

# EARLY LEARNING & CHILD CARE



Native Women's  
Association of Canada

L'Association des  
femmes autochtones  
du Canada

## The Ongoing Legacy of Residential Schools

- Before the arrival of European settlers, Indigenous people had their own systems of childcare and education rooted in the community, the natural environment and spiritual teachings. After the Europeans arrived, colonization introduced the reservation and residential school systems responsible for the cultural genocide imposed on Indigenous people in Canada.
- The Canadian policy of assimilating Indigenous people came from the belief that their worldviews were inferior or primitive. Residential schools were established in 1880 and the last school was closed in 1996. These schools practiced abusive and inhumane discipline on students.<sup>1</sup>
- Many parents now lack culturally relevant teachings to pass onto their children because residential schools shamed students for practicing their language and culture, and robbed them of the opportunity to learn traditional teachings from their Elders.



## What does Indigenous ELCC Look Like?

- For Indigenous people, education is a treaty right that is recognized by the Canadian Constitution and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.<sup>1,2</sup>
- Indigenous education is holistic, lifelong, experiential, spiritually oriented, communal and integrates traditional knowledge with western knowledge.
- Research has shown that children cannot effectively learn if their environment is deficient in the key areas of housing, nutrition, health and general welfare.<sup>1</sup>
- In order for adults and children to successfully teach and learn, they must have an environment to foster learning.
- ELCC is part of the holistic and life long learning in Indigenous communities, and is an essential part of child rearing.<sup>8</sup>



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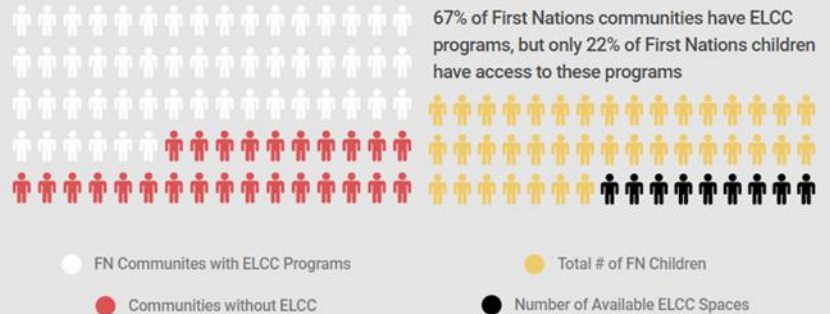
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## Early Learning & Child Care Quick Facts

- Indigenous women under 20 are three times more likely to be young mothers.<sup>3</sup>
- Thirty-eight per cent of Inuit and 25% of First Nations and Métis young mothers drop out of school due to pregnancy and lack of available childcare.<sup>3</sup>
- Sixty-seven per cent of First Nations communities have ELCC programs, but only 22% of children can access programs.<sup>4</sup>
- Inuit programs are chronically underfunded.<sup>5</sup>
- Many Métis communities don't have access to programs.<sup>6</sup>
- Eighty-four per cent of Indigenous people in Ontario live off-reserve and are not able to access federal programs.<sup>7</sup>



### Availability of ELCC in First Nations Communities



## Culturally Relevant ELCC Programs

- There are many examples of successful programs with not enough space to meet demand.<sup>7</sup>
- Improving accessibility to these services requires increased control, increased capacity, local decision-making, investment in infrastructure, affordability and culturally relevant programming.<sup>7</sup>
- Programs that are available and culturally relevant incorporate language, culture, healthy living, social supports and parental involvement.<sup>1</sup>
- These programs have shown positive impacts on children and their families including fostering self-worth, pride in identity, increased cognitive skills, desire for lifelong learning, better familial relationships and improved parenting skills.<sup>1</sup>
- Some parents are hesitant to access ELCC services because of ties to child welfare services.<sup>8</sup>

**TO LEARN MORE, PLEASE CONTACT:**

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