



**METRO VANCOUVER
ABORIGINAL EXECUTIVE
COUNCIL**

COALITION OF
**child care
advocates**
OF BC

November 2022

The need for a province-wide fair wage grid with a focus on Indigenous rights and reconciliation.

In British Columbia we are celebrating the measurable progress achieved in our province since 2018 towards creating a \$10aDay child care system to meet the needs of children, families, communities, and the economy.

After decades of neglect there is of course much more to do - but - child care in our province is increasingly more affordable with the rapid expansion of \$10aDay sites, and significant fee reductions in other programs. There are thousands more licensed spaces across the province, and early childhood educators have a \$4/hour publicly funded wage enhancement. Importantly, there are new investments with First Nations, Métis Nation and in Aboriginal Head Start for the expansion of Indigenous-led programs, with affordable fees, and improved educator wages.

These important milestones reflect provincial and federal policy and funding commitments to achieve a quality \$10aDay system. A system that ensures culturally safe child care services reflecting Indigenous rights, jurisdiction, and worldviews that strengthen the gifts of children, families, and communities. A system that must prioritize increased access for all Indigenous children, including those living away from their home nations to their languages and cultures.

However, the main obstacle to expanding access to licensed child care and achieving quality goals is a shortage of early childhood educators and other child care professionals. It's a problem that requires much more significant action than is reflected in the government's current recruitment and retention strategies. The lack of qualified educators today is preventing many existing programs from operating at full capacity and is an obvious barrier to achieving the expansion required to ensure child care is available for all families who choose it.

With BC's adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act it is especially vital to encourage and sustain Indigenous educators within the growing child care sector. As so clearly stated by the Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council, we must move towards restoration and reconciliation while prioritizing the implementation of trauma informed practices within our services in order to create cultural safety. And, to further advance decolonized funding structures by providing more than a "living wage" to Indigenous staff we must provide them with a thriving wage so that families can transcend conditions of scarcity.

A province-wide publicly funded and fair wage grid for educators, as recommended by the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC and Early Childhood Educators of BC, along with allies such as the Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council, needs to be the next milestone in BC as we lead the way on implementing \$10aDay child care across Canada.

After decades of undervaluing child care professionals by making their compensation largely reliant on parent fees, the 2021 Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement commits the Government of BC to develop a wage grid for educators. Now is the time for us all to advocate for BC Budget 2023 to transition the current ECE wage enhancement into a competitive province-wide wage grid for the child care sector, learning from the wage grids implemented by BC Aboriginal Child Care Society and Aboriginal Head Start Association of BC.

Together we advocate - together we make progress.

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