

# EARLY LEARNING & CHILD CARE



Native Women's  
Association of Canada

L'Association des  
femmes autochtones  
du Canada

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## The On-Going Legacy of Residential Schools

- Before the arrival of European settlers, Indigenous peoples had their own well-established systems of childcare and education that were rooted in the community, the natural environment, and spiritual teachings. After the Europeans arrived, colonization began and the introduction of the Indian Act paved the way for the reservation system and residential school system responsible for the “cultural genocide” imposed upon Indigenous peoples in Canada.
- The Canadian policy of assimilating Indigenous peoples came from the belief that their worldviews were inferior or primitive. Residential schools were established in 1880 and the school last was closed in 1996. These schools practiced abusive and inhumane discipline on students.
- The Canadian government issued a formal apology in Parliament for the destructive inter-generational effects residential schools continue to have in Indigenous communities.<sup>1</sup>



## 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 clearly shown that children cannot effectively learn if their environment is deficient in the key areas of: housing,<sup>1</sup> 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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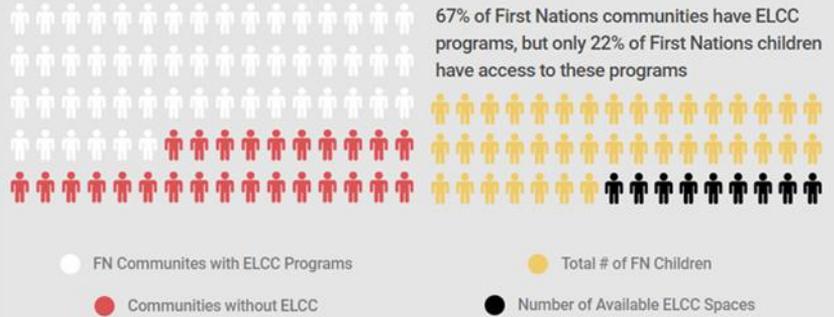
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## Early Learning & Child Care QUICK FACTS

- Indigenous women under 20 are 3 times more likely to be young mothers<sup>3</sup>
- 38% 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>
- 67% 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>
- 84% 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 spaces 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, increase cognitive skills, desire for life long 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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