

First as a child and now as a mother and educator, BGC Dawson has always been there ^[1]

Working with kids at the community centre helped me find my career path

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EXCERPTS

BGC Dawson has been a part of my life ever since I was a child, when my three brothers and I went to the after-school program. I loved the activities they had, and it's amazing to see how BGC Dawson has evolved since then.

As a young adult, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do with my life. I knew I wanted to do something creative, maybe with kids, but couldn't see long-term goals for myself. It truly was not until a program co-ordinator at Dawson took a chance and hired me as a summer animator in 2008, that I realized how much I enjoyed working with children.

I was still working there three years later when my first child, Addison, was born with a rare birth defect. While she is completely healthy now, we felt so blessed to have the support and love from the staff at BGC Dawson while she underwent various surgeries and procedures in her six-month stay in the neonatal intensive-care unit.

I knew Dawson was home when my colleagues held a little baby shower for me, complete with gifts and food, in the hospital.

When I was pregnant with my second child, Teagan, I found myself once again with a high-risk pregnancy and desperately needed a break while running after Addison, a toddler with so much energy. I was thankful for the early childhood education (ECE) program at Dawson. It gave us a little community of new parents, a chance to rest while our children were in professional hands.

As the kids spent time together in an educational environment, the parents enjoyed a variety of activities to gain experience and develop new skills like baby sign language and baby massage. There were times when you would find a few moms cooking in the downstairs kitchen, learning how to make a new dish. I learned new songs and ways to bond and connect with my baby.

The ECE animator at the time was someone I admire very much: the fantastic and talented Cindy Cohen, who is currently the co-ordinator of the 0-12 program and my supervisor.

With the leadership and guidance of Cindy, I genuinely fell in love with ECE. Being an educator feeds my need to be creative every day, and I feel so fortunate to be able to do what I love. Through the experience I gained from attending the ECE program — as a child, a parent and as an animator — I realized this is a career path I want to follow. I then worked hard to complete my high school diploma and enrolled in Vanier College's continuing education Intensive ECE program.

I did that all through the lockdown, at home with my three children: Logan, 6, Teagan, 8, and Addison, 10.

I am now in my last semester at Vanier, and the amazing directors at Dawson have asked me to work as the ECE animator while I finish school. I'm looking forward to graduating, so (fingers crossed!) I can fulfil my dream to grow within the organization, and help maintain the same welcoming environment to learn and grow that I had growing up

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