

ORGANIZING ACTIVITIES

How to enhance your activities and deliver key messages to engage your target audiences during Early Childhood Week

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this tool is to help various provincial, regional and local partners develop and organize meaningful activities during this pivotal week focused on early childhood development.

The activity examples mentioned below were among the most successful from the first three years of the event (2016–2018). Each made it possible to reach different audiences and achieve our objectives.

OVERVIEW OF EARLY CHILDHOOD WEEK'S GENERAL OBJECTIVES

Make early childhood development a priority in Quebec

- Provide information on how young children are faring in our society.
- Raise awareness and engage the public on how important it is to take early action and on the benefits and impacts that collective measures and actions have on early childhood development. We're primarily referring here to measures that can be adopted by provincial and municipal elected officials as well as employers.
- Showcase major players and accomplishments in early childhood at every level of society.

GENERAL TIPS

Your message

- Regardless of the type of activity you are organizing, even if naturally fun and engaging, identify one or more ways to convey ECW's key messages. For example, during a speech, in a brochure given to participants, through posters or emails, or even in posts on social media, plug in what you can from the tools our communications team has given you: key messages, sample press releases, letters, social media posts and so on.
- Find inspiration in the drivers of action espoused by the Collectif petite enfance to enhance your communications. Seize every opportunity to share key messages about early childhood development, including the importance of early action, collective responsibility and equal opportunity for all young children.
- The theme of this year's event, which revolves around prevention and caring, emerged organically. Prevention is the pillar upon which we can build creating communities for our babies, toddlers and preschoolers. To make our prevention efforts as effective as possible, we have to break down the silos that separate us and encourage all stakeholders to contribute.

How to get your message out

- Use the tools at your disposal to promote your event and create a buzz – media relations, social media, ECW promotional materials, etc.
- The media can serve as an important channel through which to drive your message and promote your activity. If you're less familiar with media relations, please refer to the document *Guide to Effective Media Relations*.

Who to reach

- Try to engage a variety of groups in your activity: young children, parents, grandparents, extended family members, early childhood stakeholders, elected officials, employers, media and others.

NEW THIS YEAR!

Four turnkey ideas just for you!

Everything has been thought out, planned and prepared to make your life easier. You can choose one, several or all of them, depending on what's right for you.

1. Use the colour-in poster to organize a special activity

- Get a group of children together to colour in this year's ECW posters.
- Deliver the completed posters to your mayor and/or MNA, along with a letter of support (template provided).
- Invite children's parents to join in from home.
- Let your social media followers know what the results of your efforts are!

2. Wear your blankie square with pride

- Invite people to wear their blankie squares on World Children's Day (Saturday, November 20).
- Spread the word ahead of time on social media and get as many as people as you can to follow suit.
- Get people to post their blankie square selfies on World Children's Day.

3. Raise awareness about Early Childhood Week on social media

- A calendar with a series of posts and visuals will be sent to you to draw attention to ECW while it is ongoing (November 15–21).

4. Send a letter to your MNA

- Go the easy-to-use application on the ECW website to send a letter to your provincial representative about the importance of early childhood development.
- Post the link on Facebook and invite people to do the same.

For each of these options, the ECW team will provide you with a set of simple, straightforward guidelines, including:

- Step-by-step instructions and a timeline
- Written/visual materials and tools to support your efforts
- Tips on reaching out to your network (email/newsletter templates, etc.).

Other items designed to help raise awareness are available through the ECW website under "Communications Tools."

THE CHALLENGE OF ORGANIZING EVENTS IN THE AGE OF COVID-19

Once again this year, Early Childhood Week (ECW) is taking place in the midst of a pandemic that is affecting all our lives in many ways. It is very important to heed the instructions of public health authorities to the letter and make any necessary adjustments to your planning and programming to keep everyone safe. Here are some useful tips from the provincial government in this regard:

- [Public health recommendations](#)
- [Gatherings in public places](#)
- [Outdoor activities](#)

Remember: Instead of cancelling or postponing your event, you can switch to a virtual format if need be. If you decide to go ahead with an in-person activity, there are a few things you should bear in mind to comply with the necessary public health requirements:

- Have a supply of disposable masks on hand for participants who need one and set up hand sanitizing stations at the entrance.
- Install a transparent barrier to protect the people tasked with greeting visitors upon arrival.
- Lay out the space in a way that complies with the 2-metre (6-foot) physical distancing guideline.
- Use arrows on the ground to indicate the direction of foot traffic in order to prevent people from coming face to face.
- Place adhesive strips on the ground at 2-metre (6-foot) intervals anywhere a queue may form to ensure people maintain the required distance.
- For conference-style activities, make sure there is a 2-metre (6-foot) space between chairs. In the case of auditorium seating, keep two seats open between occupants.
- For round-table discussions, limit the number of people per table to obey the 2-metre (6-foot) restriction.
- If the venue is not large enough to accommodate all guests in these circumstances, you may choose to stream the event on social media and/or record it for subsequent viewing.

EXAMPLES OF ALTERNATIVE ACTIVITIES YOU MAY WISH TO CONSIDER

- Creation of a video with messages from families, children and other key stakeholders to thank politicians in a given area (some messages can be longer, while others can be a simple THANK YOU; they can then be edited together to create a cohesive final product, complete with narration, an introduction and a conclusion)
- Social media contest to get families to promote original initiatives in their community in support of early childhood development
- Care package sent to elected officials with drawings, handmade crafts and messages from families and children in the community to thank them for supporting the youngest members of the population
- A “Did You Know” list to highlight ECW’s key messages and draw attention to compelling statistics
- Video shot overhead by a drone camera where the letters E-C-W and T-H-A-N-K-S (or G-S-T-P and M-E-R-C-I in French) are placed at 2-metre (6-foot) intervals in a park, with children, families and others standing next to each letter (can be sent to journalists and posted on social media)
- A “chain of caring” with children standing 2 metres (6 feet) apart around a seniors’ living facility to cheer on the residents (who would be asked in advance to stand outside on their balcony)

ACTIVITY EXAMPLES – NOTE THAT THESE WERE DEVELOPED BEFORE COVID-19

Fun activities bridging the gap between young and old

CPE Pain de Sucre, St-Jean-de-Matha, Lanaudière

This activity included an indoor picnic between children from the childcare centre and seniors from the Grand Manoir à Saint-Jean-de-Matha residence. A regional representative was also invited to participate.

First Nations: An intergenerational activity was organized during which participants built a drum together.

Maison de la famille Parensemble, Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean

Le Café des générations: A team of moms and tots (from 0 to 18 months) visited senior residences to spend time together and break the isolation.

Célébrons le droit des enfants, Montreal

Members from the Table de concertation Famille de Verdun organized several activities on children's rights at the Verdun city hall. Children and their families were invited to travel from station to station to participate in activities related to children's rights.

Unveiling of a special spot for tots at the Lanoraie library

At the Lanoraie library, a section was set up especially for the library's youngest members next to the books likely to interest them, featuring toys, cushions, a tent and a child-sized table. The unveiling of this new section was celebrated with a story hour, hosted by the mayor, followed by a light snack.

Early Childhood Week logos were visible on all communications promoting the opening of this special section along with promotional bookmarks, badges and posters. The "Letter from Grown-Ups to Our Little Ones" was printed and distributed to the families attending the activity. Marcel Sabourin's video, narrating this letter, was viewed in the library after story hour.

La fête des tout-petits, Montreal

A special morning was organized at the BAnQ Grande Bibliothèque, in the Espace Jeunes section of the library. The lineup of activities included a special hip-hop story time, a picnic, craft time, free play and a photo session with a green screen (the background had Espace Jeunes written out, the "Hutte" and the ECW logo, along with the hashtag #toutpetits).

Activities to share experiences and information

Olo Foundation, Montreal

As part of Early Childhood Week, OLO Foundation nutritionists went live on Facebook to answer questions about child nutrition from birth to age 2.

Regroupement des centres de la petite enfance de la Montérégie

In partnership with Actif pour la vie, the RCPÉM designed a postcard addressed to parents of young children that was distributed to over 128,000 households in 10 regions of Quebec (Mauricie, Centre-du-Québec, Estrie, Laval, the Laurentians, Montérégie, the Quebec City area, Chaudière-Appalaches, Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean and Côte-Nord). The purpose of the postcard, the layout of which was consistent with the design approach used by regional childcare centre groups, was to promote physical literacy among young children and encourage active play to keep them healthy and strengthen their overall development.

Regional event, Côte-Nord

The Côte-Nord region organizes an early childhood event every two years to engage all local early childhood stakeholders. The organizing committee includes members of Éclaire Côte-Nord and a representative from local groups partnering with Avenir d'Enfants. The event program offers an array of activities including:

- Lectures on child abuse (Camil Bouchard) and early childhood education (André Lebon)
- A panel of elected officials to discuss early childhood as a source of community vitality, including their vision and initiatives promoting early childhood (participants include representatives of CAMF and MAMOT, pro-mayor of Baie-Comeau, an elected official from the Minganie community, etc.)
- A panel on actions that make a difference (Avec papa c'est différent, SMI, SIPPE, Tricoté serré)
- Subgroup discussion workshops (e.g., discussions on community realities and needs to prepare for the next Éclaire Côte-Nord action plan)
- Déjeuner Cocauserie and other networking activities

Activities to mobilize and engage

Comité 0-5 ans, Laurentides

The Comité 0-5 ans sent RCM city halls a “loot bag” containing Early Childhood Week promotional items and an invitation to learn more about the committee and what it does for young children and their families. The committee included a presentation on its actions and the impact they have, Early Childhood Week as well as a sample motion for municipal councils. The RCMs were also invited to take concrete action and keep the committee informed. Results: One municipality issued a press release highlighting the committee’s work, posted information about Early Childhood Week on their Facebook page and now follows the committee's page.

Des grands engagés pour nos tout-petits regional campaign, Quebec City

In Quebec City, a regional campaign was launched highlighting accomplishments in the field of early childhood from both non-traditional stakeholders and those working on the front lines. The campaign focused on a thank you postcard with a generic message and a space to write something more personal to the recipient. In addition, the day before Universal Children's Day, a short event was held to open City Council, featuring the two event co-spokespersons addressing elected officials and presenting them with a flower symbolizing children’s rights, along with a postcard from the thank-you campaign.

Grand rassemblement des tout-petits organized by the Table de concertation petite enfance de la Haute-Yamaska

Children and their families, childcare centres and family organizations were invited to participate in the early childhood rally, where several psychomotor activities were offered.

Activities to spread information about early childhood

FNQLHSSCM's comic strip

A comic strip was created to illustrate the research data on First Nations children from the *Declaration of the Rights of First Nations Children*. The Commission also produced videos and stories, including "Children as Seen by the Elders," "À la recherche des oiseaux d'été" and "Kwiwichi."

Université Laval and Réseau des CRP, Quebec City

These two organizations launched a knowledge-gathering initiative on respite services providing postnatal home support adapted to family needs. In nine regions of Quebec, respite services provided by various non-profit organizations, including perinatal resource centres (CRPs), are largely unknown to healthcare professionals, decision-makers and the general population. This is what motivated the creation of the video *Les Relevailles*, broadcast on YouTube and a web page giving more information on these services. The results that have contributed to the website stem from two research projects, under the leadership of Geneviève Roch, PhD, Professor at Université Laval: *Vulnérabilité et relevailles* (carried out with funding from Avenir d'enfants and MESS) and *Relevailles et collaborations intersectorielles* (carried out with funding from the CIHR in partnership with CIHI and PHAC).

Activities acknowledging actions in early childhood

COSMOSS de la Matanie, Matane

In the La Matanie MRC, an afternoon reception was organized for community groups, business stakeholders, elected officials and local media at the Matane town hall. During the activity, early childhood efforts undertaken in La Matanie were highlighted, and participants took part in putting together a symbolic quilt.

Grande matinée des tout-petits, Quebec City

In keeping with the theme "Grandissons tous ensemble," the Concertation intersectorielle pour le développement des tout-petits et leur entrée à l'école réussie de la Capitale-Nationale organized the Grande matinée des tout-petits, where 160 local and regional stakeholders working in different sectors (education, health, childcare services, community, municipal) were invited to take a look at regional data from EQDEM 2017 and collectively commit themselves to supporting early childhood.

Voir grand pour nos petits, Pierre-de-Saurel RCM

A total of 12 families from the 12 municipalities that make up the Pierre-De Saurel RCM gathered to thank the 12 elected officials in charge of family policy. Parents, children, partners from school, municipal, community organizations and entrepreneurs together watched videos showing families expressing their gratitude for the actions and projects implemented to serve them (e.g., a family who received a cloth diaper grant, development of a park in a rural area, lower speed limits, family spaces, etc.). In addition, the parents present gave a certificate to the local business owners who went out of their way to make their establishments more family-friendly.

Salon des familles Mashteuiatsh, Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean

In Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean, a family event was held on a Sunday morning that began with a healthy brunch served at the community centre. Mid-morning was marked with a story hour at the library and several booths were set up at the municipal gym throughout the morning to inform and raise awareness among families. Cultural information was

also provided through booths on cultural heritage, household safety and local activities, and another both was set up for arts and crafts. A photography booth and a clown served as entertainment. The main objectives of the Salon des familles were to make families aware of the resources available in the area and to celebrate and highlight the importance of children in the community. In addition, the activity made it possible to publicize actions and resources that promote the well-being of babies and toddlers. The activity served to inform parents and support them in their role, raise their awareness of children's rights, educate them on the importance of safe, stimulating and supportive environments adapted to their needs, and drive home the fact that society as a whole has a role to play in the development and well-being of young children. This includes their extended circle of friends, family and neighbours, municipal resources (recreation centres, libraries), decision-makers, employers and elected officials.

À petits pas 0-5 ans, Lac-Etchemin

Launch of the family certification program highlighting the achievements of organizations and companies that have gone the extra mile to cater to the needs of young families in the area. Guests included members of the media, community partners, organizations, businesses and parents.