



# Leadership 2020 Evaluation Report

March 2017

The Federation of  
Community Social Services of BC



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of COMMUNITY SOCIAL SERVICES of BC

Altogether better.

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## Leadership 2020 Evaluation Report: March 2017

Last year, The Federation celebrated the fifth anniversary of the very first Leadership 2020 cohort. Over the past five years, the program has grown, expanded its mandate, and changed course to accommodate the needs of a growing community of participants.

The program teaches how leadership is, among other things, reflective and participatory. As such, we invited Leadership 2020 graduates to reflect on their experiences and offer feedback to help guide the next five years. We wanted to learn more about the impact of the program, how we could improve the program for future cohorts, and ways to best to support the growing community of Leadership 2020 graduates as they continue to live their personal leadership journeys.

Our evaluation was sent to all past participants and 90 different graduates offered their thoughtful and detailed responses. About half (56%) of the responses were from MCFD participants. The remainder we made up of participants from Community Agencies, Delegated Aboriginal Agencies, and Friendship Centres. Those that completed the evaluation represented a balance of all past cohorts in both the Blended Program and the Indigenous-Focus Program

In addition to the basic demographic information, we explored the impact Leadership 2020 had on five key areas of practice: **working with change; practitioner wellness; working in complexity; reconciliation;** and **cross-sector relationships.**

We learned that the program has had a greater impact on people than we ever could have imagined. It has increased the confidence of

current and future leaders; enabled them to make change; inspired them to further their careers; built meaningful and powerful relationships; connected them with and increased their understanding of ministry and community allies; offered many different pathways towards reconciliation.

"I FOUND MY VOICE, WHICH WAS BIGGER THAN I EVER IMAGINED IT COULD BE. I EMBRACED MY VULNERABILITY. I LEARNED TO TRUST MY GUT."

Evaluation responses included heartfelt thanks, personal stories of change, reports on career progress, and the thoughtful ideas for future cohorts. More than anything, responses spoke of increased confidence, newfound courage, and valuable connections. This is how Leadership 2020 is creating the leaders of tomorrow.

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### 1. Working With Change

Our social care sector is facing constant change. We also recognize the magnitude of change that takes place within the Ministry of Children and Family Development. As such, the Leadership 2020 program was designed to support people facing such change and to increase the capacity of leaders to understand, adapt to, and lead such changes.

Some changes involved moving to a new position or new portfolios and others required approaching the same work in a new way. The program inspired many participants to finally go after a promotion

they had been eyeing. Many had greater capacity and the confidence to step into leadership roles—formal or otherwise—when they were called upon.

We asked participants how the Leadership 2020 program supports and prepares people for such change management.

**"LEADERSHIP 2020 INSPIRED ME TO RISE ABOVE THE CURRENT CONDITIONS AND CREATE A VISION FOR CHANGE GOING FORWARD."**

At the time of the evaluation, less than half of all people who were Frontline Practitioners at the start of their Leadership 2020 program were still front line practitioners (a **decrease from 32% to 13%**).

Many participants had progressed into Frontline Manager, Program Manager, or Senior Manager Roles—three areas that saw an increase in representation at the time of evaluation.

Moreover, over half of those who changed roles over that period (**54%**) identified their participation in Leadership 2020 as "inspiring or helping" them to make the change.

**81%** of participants reported that the Leadership 2020 program integrated knowledge, skills, and tools to enhance their personal capacity as a leader.

**70%** of participants developed the capacity and confidence to try new approaches and learn from them.

**65%** of participants developed greater cultural awareness and understanding and the capacity to be more culturally agile and work across differences.

The Leadership 2020 program has prepared and inspired participants to embrace and enable

key changes in both their personal and their professional lives.

Almost all (**97.8%**) of Leadership 2020 participants enhanced their capacity and willingness to collaborate and work across differences—one of the key goals of the program.

**Over 85%** of participants "initiated, tried, or achieved" a positive shift or change in their day-to-day work that they were personally proud of.

**Over 75%** of participants "initiated, tried, or achieved" a change at the team or program level and 60% enacted or supported a change that affected their entire agency or service area.

**Over 45%** of participants "initiated, tried, or achieved" a positive change that affected their entire community or region and nearly a third (**32%**) were involved in change or shift of a provincial scope.

**"I'VE LEARNED THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY PLANNING AND PLANNED CHANGE MANAGEMENT."**

Since completing the program, two-thirds (**66%**) of Leadership 2020 participants have applied their learning by providing direct leadership to projects that align with the strategic priorities and interests of their organization and/or their community.

Leadership 2020 participants are supported in gaining the capacity to see, understand, and adapt to change when and where it happens. They understand systems thinking and can create space for others to lead change.

However, almost all participants (**83.5%**) have also "developed the personal confidence and courage" to step into leadership when it is needed or called for.



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## 2. Practitioner Wellness

Working in the social care sector can be challenging. Whether you are working directly with clients or community members or you are in a leadership role managing others, the impact of working in this sector can be immense.

People working in the social care sectors often deal with some of the most heart-wrenching stories and tragic circumstances. The work is often unpredictable, frequently emotional, and rarely is success achieved quickly. All this takes a toll on people.



The wellness of people doing this work is vital to the quality of service delivered and to recruitment and retention. People who enjoy their work and encourage others in following similar pursuits, especially since the sector is highly dependant on relationships between colleagues and partners.

In Leadership 2020, we talk a lot about leadership being personal and, as such, we were curious about the impact that the program had on the personal well being of participants.

We asked participants what the three most important things they learned in the program were. Responses included insights such as:

- *"A greater awareness of my own strengths and capacity."*
- *"The need to take care of myself."*

- *"Personal insight into my wellness, inspiration, and realizing any challenge can be overcome by working with others."*
- *"The importance of connecting with myself."*
- *"That taking time to improve myself and study is a valuable investment and is beneficial to me and others."*
- *"To not to beat myself up and to give myself time for reflection."*
- *"The need for personal wellness & reflection."*
- *"Being kinder and gentler with myself."*
- *"How to examine limiting beliefs."*
- *"Personal wellness is key to healthy and supportive leadership."*
- *"Remembering to ask for what I need and to offer what I can."*

By the end of the program, almost all Leadership 2020 participants had increased the value they place on well-being, reflection, and self-care.

**86%** of participants better understood who they were as a person (their strengths, interests, preferences, values, styles) and how this affects their leadership practice.

**75%** of participants understand the value of self-assessment tools and had applied strategies to improve their self-awareness.

**"I'VE LEARNED THE IMPORTANCE OF WEAVING SELF CARE INTO THE WORK OF MY AGENCY."**

**60%** of participants had developed a holistic understanding of wellness as a means of ensuring a healthy work climate for themselves and for their peers and colleagues.

**70%** of participants had applied a variety of tools to develop reflective practices that improve and enhance their relationships, performance, and outcomes.

### 3. Working in Complexity

The Leadership 2020 program understands that the wide-reaching social care sector is a complex system addressing complex social issues. It also understands—and teaches participants—exactly what that means.

Sometimes the words “complicated” and “complex” are used interchangeably. It is important to understand that they are actually very different.

A complicated issue is one that has a degree of predictability; success relies less on relationships than it does on creating and following a sequence of actions that will lead to success.

On the other hand, a complex issue is one in which the future is unfamiliar and unpredictable; since cause and effect are so far apart, success requires collaborative relationships between people with different perspectives and different agendas.

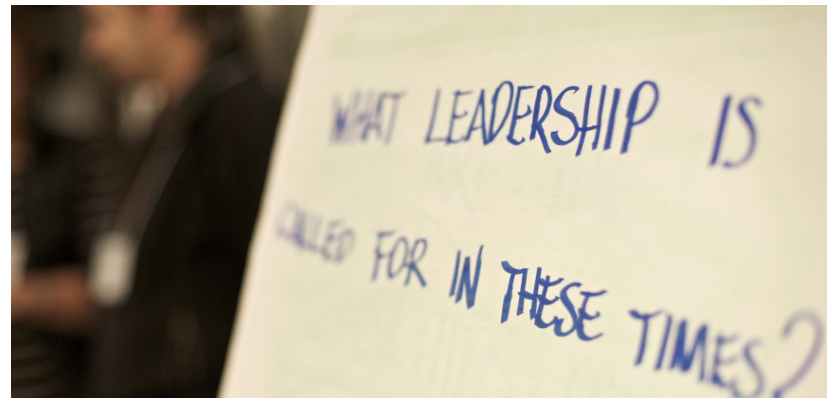
Such collaboration is rarely easy. That is why Leadership 2020 strives to prepare, equip, and empower leaders to work in areas of complexity. Participants are challenged to engage in systems thinking, appreciative approaches, and new frameworks to identify, understand, and work in complexity.

**“I HAVE LEARNED GREAT NEW TOOLS AND MODELS FOR DEALING WITH SYSTEMS CHANGE.”**

Over two-thirds of participants (69%) were supported in gaining the skills and confidence needed to leverage their learning into new collaborative initiatives after completing the program. Some hosted and facilitated new workshops, others collaborated on new housing services for youth, and a few hosted events with their local Friendship Centres to give voice to

aboriginal community members and explore new ways of offering support. Other examples include:

- *“Collaborating with Delegated Aboriginal Agencies to coordinate new cultural programming for foster parents.”*
- *“Co-created and co-facilitated workshops on permanency.”*
- *“Collaborating on a Youth Health Hub initiative in their community.”*
- *“Co-creating a rural coordinated response model for child and youth victims of abuse.”*
- *“Collaborating with government ministries on new training opportunities for adoptive/foster parents.”*
- *“Community-based reconciliation initiatives.”*



**81%** of Leadership 2020 participants learned new concepts, frameworks, and tools that increased their ability to work effectively at different levels within complex systems.

**86%** of participants learned about the importance of engaging others in order to deal effectively with complex challenges.

**54%** of participants have applied frameworks learned in the Leadership 2020 program (e.g., the Cynefin Framework, the Two Loops Model) to distinguish complex problems from others and have applied the appropriate approaches when addressing complexity.

Over one third (**39%**) of participants have gone as far as to use design and hosting tools from the Leadership 2020 program to engage their key stakeholders in analyzing and understanding complex problems and developing solutions together.



When we asked participants for the three most important things they learned during the Leadership 2020 program, working in complexity and using the Cynefin Framework to identify complex problems came up again and again:

- *"Remaining steady inside of complexity."*
- *"Different models for systems change (Cynefin, Two Loops)."*
- *"Tools for learning, planning collaboratively."*
- *"Skills and abilities to work across differences and in complexity."*
- *"Working with complexity (Cynefin)."*
- *"Collaboration and developing a community approach to problem-solving."*
- *"Working in complexity."*
- *"A better understanding of complex systems and how they are fluid and changing all the time."*
- *"Working effectively in chaotic and complex systems."*
- *"The Cynefin Framework: I've been revisiting those concepts and that map in my 2020 Workbook several times as our large organization manages changes."*
- *"The Cynefin Framework and the Two Loops Model."*

## 4. Reconciliation

The facilitators of Leadership 2020 are mindful of the impact of colonization on Indigenous people and the ways in which Canada's child welfare system has been, and continues to be, an agent of colonization.

We understand very well the role social care services can have on the lives of Indigenous community members and the different issues facing Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations as they serve their communities.

As such, Leadership 2020 strives to create safe spaces for participants to consider their responsibility to Canada's Indigenous peoples and explore their personal path of reconciliation. For some participants, this is the first time they have considered this aspect of their work. For others, this opportunity provides a new lens through which to view their own approach to social justice.

**"THE NOTION OF CULTURAL AGILITY WAS THE NEXT EVOLUTION OF CROSS CULTURAL UNPACKING AND DECOLONIZATION FOR ME."**

We wanted to understand the impact that participation in Leadership 2020 has had on people's understanding of, and personal commitment to, reconciliation.

**65%** of Leadership 2020 participants developed greater cultural awareness, understanding, the capacity to be more culturally agile when and to work across differences.

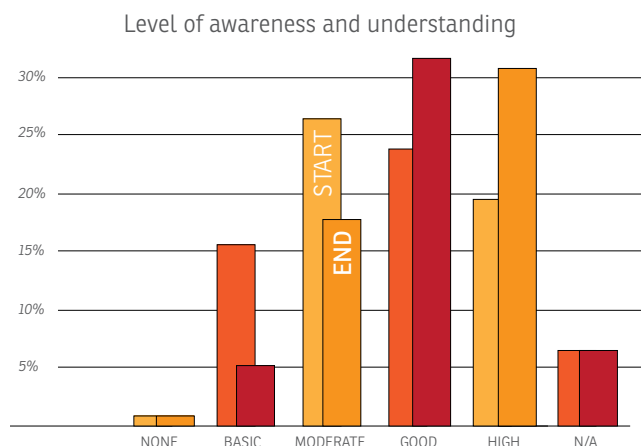
**62%** of participants became more aware of their own cultural background, recognized diversity between and within Aboriginal cultures, and applied this knowledge to provide improved service to people of Aboriginal heritage during and after the program.

**64%** of participants developed an increased understanding of the experience of Aboriginal people and took new risks to respectfully learn about unfamiliar cultural circumstances.

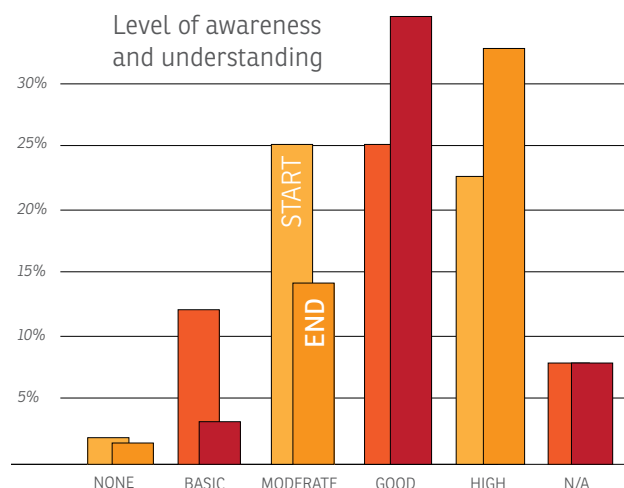
When we asked participants to identify the most important things they learned during Leadership 2020, many people referenced cultural agility, embracing diversity, and ways to bring reconciliation into their day-to-day work.

- *"Cultural agility and respectful ways of working with indigenous communities."*
- *"Aboriginal teachings and cultural agility; ways of working in the spaces between."*
- *"Ways to engage others in my organization to work toward Truth and Reconciliation."*
- *"I have renewed my participation with the local reconciliation circles."*
- *"Approaches to community-based reconciliation work."*
- *"An understanding of cultural agility and the importance of listening to peoples' stories."*

We asked participants from MCFD to rate the extent to which they understood the work of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, Delegated Aboriginal Agencies, and Community Agencies at the start of the program compared to the end of the program. The chart below shows the change in MCFD participants' level of understanding between the start of the program and the end.



We also asked participants from Community Agencies, Aboriginal Friendship Centres, and Delegated Aboriginal Agencies to rate their level of understanding about the work of MCFD and other community-based agencies. We compared their knowledge at the beginning of the program and at the end of the program. Almost all participants increased their level of understanding about the work of others over the course of the program. See the chart below.



By blending staff from various backgrounds and different areas of the social care sector, the Leadership 2020 program is able to increase each participant's understanding of the work done by their allies and partners across the sector.

**"IT REMINDED ME THAT CHANGE IS POSSIBLE AND THAT BRIDGES CAN BE BUILT, BETWEEN NON-INDIGENOUS AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES THAT WANT TO SUPPORT TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION."**

Moreover, the Indigenous-focused cohorts within the Leadership 2020 program have allowed for the intentional development of leadership skills, knowledge, and communities of practice for those facing the unique challenges and opportunities within BC's Indigenous child, family and community services.



## 5. Cross-Sector Relationships

The social care sector is made up of a wide range of people. Some work for government ministries, others work in community agencies (both non-profits and proprietorships), Delegated Aboriginal Agencies, or Friendship Centres.

The broad reach and scope of the social sector requires people to work together across vast differences: different backgrounds, training, approaches, world views, priorities, and values.

These differences can create tensions, misunderstandings, and biases that ultimately affect how well our social care system is able to serve people. The model of Leadership 2020 is specifically designed to bring people together, foster understanding, and support such cross-sector relationships.

**65%** of participants developed the ability to use a range of participatory engagement strategies and tools in diverse settings, both within and outside of their organization.

**82%** of participants learned to apply tools and frameworks to understand the perspectives of others and to overcome limiting beliefs, fears, judgments, biases, and cynicism about their working relationships.



**53%** of participants understand systems thinking and can apply strategic approaches to influence cross-sector changes.

As mentioned in the previous section on Reconciliation, combining staff from various backgrounds and different areas of the social care sector in the same cohort, the Leadership 2020 program continually increases the level of understanding about the work done by their allies, partners, and others in the broad social care sector.

One of the main goals of the Leadership 2020 program is to enhance each participant's capacity and willingness to collaborate and work across differences. Nearly every single participant (**98%**) agreed that the program did just that.

**"I DEVELOPED A GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF THE MANY CHALLENGES BEING FACED BY MY COLLEAGUES THROUGHOUT THE COMMUNITY SOCIAL SERVICE SECTOR AND WITHIN MCDF."**

The Leadership 2020 program is structured so small cohorts of diverse participants can understand their differences, build bridges, and explore together new ways of learning, thinking, and working together.

We also asked participants how valuable it was to be a part of a cohort of diverse colleagues that they could get to know in a safe space before beginning to work together.

**11%** of participants said the cohort structure was "somewhat valuable;" **29%** said it was "valuable" and **60%** of participants said it was "extremely valuable."

**69%** of participants have also undertaken a new collaborative project or initiative since completing the Leadership 2020 program.



These initiatives include things like: Co-hosting a conference with MCFD; Collaborated with Friendship Centres on an event where Aboriginal people, told their stories, talked about the missing and murdered aboriginal women, and shared ideas for community caring and support options; Building meaningful relationships with Aboriginal agencies; Coordinating a cultural mini-series for foster parents with a delegated agency; working with Muslim community to develop professional education; Permanency Planning with an Aboriginal agency; Working with cross jurisdictions on getting foster children to succeed in school; Affordable and Social Housing Round tables at provincial level.

Many Leadership 2020 participants identified the various tools for (and approaches to) working across differences as one of the most important things they learned in the program: The most important learnings that have served them well since completing the program include:

- *"Skills and abilities to work across differences."*
- *"Community collaboration and developing a community approach to problem-solving."*
- *"Collaborative and dynamic processes for engagement across the sector."*
- *"Understanding that challenges are common to all and diverse approaches to find solutions are available."*
- *"Facilitation techniques that are flexible."*
- *"Inviting and keeping a variety of voices at the planning and development tables."*
- *"Ways of connecting with others that have differing views or perspectives."*

**"MY GREATEST LEARNING WAS THAT LEADERSHIP COULD BE PERSONAL; ONE ON ONE; AND WASN'T NECESSARILY LEADING A GROUP."**

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## Appendix A: Leadership 2020 FAQs

### Why was Leadership 2020 created?

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The Federation of Community Social Services of BC has been working on recruitment and retention issues since 2008 when we were asked by our members to address what has been called a 'leadership crisis'. Leadership 2020 was launched in September 2011 and is our response to this concern. It supports emergent, experienced and legacy leaders (described below) in a co-learning process that prepares them to meet current and future leadership challenges and to successfully lead and support their teams and agencies.

### How does it work?

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The program takes place over nine months and includes residential, online and self-directed learning opportunities. It is very relevant and practical and participants are encouraged to apply what they learn in their day-to-day practice and to continuously learn from their experiences. Participants also build a strong community of practice or network of colleagues and advisors that they can draw upon long after the program finishes.

### What is the Leadership 2020 Blended program?

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In early 2013, at the recommendation of graduates from previous Leadership 2020 programs, we brought together MCFD and community sector leaders in a 'blended cohort'. Half of the participants came from MCFD and half from Federation member agencies. The opportunity to learn together and from each other, work across differences in 'the spaces between' government and community agencies, and strengthen working relationships, proved to be very positive and beneficial. It surpassed all of our expectations and helped us live more fully into our belief that we have to work together differently in order to address the complex challenges of our times.

