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Indigenous programming at affordable child centres

Alberta children are learning about traditional language and culture, with five new \$25-a-day child care centres offering Indigenous-focused programming.



Minister Larivee participates in a drumming circle with Elders, staff and children at Little Sundance Child Care

Centre.

Little Sundance Daycare in Calgary is one of six Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) centres across Alberta implementing Indigenous-focused programming, including traditional drumming, storytelling and lessons in Michif, Blackfoot and Cree.

“Reconciliation does not happen without understanding. These child care centres foster positive experiences of Indigenous culture and language. For Métis and First Nations children, they create a sense of belonging and identity. For other children, they offer a formative experience that will open the door to lifelong conversations.”

- Danielle Larivee, Minister of Children’s Services

Operated by Métis Calgary Family Services, the 56-space centre incorporates Indigenous artifacts and storytelling, with Elders teaching students in Indigenous languages. Roughly half of the students at Little Sundance belong to a growing Indigenous population in Calgary, which increased by nearly 60 per cent in the past decade.

“Childhood experiences enriched with traditional culture unlock potential for children, families and society as a whole. Indigenous culture manifests a wonder to explore, and inspires the innate curiosity within each child. Nurturing that spirit is a key factor on the path to reconciliation within all of our communities.”

- Lori Anne Houle, CEO, Metis Calgary Family Services Little Sundance ELCC Centre

In addition to Little Sundance, four other new ELCC Centres have committed to Indigenous programming:

- 1000 Women Child Care Centre, Edmonton (56 child care spaces)
- Legacy Childcare, Slave Lake (125 child care spaces)
- Knowledge Tree, Valleyview (38 child care spaces)
- Wetaskiwin Early Learning and Childcare Centre, Wetaskiwin (64 child care spaces)

These new centres join the Opokaa'sin Child Care Centre in Lethbridge (53 child care spaces), announced in 2017, which partners with the Piikani and Kainai First Nations and local agencies.

While ELCC centres are best known for offering \$25-a-day child care, many participating centres include additional supports for vulnerable families, cultural and language programming to serve their respective communities and improvements for curriculum and staff training.

The province's recent 6,000-space expansion of the pilot program is the result of a bilateral agreement with the Government of Canada that will see an investment of \$136 million over three years. In addition to the annual \$10 million announced in the first phase of the program, the province will invest an additional \$4.5 million per year.

"I am thrilled to see that funding from the Canada–Alberta early learning and child care bilateral agreement will be used to expand Alberta's ELCC Centres that provide culturally appropriate supports as it relates to Indigenous children and communities. It's a priority for the Government of Canada that children have the best possible start in life to set them up for success. For Indigenous children in particular, this means access to high quality and culturally based early learning and child care services."

- Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Government of Canada

The expansion is expected to create 400 child care jobs and help 1,400 parents re-enter the workforce. Province wide, parents are expected to save an average of \$425 every month.

Related information

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Media inquiries

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