



ECEBC | early childhood
educators of BC

**The Early Childhood Educators of BC Leadership Initiative
2009 Leadership Institute #2 Report
June, 2009**

Background

From May 22-26, 2009, ECEBC hosted a second Leadership Institute for the ECEBC Leadership Initiative (LI) participants from the 9 active Communities of Innovation.

Initially – the Leadership Initiative second Institute was planned as a 2 day event enabling LI participants to attend the University of Victoria's Summer Early Years Institute. However, after the first Leadership Institute in early 2009, participants indicated that they wanted more time together, as a group.

As a result, 23 LI participants came together for another 5 intensive days of leadership related activities including participation in the annual ECEBC conference and the University of Victoria Early Years Institute. Time was also provided for LI participants to meet as a group to share their leadership lessons to date and develop their leadership capacity. At the request of participants, group facilitation and writing skills were addressed.

The schedule was as follows:

Friday, May 22 – participants attended the ECEBC Conference in Richmond, BC selecting workshops of their own choosing from the conference offerings. (Workshops on the Leadership Initiative were also offered to other conference participants).

Saturday, May 23 – participants gathered in a LI stream. The morning was devoted to sharing participants' experiences in the implementation of their community projects. The afternoon focused on group facilitation skills.

Sunday, May 24 – participants travelled to Victoria BC and met with members of PLAY – a leading child care group in Victoria to share leadership challenges and successes.

Monday, May 25 – participants attended the key note speeches and workshops of their choice at the University of Victoria Early Years Institute.

Tuesday, May 26 – participants gathered in a LI stream to debrief Monday and build their writing skills and capacity.

Lessons Learned

Based on active observation and reflection throughout the second Institute of LI participants and on participant feedback forms, the following key reflective/evaluative themes emerged.

1. Leadership Capacity

By far, the most significant developments evident at the 2nd Institute of LI participants were the depth, breadth and richness of the emerging leadership empowerment, capacity and confidence.

This first became evident while participants shared updates about their Community Projects when we first gathered as a group on Saturday morning. Initially designed as an informal, safe place for participants to share their leadership successes and challenges with each other – it quickly became clear that communities had moved far and fast and had their own sophisticated, complex and diverse story to tell.

Participants clearly valued the opportunity to share with others about their evolving projects. Things that worked for them included...

Loved to see everyone's project and how far everyone has come.

Show and Tell on Saturday was excellent – got some great ideas for our project

Debriefing and sharing of what worked

Loved the updates of Leadership, questions, comments for each project

Enjoyed the opportunity to review everyone's projects.

However, the Institute's schedule had not included an opportunity to share the wealth of learning from the Communities of Innovation more broadly with the ECE community.

Some on the spot adjustments were made to try and address this oversight. Quickly, members of the ECEBC Board of Directors were invited into the session to learn from the LI participants. And, one Community of Innovation's media presentation and one LI participant's 'story' were added to the ECEBC Conference lunch program.

The capacity of LI participants to take leadership and to speak strongly and confidently to the value of their work in front of 500 of their peers had a profound impact. New and emerging leaders across BC were received with open hearts and a standing ovation! As one participant aptly said "*Speaking up and speaking for is becoming more and more organic.*"

The resulting interest in and 'buzz' about the Leadership Initiative and the LI participants carried on from the ECEBC Conference to the University of Victoria Institute. Here, LI participants had an opportunity to meet leading international early childhood researchers and policy makers. Again, the leadership they demonstrated in the workshop sessions they attended reflected a move from victimization and intimidation to strength, confidence and capacity.

The speed, energy and creativity with which the LI participants integrated and acted on their learning at the first Leadership Institute was both unexpected and amazing. Those of us responsible for planning and facilitating the 2nd Institute were running hard to keep up.

2. Integrating the Experience

As noted above, the 5 days LI participants spent together included 3 different events. On the one hand, participants valued this. When asked about the things that worked for them, they said

Using our knowledge and gaining opportunities to advocate at the ECEBC Conference.

Huge amount of networking at both conferences.

Being able to participate in all 3 in the same trip.

Enjoyed the keynotes in Victoria...the bigger group at ECEBC workshops.

Great to hear from speakers around the world and to hear many similar things in each area.

Being part of the Conference and Institute was great...would have enjoyed more of it.

It was helpful for us to see the BIGGER PICTURE that there are many other ECEs out there who will be standing beside us to keep this field going.

I would easily have enjoyed attending 2 days of the ECEBC Conference as well as 1 full day of the UVIC Summer Institutes.

On the other hand, participants found that the over-all experience was somewhat fragmented. A lot of time was spent in travel and participants indicated that there was not enough time to work together on LI specifics.

Participants' comments about things that didn't work for them and suggestions for next time reflect this conundrum...

It was a non-stop 5 days, may work easier if Leadership (sessions) were not broken up too much as I had trouble remembering what we did on Saturday afternoon – so much info given in so many places.

Too much traveling even though conference and leadership were empowering.

No time to work in groups on our new (Community Project) work plan.

Not enough time to meet together as ECE Leadership .

Not enough time to reflect together.

Tuesday in Victoria was too short, very rushed.

Would have liked more depth on writing (skills) – what was given helped but rushed.

3. Culture of Caring

The culture of caring continued to be an important theme during the 2nd institute . Participants valued the sharing, caring, informality and fun.. Things that worked for them included...

The information received has made a great difference in my motivation and added more to what I want to share with others.

Using our new knowledge and gaining opportunities to advocate.

Seeing everyone connecting.

A sense that we are supporting each other.

Great atmosphere.

Group time together were great.

Leadership sessions were informative and fun, I liked the relaxed attitude.

Participants also appreciate the effort that went into meeting their physical and emotional needs.

You made this fun; thank you Maria for taking such good care of us.

Maria's organizing, notes, binders were phenomenal again. Thank you Maria.

Conclusion and Next Steps

LI participants' continued high level of engagement, commitment and capacity to model an emerging culture of ECE leadership all contributed to another highly successful Leadership Institute . The opportunity provided for participants to be part of and show case the Initiative and Community Projects at public events was a particular strength.

Until the next Institute in October, Community Projects will be supported through a new on-line Chat Room, Conference Call and individual project support.

Further, as a result of the lessons learned to date, over the summer the LI Advisory Committee and ECEBC Board of Directors will be asked to consider changes to the scheduling of the next cohort of Communities of Leadership Innovation Projects. One suggestion is to begin new projects in April with the intent of highlighting these projects at the ECEBC annual May conference the following year. This will ensure that the capacity to share the learning from the Leadership Initiative is built into the on-going life and cycle of the organization.

We continue to thank Vancity Community Foundation for their on-going support of this important initiative. We remain confident that this work will serve our field and the children and families we serve very well.