

Happy Holidays from CRRU: The year in review ^[1]

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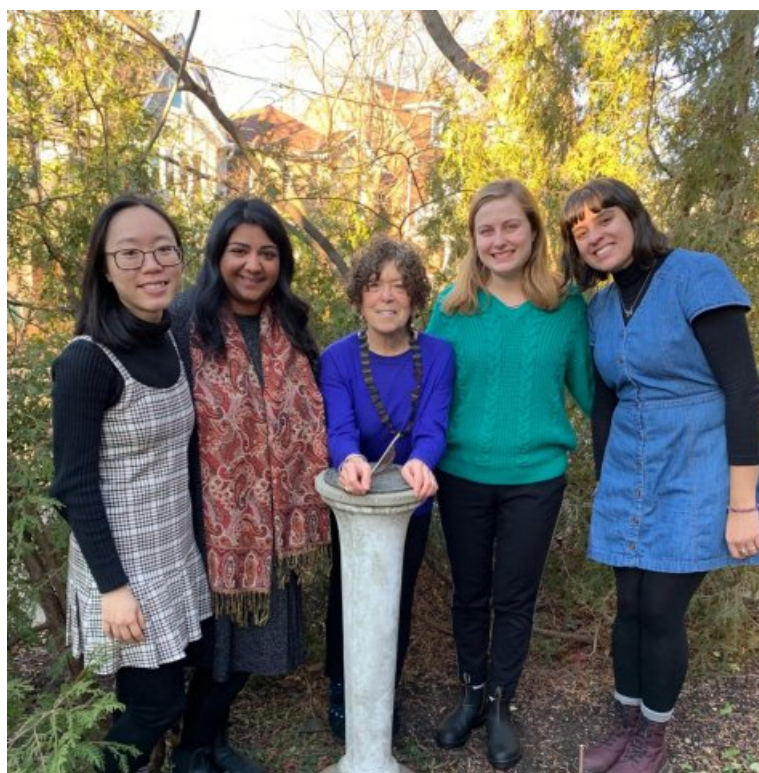
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2021: The year in review from CRRU

For CRRU, 2021 has been an immensely exciting year in which we saw an unprecedented initiative on Canadian child care. Building the long-awaited Canada-wide universal child care program has now begun, with much of the implementation still to come. Despite the personal and professional challenges associated with the continuing pandemic, 2021 has been a historic and amazing year for those of us who have fought for high quality, universal child care – whether it’s been for 50 years, or five years.

As the winter holiday period approaches, we take this opportunity to review 2021’s main child care developments, highlight some of the Childcare Resource and Research Unit’s main related activities in 2021, and send all our friends and colleagues and all child care supporters everywhere our best wishes for good health, peace, prosperity and quality child care for all in 2022.



The 2021 context for early learning and child care has been encouragingly hopeful, as the pandemic’s lessons about child care have been taken seriously by the federal government, provinces/territories and many other players who have recognized that an excellent viable child care system is central to a thriving economy, as well as fundamental for women, families and children.

We were thrilled when the April 2021 budget included a historic financial commitment and that its policy commitments for child care reflected the child care movement’s “vision” ^[4] at a high level. By the time the September federal election was called, eight provinces/territories had made child care agreements with the federal government. When all the main political parties highlighted child care as a key election issue, it was striking that the mainstream debate was no longer whether child care is essential, and whether it should be publicly funded, but more about how it should be funded and delivered.

After the federal election resulted in a Liberal minority government, provinces/territories continued to reach agreements with the federal

government and began to put changes to child care in place.

In this environment, CRRU dove into working with colleagues Canada-wide to make the universal high quality child care system a reality.

The CRRU staff—Martha Friendly, Sophia Mohamed and Rachel Vickerson—welcomed Tegan Nguyen as full time staff in the spring. We were joined by Stephanie Walker, an intern from ‘Ryerson’s’ Early Childhood Studies program whom we then hired through a Canada Summer Jobs grant along with Patrícia Borges Nogueira. All of us, with Billie Carroll, our long-term web master, have made up the CRRU “team” this year.

In this hopeful environment, CRRU aims to fulfill our mandate “to work towards an equitable, high quality, publicly funded, inclusive ECEC system for all Canadians.” To support this work, this year we are most appreciative to have received two multi-year grants, the first from Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE) and the second, project funding from Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) to develop Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2021. The CRRU team, plus Jane Beach and Barry Forer, are working towards publishing the 13th version of *ECEC in Canada* [5] at the end of 2022.

The revamp of the CRRU website in mid-2020 recognized [6] that childcarecanada.org [7] has evolved to be a major source of resources on early learning and child care. In addition to our weekly newsletter and searchable online document collection, in 2021, we developed a number of new resources such as our Issue File *Building a Canada-wide early learning and child care system* [8]. This collects, in one place, government and community documents and information about the evolving new Canada-wide child care initiative.

In 2021 CRRU published *ECEC in Canada 2019: Summary and analysis of key findings* [9] (January 2021) and three Occasional Papers, *Risky business: Child care ownership in Canada past, present and future* [10] (June 2021), *Struggles and sit-ins: The early years of Campus Community Co-operative Day Care Centre and child care in Canada* [11] (June 2021), and *Canada’s child care workforce* [12] (November 2021).

We also continued our research on the effects of COVID-19 on Canadian child care. *COVID-19 and childcare in Canada: A tale of ten provinces and three territories* [13] was published in the *Journal of Childhood Studies* in November 2021. In Spring 2021, we followed up our 2020 COVID and child care survey with a second phase; a report on its results will be published early in the new year.

CRRU has long engaged in collaborative research and advocacy as a matter of practice. This year, we’re part of three multi-partner multi-year academic projects including *Reimagining Care/Work Policies* [14], a seven year SSHRC-funded project led by Andrea Doucet at Brock, of which CRRU is the lead community partner and Martha Friendly is a co-investigator. We are also a partner in two other SSHRC Partnership grants, the *Inclusive Early Childhood* [15] project led by Kathryn Underwood at ‘Ryerson’ University and *Care Economies in Context*, [16] led by Ito Peng at the University of Toronto. We are also part of a new WAGE-funded project with Oxfam Canada and Child Care Now that will address the underrepresentation of women from diverse communities in child care. Since 2014, we have collaborated with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives on an annual survey of parent fees. The 2021 report, *Sounding the alarm*, [17] provided data about the effects of COVID on child care providers, as well as parent fees.

All the CRRU team regularly participate in and develop public education and advocacy on early learning and child care, including appearances in the media [18], and on panels [19], webinars, roundtables, class presentations organized by groups ranging from the Canadian Sociological Association [20] to the YWCA [21], organizing public education events at the national, provincial, local [22] and class level, as well as writing [23] commentary [24] in multiple [25] venues.

CRRU celebrated several accomplishments in 2021. Martha Friendly was enormously thrilled to be awarded the Charles Taylor Prize [26] for Excellence in Policy Research by the Broadbent Institute. We also congratulated Tegan Nguyen on receiving the Virginia McColm DiRoma award for academic excellence and active involvement in the community.

Next year, in 2022, CRRU will mark 40 years since our beginnings as a small project at the University of Toronto in the Centre for Urban and Community Studies. There have been many ups and downs since then but this year, we have been part of contributing to building the Canada-wide child care system we have dreamed about since then.

We wish all our colleagues in the child care movement—advocates, researchers, front line service providers, early childhood educators, child care workers, feminists, social justice organizations, labour sisters and brothers, child care supporters working in government and as elected officials, and everyone else who is part of the child care movement—a safe, happy and fulfilling holiday season. We look forward to working together more and better in 2022.

Happy holidays to all!

Martha, Sophia, Rachel, Tegan, Patrícia and Billie.

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[4] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/20/06/affordable-child-care-all-plan>

[5] <https://childcarecanada.org/publications/ecec-in-canada>

[6] <https://childcarecanada.org/blog/new-version-childcarecanadaorg-%E2%80%94-more-our-website>

- [7] <https://childcarecanada.org/>
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- [13] <https://journals.uvic.ca/index.php/jcs/article/view/20030>
- [14] <https://rcwproject.ca/>
- [15] <https://www.ryerson.ca/inclusive-early-childhood-service-system/>
- [16] <https://cgsp-cpsm.ca/ceic/>
- [17] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/21/03/sounding-alarm-covid-19%E2%80%99s-impact-canada%E2%80%99s-precious-child>
- [18] <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/frontburner/universal-child-care-is-it-for-real-this-time-1.5997174>
- [19] <https://childcarecanada.org/resources/events/21/11/importance-not-profit-childcare-parents-ontario>
- [20] <https://childcarecanada.org/resources/events/21/06/reimagining-childcare-parental-leave-and-employment-policies-diverse-canadian>
- [21] <https://ywcaCanada.ca/news/ywca-canadas-panel-event-on-whatsnextforchildcare-shares-hopes-for-the-future/>
- [22] <https://www.facebook.com/groups/540693746299024/events>
- [23] <https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/2021/09/17/child-care-is-on-the-ballot-an-issue-that-will-make-a-tangible-difference-to-canadian-families.html?fbclid=IwAR0d-Wt-VWd7289fKsNHFB9LpZG9SD7K9ZhGxknaPNnvXDekUdcG-Fw017k>
- [24] <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/july-2021/how-to-grow-an-accessible-high-quality-equitable-child-care-system/>
- [25] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/21/11/no-one-left-behind-strategies-inclusive-recovery>
- [26] https://www.broadbentinstitute.ca/2021_layton_taylor