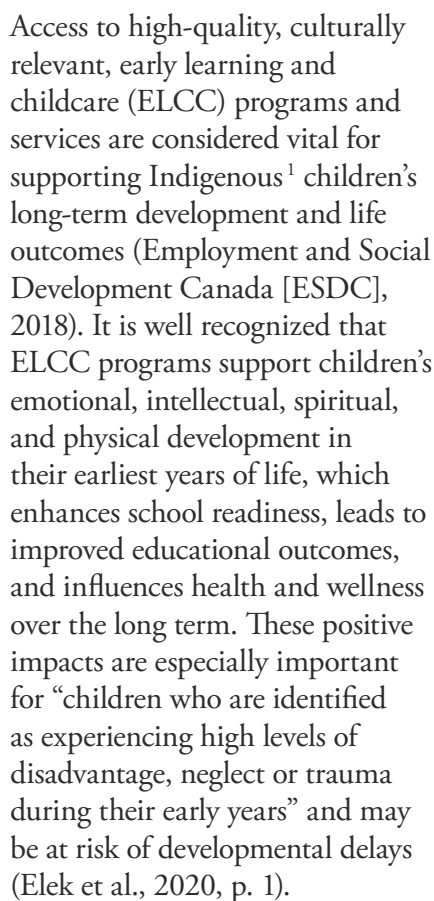




ELCC TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR EDUCATORS WORKING IN INUIT COMMUNITIES



Key components of high-quality, culturally relevant ELCC programs for Indigenous children and families include:

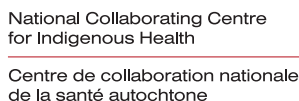
- participation in cultural activities,
- language revitalization,
- family participation in programs, and
- family and community involvement in program planning and governance (Elek et al., 2020; Murdock et al., in press).

These components contribute to the development of a strong sense of identity, which is considered a protective factor for Indigenous children and families, and build a sense of belonging, security, and resilience (Ezekwem-Obi et al., 2025).

They can also help strengthen family bonds and build the family's capacity to "support the learning and development of their children" (Elek et al., 2020, p. 2). Additionally, engagement with Indigenous families and communities in program planning and governance helps to ensure that ELCC programs respond to the needs of families and communities. High-quality, culturally relevant ELCC programming is thus an important tool for addressing Indigenous health inequalities.

Having the ability to design, develop, and deliver ELCC programming is central to self-determination, reconciliation, and cultural revitalization (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami [ITK] et al., 2017). For Inuit, culturally

¹ The term ‘Indigenous’ is used in this fact sheet to refer to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis populations inclusively.



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relevant ELCC programming is grounded in Inuit Societal Values and Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ), and uses methods that are “Inuit-specific, evidence based and globally informed (ITK et al., 2017, p. 3). IQ is based in four laws (maligait):

1. working for the common good;
2. respecting all living things;
3. maintaining harmony and balance; and
4. continually planning for the future (Tagalik, 2010).

These teachings are intended to “support every child to become a capable human being that can be assured of living a good life” (Childcare Section, 2023, p. 6). In practice, culturally relevant ELCC programming promotes Inuit culture and language through connections with family members and Elders who “provide teachings with land, sea and ice, plants and animals including healthy country foods” (Rowan, 2011, as cited in ITK et al., 2017, p. 7). In so doing, children become “happy, proud, and have a strong sense of identity and belonging” (Childcare Section, 2023, p. 6).²

The federal government of Canada affirms these qualities in the Indigenous Early Learning

and Child Care Framework, co-developed with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis governments and organizations at the national, regional, and community levels and released in 2018. The framework sets out shared visions, principles, and paths forward to ensure all First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children “have the opportunity to experience high-quality, culturally rooted early learning and childcare programming” (ESDC, 2018, p. 2). The framework articulates distinctions-based approaches to ELCC that holistically support “parents and families to participate in their cultures and languages,” reinforce connections to community, and align with the unique health, education, and social priorities of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis families and communities (ESDC, 2018, p. 3).

However, Indigenous children and families continue to be denied equitable access to high-quality, culturally rooted ELCC programming (Gerlach et al., 2021). Some of the barriers include, for example:

- lack of transportation,
- possible shame experienced by families in the provision of their children’s needs,
- distrust of child care environments,
- lack of appropriate funding for ELCC programs,

- lack of child care spaces available, lack of culturally appropriate child care settings,
- unaffordability, and
- limited family support (Freeborn et al., 2023).

The lack of funding for ELCC programs is especially acute in Inuit communities. Inuit live primarily in Inuit Nunangat, the traditional Inuit homelands comprised of four land claim regions in Arctic Canada:

1. Nunatsiavut (Newfoundland and Labrador),
2. Nunavik (northern Quebec),
3. Nunavut, and
4. Inuvialuit (western Canadian Arctic).

There are 49 communities in this region and in 2017, 10 of these communities had no licensed child care centres, 27 were without Head Start programs, and all but one centre had wait lists (ITK et al., 2017).

Adding to these barriers is the challenge of training and attracting qualified early childhood educators who have the knowledge and skills needed to create a safe and trusting early learning environment that is culturally relevant for Indigenous children and families (Gerlach et al., 2021; Murdock et al., in press). This fact sheet presents findings from an environmental

² Childcare Section (2023) articulates an Inuit-specific Inunnguiniq curriculum that is mandated by the Kativik regional government for use in all Nunavik daycares.

scan of ELCC training programs and curricula across Canada focused on the training of early childhood educators to work with Inuit families and communities. Specifically, it examines the characteristics of ELCC training programs, including:

- the location of training;
- mode of course delivery;
- type of training program;
- inclusion of Inuit knowledges, perspectives, worldviews, and approaches in curriculum; and
- requirements to complete practicums or field placements in an Inuit community.

Relevant programs were identified via an Internet search, using the term “Inuit” along with combinations of “early childhood/early learning/childcare,” “educator”, and “training programs.” All programs that could be tailored specifically to an Inuit ELCC context, including K-7 education programs, were included. Once programs were identified, program and course descriptions were reviewed to identify courses that were specifically Inuit focused or explicitly stated that Inuit content would be covered, and to identify Inuit topics covered in those courses. However, since programs often did not specify Inuit courses or topics but rather used the more inclusive term

“Indigenous”, this analysis includes both Inuit-specific and broader Indigenous programs and course content. It is important to note that the language used here in relation to course and program descriptions reflects information publicly accessible online. No efforts were made to contact program directors to clarify or gather additional information.

This work is intended to complement previous work conducted by the National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health (NCCIH), funded by ESDC, that involved an environmental scan of ELCC training programs for educators working in First Nations communities across Canada (see Murdock et al., in press).

Inuit ELCC training programs

Access to ELCC certification and training programs is limited for Inuit living in Inuit Nunangat (ITK, 2023). Few post-secondary institutions within the Inuit homelands offer community-based ELCC training programs or access to distance education (ITK, 2023). As a result, aspiring students may have to pursue this training in communities far from their home communities, which comes with high personal and

economic costs. This may pose a considerable barrier to building a qualified Inuit ELCC workforce. Professional development opportunities are also extremely limited in the region.³

The environmental scan identified six post-secondary institutions across Canada that offered ELCC training programs that were considered accessible to aspiring Inuit educators. This section examines the degree to which Inuit knowledges, perspectives, worldviews, and approaches were incorporated within the ELCC training programs offered at McGill University, Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue (UQAT), College of the North Atlantic, Labrador Institute – Memorial University, Aurora College, and Nunavut Arctic College. It also examines characteristics that enhance access to training for aspiring Inuit students.

Nunavik region

The most accessible ELCC training programs for Inuit living in Nunavik are offered by McGill University and the Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue. Both of these institutions offer only education programs that can be tailored to an Inuit kindergarten context.

³ ITK (2023) identified ELCC professional development opportunities in only two Inuit regions – Nunatsiavut and Nunavik, with training in Nunatsiavut limited to Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders.

McGill University

McGill University offers bachelor's degree and certificate in education programs. Their Bachelor of Education, Kindergarten and Elementary Education (First Nations and Inuit Studies), developed in collaboration between McGill University's Office of First Nations and Inuit Education and partnering Inuit education authorities, is delivered in select Inuit communities. It requires completion of McGill University's education program requirements as well as courses that place emphasis on cultural and language preservation and land-based learning.

In their first year, students must complete 30 credits of introductory-level courses in subjects taught in elementary school, some of which may focus exclusively on Indigenous populations and early learning contexts. They are then required to complete an additional 78 credits for their education degree. Among the required courses, students specializing in Inuit education must take two Inuit language courses and two courses focused exclusively on Indigenous educational contexts and perspectives on learning. The program can be further customized to build the capacity of Inuit ELCC educators through a greater choice of electives focused on young children's learning and through Indigenous

and Inuit focused complementary courses, such as:

- "Cultural Skills 1 and 2,"
- "Indigenous Physical Activities",
- "Reading Methodologies in Inuktitut/Cree",
- "Reading & Writing Inuktitut/Cree",
- "Indigenous Land-based Pedagogy",
- "Cultural Values & Socialization", and
- "First Nations & Inuit Curriculum", among others.

Students are also required to complete four field placements within their home community.

McGill University's Certificate in Education: First Nations and Inuit program, developed in partnership with Kativik Ilisarniliriniq, can also be tailored to a kindergarten context. This 60-credit program can be delivered in community, in some cases entirely in Inuktitut, and taken on either a part-time or full-time basis. Start dates are flexible, based on the preferences of Kativik Ilisarniliriniq. Students are required to take nine courses – one of which is Indigenous focused (EDEM 502 Indigenous Family Dynamics & Supporting Institutions). They are also required to take two courses from an approved list of complementary courses, of which three options focus on Inuit languages: EDEC 289: Inuktitut

Orthography & Grammar, EDEC 342: Intermediate Indigenous Language, and EDEC 344: Advanced Indigenous Language. Students must also complete three field experiences, which while not specified, likely take place in an Inuit community.

Additionally, students must take a set number of credits from an approved list of courses for each of three different streams (i.e., generalist, physical education, culture and language), with Inuit curriculum varying depending on the stream. The generalist stream requires 27 credits, two of which are Inuit-focused (EDEC 248: Reading & Writing Inuktitut and EDEA 242 Cultural Skills, which focuses on art, music, and crafts), and one that has explicitly stated Indigenous content (EDEE 253: Kindergarten Classroom Pedagogy). The Physical Education Stream requires 21 extra credits, of which only one is an Indigenous-focused course – EDKP 241: Indigenous Physical Activities. The Culture and Language Stream requires 27 extra credits, almost all of which are either Indigenous- or Inuit-focused, including topics on cultural skills, language and literacy, life skills, Indigenous physical activity, Indigenous story and creative writing, and oral and family history. Upon completion, graduates receive Ministry of Education certification to teach at the elementary school level.

McGill University also offers a Certificate in First Nations and Inuit Educational Leadership. However, the program is not tailored specifically to an ELCC context.

Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue (UQAT)

The Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue (UQAT) offers three certificate or short programs through its Educational Sciences Teaching and Research Unit, which supports various community-based projects in education. The certificate and short course options are delivered in community by professors or lecturers who may stay in the Nunavik region for more than one session and thus sessional periods may be intensive. Project management and educational support for students are provided by video or phone conferences that link the two Inuit communities of Ivujivik and Puvirnituk to the UQAT campus of Rouyn-Noranda and Val-d'Or. UQAT also offers a bachelor's degree teaching program that could be tailored to an Inuit ELCC context.

Of the certificate or short programs, UQAT's 42-credit Pre-School Education and Elementary Teaching in a Northern Context certificate program requires completion

of 14 courses, one of which is complementary. Of the required courses, four focus exclusively on Inuit in a northern context (i.e., DID 1343 – Writing Inuktitut: Teaching and Learning; EDU 1438 – Cultural Identity and Education, EDU 2342 – Cultural Identity and the Social World in the Northern Context, and LIN 1341 – Structure of Inuktitut). Three additional required courses contain explicitly stated Inuit or Indigenous content (EDU 1340: Introduction to the Teaching Profession and Methodology of Academic Intellectual Work contains content related to teaching in Nunavik; EDU 1433: Adult-Child Educational Relationship contains content on residential schools; and EDU 2341: Pedagogical Use of Media Technologies contains content related to cultural identity). Students are required to complete one practicum in an Inuit community and have the option of choosing from at least three Inuit-focused complementary courses.

The Short Program in Pre-School and Elementary Teaching in a Northern Context is intended as professional development for Inuit teachers. It requires completion of 18 credits, including courses on Inuktitut reading, teaching geometry and measurement in Inuktitut, and

Inuit traditional approaches to teach children, as well as a practicum in an Inuit context.

The Pre-School and Elementary Teaching in a Northern Context II certificate program is intended to continue the training of Inuit pre-school and primary teachers. It requires completion of 11 courses (33 credits), of which one is complementary. Several of the required courses are Inuit-focused, including courses on:

- Inuktitut writing and speaking,
- Inuit literature
- Nunavik's intercultural school system,⁴
- teaching and learning sciences and technology in Nunavik kindergartens and elementary schools,
- the social world in a northern Inuit context, and
- essential knowledge in plastic creation in Nunavik kindergarten and elementary schools.

The program also includes one practicum in an Inuit community.

A fourth program – Certificate in Teaching Practice Development in a Northern Context – also aims to improve the professional practice of Inuit educators. It requires seven courses, including three Inuit-focused courses, one with explicitly stated Inuit

⁴ The course teaches about the structure, functioning, and context of school systems in northern regions, the Quebec school system as a social institution, the history of the educational institution, and its socio-cultural effects in northern communities.

content, and a practicum in an Inuit community. The Inuit-focused courses include DID 1842: Teaching and Learning Sciences and Technology in Nunavik Kindergarten and Elementary School; DID 1842: Teaching and Learning Inuit History in Relations with the Contemporary World; and LIN 1344: Inuktitut Orthography, Phonology and Morphology. EDU 2346: Educational Training Project and Institutional Development explicitly states Inuit content is covered in relation to use of Inuktitut in a student's individual training project. The program also requires completion of one practicum, to be completed in an Inuit setting.

UQAT also offered a Bachelor's degree in Preschool Education and Elementary Teaching that was specifically targeted at First Peoples.⁵ It was identified as one of several programs developed for First Nations and Inuit students that use pedagogical approaches that “make room for Indigenous perspectives” (UQAT, 2025, n.p.). Despite this orientation, a review of the course descriptions revealed that none of the required courses focused exclusively on Inuit

populations and contexts, while only one course explicitly stated that Indigenous content was incorporated. As a result, the degree to which Inuit content was incorporated could not be fully ascertained. Students were also required to complete two courses from a list of five development courses, of which one course description explicitly stated some Indigenous content was incorporated. Students were also required to complete five practicums, which may occur in an Inuit setting.

Nunatsiavut

The most accessible ELCC training programs in the Nunatsiavut region are offered by the College of the North Atlantic and the Labrador Institute at Memorial University. However, only one of these programs appeared to incorporate any specifically stated Inuit content.

College of the North Atlantic, Newfoundland and Labrador

The College of the North Atlantic offers five separate one-year programs that can be layered on top of each other and combined

into two separate streams for a Bachelor of Applied Arts: Early Childhood Education degree. These programs are not specifically tailored for educators working in Inuit communities and are not generally delivered in Inuit communities;⁶ however, much of the training is available online, through either synchronous or asynchronous⁷ delivery, and can thus be completed remotely (ITK, 2023).

The Early Childhood Education Certificate is offered in the first year, either through in-person delivery at the Labrador West campus or online in an asynchronous format. Students are required to complete 13 courses – none of which are Inuit focused. Students may also choose to do their two field placements in an Inuit setting.

The Early Childhood Education Diploma program builds on the certificate program and is offered in the second year, either online in either synchronous or asynchronous formats or in-person at Carbonear, Corner Brook, Gander, Port aux Basque, and Prince Philip Drive campuses. Students must complete 13 extra courses, none of

⁵ For further details, please refer to <https://www.uqat.ca/telechargements/premierspeuples/Bachelor%20Preschool%20Education%20Primary%20Teaching.pdf>

⁶ An in-community ELCC training took place in Main as a pilot and included Inuit cultural knowledge and practices. It was very successful but has not been replicated (S. Tagalik, personal communication, 2025).

⁷ Synchronous course delivery occurs in real-time, with students and instructors interacting live through online platforms like Zoom during scheduled times, while asynchronous delivery allows students to access materials and complete assignments at their own pace, with no scheduled meetings.

which are Inuit focused, and two additional field placements that may occur in an Inuit setting.

The Early Childhood Education Administrative Leadership Advanced Diploma program is one of two streams that can build on the diploma program and be used as the third year of a Bachelor of Early Childhood Education degree. It is offered online in an asynchronous format and requires completion of 10 courses, none of which focus exclusively on Inuit ELCC contexts. One course – EE3020: Culture & Diversity – may include some Inuit content related to issues of equity and social justice, but this is not explicitly stated in the course description.

The Early Childhood Education Advanced Studies in Inclusive Practice Advanced Diploma program is the second of two streams that can build on the diploma program and be used as the third year of a Bachelor of Early Childhood Education degree. It is delivered online in an asynchronous format and includes 10 mandatory extra courses, none of which focus specifically on ELCC in an Inuit context. One course – EE 3120: Trauma and Loss – may cover some Inuit content related to trauma-informed practice, but this is not explicitly stated.

Lastly, the Bachelor of Early Childhood Education builds on either of the two advanced

diploma streams by requiring students to complete a fourth year of study, with 10 additional courses. Of these courses, one is Indigenous – but not Inuit – focused (EE 4040: Indigenous Peoples and Education). It covers the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, colonialism and its impacts, Indigenous created media and resources, and culturally appropriate curriculum and practice. The program is available online in asynchronous delivery.

Labrador Institute, Memorial University

The Labrador Institute at Memorial University has recently developed a community-based teacher education option – the Bachelor of Education (Primary/Elementary for Nunatsiavut) program (Memorial University, n.d.). Developed in partnership between Memorial University, the Nunatsiavut Government, the Labrador Institute, the College of the North Atlantic's Faculty of Education, and the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District, the four-year (150 credit) program is delivered in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador and includes an Inuktitut language component; however, it is unclear whether the program can be tailored to an early learning context, as the course calendar is not readily accessible to individuals external to the university community.



Inuvialuit

Aurora College

The most accessible ELCC training program for Inuit living in the Inuvialuit region is offered by Aurora College. Not only is the College the closest post-secondary institution geographically, but accessibility is also enhanced through other means. Aurora College offers one-year certificate and two-year ELCC diploma training programs that can be accessed either through distance delivery or in-person at the North Slave Campus in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. Further, Inuit living in the Inuvialuit region may receive funding support from the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation to complete their training through Aurora College (ITK, 2023). Nevertheless, the extent to which the College offers culturally appropriate training for aspiring Inuit educators is difficult to ascertain, based on program and course descriptions.

Aurora College's certificate program includes 10 mandatory courses, two of which are focused on Indigenous ELCC contexts. ELCC 0101: Cultural Competency in Early Learning and Child Care focuses on the incorporation of Indigenous cultural understandings and teachings into daily practice, while ELCC 0112: Applied on the Land Learning focuses on Indigenous land-based learning,

interactions with local Elders and Knowledge Holders, the revitalization of Indigenous languages and cultures, and understanding the foundations of Indigenous Knowledge. Neither of these courses are specifically Inuit focused but they may incorporate some Inuit content. The certificate program also includes one field placement that may occur in an Inuit ELCC setting.

Aurora College's ELCC diploma program builds on the certificate with a second year of instruction. Students are required to complete nine additional courses, two of which are focused specifically on Indigenous ELCC contexts. ELCC 0201: Cultural Competency in Early Learning and Child Care II includes content on Northwest Territories history, current cultural contexts, Indigenous relations, government policies and agreements that impact Indigenous families and communities, the rights of Indigenous people, and the design of educational activities based on northern Indigenous curriculums. ELCC 0214: Applied on the Land Learning II includes content on Indigenous experiences on the land, Indigenous cultures and traditional ways of life, revitalization of Indigenous languages and cultures, and application of Western and Indigenous pedagogical approaches. Three additional courses include explicitly stated Indigenous content, including ELCC 0205: Philosophy of Early Learning and Child Care, ELCC 0206: Ecology of the Family

and Community, and ELCC 0213: Applied Play-Based Learning II. While none of the courses focus exclusively on Inuit, these courses may include some Inuit content. Students are also required to complete one field placement, which may occur in an Inuit ELCC setting.

Nunavut

Nunavut Arctic College

Nunavut Arctic College is the most accessible ELCC training program for Inuit living in Nunavut. As a publicly funded post-secondary institution in a predominantly Inuit region, the College's ELCC programs can be considered Inuit-led or directed, despite the programs not being specifically identified as Inuit ELCC programs. The College provides community-based training or distance delivery in some regions across the territory (ITK, 2023).

Nunavut Arctic College offers two Early Childhood Education programs: an ECE Applied Certificate Program and a Diploma program (Nunavut Arctic College, n.d.-a). The Applied Certificate Program is tailored to meet the logistical needs of Nunavut communities, with training provided onsite through a series of intensive, three-week accredited courses, delivered in Kivalliq and Qikiqtaaluk regions (Rankin Inlet, Arviat, Coral Harbour, and

Iqaluit). The Diploma Program is a two-year, accredited program that builds on the certificate program with a second year of instruction. While no course descriptions for these programs are readily accessible online, the College's mission includes "making the benefits of Inuit traditional knowledge and southern science more accessible," and its vision includes promoting "opportunities, innovation and leadership while enhancing knowledge of Inuit language and culture to permit all learners to proudly take their place in Nunavut and beyond" (Nunavut Arctic College, n.d.-b). Based on

the College's mission and vision statements, its ECE programs are likely to be infused with and led by Inuit content. Students may also be required to complete field placements in an Inuit context.

Inuit content in ELCC curriculum at other post-secondary institutions

In addition to the programs above, Inuit students may also have some options to learn about Inuit children and ELCC contexts in programs offered by other mainstream post-secondary institutions across Canada,

through their choice of electives and/or decisions about where to complete their field experiences or practicums. For example, the University of Saskatchewan (n.d.) offers a teacher education program that can be tailored to an Indigenous ELCC context and offers a wide range of electives that incorporate Indigenous content, including EIND 380, which incorporates cultural arts of First Nations people, Inuit, and Métis people into school programs. However, these programs would not be targeted specifically at Inuit ELCC contexts and entail aspiring students to leave their communities to pursue their education.



© 2018 Nunatsiaq News and photographer Jim Bell. Young Inuit throat singers who performed at the Sept. 10, 2018, Embrace Life event in Ottawa. Reproduced with permission. Source: https://nunatsiaq.com/stories/article/65674itk_president_praises_new_indigenous_early_learning_and_child_care_fra/



Conclusion

This review found 17 ELCC training programs, offered by six post-secondary institutions, that either were or could be tailored to an Inuit ELCC context. Most of these programs were delivered locally in communities or allowed for distance learning. In some cases, accessibility to these programs was further enhanced through funding support for students. Nine of these programs clearly described including Inuit-specific curriculum, while another three programs included Indigenous-specific curriculum.

Of the culturally appropriate curriculum described in these programs, the focus was most often on Inuit language development, with some inclusion of land-based learning and Inuit pedagogy, cultural values and skills, and Inuit learning contexts. Less attention was given to learning about Inuit music, art, dancing, health, and trauma-informed practices. Indigenous-specific curriculum tended to focus on Indigenous rights, reconciliation, and the impacts of colonialism. As such, existing ELCC training programs for Inuit somewhat align with the characteristics of high-quality, culturally relevant ELCC programs for Indigenous children and families identified in research and policy (Elek et al., 2020; ESDC, 2018; Murdock et al., in press). Nevertheless, access to high-quality ELCC programs for Inuit children and families could be further enhanced by incorporating more Inuit perspectives, worldviews, and approaches into ELCC training

programs offered via distance delivery, such as those offered by Aurora College and the College of the North Atlantic, Newfoundland and Labrador, and by including a greater focus on ELCC contexts in Inuit-focused teacher training programs, such as those offered by McGill University and UQAT.

Outside of the 17 training programs identified above, access to culturally relevant ELCC training for aspiring Inuit ELCC students were exceptionally limited at other mainstream, publicly funded post-secondary institutions across Canada. While these mainstream programs may offer some opportunities to learn about Inuit ELCC contexts, the degree to which they are able to meet the needs of Inuit children and families is uncertain (Murdock et al., in press). Inuit-specific ELCC training programs are much better suited to provide culturally relevant training for ELCC educators who want to work in their home communities. As such, addressing barriers to culturally relevant training for aspiring Inuit ELCC educators, including enhanced access to community-based and distance learning opportunities; increased incorporation of Inuit knowledges, worldviews, and perspectives in curriculum; and increased funding support; is key to building Inuit ELCC workforce capacity and, subsequently, enhancing access to high quality, culturally appropriate, early learning opportunities for young Inuit children and their families.

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