

July 3, 2019

RE: STARS INNOVATION CREDIT

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of my faculty team, I am writing to affirm details of the Early Childhood Education Program (ECE) at Fleming College in relation to the STARS Innovation Credit; Innovation and Leadership.

For many years the ECE faculty team at Fleming, together with our students, have been researching innovative ways to “Green Up” children’s environments and programs. Our 3<sup>rd</sup> semester curriculum course, “Creating Early Learning Sustainable Environments” (CELSE), embraces post modernism early childhood thinking as we engage students to rethink common practices and imagine ones that include a more natural approach to early learning. This course has strong connections to indigenous perspectives on relationship with place and land. We emphasis reciprocity, respect and relationships.

Learners are introduced to creating natural play spaces for children in first and second semester. In the CELSE course, they partner with community early learning programs to create a “Building Outdoor Memories” project. Through a collaborate partnership with early learning educators, learners design and implement an applied project at their site. As they share ideas and generate enthusiasm for outdoor learning, our student learners begin to establish a personal philosophy that is deeply rooted in nature-based learning.

The ECE program has also partnered with a community environmental education program, Camp Kawartha, to create an optional program for students called the “Eco Mentorship Certificate.” Learners who wish to be involved attend 4 workshops relating to indigenous perspectives, outdoor education and nature-based programming. They then document their experiences of applied learning with children while they are in their field practicums. Some beautiful opportunities for both the learner and the children as they live out their curiosities and interests in the natural world.

As a program, we are very committed to reducing plastic materials within children’s worlds and building capacity in preservice educators to be instruments of change within our profession. Through environmental leadership at the post secondary level, real change is possible and that is not only exciting but revolutionary. As Margaret Mead once said, *“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”*

Sincerely

*Mary Lou Lumiss BA RECE*