



**Quality Indicators and Dispositions in
the Early Learning and Child Care
Sector: Learning from Indigenous and
Newcomer Families**

Final Report

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Executive Summary

In 2020, the Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care (ECELC) and MacEwan University began a joint research project aimed at examining the following research questions:

1. For Indigenous families, what are indicators of quality in early learning and child care?
2. What are the essential dispositions child care educators demonstrate that meet the needs of Indigenous children and families?
3. For newcomer families, what are indicators of quality in early learning and child care?
4. What are the essential dispositions child care educators demonstrate that meet the needs of newcomer children and families?

Overall Findings

- A scoping review of recent academic literature revealed diverse viewpoints and experiences for Indigenous and newcomer families.
- Focus groups in Edmonton identified a need for ongoing engagement of Indigenous and newcomer families in order to centre their voices in policies, programming, and practices.
- Case studies of four centres in Edmonton revealed a need for culturally responsive child care that is specific and focused on individual families and children, and stemming from strong images of both children as well as families.
- In order to provide specific and culturally responsive child care, educators must engage in critical reflection and ongoing professional learning, and must work to continually engage with and deepen their practice of relationships in their work with children and families.
- Educators' engagement with *Flight: Alberta's Early Learning and Care Framework* (Makovichuk, Hewes, Lirette, & Thomas, 2014) in pedagogical practices supports continual growth, critical reflection, and co-learning. This observation was made by educators with experience working with both Indigenous as well as newcomer families.
- Culturally focused as well as mainstream child care programs can achieve positive outcomes for Indigenous and newcomer children and families.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that:

- Pre-service and in-service educators receive ongoing opportunities to work with *Flight*, reflect critically on their practice of relationships with children and families, and develop dispositions such as a strong image of the child (and family).
- Practical tools are developed for educators and child care leadership that draw connections between this research, *Flight*, and some practical strategies for achieving research outcomes.