SOCIAL
SERVICES
SECTOR
TRAINING &
EDUCATION
PLAN

FINAL REPORT MARCH 2024

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DISCLAIMER

The views and opinions expressed in this report are those of its author(s) and are not the official policy or position of the Government of British Columbia.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides a series of actions that could serve to address urgent needs related to training and education for B.C.'s community social services sector. The Social Services Sector Training and Education Plan (SSSTEP) is a collaboration between the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres (BCAAFC) and The Federation of Community Social Services of B.C. (The Federation). This project is funded through the Canada-British Columbia Labour Market Development Agreement's Sector Labour Market Partnerships (SLMP) Program, administered by the B.C. Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills (PSFS). This work builds on the labour market research conducted as part of the Social Services Labour Market Research Project[1] (SSLMRP). The SSLMRP was a joint initiative of The Federation, the Social Planning and Research Council of BC (SPARC BC), and the Community Social Services Employers' Association (CSSEA). The final report from the SSLMRP was released in 2021. Many of the research findings—in particular, the findings related to how effective front line workers and leaders found current education and training to be—influenced the focus of the SSSTEP.

The SSSTEP Advisory Committee is a group that consists of representatives from post-Secondary Institutions (PSIs), employers and their associations, government (ex officio), and unions. The proposed actions laid out in this plan have been created based on the feedback of employers, educators, employees, and students in the social care sector. While the Advisory Committee lacks authority to mandate those within the social services sector to take up this plan, they encourage the sector to find the means to implement the mandate. The recommended actions have been formulated with considerations related to governance structure, financial resources, and other actions that are reasonably within the control of the sector itself.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Advisory Committee members each represent an organization/institution that is part of the complex web that makes up the social care sector in BC. Advisory Committee members were invited to participate and did so voluntarily because they had an interest in the subject matter. The project was designed and led by staff from The Federation of Community Social Services of B.C., in partnership with the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres. The project team consisted of two researchers who were in charge of background research, outreach development and activities, and completing data analysis to draft action items. The Advisory Committee developed a Terms of Reference to guide the project, and ensured that principles of reconciliation and decolonization informed every aspect of the work.

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1.   Federation of Community Social Services of B.C. 2020. Social Services Labour Market Research Project Final Report.

The scope of this project is training and education; however, it is important to note that throughout the project, issues such as cost of living, wages, and compensation were raised by both Advisory Committee members and participants as significant contributors to experiences of stress and burnout, inaccessibility, and a lack of cultural safety. Recommendations related to those issues are outside of the scope of this project, but also need due consideration.

At the time of writing (fall 2022), the Province launched the Health Human Resources (HHR) Strategy with funding announced in Budget 2023. The HHR Strategy aims to address the urgent need for more workers in the healthcare system. In May 2023, the Province launched the Future Ready Action Plan which includes a commitment to develop and implement a Care Economy Workforce (CEW) Strategy. The CEW Strategy aims to better define B.C.'s Care Economy, which includes direct government, Crown Agency, and third-party service providers. It will also focus on improving care economy workforce information as well as short and longer-term actions related to labour supply and service delivery innovation. We hope the proposed CEW Strategy, coupled with recommendations for actions contained in the SSSTEP, will work together to address the complex challenges to recruitment and retention in the social care sector.

AREAS OF FOCUS

This project has five areas of focus:

A. Enhancing cultural safety and decolonizing education and training resources
B. Ensuring education and training curricula are relevant to workplace realities
C. Reducing stress and employee burnout
D. Reducing inequities in professional development opportunities related to location, employer size, and union membership
E. Addressing ableism and disability in education and training

Focus areas A-D were chosen, in part, because they reflect findings in the SSLMRP. While these areas are distinct, they also have significant overlap with one another. For example, it is reasonable to presume that ensuring that training and education are relevant to workplaces would help diminish the degree of stress a person would experience in their workday. Shifts in one area could have a ripple effect in others. Conversely, not doing anything about any one area could also limit the potential for changes in the other. Recommended actions are listed according to the area of focus they most closely align to. In some cases, actions are listed in more than one area. Please note that Focus E was added following feedback from Advisory Committee members concerned about the lack of direct recommendations regarding disability and accessibility.

SOCIAL SERVICES FUNDING

Sector Labour Market Partnerships funding typically assists industry sector organizations to analyze labour market challenges and work in collaboration to recommend solutions. Government's expectation is that sector organizations and/or individual companies fund implementation through reinvesting profits that lead to future success. However, the community social services sector, unlike private sector industries, is not structured to generate profit. Much of its funding comes from different levels of government, charitable foundations, and private donors. Due to this funding structure, the sector faces limitations in raising the resources necessary to implement many training and education strategies.

A detailed plan for funding is not provided at this time. It is the hope of the Advisory Committee and report authors that the recommendations will encourage further exploration and discussions about potential funding opportunities.

COMMITMENT TO DECOLONIZATION

The research team and Advisory Committee made a clear commitment to decolonization and reconciliation in their Terms of Reference and throughout the stages of the project. Given the continued relationship between colonization and the practice of social services in Canada, a firm commitment to Truth and Reconciliation needs to be foundational to any plan for social services sector training and education. This commitment must reflect concrete, measurable changes in the conditions within which training and education occur, and must uphold the principles of sovereignty and self-determination as laid out by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). As Eve Tuck (Unangax̂) and K. Wayne Yang affirm in their oft-cited article "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor,"[2] the work of decolonization is "hard and unsettling," and thus must not merely be superficially adopted into policy, curriculum, and practice. The data collected from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants in our outreach activities, as well as from discussions with the Advisory Committee, indicates that people are eager to develop and implement tangible and long-lasting change in the sector.

The social services and education sectors in Canada have both been tools for colonization for many generations. Notions of deserving and undeserving, "good" and "bad" parents/children/families, and the belief that outside experts knew more than those needing support themselves are all a part of the tangled roots of the social services sector, which is to say that the work of decolonization is not separate from the social care sector. Efforts to decolonize ourselves as professionals, teachers, learners, and workers within this sector are part of how the sector will work to decolonize. Decolonization and the creation of cultural safety involves dismantling all forms of colonial and imperial violence, including ableism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and ageism.

Decolonizing work requires effort, consistency, and time, as well as intergenerational commitments to ensure that previous work is not lost or erased. We do not wish to merely reinvent the wheel, nor simply repeat the same calls for action without any follow-through. To that end, we envision that SSSTEP exists both as a series of recommendations for the near future as well as a document that will bear historical witness to an urgent need for change within the social services sector. It is our hope that the work of SSSTEP, as with other projects like SSLMRP, serves as a scaffolding to uplift yet more initiatives down the road.

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2.   Tuck, E., and Yang, K. W. 2012. Decolonization is not a Metaphor. Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society, vol. 1, no. 1, 1-40.

METHODOLOGY

ORIGINAL SCOPE OF WORK

The research team was tasked with conducting outreach to gather information about current opinions and attitudes within the sector to help shape the foundations of discussion and the development of the education and training plan. The methodology was deliberately narrower and less systematic in scope than a formal research project. Outreach activities were designed to gain a deeper understanding of training and education needs, particularly from the Social Services Sector Labour Market Research Project (SSLMRP). While the SSLMRP gave clear indication for the need for a training and education plan, and recommended enhanced training and education, the data gathered was not sufficient to design this plan, nor did it reflect the changing realities of the sector given the impacts of the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic.

SSSTEP employed a mixed-methods approach. We began with the development of a Glossary of Terms to ground our project in a shared understanding of terminology. This Glossary can be found in Appendix D. Recognizing that the Advisory Committee members largely represented leaders in their respective fields and organizations, the project worked to seek the feedback and experiences of a more diverse group representing students, frontline, and mid-level staff, as well as educators and leaders in the sector. Using keywords from our glossary, the research team then conducted a narrative review of existing literature to inform the development of our outreach tools. These included key informant interview and focus group questions, as well as online surveys of post-secondary students, front-line workers, and managers that included both qualitative and quantitative questions. The literature review, which can be found in Appendix A, included a focus on the following areas:

▸ Existing cultural safety training programs in other sectors (especially healthcare)
▸ Guides for decolonizing curriculum and initiatives in post-secondary education
▸ Critical examinations of clinical social work education and regulation and its history
▸ Critical examinations of equity, inclusion, and diversity work
▸ Recent studies on occupational and educational burnout
▸ Measurement scales used to assess burnout
▸ Accessibility, adaptability, and universal design
▸ The academic well-being of racialized students

Data collection details, including numbers of focus group participants/key informants and survey respondents, are described in each section below. Selected supporting (disaggregated) data for each action item, as collected from outreach activities, are provided in detail in Appendix C.

ADDITIONAL SCOPE OF WORK AND AREAS BEYOND SCOPE

Following discussions with Advisory Committee members in March 2023, we included a fifth focus: addressing ableism in education and training. Since disability, ableism, and accessibility

were not explicitly included in the original scope of the project (including outreach activities), it was determined that this was an oversight, particularly given their importance in the context of educational activities as well as within the sector as a whole. Despite the lack of an explicit disability lens in the development of our outreach activities, our data collection managed to record several data points related to disability, discrimination, and exclusion, including as they related to access to education on cultural safety, workplace stress and burnout, and workers' experiences of discrimination in the workplace.

Outreach specific to stress and burnout revealed strong themes outside of the direct scope of training and education such as: the relationship between adequate compensation and burnout, work-life balance, access to mental health resources, increasing scheduling flexibility, workplace culture and attitudes, management and leadership styles, and generational differences in the workplace.

LIMITATIONS ON DATA COLLECTION

Several factors impacted our data collection. While we attempted to engage with a variety of individuals from across the sector, the reach of our focus groups, key informant interviews, and online surveys were generally limited to the existing networks of the BCAAFC, The Federation, The Social Services Roundtable Reference Group (SSRRG), and the Advisory Committee. The samples we received through our online survey were not randomly or systematically derived, and we did not set specific quotas for our sample sizes. The voluntary nature of the surveys also means that respondents likely already had a strong interest in the survey topics. The numbers of page views compared to completed surveys also means there is a possibility of non-response bias having been introduced into the data. Because the data collection process was never intended to be systematic, as with SSLMRP, "findings may not be generalizable to the entire sector. Without comprehensive data, it is not possible to assess and estimate the extent of response biases, nor is it possible to identify which types of organizations or individuals may be under- or over-represented in the findings."[3]

DATA USE AND GOVERNANCE

The research team acknowledges and emphasizes that cultural safety and decolonization extends to data use and governance, including data collected in the outreach process. As Marissa Hill (Métis) and Sara Wolfe (Anishnawbe) point out in their work on data governance, data collection should "maximize benefit for and, most importantly, [minimize] harm to Indigenous peoples."[4] Approaches used by the research team to work respectfully with data include the following:

▸ Online surveys explicitly asked participants their consent to participate
▸ Online surveys gave participants the ability to skip questions

3.   Federation of Community Social Services of B.C. 2020. Social Services Labour Market Research Project Final Report. 24.

4.   Marissa Hill, Sara Wolfe, Cultural safety: the criticality of Indigenous Knowledges and data governance. Published On: December 2020, Canadian Science Policy Magazine, retrieved June 2023.

▸ Focus group participants were told that any feedback they provided would be reported anonymously and disaggregated from their institution or role

▸ Qualitative and quantitative data regarding experiences of anti-Indigenous racism were reviewed in aggregated form only by the research team; selected data were reviewed in disaggregated form by the Advisory Committee to help inform the recommendations for the action plan, but no aggregated or disaggregated data about survey participants' experiences of anti-Indigenous racism will be made public or accessible to any other agency or ministry.

▸ Complete, aggregated data for all outreach activities are held onto by The Federation and will not **be** turned over to any other agency or ministry.

RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

TRAINING & EDUCATION

FOCUS E
Addressing Ableism and Disability in Education and Training

FOCUS A
Enhance Cultural Safety and Decolonize Education and Training Resources

FOCUS D
Reduce Inequalities in Professional Development Opportunities

FOCUS B
Ensure Education and Curricula are Relevant to Workplace Realities

FOCUS C
Reduce Employee Stress and Burnout

GENERAL RECOMMENDATION: EVALUATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The Social Services Sector Training and Education Plan (SSSTEP) is intended to be used as an action plan that provides a number of actions and resources for Post-Secondary Institutions (PSI) and agencies to implement in their education and training. We encourage not only the uptake of listed activities, but also advocate that when doing so, there are clear processes of evaluation and follow-up to determine whether or not indicators have been met, as well as whether or not additional indicators have emerged in the course of activity implementation.

Because SSSTEP is committed to decolonization, we uphold principles of evaluation that are decolonial. As Linda Tuhwai Smith explains, "in order to move forward from a colonial understanding of knowledge and measurement, a decolonizing process must occur."[5] This process, particularly when it comes to activities that involve cultural safety and Indigenization, requires moving away from change as simply checking-off items on a list. Rather, the hope is that both change and evaluation will be continuous, with communication and documentation that allows for accountability and the development of better relations. In terms of decolonial and Indigenizing projects in particular, we turn to the work of Indigenous evaluation professionals such as Gladys Rowe and Carla Kirkpatrick, who note amongst their many recommendations that "evaluation is not an add-on and should be embedded into program design and delivery" and that above all, "community must be the driver of evaluation."[6]

5.   In Rowe, G, and Kirkpatrick, C. (2018). Na-gah mo Waabishkizi Ojijaak Bimise Keetwaatino: Singing White Crane Flying North: Gathering a Bundle for Indigenous Evaluation. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

6.   ibid.

PLAN SUMMARY

Below are 17 action items that make up the Social Services Sector Training and Education Plan (SSSTEP). While many items stand alone to fully address the complexity of training and education needs for the social care sector, it is important to recognize them not so much as a menu to choose from, but rather as a collection of activities that together could serve to help the sector be more inclusive, culturally safe, responsive, and a better place to work. These activities will not address some critical factors impacting the sector. Funding for core operations, competitive compensation packages, and realistic case loads are among just a few of the pressing issues cited in the project outreach as having a detrimental impact. These issues lie outside of the scope of this project, but addressing these issues are critical success factors for the SSSTEP.

FOCUS A: ENHANCE CULTURAL SAFETY AND DECOLONIZE EDUCATION AND TRAINING RESOURCES

- ▶ **Action Item #1:** Increase access to Indigenous-led training programs and resources.
- ▶ **Action Item #2:** Develop safe ways to implement and practice cultural safety in practicums.
- ▶ **Action Item #3:** Create ongoing opportunities for faculty and staff at post-secondary institutions to meet and exchange resources, cross-institutional collaborations.

FOCUS B: ENSURE EDUCATION AND TRAINING CURRICULA ARE RELEVANT TO WORKPLACE REALITIES

- ▶ **Action Item #4:** Improve practicum experiences and the capacity for practicums to serve as a vital bridge to the workplace.
- ▶ **Action Item #5:** Improve connections, communications, and working relationships between educational institutions and agencies/practitioners.
- ▶ **Action Item #6:** Increase mentorship opportunities for both students/new workers and supervisors/managers.
- ▶ **Action Item #7:** Continue the shift to collective learning models and group work.
- ▶ **Action Item #8:** Focus on the development of specific skills as top priorities: trauma-informed practice, pro-active communication and navigational skills within the sector, case management skills (reporting, documentation, paperwork), and conflict resolution.

FOCUS C: REDUCE STRESS AND EMPLOYEE BURNOUT

- ▶ **Action Item #9:** Develop strategies for building supportive, trusting workplace cultures.
- ▶ **Action Item #10:** Establish barrier-free on-site mental health supports.
- ▶ **Action Item #11:** Improve workload expectations and caseload management.

FOCUS D: REDUCE INEQUITIES IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES RELATED TO LOCATION, EMPLOYER SIZE, UNION MEMBERSHIP

- ▶ **Action Item #12:** Establish paid, on-the-clock training for all social services staff.
- ▶ **Action Item #13:** Prioritize rural and remote professional development.
- ▶ **Action Item #14:** Facilitate interagency collaboration and support.

FOCUS E: ADDRESSING ABLEISM AND DISABILITY IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- ▶ **Action Item #15:** Ensure that schools and organizations practice accessibility as both a legal obligation as well as a ethical commitment.
- ▶ **Action Item #16:** Increase funding into research focused on ways to improve supports and outcomes for disabled students and staff.
- ▶ **Action Item #17:** Create training materials and events that proactively meet accessibility standards and requirements.

A key consideration of the Advisory Committee was the fact that, in many ways, the focus areas are an artificial way of separating issues that overlap. They reminded the project team of the importance of wholeness and interconnectdness in adhering to decolonizing principles in this work. For this reason there are some activities that appear under more than one action item.

FOCUS A: Enhancing Cultural Safety and Decolonizing Education and Training Resources

DATA COLLECTION: METHODOLOGY

Two focus groups were held in early December 2022, each with six participants (faculty, staff, and senior leadership) representing 11 post-secondary institutions. One key informant interview was conducted (using the same questions) with a participant who was not able to attend the focus group sessions. A survey was designed for post-secondary students in social services sector programs. The survey was distributed by Advisory Committee members with post-secondary affiliations, the Child and Youth Care Educators Consortium (representing seven institutions), and through the distribution list of Human Services Deans and Directors at public post-secondary institutions. The survey went live on January 11, 2023 and closed on January 24 2023. There were 99 respondents to the survey; one respondent requested to speak further with the research team over Zoom.

DATA COLLECTION: SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

Type of program student is enrolled in	Certificate (7%)	Diploma (5%)	Undergraduate (36%)	Graduate (51%)
Does the student work or volunteer in the social services sector?	Yes (62%)	No (38%)	-	-
Number of respondents who belong to one or more groups of Indigenous peoples	18%	-	-	-
Number of respondents who belong to one or more groups marginalized on the basis of race or ethnicity	25%	-	-	-

Note: The high percentage of graduate and undergraduate respondents may be skewing some of the confidence in knowledge around cultural safety. Given how many front-line workers hold diplomas and certificates, we need to ensure that knowledge around cultural safety is built into all levels of education.

BIGGEST THEMES

CULTURAL SAFETY: DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE

The majority of students who responded to our survey agreed that the availability of cultural safety education and training was either important or very important to their choice of post-secondary institution. However, students felt there was a gap between their understanding of cultural safety as a theory or concept and knowing how to put their knowledge into practice via a concrete set of actions. Knowing that this might be different from region to region, nation to nation, students wanted more collaboration with communities to know how to best serve their clients in a culturally safe manner. Learning how to reduce harm in client-provider interactions was identified as an important outcome for decolonization training and education, as was increasing accountability to Indigenous clients and communities.

INDIGENOUS STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND STAFF ARE BURNED OUT AND OVERWORKED

Outreach activities indicated that Indigenous students, faculty, and staff are burned out and overworked, particularly because of the multiple roles that individuals are asked to take on. For example, Indigenous students are often asked to speak for Indigenous Peoples as a whole in the classroom; Indigenous faculty still comprise a small portion of faculty at most PSIs. The burden of dealing with racism adds to the already-untenable workloads that many Indigenous students, faculty, and staff are dealing with in PSIs.

> **"FACULTY AND LEADERS WE HAVE ARE OVERWHELMED BY REQUESTS FROM EVERYBODY; THEY ARE CALLED ON TO BE CONSULTANTS, EXPERTS, COMMITTEE MEMBERS, ASSISTANTS, DECISION MAKERS…AND THEY'RE BURNING OUT AT INCREDIBLE RATES."- FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT**

DESIRE FOR MORE INDIGENOUS-LED PROGRAMS/CURRICULUM AS WELL AS COMMUNITY AND COHORTS

There is a strong desire to have access to Indigenous-led programs and curriculum. A majority of survey respondents indicated that having an Indigenous instructor or co-instructor would help increase the uptake of cultural safety education or training. In addition, there is a desire for cohort-based learning and community space, especially for Indigenous and racialized students to be able to connect with each other, even across institutions. Community can be informal and take space outside of the classroom; just creating space for people to be with each other can go a long way towards creating cultural safety.

> **"PEER SUPPORT MECHANISMS FOR STUDENTS AND ALSO FOR FACULTY ACROSS DISCIPLINES TO RECOGNIZE THAT INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGES ARE TRANSDISCIPLINARY, [PEOPLE] SOMETIMES CAN CONNECT WITH PEOPLE IN OTHER DEPARTMENTS BETTER THAN WITHIN OUR OWN DEPARTMENTS." - FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT**

DECOLONIZATION STILL OFTEN SEEN AS A CHECK-MARK BY FACULTY, SCHOOLS, AND AGENCIES, RATHER THAN AS AN ONGOING PROCESS

There is often a tension around the institutional requirements of decolonization, particularly in terms of timelines and funding constraints. Factors such as staff and faculty turnover also affect the uptake or continuation of plans, including curriculum development. Results are also not necessarily immediate: systemic change can take time and can often be an uncomfortable process especially when behavioural and cultural change are required. Indigenous people are not here to reassure non-Indigenous people (settlers in particular) that decolonization is "completed." Decolonization is a lifelong commitment that the sector must take on.

> **"I WON'T MAKE A STRATEGIC PLAN. I'LL MAKE A GUIDELINE, BUT THE STRATEGIC PLAN IS COLONIAL, A SET AMOUNT OF TIME. YOU CAN'T COMPLETE DECOLONIZATION."**
> **- FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT**

SOCIAL SERVICES SECTOR PROGRAMS ARE STILL SITES OF VIOLENCE, TRAUMA, AND HARM FOR INDIGENOUS AND RACIALIZED STUDENTS

Indigenous and racialized students pointed out that they needed to feel culturally safe in their classrooms to learn how to deliver culturally safe care. They also discussed feeling, at times, that they wanted to quit their programs, and expressed sadness at experiencing racism within care work programs. There is a big push to continue to recruit Indigenous students as a part of post-secondary Indigenization, but as one focus group participant noted, "I won't recruit until we're safe for Indigenous students." There needs to be strong indicators of cultural safety within education and training programs first.

> **"IF YOU ARE A MEMBER AT AN ACADEMIC INSTITUTION, CAN YOU CLAIM TO BE EXCELLENT AT TEACHING IF YOU DO NOT HAVE THE SKILLS TO EVALUATE AND RESPOND TO RACISM IN THE CLASSROOM?" - FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT**

ACTION ITEMS

Action Item #1: Increase access to Indigenous-led training programs and resources

Outcome

- Reduced harm to Indigenous students, faculty, staff, and communities.
- Programming that reflects the needs of both providers and communities.
- Resurgence of Indigenous knowledges.
- Increased accessibility for faculty and students (disabled faculty/students, those with other work duties, caregiving/childcare, remote/rural).

Existing Projects/References (See Appendix B)

Indigenous-only training for Indigenous students

BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres Reconciliation Framework which will include an organizational self-assessment tool, training, and safe space app to document incidents of anti-Indigenous Racism so that hot spots can be identified and intervention offered to make systemic change at the organizational and community level.

Pulling Together Guides for Indigenization at Post Secondary Institutions by BC Campus (guides for teachers/instructors, administrators, front-line staff, etc.)

BC Association for Child Development and Intervention Directory of Resources for Indigenous Cultural Safety Resources

Western Deans' Agreement exists for graduate study; more opportunities for reciprocity amongst institutions.

Activities: Now

Activity 1.1: Create an ongoing grant for PSIs to support efforts that Indigenize course content as courses come up for review. The grant would enable time for the course instructor to work with local Indigenous knowledge keepers (and fairly compensate them for their time and expertise) to update course content and document those changes for other programs to learn from. The report from various programs each year could serve as a resource for all PSIs to guide their own course reviews and updates in the five year cycle.

Activity 1.2: Start a community of practice for Indigenous student support/liaison departments across the province.

Activity 1.3: Community social services sector employers access and enroll staff in the programming available through BCAAFC reconciliation framework (in progress and funded). Having grants available to organizations who complete the self-assessment and training to support a staff person able to dedicate time to implementing changes would enable quicker and more focused change.

Indicators

- More Indigenous people seeking a career in social care.
- More Indigenous students accessing Indigenous specific post-secondary education.
- More seats in Indigenous post-secondary programs.

Action Item #1: Increase access to Indigenous-led training programs and resources

Activity 1.4: Engage programs like BC Campus who have a mandate for Open Education/Open Access. Work with BC Campus to identify opportunities to build and strengthen the relationship between human service PSIs and BC Campus to make optimal use of the resources and support available.

Activities: 3-5 years from now

Activity 1.5: PSIs support students to access courses at Indigenous-led PSIs through the Western Deans' agreement.

Activity 1.6: Expand Western Deans' Agreement to undergraduate studies, giving Indigenous students at non-Indigenous PSIs access to courses at Indigenous-led institutions (and making sure these institutions are paid and that students get funding if travel is necessary).

Activities: 5–10 years from now

Activity 1.7: PSIs (and others) collectively advocate for additional funding for Indigenous students to attend Indigenous programs and funds to increase the number of program seats.

Activity 1.8: Undertake cluster hires of Indigenous faculty at regular intervals (cluster hires help ensure cultural safety for those faculty members and increase the odds of retention).

Activity 1.9: Study of the impact of the BC Tuition Waiver Program in terms of increasing access to Post-Secondary Education for Indigenous people who were in government care.

Budget/Funding

Activity 1.1: A grant/program to support the Indigenizing of one course. Funds would cover the release of an instructor for one term who will focus on the content review and development, outreach and relationship building with Indigenous Knowledge keepers, and create a summary of the changes and process for the report. There would be need for someone to coordinate the granting process.

Action Item #1: Increase access to Indigenous-led training programs and resources

Activity 1.2: There is no specific cost but participating in such gatherings (even when they are virtual) uses existing resources of time and energy in different ways. A consistent theme in respondents' comments (including members of the AC) was that they perceive and experience the post-secondary sector as over-stretched and under-resourced. For educators and leaders to participate in activities as outlined above, they must often make difficult decisions about how many external groups they have the capacity to participate in on top of teaching, research, and faculty duties. Any recommendations made in this report about additional gatherings is made with awareness and respect of the current workload PSI instructors and faculty carry.

Activity 1.3: The BCAAFC reconciliation framework will include access to a self-assessment tool and subsequent training opportunities and this is already funded by the province of BC. However, organizations, once having completed the self-assessment will still need to implement those learnings into their organization, and this change management could be assisted with some grants that would enable organizations to free up a leader within to guide that work. However, organizations, once having completed the self-assessment will still need to implement those learnings into their organization. This change management could be assisted with some grants prioritizing rural, remote and small to mid-size organizations, that would enable organizations to free up a leader within to guide that work.

Activity 1.4: BC Campus to support an evaluation of the connection between BC Campus and human services PSIs with some recommendations for strengthening that relationship.

Activity 1.5: Support an awareness raising campaign created by a communications firm that will be used across campuses to encourage enrollment in courses and programs at Indigenous-led PSIs through the Western Deans Agreement.

Activity 1.6: Conduct a feasibility study of the ways in which the Western Deans Agreement could be expanded to include Indigenous undergraduate students.

Activity 1.7: There are no additional costs associated with the recommendation to advocate.

Activity 1.8: PSI to launch study with a project lead and researcher. The purpose of the study would be to examine factors that contribute to cultural safety for Indigenous faculty and teaching staff and to capture data that would help inform best practices in hiring practices moving forward. The final report would establish what is working well and areas for improvement with recommendations. Changing hiring practices to be more focused on creating safe space for educators and their students is considered in the context to be a practice change that does not require a budget.

Activity 1.9: Hire a Project coordinator/researcher for one year who would design and implement a study to access the impact of the tuition waiver program on removing barriers to post-secondary education for young people in care.

Action Item #2: Develop safe ways to implement and practice cultural safety in practicums

Outcome

▸ Workers can define and explain culturally safety and the people accessing services describe spaces and services as being culturally safe.

Existing Projects/References (See Appendix B)

San'yas Anti-Racism Indigenous Cultural Safety Training. It may be possible to make this training available to all students, including their option of Indigenous-only training for Indigenous students.

Federation Support to Practice Training. This cohort-based workshop series will teach supervisors and managers how to understand the spectrum of supervisory responsibilities and help them develop the specific supervisory skills that enhance direct services.

Activities: Now

Activity 2.1: PSIs come together to share their practices regarding the expectations to learn about and enable cultural safety in practicum settings. Post-secondary programs build on their collective knowledge and experience about how students in practicum settings demonstrate and practice competencies and awareness as it relates to cultural safety in social service settings.

Activities: 3-5 years from now

Activity 2.2: Encourage post-secondary programs to require organizations willing to provide practicum placements to complete self-assessment of cultural safety prior to having students placed.

Activity 2.3: Social service organizations develop safer spaces for reconciliation and decolonial learning, which practicum students are welcomed into.

Activity 2.4: Increase access to the Federation's Transformative Reconciliation program through grants and bursaries; the program has a strong focus on the application of knowledge in one's work environment.

Indicators

▸ Students and workers report that they have a safe place to consider and act on concrete steps to create culturally safe spaces and commit to reconciliation.

▸ Students and workers report an increase in the number of meaningful relationships they have with local Indigenous communities

▸ Reported incidents of anti-Indigenous racism (reported through the Safe Space App hosted by the BCAAFC) decreases.

Action Item #2: Develop safe ways to implement and practice cultural safety in practicums

Budget/Funding

Activities 2.1–2.3: Using existing resources and relationships does not have a specific cost, but it is important to note that these activities would require existing resources to be used differently. A consistent theme throughout the work of this project was the under-resourcing and over-stretched capacity of the post-secondary sector. For educators and leaders to participate in activities as outlined above, they must give something else up.

Activity 2.4: Access to the program would be made easier, particularly for smaller organizations, if the participant fees were reduced.

Action Item #3: Create ongoing opportunities for faculty and staff at post-secondary institutions to meet and exchange resources, cross-institutional collaborations

Outcome

▸ Increased opportunities to share resources and advocate for change; greater accountability and solidarity exists across institutions

Existing Projects/References (See Appendix B)

Social service programs at PSIs have some ways of gathering, including articulation groups, the BC Child and Youth Care Educators Consortium, and as members of associations like the Federation. BC Campus hosts a learning series called "Pulling Together" that provides another venue for PSI social service focused programs to come together.

Activities

Activity 3.1: Human services PSIs convene at a twice-yearly gathering (online) using the principles of Open Space to set agenda items for discussion in small breakout rooms. Several PSIs are members of The Federation, so there is potential for The Federation to be the convening organization should more PSIs join as associate members. There are some opportunities for PSIs to gather but they are for other purposes (like articulation) and don't necessarily provide the means to connect and share and collaborate in this way. While this gathering could be added on to an existing gathering, resources would still be needed to host in this manner and provide some measure of follow-up on what was discussed.

Indicators

▸ Representatives from PSIs report feeling more connected and less isolated.

▸ Increase in shared resources across PSIs.

▸ Increase in relationships built between PSIs and local Elders and Knowledge Keepers.

Budget/Funding

Activity 3.1: Could use existing resources and relationships and do not have a specific cost; however, it is important to note that these activities would require existing resources to be used differently. A consistent theme throughout the work of this project was the under-resourcing and over stretched capacity of the post-secondary sector. For educators and leaders to participate in activities as outlined above, they must give something else up.

FOCUS B: Ensuring Education and Training Curricula are Relevant to Workplace Realities

DATA COLLECTION: NARRATIVE SUMMARY

Three key informant interviews were conducted in December 2022, with individuals representing community living, youth services, and adult services. A survey was designed for managers and supervisors. The survey was circulated through the Advisory Committee, the Roundtable Reference Group (30 networks representing hundreds of social service organizations), BCAAFC Membership (25 organizations) and Federation membership (150 organizations). The survey went live on January 9, 2023 and closed on January 20, 2023. There were 150 respondents to the survey. The research team was struck by the depth of respondents' open-ended answers and the candor they expressed about challenges they are encountering in the workplace.

SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

The following data supports qualitative and anecdotal information provided by many people in supervisory and managerial roles who have been working in the sector for decades. This factors into conversations about the challenges and opportunities of generational differences in the workplace. Additionally, a significant portion of supervisors and managers began their roles in the last 0-5 years.

How many years have you worked in the social services sector?				
0-2 years	3-5 years	6-15 years	16-20 years	20+ years
5	13	43	24	62

How long have you worked as a supervisor or manager?				
0-2 years	3-5 years	6-15 years	16-20 years	20+ years
24	33	58	14	18

BIGGEST THEMES

NEED FOR INSTRUCTORS WITH FRONTLINE EXPERIENCES

Instructors who haven't recently worked in frontline social services are not preparing students for the complexities they will face, which can undermine students' trust in their education. Supervisors explained that the gap between expectation and reality is jarring for new workers and new workers need a lot of support to get up to speed and bridge the gap between the classroom and the workplace.

IMPROVING PRACTICUMS AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

There is significant room for improvement in developing capacity for practicums, supervision, debriefing, mentorship, support, and hands-on learning experiences. When these steps are skipped or skimped over due to staffing and funding issues, it compounds existing stress, burnout, and retention issues because: i) students and new workers get overwhelmed and leave the sector and ii) existing workers face a revolving door of new people to train, stretching them between their duties, demoralizing them, and depriving them of appropriately trained and trusted teammates in the workplace. This is a bottleneck that significantly impacts both the recruitment and retention of trained workers.

▸ Supervisors/managers say practicums need to take place earlier, be longer, and cover a wider variety of experiences in the social services sector to better prepare students for workplace realities.
▸ Practicums are a key avenue for strengthening the relationships between educational institutions and workplaces.
▸ Many interviewees and respondents spoke about how practicums are, ideally, a vital avenue for developing and hiring new workers into the sector. However, a lack of personnel and funding are severely dampening these connections.
▸ A lack of competitive compensation and sustainable funding and how these factors relate to challenges in building capacity in the sector are all themes that were also prominent and consistent in the SSLMRP Final Report.
▸ There is an opportunity to better harness the potential of a practicum and show students career opportunities and connections so they can vision and build a career in the sector that has sustainability and longevity in mind.

A shift to collective learning models and group work is already happening and has been a part of the learning pedagogy for many human service programs for years. In addition, as programs and courses undergo their mandatory reviews as required by the Province, both course content and the ways in which content is instructed are being Indigenized to some degree. This work has started and PSIs are in the midst of change and respondents were clear that these changes and this way of learning is vital to the social care sector.

ATTENTION TO MID-LEVEL MANAGEMENT TRAINING AND WORKPLACE CULTURE

There is a notable tension emerging between manager/supervisor attitudes and frontline worker attitudes in two key areas: i) scheduling flexibility and ii) expectations around access to support and debriefing.

▸ Many managers/supervisors want workers to understand the constraints they're under with scheduling, but most frontline workers perceive scheduling as an organizational/leadership responsibility that shouldn't negatively impact their own work/life balance.

▸ Many managers expect workers to make sacrifices for the workplace (such as mandatory overtime, not getting time off requested) in ways younger/newer workers find unacceptable and contradictory to their personal boundaries regarding work/life balance and mental health.

▸ Manager/supervisor responses to their staff/team's expectations of them range from "I wish I had the time and know I owe them more time/attention" to more scathing "My staff need to understand I'm not their therapist."

▸ Workers expect more supervision, mentorship, relationship building, and open communication but expressed that their supervisors/managers penalize, judge, or micromanage them when they are honest about challenges in the workplace.(Most managers/supervisors recognize this need but express they do not have the time, resources, or skills to provide sustained support.)

▸ There's a mismatch: staff and students are being told to take initiative, make decisions on their own, and speak up when they have questions, but are often getting dismissed when they do so, or genuinely not feeling they have the training/experience/context to safely and confidently make decisions in the workplace.

COMMUNICATION AND CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

New workers have lots of room for improvement in developing the communication and critical thinking skills required in the workplace. In particular, managers/supervisors and sector leaders say new workers need more robust navigational skills (understanding the different actors and stakeholders in the social services sector and when/how to engage with them), de-escalation and conflict resolution skills (with both clients and colleagues), and the ability to problem-solve and take initiative. The intensity and complexity of the work makes it challenging for new workers to learn. A more supportive environment is needed to help them develop their mindset and attitude towards the work at hand.

> **"...THEY NEED TO BE SELF-SUFFICIENT AND MAKE DECISIONS ON THEIR OWN. I FIND THAT EVEN A FEW MONTHS AFTER ORIENTATION AND TRAINING, SOME HIRES ARE STILL NOT COMFORTABLE MAKING EVEN THE SIMPLEST OF DECISIONS." – SURVEY PARTICIPANT**

JOB DESCRIPTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

There are diverging understandings of job descriptions and expectations that create confusion and frustration amongst new workers in the sector. There is room for improvement in communicating expectations and preparing workers to build their capacity for collaboration, innovation, and communication for a complex, dynamic workplace where they will be expected to engage in multiple scenarios day-after-day.

▸ More experienced workers say that frontline workers should expect to do side-of-desk tasks based on what their workplace and clientele need. They also note that there is a trend of more complex clients being pushed into areas where workers don't have specialized skills to support them (e.g., mental health and addictions).

▸ Newer/younger workers say their job reality is different from what they were hired for in ways that contribute to workplace stress and feeling overwhelmed. They feel unprepared in ways that contribute to early burnout.

UNIVERSAL PRACTICE-BASED SUPERVISION

Work in the social services sector requires individuals to make critical decisions in complex environments that impact the lives of those they serve every day. A model of practice based supervision helps ensure that frontline staff working with clients have access to focused and meaningful support, mentorship, and learning opportunities in their work. This is a model that goes beyond simply making sure that frontline staff are following policies and workplace rules, and offers a safe space for workers to question their practice, identify their challenges and biases, and be supported to provide respectful and helpful support to their clients. By and large clinical supervision (as opposed to compliance based supervision) is limited to staff in therapeutic roles.

A network of access to practice-based supervision for all workers (across all levels of an organization) would help to change that, create mentorship opportunities, and help to reduce stress and employee burnout. In addition, this kind of supervision creates a safe space for employees to reflect on their work and practice, to address areas where they may be stuck, and is provided separate from discussions about performance.

ACTION ITEMS

Action Item #4: Improve practicum experiences and the capacity for practicums to serve as a vital bridge to the workplace

Outcome

- Sustained investment in supportive practicum experiences as a vital bridge between education and workplace preparedness.
- New staff arrive in the workplace with a stronger baseline understanding of key aspects of the social services sector (e.g., stakeholders, workplace attitudes, funding bodies, the complexities clients face).
- New workers are more efficiently laddered into the workplace and have more comfort asking questions, making decisions, and connecting to co-workers.
- Stronger relationships between education/training programs and workplaces.
- An increase in competent and confident new graduates getting hired directly into agencies from their practicum placements.
  - Ideally this creates a more sustained flow of hireable workers to help with chronic recruitment issues.
- Address and improve capacity-issues to enable agencies and workplaces to take on practicum students and give them the time and attention they require to learn.

Existing Projects/References (See Appendix B)

Vancouver Island University Child and Youth Care Centre for Community Outreach and Care. Established in April 2013 by the Child and Youth Care Department at Vancouver Island University, their purpose is to provide enriched practical learning experiences for Child and Youth Care students through partnering with the local Harewood community to engage in child and family focused activities. This program has since changed in scope due to some funding constraints.

University of the Fraser Valley Child, Youth and Family Studies Practicum Centre.

Activities: Now

Activity 4.1: Identify and elevate 3-5 strong examples of practicums as case studies that others can emulate. Employers often provide site-specific training so there should be efforts to connect similar work sites to each other to strengthen learning opportunities (e.g., connecting multiple daycares or employment programs to share resources).

Activities: 3–5 Years

Activity 4.2: Develop and share peer support/learning models where students can get together in the practicum setting to share what they are learning in the workplace. This can be facilitated by supervisor and/or senior manager.

Activity 4.3: Establish stipends and compensation for practicum supervisors to recognize their additional labor and encourage capacity building.

Indicators

- Increased hiring rates from practicums.
- Increased reported strength of relationships between students and their training and practicum placements.
- Student feedback indicates that their practicums were safe places to learn and played an important role in preparing them for the workforce.

Action Item #4: Improve practicum experiences and the capacity for practicums to serve as a vital bridge to the workplace

Activities: 5–10 Years

Activity 4.4: Increase the ways in which practicums can mutually support the needs of students, PSIs, and employers to help improve practicum experiences for students. Complete any needed research, work with community partners to identify needs, and develop the parameters of agreed upon projects by developing roles that help students navigate career planning and connect to the workforce.

▶ For example, a dedicated practicum faculty member. This could be a dedicated role for experienced workers seeking more flexibility and some time away from front lines (alumni from institutions/ programs, workers in final few years before retirement).

▶ Intentionally utilize the skills of workers who may be facing ageism.

Activity 4.5: Explore group setting practicum models as an alternate to the one supervisor/one student model.

Activity 4.6: Introduce practicums earlier in training/education programs or increase shadow shifts to give students hands-on experience and connection to their future workplaces that they can integrate into their learning goals.

Indicators

▶ Increased number of faculty positions in human service PSI devoted to practicum oversight.

▶ Increased number of practicum settings available in programs across the province.

Budget/Funding

Activity 4.1: Research project hosted by a PSI to fund a graduate student part-time to conduct this work and put together a report outlining some common best practices.

Activity 4.2: No specific costs as this is more a change in practice. Efforts should focus on having at least two students in a setting so that there are opportunities to support each other.

Activity 4.3: Practicum supervisors stipend grant that organizations could apply to access funds to provide a stipend to staff willing to host practicum students.

Activity 4.4: Fund 30 PSIs to have a full time practicum coordinator for their human service programs.

Activity 4.5: Pilot 4 sites across the province.

Activity 4.6: Grants to PSIs wishing to make changes to their practicum structure.

Action Item #5: Improve connections, communications, and working relationships between educational institutions and agencies/practitioners

Outcome

- Increased student understanding of practical skills like critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, and communication.
- Increased opportunities to practice skill sets, debrief, and get relevant feedback from instructors with strong connections to the sector.
- Improved students understanding of current landscape of social service sector (from ongoing crises and complexities such as toxic drugs, homelessness, and increased violence to how stakeholders interact).
- New, more adaptable course content and pedagogy, improved practicum experiences, investments in creating prepared workers for the workforce.

Supporting Data:

Survey respondents and interviewees highlighted the importance of instructors maintaining strong ties to the realities of frontline work in the sector.

- "The most engaging/impacting teachers I had in university were the ones who had actually worked front line or were still working front line. They had real examples to share, they understood the realities and complexities of practice. We need to bring more seasoned front line practitioners into our training programs." – Survey Respondent

Some respondents noted the vital importance of restoring and maintaining connections built between PSIs and local agencies.

Existing Projects/References (See Appendix B)

Child and Youth Care Association of BC works with the Child and Youth Care Educators Consortium to have practicing CYCs from community speak to classrooms of new students.

BC Association of Social Workers provides mentoring for new grads entering the workforce.

Action Item #5: Improve connections, communications, and working relationships between educational institutions and agencies/practitioners

Activities: Now

Activity 5.1: Human service programs bring frontline workers into classrooms as guest speakers. To some degree this is happening already but based on feedback from students, it could be increased.

Activity 5.2: Undertake research to explore and understand the qualities of a strong relationship between the PSI and local service provider (from the perspective of PSIs, agencies, and students/ workers). SPARC BC has begun this work.

Activities: 3–5 Years

Activity 5.3: PSI Human Service programs jointly create a hiring matrix that can be used as a guide to help ensure that programs have an appropriate mix of faculty and instructors with research and front line experience.

Activity 5.4: Initiate a project across 3-4 PSIs to complete an audit of accommodations for students with a disability and the rate at which they complete the program and continue on to work in the social services sector. The audit process should utilize an intersectional lens and pay particular attention to the needs of Indigenous and racialized students. PSIs participating would participate in a community of practice together where they could learn from what is working and what needs improvement.

Indicators

- Schools report increased number of instructors and faculty who have worked in social service organizations in the past five years.

- Students report increased understanding of the work of social services and are less surprised at what the work entails.

Budget/Funding

Activity 5.1: No cost, but does take time to coordinate, particularly if there are not strong ties between the PSI and local organizations due to staff turnover, geographic distance, and capacity.

Activity 5.2: One-year research project.

Activity 5.3: Part-time project coordinator and stipends for participating PSIs to support participation.

Activity 5.4: PSI to launch study with project lead and researcher. Final report would establish what is working well and areas for improvement with recommendations. Collective advocacy could be done as part of the ongoing work PSIs are already doing to ensure equitable access to education.

Action Item #6: Increase mentorship opportunities for both students/new workers and supervisors/managers

Outcome

- Judgment-free learning environments, preferably with mentorship opportunities that are not attached to school or job performances.
- Increased, more visible, and facilitated social and professional connections that strengthen networks and supports, not evaluative spaces.
- Recognition that learning and capacity building in the workplace takes place through relationships and sustained communication.
  - Social services jobs require complex people-based skill sets that we cannot expect workers to inherently be good at just because they are passionate about their jobs. It takes time and requires ongoing support to build and maintain these skills in a fast changing world and sector.
- Attention to bridging gaps in recruitment, onboarding new hires, building strong teams, capacity building.

Existing Projects/References (See Appendix B)

Federation monthly Member Support and Information Exchange meetings (for managers and senior leaders).

Child and Youth Care Association of BC hosts quarterly brown bag lunch and learn sessions.

BC Association of Social Workers offers mentoring programs for new graduates and for Social Workers entering private practice.

BC CEO Network offers quarterly gatherings for CEOs, senior leaders, and Finance directors working in the community living sector.

Activities: Now

Activity 6.1: Community Social Services (CSS) organizations host town halls, fireside chats, and/or lunch and learns to encourage community building, connection, and sharing of challenges and successes in the field, in practicums, in early career work.

- Share facilitation duties between institutions, agencies, locations in B.C. (Create a speakers series among 10 organizations. Each does one and then they are available to the rest of the group for a monthly presentation).
- Rotate through different subject matter/topics and different experience levels (e.g., student reps ask questions one week, team leads in agencies ask questions to students the next).
- Factor preparation, attendance, and debrief time into peoples work days (so it is a positive experience for a team rather than an opt-in that gets individualized and skipped due to time pressures).

Indicators

- Decreased reports of stress and burnout in workers.
- Increase reports of satisfaction with support offered from people served.
- Reduced turnover.
- Increased reports of team morale, trust, and cohesion.

Action Item #6: Increase mentorship opportunities for both students/new workers and supervisors/managers

Activities: 3-5 years

Activity 6.2: Create access to practice-based supervision (see page 26) for all workers across all levels of the organization (i.e., front line staff, managers, leaders, admin support staff) through the creation of a network dedicated to social service supervision. This network would provide a way to access high quality supervision and increase access to clinical supervision, particularly for smaller rural and remote organizations.

The model is similar, in some ways, to an Employee Assistance Program in that it centralizes the supports available. Ideally the network would be available to senior leaders and non-client focused staff as well. This is in line with a trauma-informed model that recognizes that everyone in an organization has a role to play in the way a client experiences care and support in an organization.

- Drawing on the pool of retired workers from the sector would help address some recruitment and retention challenges. It also helps ensure that those providing the guidance have familiarity with the work and standards of the sector.
- The network would have some standards of practice and could draw from the significant pool of retiring/soon to be retired senior leaders in the sector as paid consultants. Roles to respond to the need for this connective, relationship building within the sector.
- These positions could be available to recent retirees on a part-time basis (payment needs to be in line with the going rates).
- A cooperative or network of consultants who have experience in the sector and are vetted could be created/hosted by a current group.

Budget/Funding

Activity 6.1: Cost for a convener to bring together 10 organizations/institutions, provide leadership, coordinate monthly offerings. Coordinator position hosted by a community organization (e.g., BC Association of Social Workers, Child and Youth Care Association of BC, Early Childhood Educators of BC).

Activity 6.2: Establish, coordinate and set up the network. This would include contractor fees, infrastructure and administrative costs, and the ability to design an evaluative process to assess use and ongoing need, and to promote the use for the network and establish criteria for our organizations to participate and contribute. At this point in time, organizations do not have funds in their contracts to pay for clinical supervision for the majority of staff roles so it is not reasonable to consider that such a network could be resourced by the agencies themselves under current funding models.

Action Item #7: Continue the shift to collective learning models and group work

Outcome

▸ Team-building is integrated into learning in order to align with workplace realities and prepare for working with different personalities, communication styles, etc.

▸ Increased mechanisms/opportunities for collaborating and debriefing with peers built into learning.

▸ New and increased capacity-building models focused on key skills such as decision-making, taking initiative, peer support, and flexibility.

▸ Workers report increased experience getting and giving feedback, developing communication skills prior to practicum and entry jobs.

▸ Increased connection to Indigenous learning methodologies where learning takes place in community with accountability (moving away from individualized and isolated learning methods).

Existing Projects/References (See Appendix B)

Several post-secondary institutions with social work programs are Indigenizing their programs and have cohort models to facilitate stronger learning outcomes such as improved communication skills, accountability, and trauma-informed practices (e.g., Langara College and the University of the Fraser Valley).

Activities

Activity 7.1: CSS organizations host town halls, fireside chats, and/or lunch and learns to encourage community building, connection, and sharing of challenges and successes in the field, in practicums, in early career work. (This is the same activity listed in 6.1.)

▸ Share facilitation duties between institutions, agencies, locations in B.C. (Create a speakers series among 10 organizations. Each does one and then they are available to the rest of the group for a monthly presentation).

▸ Rotate through different subject matter/topics and different experience levels (e.g., student reps ask questions one week, team leads in agencies ask questions to students the next).

▸ Factor preparation, attendance, and debrief time into peoples work days (so it is a positive experience that is shared amongst a team rather than an opt-in that gets individualized and inevitably skipped due to time pressures).

Indicators

▸ Decreased reports of stress and burnout in workers.

▸ Increase reports of satisfaction with support offered from people served.

▸ Reduced turnover.

Budget/Funding

Activity 7.1: Bring together 10 organizations/institutions, provide leadership, coordinate monthly offerings.

Action Item #8: Focus on the development of specific skills as top priorities

Outcome

- New workers have a baseline understanding of skill sets and practitioner approaches that are required in contemporary social services work including the following:
  - Trauma-informed practice.
  - Navigational skills (understanding different actors and decision makers within the sector).
  - Proactive and adaptive communication styles.
  - Case management and time management (reporting, documentation, paperwork).
  - Conflict resolution.
- Increased competency that builds trust between existing workers and incoming workers, making it easier to train and support newcomers on-the-job.
- Increased awareness and confidence in incoming workers (comfortable with growth through discomfort, knowing how and when to ask for support, understanding the complexities and unpredictability of how the sector operators in real life scenarios).

Existing Projects/References (See Appendix B)

Post-secondary institutions are focused on integrating in-demand skill sets such as trauma-informed practice into their programs. (E.g., Langara College and the University of the Fraser Valley).

BC Association of Social Workers new grad mentorship program.

Federation Support to Practice clinical supervision training.

Activities: Now

Activity 8.1: Community social service organizations identify five key positions in the sector where the job description and classification no longer reflect the reality of the work and work with employers associations to re-adjust based on current circumstances. This review does not happen on an annual or regular basis and is overdue.

Activities: 3–5 Years

Activity 8.2: Creation of a sector wide orientation program using existing training resources and supplementing where necessary. Training would be available online and would cover basic entry level orientation that is consistent across the sector (privacy training, first aid, cultural safety, trauma informed, supervision, admin skills needed, intro to the political landscape in social care, power structures in the sector). Training would be portable across organizations and participants could have a passport system where they receive incentives/bonuses that correspond to training hours attained. Ensure contractors in the sector also have access to this training.

Indicators

- Workers across all levels of the organization report having the skills they need to meet client and workplace needs.
- Increased number of clients report a sense of support and having their needs met.
- Staff retention in organizations and in the sector increases.

Action Item #8: Focus on the development of specific skills as top priorities

Budget/Funding

Activity 8.1: Project consultant to lead the work and gather the data about the five positions. This would have potential impacts on service contracts, wages and compensation, and funding dollars. The involvement of funders, employers associations, and unions representing the sector would be required. The total value of what those changes would cost depends on the positions selected, the scope of change in the position, and how those changes align with the current collective agreement, and the number of positions across the sector.

Activity 8.2: Most service contracts do not include funding for training. In 2020, the government made a historical investment of $10M into the social service sector for training, the majority of which was provided in grants to social service organizations to obtain training of their choice and to some sector associations to provide sub-sector specific training to their members. This fund has largely been expended. An ongoing source of funding for sector training could fund a network of vetted resources. Short of embedding costs for training into contract base, an ongoing funding program to support a network such as outlined above could help to address the training gap in the sector.

FOCUS C: Reducing Stress and Employee Burnout

DATA COLLECTION: NARRATIVE SUMMARY

Five key informant interviews were conducted in December 2022, with organizations representing youth services, mental health services, services for young children and families, substance use services, and an Indigenous-led organization. Participation was invited from among the Federation and BCAAFC memberships and represented organizations from across the province. A survey was developed and circulated among front-line workers in December 2022. The survey was circulated through the Advisory Committee, Roundtable Reference Group (30 networks representing hundreds of social service organizations), BCAAFC membership (25 organizations) and Federation membership (150 organizations).

As part of the survey development, the research team consulted with the Workplace Learning Coach for the community social services sector through a partnership between Canadian Mental Health Association and The Federation. The Learning Coach's role is to support organizations in implementing strategies to address worker stress and burnout. The survey went live on November 2, 2022, and closed on November 10, 2022. There were 793 respondents to the survey who provided detailed and candid personal stories of how stress and burnout are negatively impacting their personal health and professional efficacy. The high degree of participation in this survey indicates how prevalent stress and burnout are in the sector. Additionally, respondents demonstrated a strong understanding of stress and burnout and clearly indicated the structural and material support they require to address this chronic issue in their workplaces.

PROTECTIVE FACTORS

In proposing actions at the training and education level we have focused on how training and education can enable protective factors for those employed in the sector, and we are keenly aware of the danger of continuously demanding that individuals adapt to injustice and unrealistic demands. In particular we note the particular burden this places on people working in the sector who also experience other forms of oppression/exclusion (disability, age, race, gender, sexuality). It was important to the project team and Advisory Committee members that this report not compound the burden of responsibility for system change on the individuals working in that system.

It is worth noting that, for this focus in particular, there were a number of issues raised in the outreach that are outside of the scope of this project or that require an intervention outside of what is available through training and education. In particular, respondents noted the impact of inadequate compensation and wages and the impact of the traditional 5 day/40 hour work week structure as key contributors to their experiences of stress and burnout.

Training and education play a vital role in helping people feel supported and prepared for the work at hand. But being fairly compensated and being able to do the work in an environment that supports worker wellbeing and growth is also important. Issues of equity, structure, and training and education weave together to create a working environment that enables people to do hard and vital work while also being healthy. In addition, the downloading of unrealistic expectations from funders onto leaders, onto managers, onto front-line workers was noted as a key element of what drives stress and burnout in this sector.

DATA COLLECTION: SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

Age range of respondents					
Under 20	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
24	148	184	170	162	97

Time worked in the social services sector				
0-2 years	3-5 years	6-15 years	16-20 years	20+ years
107	189	256	81	156

I have been experiencing chronic stress at work for...							
I do not experience chronic stress at work	A few weeks	A few months	1-2 years	3-5 years	6-15 years	16-20 years	20+ years
122	46	129	250	143	61	11	17

▸ 351/793 people said they are parents or guardians.
▸ 363/793 people said they are primary earners for their households.
▸ 44/793 respondents said they faced anti-Indigenous discrimination that impacted their stress at work.
▸ Respondents most often faced barriers regarding mental health, financial struggles, age-based discrimination, and racism that impacted their stress levels at work.

BIGGEST THEMES

COMPENSATION, SCHEDULING, SUPPORT

There is an immediate need for tangible actions to address wage increases and other compensation issues, workload boundaries, inflexible schedules and flexibility, and to create more supportive workplace cultures.

Recruitment and retention issues can be directly linked to these factors as people simply cannot afford to work in the sector due to lack of adequate and competitive wages. There is a pattern of experienced and talented workers leaving frontline and agency jobs for better paid jobs with more stable schedules in government, healthcare, and education.

▸ Emotional/physical exhaustion and financial stress (exacerbated by cost of living crisis) are compounding existing stress and burnout in the sector.
▸ 462/793 survey respondents said a traditional 5 day work week does not work for them, with the vast majority of people suggesting a shift to a 4 day work week.
▸ Additional forms of flexibility may be needed for certain parts of the sector where clients have 24/7 needs (e.g., community living).

BURNOUT

Burnout is an organizational problem, not an individual failing or responsibility. It is vital that burnout is understood as an occupational and organizational issue, rather than an individual issue. People cannot self-manage or self-care their way out of systemic issues. In fact, the systemic issues often exacerbate burnout as workers feel demoralized and frustrated by a lack of resourcing and supportive infrastructure that impede their ability to address the needs they see in the community.

▸ Over half of the survey respondents do not think their workplace is doing enough to help workers with stress and burnout.
▸ Workers said that identity-based discrimination such as racial discrimination, anti-Indigenous discrimination, classism, disability, and age-based discrimination impacted their level of stress and burnout in the workplace. (See Appendix C for further data.)

My workplace is doing enough to help employees manage stress and burnout				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
209	246	177	114	37

Stress and burnout in the workforce are affecting clients and communities; these are workplace safety issues that are actively harming workers and impacting their ability to support their clients, communities, and themselves. It has a ripple effect: compassion fatigue; making mistakes or encountering conflict with co-workers due to exhaustion; staffing issues

due to workers being sick or on leave to heal from mental health issues brought on by burnout. Stress and burnout are never limited to one person but impact all their professional and personal relationships and responsibilities.

> **"PEOPLE ARE JUST EXPRESSING HOW STRESSED THEY ARE FEELING. WHENEVER THERE IS A VACANCY, WE HEAR THAT THERE IS A CHALLENGE. THE COMMUNITY ALSO EXPRESSES THIS: WHO IS MY WORKER? WHO DO I CONTACT AND HOW DO I GET SUPPORT? WE KNOW, BUT WE ALSO HEAR IT FROM THE COMMUNITY." – SURVEY RESPONDENT**

HEALTHY SUPPORTIVE WORKPLACES

Workers want to build healthier, more supportive workplaces. Survey data shows frontline workers are extremely knowledgeable about stress and burnout. They are regularly engaging in the topic and have clear asks for what they need to change their workplaces. They know and embrace the complexity and challenges of their work but need investments in material support and structure to ensure their work is sustainable and impactful.

I believe it is possible to change burnout culture and create a healthier workplace				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
17	17	97	264	390

> **"YOU CAN DO HARD WORK IF YOU'RE TAKEN CARE OF. YOU CAN'T DO HARD WORK IF YOU'RE NOT TAKEN CARE OF, BEING TRAINED, GIVEN DIRECTION." – KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW**

Efforts also need to break down the key barriers to accessing mental health supports (time, money, frustration with lack of relevance, fear of being shamed/judged by supervisors or colleagues). These barriers are compounded by the labour shortage which leads to workers taking on more shifts and feeling pressure to get more done in the same amount of time. There are also issues with caseload increases (both in terms of number and the complexity of support required, as seen in the SSLMRP findings).

I would like to access mental health supports and services but I do not because...	
I don't have enough time	406
I'm worried about what other people will think of me	70
The services are confusing or hard for me to access	218
The services don't feel relevant or impactful	254
All of the above	67

> **"GIVE THEIR EMPLOYEES MENTAL HEALTH DAYS. SHOW THEIR EMPLOYEES THROUGH ACTIONS THAT THEY ARE PEOPLE WE CAN TRUST WITH OUR MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS."
> – SURVEY RESPONDENT**

TRAINING AND SUPPORT

There appears to be great need for support and training specifically for management teams in social service organizations across the sector. These positions hold immense responsibility for workplace culture at the senior leadership level and with the frontline staff. They are the ones who support frontline staff and could identify signs of burnout. People in these positions also represent the next generation of organizational leaders. The importance of succession planning and supporting learning at this career stage has huge implications for the current and future capacity of the sector and the individuals within.

ACTION ITEMS

Action Item #9: Develop strategies for building supportive, trusting workplace cultures

Outcome

- ▶ Open-communication and feedback that facilitate teamwork and capacity building.
- ▶ Increased trust and accountability rather than divisions between frontline and management/supervisors.
- ▶ Improved recruitment and retention (as a result of supportive workplace cultures—feeling undervalued or mistreated contributes to people leaving workplaces).

Existing Projects/References (See Appendix B)

The work of Vicki Reynolds.

CMHA Care workshops.

Activities: Now

Activity 9.1: The Roundtable Reference Group establishes a "Take Your Breaks" campaign (and ensuring staff have an adequate and comfortable place to do so).

- ▶ This needs to include hybrid and work-from-home contracts: people need breaks regardless of where the work is taking place.

Activity 9.2: The CMHA and partners develop a mental health campaign focused on activism and working with others for change to oppressive systems.

- ▶ The power of solidarity, action, and removing the burden of change from individuals: keeping the goals for change reasonable.

Activities: 3-5 Years

Activity 9.3: Roundtable Reference Group develops a grant to help ensure space for employees to rest and socialize at work.

- ▶ Physical space (many note they have no dedicated break room).
- ▶ Protecting time in work days for breaks.

Indicators

- ▶ Workers report feeling a sense of trust, care and support in their workplace.
- ▶ Workers take their breaks.
- ▶ Workers report an increased sense of control and mastery in their work.
- ▶ Managers report an increased sense of mastery and skill in their work.

Action Item #9: Develop strategies for building supportive, trusting workplace cultures

Activities: 5–10 Years

Activity 9.4: Development of training program (1 year, cohort based) for CSS managers. Organizational self-assessment tools that then have resources attached to address areas for growth. Without dedicated funding for training, CSS organizations will need to fundraise for resources to fund training programs.

▶ This is the model being used by BCAAFC to design their reconciliation organizational self-assessment tools and cultural safety training.

▶ Explore how this model can be used to address other systemic barriers and show that the agency cares about feedback from staff on these issues (ableism, ageism, sexism, heterosexism, classism).

Budget/Funding

Activity 9.1: Campaign visuals and e-posters and marketing materials.

Activity 9.2: Background research and development of marketing e-materials.

Activity 9.3: Grants to establish wellness spaces for staff.

Activity 9.4: If there was dedicated funding for sector training, this program could be funded in part with that money.

Action Item #10: Establish barrier-free on-site mental health supports

Outcome

▶ Workers can access mental health support without administrative red tape or budgeting their few sessions in their benefits package.

Existing Projects/References (See Appendix B)

Some smaller agencies mentioned proactively creating on-site open-door policy counselling for their workers at anytime.

Canadian Mental Health Association BC's Hub for Workplace Mental Health (with resources specific to the social services sector).

Care to Speak is a free, peer support service that provides emotional and psychological help to people working in healthcare and community social services.

CARE is a free training for workplaces offered through CMHA.

Action Item #10: Establish barrier-free on-site mental health supports

Activities: Now

Activity 10.1: Creation of a "Take Your Wellness Days" campaign and supporting materials for workplaces to talk about the importance of taking wellness days with staff (e.g., taking wellness days not just for cold/flu but to access mental health supports).

Activity 10.2: Establish required sessions at all team days on mental wellbeing and managing stress in stressful environments (including an organizational self-assessment to determine areas where it is not an individual response but a system or organizational response). Learning sessions need to be anti-oppressive and disability justice oriented to meet the needs of workers with disabilities.

Activity 10.3: Find ways to increase the number of organizations taking the CARE training. Consider incentive program for organizations to complete the training and implement strategies with support from CMHA learning coach. This work is already underway.

Activity 10.4: Work with BC CMHA to promote Care to Speak (a peer-based phone, text, and web chat service providing free and confidential support to health and social support workers in B.C.). This work is already underway.

Activity: 5-10 Years

Activity 10.5: Organizational self assessment created to determine how organizations can better accommodate disability related needs. When workplaces do not accommodate disability related needs it affects the mental wellbeing of all staff. If organizations are not inclusive toward their staff with diverse abilities, this is in and of itself a barrier to a staff person accessing any mental health supports that workplace may offer and may also contribute to an increased need for mental health supports.

Indicators

▶ More on-site and on-the-clock mental health services for workers.

▶ Meaningful workplace culture shift to encourage and support workers to take time off without guilt or shame.

▶ Higher instances of worker satisfaction with the quality and relevance of mental health supports.

Budget/Funding

Activity 10.1: Develop e-materials.

Activities 10.2, 10.3 and 10.4: There is already significant funding being invested in the community social services sector through programs available through CMHA. CMHA is currently undertaking work to increase promotion and uptake of programs available.

Activity 10.5: Develop the self assessment and identify available resources available to organizations.

Action Item #11: Improve workload expectations and caseload management

Outcome

- Take actions to support the rhetoric of advocating for worker mental health and work/life boundaries.

- Build towards more sustainable workflow with the recognition that this is a crucial preventative measure for burnout (e.g., when workers feel like their work is never-ending and/or that they cannot say no to the expectations placed on them, they feel isolated and stressed which can lead to burnout).

- Improve relationships between frontline workers and management with clear communication and support for proactive caseload management and boundary setting.

- Modeling and encouraging work-life boundaries.

Existing Projects/References (See Appendix B)

CMHA workshop series on burnout, stress and setting boundaries.

Activities: Now

Activity 11.1: PSI programs that invite organizations into classrooms ask for both a leader and a frontline worker from the same organization so students can ask questions of both positions/perspectives and get a clearer idea of workplace cultures, practices, and expectations for the role. This would allow for dialogue between students and future employers about what caseload management looks like and the challenges, and hearing from future employers about how they support staff to be well in a complex environment.[7]

Indicators

- Managers prioritize proactive, regular check-ins about caseload sustainability and equity amongst their teams.

- Capping caseload numbers with the understanding that this is done to protect the mental health workers and prevent burnout.

Budget/Funding

Representatives from Social Service Organizations are already invited into classrooms, the proposed activity suggests including more representation, there is no cost for this item as it is traditionally done on a voluntary basis with representatives perhaps receiving a small token (a mug, pen etc) for their participation. Having frontline staff attend alongside a leader would require the organization to backfill or have fewer staff on site for the time used, but this is already the practice for leadership. For this reason there is not a financial cost budgeted for this activity.

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7. The comments shared in the engagement and outreach indicate that this is an area that requires significant attention but the suggestions for improvement largely fall outside of what is addressed with training and education. The activity suggested is designed to help ensure new workers have a clear understanding about what the work entails.

FOCUS D: Reducing Inequities in Professional Development Opportunities Related to Location, Employer Size, and Union Membership

DATA COLLECTION: NARRATIVE SUMMARY

Members of the Social Services Roundtable Reference Group were invited to participate in one of two focus groups on reducing barriers to training and education. The Reference Group members are 30 different provincial associations representing the multiple sub-sectors of the social services sector (i.e. victim services, seniors services, employment services). Several members of the Reference Group are also Advisory Committee members.

Six people participated in two groups representing five organizations, reflecting the service delivery realities of Jewish services, older adult services, housing, services to families experiencing domestic violence, and community living services and services to young people. In addition, one key informant interview was added to fill in some gaps in information regarding the training offered through unions.

BIGGEST THEMES

LACK OF TIME AND FUNDING

Focus group participants shared their perspective that there is a lack of ongoing sustainable funding for the Community Social Services sector, in particular noting the lack of such funding in service contracts and the rise of grant based training funds from the Province. Focus group participants noted that not having the financial resources for training is compounded by not having enough staff to provide backfill coverage, and in some cases not having backfill as part of the service contract. This is an issue for both union and non-union organizations.

> **"TRAINING IS A WAY OF TELLING EMPLOYEES THAT YOU CARE ABOUT THEM." – FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT**

In order to improve access to the necessary training, contracts need to include funding for training regardless of budget size or location. Small organizations with smaller non-program-related budgets have little wiggle room to access training and organizations in rural and remote communities face higher costs to attend trainings in person.

SUCCESSION PLANNING

Executive Directors who are retiring in the next 2-3 years need to be engaged in professional development strategies and knowledge transfer where they can share what they have learned

from their time in the sector to those who will follow them. Funding to support the mentorship of new/future Executive Directors would support this.

TRAINING AREAS IN DEMAND

Training and topics are in demand at the moment include de-escalation, naloxone, domestic violence, mental health, management/leadership. Additionally, boards of directors and human resources require specialized training, but this is often overlooked.

Demographics of workers are shifting and professional development opportunities need to recognize different needs (e.g., workers age 55+ returning to the workforce and facing ageism, New Canadians with English as an additional language).

TRAINING IN UNIONIZED ORGANIZATIONS

Generally speaking, the training unionized organizations have access to through their respective union is training to fulfill shop steward roles, occupational health and safety standards, and access to labour movement focused conferences. Unions do not provide training for social service organizational practice. Any additional training is for union specific activities that are not related to work. The union (through its own funds from dues) covers all costs of training including wages. Unions may also choose to provide additional training around equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Unions actually view work-related training as an individual employer's responsibility. The current collective agreement does not mandate or entitle a unionized worker to training. Article 25 in the collective agreement outlines Career Development principles and notes that: "Both parties recognize that improved client care will result if employees require knowledge and skills related to the services provided by the Employer." Because our field research indicates that there is not a disparity in access to training for union or non-union organizations we have not included recommendations to address this disparity.

ACTION ITEMS

Action Item #12: Establish paid, on-the-clock training for all social services staff

Outcome

▶ Training is baked into workers' schedules to remove key barriers to training such as time, money, and managing time-off requests (which can be time-consuming and frustrating).

Existing Projects/References (See Appendix B)

There is work underway at the Social Services Sector Roundtable including pieces of this advocacy and awareness raising.

The Federation currently has a research project underway looking at the model of funding for admin and core operating costs.

Activities

Activity 12.1: Organizations continue to advocate for contracts that include training dollars, time for training backfill, and supervision. Such advocacy should also include contract expectations that align caseload expectations with the reality of the work.

▶ Organizations submit true cost budgets when negotiating contracts, and work with provincial organizations to document when contracts are reflective/not reflective of true costs.

▶ Organizations continue to advocate that training dollars be annualized and include opportunities for non-provincially funded organizations to apply (e.g., food banks).

Indicators

▶ Contracts include appropriate amounts for training and associated costs.

Action Item #13: Prioritize rural and remote professional development

Outcome

▸ Rural and remote organizations report having access to training opportunities for their staff when they need it and say training takes into account the complexities of rural and remote social service delivery.

Existing Projects/References (See Appendix B)

B.C. Association of Community Response Networks Training.

Community Social Services Training Fund and Technology Fund used an equity lens that prioritized rural and remote and Indigenous organizations to receive funds.

Activities: Now

Activity 13.1: Future iterations of the Community Social Services Training Fund or Community Social Services Technology Fund continue to utilize an equity lens that prioritizes organizations in rural and remote communities (eligible for larger grants, get priority placement to access funding, workshops developed prioritize including a rural and remote lens on service delivery and worker experience).

Activities: 2-5 Years

Activity 13.2: PSIs and CSS organizations host regular hybrid town halls, fireside chats, and/or lunch and learns to encourage community building, connection and sharing of challenges and successes in the field, in practicums, in early career work.

▸ Share facilitation duties between institutions, agencies, locations in B.C. rotating through different subject matters, different experience levels (e.g. practicum student ask questions one week, team leads in agencies ask questions to students the next).

▸ Factor preparation, attendance, and debrief time into people's work days (so that it is a positive experience that is shared amongst a team rather than an opt-in that gets individualized and skipped due to time pressures).

Activities: 5-10 Years

Activity 13.3: PSIs build practicum opportunities/relationships with new/additional schools across the province. Some schools have international placements and relationships abroad; use this model within B.C. to build connections between a community in a rural/remote location and a PSI elsewhere.

Indicators

▸ Rural and remote organizations report having access to the training they need.

▸ Increased strength of relationship between PSIs and rural and remote communities.

▸ Increased number of new students choosing to work/move/live in a rural and remote community.

Action Item #13: Prioritize rural and remote professional development

Budget/Funding

Activity:13.2: Cost for a convener to bring together 10 organizations/institutions, provide leadership, coordinate monthly offerings.

Activity: 13.3: Costs associated with the time and resources required for a PSI to establish a meaningful relationship.

Action Item #14: Facilitate interagency collaboration and support

Outcome

▶ Organizational resources are shared more easily and frequently; interagency relationships are strong.

▶ Increased social and professional support informed by an understanding that other people are encountering challenges in the sector; increased cross-sector collaboration on responses and solutions.

Existing Projects/References (See Appendix B)

#HousingCentral (particularly their yearly conference, which often features many well-attended sessions).

B.C. Social Service Sector Roundtable (SSSRT).

BC CEO Network #CreateReactions Campaign on careers in community living services.

Lookout Housing Society (they're a large provider and offer career laddering for peer support workers)

Canadian Housing and Renewal Association Mentorship Program.

Activities

Activity 14.1: Create community convening grants that are available to provincial associations to host training and networking opportunities in the Interior, Kootenays, North, and North Island. Participation would not be limited to the membership of that organization.

▶ Locations would be selected based on realities of travel in those communities and would enable people to come together at the local level to engage in training and building relationships.

▶ Trainings would be on cross-sector topics with opportunities for frontline staff, management, and administrative teams.

▶ Many provincial organizations have developed professional development training geared towards their membership (e.g., employment programs, childcare). With additional support, these trainings could be adapted to be more reflective of the wider CSS.

Indicators

▶ Increased reporting of connection and relationship between organizations.

▶ Increased access to training and education for workers.

▶ Workers report increased skill acquisition and use.

▶ Employers report reduced turnover in frontline staff.

▶ Employers report easier recruitment.

Action Item #14: Facilitate interagency collaboration and support

Activity 14.2: Create a sector-wide orientation program using existing training resources and supplementing where necessary. (This is the same activity listed in 8.2.)

▸ Training would be available online and would cover basic entry level orientation that is consistent across the sector (privacy training, first aid, cultural safety, trauma informed, supervision, admin skills, intro to the political landscape in social care, power structures in the sector).

▸ Training would be portable across organizations and participants could have a passport system wherein after they attain a certain number of training hours, they receive an incentive/bonus.

▸ All training would be vetted to ensure it has inclusive lens related to ability, cultural safety, gender, class, heterosexism. Ensure contractors in the sector also have access to this training.

Budget/Funding

Activity 14.1: Annual grants to support 8 gatherings per year hosted by a provincial association.

Activity 14.2: Start up research, coordination, marketing, design. Ongoing to manage coordination (assuming the program can be hosted in an existing organization).

FOCUS E: Addressing Ableism and Disability in Education and Training

DATA COLLECTION: NARRATIVE SUMMARY

This focus was not within the original scope of work of this project; however, the need to address pervasive ableism within social services sector education and training emerged as a critical point from discussions within Advisory Committee meetings. Formulating this plan without considerations for disability and access, even as a baseline element of any recommendations relating to education, was an oversight. Addressing this mistake and expanding the plan to include this section emphasizes the importance of projects growing and responding ethically to the concerns and needs of community members, particularly because of the role that disability plays within our sector.

While the social services sector often focuses on how it can better serve disabled clients, a significant cultural shift is required to centre the needs, expertise, and experiences of disabled students, staff, faculty, and workers in order to make the sector more inclusive and accessible. While ableism was not the explicit focus of data collection for this project, several questions from our outreach still collected data pertaining to accessibility[8] including questions about the impact of racism and anti-Indigeneity on mental health, as well as questions about disability and exclusion in our stress and burnout survey.

BIGGEST THEMES

REMOVING THE BURDEN FROM PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Addressing ableism and asking for accessibility unduly burdens disabled people in the social services sector. Ableism is compounded when disabled students, staff, faculty, and workers have to constantly call it out and ask for accommodations that they are legally entitled to.

Dealing with ableism adds to existing stress and burnout, including that compounded by racism, workload, etc. People with disabilities are also far more likely to be experiencing compounding and overlapping forms of burnout (e.g., medical burnout, neurodivergent burnout, caregiver burnout).

It should be noted that public self-identification with disability and/or official diagnoses that can be required to connect individuals to accommodations processes and resources can be fraught with barriers and risk assessment. For example, the money, time, and social stigma involved may be prohibitive for people or their access to supportive resources may fluctuate

8.   Here, accessibility is understood as originating from the lens of disability, but also broadening out to intersections of access that may benefit non-disabled individuals, including geographical and financial access, childcare, etc.

due to medical and administrative bureaucracy. This includes physical and mental disability, chronic illness, neurodivergence, learning differences, and mental illnesses.

LEGAL AND ETHICAL RAMIFICATIONS

Addressing ableism is a sector-wide responsibility with legal commitments and ethical ramifications. Many parts of the social services sector, including post-secondary institutions, are legally bound by the requirements of the Accessible B.C. Act (2021), which includes the development of an accessibility committee, accessibility plan, and feedback tool. B.C.'s Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (2022) follows the commitments of UNDRIP, and includes as an action a plan to address barriers for disabled Indigenous persons (see overlap with Focus A).

The social services sector provides care and services for disabled populations, and there are serious ethical ramifications of ableism within the sector itself towards students and workers. Resources exist, however. Actually using them and normalizing the ways in which events, spaces, how we gather, and attitudes about accommodations outside of when there is a specific need, or challenge, will help to enable the cultural change that is required in social service organizations.

ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCESS

Structural inaccessibility prevents disabled students and workers from accessing education and training. To a lesser extent, structural inaccessibility also affects non-disabled students and workers. Everyone benefits from addressing these barriers and gaps.

Because measuring attrition is inherently difficult, we have no idea how many disabled students and workers have not applied to or have simply left post-secondary institutions or workplaces, or how many have been unable to access specific courses or training materials.

Some respondents to our surveys discussed the following situations, which make clear that ableism and accessibility overlap with our other foci: wanting to be able to attend an Indigenous-focused program stream as their first-choice school, but not having the option of part-time study and thus having to attend a different program; wanting access to different types of learning/conversation models; not being able to attend certain trainings because of geographical location/cost.

ACTION ITEMS

Action Item #15: Ensure that schools and organizations practice accessibility as both a legal obligation as well as a ethical commitment

Outcome

▸ Remote/hybrid learning models and/or options and flexible work schedules are reinforced as an accessibility right.

▸ Staff (and others) in organizations and institutions are knowledgeable about policies and procedures, rights and responsibilities.

▸ Access is proactive and consistently prioritized, not reactive or provided on a case-by-case basis.

Activities

Activity 15.1: Conduct research with existing student advocacy groups and/or student representatives to:

▸ Understand the existing landscape with accommodations processes for social services sector students (e.g., UBC Disability Affinity Groups).

▸ Support the transition between student life and work life for disabled students and identify areas of improvement.

Activity 15.2: Engage with grassroots disability organizations/advocates to promote and develop workshops on topics such as disability justice specifically for employers in the social services sector (e.g., the work of Creating Accessible Neighbourhoods).

Indicators

▸ Representation of disabled perspectives in major touch points of social services sector education and training (e.g., curricula, practicum, testing and assignments).

Budget/Funding

Activity 15.1: Conduct a research project on gaps, usage, and usefulness of current accommodations for students in human service programs.

Activity 15.2: Create 2 online self-administered workshops for organizations to access (one for orienting new staff and one for leaders).

Action Item #16: Increase funding into research focused on ways to improve supports and outcomes for disabled students and staff

Outcome

▸ Staff, supervisors, and people accessing services can recognize a cultural shift in the sector regarding accessibility needs as tied to stress and burnout prevention/mitigation. Accessibility efforts become crucial to both recruitment and retention in school programs and the workforce.

▸ Accommodations are embraced as a proactive part of a more inclusive and sustainable work culture.

▸ The lived experience and expertise offered by workers with disabilities is valued and prioritized.

▸ Barriers to self-identifying disability/illness in the workplace are understood (particularly in care work) and are regularly identified and addressed.

▸ Leadership and structural components that counter toxic work expectations (grind culture, self-sacrifice) that cause people to leave their programs and/or jobs (either by choice or necessity) are formally established in organizational procedures, programs, and policies.

Activities

Activity 16.1: Include specific disability and accessibility questions in exit interviews, practicum settings, manager check-ins, anonymous workplace feedback, and more to build a more concise understanding and data-set where students and staff have been failed by institutions and need further support.

Activity 16.2: Develop a resource for workplaces to enable flexible mental health day policies to build case studies that other management and leadership can use as practical inspiration for change management in their workplaces. This could be a joint initiative between CMHA, The BC Social Services Sector Health and Safety Association, and WorkSafe BC. It is imagined that such a resource could assist organizations in addressing stigma or barriers to staff using sick time for mental health related reasons, in particular, by using a disability lens to examine how employees with disabilities may face barriers to disclosing any mental health issues they may be facing.

Indicators

▸ Team leads and managers report higher levels of flexibility and trust in their team members' use of work hours, time off, and mental health days.

▸ Disability, accessibility, and health outcomes are factored into recruitment and retention with an understanding they play a central role in both.

Budget/Funding

Activity 16.1: Enabling the capacity of organizations to undertake this work may require some organizations to seek additional funds if they do not have the capacity in-house. This could be funded through the activity noted in 15.1.

Activity 16.2: Hire a consultant to assist social service organizations in developing resources and policies that enable staff to utilize wellness days, support mental health, and counter organization cultures that can dissuade staff from taking time to support their mental health and wellbeing.

Action Item #17: Create training materials and events that proactively meet accessibility standards and requirements

Outcome

▸ Disabled students, staff, faculty, and workers do not take on the added burden of always being the only ones asking for accessibility.

▸ Disabled students, staff, faculty, and workers do not miss key education or trainings because they are not accessible.

Existing Projects/References (See Appendix B)

City of Vancouver Guide to Accessible Events Checklist.

Rooted in Rights #AccessThat Guides to Digital Content and Virtual Events Accessibility.

Web Accessibility Standards.

Document Accessibility.

BC Campus Accessibility Toolkit.

Activities

Activity 17.1: Provide grants to community organizations to implement the requirements of the Accessible B.C. Act. Develop an accessibility committee, an accessibility plan, and a feedback plan. As part of the granting process, encourage and prioritize organizations to hire and contract with individuals with lived experience to advise on the plan and implementation.

▸ Use checklists for accessible virtual and in-person events (e.g., enable captions in Zoom, provide alt-text in image descriptions, provide physical specifications for in-person events).

▸ Ensure that websites and documents adhere to accessibility standards.

▸ Let students and instructors know about resources like the Centre for Accessible Post-Secondary Education Resources (CAPER-BC).

▸ Ensure that materials and events reflect access needs of students with other access needs because of things like work schedules, caregiving duties, childcare.

Indicators

▸ Increased attendance of disabled students, staff, faculty, and workers at events and trainings.

▸ Clear and proactive accessibility information is available for materials and events (including archived materials/events).

Budget/Funding

Activity 17.1: Community action grants available to community social service organizations to fund project work that enables the organization to develop an agency accessibility plan focused on the experiences of both people served and those working in the organization.

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APPENDIX B: Projects Referenced in Report

FOCUS A: ENHANCE CULTURAL SAFETY AND DECOLONIZE EDUCATION AND TRAINING RESOURCES

Western Deans' Agreement

"This agreement was established in 1974 as an expression of cooperation and mutual support among universities offering Graduate programs in western Canada. Its primary purpose is the reciprocal enrichment of graduate programs throughout western Canada. This agreement is not intended to preclude other agreements between participating institutions. The Western Deans' Agreement allows graduate students paying required tuition fees to their home institution [to] not pay tuition fees to the host institution."

San'yas Anti-Racism Indigenous Cultural Safety Training Program

"San'yas means 'way of knowing' in Kwak'wala, the language of the Kwakwaka'wakw Peoples. Kwak'wala is the language of the San'yas founder and creator, Dr. Cheryl Ward. [San'yas focuses] on Indigenous cultural safety instead of competency, and offers both anti-racist online training courses and consultation services to support organizational and systems change. Our long-term goal is to correct and transform the societal systems that continue to harm Indigenous people. We can only achieve this goal with your active support and participation."

B.C. Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres Reconciliation Framework

"The framework includes the expansion and customization of existing anti-racism tools to inform organizers where cultural safety training needs to be prioritized, such as: an organizational assessment tool that provides organizations with a framework to evaluate the level of anti-Indigenous racism internally as a first step toward taking action to remove it; and the Safespace web application, which allows Indigenous people and others to anonymously report incidents of racism experienced within the health-care system in the province. The application has demonstrated the value of a third-party reporting system for anti-Indigenous racism and will expand to include other service areas in addition to health care."

BC Campus: Pulling Together Guides for Indigenization

A series of guides for Indigenization in post-secondary institutions that are the result of a collaboration between BC Campus and the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills. There are guides for teachers and instructors, curriculum developers, researchers, leaders and administrators, front line staff, advisors, and student services, as well as a foundations guide. The guides were written by teams of Indigenous and ally writers from across British Columbia.

BC Association for Child Development and Intervention Directory of Resources for Indigenous Cultural Safety Resources

A directory of primarily Indigenous-created content, including webinars, online courses and training modules, posters/pamphlets/information sheets, practice guidelines, videos, and reports and articles.

BC Campus: Faculty Open Educational Resources Toolkit

"The Faculty OER Toolkit is an information resource about and guide to adapting and adopting Open Educational Resources. Included are definitions and examples, information about Creative Commons licensing, and tips on how to adapt and/or adopt OER for classroom use."

BC Child and Youth Care Educators Consortium

"The Child and Youth Care Association of British Columbia (CYCABC) is an organization that supports the growth of the child and youth care (CYC) profession. The CYCABC is dedicated to uniting all CYC practitioners with the common vision of enhancing the CYC profession in BC, as well as ensuring the provision of diverse quality services for children, youth, families and communities."

The Federation' Support to Practice Supervision Training

"Support to Practice Supervision training, offered in partnership with Community Action Initiative and CityU, strives to support all of our valuable employees. It explores and shares what we are calling a 'Support to Practice' framework custom-built for all staff in supervisory roles that translates to a wide range of service delivery areas. This cohort-based workshop series will teach supervisors and managers how to understand the spectrum of supervisory responsibilities and help them develop the specific skills that enhance direct services."

B.C. Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres/Safespace Networks Safe Space App

"BCAAFC has partnered with the Safespace Networks pilot project to give Indigenous patients across B.C. the ability to submit their positive and negative healthcare experiences, with the first pilot being focused on the experiences of racism in healthcare."

B.C. Council on Admissions and Transfer

"The BC Council on Admissions & Transfer oversees the BC Transfer System, enabling important links between the B.C. post-secondary institutions, the education ministries, and the public and private education sectors. BCCAT facilitates admission, articulation, application, and transfer arrangements among B.C. post-secondary institutions for the benefit of students."

FOCUS B: ENSURING EDUCATION AND TRAINING CURRICULA ARE RELEVANT TO WORKPLACE REALITIES

Vancouver Island University Child and Youth Care Centre for Community Outreach and Care

"The mission of the Center for Community Outreach and Care is to provide meaningful learning opportunities for students who are committed to working with children, youth and families in their communities. The impetus for the center came from a strong desire of faculty to create enriched practical learning experiences for students which would be advantageous to the community and reduce the demand while simultaneously providing child, youth and family focused programs to the Nanaimo Harewood community."

University of the Fraser Valley Child, Youth and Family Studies Practicum Centre

Practicum centre for students of the UFV Child, Youth, and Family Studies program.

FOCUS C: REDUCING STRESS AND EMPLOYEE BURNOUT

Vikki Reynolds: Consultant, Facilitator, and Supervisor in Resisting Burnout and Vicarious Trauma

"Vikki works from a decolonizing and justice-doing framework. She works as a consultant, facilitator and supervisor in team development, resisting burnout and sustainability, 'trauma' and witnessing resistance to violence and oppression, and a supervision of solidarity. [...] As a clinical supervisor and therapeutic supervisor, Vikki is informed by narrative and collaborative therapy, and provides individual and group clinical supervision to therapists and community workers."

Canadian Mental Health Association of B.C. Hub for Workplace Mental Health

The hub for workplace mental health provides a variety of workshops on mental health at work and psychological health and safety, including content for managers, supervisors, union leaders, and front line workers, and encompassing topics such as addiction, readiness for change, and compassion fatigue.

Care for Caregivers: Care to Speak

"Care for Caregivers is an online resource established in response to the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic to provide support for the dedicated healthcare workers who support others. Designed specifically for professional care providers and the leadership team who supports them, Care for Caregivers provides resources and targeted support for COVID–19 related mental health stressors. This initiative represents a partnership between the Canadian Mental Health Association, BC Division and SafeCare BC, and is proudly supported by the BC Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions."

FOCUS D: REDUCING INEQUITIES IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT RELATED TO LOCATION, EMPLOYER SIZE, AND UNION MEMBERSHIP

B.C. Association of Community Response Networks Training

"BC CRN has two signature programs which have been designed to educate community members and to provide outreach information on the topic of adult abuse, neglect, and self-neglect awareness and prevention."

Community Social Services Training Fund and Technology Fund

"B.C.'s community social services sector experienced significant and unfunded expenses as a result of moving to virtual and remote service-delivery during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Providing safe and accessible supports and services [became] more necessary and more challenging than ever before. The Community Social Services Technology Fund [provided] grant funding to community social service organizations to offset the added IT costs of adapting to new ways of working and delivering services. It [also provided] grant funding for purchasing laptops, equipment, and covering IT costs related to increasing [...] clients' access to virtual supports, learning opportunities, and employment."

Housing Central

"Housing Central is a strategic alliance between BC Non-Profit Housing Association (BCNPHA) and the Co-operative Housing Federation of BC (CHF BC). Our mission is to strengthen and grow the community housing sector so all British Columbians have a safe, secure home they can afford."

Social Services Sector Roundtable

"This roundtable provides a forum for senior government officials and community social service agencies. It was formed in May 2019. They collaboratively address issues and work to ensure coordinated social services delivery."

B.C. CEO Network #CreateReactions Campaign

This campaign by the B.C. CEO Network includes answers to commonly-asked questions about working in the community living sector (kinds of available positions, hours of work, union membership), as well as a comprehensive list of member organizations so that individuals can learn more about potential workplaces.

Lookout Housing Society

Lookout Housing Society provides career laddering for peer support workers.

Kathi Camilleri: The Village Workshop Series

"Kathi Camilleri facilitates experiential reconciliation workshops Building Bridges through Understanding the Village© and strategic planning workshops Paddling Together© for diverse groups of people and organizations in communities across Canada and the U.S. Kathi's work, including keynotes and webinars, is focused on the revival of culturally-based values in order to increase collaboration among all people."

Canadian Housing and Renewal Association Housing Professionals Mentorship Program

"The Housing Professionals Mentorship Program (HPMP) connects experienced housing professionals with those who are looking for mentorship to strengthen the Community Housing and Homelessness Sector. Our mission is to strengthen leadership in the housing and homelessness sector by: building strategic networks and community; developing leadership competencies; igniting passion and interest in housing; supporting career development; enhancing knowledge around core housing themes (e.g. housing policy, advocacy, asset management and development, operations.)"

FOCUS E: ADDRESSING ABLEISM AND DISABILITY IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Accessible B.C. Act

"Effective September 1, 2022, over 750 public sector organizations will be required to establish an accessibility committee, an accessibility plan, and a build tool to receive feedback on their accessibility. [...] The B.C. government is required to: build a tool to provide feedback to government; develop government's accessibility plan; establish the provincial accessibility committee; develop initial regulations prescribing organizations."

City of Vancouver Accessible Events Checklist and Resources

Provides a checklist of a variety of aspects of access to consider, including planning, choosing accessible venues, on-site operations and assistance during events, displays and exhibitions, food and beverage, staff and volunteer training, event materials, presentations, and attendees, assistance dogs, and promotion and invitations. Also includes a list of other resources and organizations.

Rooted in Rights: #AccessThat Guides to Accessible Digital Content and Virtual Events

Includes guides to digital accessibility basics, accessibility basics checklists and resources, best practices for Zoom hosts, as well as guides for transcripts, audio description, captions, alt text, transcripts, and accessible video calls.

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines Fundamentals

Accessibility fundamentals resources for getting started with WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines), including an introduction to accessibility, the "people aspect" of accessibility, components of web accessibility, accessibility principles, and digital accessibility courses.

BC Campus: Accessibility Toolkit

"The goal of the Accessibility Toolkit - 2nd Edition is to provide resources for each content creator, instructional designer, educational technologist, librarian, administrator, and teaching assistant to create a truly open textbook—one that is free and accessible for all students. This is a collaboration between BCcampus, Camosun College, and CAPER-BC (Centre for Accessible Post-Secondary Education)."

Centre for Accessible Post-Secondary Education Resources BC

"Centre for Accessible Post-secondary Education Resources BC (CAPER-BC) provides accessible learning and teaching materials to students and instructors who cannot use conventional print because of disabilities. We serve clients who cannot use conventional print due to visual impairments (including blindness), learning disabilities, physical limitations, neurological impairments, and multiple disabilities. We can provide alternate formats for all print material including textbooks, course packs, journal articles, online sources, tests, syllabi and library material."

Creating Accessible Neighbourhoods

"Creating Accessible Neighbourhoods (CAN) is committed to accessibility, diversity, and equity. CAN recognizes that people with disabilities, including identities such as crip, chronically ill, neurodivergent, and Mad, as well as those with chronic health conditions, have multiple intersecting identities that affect their experiences and daily life. CAN represents and honours all identities by centering decolonization and using both an intersectional lens and disability justice framework."

APPENDIX C: Action Item Supporting Data

After careful review of the evidence collected in our survey, interview, and focus group activities, these quantitative and qualitative data points were among those selected by the research team as among the most relevant to present to the Advisory Committee to help inform their understanding of drafted action items and supporting activities, outcomes, indicators, and budget lines.

FOCUS A: ENHANCING CULTURAL SAFETY AND DECOLONIZE EDUCATION AND TRAINING RESOURCES

ACTION ITEM #1: INCREASE ACCESS TO INDIGENOUS-LED TRAINING PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES

"If you do not currently have access to Indigenous-led social services education programs, would you prefer to have access to these programs?"

Out of 93 respondents to this question, 45 responded that they would definitely prefer access, and 17 responded that they would probably prefer access. Respondents equally chose proximity, cost, type of programs, and information (about programs) as access barriers.

"Social work education needs to lead by Indigenous instructors and Indigenous cultural ways of education need to be standardized across Canada." - Survey Respondent

"More than just land acknowledgements: sustained commitments to Indigenous-led projects" - Survey Respondent

"Why not incorporate Indigenous teaching methods? [...] It's one thing to insist that students take on a decolonial mindset, and it's another to incorporate anti-colonial practices into the colonial academic system." - Survey Respondent

"Even if we can't offer trainings, offering a list of trainings that have been vetted. So many out there, don't know what we're buying, what we're looking for etc. There's a lot of hesitancy." - Focus Group Participant

"I am a First Nations student [...] I have had an amazing experience in the past two years with obtaining certification [...] I have learned in a culturally safe space with a ton of supports around me, learning so much of my own identity as well as the history of our Indigenous peoples and the trauma since contact. I am blessed to be gaining my education from [redacted] as we have Elders [...] we have drumming and ceremony, we learn in a healthy and productive way and will be able to go forth and share our skills in Indigenous communities." - Survey Respondent

ACTION ITEM #2: SAFE WAYS TO IMPLEMENT AND PRACTICE CULTURAL SAFETY IN PRACTICUMS AND CARE PLANNING

"In social work courses, I would like more of an emphasis on implementing cultural safety into real-life social services working experiences. Many courses teach us about the importance of cultural safety but do not go into depth." - Survey Respondent

"I have found I know a lot about cultural safety in theory, but I have been finding it difficult with implementing it in a safe and proper way in my work and practicum."
- Survey Respondent

"I wish my grad program had more specific, and concrete resources available for me to learn more about how I can support and provide cultural safety to my classmates and future counselling clients. I feel like we get a lot of theory about the issues but little actual action on decolonizing ourselves, our education, and our future work."
- Survey Respondent

"It's great we are learning about it but I want to know some CONCRETE next steps."
- Survey Respondent

"In terms of students capacity/safety in those environments, it depends a lot on coordinates for placements, to make sure students are getting what they need out of the placements and are also being supported/respected"   - Survey Respondent

"Go into practicum in places that don't necessarily adhere to philosophies/ethics learned in classroom […] that's where they don't feel safe" - Focus Group Participant

IDEAL OUTCOMES

▸ 74% of respondents want more guidance and input from local Indigenous communities on best practices for cultural safety.
▸ 75% respondents emphasized that reducing harm in client-provider interactions was an important outcome in decolonizing training and education.
▸ 69% respondents stated that accountability to Indigenous clients and communities was an important outcome in decolonizing training and education.

FAMILIARITY WITH CULTURAL SAFETY

▸ 56% of respondents were familiar with the definition of cultural safety.
▸ 34% of respondents were not familiar with the definition of cultural safety.

IMPORTANCE OF CULTURAL SAFETY TRAINING

▸ 31% of respondents said the availability of cultural safety education and training was very important when they were choosing a post-secondary institution.
▸ 22% of respondents said the availability of cultural safety education and training was important when they were choosing a post-secondary institution.

ACTION ITEM #3: CREATE ONGOING OPPORTUNITIES FOR FACULTY AND STAFF AT POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS TO MEET AND EXCHANGE RESOURCES, CROSS-INSTITUTIONAL COLLABORATIONS

"I feel hopeful and daunted, grateful to be here, I find these conversations to be incredibly rare." - Focus Group Participant

"We feel like we're doing [work] in silos often rather than having wider praxis across our institutions." - Focus Group Participant

"Lot of innovative work but lack institutional support to move them forward in a good way with partnership from community and that can feel disheartening at times - Focus Group Participant

Focus group participants asked if the focus groups and engagement would be ongoing. They said they were impressed by the quality of conversation and learned lots from each other. Participants articulated a clear understanding of where they are and where they want to go. They expressed a desire for a resource centre that all post secondaries could reach. (e.g., "A space for us to connect with each other to see our successes and failures." "A network of resources is everything: people, knowledge.")

Because Elders' and Knowledge Keepers' time is increasingly sought out by multiple institutions at once, they are often stretched thin. Many asked how institutions within the same community can work together to address this.

FOCUS B: ENSURING EDUCATION AND TRAINING CURRICULA ARE RELEVANT TO WORKPLACE REALITIES

ACTION ITEM #4: IMPROVE PRACTICUM EXPERIENCES AND CAPACITY

"School lacks client-facing interaction, new staff are often under prepared for the variety of possible outcomes." – Survey Respondent

"Current practices do not allow for practicum students to have opportunity for decision making and engagement in a real life way." – Survey Respondent

"There needs to be funding available to back fill so experienced workers can support students in practicums and mentorship." – Survey Respondent

ACTION ITEM #5: IMPROVE CONNECTIONS, COMMUNICATIONS, AND WORKING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND AGENCIES/PRACTITIONERS

"More connection between instructor and practicum supervisor, including learning theory and models in school while at the same time practical experience to reflect and try their learning." – Survey Respondent

"Teachers who work in the field or have close relationships with those who do to better understand the realities of the work we do." – Key Informant Interview

ACTION ITEM #6: INCREASED MENTORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES FOR BOTH STUDENTS/NEW WORKERS AND SUPERVISORS/MANAGERS

*"Many of the leadership and supervision trainings out there as proD are beginning trainings - provide much of the same information and are often quite theoretical - I don't believe this really helps supervisors develop their skills - something that was longitudinal and next level trainings would be helpful to enhance supervisory skills (e.g., perhaps trainings in which there are consultations built in to help increase awareness of areas of growth and receive mentorship on how to grow in those areas)."
– Survey Respondent*

"Formal mentorship program would be helpful but is challenging to facilitate at this time due to staffing constraints." – Survey Respondent

*"Often it comes down to supervisor time and availability for the longer-term mentorship during the orientation phase (6 months–1 year). So I guess more supervisor capacity and connecting newer staff to more experienced staff for peer mentorship."
– Survey Respondent*

ACTION ITEM #7: CONTINUE THE SHIFT TO COLLECTIVE LEARNING MODELS AND GROUP WORK

"Resist the urge to teach in a lecture-examination format and shift to learning circles and discussion-based learning. However, just telling learners that they will be discussing the readings, etc, will not cultivate the desired environment. Professors and educators need to become more familiar with, ideally, Indigenous ways of knowing and learning." – Survey Respondent

" I think all new students and hires need to have a better understanding of working in a collective atmosphere. That in working in a community social service agency, especially non-profits, that they need to look at the bigger picture of what works for everyone (clients, fellow staff, the agency) and not just having an I/Me mentality. The circle needs to reflect the current social climate and context. Toxic drug supply, housing crisis, bigger system realities such as lack of available MH facilities and very limited treatment and detox facilities." – Survey Respondent

"More focus on Indigenous knowledge and learning, more focus towards decolonial practices" – Survey Respondent

ACTION ITEM #8: INCREASED AWARENESS AND CONFIDENCE IN INCOMING WORKERS

"There needs to be a focus on the importance of paperwork/admin tasks that are an essential part of reporting to the funders and for clients who are court involved. This seems to be lost on or overwhelming for newer staff. Planning their day and prioritizing tasks needs to be taught in schools." – Survey Respondent

Many Survey Respondents said their workplaces had chronic stress and overtime issues from multitasking service delivery and administration expectations. They named outdated technology and/or redundant paperwork demands to different funders as major bottlenecks in workflow and efficiency.

"I would suggest a greater focus on critical thinking and adapting to change skills versus information, task and progress-oriented curricula. Additionally, I suggest greater learning around engaging in and resolving conflict- effectively for both worker/client interactions as well as inter-staff interactions." – Survey Respondent

"Do we need to train navigators? Everyone could be trained in basic navigation skills to help their clients and know how agencies interact with other and how services interact with each other. It can be as simple as making a phone call. So often we stay siloed and don't do that. I think there's a missing skill set in this sector which is helping people get to their next step." – Survey Respondent

"More time spent on working from a trauma-informed perspective (and better understanding of their own triggers); change in the way students are taught about advocacy (collaborative, client-driven, etc.)" – Survey Respondent

"Communication training; critical thinking and problem-solving skills, professional boundaries, systemic challenges." – Survey Respondent

FOCUS C: REDUCING STRESS AND EMPLOYEE BURNOUT

ACTION ITEM #9: BUILD SUPPORTIVE AND TRUSTING WORKPLACE CULTURE

▸ 628 of 793 respondents said workers need support from their workplace to recover from burnout.
▸ Trust, support, and being part of a strong team are key factors that impact how workers feel about their workplace, workload, and ability to take care of themselves.

"How does your workplace contribute to your sense of wellbeing?"

"Great team to release frustrations, regular management meetings, recognition that the nature of work is stressful and taking proactive action on areas they can impact."
– Survey Respondent

"Our case consultation meetings where we discuss files together confidentially and my peers provide supportive and constructive feedback in a non-confrontational manner."
– Survey Respondent

"Supportive leaders hear concerns and work to address them in a timely manner."
– Survey Respondent

"I have a very supportive work environment where I am challenged and encouraged at the same time. I am treated as an asset not a worker bee and my opinion counts."
– Survey Respondent

Respondents who were having a difficult time at work spoke to management and/or leadership not respecting their work-life boundaries, not being open to flexibility in scheduling, and/or reacting poorly to workers in a way that shut down communication and eroded trust.

"Unsafe to talk about burnout, no trust by upper management, inconsistent applications of policy." – Survey Respondent

"Not enough security in openly discussing what we find challenging without fear of judgment or criticism." – Survey Respondent

"The organization as a whole is out of touch with what we do day in and day out and tend to minimize our concerns." – Survey Respondent

"It's a dog eat dog environment with stressful edicts from management that make it hard for the worker to feel confident in performing their duties." – Survey Respondent

"Lack of communication, clear expectations and low psychological safety." – Survey Respondent

"People do not feel safe to bring up concerns or issues and when they do, manager takes it personally and are treated like crap when you do." – Survey Respondent

"Management has unrealistic expectations of how long tasks take, how many clients is a reasonable case load, etc." – Survey Respondent

Discrimination and inequity in the workplace also impact how workers experience stress and burnout.

I face barriers based on my lived experiences and identities that impact my level of stress	
Disability and navigating accessibility	93
Racial discrimination	100
Anti-Indigenous discrimination	44
Gender identity	74
Age-based discrimination	140
Sexual orientation	59
Class and financial struggles	**270**
Health and mental health	**344**
All of the above	5
None of the above	223

Since 2020 I have done the following	
Read a book about stress and burnout	271
Sought counselling or therapy for stress and burnout	361
Listened to a podcast about stress and burnout	287
Talked to my loved ones about stress and burnout	**625**
Talked to my coworkers about stress and burnout	**620**
Attended a workshop, lecture, or training session about stress and burnout	271
Taken up a new hobby to improve my health and happiness	417
Filled out a survey about stress and burnout	391
Tried to take proactive steps to prevent burnout	493
All of the above	53
Other	26
None of the above	25

ACTION ITEM #10: BARRIER-FREE ON-SITE MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS (ONGOING AND CRISES/CRITICAL INCIDENT RESPONSE)

I would like to access mental health supports and services but I do not because				
I don't have enough time	I'm worried about what other people will think of me	The services are confusing or hard for me to access	The services don't feel relevant or impactful	All of the above
406	70	218	254	67

"Give their employees mental health days. Show their employees through actions that they are people we can trust with our mental health concerns." – Survey Respondent

ACTION ITEM #11: IMPROVING WORKLOAD EXPECTATIONS AND CASELOAD MANAGEMENT

"My burnout is more related to unrealistic expectations from upper management and funders, being stretched too thin between clients." – Survey Respondent

*"Burnout prevention seems more like a theory than an application. Employers provide burnout prevention "training" but do nothing in real terms to intervene."
– Survey Respondent*

"Self care and wellness strategies do not fix systemic problems. I cannot adapt to a broken and dysfunctional system." – Survey Respondent

"The burnout I feel is due to the actions or inactions of others that put additional responsibility on my shoulders without fair compensation." – Survey Respondent

How can decision-makers support workers?[9]

"Setting realistic workload expectations. Protecting workers from increasing workload demands with no additional funding to support." – Survey Respondent

"Have tangible ways to help with increasing caseload demands (i.e. protocols/systems in place). By NOT sending us emails about what WE need to be doing to manage our mental health. This further stigmatizing that the burnout is 'our fault' for not doing enough 'self-care'. – Survey Respondent

"Most employers say they understand and try to validate, but its just words, they never follow through." – Survey Respondent

Many respondents say supervisors/leadership are not aware of frontline realities and need to intentionally work frontline or be present there more frequently to understand the impact

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9. Note: there's a serious lack of trust in leadership's ability to follow thru with supporting with burnout prevention and many worry there will be consequences when they speak out/advocate for themselves or others.

of their management decisions, the intensity/complexity of client demands, and the lack of resources they have to support community/clients.

FOCUS D: REDUCING INEQUITIES IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT RELATED TO LOCATION, EMPLOYER SIZE, AND UNION MEMBERSHIP

ACTION ITEM #12: PAID, ON-THE-CLOCK TRAINING

"How do you promote education when you can't free up your staff to go?"
– Focus Group Participant

"In-house opportunities for learning and professional development: most of it is voluntary." – Focus Group Participant

"We need to increase salaries in order to be able to deliver the services."
– Focus Group Participant

"We have lots of dreams and plans and strategies about what a really well-resourced sector could look like around PD: but it's about getting those people there."
– Focus Group Participant

ACTION ITEM #13: PRIORITIZE RURAL AND REMOTE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Travel costs and internet accessibility issues are of concern in rural and remote areas.
- There is an opportunity to focus efforts on under-resourced locations in the sector and have urban-centres learn from them.
- While there are specific local contexts/details/relationships, many of the core issues are similar across the province (e.g., the impact of the toxic drug crisis, housing affordability, mental health).
- Workers from urban centres could spend time learning about working in community, building relationships, and collaborating by connecting with rural/remote colleagues.

ACTION ITEM #14: FACILITATE INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION AND SUPPORT

Focus groups emphasized the need to share organizational histories and knowledge to bridge generational and experiential gaps in the community social services sector.

FOCUS E: ADDRESSING ABLEISM IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

ACTION ITEM #15: ENSURE THAT SCHOOLS AND ORGANIZATIONS PRACTICE ACCESSIBILITY AS BOTH A LEGAL OBLIGATION AS WELL AS A ETHICAL COMMITMENT

▶ 560 frontline workers who completed the stress and burnout survey said they work with people with disabilities.
▶ There is a need to improve understanding and action/accessibility to make work environments more welcoming for disabled workers, as well as disabled clients.
▶ There is significant opportunity to draw upon the knowledge/expertise/lived experience of workers with disabilities. However, they must be compensated for their expertise so they can better advocate for clients and co-workers rather than (i) masking their disability to keep up with ableist expectations/timelines or (ii) burning out without access to the accommodations they need (e.g., navigating accommodations processes, helping people know their rights, finding community/peer support buddies).

ACTION ITEM #16: FUNDING RESEARCH INTO IMPROVING SUPPORT AND OUTCOMES FOR DISABLED STUDENTS AND STAFF

Skyrocketing long-term disability claims are indicative of both chronic and acute challenges with supporting staff in the workplace that require further understanding. These lead to compounding burnout issues, loss of potential, loss of leadership/expertise, and loss of consistency in the workplace which contribute to the challenge of creating sustainable, healthy workplaces. **As such, there is a strong business case for improving employee benefits.**

Based on the Focus C Stress and Burnout Survey data, we know frontline workers encounter disability in their own lives whether it's their lived experience or that of loved ones, and that stress/burnout are exacerbated as a result.

▶ 498 frontline workers said their burnout symptoms include mental health challenges.
▶ 329 frontline workers said their burnout symptoms include physical health challenges.
▶ 123 frontline workers were providing ongoing support to family/friend who has a disability.
▶ 189 frontline workers were providing ongoing support to family/friend with significant health concerns.
▶ 172 frontline workers were providing ongoing support to elderly family/friend.
▶ 93 frontline workers identified disability and navigating accessibility as a lived experience that impacts level of stress.
▶ 344 frontline workers said their health or mental health impacted their level of stress.

Qualitative data from Focus C outreach indicates several patterns.

▶ Workers are frequently using vacation days as their sick days out of scarcity/necessity in ways that severely damage their morale and trust in their management/workplace. This often bleeds into longer term health leave or situations where people leave their jobs entirely.

▶ Workers are asking for official mental health days that are separate from sick days as a response to the mental health needs in the workplace. They are also asking for less red tape when accessing mental health days. Workers with higher satisfaction with their workplaces point to a high degree of trust from leadership/management in how workers use mental health days and flex time as a reason for their satisfaction.

ACTION ITEM #17: TRAINING MATERIALS AND EVENTS PROACTIVELY MEET ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS AND REQUIREMENTS

Resources exist. Using them and normalizing the ways in which events, spaces, how we gather, and attitudes about accommodations outside of when there is a specific need, or challenge, will help to enable the cultural change that is required in social service organizations.

Many parts of the social services sector, including post-secondary institutions, are legally bound by the requirements of the Accessible B.C. Act (2021), which includes the development of an accessibility committee, accessibility plan, and feedback tool.

APPENDIX D: Glossary of Terms

FOCUS A: ENHANCING CULTURAL SAFETY AND DECOLONIZING EDUCATION AND TRAINING RESOURCES

The purpose of this glossary of terms is to clarify the key concepts and principles that informed the development of the literature review, the outreach to focus groups and key stakeholders, as well as the final recommendations of the training and education plan. Many of these terms have already been well-defined by other researchers, particularly within the fields of social services, healthcare, and education. As such, this glossary offers brief summaries of that work, with citations provided as necessary. Where possible and appropriate, terms have been chosen from research produced within and pertaining to the specific geographical and cultural contexts of this project.

Five terms—settler colonialism, decolonization, reconciliation, Indigenization, and cultural safety—are prioritized below as they offer the foundational historical and cultural contexts for this focus. The remaining terms, which are presented in alphabetical order, offer more background information that is applicable to decolonial work in education and training.

SETTLER COLONIALISM

Settler colonialism is a form of colonialism wherein land is the most important resource. As Eve Tuck (Unangax̂) and K. Wayne Yang explain, "this is because the settlers make Indigenous land their new home and source of capital, and also because the disruption of Indigenous relationships to land represents a profound epistemic, ontological, cosmological violence."[10] Genocide, therefore, is the agenda of settler colonialism, because in order to appropriate Indigenous land, settlers had to "destroy and disappear" Indigenous peoples. Because settlers have appropriated Indigenous land in perpetuity and developed systems of governance that uphold and maintain this continued theft, settler-colonialism is not a one-time event, but rather an ongoing structure.[11]

DECOLONIZATION

The process of dismantling colonial systems and ideologies that have asserted white, Western/Global North dominance over marginalized and oppressed groups, particularly through land theft and dispossession. While decolonization has entered mainstream usage, particularly within educational institutions, politics, and social services, scholars such as Eve Tuck (Unangax̂) and K. Wayne Yang emphasize that "decolonization is not a metaphor."[12]

10. Tuck, E. & Yang, K.W. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society 1(1), 1-40.
11. Wolfe, P. (2007). Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native. Journal of Genocide Research 8(4), 387-409.
12. Tuck, E. & Yang, K.W. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society 1(1), 1-40.

Rather, decolonization is a process of tangible cultural and material transformation that centers the dismantling of colonial structures rather than their reform.

RECONCILIATION

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) defines reconciliation as "a process of healing relationships that requires public truth sharing, apology, and commemoration that acknowledge and redress past harms."[13] Reconciliation is an active, collaborative process. As the TRC notes, the framework for reconciliation in Canada comes from the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP). Within the province of British Columbia, reconciliation is also framed by the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (2019), which affirms the obligations of the province in recognizing Indigenous peoples' human rights, fundamental freedoms, rights to self-determination, and autonomy.

INDIGENIZATION

A process whereby Indigenous knowledges, protocols, and worldviews are upheld and centered, particularly within educational institutions. Adam Gaudry (Métis) and Danielle Lorenz (settler) emphasize that Indigenization is "about the redistribution of intellectual privilege,"[14] and as such, requires that educational systems "rebuild capacity for Indigenous intellectual institutions to determine their own intellectual priorities," including land- and community-based research.

CULTURAL SAFETY

Cultural safety is a term developed by Māori nurse Irihapeti Ramsden to refer to healthcare practices where the recipients of services, rather than the providers, are those who determine whether it is culturally safe. While related to terms such as cultural competency, cultural humility, and cultural awareness, cultural safety goes beyond these concepts and prioritizes a transformation of the power imbalances within institutions such as healthcare or education. As Kwakwaka'wakw educator Dr. Cheryl Ward describes, Indigenous Cultural Safety training in particular is "decolonizing work that takes place within complex and dynamic contexts where transformative learning occurs and where harm is often reproduced."[15]

ACADEMIC WELL-BEING

Academic well-being is a broad term that encompasses several drivers of both negative and positive educational outcomes. Benita Bunjun elaborates that academic well-being lies in the

13.   Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015). What we have learned: principles of truth and reconciliation. Available at www.trc.ca.

14.   Gaudry, A. & Lorenz, D. (2018). Indigenization as inclusion, reconciliation, and decolonization: navigating the different visions for indigenizing the Canadian Academy. AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples 14(3), 218-227.

15.   Ward, C., Ninomiya, M.E.M, Firestone, M. (2021). Anti-Indigenous racism training and culturally safe learning: theory, practice, and pedagogy. International Journal of Indigenous Health 16(1), 304-313.

"capacity of academic institutions to carefully conceptualize and implement with relevance the policies, pedagogies, curricula, and services that promote the mental, physical, and intellectual wellness of students."[16]

ACCESSIBILITY

Accessibility Services Canada defines accessibility as "the design of products, devices, services, or environments for people who experience disabilities."[17] In 2021, B.C. passed legislation that requires numerous accessibility standards to be implemented in the province by 2024. As of September 2022, the Act requires over 750 organizations to establish an accessibility committee, develop an accessibility plan, and create a public feedback tool.

BIPOC

This term is often used as a shorthand for describing racialized communities, including Black, Indigenous, and other people of colour.

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

This term refers to an educational and social movement established by Brazilian philosopher and educator Paulo Freire in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Critical pedagogy asks both educators and students to consider power dynamics within the classroom and moves away from viewing students as passive recipients of information.

CULTURAL AWARENESS/SENSITIVITY

The acknowledgement and observation of cultural differences. Cultural awareness and sensitivity are only small first steps towards redressing inequity and are insufficient in and of themselves to catalyze real change.

CULTURAL COMPETENCY

Cultural competency is a term that refers to an awareness of one's own position and biases as a way of interacting more respectfully with individuals from other cultural groups. While this term is frequently used in social services literature and research, this project attends to the concerns raised about this term, including the implication that "cultural competency could be achieved through a single training or course" (FNHA).[18]

16. Bunjun, B. (2021). "Centring the academic well-being of racialized students." Academic Well-Being of Racialized Students. Fernwood Publishing.
17. Accessible Canada. "Definitions." Available at https://accessibilitycanada.ca/aoda/definitions.
18. First Nations Health Authority. #itstartswith me: FNHA's Policy Statement on Cultural Safety and Humility. Available at https://www.fnha.ca/Documents/FNHA-Policy-Statement-Cultural-Safety-and-Humility.pdf.

CULTURAL HUMILITY

The First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) defines cultural humility as "a process of self-reflection to understand personal and systemic conditioned biases, and to develop and maintain respectful processes and relationships based on mutual trust. Cultural humility involves humbly acknowledging oneself as a life-long learner when it comes to understanding another's experience."[19] Cultural humility is understood as facilitating cultural safety.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION (DEI)

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are a common grouping of terms through which many institutions frame their policies, practices, and initiatives. Diversity refers primarily to the representation and appreciation of diverse populations within an organization or community, including on the basis of gender, sexuality, race, and ability. Equity refers to fair treatment and opportunities that allow for equal outcomes to be achieved by members of an organization or community. Inclusion refers to community members' sense of belonging and value.

INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

Institutional racism "refers to the policies and practices within and across institutions that, intentionally or not, produce outcomes that chronically favor or put a racial group at a disadvantage."[20] Institutional racism is of particular importance in educational and professional settings, especially as it pertains to grading, attrition, hiring, promotion, and retention.

INTERSECTIONALITY

A term first theorized by African-American theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw to describe the cumulative effects of discrimination based on intersecting, overlapping identities and positions. First used to describe Black women's experiences of racialized and gendered discrimination, intersectionality has come to describe a reflexive approach to research that as Natalie Clark (Métis) and Sarah Hunt (Kwakwaka'wakw) point out, "recognizes the contextual nature of identity across geography, social, and cultural contexts."[21]

STRUCTURAL/SYSTEMIC RACISM

The Aspen Institute defines structural racism as "a system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequity."[22] Structural racism is collectively, rather

19. First Nations Health Authority. #itstartswith me: FNHA's Policy Statement on Cultural Safety and Humility. Available at https://www.fnha.ca/Documents/FNHA-Policy-Statement-Cultural-Safety-and-Humility.pdf.

20. The Aspen Institute. Glossary for understanding the dismantling structural racism/promoting racial equity analysis.

21. Clark et al (2012). Indigenous social work field education: "Melq'ilwiye" coming together towards reconciliation. Native Social Work Journal 8, 105-127.

22. The Aspen Institute. Glossary for understanding the dismantling structural racism/promoting racial equity analysis.

than individually, propagated because it is built into shared cultural norms, social interactions, economic policies, and political systems.

FOCUS B: ENSURING EDUCATION AND TRAINING CURRICULA ARE RELEVANT TO WORKPLACE REALITIES

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Communication skills and strategies for resolving disagreements, tension, or frustration. While it is not possible to remove stress and uncertainty from the social services sector, it is possible to train workers in conflict management so they are better equipped for stressful situations they may face, either with clients or their own colleagues. The Thomas-Kilmann Instrument (TKI) is a popular HR and organizational development tool to facilitate conflict management education. It outlines five responses to conflict situations along axis of assertiveness and cooperativeness: competing, accommodating, avoiding, collaborating, and compromising.[23]

GERONTOLOGY

The scientific study of ageing and older adults. It is used to address the specific structural problems faced by ageing people, create policy recommendations, and improve quality of life. Work BC observes that the ageing population in the province will result in an increased demand for gerontology focused jobs such as assisted living, residential care work, and hospital support.[24]

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

The exchange of information between people through ideas, thoughts, and feelings. This includes decision-making skills, collaboration, empathy, self-awareness, and more. There are four main types of interpersonal communication: oral, written, non-verbal, and listening. In today's fast-paced and hybrid workplaces, workers are expected to effectively navigate between different types of communication with different audiences.[25] For example, someone may need to speak to a remote client via telehealth (see telehealth), be attentive in a team meeting, write a concise report to a colleague, and compassionately listen to a face-to-face client with their full attention. Good interpersonal communication skills are valuable in the workplace. It is a skillset that requires training, feedback, and practice over time.

23.   Kilmann Diagnostics, Take the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI), Available at https://kilmanndiagnostics.com/overview-thomas-kilmann-conflict-mode-instrument-tki.

24.   Work BC, Social workers (NOC 4152): Insights from industry, Available at https://www.workbc.ca/careers/4152#insights-from-industry.

25.   Moss, Laura, Interpersonal Communication: Why it is, Why it Matters, and How to Improve It, Available at https://everyonesocial.com/blog/interpersonal-communication.

TELEHEALTH

Healthcare appointments and services conducted remotely using technology, typically via video call. They are useful for staying connected to clients in rural settings and for offering accessible options for clients who are unable to leave their homes due to health issues. An increased demand for telehealth options due to technological advances, COVID-19, pressures on social services, and expectations of flexible appointment options make this is an important area for new social services workers to understand and build competency.

FOCUS C: REDUCING STRESS AND EMPLOYEE BURNOUT

This glossary is more in-depth as many key terms inform other areas of focus (student experiences with curricula; Focus B, and gaps workers face when seeking professional development; Focus D). Burnout is a global issue and a popular topic. There were significant resources to parse through. Many recent workplace studies were helpful to understand the scope of the issue. Additionally, some terms are used interchangeably or colloquially that were worth building specific definitions for.

ADAPTABILITY

The American Psychological Association (APA) defines adaptability as "the capacity to make appropriate responses to change or changing situations; the ability to modify or adjust one's behaviour in meeting diverse circumstances of different people." Adaptability is often considered a "soft skill" that is challenging to teach but can be learned through experience on the job. It is related to flexibility (cognitive, emotional, dispositional) and building resilience to navigate challenging and uncertain circumstances in the workplace.[26] Research shows adaptability has a key role in workers ability to handle stress at work and stay engaged with their job when faced with challenges. It is both a learned skill set and an attitude that can be helpful in preventing and/or mitigating stress and burnout.

BOUNDARIES

A standard by which people want to be treated, either by themselves or by others. There are different categories of boundaries including but not limited to: emotional boundaries, work boundaries, mental boundaries, time boundaries, and physical boundaries. Setting boundaries involves self-awareness, communication skills, and self-advocacy. However, the onus cannot be on individuals to set boundaries without organizational encouragement and support. Positive boundaries in the workplace need to be modelled by leadership and enabled at a structural level. For example, if workers are not expected to be available outside of working hours but management sends emails on evenings on weekends, individuals trying to maintain

26. Kaplan, Zoe, What are Adaptability Skills? Definition and Examples, Available at https://www.theforage.com/blog/skills/adaptability#:~:text=Your%20Adaptability%20Skills-,What%20Is%20Adaptability%3F,updates%20or%20their%20work%20environment.

work and time boundaries may fear retribution (missing out on key information, being perceived as uncommitted) and feel unable to speak up due to power dynamics.

BURNOUT

A state of physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion caused by chronic, unmanaged stress. American psychologist Herbert Freudenberger coined the term in the 1970s to describe the consequences of extreme stress and high ideals in "helping" professions.[27] While there are now understood to be many types of burnout (caregiver burnout, autistic burnout, chronic illness burnout, etc.) burnout studies originally focused on the workplace. There are psychological and medical frameworks for burnout, but the World Health Organization categorizes burnout as an "occupational phenomenon", not a medical condition.[28] It is important to note that an individual could be experiencing compounding burnout (for example if they are a parent, student, and frontline worker). People experience burnout symptoms differently but common experiences include: depression, anxiety, anger, sleep issues, substance misuse problems, and fatigue.

Dr. Christina Maslach identified three components of burnout which are commonly used in the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI).[29] They are:

▸ Feelings of exhaustion
▸ Cynicism related to one's job
▸ Reduced professional efficacy

Burnout is an organizational problem, not an individual problem. Maslach argues that burnout cannot be self-managed by individuals because it is a result of a failure of employers to manage chronic stressors in the workplace. As such, burnout prevention and intervention must take place at an organizational level.

OCCUPATIONAL BURNOUT (ALSO CALLED CAREER BURNOUT OR JOB BURNOUT)

A recent McKinsey report names "systemic organizational imbalances across job demands and job resources" as burnout causes.[30] Burnout in the workplace has received heightened attention in the past few years due to increased external stressors (e.g., COVID-19 pandemic, climate crises, cost of living) and increased pressure to 'do more with less' in the workplace. The Great Resignation and the characterization of Gen Z as 'The Burnout Generation' have highlighted the intensity and scale of burnout across industries, sectors, and organizations

27. National Center for Biotechnology Information, Depression: What is burnout? Available at https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK279286/#:~:text=The%20term%20%E2%80%9Cburnout%E2%80%9D%20was%20coined,ideals%20in%20%E2%80%9Chelping%E2%80%9D%20professions.

28. World Health Organization, Burn-out an "occupational phenomenon": International Classificaiton of Diseases, Available at https://www.who.int/news/item/28-05-2019-burn-out-an-occupational-phenomenon-international-classification-of-diseases.

29. Maslach, Christina and Michael P. Leiter, How to Measure Burnout Accurately and Ethically, Available at https://hbr.org/2021/03/how-to-measure-burnout-accurately-and-ethically.

30. McKinsey Health Institute, Addressing Employee Burnout: Are You Solving the Right Problem? Available via https://www.mckinsey.com/mhi/our-insights/addressing-employee-burnout-are-you-solving-the-right-problem.

worldwide. Focus on burnout is not entirely altruistic as the phenomena is considered a major 'business risk' due to issues with employee performance, absenteeism, and retention.

Risk factors for occupational burnout include a heavy workload, unclear job expectations, low-autonomy in the workplace, and difficulty maintaining work-life balance **(see: work-life balance)**. Burnout results from stress but not all stress leads to burnout. **(See: stress)**. Instead, it is unrelenting and seemingly unresolvable stress that leads workers towards the isolation and overwhelm characteristic of burnout. Workers in helping professions (teaching, social services, health care) are more susceptible to burnout as are Millennial/Gen Z workers who feel betrayed by workplaces that do not meet their expectations or act in ways that are misaligned with their values. Another way to view burnout is a "relationship in conflict,"[31] with the relationship in question being that between a worker and their workplace.

CAREGIVER BURNOUT

Exhaustion experienced by people in caregiving professions or performing caregiving duties, such as parenting, being a guardian, or looking after sick or disabled loved ones. **See: compassion fatigue.**

COLLECTIVE CARE

Collective care focuses on well-being as shared responsibility, rather than an individual problem to manage alone. It centres community, connection, and interdependence as ways to compassionately support one another, particularly in high intensity settings like care work, advocacy, and social justice organizing where individual burnout can spread to group burnout.

While self-care practices have been popularized in recent years, some argue self-care can be limited and isolating. Collective care models are often used as an addition to self-care and draw on the customs and practices of non-Western cultural organizing. For example, TARSHI, a feminist Indian reproductive health organization, argues that "collective care contributes to the growth and sustainability of the individual members and of the movement itself."[32]

COMPASSION FATIGUE

The acute exhaustion and emotional withdrawal experienced by those in caregiving roles or professions. This typically results in uncharacteristic apathy towards the suffering of others and can interfere with the caregiver's ability to provide appropriate attention to the people they are responsible for. Compassion fatigue is related to burnout and the two terms are sometimes conflated. However, The Canadian Medical Association makes the distinction that compassion fatigue typically has a rapid onset while burnout is a result of chronic unmanaged stress over time. Compassion fatigue is strongly associated with caregiver burnout and sometimes the two terms are interchangeably used.

31. Kim, Whizzy, Is That All There Is? Why Burnout Is A Broken Promise, Available at https://hbr.org/2021/03/how-to-measure-burnout-accurately-and-ethically.

32. TARSHI, Collective Care, Available at https://www.tarshi.net/selfcare/collective-care.

EMOTIONAL LABOUR

American Sociologist Arlie Hochschild coined the term to name the task of regulating or managing emotional expressions with others as part of one's professional work role.[33] Emotional labour is overtly or tacitly expected in public-facing and care-giving roles where workers are expected to perform positive emotions (e.g., smiling, enthusiasm, understanding) regardless of how clients or patients act. Studies show fatigue from performing emotional labour, particularly if it feels inauthentic and effortful, can impact employees wellbeing and contribute to burnout.

MENTAL HEALTH

A state of psychological and emotional well-being. Everyone has mental health, and their relationship to it may fluctuate over time based on life factors and events such as relationships, work environments, finances, and physical health. The Canadian Mental Health Association says good mental health includes a strong sense of self, feeling connected, and the ability to cope with stress. Unmanaged stress and burnout damage peoples' mental and physical health and it can take considerable support and time for them to recover.

MENTAL ILLNESS

Health issues that negatively impact a person's thoughts, feelings, behaviours, how they think about themselves, and how they relate to the world around them.[34] Workplace stress and burnout can lead to or exacerbate mental illnesses such as anxiety, depression, and substance misuse. While some people seek out medical terminology and diagnosis, others may reject it. Conversations about mental illness have increased in recent years due to the rise of anxiety and depression; however, stigma and barriers to accessing care (e.g., lack of culturally safe practitioners, the cost of therapy, internalized shame) remain a significant issue.

SELF-CARE

Personal routines and practices for tending to one's physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being. They can be preventative and proactive ways to decompress, manage stress in healthy ways, and stay connected to oneself. There is no one-size fits all approach to self-care, and some people will engage in self-care without calling it that. Popular self-care tactics include spending time outdoors, moderate exercise and movement, time with loved ones or pets, journaling, or meditation. Self-care tactics connected to personal values can be nourishing and supportive for people. However, some argue that self-care is limited and can isolate people without more meaningful connections to community. **See: community care.**

33. Hochschild, The Managed Heart, 1983.
34. Canadian Mental Health Association, Mental Illnesses, Available at https://cmha.ca/brochure/mental-illnesses.

STRESS

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health defines stress as a normal response to situational pressures.[35] A change in brain chemicals due to perceived threats causes physiological responses such as tensing muscles, breathing quickly, and sweating. Stress is not inherently a bad thing. Stress in small doses can be positive, enabling someone to meet deadlines, be prepared, and engage in everyday challenges. However, unmanageable chronic stress increases the risk of mental health problems and can result in burnout.

TOXIC WORKPLACE

A work environment that harms employees. While overt incidents like bullying or danger on the job can create a toxic workplace, they can also be formed through insidious harms such as overwork, poor pay, lack of internal mobility, or violating trust.[36] Toxic workplaces are a key factor in burnout and one of the main factors people cite for leaving their job. When people feel their workplace is destructive, unsupportive, or ineffective, they disengage from their job or choose to leave it rather than staying in an environment where they have little agency or control.[37] McKinsey notes that while resilient and adaptable employees are better equipped to work in toxic environments, they are also less likely to tolerate them, leading to resignations.[38]

WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

The optimal physiological state where a person can effectively manage their emotions and respond to stressful situations. Outside this optimal state, people are either in hyperarousal (activated, overwhelmed, out of control, fight or flight response) or hypoarousal (numb, frozen, shut down, disengaged).[39] Mental health and wellness resources often discuss how reflecting on one's own physiological reactions to stress (i.e how it feels in your body) can be used to expand the window of tolerance, make more considered choices, and increase empathy for others.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

The level of prioritization between personal and professional activities in a person's life and the degree to which workplace activities take up space at home.[40] Healthy work-life balance means a worker understands their priorities, gains satisfaction in different areas of their life,

35. CAMH, Stress, Available at https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-illness-and-addiction-index/stress.

36. Perna, Mark. Toxic Work Culture Is the #1 Factor Driving People to Resign, Available at https://www.forbes.com/sites/mark-cperna/2022/06/01/toxic-work-culture-is-the-1-factor-driving-people-to-resign/?sh=7961e94168f1.

37. McKinsey Health Institute, Toxic workplace Behavior and Employee Burnout: Fix One, Fix Both, Available at https://www.mckinsey.com/mhi/our-insights/toxic-workplace-behavior-and-employee-burnout-fix-one-fix-both.

38. McKinsey Health Institute, Addressing Employee Burnout: Are You Solving the Right Problem? Available via https://www.mckinsey.com/mhi/our-insights/addressing-employee-burnout-are-you-solving-the-right-problem.

39. National Institute for the Clinical Application of Behavioral Medicine, How to Help Your Clients Understand Their Window of Tolerance, Available at https://www.nicabm.com/trauma-how-to-help-your-clients-understand-their-window-of-tolerance.

40. HR Zone, What is Work-Life Balance?, Available at https://www.hrzone.com/hr-glossary/what-is-work-life-balance.

and is able to maintain strong boundaries. An imbalanced work-life balance due to perceived or actual lack of control over work contributes to stress and burnout. These dynamics have received heightened attention during COVID-19 due to the blurring of work and home life, expectations that workers are 'always-on' due to technology and surveillance, and increased workloads.

FOCUS D: REDUCING INEQUITIES IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT RELATED TO LOCATION, EMPLOYER SIZE, AND UNION MEMBERSHIP

Please note that Focus A (decolonization) and Focus C (stress & burnout) provide overlapping and relevant terminology that will apply here.

ACCREDITED SKILLS

Skills that have been officially approved and recognized by a professional body or institutions. The purpose of accreditation is to create quality standards, a framework for accountability, and build trust with clients or patients. This is particularly important in sectors that are public facing and regularly manage personal health information, such as social services.

DIRECT PRACTICE/SERVICE

Person to person contact with individuals, groups, or families with a goal of uplifting clients' strengths, reducing their barriers to growth, and helping vulnerable populations navigate and access support.

FACILITATOR

A person who is responsible for guiding a group of people to learn, reflect, and engage. Good facilitation helps create a safe, supportive environment for building community and connections. Some organizations in the social service sector **(see: social service sector)** prefer to use the title of facilitator in place of support worker **(see: support worker)** in order to re-orient the balance of power from individuals to community members as a whole.

INDIRECT PRACTICE/SERVICE

Working on policies and programs that will benefit clients. Service management, logistics, administration, and organizational tasks are the main focus, instead of face-to-face client contact.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Training and networking that enables employees to improve their skills, be more successful in their role, and advance their careers. Workplaces can host professional development opportunities, such as lunch-and-learns, or enable their employees to take classes, attend

workshops and conferences, or connect to mentorships. Employees can also engage in independent study to keep up to date with best practices and trends. Professional development can help employees gain confidence, build relationships, seek further education, and build a vision for their career.

SOCIAL SERVICE SECTOR

Support and care programing, typically delivered by non-profit organizations. Services are provided to vulnerable populations including people with disabilities, at-risk youth, women experiencing family violence, Indigenous communities, refugees and New Canadians, children who witness abuse, and more.[41]

SUPPORT WORKER

Front-line workers who provide support, companionship, and care to clients who require assistance in daily life and activities. This includes personal aides and attendants who perform routine health and household duties for seniors and people with disabilities.

FOCUS E: ADDRESSING ABLEISM AND DISABILITY IN EDUCATION & TRAINING

ABLEISM

The BC Human Rights Code defines ableism as "an ideology and system of oppression in society that holds that some bodies are more valuable than others, which limits the potential of people with disabilities. People with disabilities are assumed to be less worthy of respect and consideration, less able to contribute and take part, and of less value than other people. Ableism can be conscious or unconscious and is embedded in institutions, systems, and the broader culture of a society."[42]

ACCESSIBILITY

Accessibility Services Canada defines accessibility as "the design of products, devices, services, or environments for people who experience disabilities."[43] Several things enable accessibility for disabled people, including but not limited to physical and communicative accommodations, adaptive devices, and mobility aids. Often, accessibility only occurs retroactively, rather than proactively, and disabled people still need only to be "accommodated" rather than included. **See also: universal design.**

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41. Community Social Services Employers' Association of BC, What is the Community Social Services Sector? Available at https://www.cssea.bc.ca/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=39:what-is-the-community-social-services-sector&catid=18&Itemid=107.
42. British Columbia's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner. (2020). "Ableism."
43. Accessible Canada. "Definitions." Available at https://accessibilitycanada.ca/aoda/definitions.

DISABILITY INCLUSION

Like other forms of inclusion, disability inclusion leads from the principles that decision-making and planning as it affects disabled people and communities must be made with and by disabled people. Within the disability community in particular, the slogan "nothing about us without us" is a rallying cry signifying the necessity of disability inclusion.[44]

DISABILITY RIGHTS

Like the civil rights movement, the disability rights movement established and enshrined previously absent legal rights for disabled people, particularly with regards to access to public space, and to medical and educational rights and protections.[45] A major fight in the disability rights movement included the push for deinstitutionalization and the expansion of community services to enable disabled people to live within their communities. Within Canada, landmark disability rights achievements included securing disability as a protected right within the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as well as the federal Employment Equity Act.[46]

DISABILITY JUSTICE

Disability justice is a movement that explicitly connects ableism to "its connections to heteropatriarchy, white supremacy, colonialism, and capitalism."[47] Because disability justice connects ableism to these other forms of exploitation and supremacy, the movement explicitly prioritizes "the leadership of disabled people of color and of queer and gender non-conforming disabled people."[48]

UNIVERSAL DESIGN

The Universal Design Network of Canada describes universal design as "the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design."[49] While universal design is often primarily used within the context of architecture and product design, the principles of equity, flexibility, simplicity, perceptibility, minimization of hazards, and reduction of fatigue still apply to other environments, including virtual environments. Of critical note is that while the principles of universal design and accessibility are important **(see: accessibility)**, disabled people may and will still have competing access needs.

44. Government of Canada (2022). Canada's Disability Inclusion Action Plan.

45. Sins Invalid (2020). What is Disability Justice? (Adapted from Patty Berne's Disability Justice - A Working Draft," pub. in Skin, Tooth, and Bone: The Basis of Movement is Our People, A Disability Justice Primer, 2nd Ed.)

46. Galer, D. (2015). Disability Rights Movement in Canada. The Canadian Encyclopedia.

47. Sins Invalid (2020).

48. Sins Invalid (2020).

49. Universal Design Network of Canada. (2023). Universal Design Knowledge.