

## FEDERAL ECEC PROGRAMS

Under Canadian constitutional arrangements, it is assumed that child care and early childhood education services (ECEC) fall under provincial/territorial jurisdiction and this is generally the practice. However, there are a number of ECEC services and programs for which the federal government takes responsibility. Although there are some exceptions, ECEC services under federal aegis are intended for populations for whom the federal government has particular responsibility – for example, Aboriginal people, military families, and new immigrants and refugees. Table 1 describes ECEC programs for which the federal government is responsible.

**TABLE 1** ECEC and related programs under federal aegis

Program	Department	Objective	Eligibility	Spending
Child Minding	Citizenship and Immigration Canada	To provide care while parents take language training and offer children “an opportunity to learn some English or French in a safe environment”.	Primarily serves children 6 months – 6 years to support service provider organizations that provide Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) programs.	n/a <sup>1</sup>
Military Family Resource Centres	Department of National Defence	To promote health and well being, information and referral for parents, aid to families in distress. Mandated programs serve 0-6 years. (May include child care centres)	Member of a military family. Military family resource programs are incorporated as not- for-profit agencies governed by Boards of Directors. In 2004, there were 42 MFRCs in Canada, Europe, the UK and the US.	\$4 M (Spending for 0-6 years) (2003/04)
Child Care Expense Deduction	Canada Revenue Agency	To reduce income tax associated with child care costs. (0-16 years)	Individual tax deduction. Deduction of up to \$7,000 for children under 7 and \$4,000 for children aged 7-16. Receipt may be requested by CRA. Claimed by 1,097,950 tax filers in 2003.	\$545 M (2003/04)

<sup>1</sup> A total of \$92,620,700 was spent on LINC programs in 2003/04 of which child minding is just one part. No breakdown is available.

Maternity/ Parental Leave Benefits	Human Resources and Skills Development Canada	To replace partial cost of provincially-determined maternity/parental leave for newborns and newly adopted children.	Female and male parents eligible under Employment Insurance rules. <sup>2</sup>	\$2,725 B (2002/03) <sup>3</sup>
Community Action Program for Children	Health Canada (Note that CAPC provides a variety of kinds of programs which, in some regions, are family resource programs.)	To fund services to meet developmental needs of children under age 6 living in conditions of risk.	Community coalitions providing specified programs for children: in low-income families; in teenage-parent families; families at risk of, or having developmental delays, social, emotional/behavioural problems; and/or neglected or abused. There were approximately 450 CAPC projects across Canada in 2003/04.	\$58.5 M (2003/04)

Source: Government of Canada, 2005. *Early childhood development activities and expenditures/early learning and child care activities and expenditures*. Ottawa, ON: Author.

Note: Federal ECEC programs for Aboriginal children are described in Table 2, Aboriginal ECEC programs.

### Maternity and parental leave benefits

While the length of maternity and parental leaves and the conditions determining terms and eligibility are provincially determined under labour legislation, the benefit that pays eligible parents for portions of these leaves falls under the federal Employment Insurance legislation. First included in the then-Unemployment Insurance Act in 1971, the length of the federal benefit has increased a number of times in the intervening years. A notable increase occurred in 1989 when benefits for parental leave (either parent) were added to maternity leave benefits reserved for birth mothers.

Most recently, the federal government increased the parental leave portion of the benefit to 35 weeks in 2001. Under these rules, maternity benefits of 15 weeks and the new parental benefit of 35 weeks to a total of 50 weeks will be paid at 55% of insured earnings up to a maximum of \$413 a week to eligible parents.<sup>4</sup>

The eligibility requirement now is 600 hours of insured work within the past 52 weeks.

In 2002/03,<sup>5</sup> spending for the federal benefit was:

Maternity	\$845,000,000
Parental	\$1,880,000,000
Total	\$2,725,000,000

Source: Government of Canada, 2005. *Early childhood development activities and expenditures/early learning and child care activities and expenditures*. Ottawa, ON: Author.

The number of initial maternity leave benefit claims (2003/04) may be found in each provincial/territorial section together with the number of births for 2003, the latest year available. Table 24 shows spending for federal benefits over time.

<sup>2</sup> In 2005 Quebec and the federal government negotiated a new financing arrangement in Quebec. See QUEBEC section for details.

<sup>3</sup> 2002/03 expenditure amounts were used because these are the most current actual spending figures. The estimates for 2003/04 are \$909,000,000 for maternity benefits and \$2,015,000,000 for parental benefits.

<sup>4</sup> See QUEBEC section for details of new arrangements in Quebec.

<sup>5</sup> 2002/03 expenditure amounts were used because these are the most current actual spending figures. The estimates for 2003/04 are \$909,000,000 for maternity benefits and \$2,015,000,000 for parental benefits.

## ABORIGINAL ECEC

### CONTEXT

Canada's Aboriginal populations include First Nations and non-status native people (on- and off-reserve), Metis and Inuit. Although many Aboriginal people live in remote and/or northern areas, there are large southern, urban populations as well.

#### Number of children 0-12 years identifying with an Aboriginal group, Canada (2001)

Age	North American Indian	Metis	Inuit	Multiple	Other Aboriginal
0-4	69,060	25,390	5,630	650	1,910
5-9	75,235	29,080	5,930	765	2,070
10-14	69,270	30,245	5,910	680	2,180

### ISSUES

#### Flexibility/accessibility

All Aboriginal groups have larger than average child populations, making early childhood education and care an especially important issue. There is a particular need for a wide range of flexible services to accommodate the diverse needs of the Aboriginal community.

#### Cultural integrity

The maintenance of indigenous culture is a major concern for all Aboriginal peoples. Aboriginal organizations point out that general standards for child care centres are sometimes too rigid for northern and/or remote communities and that they may not reflect traditional cultural norms and practices. Culturally sensitive early childhood education as it pertains to training and service delivery is of special concern. There is a strong interest among Aboriginal groups in developing ECEC programs that are operated and controlled by the communities themselves.

#### Government policy

Generally, funding for on-reserve social programs is the responsibility of the Government of Canada. In 1996 the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples recommended that

federal, provincial, and territorial governments co-operate to support an integrated early childhood funding strategy that a) extends early childhood education to all Aboriginal children regardless of residence; b) encourages programs that foster the physical, social, intellectual and spiritual development of children, reducing distinctions between child care, prevention and education; c) maximizes Aboriginal control over service design and administration; d) offers one-stop accessible funding; and e) promotes parental involvement and choice in early childhood education options.

Although provincial governments in some provinces carry out regulation of on-reserve Aboriginal child care, other provincial governments do not. In some provinces, First Nations communities do not recognize provincial jurisdiction on reserves. First Nations and Inuit organizations have responsibility for administration of funds and for developing services. (See Table 11 for further details).

In the past, federal funding for child care was limited to First Nations in the Yukon and Northwest Territories, in Ontario and Alberta where the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) covered costs in accordance with provincial funding policies, and in Quebec where child care programs for First Nations children received national funding through the James Bay Northern Quebec Agreement. Until 1995, when the First Nations Inuit Child Care Initiative and Aboriginal Head Start were announced, there was relatively little spending for Aboriginal ECEC in much of Canada.

**TABLE 2** Federal Aboriginal ECEC programs

Program	Department	Objective(s)	Eligibility	Spending (2001)
First Nations/ Inuit Child Care Initiative (FNICCI)	Human Resources and Skills Development Canada	To increase the supply of quality child care services in First Nations and Inuit communities.	On-reserve First Nations and Inuit communities. FNICCI funds child care at 407 sites. FNICCI directly supports 7,500 spaces.	\$50.1 M
Child/Day Care Program Alberta	Indian and Northern Affairs	To provide early child development programming and learning services that are comparable to those offered by the provincial government to people living off-reserve.	On-reserve First Nations in Alberta (as a result of the 1992 Administrative Reform Agreement between Canada and Alberta).	\$2.5 M
Child/Day Care Program Ontario	Indian and Northern Affairs	To provide early child development programming and learning services that are comparable to those offered by the provincial government to people living off-reserve.	On-reserve First Nations in Ontario (as a result of a 1965 agreement between Canada and Ontario).	\$15.4 M
Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities	Health Canada	To prepare young Aboriginal children for school by meeting their spiritual, emotional, intellectual and physical needs (ages 2-6 years).	First Nations, Inuit and Metis children and their families in urban centres and large northern communities (off-reserve). In 2003, AHS provided services to 3,616 children.	\$31.2 M
Aboriginal Head Start on Reserve	Health Canada	To prepare children for school by meeting their emotional, social, nutritional and health needs (ages 0-6 years).	On-reserve First Nations communities. In 2002/03 7,429 children attended programs at 307 sites.	\$35.1 M

First Nations Child & Family Service Head Start – New Brunswick	Indian and Northern Affairs	To maintain strength of family unit; assist children with physical, emotional, social and/or educational deprivation; and support and protect children from harmful environments (0-6 years).	15 sites in New Brunswick.	\$1.4 M
First Nations Elementary Education (including pre-k and kindergarten)	Indian and Northern Affairs	To provide programs comparable to those required by the province/territory off-reserve.	First Nations students on-reserve including pre-K and kindergarten. In 2003/04 13,483 children attended kindergarten classes through the program.	\$51.4 M

Source: Government of Canada, 2005. *Early childhood development activities and expenditures/early learning and child care activities and expenditures, 2003-2004*. Ottawa, ON: Author.

Note: See provincial/territorial Aboriginal ECEC programs, Table 11.