

JANUARY  
2026

## Early Learning and Child Care

## MONTHLY E-NEWS



MOVING FORWARD  
ON CHILD CARE  
PRIORITIES

ANNOUNCEMENTS  
AND REMINDERS

PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT

SPOTLIGHT ON  
SUCCESS

DIVISION  
UPDATES

## WELCOME TO OUR UPDATED MONTHLY E-NEWS

### The E-News has a new look!

Thank you to everyone who responded to the October E-News Satisfaction Survey seeking your important feedback.

This month, we have introduced some changes inspired by your input. Along with a refresh to our look, we've also adjusted the layout and improved access to some of our feature topics including announcements, reminders and professional development opportunities, along with key dates to help you calendarize.

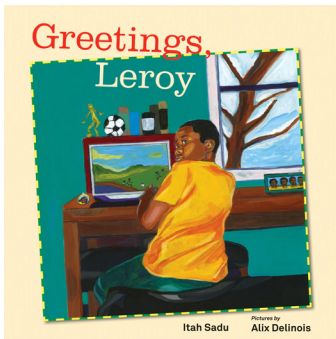
Watch for more updates in the issues ahead as we continue to work on your suggestions! We welcome your feedback. If you have content ideas or a story you would like to include, email [CDCinfo@gov.mb.ca](mailto:CDCinfo@gov.mb.ca) with the subject line 'ENEWS' to share your thoughts!

## February is I love to Read Month and Black History Month

Celebrating all things 'reading' and honouring the legacy of Black people in Canada and their communities.

Child care facilities are invited to celebrate literacy and honour Black history throughout the year with outstanding books by various Canadian authors and illustrators. Below are a few options to consider, available through local libraries and booksellers.

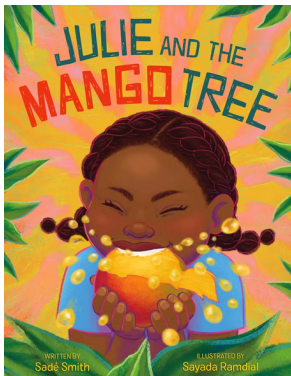
BLACK  
HISTORY  
& I LOVE to  
READ  
month



### 1. *Greetings, Leroy*

Written by: Itah Sadu  
Illustrated by: Alix Delinois

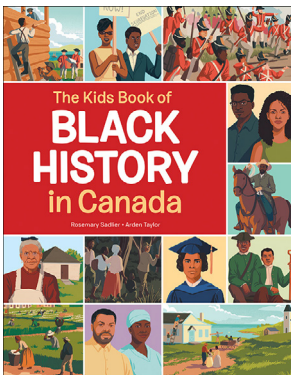
Itah Sadu tells the story of Roy, whose family has just moved to Canada from Jamaica, in this story about finding a new home while still staying proud of where you're from. Harlem-based artist Alix Delinois shows the joy of making new friends with his vibrant, layered paintings.



### 2. *Julie and the Mango Tree*

Written by: Sadé Smith  
Illustrated by: Sayada Ramdial

In this story influenced by Caribbean culture, Julie patiently waits for ripe mangoes and ultimately chooses to share them with her community. The story from Toronto writer Sadé Smith teaches children valuable lessons about patience, generosity, and interconnectedness, making it a delightful read that encourages kindness and the importance of community.



### 3. *The Kids Book of Black History in Canada*

Written by: Rosemary Sadlier  
Illustrated by: Arden Taylor

For older children, Rosemary Sadlier's definitive children's guide to Black history in Canada, first published in 2003 and updated in 2024, offers an informative and engaging collection of facts, quotes, and profiles that honour the history of Black Canadians.

Learn more about Canadian children's book authors and illustrators at [Scholastic Canada](https://www.scholastic.ca), the [Manitoba Reading Association](https://www.manitobareading.ca), [the Winnipeg Public Library](https://www.winnipegpubliclibrary.ca), or your local library.



# MOVING FORWARD ON CHILD CARE PRIORITIES

## Sixth Biannual Implementation Committee Meeting on the Canada Manitoba Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement

On December 18, 2025, Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning, in partnership with Canada, hosted the sixth biannual Implementation Committee Meeting (ICM). The meeting brought together members of the Minister's Consultation Table (MCT), representatives from the Federal Secretariat on Early Learning and Child Care, and staff from the Early Learning and Child Care Division, to discuss Manitoba's progress under the [Canada-Manitoba Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement](#).

Manitoba meets with federal partners and stakeholders twice a year to discuss the priorities outlined in the Agreement, assess progress, and exchange information on local challenges and emerging practices. Each ICM provides an opportunity for child care stakeholders to engage in collaborative discussions focused on strengthening quality, accessibility, and workforce supports across the province. MCT members offer insight on strategic direction and implementation considerations from a Manitoba perspective. Hearing directly from Manitoba child care providers and sector experts remains essential to improving affordability, access, quality, and inclusivity in child care services across the province.

The next ICM will take place in Summer 2026. Participation in biannual ICMs is one of several ways MCT members contribute to shaping Manitoba's early learning and child care system. To learn more about applying or nominating someone you know for an appointment to the MCT, please visit [Province of Manitoba | education - Engagement Committees](#).



# ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REMINDERS

## Competency-Based Assessment for Rural and Northern Participants—Intake Spring 2026

Competency Based Assessment (CBA) is a no-cost, self-directed assessment program in which Child Care Assistants, with five years of work experience in a licensed child care centre or nursery school, may earn a classification of Early Childhood Educator (ECE) II upon successful completion of the program requirements, under the guidance of an Advisor and Peer Assessor.

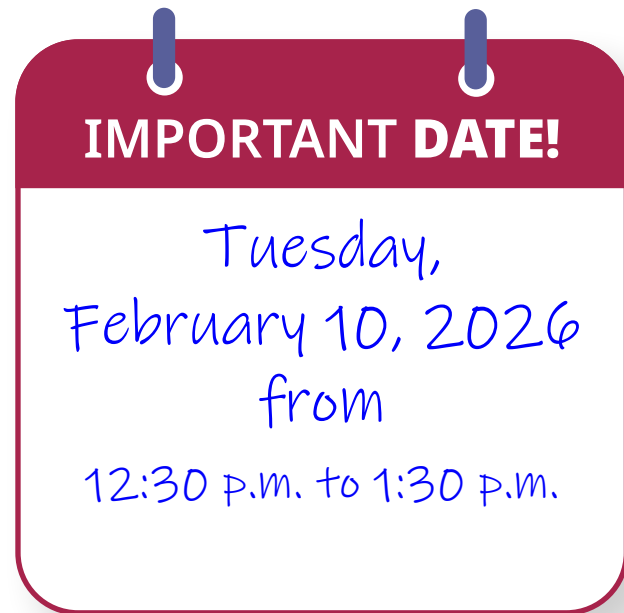
**Competency Based Assessment (CBA)** is one of the four assessment streams of the [ECE II Assessment Program](#), with completion taking 18 to 24 months on average.

To learn more, review the [information sheet](#) or attend an online information session:

Tuesday, February 10, 2026, from 12:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.

[Register](#)

To apply for 2026 spring intake, contact [cdccertificate@gov.mb.ca](mailto:cdccertificate@gov.mb.ca) before March 10, 2026.



## Seeking Nominations for the 2026 MCCA Awards

The Manitoba Child Care Association's Professionalism and Public Policy Committee is seeking nominations for the 2026 MCCA Awards.

Nominees must be current MCCA members, classified as an ECE II or III, and employed at an MCCA member centre.

Categories include:

- Leader of the Year
- Exceptional Early Childhood Educator
- Exceptional Caregiver
- Exceptional Family Child Care Provider
- Volunteer of the Year
- Educaring Award
- Graduate Research Bursary Award

For more information and to nominate someone, visit [Nominate someone today!](#)

## Routine Practices Guide and Infection Prevention and Control Poster Series

In early 2024, Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning mailed copies of the infection control and prevention poster series to child care facilities across the province. These posters support the *Routine Practices: Guide to Creating a Healthy Environment and Preventing Infections within Child Care Facilities and Schools* initiative.



A select number of printed poster copies remain available by request. For more information on Routine Practices, or to view/download copies of supporting resources including the poster series, visit [www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/routine\\_practices/](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/routine_practices/).

To order, contact the Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning, Sector Relations Unit by phone at 204-945-7188 or by email at [SRUnit@gov.mb.ca](mailto:SRUnit@gov.mb.ca).

## Apply for the Manitoba Accessibility Fund: Intake Now Open for 2026/2027

The Manitoba Accessibility Fund (MAF) provides one-time, project-based grants to help municipalities, non-profit organizations, and businesses in Manitoba remove barriers, create awareness, and support compliance with The Accessibility for Manitobans Act and its standards.



Approved projects can receive up to 100 per cent of eligible costs, to a maximum of \$50,000 per application.

The application deadline is February 20, 2026.

To learn more and apply for the Manitoba Accessibility Fund grant program, visit [AccessibilityMB.ca](http://AccessibilityMB.ca).

## Provide Your Feedback: Public Consultation on The Accessibility for Manitobans Act Penalties Regulation

The Accessibility Compliance Secretariat is part of the Manitoba government. Its job is to help make sure organizations follow the rules under [The Accessibility for Manitobans Act](#) and its regulations. This includes promoting accessibility, monitoring progress, and enforcing compliance when needed.

On December 3, 2025, the government published a proposed regulation about penalties for not following accessibility laws. It is now open for public feedback on the provincial government's "Proposed Regulation" [website](#) until February 2, 2026.

# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## Three PD Days in 2026

How will you use the three allocated PD days for 2026? This is a great time to look ahead at potential training opportunities, including workshops, conferences, and seminars that can support your professional development goals.

Reminder that a funded facility can charge parent fees and receive payments for the Reduced Parent Fee Revenue Grant and subsidy on behalf of eligible families for up to three PD days on a date(s) selected by the facility [between January 1 and December 31, 2026](#).

Below is a non-exhaustive list of upcoming opportunities. Additional information is also available on the department website at [Professional Development](#).

### MCCA 2026 Winter/Spring Workshops

The Manitoba Child Care Association lists [more than 40 different workshops](#) and activities between February 1 and April 30. The following are just a few of the upcoming sessions in February.

**Reframing Behaviour (Virtual)** | February 4, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. | with Monica Madison. Rooted in a brain-based understanding, participants gain valuable insight on “why does he do that?” with exploration of co-regulation throughout the early years. We re-frame our understanding of behaviours, deeply connect with the model of ‘upstairs brain/downstairs brain’ with strategic, on-the-floor, actionable responses for educators.

**Pedagogical Leader: Community of Practice 001** | February 5, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. | with Karen Kowalski @ Discovery Children’s Centre, 367 Hampton Street. Join us as we share and support each other’s pedagogical journey. At each meeting, we spend three hours exploring topics that are current and relevant to our daily practice, on a deeper level. The meeting content includes a round table discussion of specific questions posed to everyone, a discussion of articles, pedagogical focused activities, and the sharing of resources.

**Empowering Inclusive Practices: Leading the Way** | February 17, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. | with Donna Freeman and Gerrie Stolz @ MCCA, 2-2350 McPhillips Street. Empowering Inclusive Practices is about leading the way in advocating for an inclusive environment and deepening understanding in your program. This session is one of five workshops developed in partnership by the Manitoba Child Care Inclusion Committee, the Manitoba Child Care Association, and the Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care Division.

**Situational Leadership** | February 23, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. | with Ron Sarraan @ MCCA, 2-2350 McPhillips Street. This workshop introduces participants to the core principles of situational leadership and explores how these approaches can strengthen relationships, boost team morale, and improve daily practice.

View a [full list and registration](#).

## Dates at a Glance

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	TIME
Various	Manitoba Child Care Association Training Workshops	Various	Various
Various	Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Training—Level 1/2	Online	Various
February 11	Blooming Words® Training (FRENCH)	Online	12 p.m. to 3 p.m.
February 20	Blooming Words® Training (English)	Online	9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
February 24 and 25	First Nations Early Learning and Child Care Conference, Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs	Victoria Inn Hotel and Convention Centre 1808 Wellington Avenue, Winnipeg	Multi-day
March 6 and 7	Red River Métis Early Learning and Child Care Conference, Manitoba Métis Federation	Delta Hotel, 350 St. Mary Avenue, Winnipeg	Multi-day



## First Nations Early Learning and Child Care Conference

This year's First Nations Early Learning and Child Care Conference will take place on February 24 and 25, 2026, at the Victoria Inn Hotel and Convention Centre (1808 Wellington Avenue, Winnipeg).

"This annual gathering brings together early childhood educators, program coordinators, community leaders, and Knowledge Keepers from across Manitoba to share learning, strengthen collaboration, and support the growth and well-being of our youngest learners."

[First Nations Early Learning and Child Care - Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs](#)

## MMF Third Annual Child Care Conference

The third Annual Red River Métis Early Learning and Child Care Conference will take place on March 6 and 7, 2026, at the Delta Hotel, 350 St. Mary Avenue, Winnipeg.

This year's theme—Rooted in Culture, Rising with Pride—celebrates the strength, wisdom, and traditions of the Red River Métis.

"This is a unique opportunity for educators to not only leave the conference with their required professional development hours, but also feel energized and inspired, with a strong focus on building Red River Métis pride for themselves and the children in their care."

[Register here.](#)



## Blooming Words® Training for Child Care Staff – No Cost in 2026

Blooming Words® is a standardized, evidence-informed early language stimulation program for children from birth to Kindergarten, developed by speech-language pathologists in Quebec in partnership with the non-profit organization API-Enfance and is being offered province-wide through the [Children's Therapy Network of Manitoba \(CTNM\)](#).

Blooming Words® training is currently free for licensed early learning and child care centres (including nursery schools) in Manitoba.

### **New Blooming Words® Training Dates for Facilitators (Train the Trainer) :**

English: February 20, 2026, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. CST

French: February 11, 2026, 12:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. CST

To register, email [bloomingwords@rccinc.ca](mailto:bloomingwords@rccinc.ca) or call 431-338-6210.

To learn more, visit [Blooming Words® Program](#) or view [program newsletter](#).

## Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Training – No Cost in 2026

Developed by the [Canada Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Research Network \(Can-FASD\)](#), this advanced online course builds on the free Foundations in FASD Level I training and offers practical, evidence-based strategies tailored for those working directly with children.

**FASD for School Staff Level II** training is now available at no cost to all Manitobans—including Early Childhood Educators and Child Care Assistants and support staff until March 2026.

For course details and to register:

[FASD for School Staff Level II - Practical Strategies for the School Environment](#) - No cost for child care providers until March 31, 2026.

To access details and registration information for Level 1 and/or other related FASD e-learning courses applicable to child care providers, visit [Courses – CanFASD ELearning](#).



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

### This Month's Question

What options are available to high school students interested in a career in child care? How can you help them?

### Answer

High school students interested in a rewarding career in child care can start their journey while still in high school. They can enrol in the Technical Vocational Education (TVE) Child Care program or take the Applied Family Studies (40S-0491) course. The successful completion of the TVE Child Care program meets the 40-hour course requirement to be a child care assistant. For more information on how to start in high school, visit [Province of Manitoba | education - 40-Hour Course Options](#).

After graduating, students can apply to one of the post-secondary programs available to become an Early Childhood Educator (ECE) II. A reimbursement of up to \$5,000 per school-year is available to help cover the tuition-related costs. To view the list of approved programs, visit [Province of Manitoba | education - Information on the Classification of Early Childhood Educators and Child Care Assistants](#). To learn more about the ECE Tuition Reimbursement program, visit [Province of Manitoba | education - ECE Tuition Reimbursement](#).

To experience what it's like to work in child care, high school students can volunteer at your facility. Please note they cannot be counted in staff-to-child ratios and must never be left alone with children.

You can help by sharing these opportunities with high school students you know and encouraging them to take the first step toward a fulfilling career in child care.



# SPOTLIGHT ON SUCCESS

## Celebrating 50 Years of Community, Connection, and Care at Arborg Play Group

Founded in 1975, Arborg Play Group Inc. began with just eight preschool spaces and a simple but powerful purpose: to give parents and children a welcoming place to gather, learn, and connect in the closely-knit Interlake community. What started small grew into something much larger.

*"Arborg Play Group serves as a cornerstone of the community," says Heather Lowe, Executive Director. "It offers far more than child care to families. By providing dependable early learning, the centre enables parents to work, contribute to the local economy, and remain rooted in the town they love. Children benefit from strong foundations for school and life, developing confidence and curiosity that carries into their future learning."*

In its early days, the Group operated out of the local drop in centre and later the veterinary clinic. The organization found long-term stability at the Kinsmen Centre, where it spent 30 years thanks to reduced rent and shared building improvements supported by the Kinsmen. As enrolment increased and needs changed, a vision for a purpose-built child care facility emerged. In 2015, a new 3,458 square foot centre was constructed through the [Early Learning and Child Care Capital Building Fund](#), grants, community sponsors, donations, and persistent fundraising. Today, Arborg Play Group offers 32 preschool spaces and eight infant spaces.

Lowe estimates the Group has welcomed nearly 1,500 children through its doors over five decades, a remarkable figure in a town of just over 1,200. The centre is now welcoming its fourth generation of families, including grandparents who once attended as preschoolers themselves. Several current and recent parent board members also attended the centre. Svava Simundsson, ECE II has worked with the facility for an incredible 40 years, one of several long-serving team members.



Continued on next page.

*Caption: Grand Opening of the New Arborg Play Group in 2015 - Left to right: Bifrost-Riverton Reeve, Harold Foster; former APG Board Chair, Melissa Moran; APG Executive Director, Heather Lowe; and Selkirk-Interlake-Eastman MP, James Bezan.*

*"Having had my children in the child care centre where I worked, I was able to see firsthand the experience the centre brought to them," said Simundsson. "I especially valued the relationship building I saw, and still see, between the peers and their educators through the time I've worked."*

Through blizzards, relocations, and changing community needs, the centre has closed only a handful of times over fifty years, thanks to dedicated staff who adjust schedules, brave winter roads, and come together to support families.

*"We see every day how early learning strengthens not just children, but entire families," says Lowe. "When parents feel supported and children feel confident, the whole community grows stronger. Arborg Play Group reflects the spirit of collaboration and pride that defines the town—a community that invests in its children, supports its families, and builds a vibrant future together. We're proud to be part of that story in Arborg."*

Arborg Play Group has an official fiftieth anniversary celebration planned early this year. Lowe says three factors, and one in particular, have helped the centre reach its golden anniversary.

*"Our staff have truly shaped Arborg Play Group into the thriving early learning centre it is today," says Lowe. "Their commitment, compassion, and teamwork have carried us through every chapter."*

*"Invest in your staff, connect with families, and lean on your community: these three commitments shape the strength of your centre. When educators feel supported, families feel welcomed, and the community stands behind your work, a centre can grow with strength and vision."*



*Indoor and outdoor spaces at Arborg Play Group.*



# DIVISION UPDATES

## MEET *the* TEAM



**SREEKUMAR 'SHREE' KODIYATH**  
Workforce Engagement Coordinator

I was working in government in a very technical position and looking for a new challenge when I joined Early Learning and Child Care's Workforce Development team in September 2024. I had a background in legislation, regulation and policy development, but what really drew me here was the opportunity to work in a more human-centered space. In this sector, you can really feel the empathy and care. Everyone is so focused on the well-being of children.

My team handles a broad mix of things: policy issues, briefing notes, and Treasury Board submissions related to the child care workforce. We facilitate the Child Care Qualifications and Training Committee, early childhood education training at Manitoba's post-secondary institutions, and Early Childhood Educator II assessment certification. Even career fairs are in the portfolio. Part of the work also looks at economics and analyzes performance, crunching data and examining trends. It's important to assess the impact of investment to know where the support needs to go.

One of my first projects was related to the funding for the Manitoba Métis Federation's Ukrainian Training Expansion Program. While the project itself was focused on program funding, it felt familiar because my academic background includes a master's degree specializing in immigration and refugee protection law.

I also worked with Urban Circle Training Center on an Indigenous culturally-focused child care project which I was also very proud to be involved with from beginning to end.

On a personal level, this work matters because I've been on the other side. Not long ago, my wife and I struggled to find child care, worrying about the affordability. Part of why I find my work fulfilling is that, in a way, I'm helping my past self by playing a part in the important work of strengthening the early learning and child care system.

## Early Learning and Child Care Connecting with Community Across Manitoba

ELCC staff will be out in the community this winter and spring connecting with students and job seekers who want to make a meaningful difference through a career in child care. Join us at **Sisler High School on February 5**, **Yellowquill College on February 11**, **St. James Collegiate on February 25**, and **Sturgeon Heights Collegiate on March 4**. We're excited to share pathways, possibilities, and the rewarding impact of a career as an early childhood educator!



*Carla Fleury-Charles, Policy and Program Analyst; Shelly Marques, Director, Strategic Policy and Intergovernmental Relations; Lindsay Ortlieb, Workforce Curriculum Consultant*

## 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.

**Adrianna Marques** joined the Policy and Planning Branch, Workforce Development Unit as a STEP student at 114 Garry Street on Monday, December 22, 2025. Adrianna is pursuing a Bachelor of Commerce with a major in Marketing at the Asper School of Business. She will be with the division on a full-time basis in January and then travelling to attend Nova University in Lisbon, Portugal.

**Adrian Chung** joined the Policy and Planning Branch, Workforce Development Unit as a social work practicum student at 114 Garry Street on Monday, January 5, 2026. Adrian is studying social work at the University of Manitoba, and recently completed a practicum in a Kindergarten to Grade 12 education setting. His work with ELCC will focus on policy development and how policy shapes educational practice and student support. Adrian is also a volunteer medical first responder with St. John Ambulance, and is fluent in both Cantonese and Mandarin. He will be with the division on Mondays through to April 13.

**Evonne Salazar** joined the Policy and Planning Branch, Workforce Development Unit as a STEP student at 114 Garry Street on Monday, January 26, 2026. Evonne is in her third year at Red River College Polytechnic pursuing a degree in Business Administration, specializing in Human Resources.

**Meera Amin** joined the Funding and Financial Assistance Branch, Facility Funding Unit as a STEP student at 114 Garry Street on Tuesday, January 27, 2026. Meera is in her final year at the Asper School of Business pursuing a Bachelor of Commerce, majoring in Actuarial Mathematics. Meera is also a volunteer with a Winnipeg-based animal rescue.

## 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](mailto: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](http://www.manitoba.ca/childcare)

**Email:** [cdcinfo@gov.mb.ca](mailto:cdcinfo@gov.mb.ca)

**Phone:** 204-945-0776

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