


Trauma-Informed Leadership for the Animal Services Sector

Presented by Sareeta Lopez, Program Manager at the Vancouver Humane Society


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Land Honouring

- I am grateful to currently be living on the unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) & səllwítulh (Tseil-Waututh) Nations
- We encourage you to learn more about the land you are living on by using the interactive map at <https://native-land.ca/>

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Research Background

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Course Structure & Objectives

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How are these concepts connected?

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One Welfare

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Credit: onewelfare.org

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Early Intervention & Prevention

- **Early intervention and prevention:** support is offered people and communities before an emergency or an issue presents itself.
- **Outreach-based practices** are the ways we can engage in early intervention and prevention practices.

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Cultural Safety

- A **culturally safe environment** is "respectful, safe and allows meaningful communication and service...without challenge, ignorance or denial of an individual's identity (Turpel-Lafond, 2020)
- Cultural safety moves beyond cultural sensitivity towards analyzing power imbalances, institutional discrimination, colonization and colonial relationships (National Aboriginal Health Organization, 2008, as cited in Baba, 2013)
- In a service context, cultural safety also involves reflecting on our own culture and how this impacts the service we are providing (Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada, n.d., as cited in Baba, 2013).

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What does trauma-informed mean?

A **trauma-informed** service provider, system or organization does the following:

- They realize the widespread impact of trauma and understand potential ways for healing
- They recognize the signs and symptoms of trauma in staff, people accessing animal services, others involved in the system
- They respond by incorporating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices

Klinic Community Health, 2013

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What is trauma?

- Trauma can be defined as an experience that overwhelms an individual's capacity to cope
- Traumatic experiences can affect one's sense of safety, self-efficacy, and ability to regulate emotions and navigate relationships. It is also common for those who have experience trauma to feel fear, shame, helplessness, and powerlessness

Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction, 2014

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Reflection

What types of traumas might you and your staff be exposed to at work?

What about the people utilizing your services?

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Trauma at Different Levels

INDIVIDUAL LEVEL	TEAMS LEVEL	ORGANIZATION LEVEL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feel unsafe Aggressive Helpless Hopeless Hypervigilant Disoriented Confused Depressed Feel inferior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feel unsafe Punitive Helpless Hopeless Hypervigilant Fragmented Overwhelmed Confused Demoralized 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are unsafe Punitive Stuck Missionless Crisis-driven Fragmented Overwhelmed Valueless Directionless

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Trauma-Informed Approaches

- Understand triggers
- Use accessible, non-triggering language
- Promote transparency in processes
- Center a person's voice and choice, and ensure respect and sensitivity
- Meet a person where they are at in their lives
- Unlearn assumptions and actively challenge biases
- Utilize a strengths-based approach
- Utilize a non-judgmental approach
- Ensure cultural sensitivity, awareness, and safety, through a historical understanding of the communities we work with

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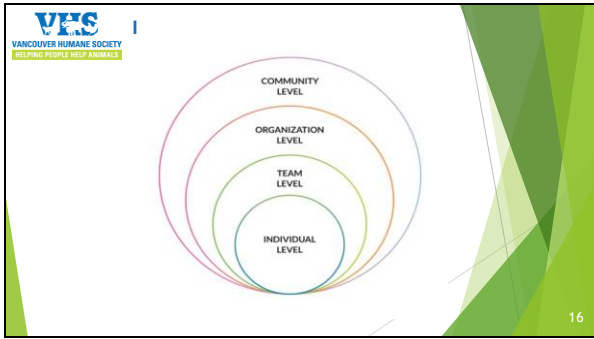
Why is a trauma-informed, culturally safe approach important and relevant to the animal protection sector?

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Part 1: Our Own Leadership

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Trauma-Informed Leadership Competencies

Source: traumatransformed.org

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Trauma-Informed Leadership Competencies

1. Trauma-informed communication

- Connecting before correcting
- Offering stabilization
- Explaining the why/what/how, the likely impacts, & what's next
- Being proactive and intentional

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Trauma-Informed Leadership Competencies

2. Inclusive leadership

- Makes space for diversity & difference
- Promotes voice & allows for multiple perspectives
- Engages in power analysis, power sharing, & power building
- Does 'with', not 'to'
- Understands power dynamics and acknowledges that institutions and systems often must change to resolve oppression and inequity




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Trauma-Informed Leadership Competencies

3. Mindfulness and reflection

- Has a stance of curiosity & awareness
- Engages in contemplation & deliberation
- Sees & feels without reacting
- Practices self-awareness
- Focuses on the long term




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Trauma-Informed Leadership Competencies

4. Complexity

- Awareness of systems thinking & change management, & use of this in practice
- Acceptance of uncertainty & ambiguity




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Trauma-Informed Leadership Competencies

5. Radical & critical inquiry

- Involves humility
- Willingness to challenge assumptions
- Ability to be reflective about oneself & the system one leads
- Practices critical self-awareness: thinks about & questions themselves & the policies & practices of their organization



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Trauma-Informed Leadership Competencies

6. Relational leadership

- Uses relationship & influence rather than power & authority to create change & system transformation
- Use of appreciation & building cultures of staff connection & shared success
- Expressing & holding emotion and vulnerability
- Interacting with transparency & trust



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Reflection

What strengths and competencies did you display in this situation?
How did your leadership make a difference to yourself or others?

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Activity: Creating a Trauma-Informed Action Plan

1. What competency would you like to develop?
2. What is your goal with developing this competency?
3. What steps need to be followed to develop this competency? What resources are needed?
4. Who else is involved? Who can we seek input from?
5. How will you measure the outcomes of implementing this competency?

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Summary of Trauma-Informed Leadership Competencies

- > Trauma-informed communication
- > Inclusive leadership
- > Mindfulness and reflection
- > Complexity
- > Radical and critical inquiry
- > Relational leadership

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Break Time!

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Part 2: Leading Others - Teams & Community

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Parallel Process



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Individuals who have experienced trauma may respond by using coping strategies such as:

- *Isolating themselves*
- *Using substances*
- *Fighting with others*

Organizations may face stressors and respond by using misapplied coping strategies such as becoming:

- *Authoritative*
- *Rigid*
- *Hierarchical*
- *Siloed*

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Trauma-informed responses can include:

- Leadership skills
- Communication skills
- Emotion management skills
- Drawing on collective wisdom & experience
- Grieving & imagination
- Cognitive skills

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Healthy Organizations

TRAUMA-ORGANIZED	TRAUMA-INFORMED	HEALING ORGANIZATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reactive • Avoiding/Retelling • Fragmented • Us/Us, Them • Inequity • Authoritarian Leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of the Nature and Impact of Trauma and Recovery • Shared Language • Recognizing Socio-Cultural Trauma and Structural Oppression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflective • Making Meaning out of the Past • Growth and Prevention-Oriented • Collaborative • Equity and Accountability • Relational Leadership

TRAUMA-INDUCING → TRAUMA-REDUCING

Credit: <https://traumainformed.org/documents/Healthy-Organization-Chart.pdf>

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Reflection

When you consider the characteristics of 'trauma-organized, trauma-informed, and healing' organizations, where would you generally place yours?

Where do you think your colleagues would place your organization?

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Part 3: Organizational & Self-Assessment
Worksheet Activity

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Part 4: Approaches for Organizational Change

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Outreach-First & Prevention-Based Approaches

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OUTREACH-FIRST AND PREVENTION-BASED MODELS

1. Free animal care workshops for the community
2. Providing documents on animal needs and care that are visible to the communities in accessible language, and asking the person if they would like to talk through them
3. Finding alternative ways to share information
4. Providing access to pet food and cat litter where needed
5. Making free training and behaviour experts available in cases where it would resolve community concerns (these experts would be trained to work with the community needs, not wishes)
6. Providing free grooming services if there are no local practitioners
7. Engaging with a veterinarian to provide a regular clinic at low or no cost if there are barriers to using the network
8. Providing access to resources on-maintained such as fencing, leashes, collars and waste bags
9. Providing foster-based services for pets where people have to separate from their pets and
10. Working with transportation and veterinary needs to assist in animals accessing care

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Best Practices for an Outreach-First, Prevention-Based Approach

- Practicing community engagement and collaboration
- Formalizing networks to provide more resources to people accessing animal services
- Having knowledge of available resources from community and social services

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Respecting Cultural Protocols

- What is the respectful and appropriate protocol for approaching or contacting an Indigenous community?
- Is there a traditional gift or offering that is considered respectful?

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How is the One Welfare model connected to prevention and outreach-based approaches, and trauma-informed, culturally safe practices?


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Brainstorming Informal Networks & Connections


Worksheet Activity

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**Compiling Community Resources
& Services**
Worksheet Activity

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Break Time!

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**Internal Policy Changes for Outreach-
First Prevention-Based Approaches**

Developing a community engagement policy

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Examples From the Field

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Canadian Animal Assistance Team

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Lakes Animal Friendship Society

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Part 5: Cultural Safety

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Internal Policy Changes for Cultural Safety

- Implement a cultural sensitivity training policy
 - Hold staff and leadership training on cultural safety, awareness, and sensitivity
 - Incorporate learnings about Indigenous community history into training processes

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Reflection

- Who are the cultural communities you serve?
- What do you know about the history of these communities, as well as their current contexts? For example, the barriers that they might face.
- In what ways are you involved with the cultural communities in your local context?
- In what ways are you addressing any distrust of services that may exist because of historical, cultural, and intergenerational trauma?

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Part 6: Supporting Employees and Teams - Organizational Resilience

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Creating Psychological & Emotional Safety in the Workplace

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Internal Policy Changes for Mental Wellness

- Create or enhance organizational mental health policy
 - Implement mental health training
 - Implement wellness days
 - Offer sector-specific counselling or support

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Brainstorming About Mental Health Policy Changes
Worksheet Activity

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Additional Resources

- Canadian National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety
- Toolkits & resources to support mental health
 - [Click here](#) to check out their list of resources.
- Organizational assessment tools
 - [Agency Self-Assessment Tool for Trauma-Informed Care](#)
 - [Trauma-Informed Policy Audit Tool](#)

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Reflection

- What are the most important things you learned in this experience?
- What is one thing you intend to carry back with you?
- What are one or two things you can commit to doing differently immediately?
- What one or two areas will you commit to learning more about?

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Thank you!

Contact: sareeta@vancouverhumanesociety.bc.ca

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