

Transforming Systems Grants “Explore” Case Studies

These are case studies from the 2020 Develop grant program that show early-stage, community-led systems change aligned with the TSG Explore stream. The Explore grant stream supports foundational work that prepares organizations and teams to undertake systems change.

Last updated: April 22, 2026

Project Name:	Integrating climate change into cross-cultural decision-making processes
Organization:	Tsay Keh Dene Nation
Location:	Prince George, B.C. (North)
Year:	2020

HOW IT ADVANCES SYSTEMS CHANGE:

Tsay Keh Dene Nation explored how climate science and traditional knowledge could both count in natural resource decisions on their territory. Community members had seen decisions made without consideration for their knowledge or for the impacts of a fast-changing climate. The project mapped where decisions happened, who was in the room, and how information was weighed, then tested simple ways to bring both knowledge systems into those moments. It created clear procedures for using climate information, strengthened working relationships with government and industry, and affirmed Nation authority in the process. This work targeted policies, relationships, power dynamics, and the mental models that shape whose knowledge is valued.

HOW IT'S COMMUNITY-LED:

The Nation led the work. Elders and Knowledge Holders guided the process, and youth were mentored and engaged. Data was governed by OCAP principles (Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession), meaning the Nation owned its data, decided how it was used, controlled access, and kept custody of sensitive information. Partners from government, industry, and research participated in interviews and workshops convened by the Nation.

GOALS THEY TACKLED:

- **Map systems and develop strategy:** Mapped decision pathways, tested how climate information could be used at key decision points, and created simple protocols for documenting and sharing rationales.
- **Develop ideas for systems change:** Blended traditional knowledge and science through repeated interviews and workshops, then refined what worked.
- **Build internal readiness:** Built community capacity through youth engagement, employment, and knowledge transfer with Elders.
- **Build inclusive partnerships and networks:** Built durable relationships with regulators, industry, and researchers to support climate-conscious, Nation-led decisions.

Project Name:	Building a systems change plan for innovation in breastfeeding support
Organization:	Kelowna Community Resources Society in Partnership with Interior Health
Location:	Kelowna, B.C. (Interior)
Year:	2020

HOW IT ADVANCES SYSTEMS CHANGE:

The project explored systemic barriers to adopting breastfeeding best practices across health facilities and the community in the Interior Health region. It gathered real stories from parents and providers, mapped where practice breaks down, and compiled themes and 15 important participant-driven recommendations in a Breastfeeding Journey Mapping report. The goal was to make culturally safe support consistent in all settings by developing a plan to influence and change the system, including improved service delivery. This work focused on improving day-to-day practices, supported by better policies and stronger relationships between health systems and community partners.

HOW IT'S COMMUNITY-LED:

A multi-sector steering committee oversaw the work with support from Interior Health and partners such as UBC Okanagan and Adams Lake Band (Sexqeltqin Health Centre).. Physicians, nurses, midwives and doulas, lactation consultants, and community members including parents from 4 locations across Interior Health shaped priorities through public consultation, an online survey, and an expert roundtable. Their testimonies and insights guided the recommendations and next steps.

GOALS THEY TACKLED:

- **Map systems and develop strategy:** Mapped gaps in practices, analyzed workflows, and produced a journey mapping report with protocols for documenting and sharing information.
- **Develop ideas for systems change:** Identified collaborative opportunities to achieve consistent policies and best practices, shaped by parent and provider input.
- **Build internal readiness:** Built readiness for multi-site adoption by clarifying roles, tools, and supports needed in health and community settings.
- **Build inclusive partnerships and networks:** Strengthened ties among Interior Health, post-secondary partners, Indigenous partners, and community organizations to sustain change over time.

Project Name:	Unlocking political potential: addressing the root causes of participation and apathy in immigrant communities
Organization:	S.U.C.C.E.S.S. (United Chinese Community Enrichment Services Society)
Location:	Vancouver, B.C. (Lower Mainland)
Year:	2020

HOW IT ADVANCES SYSTEMS CHANGE:

The project examined why many immigrants felt politics was not for them and why they received fewer invitations to participate. It listened to how people made sense of civic life in daily routines, then identified where motivation and opportunity were getting blocked. By pairing life-history interviews with consultations, the team outlined practical steps that made participation feel relevant, welcoming, and doable. The work focused on mental models as the primary lever, with supporting shifts in relationships and power dynamics, practices, and policies.

HOW IT'S COMMUNITY-LED:

S.U.C.C.E.S.S. partnered with a UBC researcher and centered immigrants' voices, including those who were less engaged and less visible. They used interpreters to reduce barriers for those who don't speak English. People who work inside the systems of municipalities and elections also joined to co-shape a plan grounded in lived experience.

GOALS THEY TACKLED:

- **Develop ideas for systems change:** Surfaced messages and materials that made civic life more relevant and accessible to immigrants.
- **Map systems and develop strategy:** Mapped where invitations, resources, and policy participation create cycles of activism and apathy.
- **Build inclusive partnerships and networks:** Convened immigrants, community leaders, and agencies to co-design next steps.
- **Build internal readiness:** Prepared an action plan with measures and timelines for testing in future cycles.

Project Name:	Strengthening our family through re-establishing a system of traditional K'ómoks feasts
Organization:	K'ómoks First Nation
Location:	K'ómoks First Nation (Courtenay / Vancouver Island & Coast)
Year:	2020

HOW IT ADVANCES SYSTEMS CHANGE:

The project documented and re-established roles, protocols, and authority embedded in Nuhum (traditional feasting) to repair cultural governance disrupted by colonial policies such as the Indian Act and residential schools. It compiled clan-specific cultural property — chiefly seats, masks, crests, songs, dances, and traditional names — and created a practical guide families could use to hold feasts and exercise their rights. The work also recognized that returning to traditional practices is “good medicine,” linked with lower rates of suicide, depression, and substance use when cultural participation and language strengthen identity and belonging. By restoring how decisions are witnessed, recorded, and validated in feast settings, the project shifted power dynamics to K'ómoks families, strengthened relationships across the community, and reshaped mental models to center traditional authority in wellness and decision-making.

HOW IT'S COMMUNITY-LED:

K'ómoks Elders, hereditary chiefs, family heads, matriarchs, and youth co-led a committee, supported by a cultural advisor and researcher. They reviewed oral histories and archival records, reached consensus on cultural property and protocols, and prepared a guide that families can use to participate fully in the feasting system and pass teachings to future ceremony holders.

GOALS THEY TACKLED:

- **Build internal readiness:** Developed a community-owned feast guide and learning pathway for future ceremony holders.
- **Map systems and develop strategy:** Mapped governance roles, decision pathways, and validation processes within Nuhum.
- **Build inclusive partnerships and networks:** Reconnected families and cultural leaders, built structures for ongoing stewardship and intergenerational leadership.
- **Develop ideas for systems change:** Tested how traditional protocols can guide contemporary community decision-making and healing.

Project Name:	Leveraging our assets and knowledge for social change
Organization:	Powell Street Festival Society (PSFS)
Location:	Vancouver, BC (Downtown Eastside)
Year:	2020

HOW IT ADVANCES SYSTEMS CHANGE:

PSFS looked at how festival assets and know-how could reduce everyday barriers faced by Downtown Eastside (DTES) residents during COVID-19 and beyond. The team shifted how resources move by planning to share production equipment and skills year-round, rather than only during the festival, and explored a mobile kitchen, washing stations, and respite space co-run with local partners. They refined training for cultural workers, so paid roles and practical learning flowed to residents who face hiring barriers. The focus was to change how resources flowed first, supported by decolonizing practices and building stronger relationships with neighborhood groups, so support reached the people who needed it most.

HOW IT'S COMMUNITY-LED:

DTES residents shaped priorities through paid input, community roundtables, and on-the-ground roles. PSFS partnered with local organizations to co-design safe distribution and production, and embedded equity in training modules that address power dynamics, cultural safety, and de-escalation. Community voices guided what equipment, shifts, and support would work in real life.

GOALS THEY TACKLED:

- **Map systems and develop strategy:** Mapped assets, partners, and logistics for year-round use of equipment and support.
- **Develop ideas for systems change:** Prototyped options for a mobile kitchen, water and sanitation, and shared infrastructure.
- **Build internal readiness:** Updated cultural workers training to decolonize organizational practices and expand paid pathways.
- **Build inclusive partnerships and networks:** Coordinated with DTES organizations and residents to align roles, safety, and stewardship.