

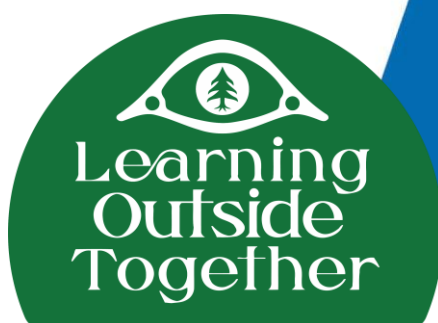


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Learning Outside Together

**Year 2 Annual Report
Phase 2**

May 22, 2026



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

LOT (Learning Outside Together) is a province-wide professional development program for Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) in BC that supports land-based, outdoor learning grounded in the Indigenous principle of Land as Teacher. Phase 2 (2024–2027), funded by the BC Ministry of Education and Child Care, aims to build a self-sustaining program that strengthens Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) professionals’ knowledge of land-based experiences and improves the quality and duration of children’s outdoor experiences. This annual report summarizes evaluation results for LOT Cohort 6, mentor learning from a separate Photovoice study, and a “partner pod” pilot testing LOT’s relevance for ELCC professionals broadly.

Methodology

The LOT evaluation incorporates components of Two-Eyed Seeing and Trauma-Informed methodologies. SRDC collected data from up to 253 participants enrolled in Cohort 6. Self-report ratings from n=118 participants who completed LOT and provided both baseline and end-of-program responses were used to assess change. Qualitative components included open-ended survey responses and, for partner pods, end-of-program focus groups and mentor interviews. Mentor perspectives are also drawn from a separate Photovoice evaluation.

Key Findings

Participation and satisfaction: Demand remained strong (347 applications). More than half of LOT participants reported no barriers; the most common barriers were schedule/workload conflicts and changes in personal/work circumstances. Satisfaction was high: over 90 per cent were satisfied and likely to recommend LOT. Suggested improvements clustered around course structure, content, and supports to reduce participation barriers.

Completion and success: About three-quarters of participants received a certification of completion in LOT, and others received participation certificates. In addition, more than 90 per cent of respondents reported achieving what they hoped to achieve in LOT.

Pre/Post Outcomes: The strongest and most consistent pre/post improvements were in self-reported skills, confidence, and knowledge related to outdoor learning and Land as Teacher—across all measured items, scores increased significantly after LOT. Participants also reported significant increases in Indigenous engagement (e.g., learning from Indigenous educators and honouring land-related knowledge), though average frequencies remained lower than other outcome domains. Wellbeing measures showed significant improvements in perceived

connection to nature and in feelings of balance across physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual dimensions. Unlike the other domains, outdoor practice indicators started high at baseline, leaving limited room for improvement. Key takeaways emphasized connection with land and peers, and personal growth such as reflection and slowing down.

Mentorship: Mentor Photovoice findings highlighted LOT’s peer mentorship as distinctive and reciprocal, grounded in Two-Eyed Seeing and storytelling. Participating mentors perceived LOT mentorship as contributing positively to ELCC workforce wellbeing and retention.

Applicability beyond ECEs: Partner pod participants generally found LOT relevant and accessible across ELCC roles, with minor adaptations suggested. Participants viewed broader eligibility as feasible and valuable, while noting the importance of participant choice and healthy workplace group dynamics.

Conclusions and Implications

Across Cohort 6, findings continued to demonstrate positive influences of LOT on ELCC professionals’ capacity for land-based, outdoor learning—particularly through robust gains in skills, confidence, and knowledge, and meaningful increases in engagement with Indigenous knowledge. The evaluation suggests LOT supports educators to engage in new mentorship opportunities, which further help ECEs overcome barriers and take practical steps toward implementation. Evidence from partner pods indicates LOT is adaptable to a broader ELCC ecosystem with targeted tweaks to content.

As Cohort 7 will conclude the current funding period, the evaluation will seek to document LOT’s broader legacy and longer-term ripple effects consistent with the program’s Theory of Change.

[LOT] has put all the knowledge and understandings I’ve learned from my diploma program into practice. The sharing of knowledge and experiences with other educators from various practices added to the value of this program. There was harmony, so much respect and professionalism in our cohort. Just awesome overall!

--LOT Cohort 6 participant

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INTRODUCTION

LOT (Learning Outside Together) was created in 2021 by the BC Aboriginal Child Care Society (BCACCS), the Early Childhood Educators of BC (ECEBC) and the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC), with funding from the Future Skills Centre and an anonymous donor. The first three years of the project established that there is demand for a professional development program for ECEs in BC that incorporates traditional wisdom of Land as Teacher and promising practices related to outdoor learning, and that LOT helps improve the skills, confidence, and knowledge of participants.

Phase 2 of LOT runs from 2024 – 2027 and is funded by the BC Ministry of Education and Child Care. The overall goals of LOT are to create a self-sustaining program that increases Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) professionals' knowledge of land-based experiences and improves the quality and duration of children's land-based experiences. This report reflects the second year of the LOT extension.

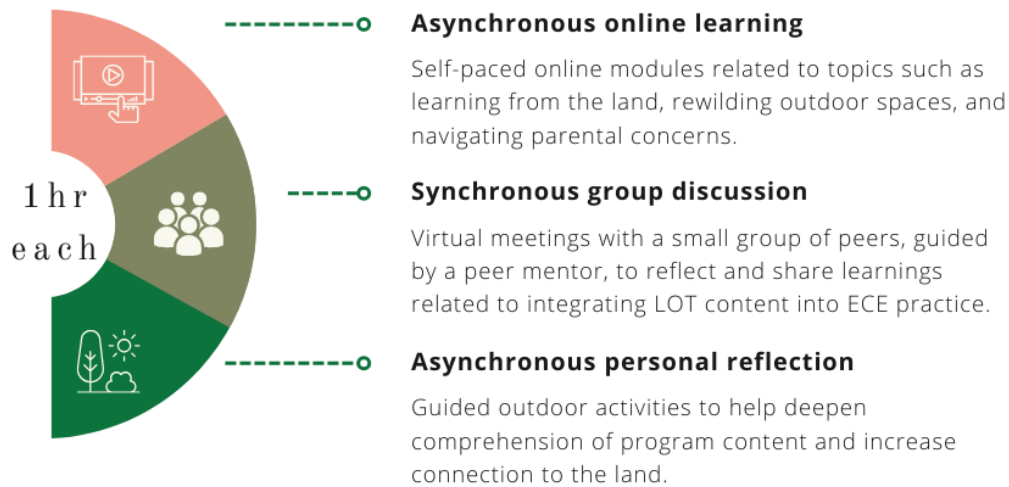
PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The LOT program is delivered to cohorts of participants through online units on BC's Early Years Professional Development Hub. Over three months, participants complete ten asynchronous units, each focusing on a particular topic related to land-based experiences. The units contain a mixture of learning materials, including narrative interviews, written materials, and reflection exercises. Participants receive a journal to write in and a seed to plant at the beginning of the program. Additionally, each participant is connected with a mentor and a small group of about seven other participants who share the same mentor. Mentors facilitate learning circles with their small group of LOT participants to further explore the course content and support one another in their learning journey. Mentors are former LOT participants and are supported by LOT mentor-facilitators (who are former LOT mentors). Contact with mentors and other LOT participants takes place primarily virtually. The components of the LOT program are visualized in [Figure 1](#).

Program Updates

Cohort 6 of LOT ran from September 2025 – December 2025. Several changes were made to the administration of LOT throughout Phase 2, including adjustments to the timeframe (from five months in Cohort 5 back to about three months in Cohort 6) to incorporate scheduled break weeks, as well as expanded eligibility criteria to include StrongStart educators (Cohort 5) and other ELCC professionals (Cohort 6), leading towards further planned expansion in Cohort 7. Specifically, ECE Assistants, Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR) managers, licensing officers, and other ELCC professionals are being considered for participation in LOT. To ensure LOT is accessible and relevant to these audiences, the content, structure, and evaluation materials may need adaptations.

Figure 1 **Weekly LOT Program Components**



Partner Pods

To better understand how LOT might support ELCC professionals beyond ECEs working directly with children, and to provide professional development opportunities, a custom cohort of “partner pods” were implemented alongside Cohort 6 (though not technically included within Cohort 6). These pods included staff from BCACCS and ECEBC, who participated as two separate groups, led by mentors from each workplace who had previously mentored in LOT.

The partner pods provided a “friendly audience” with which to test delivery of the LOT program content and structure in a novel way. Specifically, staff from two BCACCS preschool locations as well as staff working with the main office were invited to participate in one pod, and ECEBC Ambassadors, who support knowledge mobilization of ECEBC programs and services, made up the other pod. The partner pods largely functioned as the LOT program typically would with a few exceptions, including:

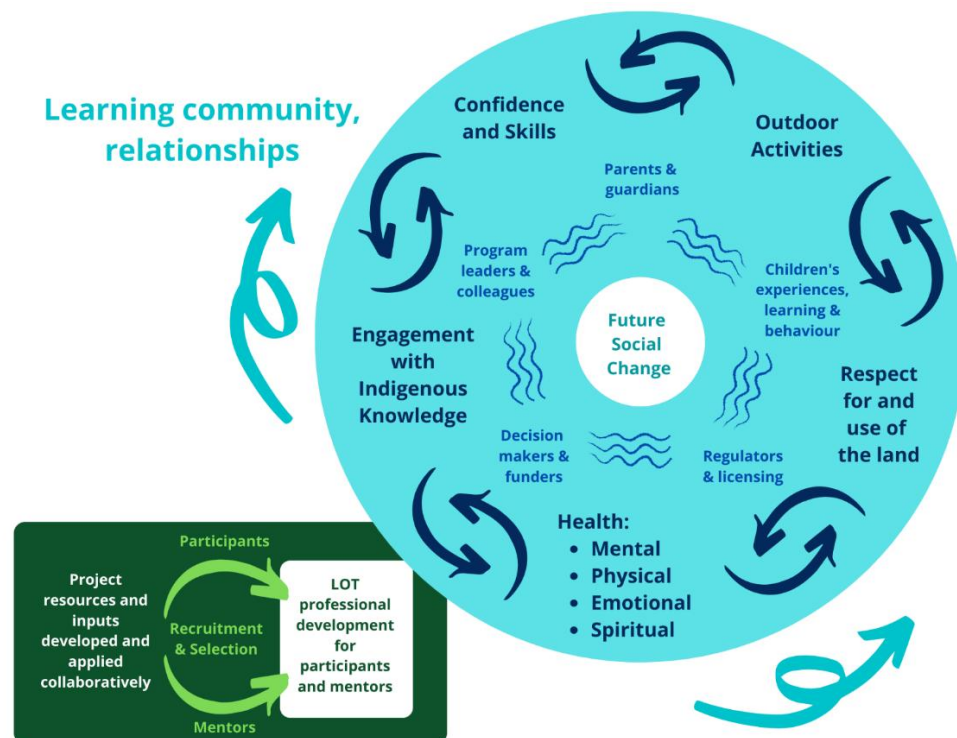
- The pods ran on an adjusted timeline, beginning in Oct 2025 and running through Jan-Feb 2026
- The small mentor groups consisted of individuals employed by the same organization
- The BCACCS pod met partially in person, given that some of the educators worked together on site
- Partner pod participants completed LOT on work time, which may be the case for some LOT participants but is not standard practice

LOT THEORY OF CHANGE

The theory of change is a conceptual representation of how the project activities will achieve its desired outcomes. It describes the many factors that may influence the success of the project. **Figure 2** presents the theory of change for the overall project. At the individual and sector levels, the desired outcomes from the LOT program are built on the assumption that there is sufficient ELCC professional uptake and demand for the program that a sizeable learning community is formed over time. The program incorporates both Western and Indigenous worldviews and provides an opportunity for cross cultural learning and skill development. The learning and skills developed over the course of the program will be shared with other ELCC professionals, the sector and broader community in general, resulting in – it is hoped – more funders and ELCC centres investing in LOT, with subsequent adjustments to programming, regulations and licensing being made by decision makers.

At the broader community level, the desired outcomes take into consideration existing research showing a positive link between access to nature and child development in several areas, including physical health, mental health, emotional wellbeing, resilience, and academic success (Dankiw et al. 2020). Research has also linked exposure to nature in childhood with later environmental leadership (Gifford & Chen, 2016; Human Environments Analysis Laboratory, 2015). Ultimately, at the broader societal level, this project aims to contribute to the body of work recognizing the value of land-based programming, through the recognition of the interconnectedness of the outdoors, land and culture with individual and community wellbeing (see Sangha & Russell-Smith, 2017).

Figure 2 Learning Outside Together Theory of Change



EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

The Phase 2 evaluation framework focuses on **summative** components. The high priority outcomes to be evaluated relate to changes within participants as a result of the LOT program (focus of Years 1-2) and outcomes related to the mentors who contribute to the program (Year 2). There are also broader objectives of the program related to the field of ELCC, such as influencing curriculum or licensing of ELCC centres, which are currently out of scope for the evaluation.

The broad goals of the evaluation of the current funding period are to tell the story of the LOT program (including who participated in it and the lives touched by it); what changes occurred because of the program (for the individual, sector, and broader community); and to demonstrate the benefits and value of the LOT program. Hence, the intent is that evidence from the evaluation can be used post-project to demonstrate the effectiveness of the LOT program and ultimately to inform, support and sustain the implementation of LOT approaches in the future.

EVALUATION APPROACHES

Two-Eyed Seeing

Utilizing the principles of Two-Eyed Seeing, as described by Mi'kmaw Elder Albert Marshall, the evaluation aims to include learnings from Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing, alongside Western knowledge and ways of learning to the benefit of all. Where possible, it is important to incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing into the evaluation framework for LOT to ensure that the evaluation aligns with the principles and values of the project. This has relevance to the overall ability of the evaluation to identify whether the changes observed were meaningful and how this is known.

Trauma-Informed

Recognition and integration of trauma-informed approaches during data collection can enhance the safety of project participants and improve the quality and richness of the data collected. While some population groups have higher prevalences of trauma and violence, there are people with trauma in all populations. Incorporating trauma- and violence-informed practices and considerations into standard evaluation procedures supports safer and meaningful experiences for all.

As such, we have incorporated trauma-informed data collection principles into our approach. In particular, we recognize that the ELCC workforce is predominantly composed of women and gender-diverse people, many of whom are Black, Indigenous, or People of Colour who experience intersecting forms of oppression. Because ELCC work has historically been devalued, many members of the workforce are low income. Further, early childhood education is deeply personal and emotional, as is LOT subject matter related to the history and ongoing legacy of colonization in Canada.

We have incorporated trauma-informed data collection in various ways, including:

- Considering the implications of various data collection methods for people who have experienced trauma, and offering choices wherever possible, recognizing and respecting individual preferences.
- When data collection tools were developed, they were extensively reviewed and tested by the LOT Steering Committee and members of staff from BCACCS to ensure the measures and language were culturally appropriate.
- Recognizing informed consent as an ongoing, continual process. We proactively identify opportunities to put decision-making control in the hands of participants, especially throughout qualitative data collection.
- Although SRDC has limited interaction with respondents through online surveys, we implement measures such as using strengths-based language in survey questions and response options, offering a ‘prefer not to say’ response option, and automatically sharing responses back with respondents to affirm that they are the owners of their information.

KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The key evaluation questions for LOT Phase 2 are:

1. To what extent does the LOT program influence participant’s knowledge and skills related to land-based experiences?
2. To what extent does the LOT program influence participants’ engagement with Indigenous knowledge?
3. To what extent does the LOT program provide new mentorship opportunities to participants?
 - a. In what ways can LOT support participants, via the peer mentors, to work through any implementation barriers to increasing time spent outdoors (including but not limited to licensing, physical space, and workplace policies)?

Additional sub-evaluation questions may be developed based on program changes, such as related to new modules or populations of interest added to LOT. As Cohort 6 eligibility was expanded to StrongStart educators, and the Partner Pods applied LOT to new audiences, an additional question was developed to explore the experiences of these new LOT participants:

4. What is the applicability of the LOT program for participants in the ELCC sector beyond ECEs who work directly with children in child care settings?

With these key questions and the above evaluation approaches in mind, evaluation tools were developed to better understand what knowledge and skills participants from the current funding period report as

take-aways from the program. Evaluation methods for Cohort 6 were informed by feedback obtained in evaluations of previous cohorts, and include changes to the implementation style (i.e., a refined pre/post design) and updated evaluation tools. Additional methods for the partner pods included focus groups with participants and interviews with mentors.

METHODOLOGY

As described in previous reports¹, there are two significant updates in the evaluation method of LOT Phase 2: (1) the absence of a control group, and (2) the introduction of participant-defined measures of success. The current evaluation serves to monitor, rather than establish, outcomes. Methodologically, this means we report on changes *within* individual participants.

This shift has also allowed us to expand our focus to understanding participants' goals for enrolling in LOT and what they determine "success" to be regarding achieving these goals. These participant-led measures are valuable for understanding motivations for joining LOT and what participants hope to achieve. They also help to deconstruct Western colonial conceptions of evaluation metrics and program management, in which goals and objectives are pre-defined and imposed on participants.

Phase 2 Program and Evaluation Timeline

See **Table 1** for a program timeline and evaluation activities related to the current funding period and cohorts. As the partner pods took place outside of the funded activities, they are not depicted below; nonetheless, their evaluation activities contributed to essential learning for future cohorts.

Table 1 LOT Phase 2 Program Timeline and Evaluation Activities

Cohort 5		Cohort 6	Cohort 7
September to October 2024	Baseline Survey sent out to Cohort 5 participants		
October 2024 to January 2025	Cohort 5 participates in LOT programming		
February 2025	End-of-Program Survey sent out to Cohort 5 participants		
August 2025	Photovoice data collection with mentors	Baseline Survey sent out to Cohort 6 participants	

¹ <https://www.learningoutsidetogether.ca/impact-stories-reports>

Cohort 5		Cohort 6	Cohort 7
September 2025 to December 2025		Cohort 6 participates in LOT programming	
December 2025 to January 2026		End-of-Program Survey sent out to Cohort 6 participants	
September 2026			Baseline Survey sent out to Cohort 7 participants
September 2026 to December 2026			Cohort 7 participates in LOT programming
December 2026 to January 2027			End-of-Program Survey sent out to Cohort 7 participants

Cohort 6 Data Sources: Baseline Survey & End-of-Program Survey

The main quantitative data source for this report is a pre/post survey administered when participants started and finished LOT. Administrative data on the program implementation is provided by LOT administrators. The survey used to evaluate Cohorts 1-3 was modified to create a new survey tool for Phase 2 in Cohort 5; minor changes were applied to Cohort 6 based on results from Cohort 5.² The partner pods were given their own pre/post survey, the results of which were analyzed separately.³

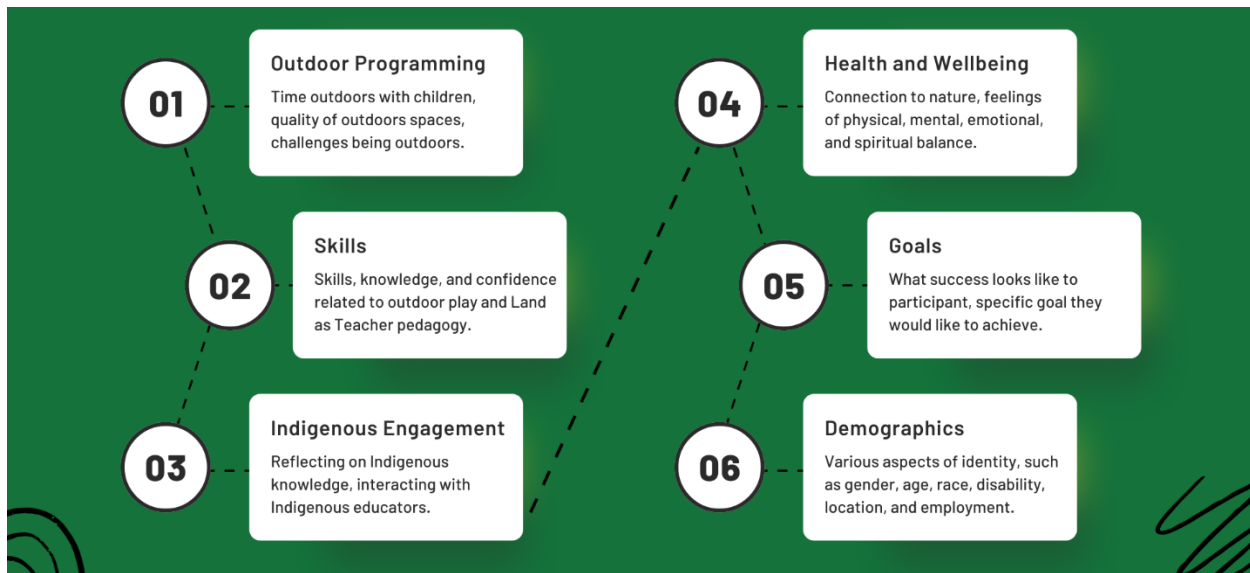
The pre/post survey covered experience with outdoor programming/Land as Teacher pedagogy, relevant skills and knowledge, Indigenous engagement, wellbeing, and reflections on program goals/measures of success. The survey also captured demographic characteristics to better understand how these factors relate to participants' experiences in the program. See [Figure 3](#) for an overview of the survey sections.

The end-of-program survey records the same information as the baseline survey, except for demographic information for those who already completed the baseline survey. Additionally, the end-of-program survey includes a section related to program satisfaction and feedback. Incentives for the surveys included a draw for one of three \$50 gift cards as well as a draw for a grand prize of a free conference registration (BCACCS conference at baseline and ECEBC conference at post).

² An indicator was also added to distinguish whether a participant is a StrongStart educator.

³ The partner pod survey included the same questions as the regular cohort, with an additional indicator for whether a participant works regularly with children. Since the partner pods received training outside of the regular cohort, their survey responses are not included in the main Cohort 6 survey analysis. However, their survey responses are analyzed to evaluate the *applicability* of the survey questions for LOT participants who may not work directly with children and we found that the existing LOT survey questions are largely still relevant.

Figure 3 LOT Cohort 6 Pre/Post Survey Structure



Mentor Photovoice

In June 2025, all former mentors for whom contact information was available (approximately 80) were invited to take part in the Photovoice evaluation. Ten former mentors were selected to participate in the three-phase process, nine of whom completed the evaluation activities. Photovoice participants were asked to reflect on their time in the LOT mentorship program and share their experiences using photography, written and oral narratives, and discussion. A full description of the process and results are available in the previous report *LOT Mentorship: Learning That Lasts*⁴.

Partner Pod Focus Groups and Interviews

Each partner pod participant group was invited to a focus group facilitated by SRDC at the end of their program. Focus groups were tailored to each pod but followed the same basic structure, including:

- Motivations for joining the LOT partner pod and expectations of the program
- Content and structure: topics and activities that were relevant and not relevant given their ELCC role; experiences navigating the program as a workplace
- Evaluation materials: identifying questions that did not apply and additional outcomes that were achieved but not captured
- Suggestions and recommendations for adjusting LOT to accommodate broader ELCC professionals

⁴ <https://www.learningoutsidetogether.ca/impact-stories-reports>

Additionally, each pod mentor was interviewed individually. Mentor interviews covered similar topics to the participant focus groups, with an additional section related to mentor supports for such custom cohorts. Focus groups and interviews were done virtually and in person, lasting between 60-90 minutes.

LIMITATIONS

The main limitation of the Phase 2 extension is the absence of a comparison group. Although we do not have the benefit of a comparison group for this Phase of LOT, our previous studies established strong evidence of the program’s effectiveness. Moving forward, we rely on pre/post program data and note here the associated limitations. The main concern is that pre/post assessments can be subject to **response shift bias**, in which respondents’ understanding of items being measured changes, leading them to recalibrate their self-ratings. This can result in inflated ratings at baseline (i.e., they think they know more than they do) and/or artificially deflated ratings at post-program (i.e., they become more aware of what they don’t know related to a topic), making it difficult to detect “true” changes from pre to post. Pre/post designs such as this are also often subject to **demand characteristics**, when respondents are likely to be aware of the intentions of the evaluation (in this case, to improve skills, confidence, and knowledge related to outdoor play and Land as Teacher). Respondents may inadvertently respond in the ways in which they feel they are expected to have changed after participating in LOT.

The effects of these response biases are more pronounced in the absence of a control group, so any current significant results that were not observed in Cohorts 2 and 3 should be interpreted with caution.

FINDINGS

MENTORSHIP FINDINGS

The mentor Photovoice photos and stories are available in a standalone report, *LOT Mentorship: Learning that Lasts*. That report presents the participating mentors’ perspectives and voices as shared; key findings were summarized in the interim report, with five main themes identified. These are repeated below and in [Figure 4](#).

Participating mentors identified the **unique elements of the LOT mentorship program**, including the emphasis on informal peer mentorship and shared experiences with ECEs outside of their workplace, as well as the opportunity to put the knowledge and skills learned as a LOT participant into practice by re-engaging with the program content. Photovoice participants shared how LOT mentorship had **influenced their mentorship journey**, typically by expanding or reinforcing their conceptualization of mentorship as a reciprocal relationship grounded in advocacy and intentionality.

Figure 4 Mentor Photovoice Summary of Findings



They also described LOT mentorship as being **grounded in Two-Eyed Seeing** through honouring storytelling, traditional wisdom, and lived experience; embracing the world from multiple perspectives; and encouraging mentors to slow down and be present in the current moment. As one mentor described,

“[Two-Eyed Seeing] teaches me so many things to remember: to be open to experiences and being a mentor; it also invites me to slow down. These are moments that have connection and joy. I love the fact that Two-Eyed Seeing leaves room for connection not only with others, but with my land, my ancestors, and my own intuition.”

-- LOT Mentor

Participating mentors described the LOT program as helping to **overcome barriers to outdoor play** by providing a venue for explicit identification and discussion of such barriers, as well as an opportunity to learn about resources. Finally, they described the benefits of LOT mentorship extending beyond the program and into their workplaces, community, and sector. They deeply valued the opportunities provided in LOT as participants and mentors, and **expressed gratitude** for the program cultivating joy and care for an essential and often-overlooked workforce. Participating mentors identified LOT and LOT mentorship as helping to mitigate the ongoing retention crisis in ELCC.

PARTICIPATION

347 total applications were received in Cohort 6 of LOT, and 296 were invited to join the cohort. 253 of these applicants accepted the invitation and formed the basis of our evaluation sample.

Of the 253 participants invited to complete the pre/post surveys, we received 207 valid responses to the baseline survey and 146 valid responses to the end-of-program survey. Although everyone who was invited to join LOT was eligible to complete both surveys, the majority of respondents had completed most or all of the LOT program.

Since there was no comparison group, the analytical approach for this cohort was to look at individual changes from pre to post among those who completed LOT; there were n=118 individuals who reported that they completed most or all of LOT and responded to both surveys. This is the effective sample for the Cohort 6 pre/post evaluation. **Table 2** shows these respondents are very similar to the full cohort sample, which includes information from all sources (application, baseline, and end-of-program).

Table 2 Description of the Cohort 6 Sample

	Evaluation (up to n=118)	Evaluation %	Cohort (up to n=296)	Cohort %
Gender				
Woman	115	97%	207	92%
Man	<5		<5	
Non-binary	<5		<5	
Two-Spirit	<5		<5	
Prefer to self-describe	<5		<5	
Age range				
Up to 29 years	14	12%	33	16%
30 - 44 years	59	52%	106	52%
45 - 64 years	41	36%	65	32%
65+ years	<5		<5	
Experience working with children				
Less than 1 year	<5		7	3%
1 - 4 years	24	21%	52	25%
5 - 9 years	26	23%	45	21%
10+ years	62	55%	108	51%
Outdoor experience				
Beginner (almost no time outdoors)	<5		<5	
Not very experienced (little time outdoors)	15	13%	27	13%
Somewhat experienced (lots of time outdoors)	93	82%	168	81%
Very experienced (outdoor expert)	6	5%	12	6%
Indigenous identity	10	9%	29	10%
Self-employed	19	17%	37	18%
Racialized identity	22	21%	41	21%
Person with disability	12	11%	19	7%
Francophone	6	5%	9	4%
StrongStart educator	9	8%	15	7%

Note: Cells with fewer than five respondents are suppressed to protect participant identity. Proportions are calculated based on the effective sample (number for whom information is available) and therefore may not match the n noted in the table header. Indigenous distinction (First Nations, Inuit, and/or Métis) was collected but not reported based on the cell counts.

WORKPLACE	Evaluation (up to n=118)	Evaluation %	Cohort (up to n=296)	Cohort %
Health Authority Region				
Fraser Health	36	31%	99	34%
Interior Health	19	16%	57	19%
Northern Health	17	14%	29	10%
Vancouver Coastal Health	26	22%	52	18%
Vancouver Island Health	20	17%	58	20%
Workplace setting				
Urban (e.g., in a city)	72	63%	137	67%
Rural (e.g., adjacent to or outside a city)	31	27%	54	26%
Remote (e.g., considerably distant from a city)	12	10%	15	7%

Note: Proportions are calculated based on the effective sample (number for whom information is available) and therefore may not match the n noted in the table header.

As shown in the tables, the sample and cohort mostly identified as women aged 30 – 64 years, similar to previous cohorts. Approximately 10 per cent of the cohort identified as Indigenous and about one fifth identified as racialized. LOT participants brought a wealth of experience to the program, with the majority having 10 or more years of experience working with children and more than 80 per cent having spent “lots” of time outdoors. Participants from across the province took part in LOT Cohort 6 and about two-thirds were from urban settings.

PROGRAM EXPERIENCES

Satisfaction and Barriers

All respondents to the end-of-program survey were asked about barriers to participation in the program. Among those who reported **completing most or all of LOT** (n=136), more than half (58 per cent) reported no barriers to participation. However, 15-22 per cent reported either schedule conflicts/workload barriers or a change in their personal or work life during the program. Among those who reported **not completing** most or all of LOT (n=9), n=7 reported schedule conflicts/workload barriers, n=3 noted a change in their personal/work life, and n=3 reported LOT was not what they expected and/or that they did not enjoy their group meetings.

Among those who reported completing most or all of LOT, the vast majority had positive feedback on the program. More than 90 per cent were somewhat or very satisfied with LOT, and more than 90 percent stated they were likely to or already had recommended LOT to a colleague.

Changes to LOT Suggested by Participants

Respondents were asked in the end-of-program survey what changes they would make to LOT, if any. This was an open-ended question so respondents could share feedback in their own words. Many participants provided general positive statements suggesting they would not make any changes to the program. Among those with specific feedback, thematic analysis revealed three main themes:

1. **LOT Course Structure:** Respondents appreciated having “break” weeks to allow those who had fallen behind an opportunity to catch up and requested additional such weeks or decreasing the frequency of meetings (e.g., every 2-3 weeks). Other suggestions included being able to change/merge groups (to accommodate schedules, geographical areas and/or group sizes) and creating separate pathways depending on participants’ existing level of outdoor experience.
2. **LOT Course Content:** Respondents suggested additional module content, such as deeper or more local Indigenous knowledge sessions, and requested more practical tips for how to implement teachings in their workplaces. Other feedback included condensing or summarising content to avoid repetition and having more hands-on components.
3. **Barriers to Participation and Engagement:** Some respondents identified key barriers they would like to see addressed in future cohorts. These included lack of communication about course expectations, such as how to engage online (especially mobile) and with mailed materials, as well as requirements of program completion. Some respondents felt that their mentor groups went off topic or were not as organized as they could have been, and some respondents suggested having more experienced or supported mentors (or co-mentors). Lastly, several respondents felt that the final celebration meeting was too long and was not “for” them.

LOT Completion and Success

As noted in earlier reports, there are multiple valid ways to define success in LOT. In Cohort 6, we continued to intentionally explore participants’ goals, perceptions of participation, and visions of success in LOT, which we believe compliments typical assessments of success such as program completion.

Completion Rates

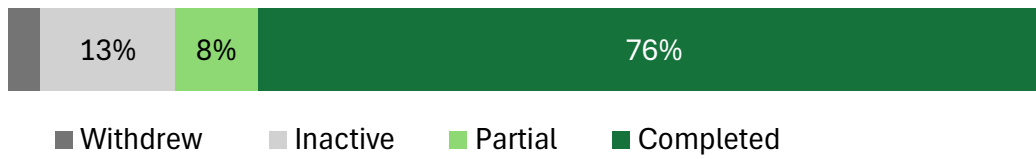
The LOT Professional Development (PD) Hours policy specifies that everyone who completes at least 10 hours of PD will receive a certificate for the hours completed, and that those who complete at least 80 per cent of the required 32 hours are eligible for a certificate of completion⁵. Of the 296 individuals who were invited to join Cohort 6, n=225 started the cohort, establishing the effective sample from which to calculate completion rates. Communicating with applicants can be a challenge, so we use the number of

⁵ Additional requirements include a minimum number of hours participating in each of the three components of the LOT program.

people who ultimately agree to participate in Cohort 6 as the denominator for the effective sample, similar to previous cohorts. Of the n=225 effective Cohort 6 participants, LOT administrators determined that 76 per cent completed all of LOT and 8 per cent completed some, as shown in [Figure 5](#).

Figure 5 Completion Rates of Cohort 6, Based on Hours of Professional Development

Among those who started the cohort (n=225), most completed all or most of the LOT program



Source: LOT Administration

Among the n=146 respondents who completed the end-of-program survey, 93 per cent stated they completed all or most of the LOT program. This rate cannot be generalized to the entire cohort since we know that those who are more engaged in LOT are more likely to complete the survey. However, this indicates that there appears to be relative agreement in completion of program activities between survey respondents and LOT administrators.

Success and Achievement

Another way to explore success in LOT is to ask participants whether they achieved what they wanted to achieve. We did this by asking respondents who reported completing most or all of LOT to rate to what extent they **achieved what they wanted to achieve in LOT**. Among the n=123 respondents who completed this question in the end-of-program survey, half (n=54) said they *mostly achieved* what they wanted, and an additional 43 per cent said they *completely achieved* what they wanted to. Only 3 per cent (n=4) reported *not really achieving* what they wanted to achieve in LOT (none said *not at all*).

This is not directly comparable to the completion rate determined by LOT administrators since it was only asked of those who reported completing the program, but it expands our understanding of what it means to be successful in LOT.

What Participants Wanted to Achieve in LOT

In the baseline survey, respondents were asked to reflect on their motivations for joining LOT, what they hoped to gain, and whether they had a SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-Bound) goal. These open-ended responses were not used as assessments but simply to encourage

participants to think about how they would like their work or life to be different after the program. Analyses of Cohort 6 responses revealed a few themes:

- The five core motivations that emerged in Cohort 5 appeared again: engagement with the outdoors; Indigenous engagement; skills, confidence, and knowledge; implementation; and collaboration.
- An emergent theme for StrongStart educators was “**personal growth**”. One respondent described:

“[My motivation is] to become more confident and capable in my role, but also to better understand myself—my strengths, my values, and the areas I want to develop. Success isn’t just about mastering specific skills; it’s about feeling inspired, supported, and empowered to take on challenges and make meaningful contributions in my work. If I leave LOT with a clearer sense of purpose, stronger relationships, and the courage to step outside my comfort zone, I’ll consider that a true success.”

-- LOT Cohort 6 baseline survey respondent

- While “collaboration” is a theme common amongst LOT participants, it should be noted that amongst StrongStart respondents, the theme is expanded beyond collaboration with children and colleagues to include collaborating with families participating in their programs. For example, participants expressed wanting to share knowledge gained from LOT with parents to promote outdoor learning.

Participant-Defined Program Impact

In the end-of-program survey, those who reported having completed most or all of LOT were asked to describe, in their opinion and own words, the biggest impact of the LOT program on their life. Thematic analysis of open-ended responses revealed overwhelmingly positive impacts of LOT. Many of these aligned with intended outcomes of LOT, such as engagement with the outdoors and increased skills, confidence, and knowledge. Such impacts are noted below in the Pre/Post Outcomes section.

Additional impacts not explicitly reflected in the survey data included collaboration and connection with others, and personal growth. In addition to connecting more with the land, survey respondents reported that LOT encouraged them to **connect with others**. While some participants referenced building a better connection to the children in their care, most reflection around connection was in reference to collaborating with other ECEs in the program. Participants reported that they enjoyed discussing LOT topics in groups, and valued being able to share ideas with other “*likeminded individuals*” who had the same passions. Many participants stated that they enjoyed being able to share ECE strategies with one another and trade tips and “*clever ideas*” on how to promote outdoor play, especially in inclement weather. Some survey respondents described feeling encouraged by their group and appreciated the harmony, respect, and professionalism within groups. One respondent shared:

“I appreciated the community of practice at our weekly meetings and am grateful for the way that [my mentor] created a welcoming and respectful space as well as her generous sharing of cultural and familial practices.”

-- LOT Cohort 6 post-program survey respondent

The final theme that appeared as an impact of the LOT program was facilitating **personal growth**. Many respondents reported taking more time to intentionally reflect and ground themselves in their daily lives. One participant stated that they had learned to slow down “*not just for learning, but for my own well-being*,” while other respondents suggested that they felt more present in their lives and better able to identify their strengths and areas they could grow. One participant reflected on the biggest impact as:

“Hearing others’ strategies for going on outings with the children encouraged me to tackle some of my own barriers to being out in community with the children. I realized I had some all or nothing thinking surrounding the length and distance [of outings, but] we could just go a block for 15 minutes and that still held value, for example.”

-- LOT Cohort 6 post-program survey respondent

PRE/POST OUTCOMES

Similar to previous cohorts, the main outcomes measured in the surveys were outdoor experiences; skills, confidence, and knowledge; Indigenous engagement; and participant wellbeing. This section of the report presents findings under each anticipated outcome for respondents who reported completing most or all of LOT and completed that section of both surveys (baseline and end-of-program). Significant differences from pre- to post- are assessed using least squared regression analysis.

Outdoor Experiences

At both baseline and end-of-program, participants were asked to report the number of days they went outdoors with children in the last five days that they worked, whether they made improvements to the outdoor space used by the ELCC program in the last month, and to select any challenges faced by their workplace when it comes to bringing children outdoors. Full results are shown in [Appendix A](#).

The **number of days with outdoor activity** went down slightly from pre to post, likely because of the weather changes from September to December, and because it was already very high at baseline (average of 4.8 out of 5 days), leaving little room for improvement. Participants reported no change in making

improvements to the outdoor space used by the ELCC program in the last month at the end of LOT compared to before LOT, unlike previous cohorts in which participants reported being more likely to make improvements at post compared to baseline. However, the baseline responses in this cohort were again very high to begin with.

There were no significant differences in whether **challenges were faced at the workplace** at post compared to pre, but respondents reported slightly fewer challenges at post compared to baseline ($p < 0.10$). In general, *children not having the appropriate gear* and *physical space does not support outdoor play* were the challenges most often reported.

As noted in the interim report, the open-ended responses to challenges faced in the workplace revealed some emerging themes that may reflect expanded eligibility criteria and recent changes in the ELCC landscape. Specifically, several respondents pointed to the unique challenges of having parents/caregivers involved in the ELCC program, noting that family programs such as StrongStart also need to address the comfort of adults other than staff towards outdoor play. Additionally, respondents mentioned some challenges around sharing ELCC space with school districts, such as not having control over the outdoor environment and/or a time-consuming process for making improvements due to a large work-order system.

Despite the challenges and lack of significant effects on outdoor experiences, some participants identified how they interact with the outdoors as the biggest impact of LOT on their life, as noted above. This included having an expanded appreciation for the outdoors and a deeper understanding of the value of outdoor play. Participants often referenced learning to “*slow down*” to “*take it all in*” when it came to the beauty of outdoor spaces. As one participant shared:

“I treasure outdoor play more in my workplace, but being in LOT, I got to embrace the outdoors too, more personally.”

-- LOT Cohort 6 post-program survey respondent

Considerations

The slightly positive state of outdoor programming at baseline could reflect the fact that LOT is an optional program that educators who are already motivated to take children outdoors chose to participate in. Additionally, it may reflect a “rising tide” of outdoor pedagogy, which has been an area of focus in BC ELCC in recent years (including the LOT program as well as other initiatives). While we cannot attribute this to LOT in any way, ripple effects throughout the field are consistent with the LOT Theory of Change, in which the course material is shared amongst the sector over time, resulting in increased investments in outdoor play and Land as Teacher pedagogy.

As we move into the final funded cohort of LOT, we might consider trying to capture the broader impact and legacy of LOT, as described in the original Theory of Change.

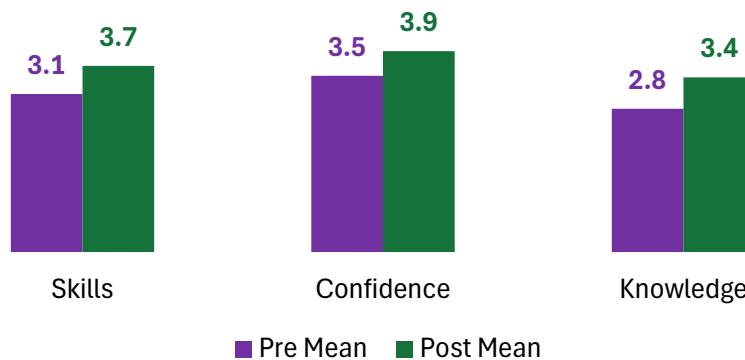
Skills, Confidence, and Knowledge

As observed in previous cohorts, the most robust effects of the program were noted in the self-assessment of participants' skills, confidence, and knowledge related to outdoor play and Land as Teacher. See [Appendix B](#) for full results and [Figure 6](#) for summary results.

Across 13 self-reported measures of **skills** related to facilitating outdoor play and Land as Teacher pedagogy, all were significantly increased immediately after the program ended ($p < 0.01$). These ratings included skills such as “*incorporating elements of outdoor play into programs*” and “*providing early care and learning in a variety of outdoor settings*”.

Figure 6 Mean Self-Reported Skills, Confidence, and Knowledge Before and After LOT

Survey respondents reported significantly higher skills, confidence, and knowledge related to outdoor play and Land as Teacher following LOT



Source: LOT pre- and post-program surveys. Scale for skills and knowledge: 1=Needs Improvement and 5=Outstanding; for confidence: 1=Very Low Confidence and 5=Very High Confidence.

Across 10 self-reported measures of **confidence** related to facilitating outdoor play and Land as Teacher pedagogy, all were significantly increased immediately after the program ended ($p < 0.01$). Respondents experienced increased confidence in areas such as “*applying Indigenous teachings in outdoor curriculum*” and “*acting as an outdoor play champion in your workplace*”.

Finally, all five self-reported ratings of **knowledge** were significantly increased immediately after the program ended ($p < 0.01$). These ratings included statements such as “*recognizing the land as a teacher*” and “*identifying local plants and animals*”.

Survey respondents who identified improved skills, confidence, and knowledge as the biggest impact of LOT described techniques for learning and teaching outdoors. For example, one participant stated that they had developed better leadership skills, while another mentioned feeling encouraged to be more “*creative*” with outdoor play. Participants also reported feeling more confident and knowledgeable about

their ability to lead children’s activities outdoors, with one participant feeling validated when they realized “*I was doing things well*”. Others appreciating learning about the medicinal uses of various plants. Overall, participants reported feeling better prepared to lead outdoor activities and felt they had learned ways to work with the outdoor spaces available to them. As one participant shared:

“[LOT] was an opportunity to reflect on the outdoor play environment, consider where to set boundaries during outdoor play based on the individual developmental levels of the children in our class, and think about autonomy in outdoor play.”

-- LOT Cohort 6 post-program survey respondent

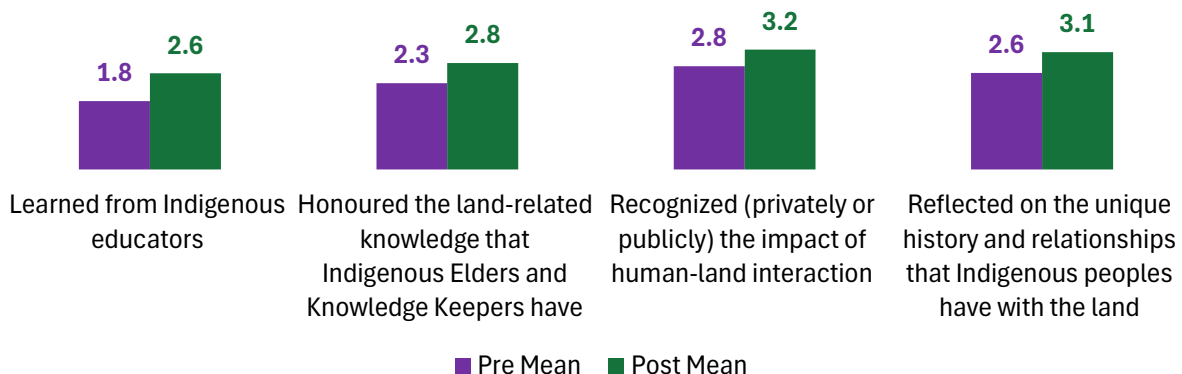
Indigenous Engagement

Next, respondents reflected on the frequency with which they recognized or interacted with Indigenous worldviews. While overall ratings of the four items in this section were relatively low, all were associated with significant improvements at the end of the program ($p < 0.01$; see [Appendix C](#) and [Figure 7](#)).

Specifically, participants’ average ratings of how regularly they ‘*learned from Indigenous educators*’ and ‘*honoured the land-related knowledge that Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers have*’ in the past few weeks increased from ‘rarely’ to ‘sometimes’. Additionally, the frequency with which they ‘*recognized the impact of human-land interaction*’ and ‘*reflected on the unique history and relationships that Indigenous peoples have with the land*’ significantly increased (average at both pre and post was ‘sometimes’, due to the nature of the variable scale).

Figure 7 Mean Self-Reported Indigenous Engagement Before and After LOT

Survey respondents reported significantly more frequent Indigenous engagement following LOT



Source: LOT pre- and post-program surveys. Scale: 1=Not at All and 5=Often.

Although engagement with Indigenous knowledge was not a commonly-identified major takeaway from LOT, many survey respondents reflected on the wisdom of Land as Teacher, describing learning from the land on a deeper level. Some also expressed curiosity and wanting to learn more about the local history of where they live and work, including understanding the importance of doing so in a good way. When reflecting on the biggest impact of LOT, one respondent shared:

“Before, I had never thought about appreciating this motherland and the ancestors of this land. Thanks to LOT, I truly appreciate and acknowledge this.”

-- LOT Cohort 6 post-program survey respondent

Wellbeing

Lastly, although the LOT evaluation questions no longer specifically reflect job satisfaction, we recognize that ECE is deeply personal work and that educator wellbeing impacts the children they interact with. Survey results showed significant differences in participants’ subjective ratings of feeling a **strong connection/bond to nature** in recent weeks ($p < 0.05$). Participants were also asked to rate **feelings of balance** physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually over the last few weeks. Respondents were more likely to report increased balance at the end of the program for all ($p < 0.05$ or lower; [Appendix D](#)).

Wellbeing was not a common theme among participants’ descriptions of the biggest impact of LOT on their lives, but many identified personal growth, as described earlier. Responses highlighted the benefits of grounding and connection. One respondent shared overlapping, multifaceted impacts of LOT as:

“The LOT program helped me become more confident and reflective in my practice, strengthened my connection to the community, and encouraged me to approach learning with greater intention and balance.”

-- LOT Cohort 6 post-program survey respondent

We feel key takeaways such as this show the impact of LOT on participants’ overall work and life, reflecting the value of the program beyond individual and isolated metrics.

PARTNER POD FINDINGS

Motivations and Expectations

Among partner pod participants, motivations for taking LOT were similar to those seen in typical cohorts. Although they were not necessarily the target populations for LOT participants, all could see the value of LOT to their work. They described the program as surprisingly personal. The fact that it

resonated with and informed “*the way I live and relate to the land*” helped make LOT content **seem accessible and relevant to everyone in the ELCC ecosystem.**

Relevance of LOT Content and Structure

Overall, LOT was considered relevant and accessible to a range of ELCC professionals. Generally, partner pod participants reflected similar key takeaways as other LOT participants: improved outdoor experiences; increased skills, confidence, and knowledge; expanded Indigenous engagement; personal growth; and connection with others and the land. Two specific suggestions for modification included more practical tips to make the content visible (especially for those who don’t currently work on the floor with children) and adjusting the ongoing mapping activity (involving the outdoor space at their ELCC program). This was described as important but challenging for those not on the floor. Suggestions included having a mapping buddy, field trip, or finding an outdoor space they can visit regularly.

The LOT structure was generally described as appropriate. One suggestion was to add additional optional modules that are specific to newly eligible groups. Partner pod participants felt that offering LOT to a broader audience was **positive and feasible**. They felt the program would be valuable for StrongStart educators (already eligible for LOT), RAs and ECEAs, Educational Assistants, as well as ELCC professionals who do not work on the floor with children, such as licensing officers and CCRR managers.

Finally, partner pods participants reflected on the pros and cons of LOT within a workplace. The pods presented examples of LOT working well within a workplace, highlighting two key elements: **participant choice** and existing **positive group dynamics**. In a program as personal as LOT, evaluation participants described the importance of choosing to be there. One suggestion is to have workplaces do LOT together in a cohort but in a different mentor group. This way, they can talk freely in their group and still be supported to implement LOT in their workplace.

Mentorship

Overall, the partner pod mentors felt well equipped and were highly motivated to support staff in pods. They suggested that mentors for newly eligible participants may simply need more preparation time for reflection and adjustments, as well as guidance on specific activities, such as mapping.

The main questions emerging regarding mentorship were: *Will newly eligible participants have the chance to become mentors? **Who will lead new mentor groups?***

It was acknowledged that it would be helpful to have, for example, a licensing officer lead the licensing officer group (if one was implemented in the next cohort), but this might not be possible given previous eligibility. The LOT partnership encountered a similar challenge in the first cohort, when no one had taken the program yet; in this case, mentors were selected from knowledgeable and engaged members of the LOT community, such as partners and steering committee members.

Evaluation

Overall, the evaluation materials work well for participants beyond ECEs working on the floor with children. Slight adjustments were suggested to ensure participants can adequately describe their context and what success in LOT looks like to them. Partner pod participants suggested more focus on self-care and professionally relevant personal outcomes, in line with the nature of the takeaways noted above.

CONCLUSION

As we've seen in previous cohorts, findings continued to demonstrate positive influences of LOT on participant's knowledge and skills related to land-based experiences, as well as engagement with Indigenous knowledge. The mentorship findings also described the value of new mentorship opportunities through LOT, suggesting that mentorship was as impactful as the initial participant program for some mentors.

A specific focus of this cohort was determining the applicability of the LOT program for ELCC professionals in the broader ecosystem (i.e., beyond ECEs working on the floor with children). Analysis of the partner pod pilot suggests that LOT is accessible and adaptable enough to serve a range of ELCC professionals with only minor tweaks to its content and structure. A full test of the program and evaluation materials could be implemented in a future cohort.

NEXT STEPS

LOT Program Administration

The partners continue to discuss LOT eligibility, noting the steady demand for LOT among ECEs in general, though with declining representation of Indigenous educators over the years. Partners are also discussing potential future iterations of LOT, beyond Cohort 7.

LOT Program Evaluation

If newly eligible participants are included in Cohort 7, they will be small in number; thus, no new scales will be added or developed at that stage. Instead, the evaluation materials will include necessary adjustments to ensure participants can adequately describe their ELCC context. SRDC will adapt evaluation materials to better understand newly eligible participants, with an eye to providing support for future funding and/or program expansion.

Finally, as Cohort 7 will be the last implementation of LOT in the current funding round, SRDC will attempt to reflect on the overall legacy of the LOT program, leaning on the Theory of Change and any observable long-term changes related to the learning community and long-term social change.

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APPENDIX A: OUTDOOR EXPERIENCES PRE/POST RESULTS

	Pre Mean	Post Mean	Difference	Standard Errors
Days children went outdoors in last 5 days	4.82	4.58	-0.23 **	(0.11)
Improvement to outdoor space in last month	0.88	0.86	-0.02	(0.05)
Any challenges faced by workplace	0.73	0.70	-0.03	(0.05)
Number of challenges faced by workplace	1.94	1.65	0.29 *	(0.15)

Notes: There are up to 118 observations at each time point. Statistical significance is denoted by asterisks: * 10%, ** 5%, *** 1%.

For "Improvement to outdoor space", 1=Yes and 2=No. For "Any challenges faced", 0=No and 1=Yes.

APPENDIX B: SKILLS, CONFIDENCE, AND KNOWLEDGE PRE/POST RESULTS

	Pre Mean	Post Mean	Difference	Standard Errors
Skills: Knowledge of suitable outdoor spaces to bring children	3.25	3.77	0.52 ***	(0.09)
Skills: Awareness of local resources, organizations, or communities that can help improve outdoor spaces	2.32	2.88	0.57 ***	(0.11)
Skills: Knowledge of the benefits of being outdoors	3.82	4.24	0.42 ***	(0.09)
Skills: Articulating why it is important for children to be outdoors	3.58	4.08	0.50 ***	(0.09)
Skills: Incorporating elements of outdoor play into programs	3.18	3.80	0.63 ***	(0.1)
Skills: Providing early care and learning in a variety of outdoor settings	3.08	3.76	0.68 ***	(0.1)
Skills: Teaching culturally specific curriculum to children	2.33	2.92	0.59 ***	(0.11)
Skills: Incorporating new pedagogy into programs	2.49	3.17	0.68 ***	(0.1)
Skills: Providing a high-quality early care and learning environment for all children	3.40	3.89	0.49 ***	(0.1)
Skills: Demonstrating leadership within my workplace	3.38	3.88	0.49 ***	(0.09)
Skills: Understanding how to foster positive and productive relationships with licensing officers	3.04	3.65	0.61 ***	(0.11)
Skills: Advocating for myself as a valuable community member	3.16	3.68	0.51 ***	(0.1)
Skills: Communicating how and why my work is essential	3.24	3.81	0.57 ***	(0.09)
Confidence: Find ways to give the children more opportunities to be outdoors	3.80	4.21	0.41 ***	(0.08)
Confidence: Negotiate with licensing officers to receive approval for the outdoor environments that you want to create	3.10	3.56	0.46 ***	(0.09)
Confidence: Resist the urge to intervene when children do outdoor play	3.68	4.08	0.41 ***	(0.07)
Confidence: Manage parental/family concerns about their children being outdoors	3.67	3.98	0.31 ***	(0.08)
Confidence: Act as an outdoor play champion in your workplace	3.62	4.13	0.51 ***	(0.08)
Confidence: Model curiosity and positive feelings about the outdoors for the children in your program	3.92	4.26	0.35 ***	(0.07)
Confidence: Create outdoor learning environments where every child can participate	3.70	4.11	0.41 ***	(0.08)
Confidence: Provide the children in your program the opportunity to participate in a variety of play and learning experiences	3.71	4.20	0.49 ***	(0.07)

	Pre Mean	Post Mean	Difference		Standard Errors
Confidence: Provide meaningful outdoor experiences to children that incorporate Indigenous worldviews	2.80	3.55	0.75	***	(0.09)
Confidence: Apply Indigenous teachings in outdoor curriculum to children	2.61	3.33	0.72	***	(0.09)
Knowledge: Acknowledging whose ancestral land the program is located on	2.54	3.18	0.64	***	(0.12)
Knowledge: Recognizing the land as a teacher	2.99	3.80	0.81	***	(0.11)
Knowledge: Identifying local plants and animals	2.42	3.02	0.59	***	(0.1)
Knowledge: Overall knowledge of the local environment	2.62	3.25	0.63	***	(0.09)
Knowledge: Understanding the policies and procedures at my workplace that relate to outdoor play	3.47	3.88	0.41	***	(0.09)

Notes: There are up to 118 observations at each time point. Statistical significance is denoted by asterisks: * 10%, ** 5%, *** 1%.

For all skills and knowledge items, 1=Needs Improvement and 5=Outstanding; for confidence, 1=Very Low Confidence and 5=Very High Confidence.

APPENDIX C: INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT PRE/POST RESULTS

	Pre Mean	Post Mean	Difference	Standard Errors
Learned from Indigenous educators	1.82	2.56	0.74 ***	(0.11)
Honoured (privately or publicly) the land-related knowledge that Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers have	2.30	2.84	0.54 ***	(0.1)
Recognized (privately or publicly) the impact of human-land interaction	2.75	3.20	0.44 ***	(0.1)
Reflected on the unique history and relationships that Indigenous peoples have with the land	2.58	3.13	0.56 ***	(0.1)

Notes: There are up to 118 observations at each time point. Statistical significance is denoted by asterisks: * 10%, ** 5%, *** 1%.

For all items, 1=Not at All and 5=Often.

APPENDIX D: WELLBEING PRE/POST RESULTS

	Pre Mean	Post Mean	Difference	Standard Errors
Strong connection / bond to the land and nature	3.99	4.22	0.23 **	0.11
In balance: Physically	3.52	3.76	0.24 ***	0.09
In balance: Emotionally	3.57	3.76	0.20 **	0.08
In balance: Mentally	3.54	3.83	0.29 ***	0.09
In balance: Spiritually	3.47	3.78	0.31 ***	0.09

Notes: There are up to 118 observations at each time point. Statistical significance is denoted by asterisks: * 10%, ** 5%, *** 1%.

For “Strong connection”, 1=Strongly Disagree and 5=Strongly Agree; for “balance” items, 1=None of the Time and 5 = All of the Time.

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