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# Early Childhood Educators of BC

## Leadership Initiative Evaluation Report

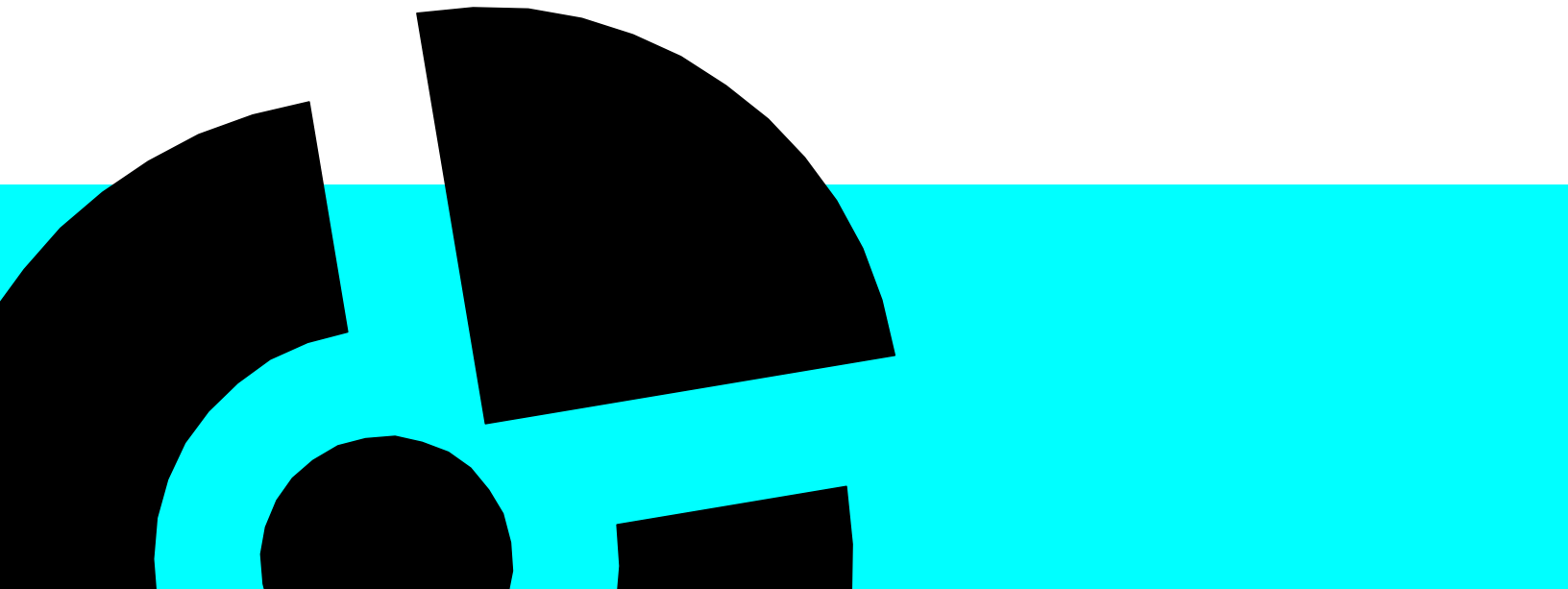
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## 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Leadership Initiative is administered by the Early Childhood Educators of BC (ECEBC). The goal of the Initiative is to *enhance the personal leadership skills and professional identity of early childhood educators in BC*.

The Leadership Initiative aims to deliver on four key objectives:

- To increase the leadership skills of early childhood educators
- To increase the leadership capacity of the early childhood education sector
- To improve the communication skills of early childhood educators towards communicating and building awareness of the impacts of early childhood education
- To increase awareness in local communities<sup>1</sup> of the critical role that early childhood educators play in the provision of quality early care and learning services

ECEBC contacted Context Research to develop the evaluation plan<sup>2</sup> and conduct the evaluation of the Leadership Initiative. This report details our evaluation methods and results, highlights the successes and challenges of implementing the program, and the extent to which the program objectives were met. The report also describes how we worked with ECEBC to build their evaluation capacity to implement the Most Significant Change (MSC) method and presents some preliminary results from this process.

**Methods:** Our evaluation methods included four interviews with ECEBC, interviews (15 participants) and an online survey (33 respondents) with past and present Leadership Initiative participants, a Leadership Institute post training survey (November 2013, 17 respondents and May 2014, 16 respondents), data tracking to document the reach of the Initiative and quick surveys (57 respondents) with 'Communities of Innovation' target audiences.

### Leadership Initiative Process:

Over the past five years, ECEBC has:

- Promoted, recruited and selected 39 Community of Innovation Projects
- Planned, developed, managed, and implemented 15 Institutes (three Institutes across five cohorts)
- Provided support to the Community of Innovation Projects and the early childhood educators (ECEs) leading the projects

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<sup>1</sup> "Local community" refers to families, local businesses, municipal staff, local government or other target audiences of the Communities of Innovation projects.

<sup>2</sup> The Leadership Initiative Evaluation Plan was presented previously in the October 2013 Early Childhood Educators Leadership Initiative Evaluation Plan report.

Based on interviews with the ECEBC Board and staff and feedback from ECEs, the process of developing, managing and implementing the Leadership Initiative was largely successful. However, ongoing effort is required to promote the Leadership Initiative to increase the number of Community of Innovation applications received each year.

We also heard from Community of Innovation participants who suggested (1) broadening Leadership Initiative promotion efforts, (2) conducting Institutes in communities across the province to improve access and representation, (3) providing flexible accommodation options and more down time at the Institutes, (4) providing further training for past participants, (5) hosting annual reunions for past participants, (6) making ECEBC membership an entry requirement for the Leadership Institute and (7) enabling participants to take training from the Institute back to ECEs in their community (e.g. train the trainer).

### **Leadership Initiative Outcomes and Impacts:**

The outcome evaluation showed clear progress towards achievement of the Leadership Initiative objectives.

Evaluation findings showed the Leadership Initiative increased the capacity of the early childhood education sector by increasing the number of ECEs involved in the Leadership Institutes (from zero in 2008 to 108 in 2013) and the number of community based projects (39 projects in total) and communities involved.

We also clearly heard the Leadership Initiative increased the leadership and communication skills of participants. Almost all participants reported their leadership and communication skills increased because of the Institutes and community projects.

The Leadership Initiative not only benefited ECEs, but also had an impact on the local community. Over 95% of community members surveyed indicated they know more about the critical role of ECEs and believe ECEs play a critical role in providing early care and learning services in their community. The majority of ECEs surveyed and interviewed also believed and reported that the initiative increased local community awareness of the ECE profession.

Finally, the Leadership Initiative enhanced the professional identity of ECEs. The majority of survey respondents and interviewees indicated they had an increased sense of professional identity because of the Institutes and Community of Innovation projects.

### **Most Significant Change**

As part of this evaluation project, we supported and guided ECEBC on the MSC technique. MSC involved the engagement of Leadership Initiative participants in the collection of stories that represented significant changes resulting directly from their involvement in the Initiative, followed by engagement of the ECEBC Board and staff to review and vote on stories that were most representative of the program impacts.

The ECEBC Board and staff reviewed and selected five MSC stories that best represented the impacts of the Leadership Initiative across three domains of change.

1. *Changes in Leadership Skills:*

- “I’m Doing This!”
- “Clarity”

2. *Changes in Communication Skills:*

- “Pushed Out There”

3. *Unintended Changes/Benefits:*

- “New Energy”
- “Holistic Change”