

East Kootenay ECE Roundtable

Tuesday 10 March 2026, 11:00 – 11:45am MT

Attendees

Robyn Peel (facilitator, CFEK), Caroline Tremblay (Golden CED), Cheryl Anderson (Summit Community Services), Crystal MacLeod (School District 6), Frankie Seitz (Southeast Kootenay CCRR), Glenda Newsted (CCRR Interior Region), Katrina Heyde (Kootenay Employment Services), Kristie Krisher (COTR), Laura-Lee Phillips (School District 5), Michelle Chan (CFEK), Renee Quanstrom (Golden CCRR), Stephannie Dunn (Kootenai Community Centre Society)

Presentation

Madeline Chan, a Research Lead for the Human Early Learning Partnership at the University of British Columbia spoke about the research project they are working on with SD5 and three other communities across BC. It is a 2-year project entitled *Advancing Community Partnerships to Integrate Monitoring System Data and Support Decision-Making for the Wellbeing of Children, Youth and Families*.

There are community engagement sessions in Fernie on 20 April 2026 and Cranbrook on 21 April 2026 where community members, service providers, and organizations are invited to review and discuss the initial findings together. Early years will be discussed during the morning session at both locations.

Roundtable Updates

- Columbia Basin Trust have increased their wage enhancement for ECEs by \$1/hour to \$3/hour. There was a discussion around the discrepancy this occurs in multi-service nonprofit agencies where those working not in childcare are receiving significantly less than those working in childcare. It was noted this is a challenge to navigate and Executive Directors of multi-service nonprofits were offered a connection to one-another.
 - It was also noted that the wage enhancement for ECEs can act as a catalyst for those who are ECEAs to complete their certification, as the hourly wage increase can be almost \$10/hour which is significant.
- There is a groundbreaking ceremony for the housing and childcare project in Fernie on Thursday (12 March 2026). This project was [announced back in 2023](#), so it's great to see the project moving ahead.
- There will be a groundbreaking ceremony for the new school in Fernie (which includes onsite childcare) in late June or early July this year.
- The Kootenay Childcare Initiative has a [resource page](#), where providers can view and sign-up for upcoming workshops and view recordings from previous training sessions. The second impact report for the initiative will be released shortly.
- With the [Budget announcements](#) from the BC government, attendees noted they are paying close attention to the tone and potential change around childcare across the province.
 - There was a commitment in the budget that the Early Years leads at the School Districts will be funded for another year, which is positive news.

- The Early Years Conference, that will be hosted by the Southeast Kootenay CCRR in Cranbrook in May, sold out within 48 hours! This shows a great demand for this kind of in-person gathering and learning opportunity. There is a waitlist, but this is already quite extensive.
 - Southeast Kootenay CCRR will be hosting another one-day in-person conference in October.
- Two providers noted that they attended the College of the Rockies Career Fair last week (on 4 March 2026) and both had great luck in meeting and potentially recruiting new staff. They both plan to attend next year too, and would suggest other providers look to attend, as it was a great experience.
 - There is a request into the Career Fair organizing committee for all those supporting and working with ECEs to be in the same area next year.
- At the new spaces centre in Invermere, they are at around 60% capacity in the first 4 months, which is exciting news. Both IT rooms are open (24 spaces), as well as 24 after-school spaces, and 45 of their 3-5 year spaces are open as well.
- In early April, there will be two information sessions on Early Childcare Education at the Creston COTR Campus.
 - Caroline shared the impact that having a coordinated support for those doing the certificate has had in Golden. The students do the course online, but they are greeted at the beginning of the academic year, are offered IT support and space to learn at the local campus, offered peer mentoring with an experienced ECE, and then have a little graduation ceremony in the community at the end. This is the 4th year they have supported a cohort and it is well received. The students feel supported and it helps them feel connected to the community.
- Discussions continue about returning the ECE Dual Credit program to the February- May cohort in 2027. There is a need to have 10 participants to have this cohort running. Discussions are in place with School Districts 8, 20 and 51 as well, to see if this wider geographical reach could support finding the 10 students.

Next Sharing Roundtable:

- **Tuesday 19 May 2026, 11:00 – 11:45am MT**