

Early Learning
and Child Care

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MOVING FORWARD ON CHILD CARE PRIORITIES



First Annual ECE Awards of Excellence: a Resounding Success

On Friday, November 28, 2025, nearly 100 early childhood education professionals, friends, families, and colleagues gathered at the Manitoba Legislative Building for the inaugural Manitoba Early Childhood Educator Awards of Excellence.



Twelve Early Childhood Educators were recognized for their outstanding achievements with certificates awarded by the Honourable Tracy Schmidt, Minister, Education and Early Childhood Learning.

The Early Childhood Educator Awards of Excellence honour Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) who play a vital role in shaping the lives of children under the age of twelve. The awards celebrate early learning and child care professionals who exhibit standards of excellence in early childhood education and recognize home-based providers for their contributions to enhancing children's growth and development.

Read more about the awards and the 2025 recipients at manitoba.ca/eceawards.

The 2025 ECE Awards of Excellence winners with Minister Schmidt (top row, third from left) and MLA Tyler Blashko (top row, fourth from left).



2025 AWARD RECIPIENTS

OUTSTANDING Early Childhood Educator Awards



Elizabeth Dryden
Tuxedo Preschool
Education Centre,
Winnipeg



Laura Remillard
Souris Cooperative
Daycare Centre,
Souris



Zen Rio Quinsaat
Fort Rouge Co-op
Day Nursery,
Winnipeg

INDIGENOUS



Amanda Johnson
Inspired by Wonder,
Winnipeg

FRANCOPHONE



Charlotte McPherson
La Garderie Arc-en-Ciel,
Notre Dame



Collaborative Early Learning Team Award

**Kara Booth,
Marina Lisak and
Amaia Zenon
Goldaraz**
Tova Vickar Child
Care Centre,
Winnipeg



Leadership Excellence Award

Ioulia Berdnikova
University of Winnipeg Students'
Association Day Care Centre,
Winnipeg



Exemplary Home-Based Early Learning Environment Award

Jean Sangalang,
Winnipeg



Ginette Simard,
Winnipeg



Shannon Trickett,
Winnipeg



Each recipient also received a cheque for \$500 in recognition of their achievements.

The Department offers its heartfelt congratulations to all of this year's winners and nominees for their exemplary dedication to and caring for Manitoba's children.

For more information, visit manitoba.ca/eceawards.

Meet the ELCC Team

Muffins McGingerbean, Nice List Coordinator, Manitoba Division

The Office of Reindeer, far-Northern Affairs, Magic, Elves, Nutcrackers, and Toys (O.R.N.A.M.E.N.T.) has recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with each of Canada's provinces and territories to better assist in the production of Santa's annual Naughty and Nice List. Early Learning and Child Care is happy to share office space this year with Muffins McGingerbean, Manitoba's official Nice List Coordinator.

"It's a common misconception that we 'make the list and check it twice.' That's just the old song. The REAL list is updated daily right up until December 23. This year, we're using A.E.I. (Artificial Elf Intelligence) to run a complete diagnostic review every 30 minutes. Before, we had to have at least 100 elves on shifts working 25 hours a day, eight days a week right up until the big guy laced up his boots!

People keep asking, and the answer is "no," saying, "SIX SEVEN!" does not automatically put kids on the bad list.

Who is on the Nice List this year? Well, I really can't say specifically, but there are a lot of great kids who happen to attend child care facilities across the province from Swan River to Selkirk. Come to think of it, there are a lot of CCAs and ECEs on the list too—that can't be a coincidence, can it?

The best part of working with ELCC this year? Definitely the people, collaborating with early childhood educators who make magic happen for kids every day—almost as magical as the North Pole."

As Manitoba's official Nice List Coordinator, Muffins McGingerbean doesn't just track the good deeds—he also keeps a close eye on the Naughty List. After all, balance is everything. From monitoring cookie theft to following up with those who are late submitting facility reports, Muffins makes sure the holiday spirit stays bright and fair.

Here's to a season of warmth, kindness, laughter, and just enough magic to keep the reindeer flying!



Muffins McGingerbean,
Nice List Coordinator





Each month, the division will answer a common inquiry received from facilities in a question-and-answer format.

This Month's Question

How do I report school-aged children on the Facility Report during the winter break?

Answer

During the winter break, enter school-aged children attendance under the In-services and Holidays category.

The In-services and Holidays category must be used for any non-school days from September 1 to June 30, such as school in-services, winter and spring breaks, recognized holidays, and professional development closure days.

For more information on facility reporting, review the video or transcript of the [Facility Reporting and Child Care Subsidy Program webinar](#) held on November 6, 2025.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REMINDERS

Webinar Recording Now Available: Early Childhood Educator Recruit-Back Incentive

This session provided an overview of the new ECE Recruit-Back Incentive, which provides eligible Early Childhood Educators (ECE) with a grant of \$5,000 to return to work full-time in a Manitoba licensed non-profit early learning and child care centre or licensed home. Topics included eligibility, application, selection, funding distribution, and the employment verification process. View the [recording](#).

Board Governance Training Workshop—January 13 and 14, 2026

To help make the most of the customizable Board Governance Manual resources distributed to licensed non-profit centres, register for the upcoming **Governance Training Workshop** (no cost) this January focused on finance, human resources, and legal oversight. These workshops, developed in collaboration with Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning, Manitoba Child Care Association, and People First HR Services, are shaped by feedback from centres already using the Board Governance supports launched in November 2024 (see [circular](#))—and they're packed with insights to empower Centre directors and board members in leading with confidence and clarity.

Register: January 13 from 10 to 11:30 a.m.: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/RVKXsqX-TIK2h13JFpwiIA>

Register: January 14 from 6 to 7:30 p.m.: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/1-WIUZ_pSw-nTKHSrEi7TQ

For further details and to request the *Early Learning and Child Care Board Governance Manual* and/or to access individualized support services provided at no-charge by People First HR Services, visit Manitoba Child Care Association (MCCA)—Board Governance—Manual and Implementation Support at <https://mccahouse.org/professional-development/board-governance>.

ECE II Programs in 2026

Take the next step in your career and enrol in an ECE II program. For details, including eligibility, application deadlines, and program specifics, contact the post-secondary institution directly.

Post-Secondary Institution	Program	Location	Term/Dates
Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology	ECE Diploma (two-year)	Winnipeg (Scurfield Campus)	January and September
	Workplace Program	Winnipeg	September
University College of the North	40-hour course	The Pas and Thompson Campus	September and February
	40-hour course	Distance and Online Learning	September and February
	ECE Diploma year 1 and year 2	The Pas and Thompson Campus	September
Assiniboine College	ECE Qualification Recognition	Victoria Avenue East Campus (Brandon)	September
	Early Childhood Education	Parkland Campus, Victoria East Campus	September
	ECE Workplace	Online	January
		Victoria Avenue East Campus	September
	ECE Program Management (ECE III)	Online	Flexible Start/Monthly
Red River College Polytechnic	ECE Workplace	Notre Dame Campus/in-person	January
	ECE Course-Based Registration	Notre Dame Campus/in-person	January
	ECE Course-Based Registration	Notre Dame Campus/in-person	April
	ECE Workplace	Exchange District Campus/Hybrid in-person and online	September
	ECE Course-Based Registration	Notre Dame Campus/in-person	September
Robertson College	ECE Diploma	Synchronously and Asynchronously (Hybrid)	January, February, and April
	ECE Diploma	Winnipeg	January, February, and April
Louis Riel College	The Indigenous-Focused Early Childhood Educator (IFECE) Program	Winnipeg	January and June

Help spread the word! Share and/or post a copy of the [ECE II Training pathways flyer](#) promoting a career in Early Childhood Education and highlighting the various recognized Early Childhood Education training options in Manitoba.

Volunteer Manitoba Professional Development Subsidy

Volunteer Manitoba has launched a new subsidy program to help non-profit organizations access professional development opportunities across the province. The subsidy will cover up to 75% of the training requested.

This initiative offers financial support for training that builds skills and strengthens community impact. Whether you're looking to boost leadership, improve fundraising, or train your team, this subsidy makes professional development more accessible.

Winter Intake Deadline:
January 15, 2026

Check the [ELCC Professional Development page](#) regularly for more updates on available opportunities.

For more information, visit <https://www.volunteermanitoba.ca/professional-development-subsidy>.

2026 Closure Days

This month, the department sent out a letter to all facilities outlining the recognized holiday schedule for 2026 and three professional development (PD) days for the early learning and child care (ELCC) workforce in the 2026 calendar year.

Funded facilities may choose to be closed on the following general and non-general holidays, charge parent fees, and receive payments for the Reduced Parent Fee Revenue Grant and subsidy on behalf of eligible families if:

- Both subsidized and non-subsidized families are charged regular fees.
- Your facility would normally be open but is closed on the date listed below.

General Holidays	
New Year's Day	Thursday, January 1, 2026
Louis Riel Day	Monday, February 16, 2026
Good Friday	Friday, April 3, 2026
Victoria Day	Monday, May 18, 2026
Canada Day	Wednesday, July 1, 2026
Labour Day	Monday, September 7, 2026
National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (Orange Shirt Day)	Wednesday, September 30, 2026
Thanksgiving Day	Monday, October 12, 2026
Remembrance Day *	Wednesday, November 11, 2026
Christmas Day	Friday, December 25, 2026
New Year's Day 2027	Friday, January 1, 2027
Non-General Holidays	
Easter Monday	Monday, April 6, 2026
Terry Fox Day	Monday, August 3, 2026
Boxing Day	Monday, December 28, 2026

For more information on holiday closures and professional development days, view the [full document](#).

Call for Nominations: Prime Minister Awards of Excellence in Early Childhood Education

Do you know an exceptional early childhood educator who deserves recognition for their outstanding work? Nominations are now open for the 2026 Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Early Childhood Education. All Canadian citizens and permanent residents who have successfully completed early childhood education training and have worked in a licensed facility for the past three years could be eligible. Start today by downloading a nomination form. Nominations for the [2026 Prime Minister's Awards](#) must be submitted by **January 14, 2026**.

EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE DIVISION UPDATE



Early Learning and Child Care Connecting with Community Across Manitoba

Early Learning and Child Care Attends the Pluri-Elles Career Fair

Staff from the division attended the Pluri-Elles Career Fair at Collège Louis-Riel on November 29, 2025. This French-language event offered attendees the opportunity to explore new career options and connect with hiring managers. Many participants stopped by the Become an Early Childhood Educator booth to learn more about how to start a rewarding career in child care.

Staffing Updates

We continue to welcome new staff into our division to support Manitoba's priorities for early learning and child care and support career growth and development of existing staff.

Signe Hanson has been appointed through a competitive process as the permanent Executive Director of the Capital and Space Expansion Branch. Signe joined ELCC as acting Executive Director in January 2024, and has been with the Manitoba government for over 15 years, having previously served as the Assistant Executive Director of Family Resolution Service in Manitoba Justice. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science and Religion and Culture, as well as a Master's in Public Administration.

Pam Weber, Director, Capital Development Unit, has accepted a new role with the Department of Health, Seniors and Active Living as Executive Director of Population and Public Health. Her last day will be December 22, 2025. Pam has been an integral part of the Capital and Space Expansion Branch team, and we all wish her well with this exciting new opportunity.

Lily Mallard has been appointed as acting Director, Capital Development until the position is posted and filled through a competitive process. Lily is a dedicated and passionate project manager, known for her strong work ethic and thoroughness. With almost 30 years of experience, Lily has worked and completed more than 150 finance, real estate property developments, manufacturing, timekeeping and capital projects. This includes child care capital projects over the last four-and-a-half years with ELCC.

Farrukh Hameed has joined the Funding and Financial Assistance Branch as Senior Financial Analyst at 114 Garry Street in Winnipeg on October 22, 2025. Farrukh holds a Bachelor's in Applied Accounting and is certified as both a CPA and ACCA. Farrukh brings a wealth of experience in auditing, financial analysis, reporting, and process improvement, having worked across a range of industries including financial services, manufacturing, oil and gas, and aviation.

Sukhjinder Dandiwal has joined the Early Learning and Child Care Division as Executive Assistant to the Assistant Deputy Minister at 114 Garry Street in Winnipeg on October 27, 2025. Sukhjinder holds a Post-Graduate Diploma in Human Resources from the Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology, as well as a Bachelor's degree in Computer Science from the Punjab Technical University. Sukhjinder has experience in administrative, customer service, and leadership roles in the private sector and in government, having previously served with the Department of Agriculture.

Akinwale "Easy" Ezekiel has joined the Policy and Planning Branch as Administrative Assistant at 114 Garry Street in Winnipeg effective November 3, 2025. Akinwale has been providing temporary administrative support to the Branch for several months, providing invaluable services as a proactive, thoughtful, and resourceful professional.

We Value Your Input!

Would you like to share some of your facility's ideas or tell us about a program or celebration at your facility? Would you like to share a quote about why you love being an early childhood educator? Email us at CDCInfo@gov.mb.ca with the subject line "ELCC Newsletter" and you could be featured in our next edition.

For general inquiries about the Early Learning and Child Care Division

Website: www.manitoba.ca/childcare

Email: cdcinfo@gov.mb.ca

Phone: 204-945-0776

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