



Manitoba Child Care Association

## **Vision**

To promote and support an exceptional and inclusive ELCC system by fueling members to be proud and excited to belong to a progressive, respected profession.

## **Mission**

To advocate for a quality system of child care, to advance early learning and child care education as profession, and provide services to our members.

## **Territorial Acknowledgement**

The Manitoba Child Care Association acknowledges that we are located on Treaty 1 Territory and on the lands of the Anishinaabe, Cree, Anisinew, Dakota, and Dene Peoples, and the Red River Métis Homeland.

We respect the Treaties that were made on these territories, we acknowledge the harms and mistakes of the past and we move forward in a spirit of reconciliation and collaboration.

## **Acknowledgements**

The MCCA ethics committee thanks Sandra Griffin and Frances Ricks for their work and leadership in the development of the first national “Best Choices” series and Guides training session (2002). We are especially grateful to Sandra Griffin for her mentorship over the years.

The Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia (ECEBC) organization, in generous professional courtesy, has allowed us to continue using “Best Choices” as the title for our Ethics workshop series.

## **Introduction**

The MCCA’s Code of Ethics is a statement of the beliefs, values and responsibilities that Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) share and practice in the field of Early Learning and Learning and Child Care (ELCC). Ethical practice honours the dignity of the children, families, colleagues and the communities with whom we work.

ECEs guide the learning of and care for one of society’s most vulnerable groups – young children. This is the inherent right of every child and an essential service for parents and families. We support families, and the communities from which they come, by building relationships that lead to mutual respect and trust. We encourage a culture of belonging.

Being a member of MCCA provides an opportunity to be a great support to each other. We share a common set of values, philosophies and guidelines for aspiring best practice and overcoming challenges. A code of ethics reflects standards of practice and conduct that prompt us to act in the best interests of the child, family, community and ourselves.

The following code is designed to help us reflect on our daily actions and guide our decision-making.

### **History and Influences on the Code of Ethics**

In the mid-1990s, the MCCA Board of Directors and staff became acquainted with the work Sandra Griffin and Frances Ricks were doing with the Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia (ECEBC). In 1997, initiated by MCCA, Sandra Griffin offered a course on ethics specific to the early childhood field. MCCA members, who took the course, started a working committee on ethics, then created a four-part ethics workshop series, “Best Choices”, based on Griffin’s work.

In 1998, MCCA adapted the ECEBC Code of Ethics and our membership ratified it as our first code of ethics. In 2002, collaborating with Griffin and Ricks, the Canadian Child Care Federation (CCCCF) and MCCA developed a national four part “Best Choices” ethics series and trained the first group of ethics guides to offer ethics workshops across the country. MCCA followed up with two additional “Train the Ethics Guide” sessions in 2008 and 2016. The series has continued to be popular as have professional development topics related to ethics. This committee has developed and delivered a number of ethics related workshops over the years.

As MCCA celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2024, it was time to review how current and relevant our code was to present day Manitobans. Our approach to revision was guided by the social and political changes in our province and the evolving specialized knowledge, philosophies and practice in ELCC. There were many considerations.

Firstly, our belief in human rights was of primary importance; particularly the rights of the child. The spirit of the MCCA Code of Ethics is rooted in society’s belief systems as outlined in universal principles within a number of international, national, and provincial documents and declarations.

These declarations reinforce the inherent rights of families for the well-being and education of their children. As we begin to apply this code of ethics, the values within all of these documents become very clear. A path worth following.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is an internationally agreed upon document of rights; a foundation of our beliefs. Of particular note are convention articles related specifically to our beliefs and values about:

- Best interests of the child
- Right to life, survival and development

- Right to voice, viewpoints, and opinions
- Non-discrimination

Secondly, the social and political landscape in Canada, and especially in Manitoba, is ever changing. There is an acknowledgement and growing desire to learn about and understand our true history and to work towards reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples. Our provincial citizens have recognized the need for Indigenous leadership as a way to move our relationships and province forward. Individuals and organizations have taken initiative to be more respectful and inclusive. MCCA is an example. The following is the second statement in the MCCA's 2023 Strategic Plan. "Recognize truth and reconciliation in the work of MCCA and ensure it is carried out with humility." It is an ethical and professional obligation to find ways to incorporate reconciliation into our daily practice with children and families.

Another social and political shift occurred during the COVID pandemic of 2020-2023. Society began to see how important child care is. It allows families to seek education, be gainfully employed and enriches early learning experiences for children while strengthening the economy. ELCC is an essential service.

Finally, the ELCC community in Manitoba has embraced professional growth. MCCA has grown from delivering 10 workshops a year to over 100 annually. The association also offers the "Pedagogical Leader Community of Practice", director series, the ethics series, many annual conferences, as well as requested regional and special interest workshops. We understand how important on-going professional development is. We, also, recognize that a code of ethics is a means to help us in our daily pursuit of quality practice.

Even though MCCA has offered the "Best Choices" series since 1998, ECEs continue to struggle in applying ethical decision-making. It is an ethical journey of life-long reflection and learning. ECEs look for guidance when faced with difficult situations, dilemmas, conflicts and decisions. For these reasons and more, a new code (2025) and accompanying workshops were developed in consultation with diverse perspectives in our field.

### **Structure and Development of the Code**

The Code of Ethics states the beliefs, values and responsibilities endorsed by the MCCA and this guides our practice. The beliefs and values in the code declare our philosophical priorities. The nine Responsibilities outline the actions we are obligated and committed to perform and help to determine what these actions look like when working with children, families, colleagues and the community.

### **Development**

An ethics sub-committee reviewed values and standards of practice of national and global codes of ethics in ELCC and related fields. This led to structuring the code specific to core beliefs, values and critical responsibilities in practice. Sub-committees worked through

clarification activities, editing many times to come to a consensus on the content and structure of the code.

The membership was surveyed, considering diverse roles and perspectives in our field. This feedback was analyzed and taken into account. The final draft was submitted to the Ethics Committee and Board of Directors for last edits prior to final approval and ratification by membership at the May 2025 Annual General Meeting (AGM).

### **When Beliefs, Values and Responsibilities Conflict**

All nine responsibilities are reflected in the ethical practice of ECEs. All responsibilities hold equal relevance. There will be times when ethical dilemmas or challenging situations arise and resolving the conflict is difficult. ECEs will need to identify which values and/or responsibilities are in conflict. Consider all the possible actions and the potential consequences. Time may be an issue in determining which responsibility is the most relevant in this situation and produces the least harm. Consult with colleagues to see multiple perspectives of a conflict, always being mindful of confidentiality.

Consider undertaking the ethical journey through the workshop series “Best Choices”, which is a great collegial learning experience and resource that connects you with others on their ethical journey. Together we can build a community of ethical practice in the service of children and families.

## MCCA CODE OF ETHICS

The spirit of the Manitoba Child Care Association's (MCCA) Code of Ethics is rooted in society's belief systems as outlined in universal principles within the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) from the United Nations (UN), The Human Rights Code from the Province of Manitoba (1987), UN Convention on the Rights (UNCRC) of the Child (1989), UNCRC of Persons with Disabilities (2006), UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007), the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action (2015) and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls: Calls to Justice (2019).

Our approach to service is guided by evolving specialized knowledge and philosophies in early childhood education influenced by research, policy and practice.

### Beliefs

In early childhood education:

- Children have rights
- Meaningful, reciprocal, respectful relationships are at the core of our work
- Children, families and communities thrive with access to quality programs

### Values

It is important that:

- We practice in a *good way*
- Children are recognized as an integral part of the community
- Children's best interests are considered above all others
- Children have access to safe, nurturing relationships and environments to promote their holistic development and happiness
- The family is respected as the foundation of a child's life
- Early Childhood Educators and colleagues engage in mutually respectful collaboration to provide quality early childhood education

### Responsibilities

We will:

- Respond with compassion and kindness
- Use quality pedagogical practices and a play-based curriculum
- Foster children's holistic development
- Build and maintain respectful partnerships with families, colleagues and communities
- Engage in Truth and Reconciliation principles to strengthen mutual respect and equity
- Work in ways that honour human dignity and diversity
- Pursue the knowledge, skill, self-awareness and self-reflection needed to be professionally competent
- Advocate on behalf of children, families, early childhood education and ourselves
- Demonstrate integrity in all our interactions and relationships

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **RESPONSIBILITY: Respond with compassion and kindness**

#### **EXPLANATION:**

Caring is at the heart of early childhood education. Children deserve to feel secure and cared for in a loving environment. When they experience the worthiness of kindness, compassion and the help of others, they learn how to show others such care. Our understanding of how emotional and spiritual needs influence who one becomes and how one behaves towards others is integral to guiding the development of mutually respectful relationships. Kindness and empathy leads to harmony and helps build healthy communities.

#### **ACTIONS in practice:** For example, **We will:**

- Create a safe, welcoming inclusive place for all children, families and colleagues
- Learn about, respect and practice cultural humility
- Practice understanding, acceptance, fairness, and empathy
- Help children show kindness and caring
- Support children's varied expressions of emotions and model acceptable ways of expressing feelings both verbally and physically
- Understand that behaviour is a way for a child to communicate needs
- Take into account others' situations and perspectives
- Show acceptance, understanding, and appropriate affection for children
- Maintain hope

### **RESPONSIBILITY: Use quality pedagogical practices and a play-based curriculum**

#### **EXPLANATION:**

Curriculum is what we offer children and pedagogy is how we offer these learning opportunities. Both are play-based and founded on our understanding of individual children. Working in the best interests of the child means creating experiences that result in optimal holistic developmental growth. We show dignity and respect for all within the context of a warm, welcoming child and family friendly environment. Quality pedagogical practice is influenced by current research, trends, theory, and the values of the educators and the field of early learning and care. Quality, also, implies such practice is unique and re-imagined for each child, family and community with whom we collaborate and for whom we provide this service.

#### **ACTIONS in practice:** For example, **We will:**

- See children as competent
- Use interactions and strategies appropriate to individual children
- Reflect on observations and documentation of children's learning; discuss with children, family & colleagues
- Come to know each child's interests, gifts and needs to ensure worthwhile learning opportunities
- Create environments that can enhance a range of abilities, strengths, gifts and challenges

- Create spaces that are reflective of family home life and the community
- Use positive responsive care-giving during routines and transitions
- Learn and apply Indigenous pedagogy from those who know
- Determine what methods and materials are appropriate learning experiences for various developmental stages and cultural relevance
- Understand child development in the context of the family's and communities' cultures
- Implement curriculum that respects all manner of diversity
- Be aware of cultural appropriation and tokenism
- Share new learnings and research with colleagues
- Learn about core values and practices of family cultures represented in our program and community

## **RESPONSIBILITY: Foster children's holistic development**

### **EXPLANATION:**

All aspects of a child's development are important and critical to overall health and well-being. Children learn best in safe, warm, welcoming environments that promote healthy, joyful interactions with others. Holistic development includes all aspects and domains of development such as social, language, emotional, spiritual, cognitive, physical, and more. Engaging learning environments build upon the individual child's strengths, provide choices and come from a place of "yes". Curriculum is a partnership with children grounded in play, including multiple ways of learning while exploring the land and natural world while building healthy relationships. We respect each child as having unique gifts with boundless potential and the right to a good life.

### **ACTIONS in practice**                      For example, **We will:**

- Consider all areas of development when creating curriculum with children
- Recognize that each child's development is unique and that it is shaped by a range of influences and factors
- See each child as an eager learner seeking competence and pleasure in their choice of challenges
- Understand that positive relationships and experiences that build connections are those which fill one's spirit
- Enter the child's day with a loving, joyful, welcoming, adventurous attitude to build a place of comfort, trust and belonging
- Create environments that are safe, inclusive and follow the unique interests and needs of all children
- Provide high-quality, child-centered, play-based and culturally responsive early learning and care
- Give many opportunities for children to explore the land and nature in all seasons
- Help children learn about and respect differences to build capacity for empathy and intercultural understanding
- Prioritize the child's safety from harm

**RESPONSIBILITY: Build and maintain respectful relationships with families, colleagues and communities**

**EXPLANATION:**

Families are the heart and the most important role in a child's life. It is our responsibility to respect and support the family's rights as they nurture, guide and make decisions for and on behalf of their child. Building positive relationships with colleagues, allied service providers and communities, enhances the families access to knowledge, resources and influence that benefits the child and family. Mutually respectful, confidential, collaborative, authentic and trusting relationships are critical to all of our work in supporting children and families

**ACTIONS in practice:** For example, **We will:**

- Create an attitude of warmth, respect and friendliness that supports the well-being of everyone
- Be open to different ideas, views and ways of being with the purpose of understanding and acceptance
- Foster a sense of trust, mutual respect and belonging
- Celebrate a child's accomplishments and milestones with their family
- Honour the family's right to make decisions for their child's care and education
- Practice cultural humility; that is, ask questions and learn about people's daily life
- Maintain confidentiality while working collaboratively with families, colleagues, allied professionals, volunteers and community members
- Strive to be a role model
- Remember that our actions and behaviours impact children, families, and colleagues
- Recognize that vulnerable children and families may need more support

**RESPONSIBILITY: Engage in the principles of Truth and Reconciliation to strengthen mutual respect and equity**

**EXPLANATION:**

We have a shared responsibility to understand our history and contribute to reconciliation with First Nations, Metis and Inuit Peoples. We are all stewards of the land we live, work and play upon, that historically has been protected by Indigenous Peoples. We help promote meaningful change by respecting and valuing Indigenous cultures, languages, ways of knowing, and ways of being. As we learn from Indigenous Pedagogical approaches, we enrich our understanding of what it means to practice in *a good way*. Together through purposeful actions and respectful relations, we can build a better life for all.

**ACTIONS in practice:** For example, **We will:**

- Learn about and consider how the history and resiliency of Indigenous Peoples influence the relationships we have with families
- Foster belonging by creating welcoming, inclusive, and safe environments
- Honour home practices so Indigenous families feel seen, respected and valued



- Build respectful relationships with Indigenous community members to enhance and practice Indigenous pedagogy
- Teach the truth about Indigenous families, histories, cultures and contemporary contributions
- Acknowledge the diversity of Indigenous Peoples, recognizing that cultural traditions and teachings vary among Nations
- Practice land-based learning by providing nature experiences reflective of Indigenous perspectives of one's relationship with the land
- Learn about and practice cultural protocols in cultural events and ceremonies
- Reflect on Indigenous perspectives and realities in staff meetings to deepen our understanding of families

**RESPONSIBILITY: Work in ways that honour human dignity and diversity**

**EXPLANATION:**

Each person has inherent worth and we accept and welcome children and families unconditionally. We respect that human diversity is expressed in many ways and we value the individual's qualities, gifts and perspectives. It is this diversity that contributes to the health of our society. We are responsible for ensuring these gifts are welcomed, respected, valued and positively reflected in our daily practice. Our first priority is assuring the rights of the child. We stand against any form of racism, discrimination, inequity and oppression. A kind and compassionate response includes empathy, patience, a recognition of mutual humanity and an expression of love and caring. We honour the worthiness of every individual.

**ACTIONS in practice:** For example, **We will:**

- See all individuals as worthy
- Create a culture of belonging
- Honour and support the parent's right to determine and choose the care and education for their child
- See children as competent and masterful learners
- Honour and celebrate children's abilities by creating an atmosphere of trust so they feel safe enough to risk learning
- Plan programs that show respect for and celebrate all forms of diversity
- Reflect on how our own biases, assumptions, perceptions can influence how we relate to children, families and colleagues
- Practice thinking about situations in various ways such as using the Indigenous "two-eyed seeing" approach to encourage understanding different perspectives
- Commit to anti-bias and anti-discriminatory values that will be reflected in all our practices
- Discuss any concerns privately and respectfully to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of families and colleagues

**RESPONSIBILITY: Pursue the knowledge, skill, self-awareness and self-reflection needed to be professionally competent**

**EXPLANATION:**

The field of early learning and care is based on an ever-expanding body of knowledge in research, policies and practices. In order to best serve the changing needs of children, families and communities, we seek ways to build on our knowledge and skill. Reflective practice makes us aware of what we have learned, our experience and skill, health, well-being and how these impact our professional competency. This identifies our goals and plans for personal and professional growth.

**ACTIONS in practice:** For example, **We will:**

- Demonstrate a pattern of continuous and lifelong learning by seeking current early childhood knowledge and methods of best practice
- Identify needs related to intercultural understanding as well as methods of best practice
- Incorporate new learning into work and practice new ways of doing things
- Reflect on one's strengths and areas for growth and work towards self-improvement
- Be mindful of our experiences, perspectives, assumptions and attitudes and the impact these have on interactions/relationships
- Support families as they pass on their languages, cultures and values to their children
- Think about how our practice mirrors one's personal philosophy and beliefs about children, families and the community
- Access professional development opportunities offered by MCCA, allied organizations and volunteerism
- Join a professional association that advocates for the field of early learning and child care
- Collaborate with colleagues to share new learnings and information
- Pursue respectful interactions and engage in collaborative learning
- Celebrate, with others, the work you do

**RESPONSIBILITY: Advocate on behalf of children, families and early childhood education**

**EXPLANATION:**

Advocacy for the rights of children, families, diverse communities and ourselves is our ethical obligation. All voices have a right to be heard. Explain that the benefits of quality early childhood experiences for children, families, communities and society are necessary. We recognize that advocacy falls on a continuum of various activities; even small steps and actions can influence change. The best interests of the child always guides our work. We continue to work towards recognition as a profession.

**ACTIONS in practice:** For example, **We will:**

- Develop the courage to stand by and defend the beliefs and values supporting the rights of children and families
- Advocate for children's access to high-quality, culturally appropriate early learning and care

- Be the voice for children on policies, services and programs specific to their health and well-being
- Help children understand their rights and how to advocate for themselves
- Provide opportunities for parents/families to participate in the planning and decision-making that influences their children
- Support families' efforts in advocacy for their children's well-being
- Advocate for self-determination and transparency in matters that impact families
- Take responsibility and meaningful action to help promote change by respecting and valuing Indigenous cultures, languages, ways of knowing, and ways of being
- Uphold all families and communities in asserting their rights for quality and culturally responsive child and family services and supports
- Support access to information and participate in research that informs and advances early learning and care
- Be an ally in supporting unique and vulnerable children, families, ourselves, as well as our community
- Support local, provincial and federal efforts to build a quality early learning and child care system
- Advocate for personal wellness
- Gather information needed to assert professional rights
- Advocate for policies and services that support children, families and communities in our programs and beyond

**RESPONSIBILITY: Demonstrate integrity in all our interactions and relationships.**

**EXPLANATION:**

To demonstrate integrity, we act in ways that build trust, respect and confidence in ourselves and our field. We must be honest, trustworthy and have moral courage. In short, we work in a *good way*. Information about others is treated with confidentiality. We will be respectful and honour the worth of others. Professional ethical conduct guides our actions, especially when conflicts of interest or dilemmas arise. We see these conflicts and dilemmas as opportunities for learning. Engaging in reflective practice will remind us to bring our best self to everything we do.

**ACTIONS in practice:** For example, **We will:**

- Remember our first priority is the best interests of the child
- Understand that beliefs, values, virtues, opinions are evident in one's actions including our own
- Communicate in ways that are open, respectful, clear, honest and kind
- Be open to other perspectives
- Carry out duties and responsibilities conscientiously
- Follow program policies, provincial regulation and legislation as well as quality practices of the early childhood learning and child care systems
- Learn about diversity and respect the range of cultural practices and communication methods in the community

- Practice building reciprocal, collaborative, respectful and inclusive environments for everyone
- Be mindful of people's privacy and maintain confidentiality
- Maintain and respect professional boundaries between ourselves, children, families and colleagues
- Refrain from engaging in unprofessional behaviour
- Recognize when your beliefs and values are in conflict with the Code of Ethics, then identify resolutions
- Respectfully challenge any biased or discriminatory language and behaviour
- Take action when colleagues, volunteers or students behave in an unprofessional manner
- Resolve to use the Code of Ethics as a guide to maintain integrity

MCCA is grateful that we are building an ELCC community that engages in learning and understanding ethical practice.

Miigwech (Anishinaabe), Migwech (Anisininew), Kinanáskomitináwáw (Swampy Cree),  
Pidamaya (Dakota), Máhsi or Masi (Dene) Maarsi (Michif) Merci (French) Thank you (English)

## Glossary

**“We”** - refers to all individuals working with children and families in our programs. This means Child Care Assistants, Early Childhood Educators in all types of positions including: family child care providers, front-line practitioners, substitutes, supervisors, assistant directors, directors, executive directors, support staff (kitchen, office, maintenance positions), volunteers, students, board of directors of the program, regular community visitors and any allied professionals that come to the program (e.g. coordinators, family support workers, social workers, physiotherapists, etc.). Parents are encouraged to consider respecting the Code of Ethics. If the program is located in shared space such as a school or religious building, this includes the staff of the shared space (educators, custodians, teachers, etc.).

Allied colleagues - those people from government, social services, health, education, cultural groups and political backgrounds that work with the ELCC community to support children and families (e.g. family support workers, nurses, occupational therapists, kindergarten teachers, Elders, political leaders, etc.)

Assumptions - thinking something is true without proof or knowing the facts

Belief - the idea that something is held to be essentially and fundamentally true

Best practice - the highest standards of care and education beyond regulation and legislation that provides a curriculum responsive to individual children’s needs using culturally and pedagogically appropriate methods

Come from a place of “yes” - means to start from a positive attitude and a willingness to be open to new things

Cultural humility - a willingness to listen, accept and learn from others and their cultures while examining one’s own beliefs and values

Curriculum - opportunities created for children's learning and development through interactions and relationships, environments, and experiences

Diversity - is about what makes each of us unique; accepting people from a range of ethnic, racial, socio-economic and cultural backgrounds living various beliefs, interests, experiences and lifestyles

ECE - an Early Childhood Educator: the general term to describe those who provide early learning and care for children. ECEs may work in a home setting, a child care centre (infant, preschool or school age) or nursery school. Training and education result in provincial designation and classification as a/an: CCA, ECEII or ECEIII

ELCC - Early Learning and Child Care

Ethic - the moral idea and foundation governing a person's actions and behaviour

Ethical Journey - the process of exploring beliefs, values and ethics towards self-awareness and personal growth; also, living a *good way* that is mindful and respectful of people and our world

Family - group of two or more persons related by birth, marriage, blood, adoption, fostering or choice of loving together. This group can be culturally diverse, multigenerational and/or identity diverse e.g. 2SLGBTQIA+.

Good way - behaving in virtuous ways with good intent. The heart of most practices.

Indigenous - peoples who existed and inhabited the land from the earliest of time before colonists arrived to present day. The original peoples of this land and their descendants are the First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples. There are 63 First Nations in Manitoba.

Indigenous Cultural Teachings - are the traditional values, ways of knowing and ways of being that are passed down through generations. Teachings and symbolism will vary among different Indigenous groups.

Moral Courage - choosing to be responsible and brave to stand up for your values and what you believe is right; acting ethically, even when it's challenging, risky or others oppose your actions.

Pedagogy - the methods and practices used to create curriculum. Quality pedagogy is child-centered and play-based.

Truth and Reconciliation - acknowledging the true history and harm of colonization and the intergenerational trauma that resulted; this includes the recent history of residential schools, 60s scoop, common contemporary Canadian racism and discrimination. In 2015, the National Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action was published and in 2021 the first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation was recognized on September 30th. The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR) is located in Winnipeg.

"Two - eyed seeing" - a concept from Elder Albert Marshall of the Mi'kmaw Nation. It is about what you do, your responsibilities and how you live on earth using the gift of multiple perspectives for the benefit of all; using a balance of two eyes when one eye sees from the strengths of Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing and the other eye sees from Western strengths of knowledge and ways of knowing

Value - the idea that something is felt to be important or of particular worth