



YUKON CHILD CARE BOARD
ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022



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April 18, 2022

The Honourable Jeanie McLean
Minister of Education
Government of Yukon
P.O. Box 2703
Whitehorse YT Y1A 2C6

Dear Minister McLean,

As per Section 4(11) of the Yukon Child Care Act, the Yukon Child Care Board is pleased to submit our annual report to you, so that you may present it before the Legislative Assembly.

This has been an exciting year for Child Care in the Yukon, and our Board has been fortunate indeed to have a front row view of all that has happened. The Yukon Government and the Yukon Department of Education should be proud of the accomplishments made and the steps forward that have been taken. We are beginning to see true change in recognizing the importance of the early years of life and the value of the educators who work with the children.

At the same time, this work is only just beginning. There is much yet to be done and the Yukon Child Care Board is happy to engage fully in collaboration with the Yukon Government and the Yukon Department of Education on behalf of all children, families, educators, centres, and citizens of the Yukon.

This is a time when passionate and dedicated people are needed, and the Yukon Child Care Board is ready to commit ourselves for all that is required.

We look forward to the continuation of a positive and collaborative relationship that best serves the most important shareholder in all of this work – the children.

Sincerely,

Laurie Parker
Chair, Yukon Child Care Board



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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Emergent seems to be the ideal word for what we see happening in every layer of the early childhood world these days. The entire field is emerging and evolving in unprecedented ways that ultimately benefit everyone involved. This is truly a time of transformation, and we are fortunate indeed to have the opportunity not only to witness but also to influence the future of child care in the Yukon.

In the same way, the Yukon Child Care Board is experiencing its own renewal. In the past year, all but two of the members have stepped away. Three others, myself included, have been recently appointed.

I find myself the new Chair of the Yukon Child Care Board, replacing Amy Ryder, who carefully and thoughtfully shepherded this Board for the past several years. She has left me with big shoes to fill, and I can only hope that I am able to do justice to the important work that Amy and her Board have bestowed upon me.

Thankfully, we have a strong team. Clayton Keats and Cyndi Desharnais anchor us with their many years of previous experience with the Board. Special thanks to Clayton for providing interim leadership in the months between Amy's departure and my own appointment. Special recognition also needs to go to our administrative support person Sophie Partridge. She somehow keeps us all organized and up to date on current actions needed. The new members (aside from myself) are Kristy Kennedy and Jenn Bugg, both of whom bring deep understanding of and commitment to the field. See more information about each one of us on the following page.

We continue to search for new members. If you feel drawn to join us on this extraordinary journey of envisioning child care as it should be, please find further information about applying at <https://yukon.ca/en/child-care-board-yukon#apply-to-be-a-member>

I graduated with my Montessori Early Childhood diploma in 1981. For the past four decades my fellow educators and I have advocated for increased recognition of early childhood educators, higher wages, benefits and enhancement packages, respect for the field, and respect for young children. In the past 18 to 24 months, each one of those issues has begun to be addressed in positive ways not only in the Yukon but also in all of Canada. I wasn't sure if I would see such sweeping changes in my lifetime, yet here we are.

However, the work is just beginning. There is so much more to do, and the Yukon Child Care Board intends to be a strong voice at all levels. Wish us well, or better yet, join us as we work toward a bold new world where the youngest children are deeply treasured and where every young child thrives.

Laurie Parker, Chair, Yukon Child Care Board



WHO WE ARE – MEET YOUR BOARD MEMBERS



Jennifer Bugg: Inclusion is my passion. I began working in Early Learning and Inclusion in 2009 and am now a program coordinator at the Child Development Centre. The children, families and educators inspire me every day to learn and grow and to better serve The Yukon. I am also a sessional instructor for the Early Learning Department at Yukon University. I have been in The Yukon for 14 years and call it my home.



Cyndi Desharnais: I am a long-time Yukoner and believe that ages 0 to 6 is the greatest learning curve in a person's life. I have been in the early childhood education field for nearly 30 years as a Day Care Director. I am President of the Yukon Child Care Association and am an active member of the Canadian Child Care Federation Council.



Clayton Keats, Vice-Chair: I arrived in Yukon in 1998 when I moved from my hometown of Bonavista, NL. I've served the Child Care field in many capacities and have been working at Church of the Nazarene Daycare since 2002, where I also hold the position of Associate Pastor.



Kristy Kennedy: I joined the high-stakes world of affordable, accessible, inclusive and quality care while endeavouring to raise my own children in Whitehorse over the past decade. My front row seat to the good, the bad, and the truly exceptional care our community has to offer motivated me to take a more active role in shaping the systems and supports we provide to these vulnerable members of our community. I joined the YCCB because all children (and their parents, siblings, grandparents, care-givers, and society members) deserve nothing less than exceptional care during their early years.



Laurie Parker, Chair: On the first day of Kindergarten, I came home and told my Mom that I was going to be a teacher. That dream never once wavered. I graduated in early learning in 1981 and have worked with young children for over 40 years. In the past few years my work has expanded to being an instructor for the Early Learning Department at Yukon University.



Sophie Partridge, Administrative Support: I arrived in Yukon in 1972 and quickly adapted to life in the Yukon. I worked with the Government of Yukon in many exciting capacities and began supporting YCCB in 1998. I know how vital the work of YCCB is to the overall well-being of children.



Unknown Member: This could be you - join the Yukon Child Care Board today!



WHAT WE DO

MANDATE

Under section 4 of the Yukon Child Care Act, the Yukon Child Care Board is established with the following functions:

- to encourage the development and support of child care services which meet the needs of parents and children in the Yukon;
- to make recommendations to the Minister on any matter pertaining to child care;
- to review any policies, programs, services or administrative procedures of government departments in matters pertaining to child care;
- to advise on the planning, development, standards, co-ordination and evaluation of child care services in Yukon; and
- to hear appeals under this Act.

VISION

Yukon Child Care Board proactively supports the management of child care issues and decisions, thereby yielding strength, innovation, and resiliency for the child care industry, its workers and all families affected by childcare policies and decisions.

MISSION

Maintain our board at full capacity with trained and knowledgeable members that are able to fulfill the board's responsibilities under the Child Care Act and effectively serve our stakeholders.



YUKON EARLY CHILDHOOD 2021 – THE BIG PICTURE

The past 12 months have been without a doubt the most dynamic and most exciting ever for early childhood in the Yukon. While the official launch date was April 1st, 2021, planning had been happening over many months, with the ultimate goal being creation of an affordable, accessible, inclusive, high quality early learning and child care system.

As preparations were made for oversight of early learning to move under the jurisdiction of the Department of Education, all shareholders in the field were invited by the newly formed Yukon Early Learning and Child Care Unit to engage in the conversation about what was needed. There was a true collaborative feel to the new plans as every voice had the chance to speak up.

The Yukon Early Learning and Child Care Unit was clear in identifying its three main foundations: Affordability, Accessibility, and Quality.

On April 1st, 2021, the following plans to make those three criteria tangible were implemented:

- Early learning moved from Health and Social Services into the Department of Education
- Families whose children were in licensed child care centres and day homes began to receive a \$700 monthly reduction in their fees for each child
- Licensed centres, both day homes and larger centres, received increased funding for their programs
- Educators' wages increased significantly
- A monthly newsletter has been launched from the Yukon Early Learning Unit

The effects were immediately felt and embraced by families, educators, and centres. Response to the changes has been positive and celebratory.

Since then, many other plans have also been implemented:

1. Establishment of Official Yukon Early Learning and Child Care Unit

The Yukon Early Learning and Child Care Unit was established with Betty Burns as director and three specialists to oversee the work – Ruth Lane, Tammy Reinhart, and Marisa Whyte. Currently, Clara Northcott is replacing Betty Burns, who is on temporary leave until later in 2022.



2. Changes to Credentialing Approach

Level 3 is currently the highest level accorded to educators. A permanent Level 3 certification is the equivalent of holding a diploma in early learning. There are educators in the field who hold a Level 3 with Equivalence certification, meaning that while they do not have an actual diploma in early learning, their past educational documentation is deemed to be comparable in scope providing they take one 45-hour post-secondary course in early learning per year.

Until now, educators holding related diplomas/degrees in Health and Social Sciences have received Level 3 with Equivalence certification. That will no longer be an available option.

3. Partnership with Yukon University to Provide Education

The Yukon Early Learning and Child Care Unit established a partnership with Yukon University in order to support education in the field. Funding for this partnership took three forms:

- i. Development of a new specific program to bring current Level 3 with Equivalence educators to a permanent Level 3 certification or to a full diploma (begun April 1, 2022).
- ii. Funding for innovative practicums so that educators in the new program have a variety of options for completing their field placement requirements (begun April 1, 2022).
- iii. Funding of a learning lab to broaden and deepen the learning for students.

4. Professional Development Funding for Individual Educators and Centres

- i. Cultural funding has been provided - \$500.00 for each educator and \$5000.00 for each centre or \$2000.00 for each day home to encourage expanded programming that is connected to culture
- ii. Pre-assembled kits for programming have been made available from the Yukon Early Learning Unit
- iii. A Professional Learning Fund is being developed to provide funding for non-credit courses and learning opportunities. The funding (bursaries and new PD funding) is open to all educators, owners and directors, even those who have already completed a diploma, degree, etc.
- iv. Bursaries will be provided by the ELCC Unit in order for individuals to access credit courses. As well, centres or groups are able to access continuous learning funds or professional development funds that would allow them to provide ongoing learning opportunities for individuals and for groups.

5. Centralized Website

The Yukon Early Learning and Child Care Unit is planning to launch a website that will allow everyone a centralized site for finding information and support.



UPDATES ON PREVIOUS GOALS AND PRIORITIES

2021 Recommendation	2022 Update	Status
That Government of Yukon re-appoint existing board members and appoint two new members to ensure First Nations and community representation.	Five of the minimum seven positions on the board are currently filled. The Board lacks First Nations representation or board members who live outside of Whitehorse.	Incomplete
That Government of Yukon commit to providing funding for training up to a maximum of one course per year per board member and secretary.	Funding for training continues to be determined.	Incomplete
In collaboration with YCCB, that Government expeditiously modernizes the Child Care Act and Regulations within two years.	To date there has been no news about updating, amending, and modernizing the Child Care Act.	No progress
That Government of Yukon either share the results of the supported child care program review or have staff at the Department of Education conduct a new review before the end of this fiscal year.	We have not seen the results of the supported child care review nor are we aware of a new review being planned.	No progress
Recruitment and Retention		
That Government of Yukon, in consultation with Yukon University's Early Learning and Child Care Program, students, and Yukon ELCC licensed programs develop and implement an ELCC Certification, Recruitment and Retention Strategy with two years.	Yukon University and the Yukon Early Learning and Child Care Unit have partnered together in order to provide (i) a new program that will bring educators who have Level 3 with Equivalence to a permanent accreditation; (ii) innovative practicums for those enrolled in the accelerated program; (iii) learning lab.	Significant progress



<u>Universal Child Care</u>		
That Government of Yukon continue to support programs as they transition to Universal Child Care and implement the recommendations presented in this report as they relate to Universal Child Care.	While there has been important action taken toward Universal Child Care in the past year, there continues to be a number of issues that need immediate attention – accessibility, increased spaces for children, increased numbers of educators, inclusion, supported child care, specific challenges faced by those who live in the communities.	Significant progress
<u>Communication and Outreach</u>		
That Government of Yukon support the development of an independent website for the Yukon Child Care Board.	Work has begun to develop a Yukon Child Care Board Website.	Significant progress
<u>Financial Overview</u>		
That Government of Yukon meet with the Yukon Child Care Board to discuss a revised and proposed budget.	The Board continues to require a budget in order to meet its full mandate.	No progress



STRATEGIC GOALS AND PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE

The goals of the Yukon Child Care Board continue to be a work in progress, as is the field of early learning itself in the Yukon. Truly this is not a sprint, but a marathon. For that reason, we return to a number of the recommendations made in our 2021 Annual Report. While there has certainly been progress in some areas, we have yet to identify any of last year's recommendations as being completely fulfilled and ready to be retired. For that reason, we agree that all previous goals and priorities remain as outstanding, and we recommit ourselves to meeting those as well as other needs we have identified. Collectively they will be our directives for the upcoming year.

The 5 directives that our Yukon Child Care Board has identified for action are:

- Child Care Act Renewal
- Inclusion
- Strengthening Early Learning Environments
- Ease of Appeals Process for Appellants
- Governance of Yukon Child Care Board

1. Child Care Act Renewal

I doubt that any of us knows anyone who is still driving the same car they had in 1993. The children that I taught in 1993 are now approaching middle age. Many of the educators in our early childhood field were not even born in 1993. We are over 20 years into the 21st century, yet we continue to base practice in the Yukon on a Child Care Act that was written in the 20th century. How long must we wait for our Child Care Act to reflect the latest dynamic research regarding child care?

What we knew about child development and the image of the child in 1993 is weak in comparison to what we know today. It's time to have a Child Care Act that speaks to today's child and today's field.

Recommendation 1: That Government immediately modernize the Child Care Act and its Regulations within two years.

Recommendation 2: That Government collaborate with the YCCB during all stages of modernizing the Child Care Act and Regulations.



2. Inclusion for Children with Exceptionalities

“The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members.” That quote is attributed to Mahatma Gandhi. All preschool children are vulnerable members of our society, but there is a group of children who are at even greater risk – children with exceptionalities. Some of those children need extra support in the preschool classroom.

It is our feeling that Inclusion has not received the intentional focus that it deserves. To us Inclusion should be a 4th pillar that joins the other 3 named by the Yukon Government – Affordability, Accessibility, and Quality.

The current supported child care program is not anywhere near what we would hope. Review of this critical infrastructure is long overdue. Supported child care workers face a number of extra challenges that must be addressed. Families are waiting far too long for the support that their child needs. So, we require two critical pieces – a review, and a way forward with a new plan.

Recommendation 1: That Government of Yukon add Inclusion as a 4th foundational pillar in the approach to universal child care. Currently the Yukon Early Learning and Child Care Unit names Affordability, Accessibility, and Quality as the key components of their approach. We want to see Inclusion included as well.

Recommendation 2: That Government of Yukon conducts a third-party public review of the current supported child care system in order to identify priorities and gaps. This review must include all stakeholders, especially families. It is imperative that this review take place in 2022.

Recommendation 3: That Government of Yukon undertakes creation of an innovative supported child care system that reflects the needs of the children, families, educators, and centres.

3. Strengthening Early Learning Environments

Quality is one of the foundational pillars of Yukon Territory’s approach to universal child care. We recognize that much has been done to address Affordability with financial help to parents, increased wages and benefits for educators, and increased financial support to centres. We also recognize that attention has been paid to addressing Accessibility by focusing on creating new spaces for children and opening new centres. It is now time to tackle the subject of Quality of centres in an intentional and thoughtful way. To date there has been work done to increase the number of fully qualified educators in the territory, and efforts are being made to promote the image of early learning as a professional career. We look now to assessing each centre so that excellence becomes the standard not only for every centre, but also for the field as a whole. A system where centres are evaluated could be made public, which would then provide parents with a helpful way in which to decide which centre best suits their family’s needs.



One key missing piece for quality is a Yukon-based Early Learning Framework. One was started several years ago, but for reasons unknown it never materialized. In the absence of our own Framework, Yukon Government and Yukon University have adopted the British Columbia Early Learning Framework. It is exceptional, but it is not Yukon oriented.

Also, attention must continue to be centered on the recruitment and retention of early childhood practitioners. There can be no early childhood program in the Yukon without passionate and caring educators. Our goal must continue to center on the development and support of an energetic field by ensuring that the people who work with the children have found a calling and not simply a job.

Recommendation 1: That Yukon Government implements a system of evaluation and assessment of centres using a mutually agreed upon tool.

Recommendation 2: That Yukon Government commissions an Early Learning Framework that is specific to the Yukon.

Recommendation 3: That Yukon Government makes recruitment and retention of educators a priority by actively marketing Yukon early learning nation-wide.

4. Ease of Appeal Process for Appellants

It has come to our attention that appellants who seek to appeal a decision are not aware of the specifics of the process or of their rights and role in presenting an appeal. We seek to have appellants better prepared for their appeal process.

Recommendation 1: That Government of Yukon collaborate with the Yukon Child Care Board in ways that will support appellants of appeals to understand their rights as well as the legal process, and to be assured of Board impartiality and independence.

5. Governance of Yukon Child Care Board

In order for our Board to operate at its highest level, we require certain supports and tools. In essence, this comes down to two indispensable factors – people, and funding.

People - Our mandate is to “maintain our board at full capacity with trained and knowledgeable members that are able to fulfill the board’s responsibilities under the Child Care Act and effectively serve our stakeholders.” The Yukon Child Act defines our Board in 2.4.1 as “consisting of not less than seven members.” Currently we have five members. Finding more people to work with us is a pressing priority.



Funding - The Yukon Child Care Board does not currently have a budget. We require one, and are mandated to receive financial assistance as set out in the Yukon Child Care Act 2.4.12. Without predictable financial support we are not even able to hear an appeal since we would have no funding for legal advice, securing a location for the appeal, transportation if needed, and recompense for members who hear the appeal. It is imperative that the Yukon Child Care Board secures predictable funding and a budget for the work that we do.

Our suggestion would be for two types of funding – an Operational Budget that is set annually to be used for honorariums, office supplies, printing of the Annual Report, and cost of meetings, and an Extraordinary Budget that has no set limit, but will be available if an appeal needs to be heard.

It is also important that we hold a place in the public eye in order to communicate the work that we do. For this we look to creation of an active and user-friendly website.

The Yukon Child Care Board has many new faces and we hope to add more members soon. As such, training and understanding of the work becomes critical in ensuring that the Board is effective as well as efficient.

Recommendation 1: That Government of Yukon establishes a working Operational Budget for the Yukon Child Care Board.

Recommendation 2: That Government of Yukon ensures that an Extraordinary Budget is available to the Yukon Child Care Board in the event of an appeal needing to be heard.

Recommendation 3: That Government of Yukon searches for and appoints at least two new Yukon Child Care Board members with a hope of securing First Nations and community representation.

Recommendation 4: That Government of Yukon commits to providing funding for training up to a maximum of one course per year per board member and secretary.

Recommendation 5: That Government of Yukon continues to fund and support the development of an independent website for the Yukon Child Care Board.



LOOKING AHEAD

The Yukon Child Care Board clearly has its work cut out. Our vision states that we work to provide “strength, innovation, and resiliency for the child care industry, its workers and all families.” The recommendations made in this report address all three of those qualities.

We anticipate a busy year ahead as we work together on behalf of the children and families of the Yukon. Collaboration will be central to our engagement, and we look forward to tackling every issue that comes our way. We feel honoured to play a role in the historic changes that are happening. Together we are creating a new world for children. Could there be any more important task?



Children naturally live in the moment and they allow that moment to be what it is – magical and beautiful in every way.

April Peerless

