

Early childhood education and care in Canada ^[1]

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Excerpts from summary

The field of early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Canada has been informed by a myriad of influences and these factors continue to shift and shape the curriculum, pedagogy, research, and practice in Canadian ECEC. Historically, following many of the theories and practices embraced by the United States, early child-care centers, day nurseries, and kindergartens were established to alleviate pressures on overcrowded schools and allow for mothers to work outside of the home. At the same time, Canadian child care took on a broader role in social welfare and later social justice, working to reduce inequities and inequality. These motivations have not been shared across all ECEC, and this is particularly evident in Indigenous early education. Here, Indigenous children and families have endured the horror of the residential school system and its legacy of colonialism, trauma, and cultural genocide. Along with these underpinning histories, Canadian ECEC has been informed by, is continuing to be shaped by, and is beginning to be guided by a number of models and movements in early learning. These include developmentalism, child-centered pedagogies, Reggio Emilia approaches, children's rights, holistic education, the reconceptualist movement, and postdevelopmentalism, and many of these approaches are not mutually exclusive. Finally, the policies and practices at federal, provincial, and municipal levels and the unique tensions between these levels of government structure Canadian ECEC policy and practice. Provincial and Indigenous early learning frameworks are created to enhance educator understandings and application of program principles, values, and goals, and these embrace responsive relationships with children and families, reflective practice, the importance of the environment and play in learning, and respect of diversity, equity, and inclusion, to name but a few shared principles. Taken together, the complexity of ECEC in Canada is clear, with historical approaches and attitudes continuing to preserve structures that devalue children and those who work with them, while concurrently efforts continue to honor the rights and voices of all children, advocate for professionalization in the field of ECEC, and reveal and reconcile past and current truths and injustices in Indigenous children's education and care, in order to support and heal all children, families, and communities.

Region: Canada ^[3]

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