

# ECE Week EDITION

Early Learning  
and Child Care

APRIL  
2026

MONTHLY E-NEWS



MESSAGE FROM  
ASSISTANT DEPUTY  
MINISTER

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## 35th Annual Week of the Early Childhood Educator

April 26 – May 2, 2026

Celebrating Early Childhood Educators



# MESSAGE FROM ASSISTANT DEPUTY MINISTER

Each year, we take time to recognize the Week of the Early Childhood Educator, an important opportunity to celebrate and acknowledge ECEs and CCAs across the province.

Educators bring a wide range of knowledge, skills, and perspectives to their work, with a strong dedication to children's learning, development, and well-being. This professional expertise allows ECEs to contribute in a wide range of roles and organizations that advance quality ELCC, including program educators and supervisors, directors, administrators, home child care providers, inclusion specialists, post-secondary instructors, and sector partners. Your collective efforts make a positive impact for children, families, and communities.

Within our Manitoba government team, we benefit from the expertise of 53 certified ECEs, who collectively have **over 1,200 years of total ELCC experience** between their time in the sector and government. ECEs in our department contribute their knowledge and skills in roles that span leadership, licensing, inclusion, capital development, curriculum, policy, intergovernmental relations, and business analysis.

During the Week of the Early Childhood Educator, I encourage everyone to take a moment to acknowledge a colleague. On behalf of the department, thank you for the meaningful work you do.

Warm regards,  
Sarah Whiteford

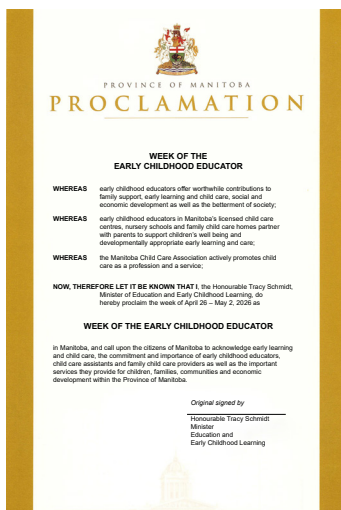
## ECE Week Recognized at Manitoba Legislature

On April 23, 2026, the Honourable Tracy Schmidt, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning, delivered a Ministerial Statement in recognition of the Week of the Early Childhood Educator in the Legislature. The Minister's statement reflected on the essential role early childhood educators play in children's early years, building strong foundations for learning, confidence, and well-being.

To read the full statement, [visit the Hansard](#).



**ECE Week**  
EDITION



## Week of the Early Childhood Educator

The Honourable Tracy Schmidt, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning, signed the 2026 Proclamation recognizing April 26 through May 2, 2026, as the thirty-fifth annual Week of the Early Childhood Educator. The proclamation invites Manitobans to celebrate our Early Childhood Educators for their dedication to caring for and educating our youngest learners. Read the [proclamation](#).



*Caption: Left to right, top to bottom: the Honourable Tracy Schmidt, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning; Tracy Cosser, MCCA Board Director; Caryn LaFleche, MCCA Board Director, Public Policy and Professionalism; Jodie Kehl, Executive Director, Manitoba Child Care Association; Cathy Gardiner, President, MCCA Board of Directors; Tyler Blashko, Lagimodière MLA; Karen Kowalski, Assistant Executive Director, MCCA; Lynda Raible, Past President, MCCA Board of Directors; Ioulia Berdnikova, 2025 ECE Award Winner; Laura Remillard, 2025 ECE Award Winner; Ginette Simard, 2025 ECE Award Winner; Jean Sangalang, 2025 ECE Award Winner.*

**ECE** *Week*  
EDITION

Early childhood educators bring skill, training, and heart to their work. Every day, they create welcoming spaces, indoors and outdoors, where children can explore, play, and belong. Their work supports our shared goal that every child in Manitoba feels safe, respected, included, and ready to succeed.

– Minister Tracy Schmidt

# MOVING FORWARD ON CHILD CARE PRIORITIES

## Second-Annual Early Childhood Educator Awards of Excellence - Call for Nominations

Early Childhood Educators lay the critical foundation for lifelong learning during the most formative years of a child's development, and what better way to acknowledge that than to take the opportunity to annually honour our incredible child-care professionals and spotlight the innovative approaches, dedication, and transformative impact that exceptional educators bring to our Manitoba communities.

The [Manitoba Early Childhood Educator Awards of Excellence](#) honour Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) across the province who play a vital role in shaping the lives of children under the age of twelve. The awards celebrate early learning and child care professionals who exhibit standards of excellence in early childhood education and recognize home-based providers for their contributions to enhancing children's growth and development. This year, two new award categories have been introduced.

Nominations are now open and accepted in the following categories:

- [Outstanding Early Childhood Educator Award](#) (up to five awards), which includes:
  - Outstanding ECE (up to two awards)
  - Outstanding Francophone ECE (one award)
  - Outstanding Indigenous ECE (one award)
  - **NEW:** Outstanding Rural and Northern ECE (one award)
- [Community Collaboration Award](#) (up to one award, three to five recipients)
- [Leadership Excellence Award](#) (up to one award)
- [Premier's Award for Early Childhood Education Excellence](#) (up to one award)
- SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARDS:
  - [Exemplary Home-Based Early Learning Environment Award](#) (up to two awards)
  - **NEW:** [Early Learning and Child Care Impact Award](#) (up to one award)

**Nomination Deadline:** June 19, 2026

A reception honouring all recipients will be hosted this autumn. Each award recipient will be presented with a certificate of recognition and a cheque for \$500.

For more information on how to prepare and submit a nomination, and the nomination and selection process, visit [manitoba.ca/eceawards](http://manitoba.ca/eceawards).

**EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR AWARDS**

**DO YOU KNOW AN OUTSTANDING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR?**

Nominations are now being accepted for the Manitoba Early Childhood Educator Awards of Excellence under the following award categories:

- OUTSTANDING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR
- COMMUNITY COLLABORATION AWARD
- LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE AWARD
- PREMIER'S AWARD FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION EXCELLENCE

**Special Recognition:**

- EXEMPLARY HOME-BASED EARLY LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AWARD
- EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE IMPACT AWARD

For complete information on selection criteria and the nomination process, visit: [manitoba.ca/eceawards](http://manitoba.ca/eceawards)

**NOMINATION DEADLINE:**  
June 19, 2026

**Manitoba**

2026 Manitoba Early Childhood Educator Awards of Excellence

# ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REMINDERS

## ECE Week Celebrations

Would you like to share some of your facility's ECE Week photos? Email us at [CDCInfo@gov.mb.ca](mailto:CDCInfo@gov.mb.ca) with the subject line "ECE Week 2026" and you could be featured in our next edition!

## Information Session for New Licensed Child Care Centre Applicants

Do you know any applicants interested in becoming licensed? The information session for new centres provides important information about the child care centre development and licensing process, legislation, staff qualifications and training, design guidelines, and much more. There will be time allocated to answer questions from participants. Upon completion of the information session, applicants in attendance will be eligible to submit a licensing application.

Next Information Sessions:

- May 20, 2026
- June 17, 2026

To register for an information session, email [cdcinfo@gov.mb.ca](mailto:cdcinfo@gov.mb.ca) or call 204-945-0776 or toll-free 1-888-213-4754 and provide your contact information and the date you wish to attend.

## Mental Health Week—May 4 to 10, 2026

The Canadian Mental Health Association has designated May 4 to 10 as [National Mental Health Week](#). This year focuses on Strong Connections / Better Mental Health, recognizing that social connection is essential to overall health and well-being. CMHA has recently launched a mental health toolkit available for free to all Canadians. Early child care providers are encouraged to take time this month to consider their own mental health, and the mental health of those they work with and care for.

## Manitoba Child Care Association Annual Provincial Conference—May 21 and 22, 2026

The 2026 provincial conference *A Culture of Caring: Celebrating Our Roots* will be held for members of the Manitoba Child Care Association at the Victoria Inn and Conference Centre. Over this two-day period, attendees will have the opportunity to take part in a variety of learning and skills workshops, as well as the MCCA annual general meeting and awards banquet. For more information, visit <https://mccahouse.org/professional-development/annual-provincial-conference>.

# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Below is a non-exhaustive list of upcoming opportunities. Additional information is also available on the [department website](#).

## MCCA 2026 Winter/Spring Workshops

The Manitoba Child Care Association lists more than [40 different workshops](#) and activities running until June 19.

See a [full list and registration](#).

## Blooming Words® Training for Child Care Staff – No Cost in 2026

Blooming Words® is a standardized, evidence-informed early language stimulation program for children from birth to Kindergarten. It was developed by speech-language pathologists in Quebec in partnership with the non-profit organization API-Enfance and is now being offered province-wide through the [Children’s Therapy Network of Manitoba \(CTNM\)](#).

Blooming Words® training is currently free for licensed early learning and child care centres (including nursery schools) in Manitoba.

For Better Speech and Hearing Month in May, Blooming Words® is offering a professional development session, “Indigenous Languages and Cultures” on May 19, 8 to 9 a.m. CST via Microsoft Teams.

This session will focus on sharing information and materials on multilingualism, highlighting the powerful role that Indigenous languages play in shaping children’s identity, belonging, and communication development. This section of the Blooming Words® program was developed through a project created with and for Indigenous communities, ensuring the knowledge shared is rooted in Indigenous ways of knowing.

Register for this [free event](#).

To learn more, visit [Blooming Words® Program](#) or view [program newsletter](#).

## Dates at a Glance

DATE	TITLE
Various Dates	<a href="#">MCCA 2026 Winter/Spring Workshops</a>
Various Dates	<a href="#">ECE II Assessment Program Spring Intake</a>
April 26 to May 2	<a href="#">Week of the Early Childhood Educator</a>
May 4 to 10	<a href="#">National Mental Health Week</a>
May 7	<a href="#">Glenlawn Career Café</a>
May 19	<a href="#">Blooming Words® “Indigenous Languages and Cultures”</a>
May 20	<a href="#">Child Care Facility Information Session</a>
May 21 and 22	<a href="#">MCCA Conference</a>



## ELCC Question Corner

### This Month's Question

*How does someone with international early learning and child care experience get their qualifications recognized in Manitoba?*

### Answer

If someone has international education or experience in early childhood education, their qualifications may be assessed for classification as an Early Childhood Educator (ECE) in Manitoba

To be classified at the ECE II, applicants must:

- Have a two-year post-secondary diploma or degree in early childhood education that is equivalent to Manitoba's education standards, or
- Have completed a [Manitoba ECE II Assessment Program](#).

To be classified at the ECE III, applicants must:

- Meet the education requirements for ECE II classification, and
- Have completed a specialization or degree program that is equivalent to Manitoba's education standards.

Five steps to become classified:

1. [Required Documents](#)
2. [Application](#)
3. [Preliminary Review](#)
4. [Credential Assessment](#)  
(a course-by-course assessment specific to early childhood education)
5. [Final Outcome](#)

**Tip:** To help speed up the process, applicants can gather their documents and complete a credential assessment from their home country before arriving in Canada. Regardless, a classification certificate is only issued once the applicant is living in Canada.

For more information, visit [Province of Manitoba | education - Internationally Educated Applicants](#).

# SPOTLIGHT ON SUCCESS

## Testimonials from Manitoba Child Care Professionals

Early Childhood Educators (ECEs), Child Care Assistants (CCAs), and home-based providers are at the heart of what makes a high-quality early learning and child-care program.

We spoke with several child care professionals from across Manitoba and asked what a career in child care means to them. Watch these short interviews for candid, heartfelt testimonials from hard-working ECEs: [manitoba.ca/morechildcare/ece-videos.html](http://manitoba.ca/morechildcare/ece-videos.html)



**Andrea, ECE II**

Cranberry Portage Children's Development Centre



**Marthe, ECE III**

Waves Home Daycare

*Testimonials from child care workers across Manitoba paint a picture of a career you'll love—that loves you back!*



## Fédération des parents de la francophonie manitobaine (FPFM) celebrate their 50th anniversary in 2026!

On February 5, the Fédération des parents de la francophonie manitobaine (FPFM) kicked off their 50th anniversary festivities by unveiling a new commemorative logo. On April 10, their annual Grand rassemblement préscolaire (Big Preschool Gathering) took place and it was a blast. More events are planned throughout the year, including a year-end gala. Watch their Facebook page and website for all the details.

The FPFM is a non-profit organization created by and for parents in 1976. They offer programs, services, resources, and training to help support families and early childhood educators in creating an environment where children can thrive and flourish in French. Their mandate is to advocate for francophone parents and francophone early years in Manitoba. To learn more about the FPFM, visit [www.lafpfm.ca](http://www.lafpfm.ca).

Félicitations on this milestone!

## Full-STEAM Ahead at Beautiful Saviour Lutheran Church Child Care

### Expanded program introduces school-readiness focus

Beautiful Saviour Lutheran Child Care has been a fixture of Winnipeg's Norwood neighbourhood since 1983. Last summer, we spoke with Program Director Jennifer Penner about the [centre's grant-supported flower and vegetable garden](#). This year, the centre has recently adapted their program to lay a stronger foundation for school readiness through Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics: STEAM.

"Over the years, children aged 3 to 5 years have been welcomed into an intentional community and have gained valuable life skills; both academic and social in nature," says Penner. "To better fulfill children's inherent interests and needs, the curriculum has expanded to incorporate the concepts of STEAM learning, while maintaining the essential components of character development."

"STEAM lays the framework for lifelong exploration and school readiness. The goal is for students to have access to a wide range of materials in a supportive environment and initiate their own learning as they explore."

STEAM differs from the more widely known STEM, adding Arts (visual arts, music, literature) to promote creativity and imagination, and a more multifaceted approach to learning. A visit to the classroom on a typical day would show students moving freely between learning centres. One group seated at a table working on an art project, a student building with magnets, a few dressed in costumes setting up a pretend picnic while a teacher leads a science experiment for another small group.



The jump from STEM to STEAM isn't just a lot of hot air, with the concept gaining traction in more educational institutions globally, from preschool to high school. [One study](#) from 2018 explored how [STEAM education](#) can be implemented in early childhood education to enhance teachers' knowledge, skills, and instructional practices. The findings suggested that innovative STEAM education practices positively impact both teacher professional development and the learning experiences of 3 to 6-year-old children. The children demonstrated higher levels of engagement, curiosity, and problem-solving abilities.

"We hope parents will see the value in an early years program that provides so much hands-on learning to our youngest students," says Penner, "We commit to growing a population that feels valuable in their community and wants to pursue curiosity throughout life."



*Children from Beautiful Saviour Lutheran Child Care take part in a variety of STEAM-focused activities and projects inside and outside, all year round.*

# DIVISION UPDATES

## Early Learning and Child Care Connecting with Community Across Manitoba

The department recently participated in career fairs at École Powerview School on April 16, the River East Transcona Career Fair at Murdoch Mackay Collegiate on April 23, as well as the Future Now Expo at the Red River Ex on April 28 and 29.

At the Second Annual École Powerview School Career Fair, dozens of high school students from Powerview and surrounding communities visited the different exhibitor booths to explore career options and connect with local employers. Many of them stopped by the Become an Early Childhood Educator booth to learn more about a rewarding career in the child care sector.

Look for our booth next at the Glenlawn Career Cafe on May 7 at Glenlawn Collegiate, and the Manitoba Child Care Association's annual conference taking place May 21 and 22 at the the Victoria Inn and Conference Centre. We're always excited to share pathways, possibilities, and the rewarding impact of a career as an early childhood educator!



Anais Ratté, Engagement Specialist (left), and Jessica Brosch, Child Care Coordinator, attended the Powerview School Career Fair on behalf of ELCC.

## Meet the ELCC Team

### Thoughts on ECE Week

This month, we asked members of our team trained as ECE IIs and IIIs for their thoughts on what quality child care means to them, and why quality child care is important for our society.

*"It's just the appeal to be able to have that positive impact on children when they're at that important time in their life."*  
-Glen Arnould



*"Watching educators grow more confident and seeing children thrive is very rewarding."*  
- Shuang Qi

*Quality child care is more than a safe place for children to spend their day. It is an environment intentionally designed to nurture a child's growth, curiosity, and sense of belonging. It's built on strong, responsive relationships between children and educators, among peers, and with families.*  
- Eden Tomczyk

*"Children never fail to make me smile. Everything we do should be about the best interests of the child."*  
- Carla Kernested

*"One of my favourite inspirational quotes is from John F. Kennedy: 'Our children are the living messages we send to a time we will not see.'"*  
- Terry Smith



*"My hope is that every ECE and CCA knows how important they are—how the small moments, the routines, your patience, comfort, and guidance leave lasting marks on children's lives. What you do matters."*  
- Sandy Manchulenko



*"I'm a strong advocate for rural child care, striving to ensure that Manitoba children succeed no matter where they live, their backgrounds, or their individual circumstances."*  
- Carol Saville

*"Imagine being the inspiration for a 9 year old today, writing a letter to their future self: 'When I grow up, I want to be an Early Childhood Educator.'"*  
- Carmen Zubin

*"The passion [ECEs] have for what they do, and how they enrich children's and families' lives makes them a pillar of society. Their role is so incredibly important to so many people, and it should be celebrated and respected."*  
- Lisa Ludwig

*"Always be open to new ideas and keep growing and learning throughout your career. It will help you form stronger relationships with the children, their families, and fellow staff."*  
- Debbie Huebner

*"We really value the work that [ECEs] do. At the end of the day, although many of us are sitting in front of computers and working on policies and procedures and 'government stuff,' our real desire is for children—for all children and families—to have quality child care."*  
- Lindsay Ortlieb



*"I know it's cheesy, but the best part of my job is the people I work with. They're passionate ECEs who really understand what quality programming in our sector looks like."*  
- Jon Bitton

## Insights from the Red River Metis Early Learning and Child Care Conference

On March 6 and 7, Division staff, including Kari Cook, Shuang Qi, and Temi Ojogiwa, attended the 2026 Red River Métis Early Learning and Child Care Conference. The conference generated insights that strongly align with the intent of Manitoba's Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Policy Framework currently under development.

The opening session emphasized that play is foundational to early learning—not simply an activity, but an approach. Presenter Donovan Robinson highlighted how play supports nervous system regulation, psychological safety, and trust, creating the conditions children need to fully engage in learning. This aligns with policy goals focused on safe, supportive early learning environments.

Keynote speaker Raven Willoughby introduced the concepts of mirrors and windows—mirrors as reflections of identity and windows as opportunities to understand others. The session underscored the importance of identity formation, self-awareness, and reflective practice. Land-based learning was highlighted as restorative and deeply connected to Métis ways of knowing, reinforcing the importance of culturally relevant, land-connected pedagogies.

Sessions on community and connection stressed that Métis culture, language, and community partnerships must be embedded at the core of ELCC programs. Speakers emphasized authenticity, healthy relationships, and meaningful cultural representation through Michif language resources, Indigenous pedagogies, and culturally aligned materials.

Language revitalization emerged as a central theme. Presenters highlighted the need for educators to learn and relearn Michif and shared practical strategies—such as storytelling, music, beading, sash looming, and jigging—that demonstrate how culture can be woven into everyday early learning environments.



## Staffing Updates

We continue to welcome new staff into our division to support Manitoba's priorities for early learning and child care and support career growth and development of existing staff.

**Renita Coutinho** joined the Funding and Financial Assistance Branch as a Financial Clerk at 114 Garry on April 15, 2026. Renita holds a Post Graduate Diploma in Project Management from the University of Winnipeg, a Post Graduate Diploma in Banking and Finance, and a Bachelor of Commerce in Banking and Insurance from the University of Mumbai, India. She has experience in financial and administrative support, transaction processing, and customer service in the private and public sectors. Renita previously served as Security Rebate Clerk with the Manitoba Department of Public Service.



## We Want to Feature You!

Celebrating a milestone? New program working out well? Great idea you want to share? If you have content ideas or a story you would like to include in our next edition, email [CDInfo@gov.mb.ca](mailto:CDInfo@gov.mb.ca) with the subject line "E-NEWS" to share your thoughts!

**For general inquiries about the Early Learning and Child Care Division**

**Website:**

[www.manitoba.ca/childcare](http://www.manitoba.ca/childcare)

**Email:** [cdinfo@gov.mb.ca](mailto:cdinfo@gov.mb.ca)

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