

January 2017

We are excited to share this month's edition of the *Eco-Healthy Child Care® Spotlight Series* with you, which features *Red River Early Learning Centre (ELC)*.

Red River ELC is a family child care facility located in Waterloo, Ontario Canada. Natasha Kocher, Director of *Red River ELC*, opened her family child care program in April 2014, and the program has been endorsed by Eco-Healthy Child Care® (EHCC) since April 2016. Ms. Kocher currently cares for 5 children, ages 1 through 5. The educational approach that Director Kocher models is derived from the [Reggio Emilia philosophy](#), where children are encouraged to develop a relationship with the world around them and to follow their natural sense of curiosity.



According to Director Kocher, *Red River ELC* sought the EHCC endorsement because, “the goal of *Red River ELC* is to nurture each child’s unique mind, body, and spirit and to create a healthy environment that encourages the growth of the whole child. Implementing eco-healthy practices in our program is just another way we strive to care for every child’s individual needs.” EHCC’s checklist, fact sheets, Frequently Asked Questions and additional resources have guided *Red River ELC* as they continue to create and maintain a safe and healthy environment. Ms. Kocher feels that implementing EHCC’s best practices has been cost effective, especially with regard to using eco-healthy cleaning products such as *Seventh Generation* and *Green Works* which are [EPA Safer Choice](#) and [Green Seal](#) certified.

Red River ELC also uses low volatile organic compound (VOC) art supplies and furnishings. For example, children’s cubbies are built with solid wood and sealed with low VOC water-based polyurethane. Such practices reduce the amount of pollution in the indoor air, thus preventing respiratory illnesses and symptoms such as asthma attacks in children and adults.

Director Kocher says that the parents she serves appreciate that *Red River ELC* is EHCC endorsed. Parents are thrilled that *Red River ELC* will be replacing plastic toys with those made of wood and other natural materials this year. Director Kocher is careful to clean their wooden toys with mild soap and water to ensure safety for mouthing infants. She hopes that through her example of utilizing EHCC’s eco-healthy best practices, parents will be encouraged to make similar changes in their own homes.

As a champion for EHCC, Director Kocher routinely shares ideas for how to create a more eco-healthy learning space via social media. *Red River ELC*’s eco-healthy journey has been a very positive experience for all involved.

To learn more about this child care facility, visit their website at: www.redriverearlylearningcentre.com. To become an EHCC endorsed provider or to be considered for the EHCC Spotlight Series visit www.cehn.org/ehcc.