



Centennial
Infant and
Child Centre
Foundation

FALL 2020

What a year!



building futures changing lives strengthening families



Our new *virtual* reality

When COVID 19 shut down Toronto in March, CICC quickly switched to the alternate world of Zoom and Teams to support our kids and families.

Our Early Intervention staff and Resource Consultants seamlessly switched from home to virtual visits with no disruption to service. The results were far better than imagined as over 300 families continued to be supported.

“Virtual Preschool” joined families in their homes. Teachers reproduced activities such as music, dance and story time using an online format. Of course, nothing can replace person to person interactions. Yet, a crisis of this magnitude can also result in creative solutions. Our amazing staff had no shortage of ideas to help their clients.

As the world gradually re-opens, memos from the Ministry of Education, Toronto Children’s Services and Public Health arrive almost daily with guidance on re-opening procedures, staff training, PPE, and screening checks. A very different world from before COVID-19!

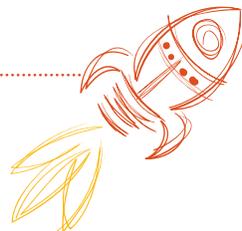
Our plan is to open Preschool Oct 1st. To ensure the health and safety of the children and staff,



we will start with a reduced enrollment of 50%. Sadly, for the first time since CICC opened over 50 years ago, our cherished volunteers will not be allowed to return yet, as per a Ministry of Education directive. This Provincial order also means our wonderful classroom assistants won’t be with us either. Only staff and children can be onsite for now.

Despite these challenging days and the uncertainty of what lies ahead, we are confident that Centennial’s Kids will continue to benefit from individualized programs, family support and an enriched learning environment. Our mission to prepare children for the best start in life and strengthen families will not be compromised.

Power the Potential of children >



Donate generously
at www.cicc.ca



Virtually amazing

To express with words the joy my husband and I feel every time we see progress in our little boy Juan Martin (JM) is difficult, it is just pure HAPPINESS.

We did have a rough start; JM was born at home without any warning or being planned. He was four weeks premature and had to spend his first month of life in the NICU. We did know from the start of the pregnancy that he had Down Syndrome and an Atrioventricular Septal Defect (AVSD) which, after being repaired with surgery, ended up in a complication which kept him hospitalized for six months.

The long hospitalization set our baby back in many ways, he stopped making any noises, he stopped bottle feeding since he was being tube fed for a long time, he would not accept any solid foods, he would not crawl or have any control of his upper body... all this, among other things, he was doing before his heart surgery.

During his time at Sick Kids, we were referred to Centennial Infant and Child Centre's Early Intervention Program. Once we were finally home, we were blessed to be connected to Anna Blaszczyk she has been such an amazing being to us! Along with her expertise she is an understanding, loving guide who celebrates with us every one of Juan Martin's achievements.

Join the **KidsClub** and keep Centennial's kids connected.

In January of this year, we came to Colombia for a short period of time but with the arrival of COVID-19 we have not been able to return to Toronto (all airports here have been closed). The challenge to continue with therapeutic support for JM was handled by our Early Interventionist Anna. She coordinated Virtual team calls so our family could connect with her, Lori (Occupational Therapist) and Cheryl (Speech-Language Pathologist) which was a relief!

JM has made so much progress during these months thanks to all of them!

He is so coordinated with his hands, he is fully sitting up, he crawls, he says tatata, papapapa, he turns pages when reading a book with mom or dad, and he now feeds fully with a bottle. We continue working on solids although we know that's going to take us some time, and we are fine with that. We go at his pace; we celebrate every little or big milestone he reaches, and we just feel blessed for our beautiful boy.

Our family can't thank Anna, Lori, Cheryl and Centennial Infant and Child Centre enough for all they have done for us, Juan Martin is true proof that with love and the right guidance, life has no limits!

— Juan Martin, Andres, and Monica

Here's how your monthly donation helps:

\$10/month = Provides Program Supplies

\$25/month = Virtual Program Development

\$50/month = Family Assistance Fund



Iris retires a fond farewell

In many ways, Iris is the heart of Centennial. It is hard to imagine this place without her. Iris started as a volunteer and began teaching in 1992. Her son, David, attended the preschool, and her grandson, Zach, came as an integrated child. Iris also volunteered at numerous fundraising events and no one could top her raffle ticket sales!

Iris and her husband, Harry, also created the David Kohn Fund in memory of their son.

This endowment supports those families who might not otherwise have the financial means to attend CICC. Iris spent the bulk of her career at Centennial – well over 30 years!! She educated and supported literally thousands of children and families, and has been a mentor to so many staff, volunteers, and students. What an extraordinary legacy! CICC will be forever enriched by your gifts.

Thank you Iris!



New country. New home. New challenges.

The decision to leave your home, your country is heart wrenching, but for families with a child with special needs it is often motivated by their desire to ensure a better future for their child, one where they are accepted despite their disability.

These Newcomer families face a broad array of unique challenges with the pressure of moving to another country, learning a new language, and adapting to a new way of life. They face survival fatigue, miss the support of friends, family and extended social circles and can feel invisible and isolated.

They have the added worries of caring for their vulnerable child, including accessing healthcare, finding developmental support and community services their child needs to learn and grow. Depending on the country of origin they often have stress and mental health issues due to significant trauma or discrimination due to their child's disability.

The child, too, can suffer from the effects of parental trauma and stress, further slowing or impeding their development physically, emotionally, cognitively, and socially.

Due to economic constraints, families whose children are medically fragile are unable to access essential medical supplies, specialized food the child may need to thrive and in-home therapy services to support their development.

In keeping with our mission, Centennial's Early Intervention program has stepped in to bridge the gap for children and their families who are marginalized due to lack of status.

Staff work with the family to establish safe, predictable routines; help them to support their child's self-regulation skills; and provide parents with practical activities that promote cognitive, fine motor and physical skills to support healthy child development.

The things they need, like affordable housing, securing subsidies for their child with special needs to pay for childcare, and securing a job can be difficult—especially in Toronto, where the cost of living is so high that these families are often forced to relocate again, creating further upheaval.

Centennial in collaboration with COSTI shelter staff and Surrey Place, work to ensure these families are informed of the supports available to them, and help them navigate the process for accessing funding and services. EI staff support the families throughout the transition to a new area, coordinate services and ensure they have the supports in place that they need upon arrival.

Follow us!



www.cicc.ca



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2020 Highlights

Bee my friend

CAMPAIGN



We raised

\$55,981.80

(including offline donations)

"...only true friends will leave a footprint in your heart."

– Eleanor Roosevelt

Your footprints have paved a path to the future for over 500 Centennial Kids. Thank you for Being a Friend.

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~ In Memory of Belinda Netley ~

**"A life that touches
others goes on forever"**



Belinda was the Executive Director of CICC from 1980 until her retirement in 2004. Her dedication to CICC was absolute. Aside from her family, to whom she was equally devoted, Belinda often said that CICC was central to her life.

She was instrumental in creating the Centennial we all know and love. We wouldn't be where we are today without her vision, as well as her passion, for ensuring all children who came through our doors would receive the early intervention so critical to their development. Equally, Belinda was unwavering in her support of families as they navigated through a complex and often intolerant system. She drew on her considerable experience and education to build an organization of excellence.

Belinda was one of a kind. Insightful, funny, innovative, astute; a trailblazer who has left a lasting legacy. Her spunk, endless energy and ideas, and her ability to carry on, without complaint, despite health challenges. She was admired by all who knew her. Belinda was determined to make the world a better place for those in the special needs' community. And she did just that!

Belinda will be fondly remembered by many.

Thank you to all donors for your generous support!



the campaign for centennial kids

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