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***IJHELD* Editors' Welcome**

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Editors' Welcome

Dear Reader,

Hello and welcome to *The International Journal of Holistic Early Learning and Development (IJHELD)*. We are delighted that you are visiting this site and hope you will stay a while, visit again soon and often, and join the conversation by contributing something of your own.

IJHELD is a dream for us, two early childhood enthusiasts who share a passion for helping all young children flourish. By establishing this journal, our goal is to share research, ideas and information on early years learning and development with the largest possible international audience. We believe that this online, open access, non-subscription journal format is a sustainable way to improve knowledge exchange and accessibility, relationship building, and networking on an international scale. Researchers, educators, families, policy makers, advocates, activists, and all other readers and contributors worldwide concerned with early years learning and development need only an internet connection to join the conversation. All readers are encouraged to submit research articles, ideas, experiences, and information written in accessible language for a diverse readership. For more on submitting to the journal, visit "Submissions" under the "About the Journal" tab, or email one of us.

For many reasons, we have dedicated the inaugural published pieces in *IJHELD* to Aboriginal ways of knowing and learning in early childhood. Early childhood research and ideas addressing this theme represent the kind of knowledge we aim to disseminate, promoting early learning and development as: child-centered (focusing on children's unique personal qualities); holistic (encompassing multiple interconnected factors); and ecological (situating every child amid influential spheres, from family to community to society).

Implementing Indigenous knowledge is a priority at our institution, Lakehead University. As part of a commitment to strengthen social justice, Lakehead's Senate Academic Committee and Ogimaawin-Aboriginal Governance Council have developed a plan for all undergraduate students to graduate with at least one course incorporating Indigenous knowledge and/or Aboriginal content. University wide, faculties are addressing this mandate through program changes and faculty members are participating in a series of information sessions to learn about implementing Indigenous knowledge into their curriculum and instruction.

Aboriginal research is a priority area for Canada's Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), and across the nation, Indigenous education has been identified as a key priority for Indigenous communities, district school boards, and governments at the local, provincial, and federal levels. As a response, innovative ideas are being realized. In one example, this winter the University of British Columbia's Faculty of Education offered a six-week Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) entitled, "Reconciliation through Indigenous Education." This course, free of cost to anyone with Internet access, aimed to help students learn to integrate Indigenous ways of knowing into their classrooms, schools and communities.

This volume of *IJHELD* begins with the work of our colleague Dr. Ruth Beatty. Dr. Beatty, along with co-author Danielle Blair, elders and community members from different Indigenous communities across the province of Ontario, explore connections between Indigenous and Western ways of knowing mathematics. By enacting ideas that bring together communities and schools in support of children's mathematics learning, they aspire to transform school-based education from a colonial past into a form that respects both Western and Indigenous traditions.

We extend our sincerest gratitude to two guest editors who lent their expertise on the articles addressing Aboriginal ways of knowing and learning:

Dr. Jessica Ball is a professor in the School of Child and Youth Care at the University of Victoria, Canada. For 10 years, Dr. Ball was Co-Coordinator and subsequently Coordinator of the First Nations Partnership Programs, an award-winning innovation in delivering a community-based child and youth care diploma through partnerships with communities. Dr. Ball is the author or co-author of three books and over 120 journal articles, monographs, and book chapters, and has presented at over 300 conferences, symposia, policy roundtables, and workshops in Canada and internationally. Her achievements have been recognized by awards for teaching, knowledge mobilization, contributions to Indigenous children's wellbeing, and research in service of communities. She has an extensive program of research that uncovers the conditions that produce marginalization and promotes policies and programs to improve the quality of life for Indigenous and ethnic minority children (visit www.ecdip.org).

Donna Forsythe is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at Brandon University. Previously, Donna served in the public schools system for 30 years, holding positions as a classroom teacher, resource teacher, and special education teacher. She also worked extensively as an Oral Language and Early Literacy Consultant in a regional program, serving students experiencing severe learning disabilities. Her subsequent roles included serving as an ELA Curriculum Consultant with Manitoba Education, and a Staff Development Consultant with Brandon School Division. Since joining the Faculty of Education at Brandon University, Donna has worked closely with Brandon School Division to initiate a Professional Development Schools model of pre-service teacher education. Donna's current research agenda focuses on oral and written language development, play-based learning, and the use of culturally relevant resources to build identity and literacy.

We would also like to thank Melody Myers, an elementary teacher at Indian Wells Elementary School on the Navajo Nation, for contributing the cover photo of a paper Navajo rug quilt created by Grade 2 students. The rug combines the patterns of traditional Navajo rugs with mathematics learning standards about symmetry. All children contributed a section for the final quilt, symbolizing how all children at Indian Wells contribute to their learning community.

A focus on Aboriginal ways of knowing and learning in early childhood has alerted us to a need for scholarship in this area, and we encourage ongoing submissions on this theme not just in this first volume, but for consideration for inclusion in all future volumes. We hope to hear from you about this theme as well as any research, experiences, and ideas promoting holistic early learning and development.

Thank you for reading,

Katherine Becker and Sonia Mastrangelo
Editors