



**Manitoba Child  
Care Association**

48th Annual Provincial Conference

# **A Culture of Caring: Celebrating Our Roots**



**May 21 & 22, 2026**

**WINNIPEG, MANITOBA  
VICTORIA INN**

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**Brochure Development:** Karen Kowalski

**Design & Layout:** On Parr Graphics

## Please keep in mind:

- When you register for conference (online or paper) you will receive an emailed confirmation with your workshop selections.
- If you are mailing in your registration please check our website to see if any workshops are full. Please ensure you have made a 2nd & 3rd choice if registering by mail.
- If you need a vegetarian, vegan, gluten free or lactose free meal, don't forget to check off the box on the registration form (paper and online) and then check your confirmation to ensure it states you have ordered a special meal. We cannot accommodate vegetarian/vegan/gluten free/lactose free requests at the conference, you must pre-order.
- If you are going to submit a travel subsidy request please read the information on page 28 prior to driving to the conference.
- Lunch is the only meal provided. AM and PM refreshments are provided.

## 50/50 Draw

Here's your chance to walk away with a cash prize.



Tickets are 10 for \$5.00 and can be purchased from a conference committee member or in the ballroom foyer. The winner keeps 50% of what is collected and MCCA keeps the other 50% to use towards the purchase of resources. Cash or card accepted.

The draw will take place at 3:00 pm each day in the Centennial Ballroom.

The conference is being held at the Victoria Inn and Convention Centre, 1808 Wellington Avenue

# A Culture of Caring: Celebrating Our Roots

As an educator and as Chairperson of the Conference Committee, I am truly honoured to welcome you to **A Culture of Caring: Celebrating Our Roots**. This conference was created by educators, for educators—with care, intention, and deep respect for the work you do every single day.

This is my second year serving as Chairperson. Last year, I was so nervous to speak that it took a full week for my legs to stop shaking. Yet, it became an experience I will never forget. The energy, passion, and sense of community you brought to the conference were incredible, and I am confident that this year will be even better.

The work we do is more than a profession; it is a calling rooted in relationships, patience, creativity, and heart. We understand the long days, the emotional labour, the joy found in small moments, and the commitment it takes to show up fully for children and families. This conference is our way of giving back to you—a space to pause, reflect, learn, and feel re-energized alongside colleagues who truly understand your work.

Throughout the conference, we hope you feel seen, valued, and inspired. Whether you are gaining new ideas, sharing stories, or simply taking a moment to breathe and connect, please know that you belong here. The strength of our field lies in educators like you who continue to grow, advocate, and lead with compassion.

Thank you for the important work you do and for taking the time to be part of this gathering. We are grateful to learn alongside you and hope you leave feeling supported, affirmed, and reminded of the impact you make each and every day.

Melanie Glaser  
Conference Committee Chair

## **The 2026 Conference Committee:**

**Committee Members:** Sheila Argue, Tracy Bijl, Allison Boxshall, Melanie Glaser, Lanny MacDonald, Shawna McKenzie, Sara MacPherson, Lorraine Milan, Melodie Meakin, Diana Metrik, Pam Shambo, Aricelle Taylor, Marilyn Valgardson, Pina Zammuto

**Staff:** Karen Kowalski & Kayla Mauricio



Our mobile conference app will launch in May. Each registered delegate will get an email to download the app. It will be very important to ensure the delegate's cell phone number is included on the registration.

Please note we recommend that you allow push notifications so that you are getting the latest information about the conference.



## What should I bring to the conference?



A pen - to write with, unfortunately we don't have a supply of pens to hand out.



Paper - to write on, a small notebook works best.



A sweater - the workshop rooms can be cool especially first thing in the morning but once 64 people are in there, it can get quite warm. Layers of clothing work best.



Labels with your name on them - this will make it much easier to purchase your 50/50 tickets.



Cash - to purchase 50/50 tickets. You can also use debit or credit.



And lastly, bring your enthusiasm, energy, and your eagerness to learn and network!

## Important Information for Conference 2026

This conference is a perfect opportunity to use your professional development days granted by ELCC. The MCCA conference is also a perfect opportunity to have your whole team attend. So many workshops to all participate in and then share the knowledge at a future staff meeting. If you are a family child care provider this is a perfect opportunity to get a chance to network with other family child care providers.

Our mobile conference app will launch in May. Each registered delegate will get an email to download the app. It will be very important to ensure the delegate's cell phone number is included on the registration.

If you are going on an offsite workshop you will not be attending the keynote. You will board your bus at 9:00 am.

When you register online you will receive an email confirmation of what you or your staff are registered for. It is important to look over each confirmation to ensure the information is correct, especially if the person requires a special (vegetarian, vegan, gluten free or lactose free) meal.

Registration opens at 7:30 am and Opening Remarks begin at 8:30 am. Please arrive early to registration so that you are seated in the Centennial ballroom by 8:30 am. Friday is our busiest day and registration can take longer. Arrive at 7:30 am and beat the rush!

## Special Meals



When you register online you will be able to select which meal type you require, this is a required field. You can choose from regular, vegetarian, vegan, gluten free, or lactose free. These are the only requests we can accommodate. The hotel is NOT a nut free space and therefore cannot guarantee that food has not come in contact with nuts. If you are submitting a paper registration, please indicate which meal you require, if this is not selected, the registration will be incomplete and returned to the person. We cannot accept special meal requests at the conference.



# Selecting A Workshop

As you are looking at the conference brochure and deciding what workshops to sign up for. What factors help you to decide what workshops to take? Do you have a goal to work on, are you looking for new ideas on a specific topic, are you trying to gain new learning and skills?

The workshops have an icon that will let you know what type of presentation the workshop is, hands on, seminar or lecture.

The next icon you will see, will let you know who the workshop is geared to in terms of what age groups you work with.

The last set of icons will tell you (if applicable) if the workshop is geared to a frontline person, a manager/leader, or for everyone.

It is important to pay attention to these icons because if you work with infants, going to a workshop that is geared for those who work with school age children will be disappointing. Don't just select a workshop based on the title, read the workshop description and note the session icons.

## Sessions Legend

### Type of Presentation:



Hands On



Seminar  
(some participation)



Lecture

### Geared for adults who work with:



All Ages



Infant/Toddler



Preschool



School Age

### Geared for adults who are:



New Frontline Caregivers



Frontline Caregivers  
w/ 5 Years Experience



Frontline Caregivers  
w/ 5+ Years Experience



Managers/Leaders



Everyone



The school bus means that you will be taken offsite for your workshop and travelling by bus.



The clock means that there is something to note regarding the workshop time.



Carla Ward

**THURSDAY KEYNOTE - 9:00 am - 10:00 am**

## **The Empathetic Educator: Cultivating Resilience, Connection & Heart in Our Practice**

Empathy is at the heart of early childhood education — yet it can also be one of the most misunderstood and draining parts of our work. In this heartfelt keynote, Carla Ward explores what it truly means to be an empathetic educator and how to lead with compassion without losing yourself in the process.

Drawing from years of experience and reflection, Carla helps educators understand the difference between empathy and over-functioning, showing how emotional awareness and self-compassion are essential for authentic connection. Participants will learn how to create emotionally safe learning environments while maintaining personal boundaries that protect their well-being and sustain their love for teaching.

This keynote celebrates the heart of the profession — the relationships, the care, and the courage it takes to keep showing up.

## **Thursday AM (TAM) workshops: 10:30 am – 12:30 pm**

### **TAM-01 Learning Together with Food**



Let's help children feel confident exploring new foods! This workshop is designed for early learning educators who want to explore food literacy and weave it into their daily practice.

Led by experienced facilitators, you'll discover practical, child-centred strategies to introduce foods in fun, inclusive, and low-pressure ways. This session will allow you to reflect on your experiences, ask questions, and explore approaches you can try immediately in your child care program.

Past participants have shared they feel more confident in supporting how young children discover and build comfort with food after this workshop.

As a bonus, you'll receive a collection of resources developed by leaders in early learning!

**Presenter: Sarah Cahill**

### **TAM-02 Growing Your Children's Library and Stories**



Storytelling and children's literature are powerful tools for sparking imagination, building language skills, and fostering social-emotional growth in children. This interactive workshop is designed for early childhood educators to enrich their approach to books and storytelling.

We will explore practical strategies to bring children's books to life and make storytelling a truly engaging experience. You will discover a wide variety of books and stories that support inclusive practices and support all children. We will look at storytelling methods such as using puppets and props, and how to incorporate storytelling and books into various aspects of the day.

**Presenter: Cindy Curry**

### **TAM-03 Messy Art**



Celebrate creativity by exposing children to a variety of mediums, tools and materials through open-ended art activities. Learn how to provide children with experiences that support inclusion and a diversity of developmental needs. This can all be possible through hands-on art situations. Discover the important role that documentation and display play in our programs for children and families when showcasing art experiences.

**Presenter: Julie Hansen**

## Thursday AM (TAM) workshops: 10:30 am – 12:30 pm

### TAM-04 Imposter Interrupt: Lead Yourself to Success



Imposter Syndrome regularly holds us back and keeps us from maximizing our career growth.

What is Imposter Syndrome? Who experiences it? What can we do about it?

Let's demystify this common occurrence and lessen the heaviness around it.

The good news is that there are things we can do, in real time, when we feel anxious or fearful, or otherwise doubt our abilities. You'll come away with tangible takeaways that you can implement immediately in order to reduce your self-doubt and catapult your career (and confidence) to new heights.

**Presenter: Jaime Mann**

### TAM-05 They Are Real People! Making Infant Care Meaningful



This isn't your average infant workshop! In these two hours, your ideas and assumptions about what infant care involves will be tested as you are asked to reflect on the care that you provide, your assumptions about infants, and simple ways that you can make your day-to-day interactions more profound and meaningful for both you and the young minds you are shaping. If you've had someone comment to you that they love how you treat the babies in your room like real people, come share your knowledge! If you haven't, come learn what this can look like.

**Presenter: Jenna Poborsa**

### TAM-06 An Alternative to the Academic and Non-Academic Discourse in Early Years Programs



This workshop serves as an extension to the initial inquiry work into care and belonging that was presented at the Blossoming Niños community. Conversations with parents led to thinking deeply about what is considered academic and non-academic in early years programs, which led to thinking with Moss (2019) and alternative narratives. In this workshop, Blossoming Niños is offered as an alternative to the current academic and non-academic discourse in early childhood education. In this workshop, educators will:

- Think about dominant discourses in ECE and how they impact pedagogical choices
- Discuss the implications of education that is deeply rooted in proof and evidence
- Reflect on pedagogical narration and how it can lead to alternative narratives through collective meaning-making

**Presenter: Ana Valle Rivera**

### TAM-07 Working Hands: Integrating ASL in the Form of Baby Sign into Your Infant/Toddler and Preschool Programs



Conference participants will:

- Understand the benefits of baby signs and debunking the myths
- Learning developmentally appropriate signs for the age group infant, toddler, preschool
- Exploring strategies for integration and supporting diverse learners
- Engaging families and team in a consistent approach

**Presenter: Jamie Wagler**

## Thursday AM (TAM) workshops: 10:30 am – 12:30 pm

### TAM-08 Unleashing Creativity: Process Art Through Play-Based Learning



Join Emily Webster as we look to inspire open ended creativity in your learning environments through process art! In this engaging workshop, we'll dive into the world of process art, where the focus shifts from the final product to the joy of creation. Process art encourages young children to explore materials, experiment with ideas, and express themselves freely, all through play-based learning!

Participants will actively engage in hands-on activities, learning how to set up process art experiences that are open-ended, fun, and accessible. This session will demonstrate how everyday materials can spark imagination and creativity, helping children develop problem-solving skills, fine motor abilities, and emotional expression. You'll leave with practical, cost-effective ideas for creating learning environments where children are free to explore and discover at their own pace.

Process art is more than just an activity—it's a powerful way to nurture creativity and independent thinking in the early years. By embracing open-ended play, educators can foster a love for learning and create opportunities for children to express themselves without limitations.

Join us to discover how process art can transform your classroom into a space of creativity, exploration, and endless possibilities!

**Presenter:** *Emily Webster*

### TAM-09 What! A New Code?



This workshop is an opportunity for those who have taken all 4 parts of the original Ethics Series to become acquainted with the new code and responsibilities. We've got all the information you need in a tidy 2-hour workshop.

**Presenters:** *Kisa MacIsaac & Michelle Vesey*

## Thursday PM (TPM) workshops: 1:45 pm – 4:30 pm

### TPM-01 Creating Spaces of Belonging with a Community Approach



This workshop shares aspects of a word association project that was carried out in the Blossoming Niños community. The word maps included people, places, things, and more-than-human worlds. The word maps were created in response to thinking deeply about the reciprocity of care within a community approach. The word maps were presented to children, educators, and parents as a visual representation of the community. In this workshop, educators will:

- Be provided with examples and traces of practice to think collaboratively
- Think about ways to create spaces of belonging using a community approach
- Explore how pedagogical narration strengthens the community and bridges worlds

**Presenter:** *Ana Valle Rivera*

### TPM-02 The Heart of Leadership: Nurturing Teams with Care, Curiosity, and Courage



A thriving team is the heart of a caring child care culture. This leadership-focused workshop is designed for directors, pedagogical leaders, and team leads who want to build stronger, more connected teams rooted in emotional intelligence, reflective practice, and shared purpose.

In this session, we will:

- Explore leadership practices that support educator well-being and retention
- Identify ways to build a team culture rooted in psychological safety, mutual respect, and belonging
- Discuss inclusive approaches to feedback, mentorship, and conflict resolution
- Learn how to lead through curiosity and connection rather than compliance and control
- Reflect on how our leadership "roots" (beliefs, values, and lived experiences) shape our work

This engaging session includes real-life examples, reflective journaling, discussion prompts, and team-building strategies that can be implemented in a variety of settings—urban, rural, or remote. Participants will leave re-inspired to lead with heart and intention, with actionable ideas to cultivate a workplace.

**Presenter:** *Jamie Wagler*

## Thursday PM (TPM) workshops: 1:45 pm – 4:30 pm

### TPM-03 Pressure, Passion, Presence: Tools for Educators and Their Leaders



Working in early childhood education and care isn't just a job—it's a calling. But let's be honest: it's also relentless. Between constant change, high expectations, and the emotional labour of supporting children, families, and staff, it's easy to feel stretched thin. That's where resilience comes in—not as a "just try harder" mindset, but as a skillset we can build together.

This two-hour session is designed for educators and leadership teams who want to stay steady in the storm, lead with heart, and protect their passion from burning out.

In this session, we'll explore:

- Why your brain reacts the way it does under pressure—and how to calm it fast
- How to stay grounded, clear, and compassionate when everything feels urgent
- Tangible tools to support emotional regulation (yours and your team's)
- How to reframe exhaustion into purpose—and build a culture of care that's sustainable

You'll leave with science-backed strategies, reflection tools, and practical ways to support yourself and others—so you can keep showing up with presence, even when the pressure is high.

**Presenter: Jaime Mann**

### TPM-04 The Importance of Self-Care



This workshop focuses on the vital role of self-care in sustaining a fulfilling and effective career in early childhood education. When educators prioritize their own well-being, they are better equipped to support the children in their care.

- Discover practical self-care strategies for busy educators
- Explore the five types of self-care; physical, emotional, spiritual, social, and professional
- Learn how well-being impacts presence, patience, and performance
- Integrate self-care into your daily routine to reduce burnout and sustain your passion for teaching

**Presenter: Carla Ward**

### TPM-05 Discovering Loose Parts & Upcycled Materials with Toddlers



This interactive and inspiring session is designed to support educators in exploring how everyday items and upcycled materials can create engaging learning opportunities for toddlers.

What You Will Learn:

- The benefits of incorporating loose parts and upcycled materials in toddler programs
- Strategies for creating engaging invitations that spark curiosity and creativity
- How to foster fine motor skill development and support cognitive growth through open-ended play
- Tips for creating sustainable and eco-friendly learning environments

This session is ideal for educators who want to expand their understanding of how simple, everyday items can lead to profound learning experiences for toddlers. You will leave with practical ideas to implement in your program right away, along with inspiration to spark children's imaginations and curiosity.

**Presenter: Julie Hansen**

## Thursday PM (TPM) workshops: 1:45 pm – 4:30 pm

### TPM-06 Understanding Pedagogy in Early Years



This workshop is designed to provide early childhood educators with an understanding of pedagogy in the early years. We will define pedagogy and its importance in early childhood education, as well as discuss the role of play, relationships, and the environment in learning.

As we dig deeper, we will explore culturally responsive and inclusive pedagogical practices and share strategies for implementing effective pedagogy in daily practice. This session will encourage reflection and discussion.

**Presenter:** Cindy Curry

### TPM-07 Unlocking the Potential of Tuff Trays and PlayTrays for Play-based Cross Curricular Learning



Join us for an inspiring professional development workshop designed to showcase the transformative power of Tuff Trays and PlayTrays in early childhood education. Discover how these versatile tools can support child-led play cross curricularly through engaging, hands-on activities that align with curriculum goals. In this session, Emily will guide you through a variety of creative setups and playful learning invitations that promote early literacy, numeracy, sensory exploration, and social-emotional development. Learn how to design dynamic play environments that encourage curiosity, problem-solving, and collaboration among young learners. Whether you're an educator seeking fresh ideas for your classroom or a parent looking to enhance learning at home, this workshop will provide you with practical strategies to make the most of Tuff Trays and PlayTrays. Join us to explore endless possibilities for creating enriching, play-based experiences that ignite wonder and support meaningful learning for children of all ages!

**Please note:** This workshop was offered last conference and was so popular that we are offering it again. If you attended this workshop last year please do not register this year.

**Presenter:** Emily Webster

### TPM-08 Infant Pedagogy Made Simple: Understanding How Infants Learn and How to Apply it



Have you heard about Pedagogy but think it doesn't apply to you because you work with infants? Are you intimidated by what Pedagogy might be and not sure how to start? Come learn what Pedagogy in Infant Care means and what it can look like. Together we will explore simple ways to practice Infant Pedagogy without all the fancy words and how to explain it to others so it makes sense. At the end of this workshop, you will have a better understanding of how infants learn, realize the value of relationships in infant care, and what it means to reflect on your infant program.

**Presenter:** Jenna Poborsa

## Thursday Full Day (TFD) workshops: 10:30 am – 4:30 pm

### TFD-01 From Greetings to Goodbyes



Child care centres are not just places where children learn and grow; they are also businesses that rely on satisfied families who trust their services. One of the key components of running a successful child care facility is providing exceptional customer service.

This workshop develops and enhances the skills necessary to create trust and build long-lasting relationships. Participants will learn how to adapt their communication style to meet the needs of their internal and external customers and will practice the essential service skills required for great customer service. We'll explore effective ways to train child care staff in customer service to ensure that every family and team member's experience is a positive one.

**Presenter: Melenie Olfert**

### TFD-02 Spark New Ideas and Fuel Results



Some days, coming up with new ideas feels impossible. You sit in a meeting, hoping inspiration will strike, but the conversation circles back to the same familiar solutions. Maybe you've suggested something, and it got dismissed, or you struggled to explain it in a way others could support. Whether you're trying to improve a process or offer a new approach, it's easy to get stuck in routine thinking.

Even strong teams run into creative roadblocks. Studies show that 94% of executives are dissatisfied with their organization's ability to generate fresh ideas, and fewer than 30% feel confident in their team's readiness for future challenges. Organizations that encourage innovation adapt more quickly and find opportunities where others see limitations. But without the right tools, ideas can stall before they lead to action.

This workshop helps you overcome creative blocks and turn your ideas into results. Through hands-on activities, group discussions, and feedback, you'll explore tools that encourage new thinking and support practical innovation. You'll learn to spark creativity, spot opportunities, and move ideas forward.

By the end of this workshop, you'll have practical strategies to boost your problem-solving skills and support creativity in your everyday work. You'll be able to approach challenges with more flexibility and help your team explore new ideas that lead to better outcomes.

**Presenter: Susan Portelance**

### TFD-03 Leading With Intention: The Heart of Everyday Leadership



Leadership isn't just what we do—it's how we show up. This engaging and reflective session invites early childhood directors to explore how kindness, curiosity, courage, and joy shape the culture and climate of their programs. Together we'll unpack real-world examples and a case study that illuminates how dispositions—those inner habits of heart and mind—directly influence staff engagement, family trust, and program excellence. You'll leave inspired and equipped with practical strategies to lead authentically, align actions with values, and cultivate excellence from the inside out.

**Presenter: Angel Stoddard**

## Thursday Full Day Offsite Workshops



9:00 am - 4:30 pm



### When registering for these workshops please keep the following in mind:

- Buses will leave by the Wellington doors by 9:00 am sharp
- If you miss your bus, attending another workshop at the Victoria Inn is not an option
- You will not attend the keynote address
- Lunch is included with all field trips. You will indicate on the registration if you require a special meal
- Delegates cannot drive their own vehicles to the offsite workshops
- Space is limited on all off site workshops and MCCA reserves the right to limit the amount of registrants from one centre/organization. **The centre limit for these 2 offsite workshops are 4 people per centre.**
- Delegates will be picked up at approximately 3:30 pm at their location and brought back to the Victoria Inn for 4:00/4:15 pm

### THO-01 Roots and Shoots

Root yourself in nature and experience a typical day of Forest School routines, conversations and play, to share with your children in your own way! Grow your practice in nature based learning through participating in group gatherings, practice risky play assessments, explore books, art, science and skill building activities through (inner) child led activities. Expand your connection to the natural world, community and yourself.



**Location:** FortWhyte Alive

**Presenter:** Leah Smith

### THO-02 Exploring the Manitoba Museum

Experience all the Manitoba Museum has to offer as part of a full day experience.



- Join us for a guided tour which brings the Museum's most significant exhibitions to life, delving into Manitoba's diverse landscapes to provide unique insights into the heritage of the province with an emphasis on rich history, diverse peoples, and remarkable landscapes of the North. We'll then present hands-on workshop that delves into the remarkable history and resourcefulness of the Inuit community, offering a deeper understanding of their traditional mastery of skin, stone, bone, and snow
- Join us in the Planetarium for Wilfred Buck's STAR STORIES which brings to life four star stories, gathered and told by renowned Ininew (Cree) astronomer/star knowledge expert and author Wilfred Buck. From the practical to the poetic, these "tellings" of the Northern night sky provide guidance on navigation, the earth's cycles, and how to live a good life with future generations in mind
- You'll also have some time to connect with your inner child (without having to supervise any...) while exploring the hands-on exhibits of the Science Gallery and you'll be able to take your time further exploring the Museum Galleries, following either our Newcomer or Indigenous Art self-guiding trails

**Location:** Manitoba Museum

## A couple of important things to note:

**Travel subsidy:** Travel subsidy is open to all MCCA members who reside in Manitoba. You must be a member from January 1, 2026. What happens if you want to join in February or April because you want to attend conference? That is fine, you just need to pay the annual membership fee for the whole year to attend the conference at the MCCA fee and this allows you to apply for travel subsidy (within Manitoba).

**Gas receipts:** It is important to fill your tank before you leave for the conference. Why do we ask that you do this, so we know you started on a full tank and any future fill ups are the amounts for gas used. We then ask you to fill up when you get home. When you are adding up all of your receipts you will deduct the first fill and that is the amount to put on the subsidy form. This is the amount (dependent on funds available) is the amount we will reimburse you.

**Please note:** MCCA encourages carpooling to the conference and will reimburse 50% of the attendees from one centre. For example if two people are coming to conference and decide to both drive, we will only reimburse one person, if four people are coming and driving, we will reimburse 2, if 6, then 3, etc.

### Registration and Welcoming Remarks

Registration opens both days at 7:30. The conference committee asks that all delegates are seated in the Centennial Ballrooms by 8:30 which is when the welcoming remarks begin. Friday is the busiest day and if you show up at 8:30 you will miss the opening remarks. We suggest you come at 7:30 and then spend your extra time, finding a seat and visiting one of the tradeshow vendors. When you arrive at the hotel, the registration area can be found through the doors on Berry St. Your registration will be located at the desk that which has registrations that begin with a certain letter.

### Audio or Video Recordings

No audio or video recording of lectures or presentations is allowed in any format, openly or surreptitiously, in whole or in part without permission. The workshop hostess will let you know if you can take photos of the presentation slides once confirmed with the presenter. Course materials (both paper and digital) are for your private use.

MCCA conference sessions are made available on the understanding that all information is provided by third parties and MCCA is not responsible for the information shared or its use.

**Please take responsibility for the energy you bring to the conference.**

**Your words matter.**

**Your behaviour matters.**

**Our members, presenters, guests and MCCA staff matter.**

**Take a slow deep breath and be mindful of your energy before entering the conference keynote and workshop learning spaces.**

## MCCA's Annual General Meeting

Thursday, May 21, 2026

5:00 pm – 6:00 pm

Doors open at 4:30 pm

Location: Embassy A & B

Attend our Annual General Meeting!

Elect the new Board of Directors!

Hear more about MCCA's plans for 2026/2027!

*Light refreshments will be provided.*

*Please register using page 34 or online with your online registration.*

## TRIVIA NIGHT

Thursday, May 21, 2026

6:15 pm – 9:00 pm

Room: Wellington A



Join us for a fun filled night of trivia. Grab some colleagues or friends and make a team of between 4 – 6 people. This 2 hour event will be hosted by Quizzlers. You must pre-register for this evening, \$25.00 pp for members and \$50.00 for non-members. You don't have to be registered for the conference to register for this evening event.

Doors open at 6:15 pm and the games begin at 6:45 pm. Light refreshments will be served. Prizes to be given out.

We hope to see you there.



Karen Kowalski

**FRIDAY KEYNOTE - 9:00 am - 10:00 am**

## My Roots, My Journey and the Lessons Along the Way

Although I have worked at MCCA for 25+ years, my roots started as an ECE student at the University of Winnipeg and then took me on a journey working as an ECE III in different roles and organizations. My training and experience working as an ECE prepared me for the work that I would do and have done at MCCA. I have learned so much about myself, the child care sector, and early childhood education from so many colleagues and mentors. I will spend this hour with you sharing my journey and all the lessons and blessings that have come during my career. My hope is that by sharing my story, you will be reminded that the experiences you have today, every interaction, challenge, and success are shaping the professional you are becoming.

## Friday AM (FAM) workshops: 10:30 am – 12:30 pm

### FAM-01 Cracking the Code on Your Resilience



You've been told that resilience is something you either have or you don't, but what if you could actually measure it, grow it, and sustain it? Child care professionals face enormous pressure, long hours, emotional demands, and constant change, while nurturing others and trying to maintain balance.

The result is often burnout, compassion fatigue, and high turnover. Great News! Resilience isn't a fixed trait; it's a skill you can build and strengthen over time. In this interactive Resilience Challenge, you'll experience the WIS® Resilience Index™, a science-based tool that helps you assess your personal resilience across emotional, social, and occupational dimensions. You'll discover where your strengths lie, where your energy leaks occur, and what steps you can take to restore balance and focus. Through guided reflection and group discussion, you'll gain strategies to prevent burnout, boost mental health, and improve teamwork and accountability, so you can lead with clarity, connect with compassion, and thrive in your work.

Each participant will also walk away with a personalized WIS® Resilience Index™ Report in one wellness dimension, a practical snapshot they can use to reflect, track progress, and continue building resilience in the weeks and months ahead.

Measure it. Grow it. Sustain it.

Because resilience isn't something you're born with, it's something you can strategically build, measure, and maintain.

**Presenter: Joyce Odidison**

### FAM-02 Beyond Duty: The Heart of Everyday Care in Early Childhood Education



In early childhood education, care goes beyond meeting basic needs—it shapes lifelong relationships and emotional well-being. This interactive workshop challenges educators to reflect on the human connection in their daily caregiving practices. Through engaging activities, real-life scenarios, and personal reflections, participants will explore how biases (both conscious and unconscious) influence interactions with children. We will examine research-based insights on the long-term impact of responsive care and discuss practical, meaningful ways to integrate genuine connections.

**Presenter: Cameile Henry**

## Friday AM (FAM) workshops: 10:30 am – 12:30 pm

### FAM-03 Mud Kitchens Through the Seasons – Outdoor Play that Connects to the Curriculum



Join us for a hands-on, inspiring professional development session designed specifically for early childhood educators who want to make the most of their mud kitchens throughout the year!

Mud kitchens are more than just messy fun—they're powerful tools for play-based learning that support every area of a child's development. In this session, we'll explore how to refresh and adapt your mud kitchen across the seasons to keep outdoor play engaging, meaningful, and curriculum-connected. From mixing snow potions in winter to leaf soups in fall, flower teas in spring, and muddy pies in summer, you'll discover how seasonal changes can bring new life to your mud kitchen setup. Learn how to use loose parts, natural materials, and open-ended invitations to support early literacy, numeracy, science, and social-emotional development through play. We'll also dive into how mud kitchens can be aligned with curriculum expectations in a way that remains child-led and joyful. You'll leave with fresh, practical ideas to transform your outdoor space into a rich learning environment—no matter the weather! Whether you're new to mud kitchens or looking to reinvigorate your current setup, this session will spark your creativity and help you see the incredible potential of outdoor play in early childhood education.

Come ready to play, plan, and get a little muddy as we explore how to turn seasonal changes into powerful learning moments through mud kitchen magic!

**Presenter:** *Emily Webster*

### FAM-04 Rooted in Belonging: Foundational Practices for Meaningful Inclusion in Early Childhood Settings



When children with diverse learning needs experience inclusion in their earliest years, it sets them up on a better trajectory for life-long inclusion across all settings. With belonging as the foundation for true inclusion, how do we nurture that sense of belonging in our programs, so ALL children feel safe and secure to explore their environment and connect with others?

In this highly interactive workshop, participants will have the chance to engage in a mix of reflective practice, as well as explore strategies through hands-on activities and video examples, that they can use in their practice and routines. Participants will leave with at least one new idea to support connection with and inclusion of all children in their program.

Learning objectives:

- Describe the neuroscience involved in belonging
- Identify common barriers to inclusion, and our role in creating change
- Investigate strategies to support children's sense of belonging, safety, and security in relationships and routines

**Presenter:** *Gina Blank*

### FAM-05 Relationships are Key



Relationships Are Key is a reflective, engaging workshop that explores the central role relationships play in early learning environments. Participants will examine their own image of the child and how this perspective influences every interaction. From there, we will explore intentional strategies for building strong, respectful relationships with children, families, co-workers, and the broader community. Topics include empathetic communication, establishing trust, co-regulation, and creating inclusive, collaborative spaces. Educators will walk away with practical steps for strengthening partnerships at all levels and fostering a culture of connection in their programs.

**Presenters:** *Colleen Lussier & Kara Kreutzer*

### FAM-06 Celebrating the Roots of Literacy



The roots of literacy start in infancy and continue to grow throughout life. This hands-on workshop will share ideas that nurture early years learning in fun and engaging ways. Using children's picture books as a base, specific strategies will be discussed on how caregivers and professionals can create strong, lasting roots of literacy. Participants will have the opportunity to create literacy extension activities and props that can then be easily integrated into their own programming.

**Presenter:** *Nancy Tovell*

## Friday AM (FAM) workshops: 10:30 am – 12:30 pm

### FAM-07 Climbing the Shelf Again? How to Create a Successful Infant Room Arrangement



Creating a safe, nurturing, and stimulating environment is crucial in child care but can be challenging due to the diverse needs of infants. This workshop will guide participants through essential considerations when arranging an infant/toddler room to maintain engagement and interest while addressing developmental needs and challenges.

Topics will include:

- Utilizing old materials in a new way
- Toys and materials to offer with little to no budget
- Understanding the WHY behind behaviours and how it impacts the environment
- Meeting the needs of the children and the staff
- Increasing the “flow” to work smarter, not harder
- Maintaining consistency while offering novelty

Please be prepared to discuss your current room arrangements, including both its advantages and challenges. We will collaborate to develop solutions and innovative ideas that can be easily implemented. Participants will leave with practical strategies to improve their infant room environments, making the space both stimulating and manageable.

**Presenter: Jenna Poborsa**

### FAM-08 AI for ECEs: Harnessing Artificial Intelligence to Innovate & Enhance Early Childhood Education



In this workshop we will uncover how Artificial Intelligence can transform the early childhood education profession. Explore practical applications of AI for administrative tasks, classroom activities, and professional development. Gain confidence in integrating technology ethically and effectively into your practice.

By the end of the workshop, participants will:

- Understand the basics of AI and its relevance to ECE
- Learn how to streamline administrative tasks using AI
- Explore tools to enhance classroom learning experiences
- Understand ethical consideration when using AI in education
- Gain insights into staying ahead in an evolving technological landscape

**Presenter: Carla Ward**

### FAM-09 Caring Roots, Resilient Kids: Building Social-Emotional Skills Through Connection in Early Years Programs



In this interactive session, educators will explore the deep-rooted connection between caring educator-child relationships and the development of strong social-emotional skills. Participants will learn practical, trauma-informed strategies to foster emotional safety, resilience, and regulation through a lens of compassion, co-regulation, and community.

This workshop will include:

- A brief look at brain development and emotional regulation
- Play-based and inclusive activities that promote self-awareness and empathy
- Connection-based approaches to support children exhibiting challenging behaviours
- Reflection on how cultural roots and lived experiences influence emotional expression
- Ideas for creating emotionally safe environments where every child feels seen, heard, and valued

Participants will leave with a toolkit of strategies they can immediately apply in their daily practice, along with resources to share with families and teams. This session blends theory with hands-on learning and space for storytelling and peer exchange.

**Presenter: Jamie Wagler**

## Friday PM (FPM) workshops: 1:45 pm – 4:30 pm

### FPM-01 Splashing into Learning: The Power of Water Play in Early Years



Join Scholar's Choice for an engaging, hands-on professional development session where we dive into the wonders of water play in early childhood education! Water play offers young learners endless opportunities to explore sensory experiences, develop key skills, and spark curiosity. This session will explore how water play can be used to support play-based learning, enhancing children's cognitive, social-emotional, and physical development.

Educators will actively participate in water-based activities that demonstrate the power of sensory play. Learn how simple water play setups can encourage children to explore scientific concepts like volume, buoyancy, and cause-and-effect, while also promoting language development and collaboration. Whether pouring, splashing, or observing water's movement, children engage in open-ended exploration that fosters critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

This session will provide practical, cost-effective ideas for integrating water play into your learning environments, both indoors and outdoors. Discover how to create meaningful, sensory-rich experiences that support holistic development while keeping children engaged and excited to learn.

Join us to uncover how water play can transform your early years classroom into a place where curiosity flows freely and learning is as natural as water itself. Register today and take a splash into creative, sensory-rich play that nurtures children's development through the power of water!

**Please note: This workshop was offered at last year's conference, brought back by popular demand.**

**Presenter: Emily Webster**

### FPM-02 Pass the Potatoes: A Potluck Approach to Curriculum for Kids



This interactive workshop will engage participants by exploring many parameters of developing curriculum for children.

The analogy of a potluck meal will open up discussion and thoughts to meet these objectives:

- Inspire creative direction and flexibility in planning
- Increase awareness of planning outcomes (intended and unintentional)
- Encourage ability to identify unintended yet positive planning outcomes
- Consider ways to document and acknowledge unintended outcomes

Come and enjoy the 'meal' and don't forget to try the turkey!

**Presenters: Bev Snell & Cynthia Jacobson**

### FPM-03 Building Brains: An Interactive Exploration of Childhood Stress



This interactive workshop explores how childhood stress affects brain development and resilience. Using the Brain Architect Game, participants will gain a deeper understanding of how stress, relationships, and environments shape the developing brain. Through reflection and discussion, educators and caregivers will walk away with strategies to reduce stress and support healthy brain growth in children.

**Presenter: Cameile Henry**

## Friday PM (FPM) workshops: 1:45 pm – 4:30 pm

### FPM-04 Every Child Belongs Outside: Upholding Children's Rights and Outdoor Disability Justice Through Inclusive Design



What does it mean to honour the rights of every child—especially those with disabilities—in outdoor spaces? How can we design outdoor environments and experiences where all children can fully participate, express themselves, and experience joy, wonder, and connection? In this session, we will explore how outdoor learning spaces can become powerful platforms for justice, belonging, and equity. Grounded in the belief that nature is for everyone, we will share stories, images, and practices from a team of educators whose work is guided by the identities and voices of the children in their care. We will look at what outdoor disability justice can mean in early childhood settings, and how educators can challenge barriers—both physical and attitudinal—to create responsive outdoor environments. You will gain ideas for adapting outdoor play to support diverse needs, strategies for co-constructing inclusive spaces with children, and inspiration for rooting your practice in the rights of the child. Whether you are just beginning to explore outdoor learning or looking to deepen your inclusive approach, this session will support you in seeing the land as a place of possibility for all children.

**Presenter:** Pat Furman

### FPM-05 Building Strong Foundations: Infant Primary Caregiving



Primary caregiving plays an essential role in offering high-quality infant child care programs. It is more than a method—it is a philosophy rooted in respect, empathy, and understanding of the unique needs of each infant and their family. Together, we will explore the benefits and principles of primary caregiving, how to develop trust-based and secure relationships with infants, and techniques for building respectful and collaborative relationships with families. Participants will also learn practical strategies to overcome challenges in primary caregiving, including managing caregiver burnout, balancing individual needs in group settings, and handling staff absences. This workshop is suitable for anyone involved in infant care programs who wants to learn more about primary caregiving and how they can make it work for their program. Join us in this engaging learning experience and take the first step toward enriching the lives of the infants in your care.

**Presenter:** Jenna Poborsa

### FPM-06 Planning for Play



Planning for Play is a hands-on, reflective workshop designed to support educators in creating intentional, responsive, and enriching play-based environments. Participants will explore the power of play through the lens of observation, documentation, and intentional interaction. We'll focus on the use of open-ended questions to spark critical thinking, the distinction between extending and scaffolding children's play, and the importance of engaging with—not interrupting—children during their explorations. Educators will leave with practical tools for planning play experiences, documenting learning in meaningful ways, and using their observations to guide curriculum planning and deepen learning outcomes. This session will be interactive, reflective, and rooted in the everyday experiences of early childhood classrooms.

**Presenters:** Colleen Lussier & Kara Kreutzer

### FPM-07 Let's Get Calm Together: Using the Polyvagal Theory to Understand & Address Social Struggles, Disruptive Behaviours & Dysregulation Among Preschoolers



This workshop introduces professionals to the Polyvagal Theory and the Safe and Sound Protocol® (SSP). Polyvagal Theory uses a nervous system lens to explain how perceived threat and safety inform human social engagement and emotional resilience. By calming the physiological and emotional state, the opportunity for improved communication, social engagement, and learning becomes possible. When a preschooler's regulatory system is aroused due to chronic stress, loss, or sensory processing challenges they may present with emotionally dysregulated, regressive, or disruptive behaviors. Interpreting dysregulated behaviors through the lens of the autonomic nervous system using the Polyvagal Theory, participants will learn how to use co-regulation and body-based exercises to foster a safe learning environment.

Participants will also be introduced to the SSP which is a non-invasive listening intervention which has been shown to improve outcomes for preschool children experiencing social and emotional difficulties; auditory sensitivities; anxiety and trauma related challenges; and inattention, difficulty focusing, and attending.

**Presenter:** Rebecca Prathipati

## Friday PM (FPM) workshops: 1:45 pm – 4:30 pm

### FPM-08 Meetings That Matter



In Meetings That Matter we look at the four stages needed to prepare for and run a successful, inspiring staff meeting that staff actually want to attend.

By the end of the workshop leaders will know:

- The key decisions in preparing for a staff meeting
- How to prepare for a staff meeting
- How to host a staff meeting
- The importance of following up and how to do it efficiently

**Presenter: Carla Ward**

### FPM-09 Empowering Before and After School Educators: Strategies for Connection, Engagement and Success



Before and after school educators are the steady roots of care, creativity, and connection for school-aged children navigating a complex and ever-changing world. This practical and reflective session is designed to empower educators with tools, inspiration, and confidence to build engaging, emotionally safe programs where both children and adults thrive.

In this interactive workshop, we will explore:

- The unique developmental and emotional needs of school-aged children in care
- Strategies to build strong, meaningful relationships with children, families, and co-workers
- Social-emotional learning (SEL) tools and play-based approaches to guide behaviours with compassion and connection
- Inclusive, child-led engagement strategies that spark curiosity, belonging, and joy
- Simple and effective self-care practices to sustain your own energy, motivation, and professional growth

Using real-life examples, reflective activities, and group discussion, this session celebrates the critical role of school age educators and offers hands-on strategies that can be implemented immediately—no matter the size or location of your program. Participants will leave feeling recharged and equipped to bring renewed care, intention, and excellence to their daily practice.

**Presenter: Jamie Wagler**

### 2025 The Brilliance of Play: Adventure Awaits Conference



## Friday Full Day (FFD) workshops: 10:30 am – 4:30 pm

These workshops will provide an opportunity to really dive into a subject. If delegates select one of these full day workshops, they will attend in the am and return after lunch for the pm session.

### FFD-01 How to Handle Toxic Behaviour



Employees who demonstrate toxic behaviour can poison the best work environment and derail teamwork and motivation and the worst part is you often don't know that you've hired one until it's too late. It's the person who has a negative response to any new idea, who's the first one out the door, who never volunteers to help out, who calls in sick often, who gossips, who complains, or who brings all of their personal problems to work!

Getting rid of them may not be simple and labour laws and possible legal implications must be considered. Ignoring or containing them seldom works. Managing the toxic employee can be one of the most challenging tasks you have to do each day.

This session through exercise and discussion will explore some ethical strategies that might just work.

**Presenter: Melenie Olfert**

### FFD-02 Performance Development and Learning with Your Team



Do you feel your employees aren't meeting expectations, even though you've provided clear instructions and resources? Are you struggling to pinpoint why performance issues persist despite your best efforts? You're not alone. Many leaders and managers face the same challenge of improving performance without always knowing where to start.

On a larger scale, businesses worldwide deal with the impact of underperformance, misaligned goals, and wasted resources. Without a structured approach, organizations often rely on ineffective solutions, like unnecessary training or unclear performance targets, that don't lead to meaningful improvement. Understanding what influences performance is key to creating a productive and engaged workforce.

This workshop will give you the tools and strategies to analyze performance issues, identify the root causes, and implement solutions that see real improvements. You will learn how to assess performance gaps, decide when training is the right approach, and create an environment where success is possible. Through hands-on activities, you'll apply a structured performance mapping process to align business goals, employee capabilities, and workplace conditions.

Instead of guessing what's wrong, you'll leave with a structured, data-driven approach to diagnosing and solving performance challenges in your workplace. This workshop will help you build a high-performing team, allowing your employees and your organization to thrive.

**Presenter: Susan Portelance**

### FFD-03 Creating a Culture of Caring for the Caregiver



As experienced educators, Ana and Samantha have taken turns burning out and as close colleagues they have helped keep each other in this field. In this workshop, Ana and Samantha get to the heart of caring for the caregivers, sharing the signs of burnout and providing strategies to care for the caregivers, inside and outside of the child care program.

**Presenters: Ana Valle Rivera & Samantha Johnstone**

## Friday Full Day (FFD) workshops: 10:30 am – 4:30 pm

### FFD-04 Building Resilience Together: A Community Approach to Mental Wellness in Early Childhood



We've all heard the African proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child," but when it comes to supporting children's mental wellness, our efforts are often divided - focusing either on caregivers or educators, rarely both. This interactive workshop from Strong Minds Strong Kids, Psychology Canada (SMSKPC) invites you to reimagine a whole-community approach to early childhood mental health.

Through hands-on activities and thoughtful discussion, you'll explore SMSKPC's evidence-based programs and discover practical tools designed to empower both adults and children:

**Taking Care of You + Others:** Before we can support children, we must care for ourselves. This program helps professionals understand the science of stress, reflect on personal well-being, and learn strategies to model healthy coping skills for the children in their care.

**StressLess (Ages 4-12):** These easy-to-use booklets offer engaging, developmentally appropriate activities that empower caregivers with the tools to help children talk about stress, calm their bodies, manage their feelings, and develop thinking skills to plan ahead -all in simple, fun ways.

**Kids Have Stress Tool! (Preschool-Grade 6):** Based on psychological research, this program provides child-serving professionals with practical, age-appropriate activities to teach stress management, support self-regulation, and foster emotional intelligence in children.

Join us to learn how you can contribute to a mentally healthy foundation for every child!

**Presenter:** Bre Cristobal Calma

## Friday Full Day Offsite Workshops



9:00 am - 4:30 pm



### When registering for these workshops please keep the following in mind:

- Buses will leave by the Wellington doors by 9:00 am sharp
- If you miss your bus, attending another workshop at the Victoria Inn is not an option
- You will not attend the keynote address
- Lunch is included with all field trips, please indicate if you require a vegetarian, vegan, gluten free or lactose free meal
- Delegates cannot drive their own vehicles to the offsite workshops
- Space is limited on all off-site workshops and MCCA reserves the right to limit the amount of registrants from one centre/organization. **The centre limit for these 3 offsite workshops are 4 people per centre**
- Delegates will be picked up at approximately 3:30 pm at their location and brought back to the Victoria Inn for 4:15 pm



**9:00 am - 4:30 pm**

## FHO-01 Inspiring Outdoor Play Through Storytelling

Step into a world where stories spark imagination, connection, and outdoor play! This interactive session explores how storytelling—whether through books, puppets, or nature itself—can ignite creativity, language development, and deeper engagement in outdoor learning environments.

Participants will experience storytelling in action through hands-on activities, creative exploration, and practical techniques designed for teachers, early childhood educators, and forest school leaders. Together, we'll uncover how stories can inspire children to play, move, and imagine in the natural world.

Through movement, discussion, and creativity, participants will:

- Discover the power and benefits of storytelling in outdoor education
- Learn practical read-aloud strategies to make storytime engaging and playful
- Explore alternative storytelling methods using nature materials, story stones, and puppets
- Create hands-on storytelling props—like clay creatures, story sticks, and peg people—to bring stories to life
- Reflect on how storytelling deepens connection, builds empathy, and enhances children's outdoor experiences

By the end of this session, participants will leave feeling inspired, confident, and equipped with new storytelling ideas to enrich outdoor play and learning—where imagination knows no bounds.

**Presenter:** Shelley Bettker

**Location:** Kildonan Park

## FHO-02 Our Hoofbeats Welcoming Your Heartbeat

This full-day retreat invites delegates to step out of routine and into a day of discovery, connection, and celebration. Working in small groups, participants will rotate through four engaging activities — two in the morning and two after lunch — that blend hands-on learning, reflection, and play.

With horses as co-teachers, nature as the classroom, and movement woven throughout, the day is designed to build confidence, strengthen relationships, and offer new perspectives that educators can carry back into their work and lives.

### About Symatree

At Symatree, our programming rests on three pillars: **equine connection, nature connection, and movement**. Together, these create experiences that stretch comfort zones, build confidence, and open new pathways for growth.

**All interaction with horses will be ground-based, this is not a riding program. Participants are encouraged to dress for the weather and wear clothing that may get a little dirty, close-toed shoes (boots are recommended), hat, water bottle (fresh water available), sunscreen and bug spray.**

**Location:** Symatree Farm

## FHO-03 Exploring Oak Hammock Marsh

Escape to the peaceful wilderness of the Henry J. Enns Wetland Discovery Centre at Oak Hammock Marsh!

Join us as we discover the many ways to enjoy the marsh with an overview of the programming offered at Oak Hammock Marsh and a chance to try the activities firsthand. Throughout the day, participants will have a guided exploration of the Harry J. Enns Wetland Discovery Centre and exhibit halls, take part in demonstrations and activities related to our many fascinating exhibits, and get a birds-eye view of the marsh from the observation deck. We will also enjoy the fresh air and discover the basics of birding as we hike along the marsh trails. We will introduce you to the history and management of the marsh and its seasonal inhabitants. Binocular and field guides are provided. Lastly, we will work up your competitive spirit as you participate in a Geocaching Scavenger Hunt that adds a sense of adventure to any walk. This modern-day treasure hunt sends teams out into the marsh in search of caches, and we will see who finds the most! Whether you're looking to go bird watching, walk our nature trails, or explore our interactive exhibits, Oak Hammock Marsh offers something for everyone.



**Location:** Oak Hammock Marsh

# Awards Banquet

Friday, May 22, 2026 • 6:30 pm – 9:30 pm

**Leader of the Year Award**  
**Exceptional Early Childhood Educator Award**  
**Exceptional Family Child Care Provider Award**  
**Exceptional Caregiver Award**  
**Volunteer of the Year Award**  
**Dr. Greta Brown Scholarship Awards**  
**MCCA Student Scholarship Award**  
**Educaring Award**  
**5+ Year Career Milestones**



Come join us to honour and celebrate with the MCCA award recipients. A couple of years ago we moved from a dinner to cocktails and appetizers. We are going to continue this format. Tickets are only \$45.00 each. Everyone is welcome to join us so bring your family and friends.

The evening will include a cash bar, hors d'oeuvres, award and career milestone presentations and a silent auction with an abundance of wonderful prizes to win. You must purchase a ticket in advance, see page 32 of the brochure or you can register online and pay with a credit card on our website.

Deadline for ticket purchases is April 29, 2026. Tickets will be mailed out the week prior to the banquet.

## 2025 **The Brilliance of Play: Adventure Awaits** Conference



# Attending Conference

## Benefits of Attending Conference:

- Opportunity of attending some awesome workshops
- Listen to our dynamic speakers share their expertise and insights
- Networking with peers from all over the province
- Make some new friends
- Hearing a variety of perspectives
- Fulfilling your professional development hours
- Connecting with old colleagues and coworkers
- Visiting tradeshow vendors that are beneficial to your program
- Chance to walk away with some cash from the 50/50 draw
- Opportunity to celebrate colleagues at the awards banquet
- Make new connections at the networking evening
- Attend the MCCA AGM and find out what your association has been up to



### Conference Certificates

When you come to the registration desk at the conference you will be handed a certificate. You will add your name on it and then you check off any evening events you might have attended. It is a good idea to keep your conference registration with this certificate as proof that you attended the conference.



# Meet Our Presenters

**Shelley Bettker** is the founder of Explorer's Forest School and TimberNook Saskatoon, where she leads programs that celebrate curiosity, creativity, and child-led learning. An outdoor play expert and passionate advocate for authentic childhood experiences, Shelley works with children ages 1 to 13 on a beautiful prairie oasis east of Saskatoon. With a background as a Certified Early Childhood Educator and a Bachelor of Education, Shelley combines her knowledge of child development with years of hands-on experience in nature-based education. She believes deeply in the power of play and storytelling to nurture imagination, confidence, and connection. Through her workshops and presentations, Shelley inspires educators and caregivers to reimagine how children learn—encouraging approaches that invite creativity, risk-taking, and joy. Whether sharing stories around a circle or guiding educators through hands-on experiences, Shelley's sessions are filled with warmth, reflection, and practical ideas that participants can bring back to their own settings. Her mission is simple yet profound: to help children and adults rediscover the wonder of learning through play, story, and connection.

**Gina Blank** has a Bachelor of Science in psychology, as well as a Master's in General Special Education. She has worked with Kids Included for over 20 years in a variety of roles: supporting children with disabilities; coaching early childhood educators; and currently, coordinating and facilitating professional learning for community partners and the public. When she is not supporting adult learning, she can generally be found outdoors with a camera, a good book, or both.

**Sarah Cahill** is a nutrition educator for over 15 years, Sarah combines her experience as a registered dietitian and parent to support educators, children, and families in the development of positive relationships with food and eating. The team at Teach Nutrition is passionate about creating programs and activities that enhance the wellbeing of students and all of the people in their lives. Sarah loves that food brings people together to share, learn, and celebrate. When we lead with curiosity, we can nourish mind, body and soul.

**Bre Cristobal Calma** (they/them) is the Coordinator of Programs & Development at Strong Minds Strong Kids, Psychology Canada. Bre is a proud neurodivergent, disabled, queer person, whose lived experience fuels their passion for ensuring all children have the support they need to help them thrive. Bre is a Certified Canadian Inclusion Professional (CCIP), and holds a Graduate Certificate in Sexual Health from the University of Alberta, as well as a Bachelor

of Education and Bachelor of Arts from the University of Winnipeg. With over 8 years of professional experience in classroom teaching, youth program development, and community education, Bre brings a wealth of knowledge from diverse applications and recognizes the need for a holistic, intersectional approach to children's mental health. Drawing from both personal experiences with childhood stress as well as professional and academic experience working with children, they are passionate about creating engaging, motivational learning environments where conversations about stress and mental health can be normalized and celebrated.

**Cindy Curry** has been in the field of Early Childhood Education for over 38 years. Currently, she is an instructor at University College of the North in The Pas. She is an active advocate for children and play.

**Pat Furman** is the Executive Director of Inspired by Wonder in Winnipeg, leading innovative and inclusive child care programs for over 20 years. She holds a Master's in Innovation in Early Childhood Education and is a recipient of the Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Early Childhood Education and the MCCA Leader of the Year Award. Pat co-chairs the Manitoba Reggio Inspired Coalition of Educators and is a member of the World Forum Foundation's Children's Rights working group. This past summer, she celebrated the groundbreaking of Inspired by Wonder's third centre, which will feature a unique intergenerational component.

**Julie Hansen** has been an Early Childhood Educator for 24 years, having received her Diploma in Early Childhood Education from Douglas College. Since then, she has gained experience in a variety of areas within the field of Early Childhood Education: Director of a preschool, supervisor of after-school care as well as 3-5 and Infant Toddler programs and centre management. Her primary focus has evolved to encompass team leadership, management training and program development. She's had articles published in provincial and national ECE journals on the topic of emergent curriculum and leadership. Her goal as an Early Childhood Educator and facilitator is to support fellow educators and early years professionals in providing high-quality early learning experiences for children and families.

**Cameile Henry** is a Professor at Sheridan College, CEO and Co-Founder of Strengthen Hands Educational Resources, and an Educational Consultant for the Jeremy and Jazzy animation series on CBC. She is also

a Writer for Be with Zee, an upcoming animated series premiering on TVO in Fall 2026. An accomplished author, Cameile has written several children's picture books that affirm, empower, and build resilience in young readers, along with her recent publication *Race Relations in the 21st Century: A Guide to Addressing the Challenges of Race*. She is also a certified Zumbini instructor, providing music and movement programs for families through CDRCP in the EarlyON Centres. Through Strengthen Hands, she has facilitated engaging workshops for children, parents, and educators in partnership with organizations in Ontario and the United States.

**Cynthia Jacobson** has been an ECE III for 25 years. She has worked extensively in community-based programming to support family relationships and promote knowledge of child development. This spring, she will graduate from RRCP's Technical Vocational Teacher Education program. She has been fortunate to share her passion for early childhood education as an ECE Instructor at Red River College Polytech. In this role, she develops curriculum, mentors students, and facilitates hands-on learning experiences to prepare future educators for success. In her self-care and free time, she loves to bake and cook, spend time with her husband and her adult children. Her two dogs are also central to her home, always eager to learn new tricks or join them for walks.

**Samantha Johnstone** is a mother of two young children. She currently works on the floor in ECE while also teaching post secondary courses. Samantha has worked as an assistant director and within multiple communities in metro Vancouver. Samantha deeply enjoys sharing knowledge and coming alongside ECEs to co-construct learning.

**Karen Kowalski** is MCCA's Assistant Executive Director/Director of Professionalism. She has been with MCCA for over 25 years and is an ECE III. She has worked as a front line staff, supervisor, assistant director and a director of a child care centre before starting at MCCA in 2000. She has learned that as a professional you are always growing and you must be your own advocate!

**Kara Kreutzer** is a dedicated Child Care Director at the YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg and instructor at MITT, bringing over 28 years of experience to the early childhood education field. Known for her leadership, mentorship, and deep commitment to nurturing both children and future educators, Kara has built a career rooted in compassion, excellence, and lifelong

learning. Outside of work, she cherishes time with her family and has recently discovered a new passion for reading, which continues to inspire her both personally and professionally.

**Colleen Lussier** is a passionate Child Care Director at the YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg with 20 years of experience in early childhood education. Her leadership is rooted in a deep appreciation for nature and a commitment to fostering meaningful learning experiences for children. An avid outdoor enthusiast, Colleen brings creativity and energy to her work, inspired by her love for the outdoors. Outside of her professional life, she enjoys spending time at the rink with her daughters, embracing the fresh air, and diving into a good book.

**Kisa MacIsaac** is Métis, a mother, an educator, artist, advocate, and volunteer. She is an ECE III and holds a BA degree in Developmental Studies. Kisa jumped into the field of early learning and child care back in 2002, has been a member of the MCCA Ethics Committee since 2008. She is passionate about land based curriculum, and loves to garden with children!

**Jaime Mann** is a leadership strategist, certified coach, and founder of The Amaryllis Project. With a background in psychology and over 20 years of experience leading people in high-pressure environments, she helps teams build resilience, lead with compassion, and stay steady under stress. Today, she's here to share real talk and practical tools to help us show up with presence—even when the pressure's on.

**Joyce Odidison** helps organizations escape the cycle of stress, burnout, anxiety, and costly conflicts, transforming them into high-resilience workplaces where teams thrive, perform, and drive growth effortlessly. With 28 years of pioneering science-backed Wellbeing Intelligence System® (WIS®) & Resilience Index (Rx) Diagnostics Joyce is on a mission to help 1 billion people gain powerful Rx insights to master their work and live. Host of The Resilience Catalyst Burnout Fix Podcast, her framework has helped over 10,000 leaders turn daily pressures into 'resilience wealth' and well-being. She is a sought-after keynote speaker, best-selling author of 7 books, and President of Interpersonal Wellness Services Inc., known for building cultures where mental health is preserved, productivity soars, and crushes the burnout culture. Contact her at [www.joyceodidison.com](http://www.joyceodidison.com) or [www.interpersonalwellness.com](http://www.interpersonalwellness.com).

**Melenie Olfert** has worked as a consultant for several years, sharing her knowledge and expertise through leadership projects and workplace training. With a background in adult education and training, Melenie is now a published writer, as well as an accomplished and certified speaker on workplace diversity, equity and inclusion, collaborative communication and leadership development. Further to her training experience, Melenie teaches with The University of Winnipeg's PACE where her teaching background helps support the diversity of the Canadian workforce by bridging gaps and collaborating together for successful career and business growth.

**Jenna Poborsa** has been in the child care field for over 20 years, with most of it spent with Infants and Toddlers. She has training in Pedagogy, Resource for Infant Educarers (RIE philosophy), and is a facilitator for both Circle of Security and Positive Discipline for Everyday Parenting. After lots of experience and learning, she is looking forward to sharing her passion and wealth of knowledge on infant play, interactions, and learning.

**Susan Portelance**, has turned her love of language into a career as a writer, editor, and trainer, after many years. As an editor, Susan works with her clients to craft effective communications – from newsletters and blogs to eBooks and proposals. Susan brings to the classroom over 20 years of training experience and four years of Toastmasters participation where she has honed her public speaking and leadership skills. Susan joined Eclectic in January 2013 and has quickly proven to be an exceptional facilitator. Susan has completed training in adult education, presentation skills, and coaching skills. She is certified to deliver presentations, workshops, and one-on-one sessions using the EQ-i 2.0 Emotional Intelligence instrument. Susan is also a Certified Training and Development Professional (CTDP).

**Rebecca Prathipati** is a Registered Social Worker who holds a Masters of Science with a specialization in the area of attachment across the lifespan. For the past 20 years Rebecca has worked within various systems focusing her expertise on child and adolescent mental health and attachment. Her experience has given her a vast appreciation for the resilience and healing that children experience in the context of secure relationships within the family and in the wider community. Rebecca received certificate training in play therapy through the Canadian Association of Play Therapy. Rebecca approaches therapy from the perspective that play is a developmentally

appropriate and useful means for children to tell their story, retell it, gain mastery, and express feelings and needs. The therapeutic playroom is a platform for parents to facilitate healthy attachment as they tune in and respond to their child's needs and experiences. Rebecca is passionate about helping parents and caregivers respond to children's stress-based emotion and behavior with trauma-informed, trust-based strategies as well as supporting and educating professionals who work with families.

**Leah Smith**, completed her Forest School Practitioner course at FortWhyte in 2016, she has brought her passion for nature-based learning everywhere she goes. With nearly 20 years of experience and an honours diploma in Early Childhood Education, Leah has found inspiration in many settings of early learning. From large centres, to Montessori schools, to private multi-family care, to her own entrepreneurial Forest School sessions along the riverbanks of Winnipeg, her commitment to outdoor child-led curriculum is deeply rooted. Leading workshops on risky play and the forest school ethos for independent child care centres and professional development conferences has also been a big part of her career in recent years. Leah is a mother of two teens who love exploring new and familiar places in nature, in their neighbourhood, and always showing the value of a Risk Assessment!

**Bev Snell** has been an ECE III with over 40 years experience in the child care field. Her work on the floor as an ECE included all ages of children from infants through school-age. She continued her career as an instructor with Red River College and most recently, University College of the North. Her passions include music, camping, golf, cooking and baking as well as spending time at her new home with husband Ken and little dog Holly.

**Angel Stoddard, MS** is driven by a deep belief that all leaders must be learners and aims to inspire the joy of learning in others. She strives to elevate the role leaders hold in ensuring quality programming. Her mission each day is to show up with passion and purpose, with curiosity and courage. Throughout her career, Angel has designed and presented professional growth opportunities for local, state, and national audiences. Angel teaches courses in early childhood administration, leadership, and program development.

**Nancy Tovell**, is the Program Coordinator, Bookmates Inc. As part of the team at Bookmates, Nancy has a wide range of experience in facilitating workshops with

a focus on sharing early literacy strategies, tools and resources to support the enhancement of pre-school children's development and learning capabilities. Prior to joining Bookmates, she was a contractor for a division of Scholastic Canada called "Books On Tour" and subsequently founded "The Book Girl", a company providing books to schools and child care centres in Winnipeg.

**Ana Valle Rivera** is a proud mother of three, a consultant, and the founder of Early Years Thriving. Since 2007, Ana has worked in various capacities in the early years field to support children, families, and educators. Ana has a background in ECE, a Bachelor's Degree in Child & Youth Care, and a Master's of Professional Education in Early Childhood Education.

**Michelle Vesey** is an ECE III. She has been working in the child care field since 1998 during which time she has held a variety of front line ECE positions as well as administrative roles. She has worked in infant, preschool, nursery school and school age program settings. Currently Michelle is an instructor in ECE program at Université de Saint-Boniface. She is a member of the MCCA Ethics committee and looks forward to guiding others along their ethical journey.

**Jamie Wagler** is an RECE, consultant, and founder of Miss Jamie Consulting, dedicated to supporting educators in creating inclusive, emotionally intelligent, and community-driven learning environments. With over 15 years of experience across sectors—from licensed child care centres to school-age programs and professional development—Jamie brings passion, humour, and heart to every session. She is the creator of the Beyond the Bell magazine and host of The Forgotten ECE podcast, amplifying the voices of school-age professionals. Jamie's workshops are known for being engaging, reflective, and immediately

applicable.

**Carla Ward** is an Early Childhood Educator, speaker, podcaster, and consultant with over 20 years of experience in the profession. She is the founder of *The Everything ECE Podcast*, *The ECE Latte Lounge* membership, and *ECE Podcast Academy*, where she empowers educators to elevate their practice and their voices. Carla is known for her engaging workshops, real-talk training sessions, and advocacy for professionalism and joy in Early Childhood Education. Whether she's speaking on stage, teaching online, or behind the mic, she brings practical insights, a deep respect for educators, and a passion for reshaping the way the world sees ECE.

**Emily Webster** is a dynamic force in educational engagement as the Social Media and Partnership Coordinator at Scholar's Choice, where she also excels as a webinar host. Her journey with the family-owned business began long before her official role in 2018, having grown up immersed in the educational community that Scholar's Choice nurtures. Emily holds a degree in Communications and Cultural Studies from Wilfrid Laurier University, which she utilizes to cultivate meaningful partnerships and craft compelling social media strategies. She is passionate about promoting the Playful Learning Approach—a method that inspires children to explore their creativity, cultivate a lifelong love for learning, and unlock their full potential. Emily's vibrant social media presence is a testament to her dedication, featuring daily posts that showcase engaging, play-based learning activities. Her work not only connects educators and parents but also transforms classrooms, daycares and homes into spaces where learning and play intersect seamlessly. Emily's innovative approach and deep-rooted commitment to education make her an inspiring voice in the field of early childhood development and educational outreach.

# Travel & Accommodation Subsidy

- **To qualify for subsidy you must be a personal member of MCCA as of January 1, 2026.**
- Travel and accommodation subsidies are available to all MANITOBA MCCA members and will be reimbursed as funds allow.
- Travel Subsidy Forms are available on our website (May) and will be available at the MCCA Registration table.
- Subsidy requests must be received at MCCA no later than **June 5, 2026**. ALL receipts MUST be included with the Subsidy Application.
- Reimbursement cheques will be made payable to the name indicated on the form and will be sent out by the end of June.
- Accommodation subsidy will be calculated at \$50.00 per person per night to a maximum of \$100.00 per room, limited to Wednesday & Thursday night(s). Please attach hotel receipts.
- **Gas receipts:** Fill up your tank prior to driving to the conference and then when you return home, this should be done within a day of arriving home. Submit all receipts and deduct the fill up receipt from the total. We encourage car pooling; therefore, reimbursement will be provided up to 50% from one centre who will be reimbursed. For example, if 4 people attend conference and all drive there, we would reimburse gas for two vehicles. MCCA reserves the right to deny any subsidy applications that are incomplete.

## Conference Accommodation

- Our conference site is the Victoria Inn Hotel and Convention Centre, 1808 Wellington Avenue, located near the Winnipeg Airport and is easily accessible via Winnipeg Transit, routes D13, D12 & 224.
- For direct reservations call 204-786-4801.
- Room rates starting at \$149.00 plus taxes. When booking please quote Group Block **#341945** and indicate that you are a delegate of the MCCA Conference. This will get you the conference rate.
- **Please note:** The hotel is smoke free, including the rooms.

## Questions About Conference

If you have a question regarding:

- Online registration
- MCCA membership
- Making a substitution
- Registration process
- Forms

Call or email Debbie at 204-336-5065 or toll free 1-888-323-4676 ext. 227, [dcrampton@mccahouse.org](mailto:dcrampton@mccahouse.org).

If you have a question regarding:

- Tradeshow

Call or email Kayla at 204-336-5061 or toll free 1-888-323-4676 ext. 223, [kmauricio@mccahouse.org](mailto:kmauricio@mccahouse.org).

You can also contact Karen Kowalski for any conference related question. She can be reached at 204-336-5062 or toll free 1-888-323-4676 ext. 224 or [kkowalski@mccahouse.org](mailto:kkowalski@mccahouse.org).

Information is also available on our website [www.mccahouse.org](http://www.mccahouse.org).

To cancel a registration by the deadline, please email Karen Kowalski. Cancellation requests must be submitted in writing.

# Registration Deadlines

**April 29, 2026**

**Registration Deadline**

Registrations WILL NOT be accepted after 4:00 pm, April 29, 2026.

**April 29, 2026**

**Banquet Ticket Purchase Deadline**

Last day to purchase Awards Banquet tickets.

**May 8, 2026**

**Last Day to make meal changes and to make substitutions.**

# Registration Policies



**Photo Release Policy:** By virtue of your attendance, you agree to usage of your likeness in still and video photography without compensation or notification. MCCA reserves the right to include your photo in *Child Care Bridges*, MCCA's website, Facebook, Instagram or any other MCCA publication/social media platform.

## Registration Policies

- Registrants MUST be personal members of MCCA to qualify for the member rate.
- MCCA Centre Membership allows one board member to attend on the Centre Membership; this membership is not transferable to any of the centre staff.
- Organizations that have an MCCA Associate Membership can send one person at the member rate.
- Non-members can begin registering February 11, 2026.
- We do not accept faxed registrations, registrations by phone, or registrations at the conference.
- Post dated cheques are not accepted and all NSF cheques will be charged a \$25.00 fee.
- Invoices can be issued to sponsoring organizations (government/agencies). The registrations must be accom-

panied by a Purchase Order indicating the name, address, postal code, phone number of the organization and must be signed with a designate officer and their direct phone number. MCCA reserves the right to decline any Purchase Order.

- MCCA reserves the right to limit the amount of registrations from one centre for any workshop.

## Cancellation Policies

- *Individual registrations:* Cancellations will be accepted until April 29, 2026 and only 75% of the registration fee will be refunded. A written request must be submitted to Karen Kowalski at [kkowalski@mccahouse.org](mailto:kkowalski@mccahouse.org). No refunds will be granted after this date.
- Substitutes must be MCCA members, attend the workshops that are currently registered and must be made by May 8, 2026.

## Special Requirements

If you should require ASL interpretive services or any other service, please call Karen Kowalski at 204-336-5062 or Toll Free (Manitoba only) 1-888-323-4676 ext. 224 or email [kkowalski@mccahouse.org](mailto:kkowalski@mccahouse.org).

## Thursday, May 21

7:30 am - Registration Opens  
8:30 am - Welcome Remarks  
9:00 am - 10:00 am - Keynote **Carla Ward**  
9:00 am - Board Buses for Offsite Workshops  
10:00 am - 10:30 am - Transition Break  
10:30 am - 12:30 pm - **AM session**  
12:30 pm - 1:45 pm - **Lunch**  
1:45 pm - 4:30 pm - **PM session**  
2:45 pm - 3:15 pm - Break  
3:00 pm - 50/50 Draw  
4:30 pm - AGM Sign-in  
5:00 pm - 6:00 pm - Annual General Meeting  
6:15 pm - 8:45 pm - Trivia Night

Registration is located outside of the Centennial Ballrooms – Doors on Berry Street entrance.

### The Trade Show Hours:

7:30 am – 3:15 pm (Thursday)  
7:30 am – 3:15 pm (Friday)

Please ensure you complete your evaluation at the end of your last conference day.

You can access the evaluation on the mobile conference app.

## Friday, May 22

7:30 am - Registration Opens  
8:30 am - Welcome Remarks  
8:45 am - Greetings from Minister Schmidt  
9:00 am - 10:00 am - Keynote **Karen Kowalski**  
9:00 am - Board Buses for Offsite Workshops  
10:00 am - 10:30 am - Transition Break  
10:30 am - 12:30 pm - **AM session**  
12:30 pm - 1:45 pm - **Lunch**  
1:45 pm - 4:30 pm - **PM session**  
2:45 pm - 3:15 pm - Break  
3:00 pm - 50/50 Draw  
6:30 pm - Awards Banquet

Interested in joining the 2027 Conference Committee?

Email Kayla Mauricio at [kmauricio@mccahouse.org](mailto:kmauricio@mccahouse.org) by May 29, 2026.

# Registration Form

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ MCCA #: \_\_\_\_\_

Pronouns: \_\_\_\_\_ (will appear on your name badge)

Organization or Facility Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**FOOD: I require a Vegetarian meal  Vegan meal**

**Gluten free meal  Lactose Free Meal**

\*These are the only four dietary requests we can accommodate.

**I will attend the following Thursday evening events:**

MCCA's Annual General Meeting (4:30 pm – 6:00 pm) - No cost to attend  
 Trivia Night (6:15 pm – 8:45 pm) MCCA Members: \$25.00 Non-members: \$50.00

## Registration Instructions

- If you choose to take two different workshops in a day, you must select an AM and a PM workshop for your 1st, 2nd, or 3rd choice. You can also choose to take a full day workshop. You can select a combination of either 2 ½ day workshops or a full day workshop for your 1st, 2nd or 3rd choices.
- Each conference day includes the keynote address (unless otherwise noted) and lunch.
- ½ day registrations are not accepted and registrants cannot share days or two day packages.
- Each person must fill out their own registration form.
- If registering online you will not need to make a 2nd & 3rd choice because if the workshop is full it will not show up as an option.

Day & Session	1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice
Thursday AM			
Thursday PM			
Thursday Full Day			
Thursday Offsite			
Friday AM			
Friday PM			
Friday Full Day			
Friday Offsite			

Turn over for conference fees, submit pages 33 & 34 to register.

# Conference Fees

## Purchase Options

	Individual Member	Non Member
<b>1 Day Conference</b>	\$165.00	\$330.00
<b>2 Day Conference</b>	\$285.00	\$570.00

### **Conference Fees**

1 Day \_\_\_\_\_ x \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
2 Days \_\_\_\_\_ x \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### **Trivia Night:**

MCCA Member \_\_\_\_\_ x \$25.00 \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Non-Member \_\_\_\_\_ x \$50.00 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Awards Banquet Tickets:** \_\_\_\_\_ x \$45.00 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*Names of the people attending Awards Banquet:*

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**TOTAL PAYMENT ENCLOSED \$**

### **Method of Payment**

Cheque enclosed in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Visa or Mastercard: go to our website at [www.mccahouse.org](http://www.mccahouse.org) and register online.

Date processed: \_\_\_\_\_ Cheque No. \_\_\_\_\_ Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail completed registration forms (pages 33 & 34) and payment to:

Manitoba Child Care Association, 2nd Flr., Royal Bank Building, 2350 McPhillips Street, Winnipeg, MB R2V 4J6