



News release

For immediate release

First tripartite memorandum of understanding signed on early learning and child care for First Nations

September 12, 2024 Vancouver, British Columbia Employment and Social Development Canada

Access to high-quality, inclusive child care has a profound influence on children's language skills and identity. First Nations children, families and communities benefit greatly from culturally based early learning and child care opportunities rooted in self-determination and in the implementation of First Nations' laws, teachings and practices.

Today, the First Nations Leadership Council (the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, the First Nations Summit, and the B.C. Assembly of First Nations) and the governments of British Columbia and Canada gathered to sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on early learning and child care for First Nations in British Columbia.

This MOU is an important step on the path to reconciliation. The goal is to support the self-determination of First Nations in British Columbia and advance First Nations' jurisdiction in relation to early learning and child care.

The First Nations Leadership Council, British Columbia and Canada recognize that First Nations families and children are best supported by early learning and child care programs and services that are designed and led by their community, and respond to local cultures, languages, traditions, practices and laws. Having access to these programs and services is instrumental in creating a foundation for a child's cultural identity and sense of self.

This MOU is advancing First Nations' early learning and child care priorities. It is a significant stepping stone in enabling discussions at the political level that respect the self-determination of First Nations and government-to-government relationships between individual Nations and the Crown.

This approach acknowledges First Nations' inherent rights to self-determination, including the right to control the design, delivery and administration of an early learning and child care system for First Nations that reflects their unique needs, priorities and aspirations.

Quotes

"Our government is here as a partner. This marks a historic moment for Canada—a pivotal step toward honouring and empowering the self-determination of B.C. First Nations in early learning and child care. By working together, we can ensure that First



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Nations children have access to early learning and care rooted in their own cultures, designed by and for their communities. This commitment will support the needs and aspirations of First Nations families for generations to come.”

– The Honourable Jenna Sudds, Canada’s Minister of Families, Children and Social Development

“This Memorandum of Understanding marks a significant step toward recognizing and empowering First Nations’ self-determination in early learning and child care. By allowing First Nations to lead programs rooted in their cultures and traditions, we are helping to ensure that future generations grow up connected to their heritage. This agreement is a meaningful move toward reconciliation, and I am proud to support this vital work.”

– The Honourable Joyce Murray, Member of Parliament for Vancouver Quadra

“Together, we are taking a historic step in our reconciliation journey toward advancing early learning and child care for First Nations that is determined by and advances the priorities of First Nations communities. First Nations families know what is best for their children, and this action will allow us to continue the dialogue about how best to ensure their early learning and child care programs reflect their own teachings and values, led by and for their communities. We are proud to lead the way across Canada in establishing the first political-level trilateral table focused on First Nations early learning and child care.”

– The Honourable Rachna Singh, British Columbia’s Minister of Education and Child Care

“Caring for our children is a sacred responsibility, one that ensures our continued existence as Indigenous Peoples. Our joint early learning and child care work starts by acknowledging and honouring our own ways of knowing, being and doing. This tripartite agreement is more than the paper it is written on—it is our opportunity to take meaningful action in creating the future that our children, families and communities deserve.”

– Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President, Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs

“Change requires more than good intentions. It requires thoughtful and principled action. This MOU sets the foundation for how we will work together to achieve positive change in the coming years. We are grateful to our colleagues in the federal and provincial governments, for their willingness to work with us in making bold and necessary changes. Our children, our families, our communities are relying on us to be successful, and this MOU helps to set that path.”

– Cheryl Casimer, Political Executive, First Nations Summit

“Today, we are taking a significant step forward, reclaiming our sovereignty, families and nations by signing this important agreement. We commit to action and are united in the spirit of self-determination and reconciliation. This work will lay a foundation that ensures every First Nations child is nurtured to reach their full potential, empowered by



their traditions, language and culture. Through our collective strength, First Nations are embracing the guardianship of their children and building stronger pathways toward resilient and thriving Nations.”

– Terry Teegee, Regional Chief, B.C. Assembly of First Nations

Quick facts

- This MOU supports the vision and principles of the [First Nations Early Learning and Child Care Framework](#), co-developed and jointly released by the Government of Canada and the Assembly of First Nations in 2018, as well as the [Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework](#) developed and jointly released by the Government of Canada and provincial/territorial governments in 2017.
- As part of the MOU, parties are committed to co-develop a collaborative, rights-based and distinctions-based approach to early learning and child care for First Nations in British Columbia.
- To support the commitments of the MOU, parties agreed to establish a political table and a technical table which will advance the development of accessible, affordable, high-quality and culturally based early learning and child care for First Nations in British Columbia that is First Nations determined.
- *The [Canada Early Learning and Child Care Act](#) respects provincial and territorial jurisdiction and Indigenous rights, including the right to self-determination. It supports the role of First Nations in leading a First-Nations-determined early learning and child care system.*
- High-quality, culturally based early learning and child care for First Nations children, families and communities, guided by First Nations priorities, is a vital part of reconciliation and a key pillar within the Canada-wide early learning and child care system. It responds directly to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Call to Action 12: to develop culturally appropriate early childhood education programs for Aboriginal families. It also complements Canada’s commitment under the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* to continue to advance and support self-determination in the provision of culturally competent early learning and child care for Indigenous children.
- This MOU also reflects new approaches the Government of British Columbia is implementing to work collaboratively with First Nations, in line with British Columbia’s *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*.



Associated links

[Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework](#)
[Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework](#)
[Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care](#)

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