

# Entrepreneurs are bringing modular child-care centres to BC <sup>[1]</sup>

Two women-led companies have combined forces to construct permanent spaces, built efficiently.

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## AVAILABILITY

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### Excerpts

Shortly after the province announced funding to increase child-care spaces to accommodate demand in 2018, Rory Richards approached her then boss at a modular construction company and suggested they get into building child-care centres.

“The government’s really taking it seriously, there’s investment in it, let’s do modular child care,” Richards recalls telling her boss.

“They said, ‘Listen: I know you’re in the ‘baby zone,’ but we don’t build daycare here.”

That conversation was the impetus for Richards, who is of Coast Salish (Shíshálh) descent, to start NUQO Modular — a female-led, Indigenous-owned modular construction company that focuses on designing and delivering child-care spaces, classrooms and Indigenous housing in B.C. Richards founded the company in 2020.

In modular construction, the building parts are assembled in a factory, a process that takes place over a 12-week period, with on-site installation taking just five days, Richards said. The average time to prepare the site prior to installation — clearing the land, building a foundation, transporting the materials to the site — is about nine months. That means from breaking ground to occupation on a modular build takes just 12 months, much shorter than traditional construction, which can take multiple years.

With a couple of housing projects already under their belt, the company is now working on their first modular child-care centres in Fernie and West Vancouver.

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“There has been a lack of women represented on the design and construction side for far too long,” Richards said. “We offer a critical piece of the solution puzzle.”

That piece came from NUQO’s consultations with early childhood educators, child-care operators and other stakeholders on the design needs for early childhood care centres, to inform their child-care centre design.

“We tried to put ourselves in the body of an [early childhood educator] and look at every movement that they would make in a day, and see how we can either eliminate that movement or at the very least we could lessen it,” she said.

For example, including a pullout staircase under a change table so older kids can climb up, avoiding the need for their caregivers to repeatedly lift them on and off the table, potentially injuring themselves in the process.

NUQO also hopes their modular buildings can help with attracting and retaining early childhood educators for the field.

For example, the Fernie child-care centre, which includes 100 child-care spaces, is a partnership with the municipality and the province that includes 27 units of affordable housing, prioritized for early childhood educators, built above the child-care centre.

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