

## CPL Program: The College Consults with RECEs

This spring, the College completed another phase in the development process of the Continuous Professional Learning (CPL) program for registered early childhood educators (RECEs). After receiving valuable feedback from College members, partners and stakeholders through province-wide focus groups and an online questionnaire in the fall of 2012, the College's Standards of Practice Committee guided the development of a draft design, implementation process and member resources for the CPL program.

From April to June 2013, the College conducted a series of roundtable sessions throughout the province seeking feedback on the draft design of the CPL program. In total, 416 members and stakeholders participated in 32 roundtable sessions. Members also had the opportunity to provide additional input to the program through an online questionnaire available on the College website.

"It will be useful to have a guide for ECEs to develop career goals. The participants felt that it was a positive experience in that they were able to network and contribute to the development and planning for a College of ECE project. They expressed interest in attending more opportunities similar to the roundtable session in the near future."

*Colleen Manitowabi, RECE, Program Manager of Wikwemikong Hub Centre and roundtable participant at M'Chigeeng First Nation*

Discussions at the roundtable sessions focused on the CPL program design which includes member participation in a two-year cycle of continuous professional learning. Within the two-year cycle, members will use three College-developed tools: a self-assessment tool based

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Roundtable session at Seneca College, King City



Roundtable session at CECE, Toronto

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## President's Message



Election 2013 saw Council members elected in Districts 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8. I'd like to welcome the nine re-elected members to Council and look forward to working with them on strengthening the College's role in the sector. I'd also like to thank those who ran for Council and voted in the election. Your initiative ensures that Council comprises a diverse group of professionals.

Council elected me as President, Susan (Darlene) Edgar RECE, Vice-President and members of the Executive Committees in June and appointed members to other committees. This was an opportunity for 11 non-elected RECEs to be appointed to committees, with 72 applying for the positions. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve as President for another term. I am honoured to continue working with Council members on furthering the College's mandate to protect the public interest.

This year, the Ministry of Education published its Ontario Early Years Policy Framework, which focuses on the need

for a shared vision to help support children's learning and development. The paper recognizes the College's creation as significant progress for the early learning sector and lists initiatives that will raise the quality of services in the sector. It also supports professionalism by prioritizing the need for leadership and capacity building with RECEs. The College shares this vision by continuing to work on developing a Continuous Professional Learning (CPL) program for all members.

We are now in the second phase of the CPL program development process. This spring, the College held 32 roundtable sessions with members and other stakeholders across the province. We sought feedback through an online questionnaire. I'd like to thank those who participated in the development process. The College will soon seek regulatory authority to implement the program and we look forward to collaborating with the Ministry of Education on this matter.

*Cheers,*

Lois Mahon, RECE, President

## Registrar's Message



The College wraps up the 2012-2013 fiscal year with considerable progress on the Council's strategic priorities. We've fostered relationships with various stakeholders by reaching out to organizations such as the Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) and District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSAB). We are developing

our relationships with partners and have expanded our resources as a result. We've established an external relations strategy that will communicate the College's role in the sector to various stakeholders and hired an External Relations Manager to oversee these collaborative projects.

Additionally, we have developed a three-year fiscal plan that will help the College invest in its Information Technology infrastructure. The new infrastructure will allow the College to work more efficiently and expand services by adding an online portal for members, eventually leading to online

applications and renewals. The College is also planning to change its website address to **college-ecce.ca** and **ordre-epe.ca** for increased visibility and access. Members will be updated on these initiatives in future communications.

The design of a Leadership Pilot project that will build leadership capacity in the early childhood education profession is now complete. Members were invited to submit applications to participate and we were pleased with the enthusiastic response – over 200 members applied to take part in the initiative either as participants or mentors. Selected candidates will be notified by the end of June. I'd like to thank all of those who volunteered to help build their profession by applying as participants or mentors.

*Sincerely,*

Sue Corke, Registrar & CEO

# Leadership Pilot Project Update

As part of its development of the CPL program, the College has designed a voluntary Leadership Pilot project that will focus on building leadership capacity in the early childhood education profession. With the changing landscape of the profession, building leadership capacity is an important aspect of facilitating public protection and trust for all College members and the profession.

Registered early childhood educators (RECEs) were invited to submit applications from March 1 to April 30, 2013 to participate in the Leadership Pilot project and the College was very pleased with the response. Almost 200 RECEs submitted applications and the applications came from across the province, from RECEs working in a variety of practice settings. Overall, the applications demonstrated a high level of professionalism and a commitment to increasing the quality of early learning and care for children in Ontario. Applicant submissions showed an understanding of the knowledge, skills and values outlined in the College's *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice*.

A selection committee reviewed the eligible submissions and selected 25 applicants to participate in the Leadership Pilot project, along with six RECEs who applied to participate in the project as mentors. Look for the official list of Leadership Pilot participants in a future issue of *Connexions*!

The Leadership Pilot project will officially begin on Thursday, September 26, 2013 when all of the pilot participants and mentors will gather for the first time as part of an opening leadership retreat. 

Visit the College website or e-mail [leadership@college-ece.ca](mailto:leadership@college-ece.ca) for information on the Leadership Pilot project.

## About this Publication

The College of Early Childhood Educators regulates the profession of early childhood education in the public interest and works towards its vision of a profession in which all members accept responsibility for practice excellence. Published three times a year in Toronto, ON, *Connexions* provides members and the public with sector and College news along with regular features on the early childhood education profession.

### Elected Council Members

Lois Mahon RECE, President, District 1  
Eugema Ings RECE, District 1  
Lisa Lamarre-O'Gorman RECE, District 2  
Susan Quaiff RECE, District 3  
Linda Cottés RECE, District 4  
Roxanne Lambert RECE, District 4  
Valerie Sterling RECE, District 5  
Richard (Dick) Winters RECE, District 5  
Heather Yeo RECE, District 5  
Anna Baas-Anderson RECE, District 6  
Sophia Tate RECE, District 6  
Susan (Darlene) Edgar RECE, Vice-President, District 7

Barbara Brown RECE, District 8  
Vera Niculena (Nici) Cole RECE, District 8

### Publicly Appointed Council Members

Madeleine L. Champagne, Ottawa  
Carol Crill Russell, Maynooth  
Rosemary Fontaine, Toronto  
Christine Forsyth, Toronto  
Bruce Minore, Thunder Bay  
Larry O'Connor, Brock  
Ann Robichaud-Gagné, Ottawa  
Rosemary Sadlier, Toronto  
Nerene Virgin, Hamilton  
Ron Wideman, North Bay

### College Administration

Registrar and CEO: Sue Corke  
Deputy Registrar: Laura Sheehan  
Director of Corporate Services: James Cha  
Director of Complaints and Discipline:  
Greg Coutts  
Director of Professional Practice:  
Melanie Dixon RECE

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## CONNEXIONS

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# Election Results Are In

In April, the College conducted an election of Council members in five electoral districts. The final results of the election are now available. The following nine members of the College have been elected to Council.

## District 3 – South East Region

### **Susan Quaiff, RECE (elected until April 2015)**

Susan Quaiff has been an elected member of the College's council since 2010 and was a past chair of the Fitness to Practise Committee. She is currently the deputy executive director of the Prince Edward Child Care Services. Susan is experienced in centre-based and home-based child care, early years and resource centres and special needs.

## District 4 – Central East Region

### **Linda Cottes, RECE (elected until April 2015)**

Linda Cottes is the senior vice-president of the YMCA of Greater Toronto. She has worked in the early childhood education field for the last 34 years and has been a member of Council since 2009. She has served as the chair of the Complaints Committee and was a member of the Executive committee.

### **Roxanne Lambert, RECE (elected until April 2015)**

Roxanne Lambert has been the Director of Children's Services for the Regional Municipality of Durham since 2002. She has been a member of Council since 2009 and has served as the Chair of the Standards of Practice Committee.

## District 5 – Toronto Region

### **Valerie Sterling, RECE (elected until April 2016)**

Valerie Sterling has worked in a variety of roles at the Learning Partnership since 2005 including National Evaluation Project Manager, Early Years Community Development Specialist and Coordinator of the Family and Community Engagement Strategy Initiatives. Valerie was previously elected as a member of Council in 2011 and has served as Chair of the Discipline Committee and as a member of the Registration Appeals Committee.

### **Richard (Dick) Winters, RECE (elected until April 2016)**

Richard (Dick) Winters has been an ECE since 1984 and a Program Manager with City of Toronto Children's Services since 2010. He is honoured to have been a member of Council since 2009 and served on the Standards of Practice Committee.

### **Heather Yeo, RECE (elected until April 2016)**

Heather Yeo has been the Executive Director of the McKee McKids Enrichment Centre since 2007. She has been a member of Council since 2009, was vice-president of Council from 2009 - 2011 and has served on the Complaints, Registration, Standards of Practice and the Nominating Committees.

## District 7 – Hamilton/Niagara Region

### **Susan (Darlene) Edgar, RECE (elected until April 2016)**

Susan (Darlene) Edgar has been employed by the Niagara Region since 2005 and became the Director, Children's Services Niagara Region this year. She was vice-president of the Council from 2011-2013, has been a member of Council since 2009 and has acted as Chair of the Registration Appeals Committee.

## District 8 – South West Region

### **Barbara Brown, RECE (elected until April 2015)**

Barbara Brown has been the Program Manager at the Connections Early Years Family Centre since 1988 and an instructor of early childhood education at St. Clair College since 1998. She has been a member of Council since 2011.

### **Vera Niculena (Nici) Cole, RECE (elected until April 2015)**

Vera Niculena (Nici) Cole has more than 30 years of experience in early childhood education and is currently an instructor in the Early Childhood Education Program at Fanshawe College. Nici has served two previous terms as a member of Council and was a member of the Discipline Committee.

## What happens next?

The new council met for the first time from June 17-19, 2013. During the first meeting of Council, Lois Mahon RECE was elected President, Susan (Darlene) Edgar RECE, Vice-President and members of the Executive Committee were elected. Organization of the statutory and non-statutory committees took place at the Council meeting.

Prior to this, newly elected Council members took part in a one-day training session. Areas of focus included governance, legislation and strategic policy directions for the upcoming year.

The next election of Council members will take place in April 2014 in Districts 1, 2 and 6. More information will be available in the months leading up to the election.

Thank you to all members who took part in the important process of electing a new Council for the College. 

## Continued from page 1

on the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice*, a professional learning plan and a portfolio.

The program reflects the principles of adult learning by providing members with opportunities for self-reflection, self-directed learning and personalized decision-making about enhancing their professional practice.

Engagement from members during this validation phase was tremendous, which shows that continuous professional

learning is important to the early childhood education profession. The College is grateful for the input from its members during the development and validation phases of the CPL program.

For more information on the Continuous Professional Learning program, visit the College website or e-mail [practice@college-ecce.ca](mailto:practice@college-ecce.ca). 



Roundtable session at Collège Boréal, Toronto



Roundtable session at Loyalist College, Belleville

# Surveying Early Childhood Educators

## From Occupation to Profession

In 2012, the College's Registration and Member Services Department conducted an online survey, Early Childhood Educator Entry to Practise and Early Career Transition. The survey targeted 2011 graduates of Early Childhood Education diploma and degree programs in Ontario. It was conducted among College members in every geographic region of Ontario, who were employed in a variety of workplace environments.

## Why conduct a survey?

The recruitment and retention of early childhood educators (ECEs) has been a concern in the profession since the late 1990s. These two factors are critical in influencing the provision of high quality early childhood education and care.

Therefore, one of the aims of the survey was to obtain feedback from the 2011 graduates in order to gain insight into the perceptions and challenges related to College registration, obtaining employment in the early childhood education sector, entry to practise experiences, career transitions and levels of professional confidence and satisfaction.

The survey was also conducted:

- As part of an ongoing effort to understand and better serve members and the public.
- To promote increased understanding and level of transparency about College registration processes and issues that affect members, the profession and the public.
- To determine members' level of knowledge and understanding of the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice*.
- To establish a baseline of information and a cohort of members that may be useful for future comparative purposes.

## Findings

Of the 2,503 members who were invited to participate in the survey, 559 English and 27 French responses were received.

Highlights of the survey's findings include:

- Approximately 80 per cent of the English respondents and 88 per cent of the French respondents were employed in the early childhood education profession.
- An additional 35 employment environments were identified by respondents (i.e. the Ready for School Connects program for new immigrants, extended school day programs, Montessori child care programs, YWCA and YMCA Childcare Centres).
- Most of the members surveyed felt "extremely confident" or "very confident" in their ability to meet the expectations of their current ECE role.
- More than half of the respondents said they were "extremely satisfied" or "very satisfied" in their current role. Of the respondents who answered that they were not working in the early childhood education sector, most of them said they were still seeking employment in the field.
- The majority of those who described their future career plans said they wanted to spend their careers in the ECE profession.

- Many of the respondents wanted to increase their knowledge and skills through additional academic studies or other forms of sector specific professional learning.

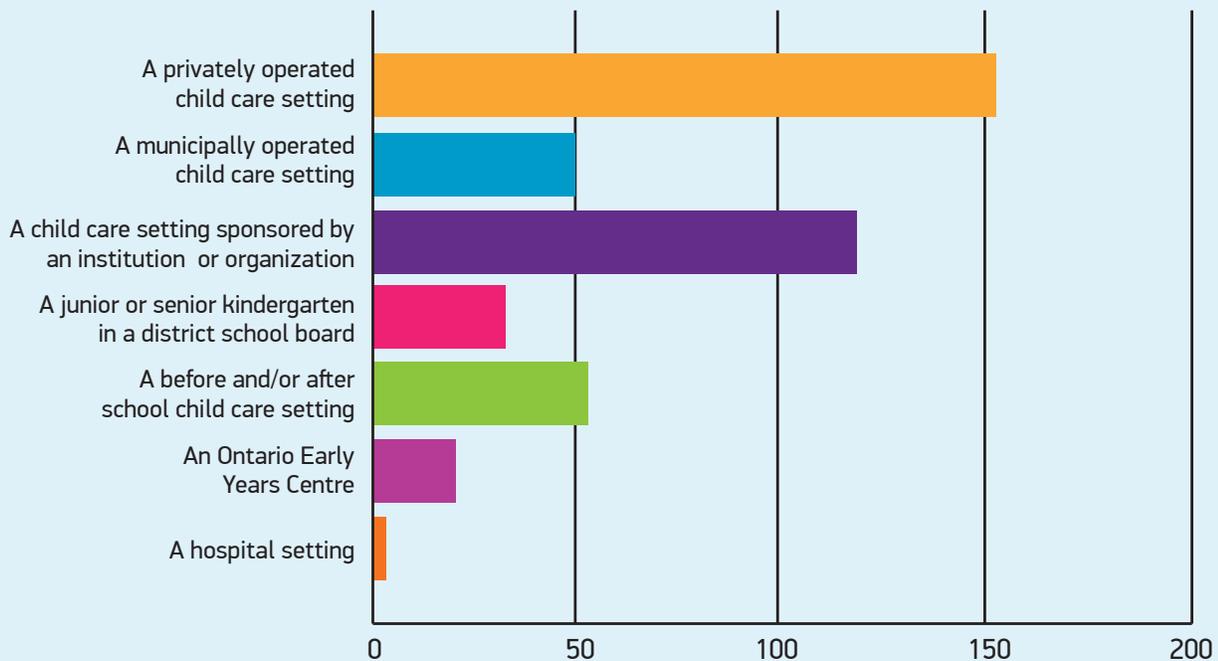
sharing. It will also serve as a catalyst for ongoing communication and collaboration with regard to quality improvement, recruitment and retention in the early childhood education sector.

The complete survey report is available on the College website. [C](#)

## Next steps

The feedback from the survey may be used by the College and other institutions and organizations for information

### If you are currently employed as an early childhood educator, which of these best describe your workplace environment?



This graph shows that early childhood educators work in a variety of settings.

# In Depth: Complaints and Discipline

## *A look at how the College keeps its members accountable*

The College protects the public interest through its complaints and discipline (C&D) process. Some members of the College are anxious at the thought of having a complaint filed against them. The following questions and answers are aimed at members who would like to better understand the process.

*Connexions* speaks with Greg Coutts, Director of Complaints and Discipline, Linda Cottes RECE, Chair of the Complaints Committee, Valerie Sterling RECE, Chair of the Discipline Committee, Susan Quaiff RECE, Chair of the Fitness to Practise Committee and David Leonard, Independent Legal Counsel about the C&D process.

### What happens when the College receives a complaint?

**Coutts:** The College's Intake Officer notes the complaint, confirms it is made against a member of the College and that it is within the College's jurisdiction to address. Then, it is passed on to the Investigations Officer.

### What happens during the investigation process?

**Coutts:** The Investigations Officer clarifies the allegations with the person who filed the complaint and sends them a Request to Initiate Investigation (RII) to sign before the officer can proceed. Then, the allegations are sent to the Member against whom the complaint was made. The Member has 30 days to respond to the complaint.

During the investigation, the Investigations Officer talks to the complainant, witnesses and Member to obtain information and documents for an investigation report. The report is submitted to the Complaints Committee.

### What does the Complaints Committee do?

**Cottes:** The Complaints Committee reviews the investigation report in an impartial manner by looking at both sides of the complaint. If the Member's actions are not related

to professional misconduct, incompetence or incapacity or if we feel the complaint is frivolous, we inform the Registrar that no further action should be taken. Most often, the Committee reminds the Member that they must behave in a professional manner and cautions them to abide by the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice*.

### How does a case get referred to a hearing?

**Cottes:** If the case involves disputed facts of credibility or more serious behaviour relating to professional misconduct or incompetence, we refer the matter to a hearing before the Discipline Committee. If it relates to incapacity, it goes to the Fitness to Practise Committee.

### What happens in a Discipline hearing?

**Quaiff:** A panel of three unbiased Committee members, who have no prior knowledge of the matter, attends the hearing. To protect the public interest, the panel comprises of at least one elected member and one appointed by the government. Independent Legal Counsel is also present to provide the panel with advice and guidance in legal matters.

**Sterling:** The panel hears submissions from College counsel and Member counsel. It hears and weighs the evidence and arguments put forward and then deliberates in private before coming to a decision.

## What happens if the Committee finds the Member guilty?

**Sterling:** If the Member is found guilty, a penalty is given. The Committee may impose a revocation or suspension of the Member's Certificate of Registration or place terms, conditions or limitations on the Member's registration. It may also reprimand the Member and in some cases impose a fine. It will order that the summary of its decision be published in *Connexions* with the Member's name, unless there are compelling reasons not to publish the Member's name.

## How does a Fitness to Practise hearing differ from a Discipline one?

**Quaiff:** Fitness to Practise hearings are generally closed to the public. The Committee focuses on the Member's ability to rehabilitate and return to practising the profession. It can require the Member to complete certain remedial measures before they are considered fit to return to practise.

## How are members' rights protected during a hearing?

**Sterling:** Members are given a fair trial and reasonable notice of the time and place of the hearing. They are also given all the information about the College's case and have the opportunity to submit a full defence. They may hire a lawyer or choose to represent themselves at the hearing.

## Should the government entrust the responsibility of conducting hearings and making decisions about people's livelihood and reputation to lay-people who have had no education in the law?

**Leonard:** The rationale for lay folk to sit on panels, as opposed to judges, is that members should be judged by their peers, who set the standards of the profession in the first place. As Independent Legal Counsel to the Committee, I give the panel advice and guide them through the legal procedures they must follow. They are not obligated to follow the advice given. I also provide the Committee members with training on how to weigh the evidence in a hearing and how to conduct one.

## What happens after a hearing?

**Coutts:** Decisions from hearings are posted on the College website and noted on the public register. The decisions with reasons are open to scrutiny by the public and may be appealed by the Member in Divisional Court within 30 days. 

If you have more questions about the complaints and discipline process, visit the College website or email [discipline@college-ecce.ca](mailto:discipline@college-ecce.ca).

# Practice Matters



**Practice Matters** features questions regarding the College and the early childhood education profession. Director of Professional Practice, Melanie Dixon RECE, addresses issues that members face and applies the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* to various situations.

Do you have a professional practice question? E-mail [practice@college-ece.ca](mailto:practice@college-ece.ca) for more information.

## How do RECEs, who work directly with children, collaborate with colleagues when differing philosophies arise? How do RECEs support these differences and also ensure they adhere to the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice*?

Registered early childhood educators are members of a diverse professional group and practise in a wide variety of early learning and care settings. The scope of practice outlined in the *Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007* asserts that RECEs plan and deliver “inclusive play-based learning and care programs for children in order to promote the well-being and holistic development of children.” Regardless of unique approaches to program implementation, all RECEs have a professional responsibility to ensure that the programming in their work environment meets these requirements.

While RECEs’ workplaces are wide ranging, so too is the scope of professional and personal knowledge which they bring to their work. Interpretations of play-based, developmentally appropriate programming will vary. Most RECEs working directly with children work with colleagues

who are experienced educators, those who are new to the field as well as student educators. Differences in opinion and style are bound to occur; it is how these differences are supported that creates positive workplaces and quality learning environments for children.

Standard IV: Professional Knowledge and Competence in the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* states that RECEs must “work collaboratively with colleagues in their workplaces in order to provide safe and secure, healthy and inviting environments for children and families.” (Standard IV. C.1) Collaborating and building a climate of trust and respect with fellow colleagues is achieved through positive interpersonal skills and by using clear verbal and written communication.

When differences of opinion arise, employing these communication strategies is essential to building consensus. If an agreement cannot be reached and the program suffers due to significant differences in approaches, RECEs should refer to the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice*, as well as workplace policies and procedures for guidance. When consulting these documents and addressing them in the workplace, it is important to remember to “interact with colleagues and other professionals in ways that demonstrate respect, trust and integrity.” By doing so, RECEs support one another and also ensure adherence to the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice*. 

### Put it into Practice!

Take some time to reflect on your own practice. What is your personal approach to programming and your style of communication with children, families and colleagues? Could you adapt your approach to support the philosophies and practices of colleagues and could you request that others do the same?

# Conversation with an RECE



Marnie Tarzia, RECE  
Thunder Bay

The College of Early Childhood Educators comprises unique members – each with a different background and story to tell. **Conversation with an RECE** features registered early childhood educators (RECEs) who are passionate about their profession and the people they serve.

Some RECEs work as resource teachers (RTs), professionals who support children with special needs. In this issue, we interview Marnie Tarzia RECE, Coordinator of Children’s Special Services at Thunder Bay District Social Services Administration Board, to learn more about RTs and their role within the sector.

## What does a typical day look like for you?

A typical day involves setting up child care placements for parents with children who have special needs. We determine whether a child has special needs and requires additional services and support in a child care setting. We also look at child care programs and assess whether they need more staff or resources.

## What specialized skills does an RT need?

They need to be well versed in child development and precise in developing individual plans. An RT needs to be able to generate strategies that can be employed in centres for children with special needs. A lot of planning and coordination is involved as they link children and families to special services such as occupational therapy or speech therapy. Most importantly, an RT needs to be emotionally intelligent and operate from a philosophy of inclusion so they’re tuned to the individual needs of children and families.

## What are some challenges?

It’s challenging when a child requires a certain service and that support can’t be implemented right away. For example, when someone is on a speech therapy waiting list for months. It’s also difficult when families are in need of services but they choose not to sign up because they’re not ready to deal with their child’s special needs.

## What value does a background in early childhood education offer to your work?

ECEs are strong communicators. They’ve studied child development and know the necessary parameters for a child to learn effectively. They are skilled in planning for an environment that covers the core curriculum areas and accommodates children’s developmental needs. For example, if a child can’t cut with scissors, an ECE will guide that child to tear the paper instead. 

Nominate an RECE you’d like us to have a conversation with by sending an e-mail to [communications@college-ece.ca](mailto:communications@college-ece.ca) or call 1 888 961-8558, ext. 251.

# Investigating Complaints

The College of Early Childhood Educators takes professional accountability seriously by investigating written complaints about members that relate to alleged professional misconduct, incompetence or incapacity. Its Complaints Committee reviews complaints and either refers them to the Discipline Committee or Fitness to Practise Committee for a hearing or resolves the matter by other means.

Details of College investigations remain confidential until such time as a case is referred to the Discipline Committee or the Fitness to Practise Committee. The Complaints Committee decisions below are published solely for educational purposes and do not identify the people involved.

## Complaint:

Acting unprofessionally and making false allegations

## Committee's Decision:

Caution

## Summary:

The College received an employer notification about an RECE who allegedly acted unprofessionally in her place of work and filed false claims with the Children's Aid Society (CAS), the Ministry of Education and her regional police department.

The employer report indicated that the Member had an outburst during a shift and used offensive language within earshot of colleagues, and possibly children, at the Centre. After her outburst, the Member left the Centre during her shift. The Member subsequently reported to CAS, the Ministry of Education and police that a number of the Centre's employees had been abusing certain children for several years.

In response to the employer report, the Member denied she behaved

unprofessionally and indicated that she reported the alleged abuse she witnessed to her supervisors during her employment at the Centre and no action was taken. The CAS investigated and closed the file because there was insufficient information to support the allegations.

After reviewing all the relevant documents gathered during the investigation, the Committee could not conclude that the Member had deliberately filed false claims. However, the Committee stated that if the Member had genuine concerns about the children in her care, she should have reported the incidents of abuse to the CAS immediately. By failing to notify the proper authorities in a timely manner, the Member placed the children at further risk of harm.

"[The Member] may feel that she is absolved of responsibility to have promptly reported these incidents to the CAS because she had reported these incidents to management," the Committee said. "However, [the Member] had her own legislative

obligation to contact the CAS or the police directly and promptly, and she did not."

The Committee indicated that the Member should have been aware of her duty to report as Standard IV.A.2 of the Standards of Practice starts that RECEs must "know, understand and abide by the legislation, policies and procedures that are relevant to the professional practice."

Further, the Committee expressed concern about the Member's unprofessional behaviour in the Centre and reminded her that early childhood educators are role models for children, families and other members of the profession.

"As outlined in Standard IVE.2, RECEs should never engage in conduct 'which could reasonably be perceived as reflecting negatively on the profession of early childhood education'," the Committee said. ©

# In the Public Interest

The Discipline Committee hears matters regarding professional misconduct or incompetence while the Fitness to Practise Committee addresses those related to incapacity.

The Discipline Committee sometimes orders that a summary of its decisions and findings related to professional misconduct or incompetence be published in the College publication, *Connexions*. **In the Public Interest** contains the most recent summaries. It directs attention to the process the Committee follows and the standards the Committee adopts in arriving at its decision.

## Nicole Williams Certificate Registration Number: 08126; Reprimanded; Suspended Member subject to Terms, Conditions or Limitations

The College's Discipline Committee found Nicole Williams guilty of professional misconduct and directed the Registrar to suspend her Certificate of Registration for 12 months and to impose terms, conditions or limitation on her Certificate.

Williams attended a hearing on March 25, 2013 and was represented by legal counsel.

Williams was the Directrice at La Garderie des Moussaillons for 18 years. After an investigation, the Centre found that Ms. Williams increased her salary without authorization, and kept cash payments made by a parent for his children's registration. It also found that Ms. Williams made purchases for the Centre with funds collected from parents and then expensed the purchases as if she made the payments herself. Lastly, the Member had not paid child care fees to the Centre since 2002 and issued tax receipts to herself for those fees.

Ms. Williams subsequently resigned and entered into a confidential settlement with the Centre. She entered a guilty plea to the College's Discipline Committee, which found her guilty of professional misconduct for breaching Ontario Regulation 223/08 and the College's *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice*.

Ms. Williams and Legal Counsel submitted a joint proposed penalty to the panel, who accepted it.

"The Member systematically defrauded the Centre over a number of years," the panel said. The Committee reprimanded the Member and directed the Registrar to suspend her Certificate of Registration for 12 months. The Member is required at her own expense to complete a course on "Ethical and Professional Standards" within five months from the date of the Committee's order. The latter seven months of the suspension will be suspended if the Member completes the course within the five months.

If the Member is employed as an RECE within 12 months after March 25, 2013, she must provide the Committee's decision in this matter to her employer and on March 25, 2014, she must provide the Registrar with a report from her employer demonstrating honesty and integrity.

A notation regarding the term, condition and limitation appears with the Member's status on the College's public register.

## Bridget Theobald Certificate Registration Number: 08743 Reprimanded; Revoked

The College's Discipline Committee found Bridget Theobald guilty of professional misconduct for possessing and distributing child pornography. The Committee reprimanded the Member and directed the Registrar to

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revoke her Certificate of Registration. Theobald attended a hearing on January 29, 2013 via teleconference.

Perth Police charged Theobald with two counts of possessing child pornography, one count of making available child pornography and one count of accessing child pornography while she was employed as a registered early childhood educator (RECE) with the Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario (CDSBEO).

Theobald admitted that she had downloaded and stored the images the police obtained from her computer during a search of her home on September 26, 2011. On October 18, 2011, the CDSBEO accepted Theobald's resignation.

Theobald agreed to these facts and entered a guilty plea to the College's Discipline Committee which found her guilty of professional misconduct. According to the

Committee, the Member's actions are "deplorable and will not be tolerated in the early childhood education profession". Through her conduct, she failed in her responsibilities to children, families and to members of the profession. The panel decided to impose the maximum penalty and ordered the Registrar to revoke the Member's Certificate of Registration.

"You have chosen a profession that aims to prepare children for their best future, but by participating in the child pornography industry, you contributed to the mistreatment of society's youngest learners and reduced them to objects for sexual gratification," said the panel when it reprimanded the Member. "Your heinous actions have demonstrated that you are not suitable to be a member of the College."

A notation regarding the revocation appears with the Member's status on the College's public register.

### **Martine Schneider Certificate Registration Number: 03705; Reprimanded; Current Member subject to interim Terms, Conditions or Limitations**

The College's Discipline Committee found Martine Schneider guilty of professional misconduct and directed the Registrar to impose interim terms, conditions or limitations to her Certificate of Registration.

Schneider attended a hearing on January 29, 2013 via teleconference.

From January 23 to February 3, 2012, Schneider was a registered early childhood educator (RECE) employed as the "in charge staff" at the Mazo de la Roche YMCA Child Care Centre.

During her brief time at the Centre, Schneider oriented an Early Childhood Education student and demonstrated a very inappropriate attitude towards parents and children. She also restrained a three-year old child in front of the ECE student and said: "I'm going to teach you how to restrain without really restraining."

On March 1, 2012, the Centre terminated Schneider's employment.

According to the Committee panel, "the Member demonstrated a blatant disregard for the dignity of

Ontario children and families by her words and actions. Through her conduct, she failed in her responsibilities to colleagues and to members of the profession."

Schneider agreed to the facts of the case and entered a guilty plea to the College's Discipline Committee, which found her guilty of professional misconduct. In particular, the Committee found that she has breached Ontario Regulation 223/08, and the College's *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice*.

"The Panel feels that you must reassess your behaviour-guidance techniques and your attitudes towards children and families. If you wish to continue as a member of the profession, we want you to reflect on the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* and make them a part of your values and belief system."

The Committee directed the Registrar to impose a term, condition or limitation on the Member's Certificate of Registration, requiring the Member, to successfully complete a course of study in professional supervision in early learning and care and behavior-management strategies. The member is to complete the course at her own expense within six months of the Committee's order.

A notation regarding the reprimand and the term, condition and limitation appears with the Member's status on the College's public register. 

# Pre-School Uses Mother Nature as its Classroom

By Jann Lee

Sara Raeesi-Gujani, a registered early childhood educator (RECE), is integrating her love for nature and children at Carp Ridge Forest Pre-School in rural Ottawa, ON.

There, children start and end their day in the forest, on 190 acres of land. They hike up muddy trails with magnifying glasses, build shelters, plant trees and study the flow of a creek. In the afternoon, they have story and nap time in an insulated tent. Computers and chalkboards are nowhere to be found in Carp Ridge.

Founded in 2008 by Marlene Power, the pre-school caters to children ages three to six. Power felt disenchanted by conventional pre-schools, which lacked emphasis on natural space and environmental principles, and decided to start one of her own.

Not long after, Raeesi-Gujani joined Power's team as an early childhood educator. A perfect fit for the program, Raeesi-Gujani brought years of experience and was passionate about working with children in nature.

She studied nature pedagogy in Sweden, Denmark and England and graduated from Ryerson University with an early childhood education degree.

Her passion for outdoor learning started in her early years. "I grew up on a farm and was inspired by how beautiful my childhood was," said Raeesi-Gujani. "It's my dream to pass that on to children. If they love nature, they will take care of it in the future."

Raeesi-Gujani incorporates the College's *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* into her daily work by using the forest to teach the children new things every day.

*"Early Childhood Educators provide opportunities for young children to experience nature, and to understand their relationship to their natural environment and to the world." Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, Standard III, B.2*



Sara Raeesi-Gujani (L), RECE, has received wilderness training to ensure that students at Carp Ridge Forest Pre-School remain safe while learning outdoors.

Photo Credit: Carp Ridge Forest Pre-School



Students learn in the forest, rain or shine, except in extreme weather conditions.

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For example, on a hike, the children found and started collecting pine cones. Later, they sat down and sorted the big pine cones from the small ones and what started out as a simple discovery bloomed into a math activity as the children counted how many cones were in each pile.

Raeesi-Gujani, who uses a child-directed approach in her play-based curriculum, follows the children's interest, only intervening to prompt their learning. "Children will freely develop skills they need in the future," she says. "They're inquisitive. When the teacher is not intrusive, then you learn the children's different styles of learning."

While Carp Ridge has an unconventional environment, it follows standard regulations to ensure the children are safe. Currently, the pre-school serves five children and is not regulated under the *Day Nurseries Act*, but that will change soon.

Power says that feedback has been positive and she's planning to expand the forest pre-school to Ottawa, where it will become a licensed day care. She is also working towards educating future early childhood educators about nature-based learning by developing courses with Algonquin College and facilitating student placements at Carp Ridge, where Raeesi-Gujani serves as a mentor. 

## News in the Sector

### MTCU Updates Early Childhood Education Program Standards

In 2011, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) undertook a review of the program standards for early childhood education programs offered by Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (OCAATs).

MTCU consulted stakeholders in the sector including the College of Early Childhood Educators, employers, professional associations, universities, secondary schools, program graduates, students and college faculty and administrators.

The revised *Early Childhood Education Program Standard*, released in December 2012, reflects the creation of the *Early*

*Childhood Educators Act, 2007*, and the establishment of the College of Early Childhood Educators as the professional self-regulatory body for early childhood educators in Ontario.

The revised program standards outline what is expected of those who register to become an early childhood educator. ECEs should engage in reflective practice, commit to ongoing professional development and become aware of the need to address ethical dilemmas that arise in the workplace in accordance with the College's *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice*.

For more information, go to <http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/> 

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