



2026

Westman Early Learning Fall Conference



***Honouring Children's Voices:
Where Quality Begins***

Friday, October 23, 2026

9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Victoria Inn, Brandon, MB

Register at westmanearlylearning.ca



Welcome!

Honouring Children's Voices: Where Quality Begins



Registration Details

- Registrations open: August 4, 2026
- Cost: \$130 per person, includes a served lunch and refreshments
- Registrations are limited - reserve early!
- Individual and group registrations available
- Registrations close: October 13, 2026
- Visit westmanearlylearning.ca for more information and to register

Register at westmanearlylearning.ca

MORNING KEYNOTE

Because it has a Song:
Children's Rights
Marc Battle



*“A bird doesn’t sing because it has an answer,
it sings because it has a song.”
~ Maya Angelou*

In my work and collaboration with kids, I have learned that the best adult in a child's life is the one who listens to their songs and is moved by them and dances to them.

Now I am not meaning their actual music but their ideas, wisdom and ways of being and living. A song so powerful that it makes you different than what you were before and deeply affects your practice and beliefs as an Educator.

We often hear how our work should be 'child led' but aside from curriculum and activities, where is the 'child led' in the rest of the childcare community? How are their inherent rights listened to and manifested? How much of an influence do the children have on the physical space, routines, practices and experiences offered? How are children's voices and songs inspiring and changing how we work today?

This workshop will explore, through stories, experiences and laughs, questions and songs, how we can evolve our 20th century standards and practice to support the rights, the needs and passions of 21st century kids simply by being willing accomplices who listen to them and answers with actions.

Afternoon Breakout Sessions

Marc Battle

Whakaoho Means Awakening, Startled

What New Zealand's Te Whāriki Could Mean for Us

This past summer I was fortunate enough to spend a little time in Aotearoa (New Zealand) and visit a few child care programs that followed the National curriculum and ideas of Te Whāriki. This experience startled me and awoke a spirit in me that connected to the possibilities of what we can do as wonderful people in the lives of children. This workshop using stories, photos and conversation and discourse will explore how we can be inspired by the work of educators in Aotearoa and what that could look like in Manitoba.

1

Nicole LeClair

The Power of Pointillism

Participants begin with a light Indigenous grounding meditation designed to quiet the mind, encourage mindfulness, and create space for creativity. From this place of connection, participants are immersed in Métis storytelling, learning about Métis culture and exploring Indigenous values of reciprocity through the teachings of the Circle of Courage and Indigenous ways of being. Participants will then be introduced to the art of pointillism, learning its techniques and exploring its significance within Indigenous artistic expression. Each participant will create their own unique pointillism artwork to take home.

2

Melanie Glaser

So Who's in Charge Here Anyway?

This workshop explores what happens when we shift meaningful control from adults to children in school-age programs. Melanie highlights how giving children real ownership can transform the environment, strengthen relationships, boost engagement, and build a stronger sense of community. She also offers practical strategies for balancing structure with autonomy and supporting children as capable leaders in their own space.

3

Off-Site Experience

Kairos Blanket Exercise & Assiniboine Food Forest Tour

This option is off-site and outdoors at the Assiniboine Food Forest (by Crow's General Store). Transportation to the location will be available. Dress for the weather!

The Blanket Exercise uses hard facts (truths) and Indigenous methodologies to enhance understanding about our shared history as Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada. The Assiniboine Food Forest Tour with Dave Barnes introduces early childhood educators to land-based learning through the lens of ecological restoration, permaculture design, and community stewardship.

4

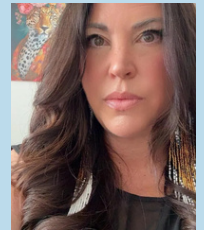
Meet Our Presenters

Marc Battle
ECE Instructor,
Red River College
Polytechnique



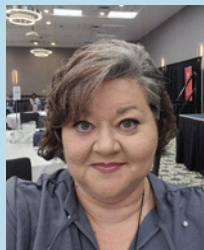
Marc Battle is an ECE Instructor at Red River College Polytechnique at the Exchange District Campus. He has been an ardent child advocate for almost 40 years and has spent his career trying to connect children's voices to his practices. He is also a musician, playground designer, and creator of the children's rights campaign, Nothing About Kids Without Kids.

Nicole LeClair
Winnipeg Métis
Artist & Art
Educator



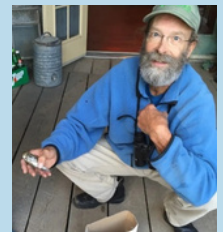
Winnipeg Métis artist Nicole LeClair discovered her love of art as a child, captivated by the stories held within paintings. With training in Advertising Art from Red River College, she has developed a signature pointillism style that echoes traditional beadwork and celebrates Indigenous identity, culture, and strength. Nicole now teaches Métis-inspired art programs for all ages. metisart.ca

Melanie Glaser
Early Learning &
Childcare
Professional



Melanie Glaser has worked in the early learning and childcare field for 36 years. Throughout her career, she has been committed to supporting children, families, and educators while fostering connections, belonging, and lifelong learning. She is passionate about sharing experiences and practical strategies that strengthen professional practice. Nothing without Joy!

Dave Barnes
Nature Educator
& Retired Teacher



Dave is a retired teacher who has been passionate about nature and the outdoors all his life. He loves to sing and dance, make maple syrup, garden, and lead Nature Walks through the local riparian woodland. Dave leads the Assiniboine Food Forest Tour, introducing early childhood educators to land-based learning.

Conference Details

Conference Etiquette

Conference etiquette helps us create a respectful, engaging experience for everyone. Please arrive on time, keep side conversations to a minimum during presentations, and give our speakers your full attention. Breaks and the lunch hour offer dedicated time to connect, network, and share ideas with colleagues.



Trade Show

Our conference trade show opens at 8:30 a.m. and will be available throughout the day during nutrition breaks and lunch. Explore a diverse selection of vendors offering products, resources, and services that early childhood professionals may find inspiring and useful.



Photo Booths

Capture the fun and connection of the day with our conference photo booths, available throughout the event. Stop by to snap a keepsake, celebrate your work together, and bring home a moment that reflects the spirit of early childhood education and community.

We look forward to welcoming you to a day of learning, connection, and inspiration. Thank you for joining us as we come together to celebrate the work of early childhood professionals and strengthen our community.

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