Design Lab
For a Well-being Economies Alliance Canada hub (WE All CAN)

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER 2020
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## Acknowledgments

This lab would not have been possible without the generous support of The McConnell Foundation.
The goal of the design lab for a Well-being Economies Alliance Canada hub (WE All CAN) was co-creation through generative dialogue. There were five sessions in the design lab, each tailored to enable participants to delve deeper into the thinking and doing of systems transformation. As well as three plenary sessions focused on origins, synthesis and action, participants were divided into smaller cohorts for two ‘deep dives’.

In these deep dives, participants were invited to imagine what paradigm shift might be required to transform Turtle Island’s economic ‘operating system’ as well as the action-enhancing architecture that would support the emergence of a new economic purpose. These smaller groups enabled the space for dialogue, dreaming and diversity of perspectives. The following visual shows the ‘milestones’ along the participant journey.

Rather than reproduce ‘meeting notes’, this illustrated record captures the essence of the design lab dialogues, through a synthesis of the common themes that emerged. In particular, it focuses on the ‘pillars of transformation’ that were identified by participants and which could become the foundations of the We ALL Can hub going forward.
A Re-imagined Purpose

Participants were asked “What could a radically re-imagined purpose of the economic system be? What can you barely dare to imagine?”

A range of common purposes emerged, summarised below.

**Thriving**
- A circular and regenerative economy, one that is iterative and gets better over time as we learn
- Reciprocity and regeneration
- The thriving of all beings and all life, not just humans
- Where families are thriving rather than barely surviving
- A culture that prioritises inner wellbeing
- A system that encourages and generates collective healing

**Connected to place**
- An economic system locally designed to redistribute goods so that all organisms can thrive and provide for future generations
- From land use to land relationships, where we are rooted and understand the relationship to family and land
- An alternative way to think about us in treaty with land, even in micro treaties in urban contexts
- We see parks and green roofs and community gardens everywhere
- We develop empathy with ecosystems and trees and water
- Sourced locally, used widely
- Rediscovering the commons and what it means to have access to commons and for the commons to be a priority

**Agency**
- Choice rather than being dictated to
- Transform people's own notions of power
- Un-trapping ourselves

**Diversity**
- People have a choice to belong to a variety of communities
- There is space for diversity, rather than standardisation
- A society based on respect for diversity and respect for everyone
- Changes occur the worldview/framing of how we think about diversity and pluralism

**Meaning**
- A world where people can find meaning and purpose in their lives - creativity, pleasure, spiritual reawakening
- A broader ingredient list beyond financially oriented ones - meaning in life, spirituality, self-expression, connections, relationships
A Re-imagined Purpose

“Going back to the land... we are the land.”
“What is your seed for the future?”

Pauses
- You can hear silence and the sounds are not of engines
- We’ve changed our vision of time
- There is no such thing as rush hour.

Equity
- All get a fair start in order to achieve collective aspirations
- A system that removes barriers to accessibility
- A system that recognises all forms of privilege
- Redistribution of wealth and income, of land

New ways of knowing and being
- We don’t tell people to think outside the box. We tell them to think inside the circle
- We no longer live in a society built on hierarchy (a triangle). We have moved to a circle
- Centrality of love – by helping people overcoming fear and moving towards love
- A shift in values and a shift in what we assume to be true creates new realities

Accountability
- There are planetary levels of accountability and transparency and through all levels of system
Equity. Your blood is the same as mine. It is no different.

Leadership as ‘transmitting energy and inspiration’.

Valuing human ways of connection as well as connections with each other and the land. It’s about returning to the land. We are the land.

Being playful, patient and listening to each other’s stories.

Start from a place of healing and repairing trust.

With relationships at the heart of the way we make change happen, versus a transactional approach of modern society.

Celebrate difference and recognise lived experience. People will have different reasons for joining the table and that is ok.

Holding to the quiet, stopping, listening, slowing down, decelerating. Dropping our egos and building on the ideas of people who were marginalised.

Creating the space to connect and imagine together – the invitation matters.

Pushing the boundaries of language and ways of communicating and ways of knowing.

There is such diversity even while, there is a universal experience of wellbeing.
Involution

By Kevin Sutton
Poet, facilitator, and freelance change-maker and WE All CAN lab participant

This is how I fill my lungs, every breath a new step a new life begun a new song sung every exhale endorses gale forces in the natural course of the setting sun in the twilight arises keen sight, one last full moon lights one last silent night in the coming dark the healer grips his staff, tired of tending wounds he seeks a peace that lasts with each stride a path through the dusk unfolds a rising tide inside a new story is told he shifts his grip in the face of a script unknown a burning seed sown now a warrior grown with heart and mind instead of sword and shield because a man is only wounded by the weapons he wields This is how I get my way make universal service my purpose every day create change every verse rehearses like a lyrical circus that converts these words into the way that I pray in the same way I play engage in fair trade pay waiting in grace for cycles to come back my way the warrior healer feels his spirit lift feels the underlying essence of the earth’s surface shift voices rise with eyes that see through lies and the few that rule feel their walls shake with war cries warrior healer sense deep fear on both sides the real point gets lost when their own points collide because if I point one finger three fingers point back at me because there’s no room for blame in a quantum cosmic tapestry This is how I answer that call how the earth revolves as global conflict resolves then our species can evolve anger and tears cannot make the case clear it’s time to face fears and treat all beings as peers what if all soldiers were educated as social engineers what if mothers ran government with all teachers revered what if the warrior healer within each of us emerged what if greed and aggression as motives were purged what if the value of life to which each of us clings was in yearning to learn why the caged bird sings what if warrior healers were what children dreamed to be what if trust in god could be between you and me what if caring and forgiving were cool ways to be what if our paper money was worth more as a tree

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Pillars of Transformation

Across the design lab, participants explored emerging narratives, seeds of the future, re-imagined purpose and shifting the underlying paradigms of the current system. Through these conversations, a series of ‘pillars’ emerged that can inform both the enabling architecture and the action agenda of the hub.

They have been synthesised in to the seven pillars below:

1. Embracing **story telling**
2. Building **new narratives**
3. Embedding diversity, pluralism and **different ways of knowing**
4. Holding **the circle**
5. Balancing **fast and slow**
6. Building on **what already exists**
7. Designing for distributed agency and **momentum**

*The combination of fast and slow components makes the system resilient, along with the way the differently paced parts affect each other. Fast learns, slow remembers. Fast proposes, slow disposes. Fast is discontinuous, slow is continuous. Fast and small instructs slow and big by accrued innovation and occasional revolution. Slow and big controls small and fast by constraint and constancy. Fast gets all our attention, slow has all the power. All durable dynamic systems have this sort of structure; it is what makes them adaptable and robust.*

*The Clock Of The Long Now: Time and Responsibility*
Steward Brand Basic Books 1999
Pillars of Transformation

1  Embracing storytelling

How do we bring in the new storytellers?
Indigenous laws/lores and ethics come from our stories.
Our stories are embedded in our whole selves and a new framework for Turtle Island.

We need to:
• Create an inclusive process for articulating what a successful society looks like
• Tell stories using art in all of its forms to connect to people’s hearts and souls and embody and take on what this could be
• Share stories where people can see themselves in the opportunity and potential, through ceremony. By witnessing, there’s a responsibility to share more broadly
• Establish network of ‘influencers’ to share narratives – e.g. teachers, athletes, each other, movie makers

2  Building new narratives

How do we retire old narratives and create new ones?
Everybody’s story is just as important.

We need to:
• Create narratives about what we mean by a wellbeing economy and the many ways this is talked about and enacted
• While we might seek a unifying message and narrative, we must remember we are not trying to homogenize language or use only one metaphor. Whether “house, bubble, container, spider web”: we are all talking about the same thing and using different words - we need to create a big house, with so many of us - each using our own words and our own stories. Not just one tent or one story
• Build new narratives by using language of invitation and intention, ceremony and engagement

3  Embedding diversity, pluralism and different ways of knowing

What might it mean to embed diversity and bring together different knowledge systems and ways of knowing, especially indigenous knowledges and cultures?
How do we instill this cultural framework in every aspect of what we are doing?

We need to:
• Focus on how ‘decolonising’ our minds, beliefs and language can make new realities possible
• Look to the foundations of indigenous ways of knowing, relating and governance - recognising that we need to build back from thousands of years of ways of seeing and knowing of First Peoples
• Incorporate the work of inner transformation (indigenous world views, spirit, shift of mindsets), as well as systems change
Pillars of Transformation

4

Holding the circle

How does the hub become a safe place to gather in circle and allow for trust and belonging and exploring? What would our ceremony be?

We need to:

• Be intentional about place and physically create spaces to allow for connection and groundedness - to each other, to space and place. This means getting out of classrooms, boardrooms, offices - the places we feel safe - and moving to other places where we can feel the earth, touch the water, connect with land, otherwise it is all just theory

• Find ways to engage the many people who are too traumatised by the situation we want to change, or who are engaged in surviving each day, putting food on the table and invite them to step in to the conversation

• Create a ceremonial space of a big house – the physical space of a house is relatable to everybody.

We must ask “what is our duty and responsibility within the house? What are our roles, how are we contributing?”

• Ask indigenous groups to share their positive working models to help us move to a different type of action

• Center different voices and be open to different perspectives, not just those with privilege. Ensure that black and indigenous communities are leading this work

• Learn how to listen – a new type of democracy

• Create safe spaces for truthful, open, diverse conversations, trust and authenticity, a place to share our trials and tribulations and embark on learning journeys

• Enable truth telling and emotional resiliency by holding in discomfort and supporting bravery

• Create wellbeing as we do the work - for ourselves and others, so we are modeling it.

• Build supports so people can remain present in the circle

5

Balancing fast and slow

There is an awareness and a grappling with a real sense of urgency to do this quickly.

There is a recognition of the need to both fast and slow and avoid being reductive.

We need to:

• Create an emergent strategy that has enough flexibility to evolve and be co-created more widely over time as the network of authors increases

• Allow for different groups to work at different speeds – the alliances we create to help us build capacity once we’ve defined wellbeing will include champions, artists, politicians and each will have a different pace

• Hold spaces for conversation while taking action at the same time

• Slow down to build relationships (authenticity, mutuality, respect)

• Allow time for addressing inter-beingness and ceremony
Pillars of Transformation

6 Building on what already exists
How do we learn from what has been done?
What moves people, and what’s been missing to date?
We need to:
• Work with what exists whilst simultaneously building new structures that make existing ones obsolete and allow something new to emerge
• Learn from the past
• Learn from other experiences (SDGs, New Zealand, Bhutan)
• Map out who is measuring and discussing well-being in Canada? What are we learning? Why is this important for us to consider shifting to a well-being economy? What has been done and what moves people?

7 Designing for distributed agency and momentum
Our desire is to be inclusive and pluralistic. There are so many localised wellbeing initiatives and we want to connect across and build coherence.
How might we connect across and empower those that are already part of the well-being movement?
We need to:
• Clarify principles and goals but let people define the scoping for themselves, including boundaries
• Become a collaborative as a movement of movements - by mapping and then inviting related players to share their work and express their needs in creating a wellbeing economy in partnership with others.
• Encourage those who have been in collective action - whether they have been seeking change in their community or national policies - to hosting talking circles / ceremonies
• Create a mechanism to bring insights from these talking circles back to inform a larger group
• Create guiding principles for those ceremonies / talking circles (safe, respectful)
• Create high level guidance by answering FAQs on what is wellbeing / wellbeing economy/ measures to define success. These will guide and be further fleshed out through the talking circle conversations.
Who Are We Inviting Into The Circle?

In hearing from Dr David Suzuki, participants were reminded of the power and urgency of inviting in to the conversation those from very different worlds and worldviews.

On the question of who else needs to be invited in to the ‘circle’ of the hub, there was consensus that diversity and inclusiveness are key. This includes inviting people with different perspectives and views than our own.

Suggestions on who the hub should engage with included:

- Those engaged to help decide the ‘ingredients’ of the hub
- Those who would benefit, including the systemically disadvantaged
- Our networks of likeminded others
- Young people moving in to future positions of power and privilege
- Private sector and mainstream business
- Finance Canada
- All Canadians
- Champions from across the political spectrum
- Allied think tanks
- Allies who desire change beyond the status quo
- Those sitting ‘across the aisle’ with opposing political views
- Others who may think differently than we do
Invited into the kitchen
A gathering of grandmothers hovering over the stove
Relationships are the starting place
The stock exchanged is in the chicken broth, differences of opinion in a beautiful blend of flavours
What helps move beyond this hub?
What shares and moves building out through the diversity of the world?
Welcoming
Relationship with the land is global
Re-establishing ourselves with land and nature and spaces, services, principles, and connection
Respect the land
The key ingredient of the interactions that is needed to transform and give the broth its healing properties
How do you artfully blend perspectives? Ah, this is the cooking of it
Accepting differences in harmony
Acknowledging an imperfect consensus

At the center of the conflict, the grandmothers tend the differences and demands
To shift and grow the tent, they add love
There is a fear of losing love that breeds disharmony
We all rail against it in our separate ways
But in that we are common
We find the collective in individuals
The is the hub
The shared vision
The grandmothers invest in their vision
Allow space for differences to be exchanged in harmony
To be welcomed and reframed
To include many ways forward toward the unknown
Thinking of this as a healing does not mean the pain will disappear
It means the hub is a place of resilience
As we come together to go through what we’re going through

Just recovery
Stop speaking
Just listening
Understand
The flourishing of human potential is more than resilience
How do we get to that place of redistribution of responsibilities that hold it all together
for an equitable distribution across
Questions

Alternative approaches to power
Q Does power ever unseat itself?
Q Do we need to get governments involved? How?
Q Or is this something that will emerge from the margins?
Q How do we scale up from the local level?

Time
Q How could our relationship with time be different in wellbeing economies?

The role of the sacred
Q What might be the place or role of the sacred in wellbeing economies?

The thriving wellbeing of all life
Q What might the definition and meaning of the ‘thriving wellbeing of all life’ be?

Civil disobedience
Q Does this have a role and what would that look like?
   How do we honour that space?

Leverage points
Q Do policies matter? Or are there many other ways to create transformation?
Q Of the leverage points available to us, what are our priorities?

Capacity and readiness
Q What are the abilities needed to work at the individual and systems level?

Decision making
Q How do we design and imagine the parameters of a wellbeing economy so they infuse decisions at all levels?

While there were many suggestions throughout the dialogue, participants also grappled with a range of questions, many of which may inform the learning journey of the hub going forward.
Across the design lab, participants were generous in sharing references, readings, videos and other resources in the zoom chat. These have been collated below.

Book Club

Tsawalk: an indigenous approach to local crisis – Umeek / E. Richard Atleo
Reference Link

The Makarrata Project Out Now
Midnight Oil
Reference Link

Anthropocene: The Human Epoch
The Anthropocene Project
Reference Link

Makers Valley Partnership's Response To The Impact Of Covid-19 In The Valley
Reference Link

Criterion Institute
Reference Link

Cognitive Edge – The Children's Party Story introduces the nature of systems and complexity through the use of a simple metaphor that resonates widely
Reference Link

The Clock Of The Long Now
Time and responsibility
Reference Link

Timescapes of Modernity - Barbara Adam
Reference Link

Dialogue: The Art Of Thinking Together
Sand Talk - William Issacs
Reference Link

Property Rights / Property Wrongs: Micro-Treaties with the Earth
Reference Link

Building Better Systems – A Green Paper on System Innovation
From ROCKWOOL Foundation by Charlie Leadbeater and Jennie Winhall
Reference Link

New paper on systems change and gender: Bridging fields of feminist systems: ecosystems for gender equity
Systems Sanctuary
Reference Link

Bayo Akomolafe
Reference Link

SEWA
Reference Link

YouTube video of Elder Albert speaking on two-eyed seeing
(he's also written a number of academic articles on the concept as well)
Reference Link

Cultura Bank in Sweden. The model is quite close to the example of ‘open banking’. 
Reference Link

A quality piece on mutual aid/banking
Reference Link

Emergent Strategy – Adrienne Maree Brown
Reference Link

Also relevant to discussion of shared values
Reference Link

Loss Leader – No One Is Coming To Rescue Us
Siri Agrell
Reference Link

Reference Link

Reference Link

Reference Link

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