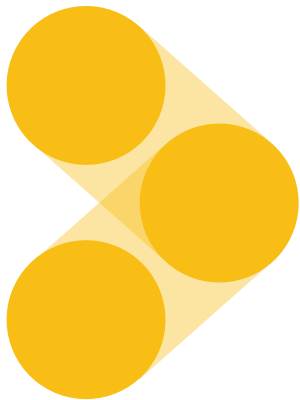
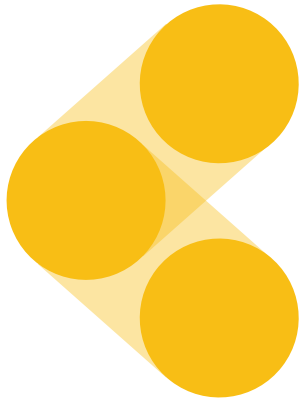


LEARNING FROM OUR FIRST YEAR

INDIGENOUS REALITIES AND SOCIAL INNOVATION
PROCESSES—ARE THEY COMPATIBLE?



Proudly supported by:



The Edmonton Shift Lab is based in amiskwaciwâskahikan on Treaty 6 territory, traditional meeting grounds for the Cree, Saulteaux, Blackfoot, Dene, Nakota Sioux, Métis, and Inuit.



edmontonshiftlab.ca/

Proudly supported by:



skillsociety.ca/action-lab
ecfoundation.org

SHIFT LAB

The Edmonton Shift Lab is a social innovation lab convened by the Skills Society Action Lab and the Edmonton Community Foundation, which built on the initial research of EndPovertyEdmonton on poverty and racism in Edmonton. From the outset, a guiding principle of the Edmonton Shift Lab was that the lab was going to generate prototypes of solutions, learn from the journey, share what worked and share what needs to be changed and adapted. This report captures the learning from the first year of the Edmonton Shift Lab.

Addressing racism and discrimination continues to be identified as a critical piece of the puzzle in how we reach the big goal of ending poverty in a generation in Edmonton. Building on the work of many local initiatives, the diverse collective making up the Edmonton Shift Lab is stewarding an exploration to develop potential service, policy, system and community action prototypes that will help reduce racism as it contributes to poverty. We want to be bold and explore how to Shift ideas. Shift attitudes. Shift systems and Shift into new ways of solution finding with community.



Celebrating our launch at the Intercultural Centre with 150 community members



Core team testing prototype themes with industry

“Aboriginal people, immigrants and refugees experience discrimination in workplaces, housing, services and facilities that exclude them from opportunities and put them at risk of poverty.”

EndPovertyEdmonton Strategy 2015

Core team in the early days getting to know each other

OUTLINE OF THE JOURNEY OF THE 4 KEY GROUPS OF THE SHIFT LAB COLLECTIVE

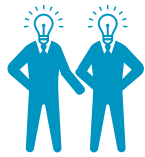
Designed by Melissa Bui

JUNE 2016 AUGUST 2016 DECEMBER 2016 APRIL 2017



ADVISORY

Leaders with hands on levers in key systems



CORE TEAM

Diverse team tackling challenge



STEWARDS

Lab designers, facilitators, adapt process to emergent learning



COMMUNITY CAMPFIRES

Interface with community

POST LAB

Evaluation, Reports, Prototype development

After the end of the lab sessions, the Stewards and Core team continued with a few streams of work:

1. Led by Mark Cabaj: interviews of lab stakeholders to inform developmental evaluation of the lab process and outcomes

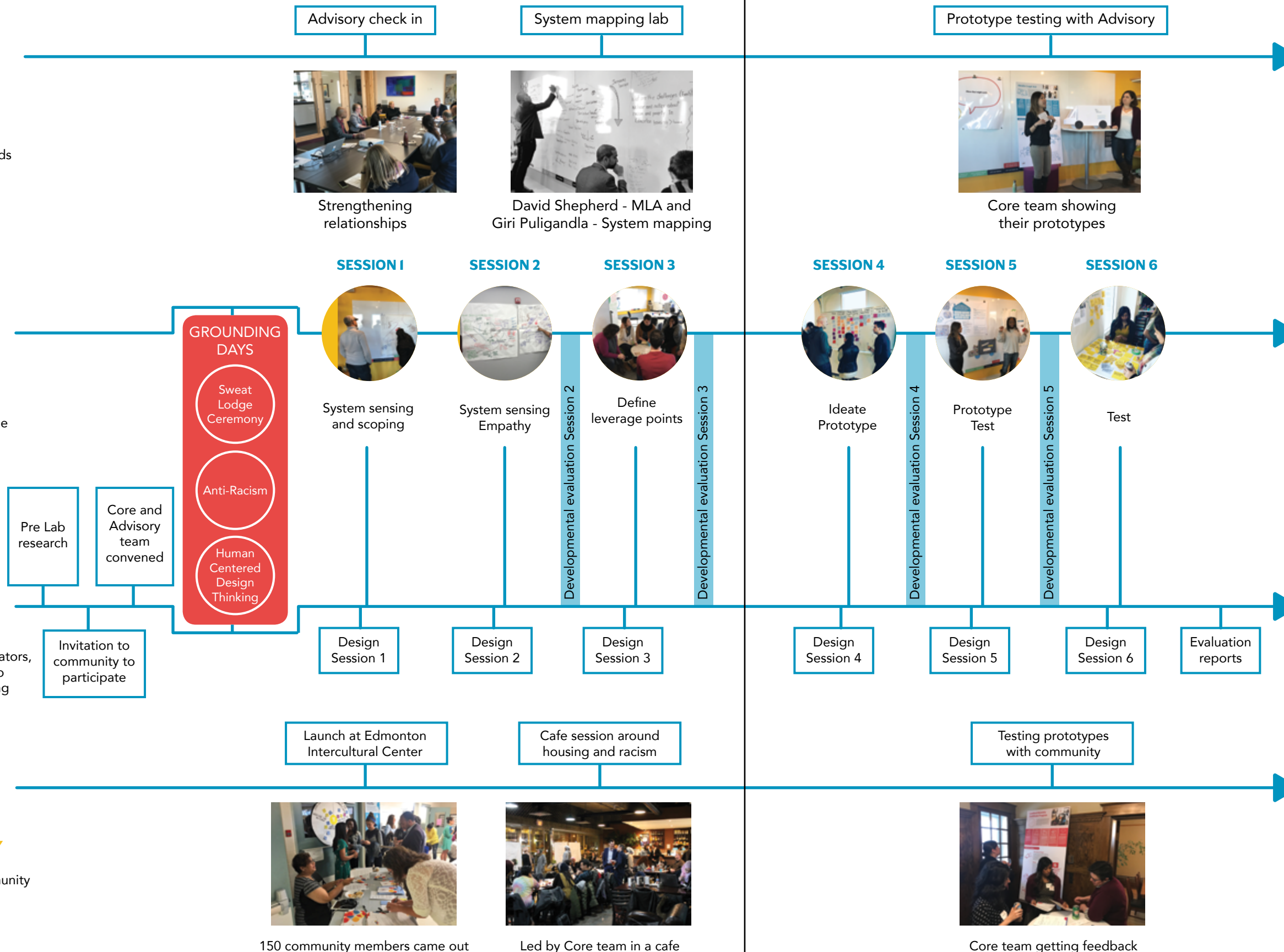
2. Evaluation and feedback on what worked well, less well, and what needs to be different for Shift Lab 2.0

3. Continued prototype development: all three prototypes had enough positive feedback to continue testing, development, and piloting. There is on-going work to incubate the prototypes.

Design Shift Lab 2.0 based on Developmental Evaluation and Feedback

Shift Lab Stewards have begun designing the next phase of the Shift Lab.

As of February 2018, the pre-lab research phase for Shift Lab 2.0 has begun. The Stewards are sifting through feedback and are designing another robust lab process that will go deeper into the complex problem and will yield another portfolio of prototypes that strive for systemic impact to address racism in Edmonton and possibly beyond.



150 community members came out

Led by Core team in a cafe

Core team getting feedback

SOHKIMAMITONEYIHTAMOWIN, THINKING DEEPLY:

Indigenous Realities and Social Innovation Processes—Are They Compatible?

by Jodi Calahoo-Stonehouse

This is a written record of an oral presentation by Shift Lab Steward Jodi Calahoo Stonehouse. We wanted to preserve as much as possible the oral nature of the piece, but have tried to provide signposts by way of section titles and written grammar. Nevertheless, we encourage you to read it aloud.



Introduction

My Cree name is Ka pa pam askum kinak eskwew, my Mohawk family name is Gwarakwanti and Kariho (Bishop Grandin changed the spelling to Calahoo) and I am from the Michel First Nation. We are a family band of Cree/Mohawk and Metis peoples. It's fascinating to think Michel, a Mohawk who was born in Kahnawake, Quebec is a signatory of Treaty #6 in Alberta. I come from reserve #137.

Academically I have been blessed to have studied under Dr. Val Napoleon, Dr. Hadley Friedland, and Dr. Shalene Jobin, specifically in the areas of Indigenous Legal Traditions, Indigenous Feminisms and Indigenous Governance.

I have been privileged throughout my life to be a student in Nakota Sioux kinship systems, beginning with my first teacher, Sykes Powderface from Morley, who introduced me to Treaty Rights, Sovereignty and Nationhood. I also owe a debt of gratitude to my Sundance relatives from the Alexis Nakoda Sioux Nation, who continuously welcome the questions, challenges and the people I bring to the lodge. I appreciate their unwavering support and guidance when navigating such tumultuous waters. I honor that they have adopted me as a relative. I appreciate that they have opened their homes, their lodge, and their hearts not only to this work, but to the people that I have brought along with me while trying to figure out how we do this work together in a good way. I appreciate that they embraced our collective and that they believed that we might possibly be able to do some work that could contribute to the lessening of the disparity that comes along with poverty and racism. I pray that our work is able to make an impact so that they along with others might themselves witness a shift and experience their lives in a kinder manner. I graciously thank Charlie and Martha Letendre, the firekeepers, the song carriers, the pipe carriers, the aunties, the uncles and all of the cousins for allowing the Shift Lab to enter Nakoda Sioux space, spiritually, physically, intellectually and emotionally. Metakiyawsin.



Jodi sharing what to keep in mind with research and Indigenous communities



Jodi and Matt Ward deep in conversation



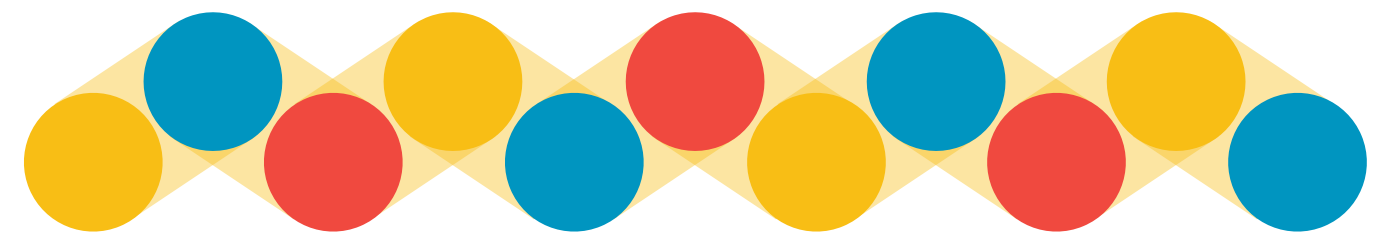
Jodi presents at the Indigenous Innovation Summit

I have spent the past 25 years investigating and exploring Indigenous processes, histories, ceremonies, stories, and traditions from many Indigenous communities' perspectives. I am not an expert in any particular field of study; I have just simply listened, observed, and participated when appropriate. As Indigenous peoples we are in a very complicated time as we become aware of the societal impacts due to colonization, the Indian Residential Schools, and systemic racism. We, as a people, have been so busy trying to stay alive and avoid persecution that this is the first time in my life that I have been able to experience the exploration of our thinking and our way of life as a source and mobilizer for systemic change, not only for our communities but across Canada. We are now in a position to say, to share, to access something that was once illegal as a method to change lives.

I think it's an exciting time, but it's also a time to be mindful. I take very seriously the responsibility of trying to honour our practices to the best of my ability, to ensure that whenever the Shift Lab engages with Indigenous communities and

our processes, it's done in a genuine, authentic, respectful way. The current Canadian socio-political reality is what I would call "sex-positive" for Indigenous worldviews. What I mean is that since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action were issued, we are seeing the integration of Indigenous peoples in positions of institutional authority, we are hearing land acknowledgments, and all kinds of folks trying their best to respond to a particular call to action.¹ More critically I see this particular work of exploring social innovation with Indigenous thinking as not simply just an act of reconciliation but rather I see it more as an opportunity to leverage thinking that has existed long before it was time to reconcile. These traditions, processes and practices are thinking tools that have been fractured by the legacies of colonialism, Indian residential schools and systemic racism. Social innovation processes themselves are a tool that can be used to support the rearticulation, the reimagining and the revitalizing of our traditions in order to to make changes in our communities and within the Canadian State.

¹ http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf



SHIFT LAB, SOCIAL INNOVATION, AND INDIGENOUS WORLD VIEWS

Shift Lab I.0 was about learning and exploring to see how Indigenous processes were applicable and compatible to social innovation processes. I was learning how to facilitate, observe, and engage in this field of study, to see the relationship and compatibility with Indigenous worldviews. I've learned that there are many opportunities for collaboration, for fusion, and for the lifting of each other's work. Ultimately, changing systems is the intention of both Indigenous processes and social innovation. They are both infused with the hope that somehow what we do will change something that is harmful/useless to people into something better. We want to improve the quality of life for people.

In my work with the Shift Lab, I have tried to draw on Cree principals that align with the western concepts that reflect notions of systemic changes to racism and poverty. For example Miyo-pimatisiwin in the Cree language means "living your best life" or "how to live well." This could be eating traditional food, drinking clean water, praying and going to ceremony,

looking after your family: I am healthy, I am alive, I am well.² The opposite of thriving in the Cree language is Kitimakisiwin, being poor. Pakwatitowin, like racism, is the hatred of certain people or groups. Within the Cree language there are what I would understand as philosophies. These philosophies provide a larger context for words and suggest ways in which one should conduct themselves in relation to that specific word. A Cree word/philosophy that can connect miyo-pimatisiwin, kitimakisiwin, and pakwatitowin³ is Wahkotowin, or relationships. Wahkotowin can be understood as a form of governance: it is good relations and good governance between people, between yourself, and between the land/water. It's how we govern ourselves and the decisions we make to do the things we are going to do.⁴ This work of drawing on Cree principles was done as a reflexive exercise, as scaffolding for the next phase and will enable us to articulate the framework of the Shift Lab from an Indigenous Epistemology.

² I learned about Miyo Pimatisiwin from Dr. Brenda Parlee, I came to understand Pimatisiwin from Barbars Grandjambe, Georgie Cardinal and Robert Grandjambe

³ Cree Language credits to Dorothy Thunder and Elder Jerry Saddleback

⁴ I learned about Wahokowin from Dr. Shaylene Jobin. I understand Wahkotowin because of my sister Roxanne Tootossiss and Dorothy Thunder and our Mushum.



Jodi Calahoo-Stonehouse

A second part of this work in the Shift Lab was analyzing and comparing epistemologies from both the western world view (in which social innovation is embedded) and Indigenous world views. How might Indigenous world views compare and or compliment systems, processes and design thinking and find connections, moments of parallel intentions and juxtapositions? For example, no one quite knew what to expect when the Lab teams was invited to a sweat lodge ceremony. It wasn't until we conducted our evaluation that we learned just how much of an impact this experience had on the thinking process of our group. People truly were taken outside of their comfort zones and were confronted in a very real way with evidence of another worldview. An important mindset social innovation lab explorers need to have is to be able to embrace the unknown and hold tensions without jumping to conclusions too quickly. Participants reflected that in a sweat lodge, embracing the unknown and ambiguity is a real, visceral experience that many drew on for strength and insights later in the lab exploration. This enabled participants them to do their work a little differently than they might have otherwise.

I think a couple of things about possible links between social innovation and Indigenous problem solving processes:

1. Social innovation processes like human centered design and systems thinking are tools that Indigenous communities can access and adapt to support their work on reclaiming, revitalizing, reconstructing their legal traditions
2. There are possibilities for social innovation thinking and Indigenous thinking to merge and create processes that will facilitate change for people in both worlds. When I think about developing sustainable prototypes and pilot project to address the societal issues that impact Indigenous communities -- clean drinking water, the number of children in care, missing and murdered Indigenous women, the housing crisis on First Nations communities -- an important factor is going to be Indigenous peoples bringing

their Indigenous thinking, traditions, cultures, and worldview together to work with system design thinkers.

3. When making modifications to these existing models, you want to aim for the sweet spot where the new model is inclusive of both ways of thinking. This will create productive collisions that will lead to robust change making processes. However, inclusivity is not prescriptive; there will be moments where an an Indigenous process is the best tool for making change or vice versa.

Guiding principles for weaving Indigenous epistemologies with social innovation approaches:

The Shift Lab hasn't created a set of guiding principles for how to weave Indigenous processes into social innovation and I would be cautious to create a universal structure to follow, particularly because Indigenous peoples are very diverse and have different language groups, social norms, and practices. The beauty of social innovation is that it makes space for and thrives in difference and tension. Social innovation, if I could speak for it, loves when you bring all these different elements of thinking and imaging and being creative and diverse together, to come up with something really beautiful. So there is no possible way to create a "guide of Indigeneity to social innovation" because each community has its own particular way of engaging. What is foundational, however, is the way in which social innovators engage in consent and consultation practices. It is paramount that the folks who you will work with, about, or on are fully aware of what your intentions are with the work that you're

about to embark on and how it may impact them, their work, their life, and their community. Following the movement created by Linda Tuhiwai Smith,⁵ we need to ensure that not only researchers but also innovators are engaging in meaningful consent and meaningful relationships with communities.

Part of the work of the Shift Lab was ethnographic research. As an Indigenous person, this raised concerns as documented by Professor Smith about the damage researchers have done with Indigenous peoples and in Indigenous communities. I wanted to shift the ways in which we understood research and engaged in it with Indigenous peoples. That meant explicating for folks in the Core Lab team Indigenous protocols of reciprocity and the historic relationship to research. There is no "Indigenous way" of engaging in research, but I wanted to ensure that our group was as mindful as possible to acknowledge the local practices of the people in the local territory. For Cree people, that meant the offering of protocol, tobacco, a gift and compensation for their time and knowledge and acknowledgment to their contributions.

The caution of Indigenizing a lab is that it becomes a romantic prettying of the process and doesn't actually facilitate rigorous engagement with Indigenous processes or thinking. You have to be really careful not to just dress it up as tokenistic "engagement." The ways in which the Shift Lab was accountable to this was having elders accessible to advise us and constant dialogue amongst the stewards where we pushed one another to ask the questions: are we doing enough? Is this right? How does the community feel?

⁵ See Linda Tuhiwai Smith's book *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*

WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO DIFFERENTLY NEXT TIME?

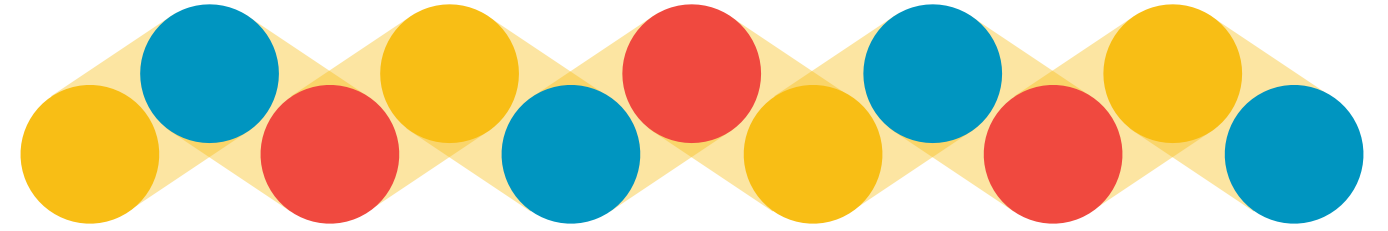
In Shift Lab 1.0 we were intentional in inviting elder Gilman Cardinal to our launch. Gilman is a Cree elder who is very much aware of municipal politics. He is a keen man to support change and he is committed to changing the lives of indigenous people in this territory. During this iteration, we also spent time with Charlie and Martha Letendre. Charlie is a Nakota Sioux elder from Alexis First Nation. He welcomed our team to his lodge and offered prayers to support the work we were about to embark on. We will continue to ground our efforts in relationships with community.

For Shift Lab 2.0, there has to be a way to have more clear support to help articulate the Indigenous process. This support could mean the Stewards being able to sit with Professor Dr. Friedland & Dr. Jobin, Elders and community members and say, "this is the next thing" and be open to feedback. Consultation is always an opportunity to do emergent work. This is a critical inclusion in our next iteration.

Mnemonic devices and their usefulness to Indigenous worldview and critical ability to maintain story and maintain value, practices, and tradition through the visualization of an object are important to think about. How can we take this skillset and transfer it to the skills of engaging in the lab? Would it be possible to have folks build something with their hands? We see a contemporary version of this with the moosehide campaign -- it's a mnemonic device to remind people of the story of men who are supporting women and want to lift women out of abusive relationships and it reminds men not to be violent to women. The square of moosehide is this symbol and device, it's a national one; how might we create or support a process to remind people not to be racist?



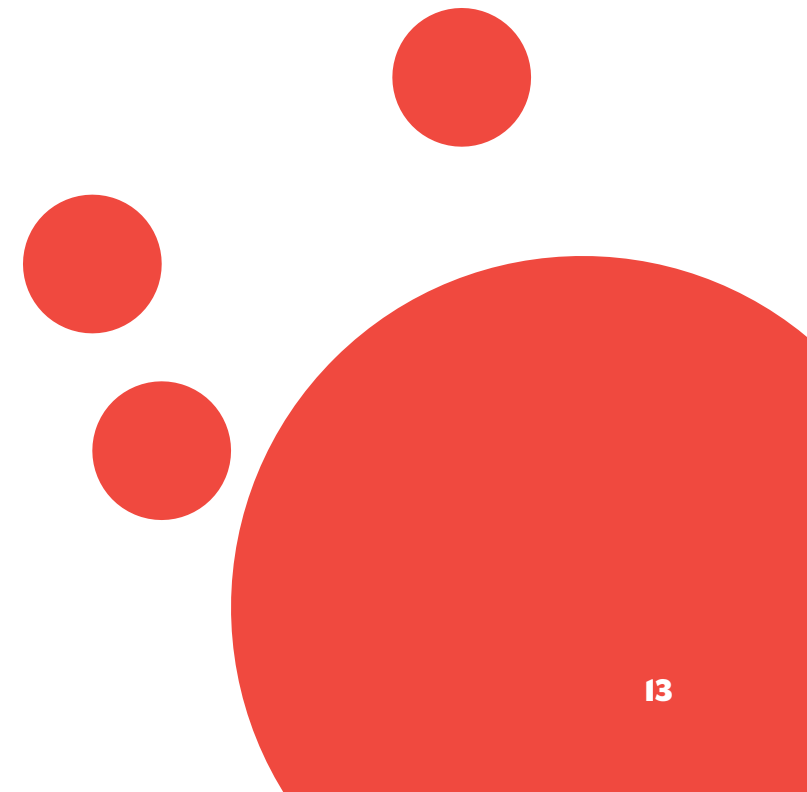
Elder Gilman Cardinal helped us launch the lab



One critical piece is ensuring that we have helpers. Eskapios in the Cree language are the helpers to elders. These folks, male or female, ensure that the right protocol is in place for you to do the work that you need to do and there are many different helpers: political, spiritual, and institutional. In order to engage meaningfully, Shift Lab 2.0 will engage helpers to ensure that Elders are engaged in process and also supporting the elders to ensure that they had the context in their own language around the work that we are intending to do. Another way to say this is: Eskapios are the experts of the genres. So whatever form of knowledge, advice, guidance we are accessing, it is really important to make sure we have the experts in that area, because sometimes people just glaze over the elders, but we have elders in different genres of study and making sure we have the right helpers meant that we have the right kind of support that we need. Pragmatically, they also make sure folks have food, water, and are looked after. That's also a very real role.

This is an exciting opportunity for me as a citizen of Treaty 6, as a learner of culture, and a learner of languages. This particular work of social innovation was an opportunity for me to learn a new language

and new cultural practice. And I think there is a really genuine exciting opportunity for Canadians and Indigenous people to come together to start tackling, wrestling with, and strategizing about how we are going to solve some of the deplorable issues of murdered and missing Indigenous women, children in care, and poverty and racism. Shift Lab 2.0 will be more explicit about our Indigenous process. We are going to articulate and find the moments where Indigenous process and social innovation can be explicated in a way that makes sense to both Indigenous people and innovators so we can sit together and start solving problems using a framework that we both understand. It's going to be contentious, it's going to be exhausting, but I'm sure we can all agree that tackling racism is of benefit to all of humanity. No one said making the world a beautiful place was going to be easy. Hiyhiy Nanaskamon, see you all in 2.0.



Want to be involved?

There are a number of ways to support and be involved with the Edmonton Shift Lab.

- Do you want to be a champion or host of one of our current or future prototypes?
- Are you a funder interested in exploring how to scale either the Shift Lab process or one of the prototypes?
- Do you work for an organization who is interested in connecting with us for some ethnographic research?

- Interested in participating as a Core team member?

If you answered “yes!” to any of these questions, get in touch: info@edmontonshiftlab.ca

To keep an eye on what we’re doing, check us out online (www.edmontonshiftlab.ca) or on Twitter (@YEGShiftLab).



MAKING
SHIFT
HAPPEN.