



# Host your own Discussion on the Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework

This toolkit has been created to help you host your own discussion to help develop the Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Framework. The kit includes materials you may wish to use to plan your discussion as well as gather and submit the results. We hope that these tools help you customize your own discussions to respond to your specific needs.

#### The toolkit includes:

- Discussion Guide
- Response Template

After your discussion, we encourage you to send the results to [NC-IELCC-AGJEA-GD@hrsdcc.gc.ca](mailto:NC-IELCC-AGJEA-GD@hrsdcc.gc.ca). In your email, please indicate if you consent to your submission being posted publicly. If not, your submission will still be considered in the development of the Indigenous ELCC Framework.

Have your say, share your ideas and take part in the engagement process!

By participating in this engagement, you are consenting to, and acknowledging that you have read, understood and agree to the **Privacy Notice Statement**, except that your submission will not be published unless you consent.

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

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## Introduction

The Government of Canada believes that all Canadian children deserve a real and fair chance to succeed, and that quality early learning and child care provides a solid foundation for future success. For Indigenous families and children, access to culturally appropriate, affordable, high-quality, flexible, and fully inclusive early learning and child care is critical.

The Government of Canada has committed to engaging with Indigenous organizations and parents to determine the best approach to delivering high-quality early learning and child care for Indigenous children and families. What we hear during this engagement will shape the development of an Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Framework to guide future federal investments and programming. This distinct Framework is being developed on a separate and parallel track to the Federal-Provincial/Territorial Framework for ELCC to reflect the unique cultures and needs of First Nations, Inuit and Métis children across Canada.

Key principles guiding the development of this framework are:

- Co-development and partnership
- Comprehensive and inclusive dialogue
- Responsive to needs and focused on outcomes
- Family-centred

These key principles are rooted in the recommendations made by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.

## What do we mean by early learning and child care?

Early learning can include a range of activities designed to support child development and learning for young children, typically from age 0 to 6. These activities aim to support language development, emotional and intellectual development, as well as physical development. Early learning activities can take place in the home, in a pre-school or nursery school, or in a child care or day care setting. Child care is the caring for a child or children, usually from birth to age 12 or 13, by a day-care centre, babysitter or other provider.

## What do we mean by framework?

A framework is a written policy document outlining a shared vision. This Indigenous ELCC Framework will outline an approach for the future of Indigenous ELCC that reflects the unique cultures and needs of First Nations, Inuit and Métis children across Canada. This Framework will be developed based on input from partners, organizations, communities, and families. This Framework is intended

**Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC):** Calls to Action for federal, provincial, territorial and Indigenous governments to work together to develop culturally-appropriate early childhood education programs for Indigenous families.

**UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP):** Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.

**Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP):** ELCC for Indigenous children should be grounded in their identity as Indigenous peoples. All Indigenous children, regardless of status or location, should have access to dynamic, culture-based early childhood education.

to guide future program approaches and investments, identify priorities, and offer actions for the short, medium and long term.

## **Why focus on early learning and child care?**

The early years of a person's life are the most critical for brain development, as the most significant brain growth occurs during this time. A child's experiences within these years are crucial, as they have a great impact on an individual's identity and overall health and well-being throughout their lifetime. Early childhood is also the best time for children to learn language, as they absorb information faster than in any other stage of life. Finally, the early years are an important stage of life in terms of culture and identity for Indigenous children; the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples described early childhood as the foundation on which identity, self-worth, intellect and strengths are built.

## **How does the Government of Canada support Indigenous early learning and child care now?**

The Government funds a range of programs and services to support Indigenous children and families. Some focus on pre-natal and infant/maternal health, while others offer parental/family supports. Some examples of federal Indigenous early learning and child care programs include:

- Aboriginal Head Start On Reserve (AHSOR), administered by Health Canada
- Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities (AHSUNC), administered by the Public Health Agency of Canada
- First Nations and Inuit Child Care Initiative (FNICCI), administered by Employment and Social Development Canada

## **Who do we want to hear from, and what do we want to know?**

We want to hear from parents, family members, communities, early childhood educators, youth, Elders, experts and leaders about your vision for early learning and child care for Indigenous children and families so that we can build on what is working and improve for the future.

Your views, ideas and insights on how to realize positive change will help shape the development of an Indigenous ELCC Framework that would reflect a common vision with shared goals (while recognizing cultural and regional differences where needed), desired outcomes and concrete actions that would help ensure Indigenous children receive the best start in life.

This Framework will be created in cooperation with Indigenous partners. A broad range of voices will be sought to:

- Identify strengths, challenges and opportunities through engagement and discussion
- Discuss communities' needs and priorities
- Develop meaningful principles and goals for the Framework
- Establish priorities for sustained action in the short, medium and long-term

This initiative will also discuss three federal Indigenous early learning and child care programs – AHSOR, AHSUNC, and FNICCI – to better understand what is working well and what could be improved. These programs are part of a broader suite of federal education and health programs (such as First Nations kindergarten on-reserve funded by Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada). Views on how these programs can better work together to support improved health, education and wellness of Indigenous children and families are also welcomed as part of this engagement.

## **How will your feedback be used?**

Your feedback will be used to inform the development of an Indigenous ELCC Framework that meets the needs of Indigenous children and families. As the engagement unfolds, you can visit the [Canada.ca/indigenous-early-learning](https://Canada.ca/indigenous-early-learning) webpage for more information.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These open-ended discussion questions may help you to provide your feedback and can be used as a starting point for your own discussions. You can tailor the questions to respond to your unique circumstances, add your own questions, or remove others.

### THEME 1

#### Early Learning and Child Care Needs

1. What ELCC programs or services are available in your area?
2. Is there an ELCC program or service that you (or people in your community) would like to access but are not currently accessing?
  - a) If so, what are the reasons you are not accessing this program or service?
3. What are the most important elements of early learning and child care programs/services? What does 'quality' in ELCC mean to you?
4. What qualities or features do ELCC programs need to include or offer to help make them culturally-appropriate for your family/community (e.g. language teachings, Elder or knowledge-keeper participation, traditional foods/crafts, outdoor learning opportunities, parent/family involvement, etc.)?

### THEME 2

#### Successes and Promising Practices

1. Can you provide examples of a successful ELCC program or service?
2. What are some ways of measuring success of early learning and child care programs and services?
3. How do we make sure those measures are meaningful for Indigenous communities?

### THEME 3

#### Current Federal Programs – Strengths, Benefits and Areas for Improvement

1. What is working well in the programs, services, and supports (e.g. FNICCI, AHSOR, AHSUNC) that are available in your community?
2. What do you feel is needed to enhance/improve/grow these programs?
3. What are some of the main gaps or barriers to these programs, services and supports?
4. What are the three most important things that should be improved?

### THEME 4

#### Planning for the Future of Early Learning and Child Care

1. What is your vision for Indigenous children and families? What are your hopes and dreams for your children?
2. What are the most important things that you think Indigenous children should learn or experience from ELCC programs and services?
3. What are the most important things that Indigenous parents and caregivers could learn or gain from ELCC programs and services?
4. In the future, what role should Indigenous communities, the federal government, and other partners play in designing, delivering and monitoring the results of ELCC programs and services?

## GLOSSARY – KEY TERMS

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To help you in providing your feedback, we have included a glossary of key terms.

<b>Aboriginal Head Start on Reserve (AHSOR)</b>	Health Canada’s AHSOR supports early child development strategies that are designed and controlled by First Nations communities. AHSOR Programming is centered around six components: education; health promotion; culture and language; nutrition; social support; and parental/family involvement.
<b>Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities (AHSUNC)</b>	Public Health Agency’s AHSUNC funds Indigenous community-based organizations to develop programs that promote the healthy development of Indigenous preschool children. AHSUNC programming is centered on six program components: Indigenous culture and language; education and school readiness; health promotion; nutrition; social support; and parental involvement.
<b>Affordable</b>	Takes into account parents’ and caregivers’ ability to pay for services.
<b>Culturally appropriate/culturally relevant</b>	Describes programming that reflects and supports strong, positive Indigenous identities that are rooted in the traditional knowledge, cultures, and languages of the participants.
<b>Child care</b>	Child care is the caring for a child or children, usually from birth to age 12 or 13, by a day-care centre, babysitter or other provider. Child care enables parents and caregivers to work, participate in training, or go to school. Many child care programs include elements of <i>early learning</i> .
<b>Early childhood development</b>	Refers to the growth of a person from pre-conception to the age of 6. It describes the development of the whole child, and includes physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and language development.
<b>Early learning</b>	Early learning programs are programs for young children (usually from birth to age 5 or 6) designed to support child development (e.g. social, emotional, intellectual, speech and language, physical development) and learning. Programs are generally based on a curriculum and delivered in locations such as child care centres, nursery schools, and preschools, or in the home.
<b>First Nations and Inuit Child Care Initiative (FNICCI)</b>	Employment and Social Development Canada’s FNICCI supports First Nations and Inuit communities in developing and implementing child care programs designed to address their local and regional needs.
<b>Flexible</b>	Refers to initiatives that promote early childhood development and support parents and caregivers to participate in employment, training, or school, such as increased ELCC spaces, extended hours, and flexible hours of operation.
<b>Holistic</b>	Can refer to programs, services, or approaches that promote Indigenous culture, language and tradition; that recognize the importance of life-long learning; and/or recognize the interconnection between learning and societal, economic and environmental well-being.
<b>Inclusive</b>	Responsive to the needs of children with differing abilities and differing cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

<b>Indigenous people</b>	Defined in the <i>Constitution Act, 1982</i> to include all Indigenous people of Canada – First Nations, Inuit, and Métis.
<b>Kindergarten</b>	Can also be included under <i>early learning</i> , but is generally part of the formal school system. In some provinces and territories, kindergarten is offered to children aged 4 (sometimes called junior kindergarten) and aged 5 (sometimes called senior kindergarten).
<b>Quality</b>	Can refer to enhancements to training, child/caregiver ratios and group size, wages and benefits, recruitment and retention, physical environment, health and safety, and learning environment.
<b>Special needs</b>	Requiring additional resources (beyond those often required) to support healthy development. This could include children who require additional resources because of exceptional gifts or talents, physical, sensory, cognitive and/or learning challenges, mental health issues, as well as problems due to social, cultural, linguistic or family factors.

## How do I share my views with the Government of Canada?

You can fill out the response guide or use another format that works for you. Responses can be sent to **NC-IELCC-AGJEA-GD@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca**, or by mail to:

Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Secretariat  
 Social Policy Directorate  
 Employment and Social Development Canada  
 140 Promenade du Portage, Phase IV  
 3rd floor, Mailstop 305  
 Gatineau QC K1A 0J9

# RESPONSE TEMPLATE

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## Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care

Day, Month, Year \_\_\_\_\_

Start time – End time \_\_\_\_\_

City, Province or Territory \_\_\_\_\_

### Participants (optional)

*Title, Community or Organization (if applicable)*

- |                 |                  |
|-----------------|------------------|
| 1. (Name) _____ | 6. (Name) _____  |
| 2. (Name) _____ | 7. (Name) _____  |
| 3. (Name) _____ | 8. (Name) _____  |
| 4. (Name) _____ | 9. (Name) _____  |
| 5. (Name) _____ | 10. (Name) _____ |

### Key Themes

Please summarize the views that were discussed.

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### Useful tips

- All questions are optional. If you wish, you can tailor the questions to respond to your unique circumstances, add your own questions, or remove others.
- Provide summaries of the discussion points rather than a word-for-word account.
- Do not identify comments by contributors (i.e. names or organizations) – instead summarize the feedback from the group as a whole.
- Make sure participants are aware that by participating they are consenting to, and acknowledging that they have read, understood and agreed to the **Privacy Notice Statement**, except that your submission will not be published unless you consent.

## **THEME 1**

### **Early Learning and Child Care Needs**

#### **Questions:**

1. What ELCC programs or services are available in your area?
2. Is there an ELCC program or service that you (or people in your community) would like to access but are not currently accessing?  
a) If so, what are the reasons you are not accessing this program or service?
3. What are the most important elements of early learning and child care programs/services? What does 'quality' in ELCC mean to you?
4. What qualities or features do ELCC programs need to include or offer to help make them culturally-appropriate for your family/community (e.g. language teachings, Elder or knowledge-keeper participation, traditional foods/crafts, outdoor learning opportunities, parent/family involvement, etc.)?

#### **Summary of discussion for Theme #1**

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## **THEME 2**

### **Successes and Promising Practices**

#### **Questions:**

1. Can you provide examples of a successful ELCC program or service?
2. What are some ways of measuring success of early learning and child care programs and services?
3. How do we make sure those measures are meaningful for Indigenous communities?

#### **Summary of discussion for Theme #2**

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## **THEME 3**

### **Current Federal Programs – Strengths, Benefits and Areas for Improvement**

#### **Questions:**

1. What is working well in the programs, services, and supports (e.g. FNICCI, AHSOR, AHSUNC) that are available in your community?
2. What do you feel is needed to enhance/improve/grow these programs?
3. What are some of the main gaps or barriers to these programs, services and supports?
4. What are the three most important things that should be improved?

#### **Summary of discussion for Theme #3**

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## **THEME 4**

### **Planning for the Future of Early Learning and Child Care**

#### **Questions:**

1. What is your vision for Indigenous children and families? What are your hopes and dreams for your children?
2. What are the most important things that you think Indigenous children should learn or experience from ELCC programs and services?
3. What are the most important things that Indigenous parents and caregivers could learn or gain from ELCC programs and services?
4. In the future, what role should Indigenous communities, the federal government, and other partners play in designing, delivering and monitoring the results of ELCC programs and services?

#### **Summary of discussion for Theme #4**

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## Notes taken by:

(Name, Last Name) \_\_\_\_\_

(Phone Number) \_\_\_\_\_

(Email) \_\_\_\_\_

## Please include the following information by adding an X next to your selected response(s).

Do you consent to your submission being posted publicly? If not, your submission will still be considered in the development of the Indigenous ELCC Framework.

- I **consent** to my submission being posted publicly.
- I **do not consent** to my submission being posted publicly.

If you consent, please indicate if you would like your name or the name of your group associated with your comments. If you select "No," neither your name nor your group's name will be associated with your comments.

- Yes, I would like both my name and my group's name associated with my comments
- No, I would not like my name, nor the name of my group to be associated with my comments

How would you like your name to appear?

\_\_\_\_\_

How would you like the name of your group to appear?

\_\_\_\_\_

Please note:

- Names will not be used for participants under 18 years of age.
- Leaving this question blank automatically means your name or group will not be associated with your comments.

## Where is your community or organization located? (select all that apply)

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alberta                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Northwest Territories | <input type="checkbox"/> Quebec               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> British Columbia          | <input type="checkbox"/> Nova Scotia           | <input type="checkbox"/> Saskatchewan         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Manitoba                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Nunavut               | <input type="checkbox"/> Yukon                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> New Brunswick             | <input type="checkbox"/> Ontario               | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to answer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newfoundland and Labrador | <input type="checkbox"/> Prince Edward Island  |   |

## Which group(s) does your community represent? (select all that apply)

- First Nations                       Métis                                       Don't know/prefer not to answer  
 Inuit                                       Non-Indigenous

Please send your feedback to [NC-IELCC-AGJEA-GD@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca](mailto:NC-IELCC-AGJEA-GD@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca) or you may also provide your feedback via our online survey. For more information visit [Canada.ca/indigenous-early-learning](http://Canada.ca/indigenous-early-learning).

Thank you for hosting this discussion and sharing the input!

### **Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care – Tool kit**

This publication is available for download at [canada.ca/publiccentre-ESDC](http://canada.ca/publiccentre-ESDC).

It is also available upon request in multiple formats (large print, Braille, audio cassette, audio CD, e-text diskette, e-text CD, or DAISY), by contacting 1 800 0-Canada (1-800-622-6232). By teletypewriter (TTY), call 1-800-926-9105

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