

Early Childhood
Development
ASSOCIATION OF PEI



FALL CONFERENCE 2026

November 5th & 6th, 2026

FALL CONFERENCE

PARTNERS

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Fall Conference wouldn't be the same!



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FALL CONFERENCE

SCHEDULE

Thursday

- 8:30 - 8:55 **Registration**
- 9:00 - 10:30 **AM Breakout Sessions**
- 10:30 - 10:45 **Networking Break**
- 10:45 - 11:45 **Breakout Sessions Continued**
- 11:45 - 1:00 **Lunch**
- 1:00 - 2:30 **PM Breakout Session**
- 2:30 - 2:45 **Networking Break**
- 2:45 - 3:45 **Breakout Session Continued**

Friday

- Registration** 7:45 - 8:30
- Morning Keynotes** 8:35 - 10:30
- Networking Break** 10:30 - 11:00
- Morning Keynotes** 11:00 - 11:45
- Lunch** 11:45 - 1:00
- Afternoon Keynotes** 1:00 - 4:00

WELCOME

The ECDA Team and Board are thrilled to welcome you to the 2026 Fall Conference: Start with Play!

This year, our exceptional facilitators are ready to spark your imagination and re-energize your professional play journey. We have curated a diverse lineup of interactive, joyful, and unique experiences, ensuring you'll have the opportunity to explore the topics that resonate most with you and the vital work you do with children and families.

Our Start with Play conference invites you to dive into the very heart of early childhood. We know that play is not just an activity; it is the essential foundation for learning, development, and human connection. Through engaging sessions and hands-on discussions, we will explore how intentional, play-based environments foster curiosity, resilience, and joy--not only for the children we guide, but for ourselves as educators 🧡.

Whether you are taking your first steps into the Early Learning and Child Care field or you bring decades of wisdom to your practice, there is a space here for you to discover, experiment, and grow. Join us as we embrace the wonder of childhood, connect with our peers, and rediscover why the best way to learn, lead, and impact the future is to always start with play.



THANK YOU

A huge thank you to the contributors, sponsors, volunteers, and attendees who bring this event to life!

Your support, generosity, and the time you dedicate are truly invaluable. This event simply wouldn't be a vibrant success without your unwavering commitment to our Early Learning and Child Care community.

We are incredibly proud to host you, and present this conference to our valued members. Your voices, passion, and playful spirits jump right off the pages of this booklet and into every session we offer!

We hope you gather a sandbox full of fresh perspectives and leave ready to conquer the world! Above all, we hope you head home feeling a little more inspired, re-energized, and ready to play. Thank you! 🧡





REMINDERS

While we love to watch children run and play, this is an adults only kind of day. However, you are welcome to bring infants under 9 months.

We hope you will understand our decision to make the conference children-free, and take the opportunity to learn and network care-free!

To ensure a safe and respectful environment please be considerate of the following guidelines during the conference:

- Be respectful and polite
- Practice active listening
- No side chatting; Save the networking conversations for the breaks, etc.
- Cell phones on silent during the sessions
- Scent Free spaces
- Please avoid arriving late or leaving early as this is disruptive to other members and PD hours are dependent upon full participation.



“The simple act of caring is heroic.”

– Edward Albert

Fall Conference PRICING

	Dates available	Member Price	Non-Member Price
Early Bird Pricing	Sept 22 – Oct 6	\$210	\$420
Standard Pricing	Oct 7 – Oct 23	\$265	\$530
Late Registration	Oct 24– Nov 2	\$295	\$590

***All tickets are subject to applicable taxes.
Payment is due in full no later than November 2nd, 2026**

Questions



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FALL CONFERENCE 2026

ACCOMMODATIONS

Holman Grand Hotel and Arts Hotel are pleased to provide special accommodations rates for conference delegates attending the 2026 ECDA Fall Conference: *Start with Play*

For Reservations, please follow the links below for more details and availability.

Holman Grand Hotel

123 Grafton Street

Rates starting at \$159 for a Queen or King Rooms, plus taxes.

Rates are quoted: per night, based on single/double occupancy, rates offer based on availability at time of booking.

This hotel offers free wi-fi, pool, hot tub and Keurig coffee machines.

[Book Here: ECDA Fall Conference Booking - Holman Grand](#)

The Arts Hotel

155 Kent Street

Rates starting at \$89 for a Queen and King Rooms, plus taxes.

The Arts Hotel is a modern, innovative, and minimalist property situated in the Downtown Charlottetown Entertainment District.

Rates are quoted: per night, based on single/double occupancy, rates offer based on availability at time of booking.

The hotel offers complimentary breakfast, parking and Wi-Fi.

[Book Here: ECDA Fall Conference - The Arts Hotel](#)



Pre-Conference **EXPERIENCE**

For Directors & Leaders

Wednesday, November 4th

YOUR FACILITATOR



Elizabeth Eldridge

The Thriving Workplace:

Building Stronger Teams from the Inside Out

Topics Include:

- Building an Ownership Mindset
- Building a Culture of Appreciation and Belonging
- Supportive Conversations
- Preventing Burnout and Building Resilience

Venue:

Belvedere Golf Club

1 Greensview Dr, Charlottetown, PE C1A 6C3



DAY 1

THURSDAY

VENUES

- Confederation Centre
- The Mack
- Holman Grand
- The Arts Guild
- Murphy's Community Centre
- Murchison Centre
- Atlantic Technology Centre
- Quality Inn
- Belvedere Golf Club
- Hampton Inn
- Holiday Inn Express

DAY 1

BREAKOUT EXPERIENCE AT A GLANCE

Experience One

Risky Play Roundtable & "They're Not Being Defiant!": Reframing Behaviour from a Neuro-Relational Perspective

Experience Two

The Curious Environment: Invitations vs. Intentions: Designing for Exploration and Discovery & Fairy Hut Building

Experience Three

Neuro-Affirming Strategies for Playful Connections & Outdoor By Design: Creating Meaningful Outdoor Learning Environments

Experience Four

Caring for the Caregiver: The Importance of Self-Care & The Art of Seeing: Making the Invisible Visible: Documentation as a Tool for Visibility and Advocacy

Experience Five

Leading with Ease: Systems That Support Staff Success and Sustainable Leadership & Advancing Equity and Belonging in the Workplace

Experience Six

Advancing Equity and Belonging in the Workplace & The Power of Play

BREAKOUT EXPERIENCE AT A GLANCE

Experience Seven

Returning to Connection: Reimagining Relationship Through Material Encounters: Wonder, Resistant Curiosity, and Becoming-Little & Returning to Connection: Reimagining Relationship Through Material Encounters: Materials Encounters

Experience Eight

Leadership Synergy: Maximizing Potential in the Modern Workplace & Finding Balance: Work, Life and Everything In Between (Work/Life Balance Tips)

Experience Nine

The Power of Play & From Hello to Harmony: Building and Maintaining Positive Communications with Families

Experience Ten

Caring for Infants and Toddlers with Respect and Dignity: An Introduction to RIE (Resources for Infant Educators) & Pain is Protection

Experience Eleven

Seasonal Wellness Planning: Simple Habits of Wellbeing & Smart Menus and Confident Eaters: Menu Planning and Food Literacy in Early Childhood

Experience Twelve

Pain is Protection & Harnessing the Power of Emotional Regulation as an Infant and Toddler Educator

BREAKOUT EXPERIENCE AT A GLANCE

Experience Thirteen

Smart Menus and Confident Eaters: Menu Planning and Food Literacy in Early Childhood & Building Joyful Eaters: How Early Childhood Educators Shape Lifelong Habits

Experience Fourteen

More Than Just Play! & From Curious to Confident: The Joy of Discovering New Foods with Basil Bunny

Experience Fifteen

The Use of Play in Supporting Classroom Management & Getting Ready for Outdoor Loose Parts Play - In Every Season

Experience Sixteen

Outdoor Play, Better Indoor Days: Building Active Play Habits Outside to Support Calmer, More Regulated Indoor Environments & Speech-Language Pathology Basics for Early Educators

Experience Seventeen

From Curious to Confident: The Joy of Discovering New Foods with Basil Bunny & Outdoor Play, Better Indoor Days: Building Active Play Habits Outside to Support Calmer, More Regulated Indoor Environments

Experience Eighteen

Creative Problem-Solving Using Action Research & Valued Based Living to Reduce Burnout and Improve Job Satisfaction

Experience ONE

Risky Play Roundtable with Rusty Keeler

Join Rusty Keeler in a facilitated conversation about all things risky play. Together we'll reflect on our yes's, no's, and why's and then visualize how to say yes more. We'll tap the wisdom of the group to hear risky play successes, challenges, and questions. We'll discuss the benefits of risky play, new ways to support it, and how to communicate with licensing and parents about risky play. Together we'll form a community and support each other in supporting risky play!



Participants
will be
outside



Morning at Murphy's Community Centre: Gym

"They're Not Being Defiant!": Reframing Behaviour from a Neuro-Relational Perspective with Gina Blank

Human behaviour is complex, which means our approach to supporting children's development requires us to think holistically. This means moving away from previous and potentially harmful ways that we used to look at children's behaviour. This session will help participants understand the paradigm shifts necessary to support a whole-child approach to guiding children's participation. Participants will investigate the impact of relational safety versus a traditional approach to responding to behavior; reconsider their understanding of the cause of behaviour, their expectations of neurodiverse children, and the importance of a common approach for an integrated support plan; and, they will have a chance to practice reframing children's behaviour through the use of scenarios and group discussion

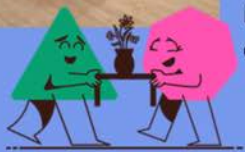


Afternoon at The Mack

Experience TWO

The Curious Environment: Invitations vs. Intentions: Designing for Exploration and Discovery with Jessica Karpathios

How do we move from a classroom that looks busy to one that invites deep inquiry? This session deconstructs the environment as the third teacher. We will analyze the difference between doing an activity and cultivating a culture of curiosity. Participants will learn to look at their current materials through a lens of potential and complexity, learning how to design spaces that don't just occupy children but challenge them to hypothesize and discover.



Morning at Confederation Centre: Memorial Hall

Fairy Hut Building with Rusty Keeler

The most fun hands-on workshop ever! Learn to support children's playful connections to nature and loose parts by playing with natural materials yourself! What a blast! Build fairy huts and gnome homes, invent tiny worlds, create sculptures, make forts and dens and more. Ideas and activities you can take back to your children right away. Release your inner child and play!



Afternoon at Murphy's Community Centre: Gym

**Participants
will be
outside**



Experience **THREE**

Neuro-Affirming Strategies for Playful Connections with Gina Blank



What do you do when a child does not respond as expected to the practices that generally spark connection in play, routines, and everyday activities? In this session, participants will reflect on the importance of accepting diverse ways of playing, while still scaffolding and expanding their play and participation. Participants will use their understanding of serve-and-return interactions to investigate strategies that support engagement and connection with children who present as neurodiverse or have a neurodevelopmental disability. Lastly, participants will have the opportunity to create a plan to start using these strategies with children in their program.



Morning at The Mack

Outdoor By Design: Creating Meaningful Outdoor Learning Environments with Carla Ward

Outdoor play is more than giving children time outside. Like indoor environments, outdoor spaces deserve intentional design that invites exploration, risk-taking, creativity, and deep engagement.

In this practical session, participants will examine how thoughtful outdoor environments can encourage richer play experiences while supporting children's physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development. Educators will explore ways to maximize existing outdoor spaces using loose parts, natural materials, and intentional design principles that foster curiosity and discovery throughout every season.



Afternoon at Confederation Centre: Memorial Hall

Experience FOUR

Caring for the Caregiver: The Importance of Self-Care with Bernadette Currie



Working in early childhood development requires a tremendous amount of energy, patience, compassion, and care for others—but it can be easy to forget to extend that same care to ourselves. This interactive session will explore why self-care is essential, not selfish, and how prioritizing our own well-being can help prevent burnout, manage stress, and allow us to show up more fully in both our personal and professional lives. Participants will leave with practical, realistic strategies for creating sustainable self-care habits that fit into even the busiest of days.



Morning at Confederation Centre: Studio #1

The Art of Seeing: Making the Invisible Visible: Documentation as a Tool for Visibility and Advocacy with Jessica Karpathios

Documentation is often viewed as a chore, but it is actually our most powerful tool for advocacy. This session focuses on the Art of Seeing, learning to ignore the surface-level fun to find the profound cognitive leaps happening in the messy middle of play. Educators will walk away with a framework for pedagogical storytelling that resonates with families, colleagues, and policymakers.



Afternoon at Confederation Centre: Studio #1



Experience FIVE

PLEASE NOTE: This experience is for Directors, Supervisors, and Leaders

Leading with Ease: Systems That Support Staff Success and Sustainable Leadership with Carla Ward

Strong leadership is not about being everywhere at once. It is about creating systems that support consistency, clarity, and shared responsibility across a program. When expectations are clear and processes are well established educators can focus on supporting children and collaborating with colleagues rather than navigating confusions and uncertainty.

This session is designed for administrators, supervisors, and pedagogical leaders who want to strengthen their leadership practices through effective systems. Participants will explore how communication, documentation, decision-making, onboarding, and daily operations influence workplace culture and team effectiveness.

Through reflection and practical examples, participants will examine the systems currently in place within their programs and identify opportunities to reduce inefficiencies, clarify expectations, and support educator autonomy. The session emphasizes systems as tools for support and empowerment rather than control, recognizing that strong systems create the conditions for educators to do their best work.

Participants will leave with practical strategies for developing and refining systems that promote accountability, collaboration, and sustainability while reducing the day-to-day pressures often associated with leadership roles.



Morning at The Arts Guild

Advancing Equity and Belonging in the Workplace with Shakira Weatherdon

Creating equitable and inclusive workplaces requires more than good intentions—it calls for intentional action, reflection, and a commitment to fostering belonging for all. This interactive session will explore practical strategies for embedding equity into workplace culture, policies, and everyday practices. Participants will examine common barriers to inclusion, reflect on their own leadership and organizational practices, and leave with actionable tools to cultivate environments where every employee feels valued, respected, and empowered to contribute. Whether you are a leader, supervisor, or team member, this session will provide insights and resources to help strengthen equity and belonging within your organization.



Afternoon at Confederation Centre: Room 2209



Experience SIX

Advancing Equity and Belonging in the Workplace with Shakira Weatherdon



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Morning at Confederation Centre: Room 2209

The Power of Play with Shari Ridgewell

“Children in PEI are healthy and happy, curious and creative, playful and joyous.” (PEI Early Learning Framework, 2011)

As early childhood educators we know that play holds fundamental value for development and is key to children’s learning. Easy to say but can be harder to implement in practice. Outside pressures, which used to focus on academics, now include many other demands which can affect our ability to keep play at the center of our practice. Through activities and facilitated discussion, participants will explore their relationship with play and brainstorm ways to break barriers keeping play as a key focus of daily practice.

Come play, reflect and learn together in a session that will support you to revitalize the full power of play as you achieve PEI’s vision for children.



**Highly
interactive
session**



Afternoon at Murphy’s Community Centre: Room 207



Experience SEVEN



Returning to Connection: Reimagining Relationship Through Material Encounters: Wonder, Resistant Curiosity, & Becoming-Little with Taylor Hansen

This opening session invites participants to slow down and reconsider what it means to know, notice, and relate in early childhood education and care. Together, we will explore wonder, resistant curiosity, and becoming-little as ethical dispositions that invite us to suspend certainty, remain open to surprise, and attend more carefully to the many ways children encounter and make meaning with the world. Together, we will begin creating the conditions for entering the material encounters of the second session with greater openness to not knowing, playfulness, and the possibilities that emerge.



Morning at Belvedere Golf Club

Returning to Connection: Reimagining Relationship Through Material Encounters: Materials Encounters with Taylor Hansen

This second session invites participants to think and be with materials, not only as tools for children's expression but as active participants in the early childhood classroom. Drawing on Pacini-Ketchabaw, Kind, & Kocher's (2017) *Thinking with Materials*, participants will be guided through sessions where they will explore and reimagine how materials "live, speak, gesture, and call to us" and children, and how they shape relationships, ideas, and possibilities in early childhood education and care spaces, and beyond.



Afternoon at Belvedere Golf Club

Experience EIGHT

PLEASE NOTE: This experience is for Directors, Supervisors, and Leaders

Leadership Synergy: Maximizing Potential in the Modern Workplace with Denise Stone



As directors struggle with the recruitment and retention of early learning and childcare staff, it is often difficult to find time to review the causative nature of this challenge and to brainstorm effective solutions. Through sharing of director/managers and facilitator experiences, this session will guide participants through an interactive discussion of proactive considerations and potential remedies for this common issue.

Topics to be examined include leading a cross-generational team, current 'cost' of staff turn-over, the importance of 'on-boarding' staff, leveraging the 'talent pool' within the centre, supporting staff performance through a management cycle and, using creative 'non-financial perks' to boost staff's external motivation



Morning at Holman Grand: Dunes & Beach Room



Finding Balance: Work, Life and Everything In Between (Work/Life Balance Tips) with Bernadette Currie

Balancing the demands of work and life can feel especially challenging in a profession centred around caring for others. This interactive session will explore practical, realistic strategies for managing stress, setting boundaries, protecting personal well-being, and creating more balance in everyday life. Participants will have opportunities to reflect, connect, and leave with simple tools they can use both at work and at home — without the pressure of trying to achieve a "perfect" work/life balance.



Afternoon at The Arts Guild

Experience NINE

The Power of Play with Shari Ridgewell

"Children in PEI are healthy and happy, curious and creative, playful and joyous." (PEI Early Learning Framework, 2011)

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Come play, reflect and learn together in a session that will support you to revitalize the full power of play as you achieve PEI's vision for children.

Highly
interactive
session



Morning at Murphy's Community Centre: Room 207

From Hello to Harmony: Building and Maintaining Positive Communications with Families with Denise Stone

"Any relationship is a living thing that grows and changes over time" (Zero to Three) and we know that relationships with families are an important cornerstone of a high-quality early learning and childcare environment. We also know that communication is the key to making any partnership work. So why does communication with families seem difficult?

Through interactive discussions we will explore together the communication challenges common in early learning and childcare environments such as time constraints, effective methods of communication and having difficult conversations (with families, peers, management).

These challenges will be viewed through the lens of the primary elements of positive communication, factors that may cause barriers to communication and how the early learning and childcare environment functions in the support of positive communication through their vision, expectations and policies.



Afternoon at Holman Grand: Dunes and Beach Room

Experience TEN



**Repeat
from Spring
Conference**



Caring for Infants and Toddlers with Respect and Dignity: An Introduction to RIE with Kris Foreman

Started by Magda Gerber and recently re-popularized by Janet Landsbury, the RIE (Resources for Infant Educators) Approach or Educaring is a way of thinking about parenting, teaching, and caring for young children that highlights the importance of involving children in their caregiving, acknowledging how they feel, and developing attuned relationships between child and caregiver. In this session, we will go through an introduction of the approach and methods and explore how we as early childhood educators can utilize these in a childcare setting



Morning at Murchison Centre: Room 1

Pain is Protection with Darren Weatherbie

During our session together we'll discuss that pain is not always harmful. Pain can sometimes be our friend by giving our nervous system signals of possible harm. During the session we'll discuss strategies on how to take control of our own pain and how to control our own nervous system.



Afternoon at Murchison Centre: Room 2



Experience ELEVEN

Seasonal Wellness Planning: Simple Habits of Wellbeing with Will Fuller



Our wellbeing needs can change throughout the year. This interactive session introduces a practical four-step framework for seasonal wellness planning. Through guided reflection and discussion, participants will identify what matters most for their wellbeing in the current season, choose one or two simple habits that fit their lives, and create a realistic plan they can begin using right away. They will leave with a personalized wellness plan for one season and a framework they can reuse throughout the year.



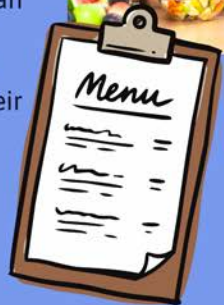
Morning at Hampton Inn

Smart Menus and Confident Eaters: Menu Planning and Food Literacy in Early Childhood with Brittany Boothroyd

This session aims to equip ECE's with practical strategies to both maximize resources as well as strengthen food literacy in their programs. Topics include cost-effective menu planning, simple, nutrition focused menu swaps to support steady energy through the day, integrating food education into everyday learning, the effect of using neutral food language and introducing children to a variety of foods and flavours at an early age. This session includes a live food demonstration and participants are encouraged to participate in discussions; ask questions and share ideas and will leave with strategies they can implement in their own centers.



Afternoon at Hampton Inn



Experience TWELVE



Pain is Protection with Darren Weatherbie

During our session together we'll discuss that pain is not always harmful. Pain can sometimes be our friend by giving our nervous system signals of possible harm. During the session we'll discuss strategies on how to take control of our own pain and how to control our own nervous system.



Morning at Murchison Centre: Room 2

Harnessing the Power of Emotional Regulation as an Infant and Toddler Educator with Kris Foreman

Navigating big feelings in infants and toddlers can feel like you're running from fire to fire without a hose – but there is a way to go from managing behaviours, to supporting big feelings! In this session, we will be going over some tools for educators to self-regulate, co-regulate and build more attuned and peaceful classrooms.



Afternoon at Murchison Centre: Room 1



Experience THRITTEEN



Smart Menus and Confident Eaters: Menu Planning and Food Literacy in Early Childhood with Brittany Boothroyd

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Morning at Holiday Inn Express

Building Joyful Eaters: How Early Childhood Educators Shape Lifelong Habits with Melody Swan

Early Childhood Educators play a vital role in laying the foundation for a child's lifelong relationship with food. This interactive session equips educators with practical strategies to encourage positive mealtime environments, nourish growing bodies and tips for having fun with food. Together we will explore the following topics:

- Essential early childhood nutrition
- Tips for picky eating
- How to enhance food literacy at a young age
- Hands on cooking session designed for little hands



Afternoon at Holiday Inn Express



Experience FOURTEEN

More Than Just Play! with Erica Ross & Janet Campbell



Language learning doesn't need fancy materials or extra time. It can happen while stacking blocks, feeding dolls, cleaning up, or getting ready to head outside. In this hands-on session, we'll discover how to turn everyday moments into opportunities for communication and connection. Come ready to participate, share ideas, and leave with practical strategies that make language learning feel natural, fun, and easy to embed throughout the day.



Morning at The Arts Hotel: Tivoli Cinema

From Curious to Confident: The Joy of Discovering New Foods with Basil Bunny with Misty Dawn Rositer and Leah Ellis (Tunes and Tales)

Basil Bunny is a gentle, playful story about the joy of discovering new foods. Inspired by themes from the CELEBRATE Feeding Project—an ongoing research initiative focused on encouraging responsive feeding practices in early learning and child care programs—the book is designed for all children, especially cautious eaters, and for anyone who loves stories filled with curiosity, connection, and warmth.

With playful songs and a sweet guessing game, Basil Bunny invites children to explore foods that are new or unfamiliar in a fun, low-pressure way. Repeated exposure gives children many opportunities to become familiar with new foods by seeing, touching, smelling, and, eventually, tasting them at their own pace.

Each gentle exposure and positive experience can help a food feel more familiar and comfortable, supporting children as they develop confidence and a willingness to explore. The goal is not to pressure children to eat, but to create positive experiences that nurture curiosity and support healthy relationships with food over the long term.

This interactive session combines evidence-based best practices around food exploration, curiosity, and “learning to like” principles with playful, practical approaches for early learning professionals.



Afternoon at Atlantic Technology Centre

Experience FIFTEEN

The Use of Play in Supporting Classroom Management with Nicole MacRae



In this session we will explore how children's brains develop, reframing how we view childhood behaviors and learning new ways to make sense of their big feelings and experiences. Together, we will discuss how play-based interventions can support children as they navigate through these experiences, including how play based interventions can enhance their overall development. In addition, we will talk about how play can be integrated into all classroom activities, supporting your classroom management strategies and giving you more tools in your role as an ECE.



Morning at The Arts Hotel: Salvador Dali Cafe

Getting Ready for Outdoor Loose Parts Play - In Every Season with Tanya Moxley

Does it feel like all members of your staff are ready for loose parts play, right up until it means the adults are getting cold and / or wet?

Join us for a session that goes beyond the importance of outdoor loose parts play into the practical realities of making that happen at your site. Indoors is easy and often the default, but outdoors? That can take a little more effort – not so much for the children in your care – more likely for your staff who may struggle with appropriate clothing and mindset around being outdoors in cold, wet weather. We'll begin with a discussion of the playwork principles and the developmental importance of outdoor loose parts play, then move into discussion of your experiences and questions about how to encourage staff engagement with outdoor loose parts play in more challenging weather conditions.



Afternoon at Quality Inn

Experience SIXTEEN



Outdoor Play, Better Indoor Days: Building Active Play Habits Outside to Support Calmer, More Regulated Indoor Environments with Angelina Mighty Osborne

Summer offers a natural opportunity to bring more active play outdoors with ease. Without the added layers and winter gear routines, educators often have more flexibility to extend movement, exploration, and connection outside. This session explores how intentional outdoor active play can be used to build simple, sustainable habits that support year-round practice with a focus on how well-planned outdoor time often helps children return indoors more focused, calm, and ready to re-engage.

Participants will leave with practical, flexible strategies to make outdoor active play an intentional and sustainable part of daily practice.



Morning at The Arts Hotel: Canvas Meeting Room

Speech-Language Pathology Basics for Early Educators with Erica Ross & Janet Campbell

This introductory/refresher session is designed for educators who are new to our sessions—or those looking to revisit foundational speech-language pathology (SLP) knowledge and practice.

Participants will explore:

- Key early communication and speech milestones
- Signs that may indicate concern
- Practical strategies to promote early language development
- How to embed language-building strategies into daily routines and common activities within early learning centers

This session emphasizes collaborative discussion and group brainstorming rather than hands-on practice.



Afternoon at The Arts Hotel: Tivoli Cinema

Experience

SEVENTEEN



From Curious to Confident: The Joy of Discovering New Foods with Basil Bunny with Misty Dawn Rossiter & Leah Ellis (Tunes and Tales)



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Morning at Atlantic Technology Centre

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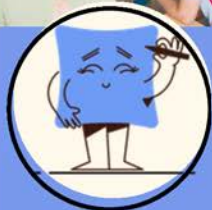
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Afternoon at The Arts Hotel: Canvas Meeting Room

Experience EIGHTEEN

Creative Problem-Solving Using Action Research with Tanya Moxley



Join us for a session on creative problem solving among staff, using rough-and-tumble play as our example. Do you or members of your staff team struggle with allowing rough-and-tumble play? How is this managed amongst your team? Might the children in your care find it challenging to know what's okay, when some staff members allow certain activities, but other staff do not? Does saying "No" to particular activities feel like 'whack-a-mole' – I say No here but then I turn around and the children are doing anyway, over there? Bring your concerns and work through the action research process with us – a tool you can use for many topics and situations.



Morning at Quality Inn

Valued Based Living to Reduce Burnout and Improve Job Satisfaction with Nicole MacRae

Burnout and Compassion Fatigue is a reality facing many ECEs, with Canadian statistics showing many are taking medical leaves or leaving the field entirely by the 5 year mark. Researchers, ECE Associations, Advocates and Therapists want to shift this, and one emerging strategy is to support ECEs and their Associations to develop value based living techniques and strategies. Through this session we will discuss the signs and symptoms of burnout, as well as what Value Based living entails as it relates to work and life. We will also engage in a variety of hands-on activities to reflect on our values and how they guide us, reduce burnout and increase overall job satisfaction.



Afternoon at The Arts Hotel: Salvador Dali Cafe

DAY 2

FRIDAY

LOCATION

Confederation Centre of The Arts
130 Queen Street , Charlottetown, PE C1A 4B3



DAY 2

Keynote EXPERIENCE



Richard Monette

Active Play is NOT Optional: Helping
Children Thrive in the Digital Age

Jessica Karpathios

The Architecture of Joy: More Than Fun: Reclaiming
the Joy and Complexity of the Early Years



Hannah Beach

Where Resilience Begins:
The Freedom to Play. The Safety to Feel.

Rusty Keeler

ReWilding Childhood



Your FACILITATORS



Hannah Beach (she/her)

When it comes to understanding kids from the inside out, few voices are as trusted—or as heartfelt—as Hannah Beach's.

Hannah is an award-winning educator, #1 Globe & Mail best-selling author, and emotional health consultant who's dedicated her career to supporting the hearts behind the behavior. She is the co-author of the best-selling book *Reclaiming Our Students: Why Children Are More Anxious, Aggressive, and Shut-Down than Ever—and What We Can Do About It*, with Tamara Neufeld Strijack, a trauma-informed resource for educators and parents rooted in the relationship-based approach. This best-selling book has now been translated into multiple languages internationally and adopted by school boards across Canada.

Named one of Canada's top changemakers by the Canadian Human Rights Commission in 2017, Hannah brings warmth, humor, and real strategies rooted in play, connection, and relationship. Her bestselling *Can Dance* book series, supporting the emotional health of children through expressive play, won a 2017 Gold International Moonbeam Children's Book Award.

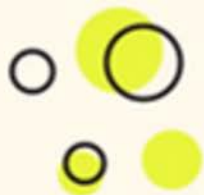
Hannah has a rare gift for blending high energy with heartfelt storytelling, moving seamlessly from powerful insights that evoke tears to moments of shared laughter. She doesn't just speak—Hannah creates an experience, blending emotion, insight, authenticity, and humor in a way that leaves audiences inspired and transformed.

She delivers powerful keynotes to audiences of thousands globally, while also working closely with leadership teams in more intimate boardroom settings. Whether inspiring entire conferences or guiding strategic leaders through meaningful change, she brings the same authenticity, energy, and impact to every room she enters.



Rusty Keeler

From Tasmania to Texas, Rusty Keeler has spent the last 35 years traveling the world designing and advocating for children's play. He is on a mission to spark a play revolution—bringing nature, risk, and pure joy back into childhood. Described as a cross between Mr Rogers and Jerry Garcia, Rusty is a frequent keynote speaker and author of multiple books on play including his latest *Adventures in Risky Play: What is Your Yes?* Rusty lives with his family beside a creek in Ithaca, NY, where he hosts the Play Nature Podcast and leads the Nature Play Academy, a membership community for the world's most excited nature play advocates learning and growing together. He'd love for you to join him!



Your FACILITATORS

Jessica Karpathios (she/her)

Jessica Karpathios (car-path-eos) (RECE, BASc, Certified Forest School Practitioner) is a pedagogical consultant, professor, and the founder of The Curious Educator Collective. With 15 years of experience in licensed child care across Ontario and international settings, Jessica works at the intersection of Reggio Emilia philosophy, forest school pedagogy, and the lived reality of the sector.

Through 1:1 coaching, organizational consulting, workshops, and keynotes, she has supported 15,000 educators across Canada and the USA. Jessica wants to live in a world where ECEs are respected and recognized for the invaluable role they play in society, and she hopes to help elevate that message, because "we could make this place beautiful."

Jessica lives in Ontario with her husband and their dog, where they spend their time in nature, connecting to the land.



Richard Monette

Richard Monette is a social innovator with more than 35 years of experience across education, sport psychology, and organizational development. His work focuses on helping people and organizations do meaningful, purposeful work in real-world conditions and constraints. As part of the leadership team at B2ten, Richard created and leads Active for Life (AfL), a national not-for-profit initiative that provides practical, evidence-informed resources to support parents and educators. AfL initiatives include Learn Through Active Play, a free professional development program that empowers early childhood educators make learning through active play a regular part of daily practice in childcare settings, supporting children's development and readiness for school and a better learning and work environment



Your FACILITATORS



Carla Ward (she/her)

Carla Ward is a passionate educator, speaker, and podcast host with over 20 years of experience inspiring teachers and leaders to reconnect with their purpose and bring joy back to their work. A proud Early Childhood Educator, Carla's approach reaches across roles and age groups, focusing on what truly matters in education: connection, curiosity, and intentional practice.

As the host of The Everything ECE Podcast and founder of The ECE Experience conference, ECE Podcast Academy, and The ECE Latte Lounge, Carla empowers educators around the world to reflect, grow, and lead with authenticity. Her work blends research, reflection, and practical strategies to help educators thrive in their classrooms, teams, and professional journeys.

Known for her warmth and humour, Carla makes professional development feel like a conversation with a trusted friend. Whether leading a keynote, mentoring entrepreneurs, or hosting her podcast, her mission is simple: elevate education and celebrate the incredible people who bring learning to life.



Shakira Weatherdon (she/her)

Shakira Weatherdon is an experienced leader of complex and institution wide initiatives, ensuring genuine and intentional collaboration, and responsiveness to organizational needs; particularly those that meet current and future needs of equity-deserving persons. She is a skilled change manager who strategically and collaboratively leads organizations towards evidenced-based policy decision making to ensure equitable and inclusive public service. She is the managing director of Chrysalis Human Rights Agency Inc. and founder of Black Girls Gather, a non-profit with a mission to equip young, Black women entrepreneurs with the tools, strategies and networks they need to build and scale up successful ventures and attaching new Black women graduates to meaningful employment opportunities. Her passions include supporting organizations to create safer, more welcoming, and inclusive environments and cultivating Black Girl Magic and Black Boy Joy. Shakira received her MA in Gender and Peacebuilding from the United Nations mandated University for Peace and her Honors Bachelor of Arts in Gender and Development Studies from the University of Toronto.

Your FACILITATORS

Taylor Hansen

Taylor is a mother to two young children and an advocate for children's rights. She is particularly interested in the dynamic ways diverse children advocate and make space for themselves in their daily lives, as well as the ways caregivers transform space through their courage to care well for children in a world that does not care well for many. She has worked directly with young people in a variety of capacities, contexts, and locations for over 20 years and is driven by a desire to support others in relating to all children as complete people worthy of dignity and respect. Currently, Taylor is a Lecturer in the Department of Child and Youth Study at Mount Saint Vincent University and in this role aims to create learning spaces with her students that challenge colonial norms and prioritize care.



Bernadette Currie

Bernadette Currie is a wellness coach, personal trainer, fitness instructor, and owner of FitLife Wellness Solutions. Before entering the wellness industry, she worked in financial services as a manager with BNY Mellon in product development, helping create technology solutions for financial firms.

After moving from Philadelphia to PEI in 2015, Bernadette decided to shift careers and pursue work focused on health, wellness, and helping people thrive. Her combination of corporate leadership experience and wellness coaching gives her a unique perspective on workplace stress, competing priorities, and the challenge of taking care of yourself while managing the demands of work and life.

Today, Bernadette works with individuals and organizations to make wellness practical, approachable, and sustainable. Through coaching, fitness, and speaking, she brings energy, humour, and a realistic perspective to topics including self-care, stress management, movement, and work-life balance.



Your FACILITATORS



Gina Blank (she/her)

Gina Blank (she/her) moves through the world as a cis-gender, bi-racial woman; these identities intersect with education in psychology and as well as special education. She has worked with Kids Included for over twenty 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—photographing wildlife, digging in the garden, or reading a good book.



Tanya Moxley

Tanya is an ambassador for unstructured loose parts play! In 2018 she completed the Playworker Development Course, through Pop-up Adventure Play in the U.K. She got into the “loose parts” business in 2012 upon meeting Beverlie Dietze, while working at Mount Saint Vincent University.

Her ‘at home’ loose parts collection began to grow while working with the Halifax Regional Centre for Education’s “Excel” program (Before & After School Care). After rave reviews from casual loose parts activities, T K Adventure Play was invited to visit every Excel site during the 2017-18 school year. Sixty-five schools followed, as well as visits to early childhood centres, summer camps, birthday parties, after-school programs, a variety of community events and even farmers’ markets!

Realizing that much time was being spent at play events with adults, helping them “get out of the way” of kids’ play, Tanya put her M.Ed in Adult Education to work and began offering professional development to anyone interested in learning about unstructured loose parts play. Programs are offered in person and via Zoom, through The Mount’s PD program, the NSCC Burr Ridge Campus, the NSCECE Resource Centre in Halifax, and also by direct arrangement with T K Adventure Play.

Your

FACILITATORS

Misty Dawn Rossiter (she/her)

Misty Rossiter (she/her) is a Registered Dietitian and a Professor of Foods & Nutrition in the Department of Applied Human Sciences at the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI). Misty has been conducting research in early years nutrition for close to 20 years with a particular interest in responsive feeding practices and nutrition policy. She co-led the CELEBRATE Feeding project with Dr. Jessie-Lee McIsaac and their work supports early learning settings to create environments that encourage children to develop positive relationships with food. Misty holds a BSc in Foods & Nutrition from UPEI, a MSc in Applied Human Nutrition from Mount Saint Vincent University, and a PhD in Family Relations and Applied Nutrition from the University of Guelph.



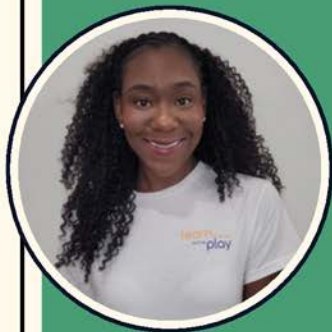
Leah Ellis (Tunes and Tales)

Tunes and Tales is a PEI based musical storytelling group creating imaginative, interactive performances for children and families. Blending original songs, and visual storytelling through crankies, their shows invite audiences into rich story worlds that encourage creativity, empathy, and social-emotional learning.



Angelina Mighty Osborne (she/her)

Angelina Mighty Osborne is an inspiring leader deeply dedicated to social impact and community empowerment. With over 12 years of experience in the non-profit sector, she has collaborated with organizations to conduct research, identify service gaps, and craft strategic plans to meet organizational needs. Driven by a passion for social justice and equity, Angelina focuses on providing resources and opportunities to historically underserved communities. Drawing on her expertise in psychology and her extensive field experience, she works to address root causes, dismantle barriers, and create meaningful, long-lasting change. Her mission is to foster a more just and equitable society for future generations.



Your FACILITATORS



Darren Weatherbie

Darren Weatherbie is a Manual Osteopath based in Charlottetown, PEI and a graduate of the National Academy of Osteopathy. He specializes in Neurofascial Reset (RAPID-NFR), a neurologically based therapeutic technique that targets the central nervous system to release tension and restrictions in muscles, fascia, tendons, and nerves. Through hands-on assessment and guided movement, his treatments aim to reduce pain and improve mobility and overall body function.



Nicole MacRae

Nicole is a Mental Health Therapist specializing in Trauma, Reproductive Counselling/Infertility, Grief/Loss, Perinatal Mental Health, Anxiety as well as working with Children, Adolescents and Parents. She owns Oak and Cedar Counselling Services, currently located in Summerside, PEI but also provides services across New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

As a practitioner for almost 20 years, Nicole is highly skilled and educated in a wide variety of areas. This includes being Certified in EMDR and is one of a handful of Certified Perinatal Mental Health Therapists in Atlantic Canada. Of special note, she also has specialized Play and Art therapy training, and has worked with kids and adolescents of all ages. Though her private practice works mostly with Adults now, her passion for Child and Adolescent Mental Health is still an important part of her work and she is looking forward to connecting with everyone at this year's Conference.



Kris Foreman (they/them)

Kris Foreman (They/Them) is an Early Childhood Educator from Fredericton, New Brunswick. Kris graduated from St. Thomas University with a BA in Gender Studies and Native Studies and they have been working in childcare for about a decade. They currently run a licensed ELC Home called Seeds & Sprouts Childcare and are a parent to a four year old named Oliver. As an educator, Kris believes our jobs are political and our pedagogies and classrooms reflect that. Their work centers creating spaces for children to be wholly themselves and to model co-regulation, conflict resolution and advocacy skills hand in hand with child-led play and discovery.



Your



FACILITATORS

Erica Ross (she/her) & Janet Campbell (she/her)

Erica Ross, SLP, graduated from University of Toronto and Janet Campbell, SLP, graduated from Dalhousie University with their Masters in Speech-Language Pathology.

Between the two of them they have over 40 years of experience building and supporting communication opportunities for preschoolers. They are both continually learning so that they can have a therapy practice based on current research, having fun, finding joy, and building on each client's strengths.

Erica and Janet share a love of golden retrievers and golden doodles, beach days, peanut butter cups, and lift the flap books. Both 'Islanders', Erica lives and works in Summerside and Janet is in Charlottetown.



Will Fuller

Will Fuller is a Licensed Naturotherapist (ACNN & APNN), Wellness Educator, and Functional Movement Specialist based on Prince Edward Island. With a background in Sports Science, Physical Education, functional movement, and more than two decades in health and wellness, Will's work focuses on helping people simplify wellbeing and turn good intentions into practical, sustainable habits.

Originally from the UK, Will has taught and worked in health, education, and wellness settings internationally, including England, Kenya, Kuwait, and California. His professional experience includes wellness education, functional movement therapy, postural re-education, manual therapy, and self-care education.

Through Vision Body Mind, Will combines his experience in wellness education, movement, behaviour change, and planning. He helps individuals and organizations develop simple, practical approaches to everyday wellbeing. His workshops emphasize reflection, practical decision-making, and small, consistent actions that can be adapted to real life.



Your FACILITATORS



Brittany Boothroyd (she/her)

Chef Brittany Boothroyd is a Red Seal Chef, food educator, and founder of Wild Kitchen; her cooking class and meal prep business. A graduate of both the Culinary Arts and Pastry Arts programs at the Culinary Institute of Canada, Brittany began her career in 2010 and spent 12 years working professionally in restaurants in PEI and abroad before bringing her experience into her own business. Through Wild Kitchen, Brittany combines professional culinary experience with a practical and approachable philosophy of food and cooking. Her work focuses on inspiring confidence in cooking and planning delicious, balanced meals despite real-world time and budget constraints.

Brittany is passionate about food literacy and the role that everyday food experiences can play in developing lifelong skills and positive relationships with food and cooking. Her interest in early childhood food education has grown through her work as a cooking instructor as well as her experience raising two young children. As a mother of two young boys she understands firsthand the practical realities of feeding growing children while balancing time, cost, variety, and nutrition. Brittany brings professional culinary knowledge, real-world experience, and a genuine enthusiasm for making food more accessible, exciting and sustainable.



Shari Ridgewell

Shari worked with children birth to 12 years; as a program administration; instructor of early childhood students; a professional development provider and an advocate for high-quality early learning and care. With a 22-year career with the Nova Scotia government, she licensed childcare centres, provided consulting services, drafted policies and was responsible for program development focused on inclusion, equity and quality. She coordinated the initial implementation of the Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children in Nova Scotia. A professional development framework using practice-based coaching with educators to increase the use of evidence-based practices with children. Now retired she continues consulting and supporting the NS province-wide Pyramid Model initiative which uses an implementation science framework to foster sustainable and scalable systems change. Her passion is to increase positive outcomes for children and their families.

Your FACILITATORS

Denise Stone (she/her)

Denise has over 40 years of experience working with young children and families, facilitation, consultation and policy development. She has worked in a wide variety of early learning and childcare settings and communities across the country, with a primary focus on children with challenging and divergent needs.

Denise has been a faculty member at the College of the North Atlantic (St. John's Nfld/Lab), Bow Valley College (Calgary, Alta.), NS College of Early Childhood Education and, currently as an adjunct professor at Mount Saint Vincent University.

Denise's career included 20 years with the Nova Scotia government, where she held numerous leadership roles, including licensing, policy development for special needs programs, supervisor and program director. One of her key achievements was participating in the development and implementation of the Nova Scotia Provincial Pre-primary Program. She retired from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development as the Executive Director Early Learning and Child Care in 2022.



Melody Swan

Melody Swan is a Registered Dietitian and has worked at the Abegweit First Nation Mi'kmaq Wellness Centre as a Health Promotion Coordinator for nearly 10 years. She is a mother of two beautiful, crazy children and understands (and appreciates!) the importance of Early Childhood Educators.

Her role at the Wellness Centre consists of; working with community members across the lifespan, managing a greenhouse and staff, and advocating for nutrition public health within the community. She also collaborates with the Abegweit Early Years Centre where she works with staff to make their seasonal menus and to incorporate hands-on curriculum to enhance food literacy.

By teaching young children where food comes from, how it grows, and how nourishment supports their bodies, Melody helps establish positive, lifelong relationships with food. Understanding that habits formed in early childhood shape long-term health outcomes, Melody helps facilitate hands-on learning and strives to make nutrition engaging and accessible for children, families, and educators alike.



MEET OUR TEAM



Jennifer Nangreaves (she/her)

Executive Director

Jenn has been leading the ECDA of PEI as Executive Director since March 2021, bringing over a decade of experience in the Early Learning and Child Care sector across both PEI and Alberta. With a background in sociology, early literacy, and Indigenous Peoples studies, and as a passionate Early Childhood Educator, Jenn is deeply committed to ensuring children and ECEs are supported, valued, and heard. She believes that when ECEs are supported, children thrive; and she's here to make that happen.



Megan McPhee (she/her)

Professional Learning and Operations Manager

Megan joined the ECDA team in 2019, after working as a frontline Early Childhood Educator for 12 years. Her diverse educational background and extensive experience in the field have equipped her with a unique perspective on early childhood. Megan believes in creating inclusive learning environments where every child feels valued and empowered. She is a creative mess maker, and loves to learn with her heart and soul. Her innovative approach to education, combined with her commitment to continuous learning have fueled her journey at the ECDA.



Karoll Aguila (she/her)

Office Administrator

Karoll joined ECDA in June 2025 with over seven years of experience in customer service and office management. Passionate about workplace culture and people operations, she brings a creative, solution-oriented mindset. Karoll is committed to continuous learning and contributing to a positive, productive work environment.

MEET OUR TEAM



Julian Taylor (he/him)

Marketing and Communications Manager

Julian Taylor is the Marketing, Communication, and office prankster at the ECDA of PEI. He loves goals, quality, and working as a team to accomplish projects. Julian is here to make sure the ECDA's visions become a reality.



Jay Baglole (they/them)

Professional Learning Coordinator

Jay is the ECDA's Professional Learning Coordinator, bringing curiosity, creativity, and plenty of energy to the early childhood community! They first joined the ECDA in 2022 as the Pyramid to Retention Project Coordinator. Jay is a passionate advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion in the early years, championing spaces where children, families, and educators feel seen, valued, and supported.



Megan Drummond (she/her)

Special Projects Coordinator

As Special Projects Coordinator, Megan Drummond plays a role in helping the organization achieve its mission to support early childhood educators, contribute to building a strong early learning system across PEI, and creating awareness of the impact of positive learning experiences in licensed quality care in the early years. Her passion lies in creating environments where educators, children, and families feel truly welcome—and where a love of learning can flourish. Megan believes that strong, supportive early childhood experiences are foundational to healthy communities.

Fall Conference PRICING

	Dates available	Member Price	Non-Member Price
Early Bird Pricing	Sept 22 – Oct 6	\$210	\$420
Standard Pricing	Oct 7 – Oct 23	\$265	\$530
Late Registration	Oct 24 – Nov 2	\$295	\$590

***All tickets are subject to applicable taxes.**
Payment is due in full no later than November 2nd, 2026

Contact us!



info@ecdaofpei.ca



(902)-368-1866



www.ecdaofpei.ca

Early
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FALL CONFERENCE 2026

Thank You!