

***Towards comprehensive and competent early
childhood educational systems across Canada:
Entangled stories: Voices from the Field***



Tricia Lirette, MacEwan University
Christine Massing, University of Regina
Alexandra Paquette, UQAM
Laura Doan, Thompson Rivers

A webinar titled *Early childhood educators sketching narratives of change: Gestures and situated responses to the potential of a pan-Canadian ECEC system* was held on November 13, 2020.

What does it mean to be an early childhood educator at this time?

<https://ecenarratives.opened.ca>

Participants:

Song, ON

Véronique, QC

Safaa, SK

Brittany, AB

Janice, BC

Mallory, ON

Daniel, BC

Christina, NWT

Kristina, NB

Mourning

The thoughts that come to mind in attempting to account for our predicament have almost the form of fragments of meditation upon the sorrowful present (Braidotti, 2020, p. 2).



Being an ECE means to me happiness, joy, patience and a good sense of humour. In this current moment, I am feeling lonely in a big world and unable to teach children the way I am used to.

When I heard other ECEs on the panel talking about interactions with children I almost cried because I miss them so much. (Song)

Being an early childhood educator during this time is not easy and especially our job in general we are a person who develop community, a person who support the whole family, a person who care for those vulnerable children, right? At this point I think the most challenging thing for myself is how do we keep and stay connected with family? Those meaningful and valued connections become remotely, become two metres apart, become almost impossible in some centres. (Song)

As an ECE student in this moment, I am feeling lost. Social distancing can make it feel like there is nobody around. Nobody around to connect with, to confide in. I am missing being surrounded by my professors and my fellow students. (Photo Collage submission)

Such a huge shift to go from sharing to no touching. (Janice)

We were asked to focus on disinfection rather than pedagogy. (Véronique)

Children also expressed a sense of loss, reminiscing: *remember when we used to eat lunch together?* (Christina)



Affective Responses

The underlying mood during this pandemic is affective. It involves complex and internally contradictory alternation of emotions...An intense sense of suffering alternating with hope, fear unfolding alongside resilience, boredom merging into vulnerability

(Braidotti, 2020, p. 1).



*We were on our way to work, walking through a ghost town with **fear in our bellies** wondering what kind of virus we were dealing with, were we going to get sick or the children we work with, our own children and families. We **put our fears, our uncertainties, our lack of understanding aside** and we went to work without hesitation because our job is to ensure the moral and physical well-being of children and even the chaos of a global pandemic could not prevent an educator from caring about children's health and safety more than her own...Because being an educator means being **exhausted** by the numerous related tasks that are constantly being added and knowing that the slightest lack of vigilance or patience on our part is going to have an impact on the children. (Véronique)*

*I know that we've been expressing **a lot of frustration** in our field and that shouldn't be **taking away from our passion** and how much work we've put into and how much love we've put into what we do but the fact that as professionals that we have to even have the discussion where a lot of the time we feel we have to choose, I mean this is what we love to do, but **is it sustainable for ourselves? It's exhausting** and it takes away from what we are do with the children, but living in Vancouver we have to... (Janice)*



Burning On While On The Edge of Burning Out

My perspective on what it means to be an ECE during these times is, "burning on while on the edge of burning out". Burn out is quite common given the immense dedication and passion that goes into everything educators do for children in their care – and with the added challenges that came with the pandemic, it has only increased.

The burned out lightbulb represents being on the edge of burn out, and the fully lit lightbulb next to it represents the dedication ECEs put forth to push on and continue to do their best despite these uncertain times.

That outweighed the fear, that helped me... The stress and the worry and the compliance that sits on educators shoulders is so heavy right now but I think that if we are able to hold it high enough, right, as the adults in these programs, if we are able to hold it high enough and also look and view and **embrace the joy** that is play and community. That's the narrative that is also unfolding alongside this. **I'm grateful** that I get to see that every day in our program, watching children continue to play even though everything else is going on around them. It speak to the level of work that ECEs are doing in the field to **hold that worry for them** during this time. (Brittany)

*I created my own website daily drop in, I also created a YouTube channel and I have zero experience of this before the pandemic, but I want to stay connected as an ECE. I want families to know I am still there for them even when the child cry at night when they see Song's face they can go to YouTube or Facebook and just see. And one picture that made me cry, the girl's dad send me a message "Song, it's not fair that the kids get to see you but you don't get to see the kids" so he sent me a photo of a girl touching on the screen, trying to touch my face. **That made me cry. That's what I miss the most.**(Song)*

Resisting

The current crisis can make us more intelligent about what we are ceasing to be and who we are capable of becoming (Braidotti, 2020, p. 3).

responsibility

perseverance

patience

positivity

inspired

vision



lonely

no matter what, we keep going.

I took these photograph from my class, to share with you some of the changes that took place in our classroom. However, instead of just talking about the challenges that we faced, I think it would be better to talk also about the positive thing that came out from all of this. (Safaa's explanation of her collage)

As an ECE, I believe it is our responsibility to challenge ourselves and to expand our own learning and to adapt to the new experiences and really try to take this as a learning opportunity to better ourselves and to better our practices. (Mallory)

If you think about it, I think that these kids are dealing with so much, and right now a lot of the focus has been on cleanliness, sanitizing and, you know, keeping germs to yourself. But I think we also need to consider, it's still about their play, and the playing together, and that community feeling, and showing a lot of compassion to the families as well and all the stress that they are going through. (Janice)

*What is inexhaustible, however, is our desire to persevere in living, against all odds
(Braidotti, 2020, p. 4).*

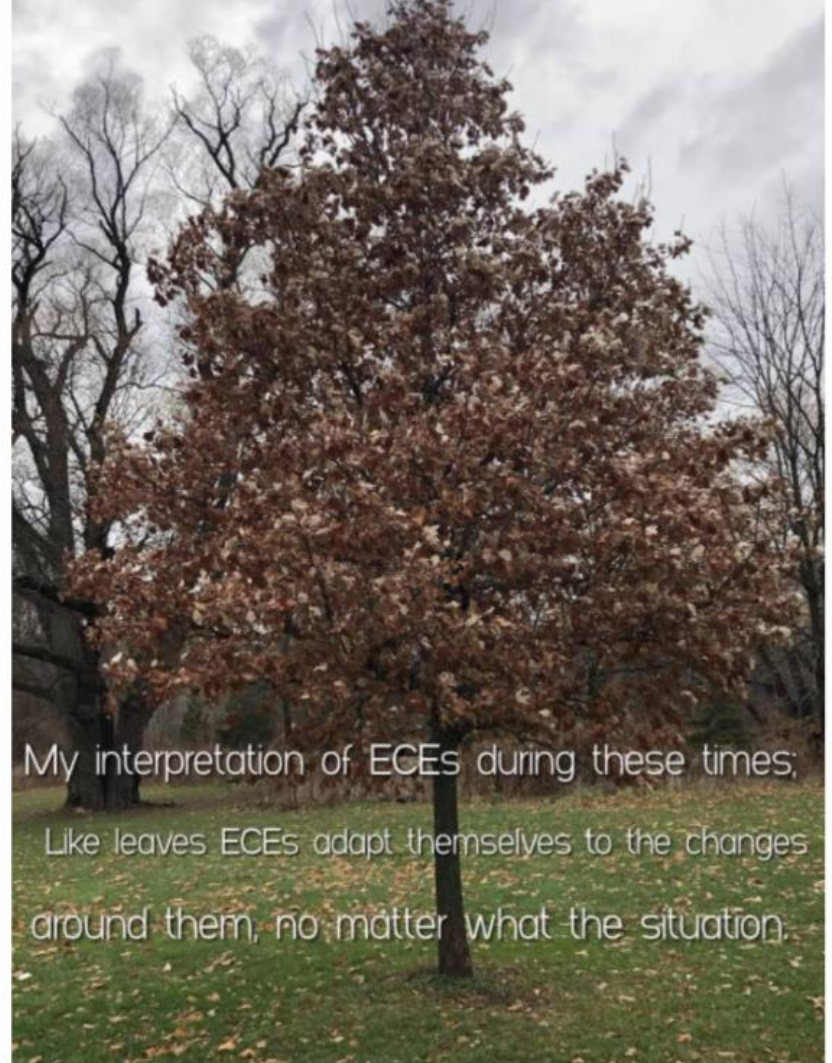
*Now it's the time that we realise how, as an educator, we evolve and adapt to the situation.
We all, I would say, ECE across Canada, we are survivors and fighters. (Song)*

*Being an educator also means doing everything so that children never realize that we do not
have the time or the means to give them everything they need. (Véronique)*

*We also, sometimes, did socially distancing outdoor gatherings to try and maintain and
preserve some of the traditions of the school that we usually do in the springtime. We usually
have lots of different events. (Christina)*

Regenerating

*Posthuman resistance must mobilize for
the compositions and collective
construction of affirmative forms of action
and solidarity and can activate their own
generative force
(Braidotti, 2020, p. 4).*



My interpretation of ECEs during these times:
Like leaves ECEs adapt themselves to the changes
around them, no matter what the situation.

*I think now is the time we realize **how we as an educator evolve and adapt** to the situation...Right now **I think we need to be seen and people need to realize how important early childhood education is.** (Song)*

*I feel like in my context a lot of it has to do with **adaptation and resilience** and, like you said, a lot of learning of new skills. As a teacher of young children I've always felt the role of the caregiver and mentor and observer and collaborator but I'm feeling through this pandemic...**it's a lot of adaptation** for ourselves for me as a teacher and for the children. (Christina)*

*As an ECE student in this moment, **I am feeling lost.** Social distancing can make it feel like there is nobody around. Nobody around to connect with, to confide in. I am missing being surrounded by my professors and my fellow students. I miss the support and the interactions. **However, I will continue straight on this path, keep moving forward, keep pushing myself and won't take a step back.** (Student Submission)*



As an early childhood educator, I'm not only a source of comfort and support to the children. I'm also a facilitator of play, adventures and exploration. Our world was turned upside down and now, more than ever, we are focusing on building strong relationships: with the children, the families and with the world around us. We are turning the mundane into the extraordinary. We are making sweet lemonade out of the sourest lemons.

*“As an aspiring ECE
It’s encouraging to see
A movement among us happening
As an aspiring ECE
It’s encouraging to see
Real change actively unfolding
As an aspiring ECE
It’s encouraging to see
A system approach emerging
As an aspiring ECE
It’s encouraging to see
What we are about to head into...”*

A New Generation of ECE’s: Perspectives

Poem by Grace Wolfe

As an aspiring ECE
It’s discouraging to see
The current state of early education
As an aspiring ECE
It’s discouraging to see
How our most vulnerable are profited off of
As an aspiring ECE
It’s discouraging to see
The job we love getting harder and harder
As an aspiring ECE
It’s discouraging to see
What we are about to head into...



Yet...

As an aspiring ECE
It’s *encouraging* to see
A movement among us happening
As an aspiring ECE
It’s *encouraging* to see
Real change actively unfolding
As an aspiring ECE
It’s *encouraging* to see
A system approach emerging
As an aspiring ECE
It’s *encouraging* to see
What we are about to head into



As an aspiring ECE
It’s encouraging to see
What a difference in perspective can do
For you can see the flame for the harm it can cause
Or see the flame for the light it can produce

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