

Equity in the classroom: Peers, educators, families

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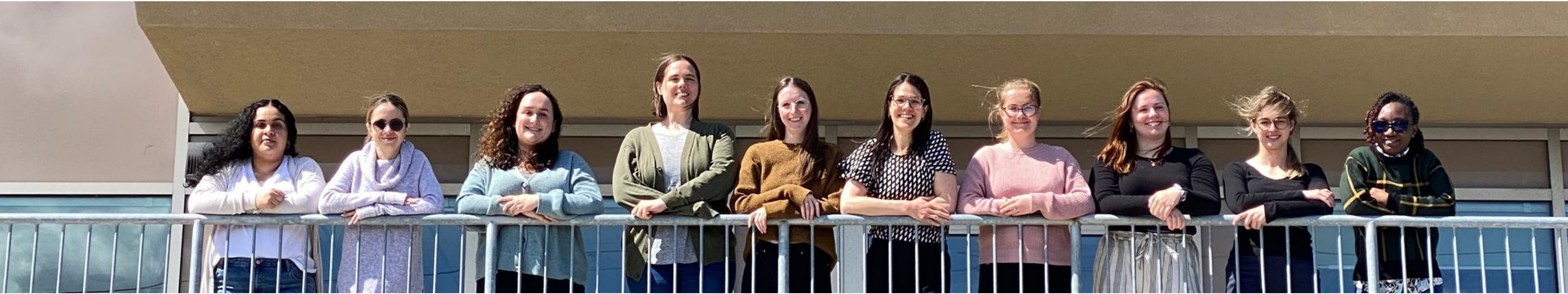
Tier II Canada Research Chair – Early Childhood: Diversity and Transitions
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Land Acknowledgement





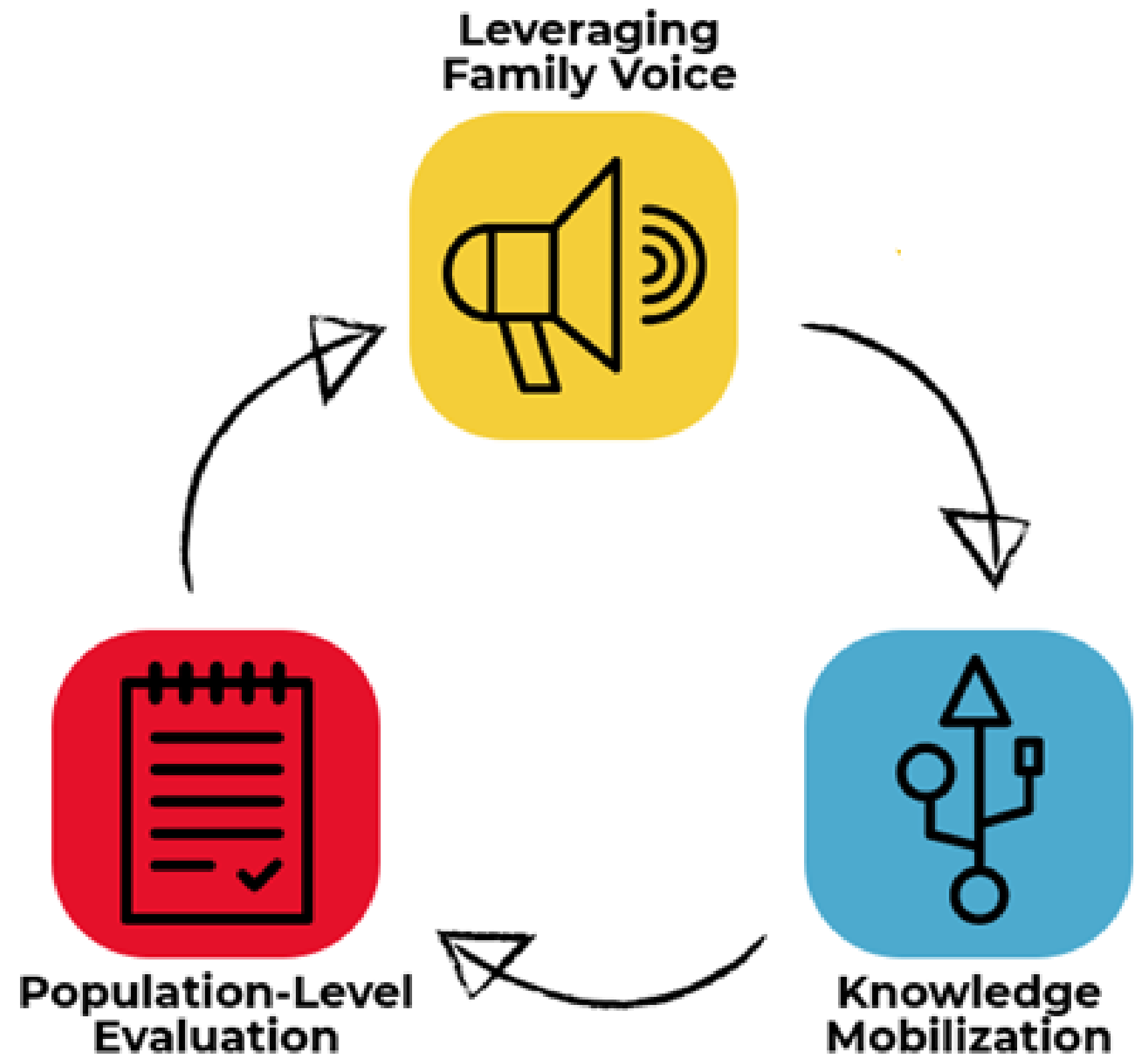


Early Childhood Collaborative Research Centre

eccrc

Goal: To enhance well-being during early childhood by ensuring policy and practice support families that experience inequity

Approach: Work with community, policy makers, and engage families- to co-produce research that mobilizes knowledge and experiences *for* and *with* families to inform policy and practice



Exploring (in)equity in Nova Scotia

- The Nova Scotia context
- Research examples leveraging family and early childhood educator voice among:
 - Newcomer families
 - Black and African Nova Scotian families
 - Well-being of early childhood educators





Nova Scotia is in Mi'kma'ki (MEEG-MA-GEE), the traditional and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people.

Population: 1 million people

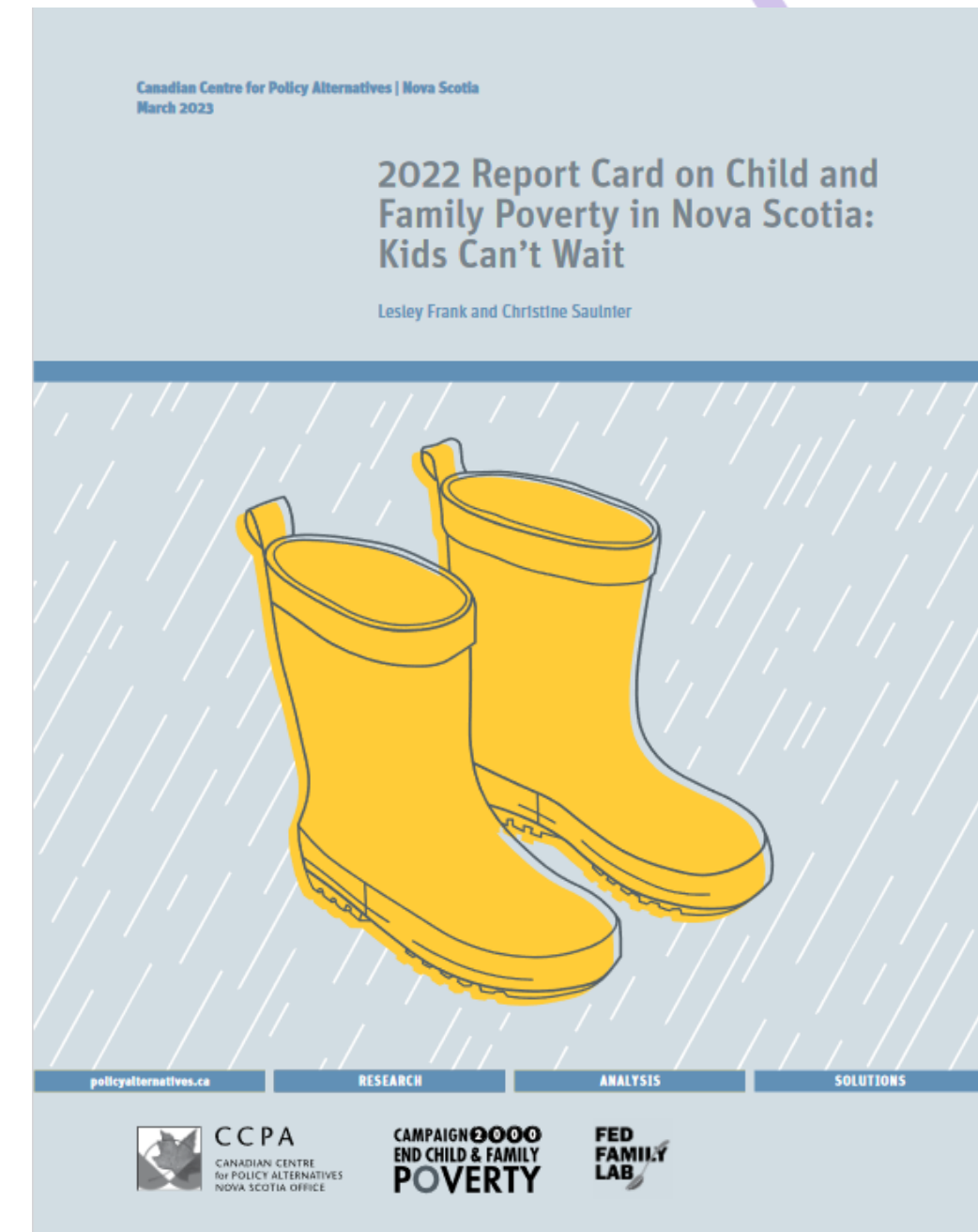
- Founding cultures: Mi'kmaq, Acadians, African Nova Scotians, and Gaels
- 40% live in rural areas
- Rise in immigrant families

Births: ~8000 per year

~1 in 4 children live in poverty

Child Poverty in Nova Scotia

- There are socioeconomic, geographical, and racial disparities within early childhood systems - or an *education debt* ([Ladson-Billings, 2006](#))
- In 2020, the child poverty rate was reduced to about 1 in 6 children (or 18.4%)
 - Reduction almost entirely due to federal pandemic relief support and top-ups
- Higher poverty among:
 - Certain geographical areas
 - Immigrant and racialized children



policyalternatives.ca/2022NSreportcard

Looking through the lens of newcomer families

SSHRC  CRSH
Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council
Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines

isans | Immigrant Services
Association of Nova Scotia



[Link](#)



Newcomer families in Nova Scotia



- The increasing population in Nova Scotia is primarily due to immigration
- Adjustments and challenges accompany family resettlement as they navigate new physical, social, and cultural settings
- Our scoping review identified interconnected themes in Canadian literature on the experiences of newcomer families with young children

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Research Article

Newcomer families' experiences with programs and services to support early childhood development in Canada: A scoping review

Alison Brown¹, Jessie-Lee D McIsaac², Sarah Reddington³, Taylor Hill⁴, Susan Brigham⁵, Rebecca Spencer⁶, April Mandrona⁷

Abstract: It can be difficult for families with young children to navigate early childhood development supports. In particular, newcomer families often encounter additional barriers and require resources, programs, and services that are tailored to their unique assets, experiences, and needs. We conducted a scoping review of the literature published between 2000 and 2019 to explore what is known about newcomer families' experiences with programs and services to support early childhood development in Canada. We searched 12 databases, screened 2390 articles, and included 34 articles for synthesis and analysis. Three common and connected themes were identified: 1) effective intercultural understanding, responsiveness, and communication are critical to ensuring full access to meaningful programs and services; 2) some newcomer families face systemic barriers exacerbated by their immigration status, and; 3) feelings and perceptions of families and service providers, as well as social supports, networks, and relationships influence how programs and services are accessed and experienced. Our review identifies the requirement for additional, participatory research that centres the voices and perspectives of newcomer children and their families and the need to expand that research to less populated and rural areas of the country to inform meaningful and culturally relevant policies, programs, and services for newcomer families to support their children's well-being.

Article History
Received: 24 June 2020
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Keywords
Newcomer families; Early childhood development; Programs; Services

Through the lens of newcomer families

- Participatory photovoice project shaped by feminist theory
- Project goals:
 - Enable participants to record and reflect on assets and concerns
 - Promote critical dialogue about early childhood programs and services, giving voice to experiences through visual methods.
 - Facilitate knowledge mobilization to inform programs and services.
- Recruited family and ECE participants in collaboration with a local settlement organization to take part in a series of virtual workshops



How do newcomer families find and use programs for young children?



My story of a sunflower



Where we live matters



Our capable and confident children



Power of Play



Supporting us in resettlement

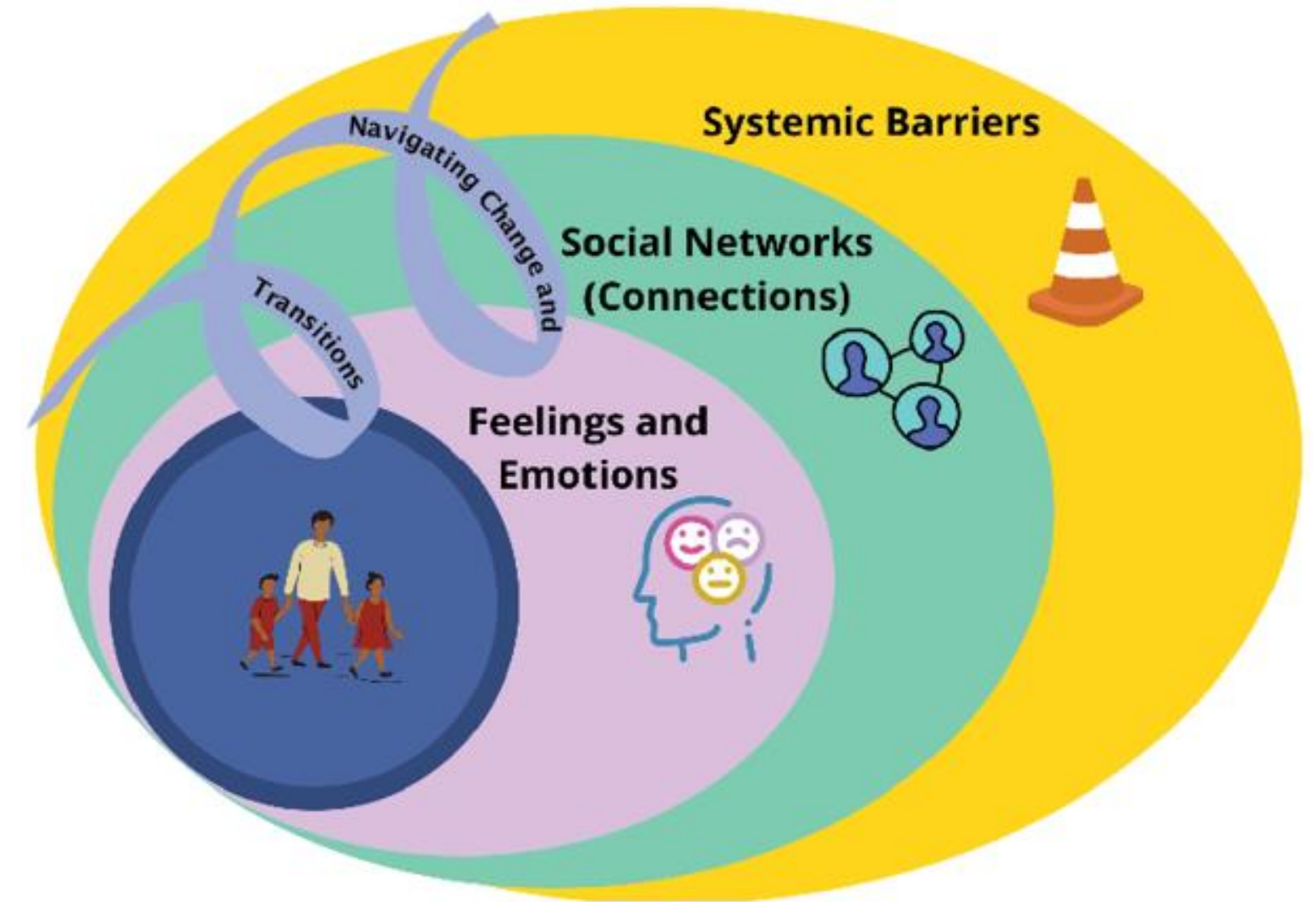
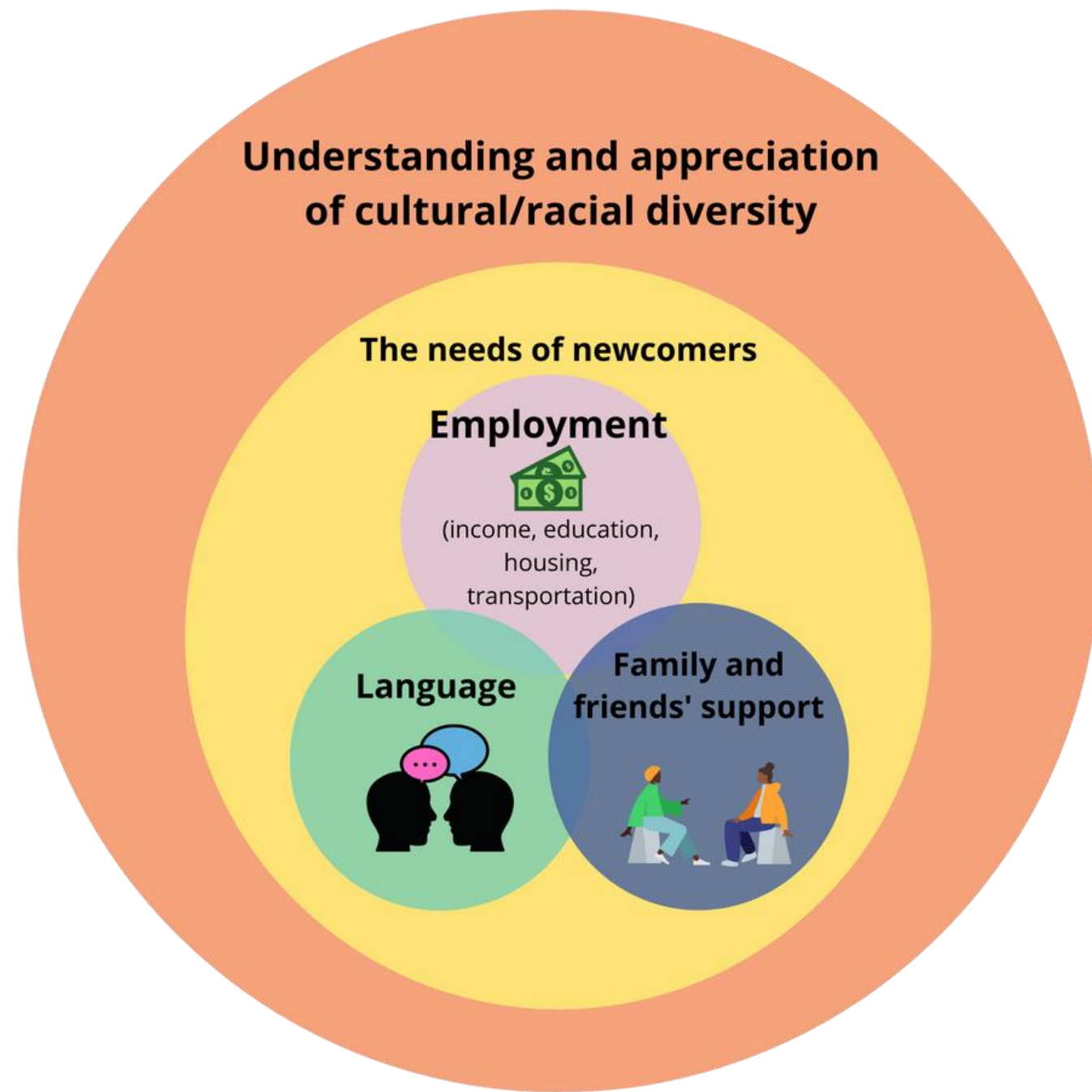


Our glimpse into a childcare classroom during the pandemic



Play as the universal language for children

How do newcomer families find and use programs for young children?



Knowledge Mobilization



New photo project shows Halifax through eyes of newcomer families



Exhibit shares challenges, highlights of immigrant families with young children

Haley Ryan · CBC News · Posted: Oct 23, 2021 6:10 PM AT | Last Updated: October 23



One of the photos that is included in the newcomer family project led by the Early Childhood Collaborative Research Centre at MSVU. (Haley Ryan/CBC)

A small sunflower in a colourful pot. Walking to school. A girl crossing the road with a pink backpack.

- CBC Nova Scotia article
- Global News Morning Halifax
- Global News at 11
- CBC Mainstreet

- Presentations for government departments
- Museum of Industry
- Halifax Central Library
- Mount Saint Vincent University

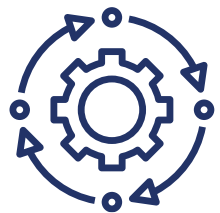


A Pan-Canadian Scan of Early Learning and Child Care for Newcomer Children



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

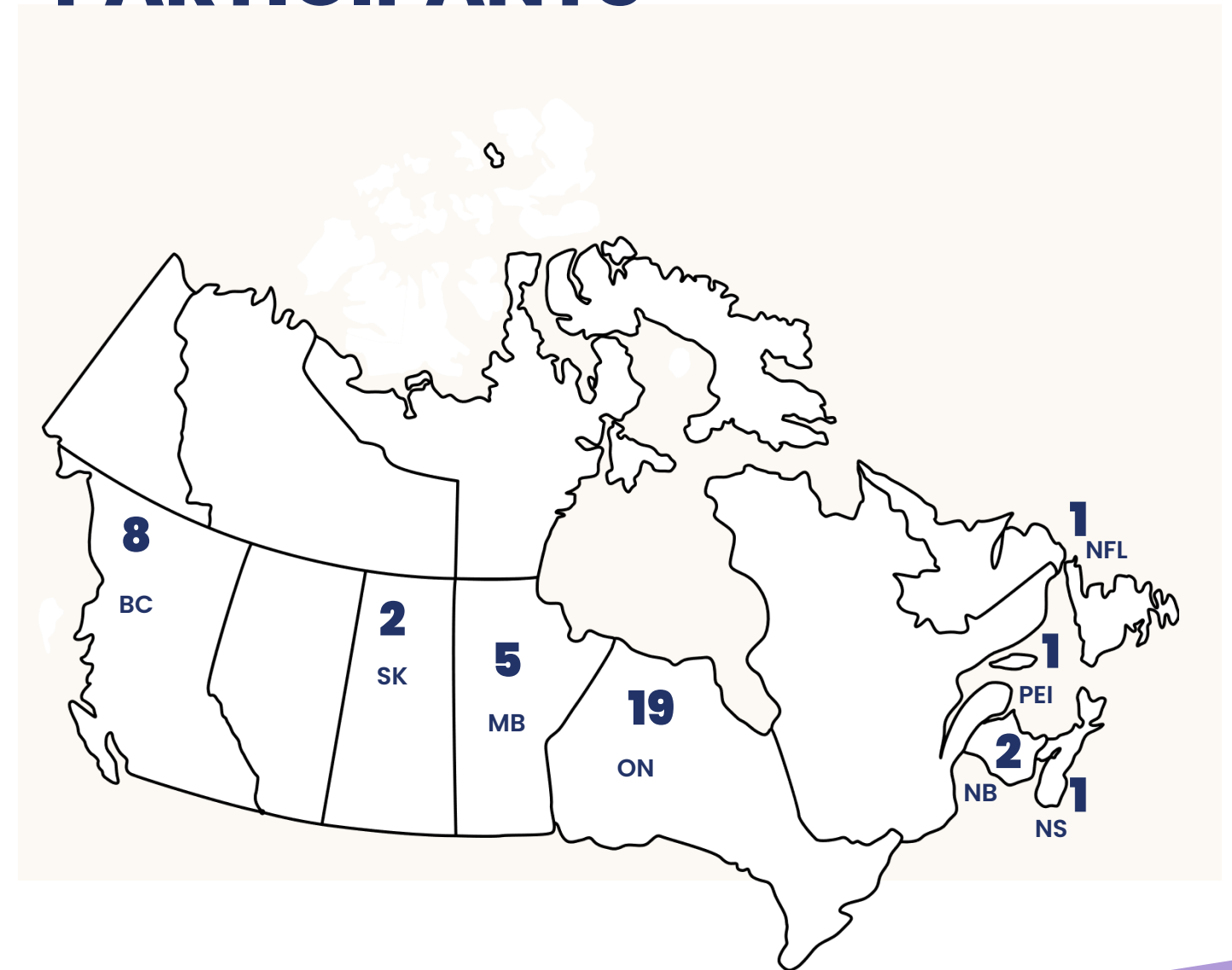
- How are settlement agencies across Canada delivering ELCC to newcomer families?
- What are the unique priorities for ELCC to support newcomer families and children?



RESEARCH PROCESS

- The environmental scan included an iterative process of a website scan, survey, and interviews to validate the information

PARTICIPANTS



Findings: Early Learning and Child Care for Newcomer Children



Strengths

- Comprehensive child care programs with connections to other services within the settlement program
- Diversity of program staff – many with newcomer experiences themselves

It's been hugely beneficial to have people that can speak the language the first language of the child and the family.

Challenges

- Unique and complex needs of newcomer families
- Many child care programs were not provincially licensed – could not always access CWELCC funding or supports

They [outside professionals] will only go to families' homes or to license childcare centers. A lot of our newcomers do not want outsiders to come into their homes, they're just comfortable with their settlement worker.

Amplifying the Voices of Black Families and Educators



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ON THESE SHOULDERS
RESEARCH COLLABORATIVE

“ All teachers, all ECEs, they really need to look at their White privilege. There has to be a serious course for them to be able to realize how much they affect our Black children...We affect and can change the world because of our privilege. So why aren't we doing that?
-ECE ”

“

“My wife is often sitting with my daughter, and she's telling her about her hair, she's telling her about her skin colour, and reminding her about the proud families that she came from.”

-Parent

”



Black and African Nova Scotia families

- Nova Scotia has a rich history of Black heritage
 - Over 77% of African Nova Scotian people have been in NS for three or more generations, with roots in 52 African Nova Scotian communities.
 - African Nova Scotians represent 44% of the racially visible population
- African Nova Scotian children experience education debt as a result of anti-Black racism
- To achieve our vision of equity, we need to amplify stories from families and educators who care for Black children to identify the system-wide changes



AMPLIFYING THE VOICES OF BLACK FAMILIES AND EDUCATORS



Interviews with:

- 7 Parents of Black children aged 18 months - 5 years old
- 8 Early Childhood Educators who work in African NS communities



- How Black children in Nova Scotia access play including risky and outdoor play;
- How racism and discrimination are experienced by Black children in Nova Scotia in the early childhood period;
- How families and ECEs view the early learning and child care environment for Black children in Nova Scotia.

Framing Ideas from Critical Race Theory and BlackCrit that guided our work:

Anti-Black Racism is Endemic and Intersectional

Challenging Claims of Neutrality, Objectivity, Color-evasiveness, and Meritocracy

The Centrality of Experiential Knowledge and the Value of Storytelling

Interrogating and Challenging of the Dominant Ideology

Commitment to Social Justice

Outdoor Play for Black Children in Nova Scotia

- Black and ANS families and ECEs value outdoor play
- Families are fearful of over-policing, stereotyping, and over-surveillance
- Outdoor play spaces are limited in many historic ANS communities

"Yeah, I definitely think outdoor play is important... He loves it outside and he loves playing, getting dirty... Even at home when he's just watching, he goes to the door, gets his coat, and his boots, and kind of just looks at me."
-Parent

"As a child, we lived right off the main road. So, the risk of us going to the end of the driveway was scary for my parents. They were scared I'd be running out on the road with the cars going by. I didn't really get to do a lot of that, and it wasn't until much later on that I really got to experience going outside. Still wasn't doing what we would consider risky play. I had still none of that, no climbing, even going to something as simple as the Lake or the beach, we didn't do that. And too because my parents didn't get to experience that, I think they were scared for us to experience it."
-Parent



Black Families and ECEs Experiences Within Early Childhood Settings



- Anti-Black Approach to Curriculum
- Inaction on Racism, Social Justice, and Equity
- Precluding Black Children from Culturally Safe Environments

"I feel like certain educators and people that may be doing it for years and years and years and things have been a certain way for so long and they're not changing their practice I feel like there needs to be a little bit more investigation as far as like who we are actually choosing to just work with kids in general but also if you don't have the education then really make sure that quality education is being given to the Early Childhood Educators that are working with African-Nova Scotians."

-ECE

" [...] When I picked him up I told you about the biting so he bit someone right before I picked him up just now and I was kind of reading through the paper and it's like "she made him go sit by himself and told him not to bite his friends ".

-Parent

Racism and its Impact on Black Families in Nova Scotia

- Intergenerational impacts of racism

"My mom tells me stories of teachers actually mentioning my hair being too big or how to put it in braids... Or children making fun. I was called the 'N' word... Unfortunately, I feel my children are probably going to go through the same thing"
-Parent



- Experiences of racism across systems

"I remember one of the nurses. She said, 'Coloured babies, they have this Mongolian spot.' And I was just taken back, because she said 'coloured.'"
-Parent

- The importance of positive self-identity and cultural pride

"My wife is often sitting with my daughter, and she's telling her about her hair, she's telling her about her skin colour, and reminding her about the proud families that she came from."
-Parent

Equity and well-being among early childhood educators

- Early childhood educators have reported feeling "[unappreciated and underpaid](#)" (Saulnier and Frank, 2020)
- NS CWELCC workforce strategy focuses on:
 - Professional recognition (including compensation framework released fall 2022)
 - Pathways to Education
 - Lifelong learning
- Considering the ongoing changes and emphasis on workforce, we were curious about how the state of well-being of early childhood professionals



Exploring the well-being of early childhood professionals



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DATA COLLECTION

The online survey was shared on social media and emailed in fall 2022 to:

- Early childhood professionals working in early learning and child care in NS
- NS Early Childhood Development Intervention Services (NSECDIS) Inclusion Coaches

EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONAL WELL-BEING QUESTIONNAIRE (ECPW-Q)

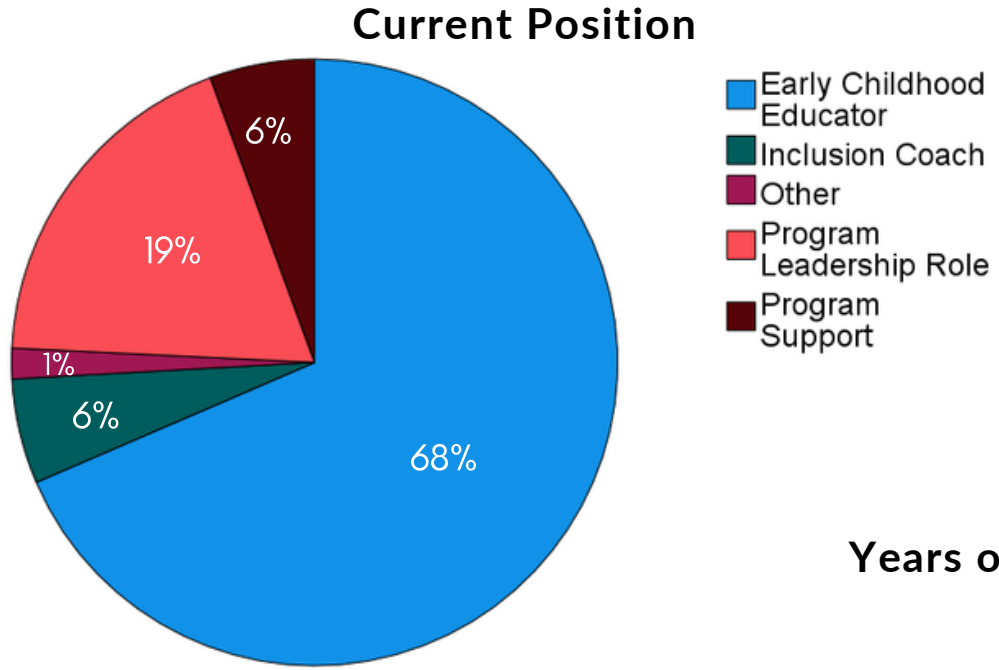
- The survey used a validated measurement instrument called the ECPW-Q ([McMullen et al., 2020](#)) to score participants level of professional well-being. **Overall well-being is the average score of early childhood professionals' responses to the items on the ECPW-Q.**
- Items covered **nine senses of well-being** including their sense of security, comfort, communication, self-respect, affinity, engagement, contribution, agency, and efficacy.
- ECPW is located at the meeting point when these senses are felt by an individual.



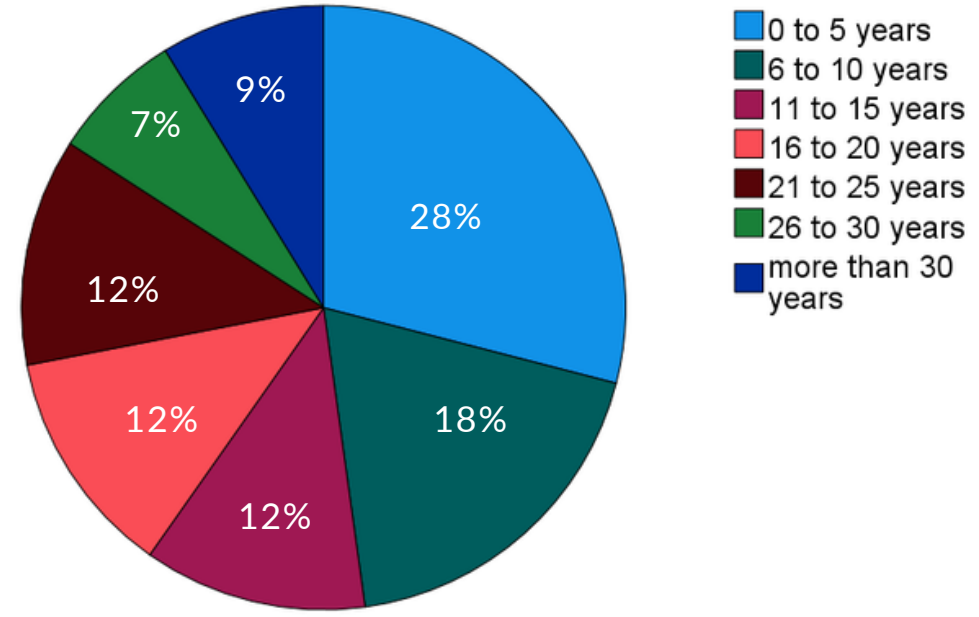
Exploring the well-being of early childhood professionals



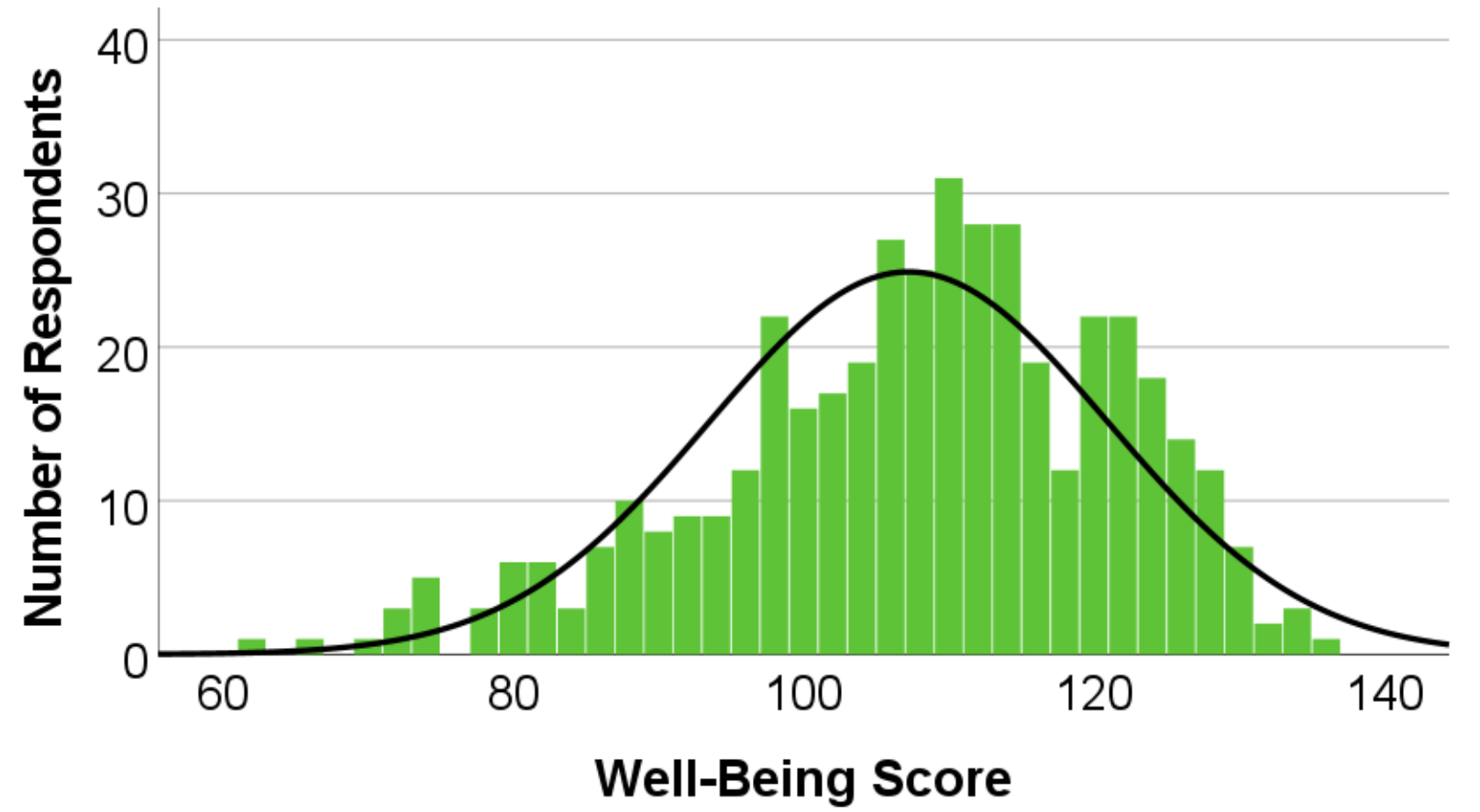
429 total responses from early childhood professionals in NS



Years of Experience as an Early Childhood Professional*



*Total 100% due to incomplete data



The higher the score, the higher the professional well-being of an individual. The highest possible score to rank on the ECPW-Q is 135. The average ECPW-Q score in NS was 107.

Exploring the well-being of early childhood professionals



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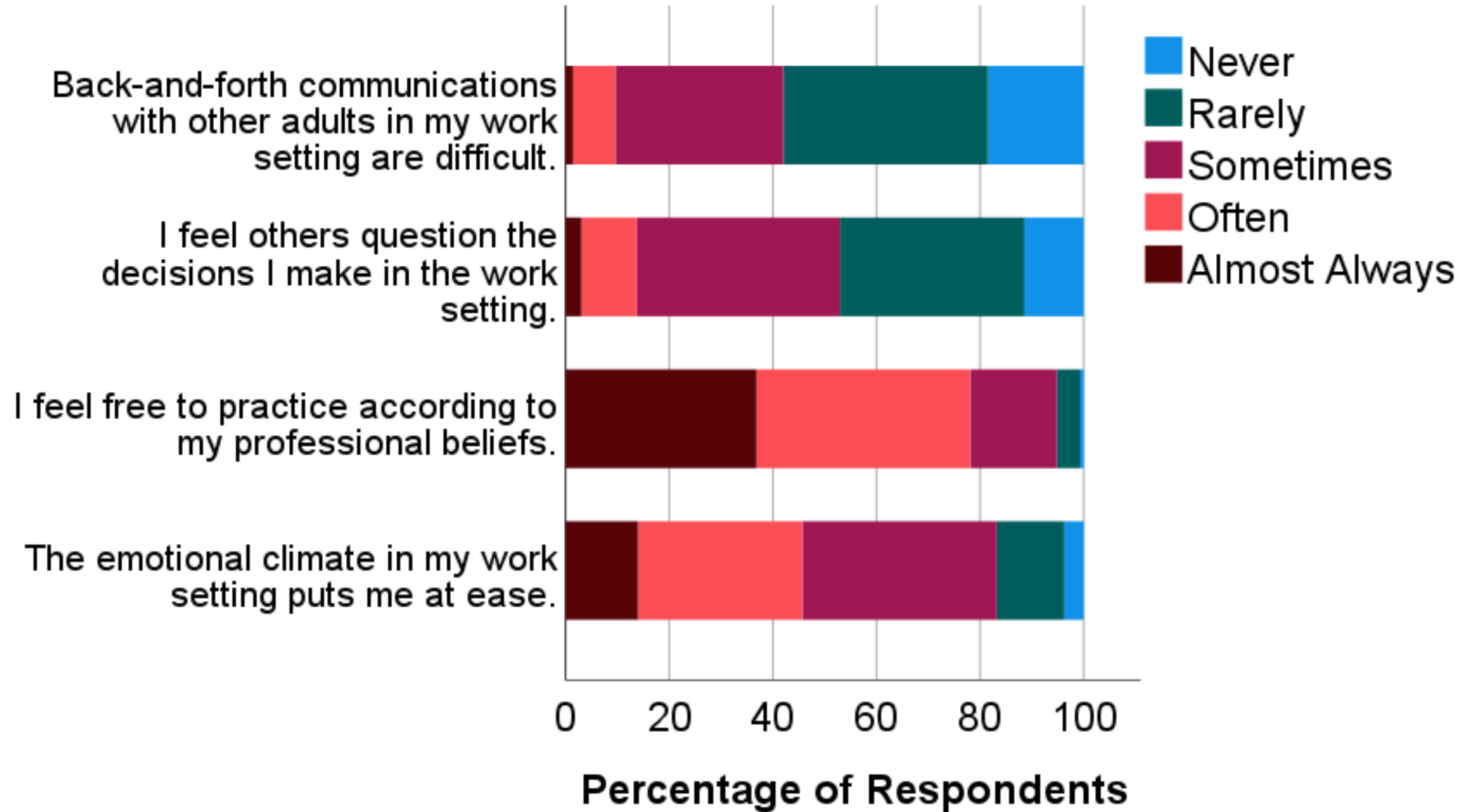


SAMPLE OF SCALE ITEM RESULTS

- Displayed are the responses to four of the items from the ECPW-Q.
- These items are reflective of the interpersonal and environmental factors in the early childhood education environment.



For more information on the survey results visit the QR code or msvu.ca/eccrc



"Being an early childhood educator is the most rewarding thing I've done to feel fulfilled in my life, but it is a struggle financially to live without stress and worry." - ECE

Recommendations from research for addressing (in)equity

- Enable partnerships within and outside of early learning and child care systems to respond to unique needs related to access
- Support the well-being of all early childhood educators through fair compensation, enhancing professional identity, and ensuring cultural and social-emotional safety
- Participatory and community-engaged research can mobilize the voices of educators, families, and children to identify solutions



Moving toward equity

- Critically examine socioeconomic, geographical, and racial disparities within early childhood systems
- Address anti-oppression within programs and build inclusive and culturally responsive programs
- Seek opportunities to leverage voices from those that experience inequity in the stories from families and early childhood educators

Thank you

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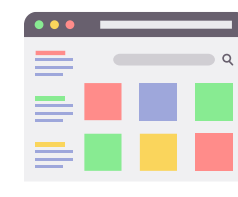
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