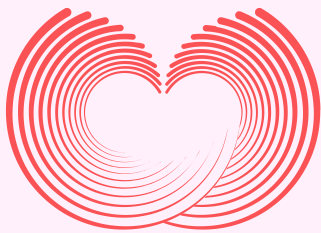


2024-2025
INAUGURAL
BELOVED COMMUNITY
COHORT REPORT

A nine-month journey of healing,
connection & radical transformation



THE INAUGURAL BELOVED COMMUNITY COHORT



*Beloved
Communities
Network*



Movement Strategy Center

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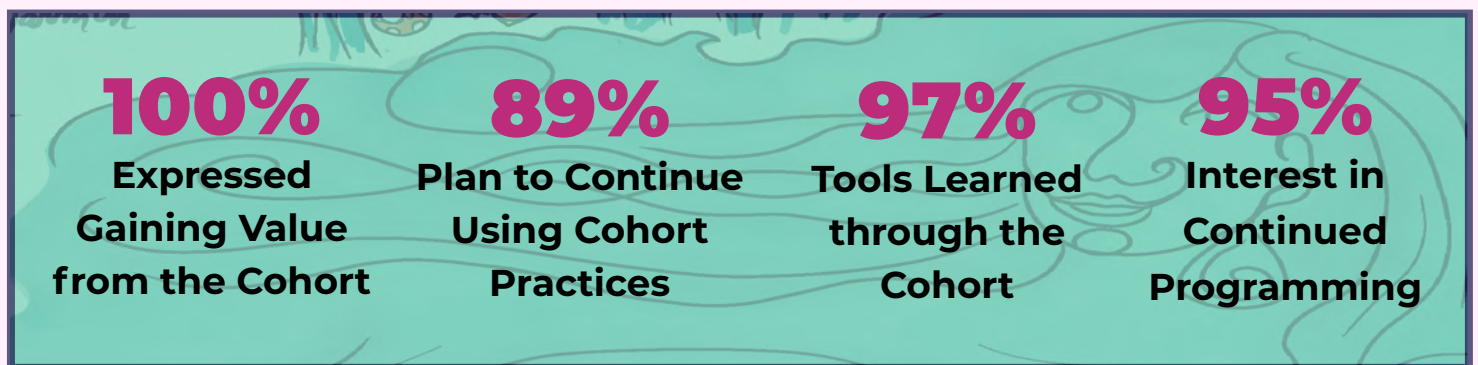
I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The inaugural Beloved Community Cohort was a nine-month learning and leadership experience **designed to strengthen the relational, embodied, and visionary capacities of people working toward social and community change.**

Developed by Beloved Communities Network (BCN) and Movement Strategy Center (MSC), the Cohort brought together movement practitioners across organizations, issue areas, and geographies to explore how cultural strategy, embodiment, storytelling, relationship, and long-arc vision can strengthen leadership in a time of fragmentation, burnout, and social crisis.

Across **nine facilitated virtual sessions** and a **three-day in-person retreat**, participants engaged in more than **40 hours of synchronous learning and practice** alongside **two core facilitators** and **11 guest speakers and artists.** More than **15 movement organizations** were represented.

Participant feedback suggests the experience generated meaningful value. Among post-program survey respondents:

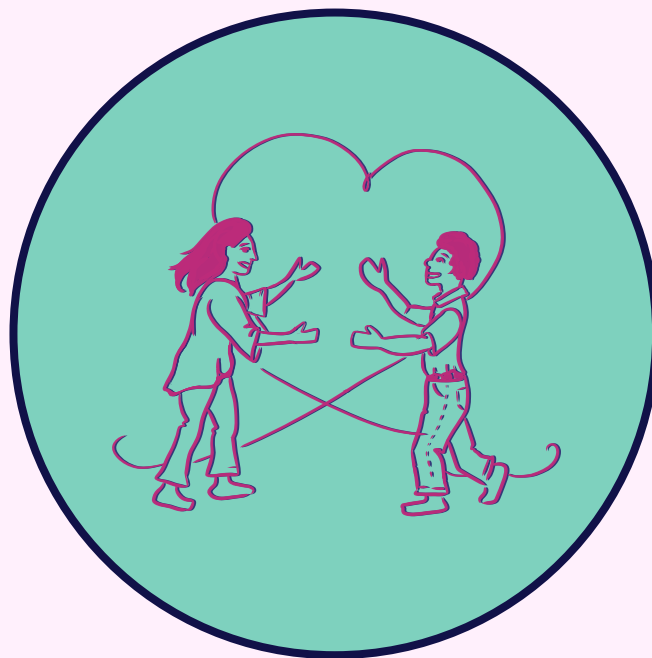


I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Participants described greater capacity to **slow down and reflect, increased self-trust, more intentional approaches to leadership, and deeper understandings of belonging and embodied presence.** Some also reported carrying practices from the Cohort into their organizations and communities.

The inaugural Cohort also surfaced important lessons around **communication, program structure, accessibility, co-creation, and the challenge of building belonging across difference.** Together, these successes and growth edges offer insights not only for future Cohorts, but for others seeking to cultivate more relational, regenerative, and long-term approaches to leadership.

Purchase the graphic novel at **belovedcommunitiesnetwork.org**



II. THE BELOVED COMMUNITY COHORT



Movement and community leaders are often asked to respond to urgent social conditions while navigating burnout, organizational strain, political uncertainty, and fragmentation. The urgency of the present can leave little room to cultivate the relationships, practices, imagination, and capacity required for lasting change over the long term.

The Beloved Community Cohort began with a different question:

“How do we cultivate the ways of being, relating, and leading that the communities we hope to create will require?”

BCN's broader vision is rooted in the possibility of 10,000 Beloved Communities: communities grounded in belonging, interdependence, shared responsibility, healing, courage, and collective thriving. The Cohort created a space for participants to explore and practice these principles together.

At the center of the curriculum was BCN's 10,000 Beloved Communities Graphic Novel & Guide, developed from dialogues among movement leaders convened by Movement Strategy Center around the question, "What leaps are possible in this moment of social unraveling?"

Rather than functioning as a conventional training series, the Cohort was designed as an experiential community of practice. Participants engaged storytelling, cultural strategy, somatic and embodiment practices, collective visioning, Deep Democracy, conflict transformation, grief practice, creative expression, and facilitated dialogue.

II. THE BELOVED COMMUNITY COHORT

COHORT AT A GLANCE

9 virtual sessions | 3-day retreat | 40+ synchronous hours | 11 guest speakers and artists
20+ embodied and relational practices | 15+ movement organizations represented

The Program Centered Three Connected Learning Goals:

1. Embodied Presence & Strategic Alignment

Cultivating greater presence and connecting personal practice to the principles of Beloved Community.

2. Relational Trust & Belonging

Building capacity for listening, resonance, care, vulnerability, conflict transformation, and relationship across difference.

3. Long-Arc Vision & Cultural Leadership

Strengthening participants' ability to imagine beyond immediate crises and connect culture, story, and collective vision to long-term change.

THE COHORT JOURNEY

KINSHIP & BELONGING → VISION & EMBODIMENT → COURAGE, SPIRIT, CONFLICT & GROWTH

The Cohort began by establishing foundations of relationship, kinship, interdependence, and belonging. Participants then moved into collective visioning and embodiment, exploring the relationship between the futures they hope to create and the ways they practice leadership in the present.

As the Cohort unfolded, participants were invited to cultivate courage, engage conflict and grief with greater presence, and draw on practices of spirit, creativity, and relationship as resources for navigating complexity together. Rather than avoiding difficulty, the Cohort encouraged participants to remain in relationship through moments of tension, uncertainty, and change.

The three-day in-person retreat created additional space for movement, cultural practice, creativity, rest, relationship-building, and shared reflection. It also offered opportunities to deepen practices of courage and spirit, allowing participants to connect more fully with themselves, one another, and the communities they seek to serve.

In Our World

Music heats and accelerates

OFA LAHI ATU!

Tout lang sèloun lang
Mwen ka pale janm vle
pale. Ou ka pale jan ou
vle pale. Mwen pa bezwen
apren anglè. Ou pèp
gadon. Hankon mwen
yon abitou paské mwen
pa pale bel françaiz.

All language will be powerful
and preserved. No more erasure.
No more assimilation. No more
acculturation. F*ck the melting pot.
Don't eat the salad.

WE ARE RESPONSIBLE TO

COLLECTIVE NEEDS.

OPERATION FEED YOURSELF.

WATER IS LIFE! LIFE'S WATER!

WELLBEING ECONOMY

LOVE ETHIC

RESPECT

FOR LIFE

There is intention

Harvest

LO PL

Look
an
Ste
Har
Ch
Not

Land of Beloved Community

anality on the map

SEEDKEEPERS AND MEDICINAL FORESTS

We relearn ancestral technology and ecological knowledge.

We come together
bringing our gifts - different
patterns, colors, textures, knowledge
and jewels... Weaving Community
Everyone contributing serendipity and MAGIC.
The Tule with the Salamanders, little frogs and
red winged black birds. The water we
use... A stunning and sensory pleasure.

caping with
WE EMBODY
AYFUL CREATION
AND
COMMUNITY

Hummingbirds visit
while we are in the shadows
Reminding us
KUP! Embracing Sun & Warmth
and turning back.
pping towards Shadows.
ressing Frequency.
ranging Channels.
t afraid of the dark.

FACILITANTS



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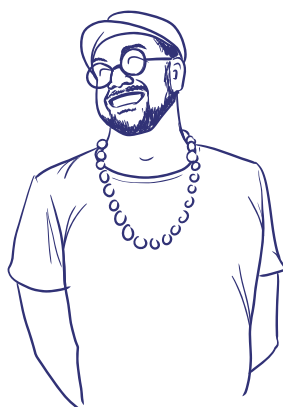
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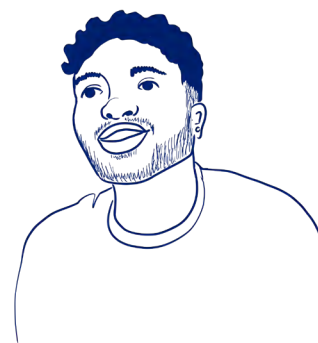
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v. IMPACT & OUTCOMES



About These Findings

Findings in this report draw from post-program survey responses, participant reflections and quotations, facilitator observations, session dialogue, retreat reflections, and adaptations made throughout the Cohort. Because the inaugural Cohort was an emergent, practice-based program, these findings include both quantitative feedback and qualitative evidence of how participants described changes in their leadership, relationships, and the ways they applied what they learned beyond the Cohort.

FINDING 1

Growth Begins With Practice

Participants described meaningful shifts in how they related to themselves and their leadership.

REFLECTION | PRESENCE | SELF-TRUST | INTENTIONALITY

Participants reported greater capacity to slow down and reflect, increased trust in themselves, deeper attention to embodied experience, and more intentional approaches to leadership and organizing.

"I have slowed down and become more reflective."

"I learned to trust myself."

Takeaway

Participants consistently described leadership as something shaped through ongoing personal practice. Greater awareness, reflection, and presence influenced how they approached both themselves and their work.

FINDING 2

Belonging is Something We Practice

LISTENING → RESONANCE → TRUST → CARE → BELONGING

Throughout the Cohort, participants practiced vulnerability, resonance, truth-telling, collective care, and relationship across difference.

The experience reinforced a central premise of Beloved Community: belonging is not created simply by gathering people who share values or goals. It is built and sustained through relationship.

Takeaway

Shared values may bring people together, but belonging grows through the everyday practices of listening, trust, care, and relationship.

FINDING 3

Practice Travels

One of the most promising findings was that participants described carrying Cohort practices beyond the program.

SELF → RELATIONSHIPS → ORGANIZATIONS → COMMUNITIES

Participants reported:

Breathwork and embodied practices incorporated into meetings

Resonance circles facilitated with colleagues and community members

Long-term visioning integrated into organizational and campaign strategy

These examples suggest that individual learning can move outward, influencing how participants relate, collaborate, and practice within other spaces.

Takeaway

Many participants described adapting Cohort practices within their organizations and communities, suggesting that the learning continued well beyond the Cohort itself.

FINDING 4

Practices With Staying Power

When participants were asked what they intended to continue using, three practices appeared most frequently:

FORWARD STANCE

Embodied practices for awareness, alignment, and action.

RESONANCE

Practices for deep listening, reflection, and relational connection.

COMMUNITY VISIONING

Practices for imagining beyond present conditions and orienting toward longer-term possibilities.

Takeaway

Participants most often returned to practices that connected inner awareness, relationship, and long-term imagination, suggesting these approaches resonated well beyond individual sessions.



POST-COHORT MEMBER SURVEY RATINGS

Relevance of Topics	4.27	★	★	★	★	★
Cohort Length	4.18	★	★	★	★	★
Meeting Cadence	3.91	★	★	★	★	★
Communication	3.73	★	★	★	★	★
Session Structure	3.64	★	★	★	★	★

VI. WHAT WE LEARNED

The inaugural Cohort offers several lessons for organizations and practitioners exploring more relational, regenerative, and long-term approaches to leadership.

EMBODIMENT CAN BE STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE

Participants did not experience embodiment only as a tool for individual wellness. Embodied practices supported reflection, presence, regulation, and intentionality, suggesting a meaningful role for embodiment within leadership and organizational practice itself.

BELONGING MUST BE BUILT NOT ASSUMED

Shared values do not automatically create belonging. Trust, care, truth-telling, accountability, and repair require deliberate practice. The Cohort reinforced the importance of treating relationship-building as part of the work rather than something that happens before the work begins.

LEARNING ENGAGES MORE THAN THE INTELLECT

Some of the Cohort's most meaningful learning happened through experiences that engaged more than analysis or discussion. Embodiment, storytelling, creativity, ritual, play, and spiritual practice offered different pathways into reflection, relationship, and collective meaning-making.

Facilitators observed that these practices helped participants access insight, connection, and a deeper sense of purpose in ways that conventional learning formats may not. At the same time, participant feedback reinforced the importance of thoughtful structure and clear containers for experiential and emergent learning.

Field implication: Leadership development can engage the whole person. Creative, embodied, cultural, and spiritual practices can deepen learning and strengthen relationships when held within intentional, well-designed containers.

RELATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE REQUIRES INVESTMENT

Trust, reflection, conflict transformation, shared practice, and cross-movement relationships require time. Yet these forms of relational infrastructure can be difficult to prioritize amid the pressure for immediate outcomes.

The Cohort suggests that investing in these conditions can strengthen people's capacity to sustain collective work over time.

GROWTH EDGES

The inaugural Cohort also surfaced areas requiring continued attention:

Communication | Program Structure & Pacing | Co-Creation
Accessibility & Disability Justice | Participant Retention | Navigating Difference

These challenges are part of the learning that comes with launching an inaugural program. Participant feedback and facilitator reflection are already informing the continued evolution of the Cohort model.



"When I heard them say 'I deserve care, my feelings are valid' — something shifted."

"This is one of the only spaces where I didn't feel I had to prove anything."



"Naming rupture and moving through it together — that's what makes this cohort different."



VII. LOOKING FORWARD

The inaugural Cohort was designed as an experiment, not a finished model.

The experience demonstrated strong demand for continued programming while also identifying opportunities to strengthen how the program is structured, communicated, and supported.

The second Beloved Community Cohort represents an opportunity to build on what we learned while continuing to evolve the model through participant feedback, facilitator reflection, and lived experience.

FROM LEARNING TO ADAPTION

The inaugural Cohort surfaced important insights that have already begun shaping future iterations of the program.

WE LEARNED

Communication requires consistency.

Emergence benefits from clear structure.

Accessibility must be foundational.

Co-creation requires clarity.

In-person relationship-building matters.

WE ADAPTED

Strengthened participant communication before, during, and between sessions.

Clarified the learning journey while preserving space for emergence and co-creation.

Continued integrating accessibility and disability justice into program design and facilitation.

More clearly defined participant expectations while maintaining opportunities for shared leadership.

Expanded opportunities for participants to gather, build trust, and deepen relationships.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FIELD

The experience of the inaugural Cohort suggests three considerations for those investing in leadership, organizations, and long-term social change.

Invest in Relational Infrastructure

Trust, belonging, reflection, repair, and relationship require time and resources. These are not secondary to organizational and movement capacity—they are part of the foundation that makes sustained collective work possible.

Treat Embodiment & Reflection as Leadership Capacities

The ability to slow down, notice patterns, regulate responses, and act intentionally influences how people lead, collaborate, navigate conflict, and make decisions. Creating space for these practices can strengthen both individual and collective leadership.

Make Room for the Long Arc

Urgent conditions demand immediate responses. They also make long-term imagination more important. Creating space to envision the future helps people orient present-day choices toward something larger than the crisis immediately in front of them.



VIII. CONCLUSION

The inaugural Beloved Community Cohort explored what becomes possible when movement practitioners are given sustained space not only to develop strategy, but also to practice the relationships and capacities needed to build toward a different future.

Participants described meaningful changes in how they relate to themselves and others. Many identified practices they intend to continue using, and some carried those practices into their organizations and communities. The experience also surfaced challenges that are helping BCN and MSC continue refining the Cohort model.

Perhaps the clearest lesson is also the simplest:

Beloved Community is not only a destination. It is a practice.

Building it requires more than shared values or compelling visions. It requires opportunities to practice reflection, relationship, imagination, conflict, care, creativity, courage, and belonging together.

The inaugural Cohort created one space for that practice. What was learned through this first cohort can help inform how we continue cultivating the conditions for lasting change within ourselves, our organizations, and our communities.



LINKS

Beloved Communities Network

www.belovedcommunitiesnetwork.org

Movement Strategy Center

www.movementstrategy.org

Purchase the 10,000 Beloved Communities Graphic Novel and Guide

www.belovedcommunitiesnetwork.org/10000-beloved-communities-graphic-novel

Inside the First Beloved Community Cohort: A 9-Month Journey of Healing, Connection, and Radical Transformation

<https://bit.ly/2025-Cohort-Blog>

Program Calendar

<https://bit.ly/2025-Cohort-Program-Calendar>





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