



FINAL

REPORT

ECE PROFESSIONAL
ECE DEVELOPMENT

BURSARY FUND

"The learning wasn't linear, but it wasn't chaotic or confused or without purpose, either. It was woven."

Angela Stockman

Woven Together

Each of us is like a thread... we have particular strengths, unique qualities and experiences. Alone we are but a single strand—a single point of view, a single idea—but when we join with others, we create something of exponentially greater value and meaning.

The visual motif and metaphor chosen for this report is Woven Together. Weaving, braiding, knitting and textile making is an ancient, cross-cultural practice that also includes many Indigenous peoples. For generations we have literally woven our stories into fabric and other textiles.

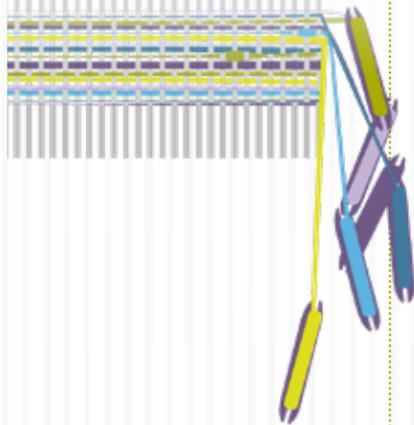


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This report aims to amplify the perceptions and longings of educators who received financial support from the ECE Professional Development Bursary Fund from 2019-2021. Perhaps at no greater time than during this project was it realized that the work of educators is not only important work but also a vital service to the health of our society. During 2020-2021 we relied on educators' dedication to sustain safe and joyful spaces for children despite ever-changing safety protocols brought about by the pandemic. Educators continued to seek support for professional development throughout unpredictable circumstances to discover deeper connections, new ideas, perspectives, and questions. This report reveals that financial support for educators to engage in professional learning significantly impacts them both personally and professionally. Educators expressed heartfelt gratitude for financial support and its symbolic recognition of educators as legitimate professionals. The voices of educators expressed in this report illustrate that they are committed to sustaining their curiosity and willingness to wonder even during challenging times.

PREPARED BY
Kathreen Riel, Project Manager
ECE Professional Development Bursary Fund

Overview

The ECE Professional Development Bursary Fund (Bursary Fund) is an initiative in partnership with the Ministry of Children and Family Development, the Government of Canada, and Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre (WCCRC), the agency responsible for administering the funds. This funding is part of the Early Learning and Child Care Agreement with the Government of Canada.

The objectives of the Bursary Fund are to:

- 1 Improve access to training for early childhood educators and child care providers living in rural and remote communities.
- 2 Improve access to training for Indigenous populations of people living in British Columbia.
- 3 Build capacity in the field by reducing the financial barriers for early childhood educators and childcare providers in accessing high-quality training opportunities.

What was funded?

Bursary funds were allocated to individual educators and non-profit agencies for the following purposes:

For Individuals

Educators applied online individually to request bursary funds. After attending the training, these individuals submitted a reflection form and expense statement for their expenses to be reimbursed.

Conferences and Workshops

Regional agencies received bursary funds to reduce their event registration costs by as much as 80%.

Communities of Practice (CoPs)*

Twenty-one non-profit agencies organized twenty-five CoPs for educators to engage in ongoing conversations and deeper reflections about identity and practice.

*Community of Practice (CoP, pl. CoPs)

A model of professional learning in which educators meet regularly to critically reflect on knowledge, experiences, values, and practice. *Early Learning Framework, p. 103*

**Rural and remote is defined as those with postal codes starting with V0 or V1

Uptake

How many educators were supported?

3396

EDUCATORS

920

OF THOSE LIVE IN RURAL OR REMOTE REGIONS**

386

ARE FIRST NATIONS OR MÉTIS

What types of professional development did educators attend?

2440

ATTENDED CONFERENCES

598

ATTENDED COURSES AND WORKSHOPS

358

PARTICIPATED IN COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

Distribution of Bursary Funds



Funded by the Government of Canada through the Canada - British Columbia Early Learning and Child Care Agreement

Canada

BRITISH COLUMBIA

WCCRC

ECE PDBURSARY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT BURSARY FUND



Scope of Funding

The scope of funding data indicates that face-to-face training such as conferences or workshops utilized bursary funds to reduce registration and accommodation expenses for educators. Those educators who sought bursary funding individually, particularly educators who lived in rural and remote regions, faced high costs to travel. These travel and accommodation costs accounted for 64% of requested bursary funds by individual educators. Although the Bursary Fund reimbursed travel costs, educators still found it challenging to pay these costs upfront. Many educators who attended conferences or workshops also forfeited their salary for the time that they did not work to travel to and attend a conference or workshop.

I am someone who would love to attend as much professional development as possible. However, living in such a remote area it is next to impossible financially, to even consider attending professional development in other areas. *Educator, Cranbrook*

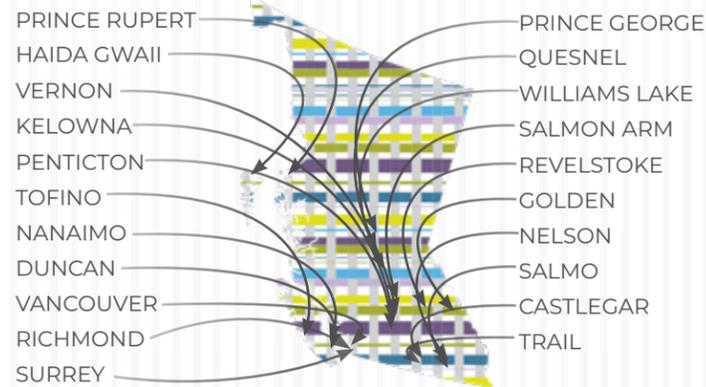
Reach

Where did bursary recipients reside?

- 1031** DIFFERENT LOCATIONS THROUGHOUT B.C. (based on bursary recipients who provided home addresses)
- 920** IDENTIFIED AS LIVING IN A RURAL OR REMOTE REGION
- 386** IDENTIFIED AS FIRST NATIONS OR MÉTIS

With no vacation time or sick time I had to lose two days of work to attend this conference. This Bursary Fund covered the majority of my costs and allowed me to attend without putting me into long-term debt. *Conference Participant, Saanich*

Where did professional development take place?

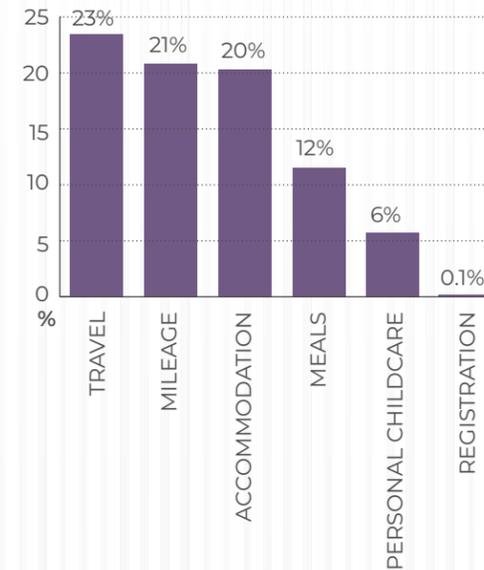


Thirteen (13) CoPs were offered online.

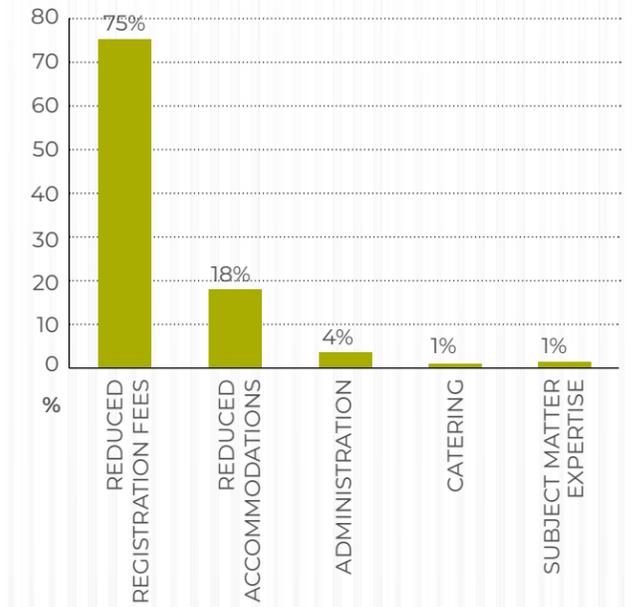
Seven (7) additional conferences and workshops were held online and available to educators throughout B.C.

Scope of Bursary Fund Expenditures

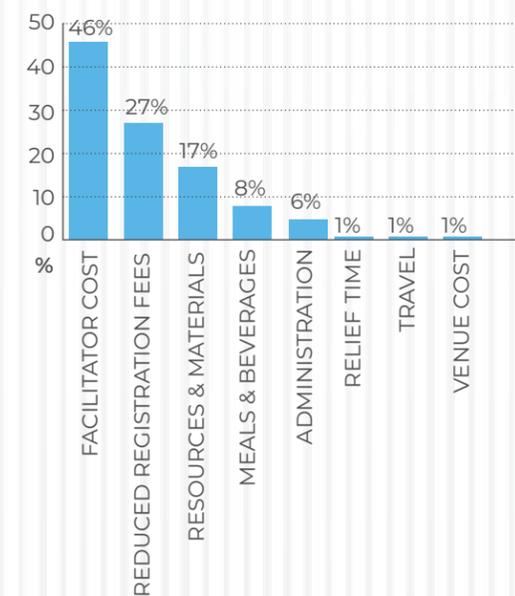
How did individual bursary recipients spend bursary funds?



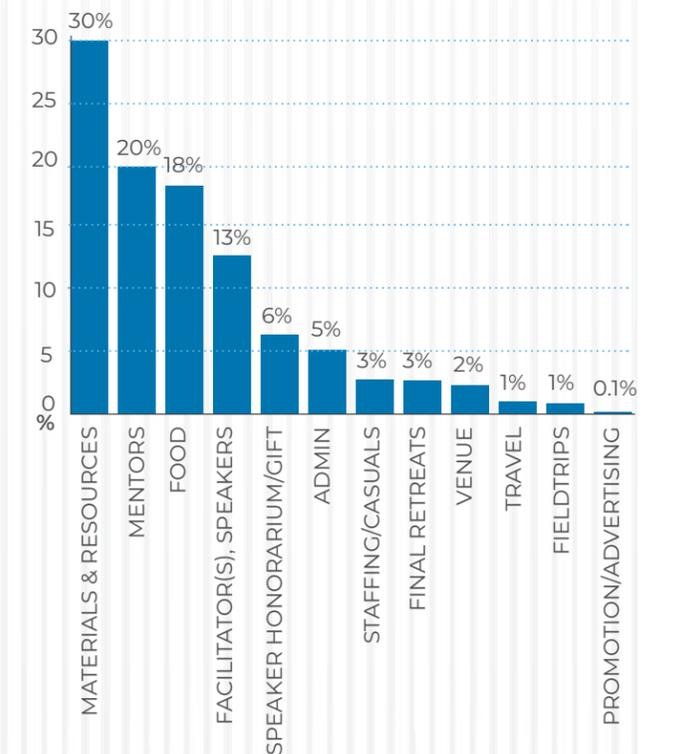
How did large-scale conferences use bursary funds?

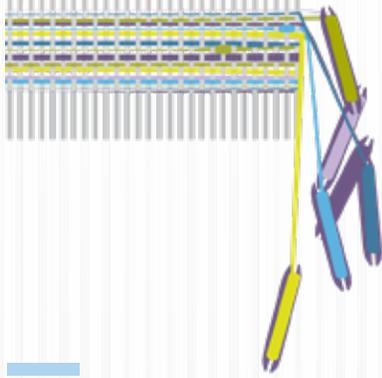


How did regional conferences and workshops disperse bursary funds?



How did CoPs spend bursary funds?





You can create nothing of value with only weft or only warp threads... it takes both strength and flexibility to create meaning.

Scope of Topics

The topics presented at conferences, workshops, and CoPs sponsored by this Bursary Fund spanned a wide range of subject areas. Themes about play and risky play were popular choices for individual applicants. Conferences that utilized bursary funds focused on the health and well-being of both educators and children. Local agency-sponsored training events offered a variety of subjects with no prominent patterns of popularity; while many CoPs used *The Early Learning Framework* and the book, *From Teaching to Thinking* to engage participants in questions and reflections about their practice.

SCOPE OF TOPICS for Individual Educator Applicants and Large-scale Conferences



SCOPE OF TOPICS for Regional Conferences and Workshops (no order of prevalence)... BUILDING BRIDGES TRAINING
 MY TWEEN & ME (SELF-ESTEEM IN PRE-TEENS) | REGGIO EMILIA MENTORSHIP | SELF-CARE, STRESS, E

SCOPE OF TOPICS for Communities of Practice



Bursary recipients described factors that would influence their decision to participate in future professional development.

SCOPE OF INFLUENCES: Five Most Prominent Themes

-  CONTINUED FINANCIAL SUPPORT
-  TRAINING EVENTS OFFERED CLOSER TO HOME
-  QUALITY OF CONTENT &/OR PRESENTERS
-  MORE STAFF AVAILABILITY AND PAID TIME OFF
-  BETTER PROMOTION OF THE EVENT

ING (DECOLONIZATION) | INTEGRATING NATURE WITH CHILDREN'S PLAY | MENTAL HEALTH | MUSIC & CHILD DEVELOPMENT
 BURN OUT | SENSORY PROCESSING, ATTACHMENT & ADDICTIONS | UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOUR

Building Capacity

A key objective of the Bursary Fund is to build capacity. In this report, capacity is interpreted as the potential for a person to demonstrate or perform a competency, expression or understanding.¹ There are five prominent themes of capacity-building outcomes from feedback provided by bursary fund recipients.

The following five themes emerged as the most prominent.

CAPACITY-BUILDING OUTCOMES

Capacity to Fully Engage with Learning

The Bursary Fund allowed me to relax and immerse myself in the experience without worrying about how I was going to afford to pay for it.

Conference Participant
Fernie

When you are able to not have to worry or stress about spending out of pocket for things like food and other amenities, you are able to fully immerse yourself in the learning experience

Conference Participant
Prince Rupert

The Bursary Fund lightened the process of making decisions for appropriate workshops without having to worry about financial issues.

Workshop Participant
Surrey

Capacity to Apply Theory to Practice with Colleagues

The Bursary Fund allowed for me to experience a Learning Institute with the other colleagues who work with me at our center. This is valuable as we could walk away with a cohesive learning plan and *formulate goals for ourselves and our program as a team.*

Conference Participant
New Denver

The bursary made it an easy decision to attend because we did not have to choose between one staff or another to get to attend with limited professional development funds. As a result, it will make it easier to talk with each other about how we can create a community of practice, deepen our learning and *implement what we have learned together.*

Conference Participant
Revelstoke

Capacity to Cultivate Relationships

Living in a rural area of B.C. limits my abilities to meet (in person) new colleagues. This conference provided me with *an opportunity to meet a diverse group of colleagues* from various Early Childhood settings across B.C.

Conference Participant
Magna Bay

I feel that the legacy of this community of practice is the understanding that I am not in this alone, I am part of a village/ community with fellow educators/ childcare providers and with the parents.

CoP Participant
Surrey

The bursary funds helped to *build relationships between ECEs and the school district* and fostered the existing relationships between ECEs to reach further into our communities.

CoP Leader
Tofino

Capacity to Feel Valued and Recognized

In my 25 years of experience, *I have never felt more supported and encouraged* to develop my profession in a meaningful way.

Conference Participant
Penticton

As an operator of a multi-age center, bursaries like this one encourages me to attend professional development programs because it recognizes the value of my work.

Workshop Participant
Coquitlam

It felt very positive to be valued in such a way for the work that we do to have the financial assistance to take part in this professional development.

Conference Participant
Saltspring Island

Capacity to Keep Learning

I am more motivated to take workshops because of the financial support I am getting.

Workshop Participant
Vancouver

The bursary gave me not only the financial support I needed to take this course but also gave me the *great motivation to keep learning* as an ECE in the future.

Workshop Participant
Victoria

In the simplest sense, fibers that are twisted or braided are stronger than the same bundle of fibers that are left straight because the resulting cord has more capacity to stretch.²

We prioritize relationships with children and families and prioritizing relationships with early childhood educators and organizations that support them – that’s what changes this field – that’s where change is going to come.

Nicky Byres,
Community of Practice Mentor

¹ Capacity. (n.d.) In Merriam-Webster Dictionary. merriamwebster.com/dictionary/capacity. Retrieved May 13, 2021.

² Amans, Michiel. “Would a rope of nylon be stronger if it was just one 1” thick strand?” Online posting. Quora.com. Retrieved May 13, 2021.

What We Are Learning and Recommendations Going Forward

Learning

Communities of Practice Foster Connections, Curiosity and Questions of Complexity

The comments from bursary recipients who participated in CoPs suggest that their experience is more reflective of the *Early Learning Framework's* vision for educators to “consider many different perspectives and engage with the complexity of practice” (p. 12) through holistic learning experiences that are focused on “connectedness, reciprocal relationships and a sense of place” (p. 16). The holistic format of CoPs extended educators’ reflections on identity, relationships, and wonder.

This community of practice has changed how I think...and I really do mean exactly that...I am seeing, listening, evaluating and approaching everything in my life with a different mindset. What I learned from this cannot be unlearned... my mind has been opened. Cool.

CoP Participant, Surrey

I think this community practice has provided a willingness to wonder.

CoP Leader, Vernon

Discussions happened quickly in the evening and how rich the time was with the desire to continue the connections even when the CoP is finished.

CoP Leader, Tofino

Comments from the community of practice participants also showed strong connections with the *Early Learning Framework's* recommended practices to

engage with “complexity, critical reflection, pedagogy of listening and collaborative dialogue” (p. 47).

We're hosting communities of practice to let the uncomfortable and awkwardness have a space and know it's okay we all can feel it.

CoP Leader, Cowichan Valley

Instead of teaching skills we are being vulnerable and sharing what we are learning – not what we have mastered.

CoP Leader, Williams Lake

Recommendation

Direct future professional development funding to programming that reflects The *Early Learning Framework's* vision for learning that is a “holistic process that happens as children and adults come together in relationship with each other, ideas, materials, places, and histories” (p. 4).

The *Early Learning Framework* recommends that “adults and children interact in reciprocal relationships where knowledge is co-constructed and outcomes cannot be predicted” (p.75). However, for educators to engage in reciprocal relationships, they need learning experiences where they may observe and practice such interactions that value and prioritize everyone’s expertise. It is recommended to continue funding professional development that support conditions for educators to engage in an open exchange of pedagogical ideas and understandings without the need for conclusive answers or solutions.

Learning

Contextual Experts Respond to Unique Capacity Needs

Educators in all parts of B.C. encounter unique economic, cultural, social, and geographic barriers specific to their region that affect their access and pursuit of ongoing professional learning. To meet the distinctive needs of educators in each region of B.C., the distribution of bursary funds relied on guidance from training coordinators of Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR) agencies.

Ideas, plans, and budgets were co-constructed with CCR training coordinators who understood the barriers and needs of educators in their community. This approach benefited from the expertise of CCR staff and their leadership role was critically important in the organization of the CoPs in rural and remote areas of B.C.

I found that the journey of preparing for this (community of practice) was full of self-doubt and worry. Questions came up for me like will they come, will they stay, will they trust us? The reality is that it is a process, a journey, and I quickly realized that we would likely make missteps, but needed to be open to feeling a bit vulnerable in the work. After all, isn't that what we are asking of others?

CCR Coordinator & CoP Leader, Penticton

Recommendation

Future funding initiatives for professional development would be optimized by a management process that prioritizes partnerships with applicants and contextual experts who understand the unique needs and strengths of their community.

Learning

Collaborative Planning Supports Capacity Building

The Bursary Fund followed a collaborative planning model inspired by Mary Parker Follet’s vision³ that change and success rely on relationships of reciprocity that emphasize collaboration and “power with” relationships instead of transactional, “power over” relationships.

Bursary Fund staff engaged “power with” partnerships in a series of exploratory conversations with agency personnel who requested bursary funds. These conversations explored the unique needs of educators in a specific region, the potential resources that could be utilized to meet those needs, and a budget that could support the implementation of an optimal learning experience. In most cases, bursary applicants requested minimal funds which were often increased after discussions about their program plans. In some cases, even after initiating the program and especially during the pandemic in 2020, plans were revised to meet the changing needs of the target audience.

Recommendation

Co-construct plans with training leaders and collaboratively evaluate learning experiences to foster professional capacity and creativity.

Learning

Consider The Readiness Journey

In the second phase of this project (March 2020 - March 2021), bursary funds were primarily allocated to support new CoPs. Twelve out of thirteen applicants who applied for bursary funds to lead a CoP were doing so for the first time. Many of these applicants participated in past learning experiences that could be identified as part of their “readiness journey” and may have inspired them to consider organizing a CoP as opposed to a course or workshop.

Reflection is a muscle that needs to be exercised.

CCR Coordinator & CoP Leader, Trail

One event that may have played a significant role in the “readiness journey” for many of these educators, was the Early Learning Institute program that took place November 2019 in Nelson, B.C. During this event, the educators joined pedagogical leader, Lorrie Baird for two days of exploration, inquiry and sharing about the joys and complexities of early care and learning.

The biggest piece I am going away with is being more aware of reflective practice and how to lead with curiosity.

Participant Early Learning Institute, Nelson

I have been an Educator for over 20 years, I know that I am a leader. Sitting with my group of six Educators, I chose to listen more and hold the space for the other five Educators. I found great value to listen more and verbally lessen my contribution.

Participant Early Learning Institute, Nelson

³ Lyndall Urwick, ed. (1949). *Freedom & Co-ordination: Lectures in Business Organization*. michelezanini.com/mary-parker-follett-the-first-prophet-of-management/#fn1. Retrieved May 13, 2021.

Another event that may have contributed to an applicant's "readiness journey" to organize professional development other than a conference or workshop, was the Peer Mentoring Project, that began in the summer of 2019. This project, led by Dr. Laura Doan, brought together new and experienced early childhood educators who met regularly to support one another professionally. Several applicants who applied for funds to lead a CoP participated in the Peer Mentoring Project. In reviewing the locations where CoPs were implemented, it is noted that most CoPs occurred in rural and remote regions of B.C. particularly in the Interior and Okanagan where the Early Learning Institute and Peer Mentoring Project originated.

Recommendation

Future funding for ongoing professional development may need to consider the value and potential effect of an educator's "readiness journey" and those capacity-building experiences that may prepare them to engage in more reflective forms of professional development.

Conclusion

The ECE Professional Development Bursary Project was established to build capacity among educators and to improve their access to professional development, especially with educators living in Indigenous, remote, and rural communities in British Columbia.

Demographic data and recipient feedback show that 3396 educators living in 1031 identified locations throughout B.C. received financial support to participate in professional development. Capacity-building among educators was realized by adopting a collaborative planning approach that involved bursary applicants, regional agencies and other professionals to co-construct plans and evaluate outcomes.

To sustain and enhance access to ongoing professional development for educators, any future funding initiatives would benefit from partnerships with local organizations such as Child Care Resource and Referral agencies that understand the unique needs and strengths of educators in their region.

Professional development that reflects the *Early Learning Framework's* vision for educators "to consider many different perspectives and engage with the complexities of practice in a spirit of experimentation" (p. 12) may be incumbent on a series of capacity-building learning experiences that support every educator's readiness to engage in ongoing discussions and deeper questions about identity, histories, and practice.

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