

2021 Recipients of the Dr. Joy Calkin Awards
Awarded by The Landon Pearson Centre for the Study of Childhood and Children's Rights
Funded by The Muttart Family Foundation

Steven Gibson

Steven's project explores how young children experience their rights to participate within relational interactions and as well as in advocacy for rights-respecting policy and practice. The questions that guide his enquiry include: How do young children understand and define their participation rights? Where and in what ways do they already see themselves as active participants in their own lives? Where do children experience a lack of power and access to participation? The research aims to generate new understandings of active participation by exploring children's knowledge in early childhood. It will seek to illuminate methods of participation that children are already employing amongst themselves and within institutions as a practice of their agency.

Carmen West

Carmen's research focuses on the emotional and social impact of the pandemic on young children's and youth mental health. She is interested in the contexts in which children and young people perceive and experience mental health and well-being programs, initiatives, and strategies delivered by their communities. The questions that guide her research include: How have children and young people experienced the pandemic as it relates to school mental health and well-being? How can these experiences inform an inclusive and participatory decision-making strategy for school-based mental well-being/wellness approaches in ways that account for children's right to participate in matters that affect them? The research responds to the outcry from adults and school officials regarding the negative and deleterious effects the pandemic has had on child and youth mental health by seeking to design an early childhood and youth mental and well-being program that is inclusive, participatory, and rights-respecting. Carmen will use a prevention program called Children Learning for Living, co-designed by Landon Pearson and previously utilized to support early childhood mental health and well-being in elementary schools, as an exemplar to inform the design of the current model.

Ashlee Williams

Ashlee's project responds critically to the use of universal and current mental health tools for indigenous children and youth by questioning whether tools tailored to specific nations would be more effective at addressing issues of mental health for children and young people. The research objective draws from the point that all indigenous nations have their own guided healing practices and that corresponding these practices to one's specific nation would be beneficial for young children and youth. Ashlee also includes a teaching component in her project to educate children and young indigenous people about their Haudenosaunee culture and how these teachings can be used to inform mental health skills and practices. Using a children's right-based approach, Ashlee will develop a five-week online program aimed at children and young people of Haudenosaunee descent and will demonstrate the potential the program has to improve the lives of children, including infants, in an early childhood context as well. Using articles 2, 3, 6 and 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the project's premise is that in Haudenosaunee culture, every decision made is based on future generations. Ashlee is interested in understanding how the teachings and skills learned by the participants in the five-week program can be passed to their children with a view to improving their lives by enabling opportunities to learn about their culture and nurturing and supporting the development of a strong sense of identity.