

The Epicentre is in the process of transitioning to a fully operational and licensed Child Care facility in the province of BC. While we are still waiting for our license approval, thanks to provincial and federal funding through the ChildCareBC New Spaces Fund, the Southern Gulf Islands Neighbourhood House Society (SHINH) has been awarded a grant of \$737,337.79 to renovate the Epicentre into a fully licensed Child Care Facility. It is expected that we will complete renovations for enrollment January 2024.

Having said that, as we are all aware, living in a rural and remote location and continued supply chain issues, we may not make that date but that is our anticipated opening.

The newly renovated Epicentre will be able to accommodate up to 18 children, have two washrooms, one that is universal and will accommodate exceptional needs, a wheelchair accessible ramp, and more.

We recognize that many people on Pender are desperate for childcare and the SGINH has developed a waitlist policy. We have been working in collaboration with Dragonfly Daycare since we started this process. They have been an amazing source of knowledge and support through this and have a significant waitlist. We want to be fully transparent and take some time to explain how we will move forward with filling the eighteen spots we will have and how we have developed our wait list.

Enrollment: The Epicentre's license will allow for up to 18 children per day. This does not mean that we will be able to necessarily offer 18 spots to children in January 2024 as that will be based on our ability to staff the facility. We are required to follow childcare licensing regulations for age and group size and the ratio of children to instructors. Also, it is important to note that while our goal is to provide childcare for as many families as possible, our wait list does **NOT operate** on a "first come, first serve basis".

While we are mindful and understanding of the difficulties families face trying to place their child in a group license daycare on Pender Island, please note that we are unable to give you a specific start date, specific number on the wait list, or to guarantee that your child will be offered a space. If you choose to apply for our wait list, we will not be able to offer or confirm a space until it opens. Spaces will be offered to families based on availability and the following enrolment priority:

1. Indigenous children
2. Children that have special needs. Examples are children on the spectrum or ADHD, children with physical mobility issues, and children who may have other exceptional needs. In your email to us please be as specific as possible about your child's special needs so we can do our best to accommodate.
3. Lone-parent families. That is not to say that we will have all lone-parent families but that we will prioritize them.
4. Current Epicentre Family Pass Holders
5. Waitlisted children from Dragonfly.

Other Considerations that may affect the order in which spaces are offered: To support children with transition to the next age group, programs maintain a balance of children's ages.

As such this may impact the priority in which spaces are offered. We also strive to ensure access to childcare spaces by low-income families which may impact the priority in which spaces are offered. While we currently cannot offer \$10 a day childcare, we will be making an application to do so; however, this may take time and we may not initially be approved. The provincial government has committed that by 2027 all childcare facilities we have access to \$10/day daycare.

In the meantime, The Affordable Child Care Benefit is a monthly payment to help eligible families with the cost of childcare. Factors like income, family size, and type of care determine how much support families can get and support ranges from **\$550-\$1250**. **Families need to renew their application every year. We encourage all parents to review the benefit and if they are eligible to make an application. *It is important to note that we cannot make an application on your behalf.* Please see the link below for more information.**

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/caring-for-young-children/child-care-funding/child-care-benefit>

We cannot guarantee a space for your child; however, children will remain on the wait list until they are five years old and are no longer eligible for our program. We fully recognize that there is a shortage of infant and toddler spaces on Pender Island, and we are hoping to provide this type of childcare in the coming year with limited numbers. We count on your patience to wait for a space while we navigate this. Applying for a space unfortunately will not guarantee enrolment.

When a space is offered (after we have a confirmed opening date, likely in early 2024)

- When a space becomes available, parents will be notified by phone and a voice mail will be left if there is no answer, we will also send an e-mail. If we do not hear from you within seventy-two hours/3 days after leaving the message, we will assume that you are no longer interested in a space and your child's name will be removed from the waiting list.
- Please make sure you have a voice mail on your phone and that you have our email on your computer, so it doesn't accidentally go to junk, and that your contact information is accurate. If we cannot reach you due to disconnected phones or no voice mail, or an e-mail that bounces back or goes unanswered we are unable to offer your child a space.
- Once the space has been offered to your child, an individual visit to the centre will be scheduled and we will forward you our "Epicentre Parents Handbook" which you will be required to read and sign that you have read it and agree to abide the policies and procedures in it.
- If you do not show up for your scheduled visit with no previous phone call or e-mail, the space will be offered to the next family on the wait list.

While we are not taking applications currently, we are happy to add you to our waitlist. Please send an email to epicentre@sginh.ca. As well as your contact information, please include the name of the child, their date of birth, if they are considered Indigenous, have exceptional needs, if you are a lone-parent family, and if you are currently on the waitlist at Dragon Fly as we are working on filling the gap in collaboration.