

December 2024

FSC NATIONAL NEWS

Newsletter for members of Family Service Canada



Message from the Board

Hello all!

I hope people read this while sipping apple cider and relaxing by the fire with all their holiday plans and work “To Do” lists finished.....or at least dreaming of this state! What a busy Fall it has been! I hope that despite the challenges we all face in our agencies and sectors, there have been lots of great successes and wins. One example of this is undoubtedly the Toronto COL we had at the end of October. It was so great to see all those who could join, and for those who weren't, we missed you!

The conference was a great blend of a consistent speaker (Paul Born) for both days, poster and program presentations, and a fireside chat. It was great to see a variety of people from across the country and people representing different positions within many of our organizations.

At the end of the conference, we conducted a live virtual survey, where we could answer the questions and see our answers in real-time. Given that the board was having its meeting the next day, this immediate level of information was invaluable. We could discuss how the conference went and look to the survey for your feedback. Here are a few things we heard:

- The Promising Practice presentations were a hit, and there were an overwhelming number of suggestions for doing this again.
- Facilitated networking opportunities and more time between sessions for small group discussions was a frequent request.
- 100% of folks would recommend the COL to others.
- 76% would like virtual touchpoints throughout the year.
- There was a request for COLs to be midweek so travel could be done early in the week.

These are just a few of the many great ideas shared, and they will definitely be part of the conversation with the next planning group for COL 2025 in Halifax. The most consistent comment, whether online or in person, was how much people enjoyed connecting with their nationwide peers and exchanging ideas, challenges, and much more. As the board continues to work to ensure that FSC members feel a strong connection within this community, we know that our annual COLs will continue to play a central role in our connections.

I wish you the most joyful holiday seasons with the special ones in your lives and a big thank-you for the amazing work you and your teams do every day!

Warm season wishes!

Maria

FSC Board Chair



Highlights from the COL - Complexity Leadership Exploring Leadership for a Changing World

Written by: Sandra Rupnarain – Family Services of Peel

Community of Learning 2024 provided a vibrant platform for thought leaders from Family Services organizations across Canada to explore strategies for leading today's dynamic, fast-moving, interconnected systems. Attendees were treated to a rich mix of learning formats, best practice sharing, and networking opportunities designed to build people connections and inspire adaptive and innovative leadership.

Conference Highlights

To kickstart the two-day event, Sunday night began with a relaxed and engaging wine and cheese reception. This allowed participants to network, exchange ideas, and deepen connections in a collegial atmosphere.

Poster Presentations

A visual showcase of cutting-edge research and innovative projects brought awareness to the creative and gap-filling programs to life. From a cultural framework to address family violence, a Men's Helpline, the development, and sustainability of a research institute to a Social Table for Seniors were just some evidence of the great work happening across Canada.

The Best Practice Presentations provided opportunities for engaging sessions that highlighted real-world success stories. Attendees learned practical strategies from diverse presentations, including working with men who use abuse and trauma interventions, developing a men's helpline, connecting the community through transforming the norms of access, the fundamentals of rapid access counselling, how to embed financial supports into existing programs; how to address postpartum depression through therapeutic programming and empowering lives through collaboration.

Complexity Leadership sessions highlighted that traditional top-down approaches often fall short in dynamic systems. Instead, it emphasizes:

- **Adaptive Thinking:** Encouraging innovation and responding to emerging challenges.
- **Enabling Environments:** Creating conditions where creativity and collaboration thrive.
- **Balancing Stability and Change:** Managing day-to-day operations while staying agile.

Some Key Themes

Leadership in Complexity: Leaders must embrace uncertainty, foster creativity, and build environments where innovation can thrive.

Bridging Research and Practice: Poster presentations offered actionable insights, emphasizing the need to translate complex theories into practical solutions.

The Power of Collaboration: The best practices underscored the importance of teamwork, cross-disciplinary approaches, and shared accountability in solving complex challenges.

Reflections and Next Steps

The conference reminded us that complexity leadership is both an art and a science. It reinforced the idea that it is about navigating challenges and seizing opportunities for growth and transformation. By adopting a complexity mindset, leaders can inspire innovation, resilience, and meaningful progress in their organizations and beyond.

As we move forward, as leaders, we can:

- Invest in ongoing leadership development. Invest in training. Equip leaders to think systemically and act adaptively.
- Encourage a Learning Culture: Value feedback, experimentation, and reflection. Create environments that support innovation and learning.
- Foster Collaboration: Break down silos and connect teams to unlock creativity.
- Build resilient networks ready to tackle the challenges of a rapidly evolving world.
- Leverage Tools Wisely: Use technology to support, not overshadow, human judgment.



Conclusion

The COL conference underscored the importance of embracing uncertainty and cultivating adaptive capabilities to thrive in today's dynamic world. Leaders must move beyond traditional hierarchies and embrace a complexity mindset to unlock organizational innovation and resilience. Whether it was the thought-provoking presentations, the creative energy of the posters, or the wine and cheese reception camaraderie, this event proved that complexity leadership is not just about navigating challenges—it's about building a better future.

Acknowledgments

I want to give special thanks to the organizing committee, speakers, and participants who contributed to the success of this thought-provoking event.

We want to know what is happening in your agency. Let us know about your successes, new initiatives, important changes in staffing, anniversaries, etc. We will include them in future issues of our newsletter.