

# Gather & Grow

## Professional Learning Day

June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2026



### Key Note Speaker

**Ziysah von Bieberstein** is a poet, author, visionary, and unsettled settler who co-dreams collective futures here on Michi Saagiig Anishinaabe territory. A slam champ and founding member of the Peterborough Poetry Slam, ze has competed, performed and facilitated workshops across Turtle Island. As co-founder of Take-Out Poetry, ze curates teams of poets to serve up fresh, customized typewritten poetry from a bicycle-drawn cart.



### *Educator Session Presenters*



**Dr. Jean Clinton**



**Rukia Monique Rogers**



**Lorrie McGee**



**Anne Marie Coughlin**



**Mary Hewitt**

# Land Acknowledgement

**Anna Jennings**

Pedagogical Lead - Nature Roots Childcare

## Wrap-Up Presenter

The closing of our day together will be presented virtually by **David Alexander Robertson** who is a Canadian author and public speaker from Winnipeg, Manitoba. He has published over 25 books across a variety of genres and is a two-time winner of the Governor General's Literary Award. He will be sharing ideas from his book *52 Ways to Reconcile*.



## About Registration

**If you are a nutrition/dietary staff go to page 3 to learn about your day and to register for your sessions. Wee Watch Providers will be registering for their own sessions with Courtney.**

Educators will register for **one** of the four sessions. The format of the day will be a community of practice. Educators will be assigned to tables with peers who work in their auspice of care with a pre-determined table facilitator. The session presenter will lead the larger group through material related to their topic area and will offer reflective questions for table groups to discuss. You will spend the day in one location with the same group of educators. Snacks and lunch will be served. **We suggest registering as soon as possible to ensure you get your first choice of presentation topic. The registration link and QR code are on page 10.**

[When you submit your registration, a pop-up window will inform you that you have successfully registered.](#)

If you are trying to register and it won't allow you to, this means the session is full and you will need to choose another session.

The registration form will ask about food allergies & accessibility needs for the day.

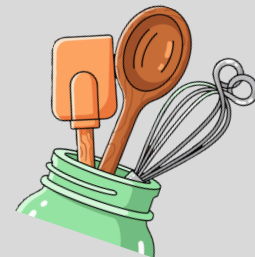
# Nutrition/Dietary Staff Sessions

*These next 3 pages are the registration and information pages for Dietary staff. All other educators registration begins on page 6.*

Nutrition/Dietary staff will be spending the day at 201 Antrim Street which is one of the locations of the Peterborough Child & Family Centres. In the morning you will be learning alongside local professionals from Lakelands Public Health and in the afternoon Nancy Northrup, Early Childhood Educator and Dietary staff from the City of Peterborough will share personal experiences and ideas in a community of practice.

## Session Choice A

### Morning Session



Join the nutrition team from Lakelands Public Health for an interactive, idea-packed workshop designed for childcare and early years professionals who want to feel confident and inspired about menu planning. Together, we'll break down the Child Care Early Years Act (CCEYA) nutrition requirements into simple, practical strategies that make balanced, child-friendly meals easier to plan and serve.

Enjoy live demonstrations and fresh inspiration for warm-weather menus, including easy, safe outdoor meals and snacks that fit into summer routines. You'll leave with new ideas, practical tools, and the confidence that comes from learning alongside peers who understand your day-to-day realities.



# Presenters



**Erica Diamond,  
Registered Dietitian**

Erica Diamond is a Registered Dietitian with Lakelands Public Health whose nutrition journey began at the University of Prince Edward Island. Throughout her education and career, she has been especially passionate about supporting the adults who guide children as they discover how to eat and explore new foods. Erica collaborates with parents, educators, childcare providers, and community partners on infant feeding, responsive feeding, supporting learning eaters, and creating positive, practical mealtime routines. She also supports adults in building their own food literacy and cooking skills, recognizing that confident, empowered caregivers help create the most joyful food environments. Erica strives to equip those who care for children with the tools and confidence to foster nourishing spaces where children can grow and thrive.



**Laura Abbasi, RD  
Registered Dietitian**

Laura Abbasi is a Registered Dietitian with Lakelands Public Health who completed her Bachelor of Science in Nutrition at Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia. After working in a variety of clinical settings, she developed a strong passion for community nutrition and for supporting the adults who guide young children in their early food experiences. Laura joined the Haliburton, Kawartha Pine Ridge Health Unit in 2005 and later completed a Master of Public Health specializing in Community Nutrition at the University of Toronto. She now works with families, educators, childcare providers, and community organizations, helping create positive, nurturing food environments where children can grow, explore, and develop healthy relationships with food.



**Elaine McCarthy  
Community Worker**

Elaine McCarthy is a Community Worker with Lakelands Public Health. With more than 20 years of experience in the culinary industry, Elaine transitioned from working as a professional cook to championing food literacy in public health. A passionate food advocate, Elaine believes that every person has the right to access nutritious food. Her philosophy centers on empowerment, sharing food knowledge, and learning from the community through conversation. Elaine believes that a healthy and sometimes complicated conversation can open the door to positive change. With the right tools, knowledge, and support; everyone has the ability to cook and nourish themselves and their families.

# Dietary/Nutrition

## Afternoon Session

### Presenter:

Nancy Northrup, RECE,  
Nutrition Staff for Pearson Day Care



I graduated quite a number of years ago from the ECE program at Fleming College and have over 30 years of experience in the field. Over the years I have worked with every age group from infant to school-age and also spent several years as a Program Supervisor. Awhile back, after a temporary move across the country and working in a kindergarten class, I found myself with extra time on my hands each day after school. During this time, I discovered a real love of cooking and have since found myself happily able to combine that with my life's passion of providing top-notch care and education for children and families.

### Session Description:



As dietary/nutrition staff in a child care program, it can sometimes feel a bit isolating in the kitchen and we may struggle to feel relevant or seen beyond being the person who delivers the lunch cart. We all have great skills and knowledge beyond following a recipe and I look forward to sharing with you, some ideas that I've been working on in collaboration with educators and families to have a more visible and connected presence within the program. Let's also come prepared to engage in sharing some experiences, hopes and new ideas around this topic and others that may be on your mind!



We are asking nutrition staff to send a couple of their favourite recipes to share with the group. You can send these ahead of time to Ellen at [emortlock@fivecounties.on.ca](mailto:emortlock@fivecounties.on.ca) and she will make them shareable for everyone.

# Educator Sessions

## Session Choice B

### Presenter:

Dr. Jean M. Clinton

Clinical Professor, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences, McMaster University



Dr. Jean M. Clinton, a McMaster University graduate with a Bachelor of Music (Honours) and Doctor of Medicine, is a Clinical Professor at McMaster University and a renowned child psychiatrist whose work has profoundly influenced understanding of relationships, brain development, and mental well-being. A Fellow of the ZERO TO THREE Academy, she has served as an Education Advisor to the Premier and Minister of Education for Ontario and on multiple national and international advisory bodies, including UNICEF Canada and the Canadian Pediatric Society. Author of *Love Builds Brains* and co-author of *Ontario: A Learning Province*, Dr. Clinton's teaching and scholarship bridge neuroscience, education, and deep learning in child development. Recognized with numerous awards—including the YWCA Woman of Distinction and induction into the Hamilton Gallery of Distinction—she is a passionate advocate for fostering well-being and resilience through connection and caring relationships.

### Session Description

“The Power of Connection – Beyond the Basics: Engagement, Relationships and Care”

Early childhood educators play a critical role in children's lives. This session explores how relationships, meaningful engagement, and quality practice influence development—especially for children facing adversity. Educators will gain practical insights and leave feeling confident in the difference they make every day.

**Link to Bio:** <https://drjeanclinton.com/>

# Educator Sessions

## Session Choice C

### Presenters:

Anne Marie Coughlin, RECE

Lorrie McGee, RECE



### Session Description:

The Art of Leading Well:  
Courage, Care & Collaborative Learning



Leadership in early learning is at its heart, a relational practice. It's about how we listen, how we care, and how we invite others into learning. This full-day session will draw on the principles of pedagogical leadership to explore how leaders can cultivate cultures of mentorship and professional growth that are rooted in trust, curiosity, and care.

Together we will reflect on the dispositions and approaches that can move leaders beyond management toward a more human and transformative practice, one that fosters vibrant spaces of living and learning rather than spaces to manage.

Through stories, dialogue, and shared reflection, participants will:

- Reimagine mentorship as a relational practice rather than a role or program.
- Explore the dispositions that sustain meaningful leadership.
- Practice strategies for engaging in courageous, growth-oriented conversations.
- Reflect on the systems and cultures that enable ongoing professional learning.
- Identify ways to find greater meaning and collective purpose within their teams

**Link to Bio: <https://lp.storypark.com/sa/podcast>**



# Educator Sessions

## Session Choice D

### Presenter:

Mary Hewitt, MPEd, RECE, BEd, BA



### Session Description:

Igniting AWE and WONDER: Re-Imagining our Materials and Spaces in the Natural World

Join us as we explore the transformative power of ‘awe and wonder’ in our practice! In this session, you will be facilitated through a simple-yet-powerful exercise to re-engage your own sense of ‘awe and wonder’. From there, you will come to understand how this can change the way you view and offer natural materials and contexts to children. In real-time (and with a renewed perspective!), you will then forage for natural materials and collaborate with your colleagues to create invitations for play. Together, we will consolidate this experience by reflecting on the ways ‘awe and wonder’ reveal new possibilities to carry forward into our everyday practice.

We will also unpack:

- ~ simple ways we can differentiate between ‘invitations’ and ‘provocations’
- ~ the important differences between ‘exciting invitations’ and ‘engaging invitations’
- ~ what it means to ‘provoke learning’ and our role as ‘provocateurs’
- ~ why being a provocateur requires us to lean-into discomfort and uncertainty
- ~ the process of emergence and why this is a sacred process for children (and us!)

Finally, you will be inspired with a photo gallery of outdoor environments and invitations for play, while reflecting on and discussing the educator’s values-made-visible in these photos AND what these educators believe about children’s competencies.

In this session, you can expect to gain new insights, engage in deep reflection with your colleagues, experience hands-on learning, and even dabble in the work of world-renowned poet Mary Oliver as an unexpected entry-point to understanding the important ways we work with and relate to the natural world!

**Link to Bio: <https://unlockingchildhood.com/about/>**

# Educator Sessions

## Session Choice E

### Presenter:

Rukia Monique Rogers; ECE has worked with young children and their families for over 30 years. She is an early childhood educator and community organizer whose work has spanned roles as a preschool and toddler teacher, studio teacher, curriculum coordinator, author and director. Her work is grounded in a deep commitment to anti-racist, anti-bias practices and work, along with community-based learning and growth.



Rukia holds a Bachelor of Science in Education, with an endorsement in special education. In 2013, she founded the Highlander School in Atlanta, Georgia, a nature-centered preschool program committed to anti-racist and anti-bias work. At The Highlander School, educators work alongside children to envision and obtain the goal of a reimagined world in which children are active participants in their communities. The school follows a Reggio Emilia approach to teaching and learning, emphasizing the rights of the child, families, and educators, the care and conservation of the natural world, and the cultivation of equitable democracy.

Rukia believes that education rooted in liberation creates connections between the worlds we envision and our daily work and practices as early childhood educators. She approaches this work with the understanding that classrooms are not excluded from the broader world, but rather are spaces where children, families, and educators actively practice ways of being in community with one another. Through both her educational and organizing work, she continues to support the building of a more just, connected, and liberated world.

### Session Description:

Building Communities of Love and Resistance: Young Children, Families and Early Childhood Educators as Activists

This session explores the deep and profound interconnections of reflective practices and anti-bias work in early childhood education.

Learn from The Highlander School's approach to integrating anti-bias work with earth-centered and Reggio Emilia-inspired practices that foster equitable, inclusive, and connected learning and living communities. This session highlights the collaborative work and engagement in activism at the Highlander School with families, educators, children and community to address the social and environmental needs of our immediate and broader world. Participants will examine how educators' ongoing reflection regarding their own beliefs, biases, and actions directly shapes daily teaching practices, classroom environments, and interactions with children and their families. Participants will engage in stories of radical solidarity and how reflective practices encourage educators to reimagine school culture as a space of care, resistance, and liberation. You will walk away from this session inspired and with a deeper understanding of how engaging children as active participants in their communities, educators can support collective well-being and nurture communities of love and resistance. **Link to Bio: <https://the-lola.com/meet-legacy-leadership-executive-rukia-rogers/>**

**Go to the next page to Register**

# Register Here: with QR code or link

<https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/ev/reg/g8xthyc>



**This link/QR code takes you to constantcontact and there will be a few seconds delay as it performs a security check...please be patient**

## Next Steps after Registration:

Two weeks before the event a letter will be sent to the email you provided. This letter will provide information about the session you will be attending, agenda for the day, location of the session and any other particulars you will need to know.

Please do not email us to ask what session you will be attending, we will send this communication to you. If you have further questions about the day, please refer these to your supervisor who will email Shannon Cattoni. We are looking forward to a day of learning with all of you!

### Agenda for Day

- 8:00-9:00 Registration
- 9:00-9:30 Keynote Presenter
- 9:30-10:00 Morning snack
- 10:00-12:00 Learning Session
- 12:00-1:00 Lunch
- 1:00-3:00 Continuation of Learning Session
- 3:00-4:00 Break, Wrap-Up and Evaluation



*Thank you to the City of Peterborough, Five Counties Children's Centre, Peterborough Child and Family Centres, Lakelands Public Health and Fleming College for your support in planning this event.*

