



# Urban Well-being Prototypes Report

# Introduction

## **The Prototypes Apply the Well-being Framework**

RECOVER's Well-Being framework is being used to design and test new interventions or practices targeted towards strengthening one or several of the well-being outcomes. The prototypes focus on people with lived experience, use research and empathy to get insight into what can be meaningfully done to help improve their well-being, as well as the systems that get in the way of that. Through experimentation, participants better understand the opportunity to intervene and have impact, including specifics, such as what kind of interactions are effective for whom and under what circumstances.

Through co-creating ideas alongside the local community, RECOVER has been developing and testing out prototypes since 2018. Over the last six months, RECOVER Urban Well-being has supported eight prototypes. All the prototypes are "owned" by external stakeholders. The prototype teams were each made up of different members, some of which were community members, some from partner agencies. RECOVER Catalyst Group members supported some of them. Some of these have their origins in earlier prototypes from 2018 and 2019; others are much newer. They are all at different stages and with different focus areas. They all have yielded learning that can inform future actions.

## **Thank You**

Improving community well-being and solving complex problems involves the kind of testing described in this document. We are deeply grateful to all the people who have led and contributed to the prototypes in this document. Thank you to REACH, InWithForward, Naheyawin, MacEwan University, community leaders, community volunteers, Edmonton City Centre, the Downtown Business Association, Green Violin, Candora Society, The Neighbour Centre, The Nook -- and the street involved people who shared their stories and gave input along the way. Finally, thank you to the Catalyst Group members who also gave their time - providing advice and making connections.

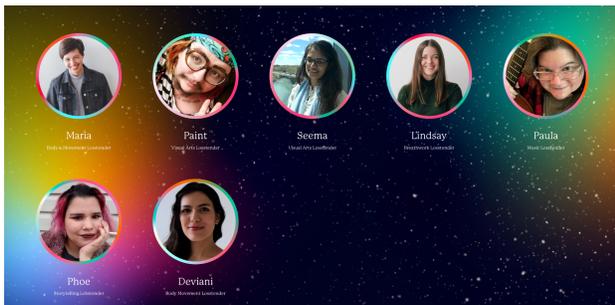
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## The Context

Across 59 ethnographic stories of street-involved adults spending time in Edmonton’s inner city and south side between 2017-19, profound experiences of loss & grief were the common thread. Inadequately acknowledged losses, with little to no space for mourning, were often a catalyst to chronic crisis -- to repeated housing evictions, stalled addiction recovery, and relationship breakdown. And this was before the pandemic turned loss of life, work, rituals, freedom, and certainty into our collective realities.



Enter Soloss. Soloss is a network of Edmontonians legitimizing and destigmatizing loss and grief. By bearing witness to loss in all its forms and giving grief a concrete form -- as paintings, objects, songs, dances, meditations and stories -- Soloss seeks to foster a deep sense of respect, connectedness, and meaning.

Early prototyping evidence shows that when we pause to recognize loss, and mark the moment, together, as fellow humans -- not as professionals or experts -- we can start to bridge class, race and religious divides and lay the groundwork for individual and collective healing.

## The Solution, In Brief

Soloss is community care for loss and grief, offering peer-to-peer support and the co-creation of individual and neighbourhood healing rituals.

Peer support +	Expression & Embodiment	+ Local Activations	= Personal & Cultural Change
Soloss supports a new peer role, the Losstender, who connects with fellow Edmontonians with experience of loss & grief.	Losstenders draw on art, music, storytelling, dance & breathwork practices to explore healing of the mind, body and spirit.	Soloss organizes local events and ceremonies that bring communities together to honour loss and make room for healing.	Soloss measures success at an individual and neighbourhood level, including greater sense of respect, solidarity, and social support, as a result of shifting the public narrative of grief and loss.

## The Problem It Addresses

Soloss addresses **disenfranchised grief**, recognizing that when loss & grief is minimized & sidelined, it can fuel depression, isolation, addiction, eviction, and further marginalization.

*“Disenfranchised grief...results when a person experiences a significant loss and the resultant grief is not openly acknowledged, socially validated or publicly mourned. In short, although the individual is experiencing a grief reaction, there is no social recognition that the person has a right to grieve or a claim for social sympathy or support.” - Kenneth Doka*

Isolation and Dislocation	Addiction and Eviction	Exclusion and Inequity	Stigma and Shame	Gap in intercultural supports
When loss isn't recognized, and there are few if any outlets for proactively grieving, we're left feeling lonely, isolated and both socially & emotionally dislocated. Psychosocial dislocation is a contributing factor in depression, burnout and addiction.	Forced to bear the pain of unacknowledged grief on their own, many retreat inward, seeking to numb the pain. Pain, trauma, substance misuse, and houselessness too often go together.	So much disenfranchised grief is the product of colonialism, racism, prejudice and discrimination. Repeated injustices, and erasure of language, culture, family and identity compound to deepen a sense of otherness, outsidership, and continued marginalization.	Seeking help can carry its own baggage, especially in communities where talk-based, clinical mental health care is culturally misaligned and where the pathologizing language of mental health creates conflict.	Grief is a universal human experience, but there is no one way to grieve. Dominant, Western culture treats grief as if it's all in our heads. We're told to grin & bear it, and if we can't, to seek help. Typical therapeutic help is professionalized and talk-based. There are few <i>free</i> , art or movement based options for adults, rooted in diverse cultural practices, and focused on the intersection of the mind, body, and spirit.

### Relation to RECOVER's Well-being Framework

Underpinning Soloss is the belief that we, as fellow humans, are capable of responding to each other's grief and connecting across lines of difference. We come from a plurality of rich traditions to help us journey through grief together; however, western culture has in many ways strayed from the traditions and rituals that nourish well-being as connection and interdependence.

**Targeted Outcomes:** Sharers and Losstenders experience greater sense of balance and connection to at least one of the six domains.

**Tools/Levers:** All the levers:

- **Frames & Narratives:** Soloss brings disenfranchised grief and loss out into the open, shifting the storyline from one of isolation and shame to solidarity and healing.
- **Knowledge & Meanings:** Soloss recognizes and draws on healing practices from across cultural, religious and disciplinary traditions.
- **Routines & Repertoires:** Soloss creates healing artifacts and rituals at an individual and neighbourhood level.
- **Interactions & Environments:** Soloss brokers horizontal, peer-to-peer relationships in people's own natural environments.
- **Roles:** Soloss values lived experiences of grief and loss, and offers flexible, paid work for individuals poorly served by the traditional labour market.
- **Incentives:** Soloss works with social services and workplaces to reduce barriers to access and support widespread use.

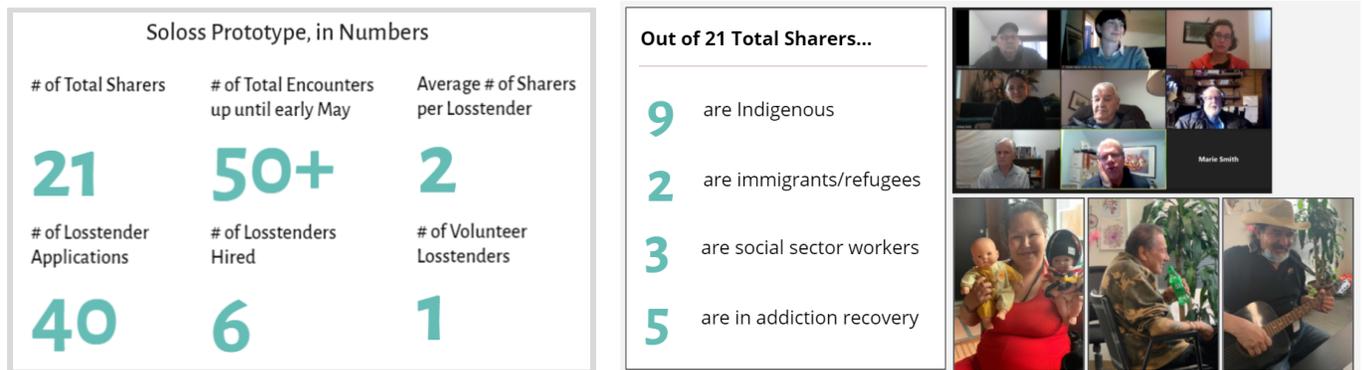
## What We Tried

- 1) **A new paid role, hiring process, and virtual onboarding:** We hired seven people into the role of Losstender (six paid and one volunteer), testing the framing and attractiveness for the role, hiring criteria, a week of onboarding interactions, 1:1 coaching, and a cohort support model. Our objective was to attract a diverse pool of applicants, learn what makes a good Losstender, for whom, and why, as well as what's required to strengthen and monitor non-professionals in this role.
- 2) **Recruitment methods and value propositions:** We reached out to fellow Edmontonians experiencing grief and loss through pop-up plant stands in front of transit stations, at a social housing complex, and in a supermarket parking lot. We door knocked, ran a social media campaign, and connected with existing community & cultural groups in the Belvedere neighbourhood. The aim was to test five different value propositions, and learn how to bring grief and loss out into the open, as part of a visible public narrative.
- 3) **Intercultural guidance:** To deepen learning and community connection, we put together a Sounding Board of [11 Edmontonians](#) with backgrounds in grief and loss and distinct knowledge traditions, professional roles, and perspectives. Sounding board members played the role of critical friend and relationship brokers, connecting directly with Losstenders to offer intercultural and interdisciplinary guidance, frameworks, and techniques.
- 4) **Supporting tools & frameworks:** To give Losstenders some grounding and practical support, we tested an online database of conversation and reflective prompts, community resources, and a notebook for recording observations and changes over time.

**5) A visual identity and language:** Because Soloss seeks to shift both personal and cultural narratives, we developed a distinct brand identity, visual language, and lexicon to transparently talk about grief and loss, in all of its textures and shades.

## Who We Engaged

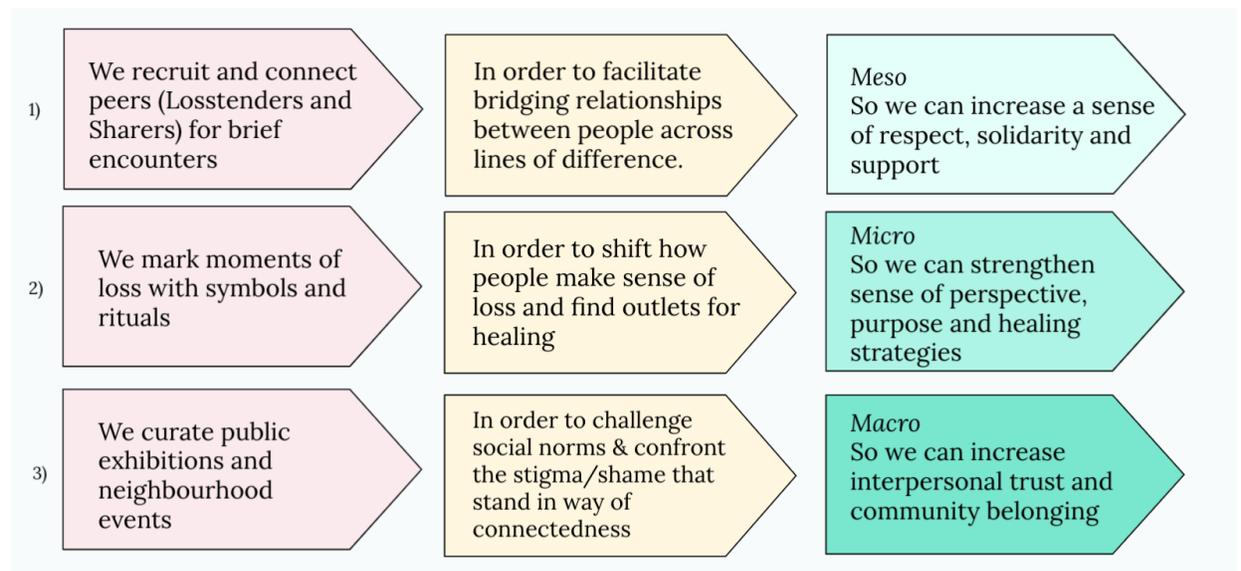
Over the 10-week experience prototype, from mid-February to April 2021, we deeply engaged 39 community members as Losstenders, Sharers, and Sounding Board Members and lightly engaged 300 community members through our hiring process, social media campaigns, recruitment pop-ups and door knocking.



## What Changed

Evaluative interviews with Losstenders and Sharers furnish early evidence for the Soloss theory of change, especially at the micro and meso levels.

## Soloss Theory of Change



At the micro level, both Losstenders and Sharers report that the process increased their sense of worth and afforded a greater sense of meaning and purpose. At the meso level,

Losstenders reported shifting their attitudes and understanding of fellow Edmontonians, especially those living at the margins. Because of pandemic restrictions, we have not been able to fully test neighbourhood exhibitions and events, or measure longer-term shifts in the broader community narrative around grief, loss, and belonging.

## We've Learned

Prototypes are designed to test four elements: (1) attractiveness, (2) engagement, (3) impact, and (4) resourcing requirements. From this initial prototype, we believe Soloss is a promising intervention that can be taken forward to proof of concept and scale.

<b>Attractiveness</b>	The Losstender is an attractive role and employment opportunity that is a good fit for individuals facing barriers to employment, who might be experiencing long-term separation from the labour market.
<b>Engagement</b>	Soloss engages a wide range of population groups — from Indigenous community members to those in addiction recovery to refugees & immigrants to students to social service workers experiencing compassion fatigue and burnout. This last segment, social service workers, was a surprising finding.
<b>Impact</b>	Brief interventions like Soloss can be effective in fostering the conditions for healing. Our prototype supports a growing literature base on the efficacy of short, community-based interventions.
<b>Resourcing Requirements</b>	To operate Soloss, across at least three neighbourhoods a year, will require some backbone infrastructure. At least two staff roles -- a lead practitioner and a community coordinator -- are necessary, along with ongoing design & research support. We believe these roles should be supported by a partnership structure, bringing together stakeholders from the arts, healing, and social service sectors.

## Value to Edmonton

Soloss is a timely intervention in the wake of a global crisis that has disrupted the way we live as well as provoking a broader conversation about how we support each other through challenges to our mental health, but it was also designed to address a yawning gap in Edmonton's pre-pandemic status quo. Alongside professional services, Soloss is a way to catalyze and support community-based responses to the most common of non-material challenges: loss.

### (1) Soloss maximizes community resources.

Soloss builds on underutilized, existing community resources; sometimes even turning a perceived deficit into an asset:

- *People:* Soloss hires diverse Edmontonians as Losstenders, not on the strength of their resumes, but based on how they have navigated their most difficult losses. Losstenders included discouraged workers and under-employed artists who reported that Soloss built their self-confidence, opened up new career directions, and helped them to make connections across cultural and class differences for the first time.
- *Infrastructure:* Soloss has discussed partnership with Edmonton Public Library to bring Losstending into libraries to use their fantastic spaces and equipment for making and moving! It also uses parks and, post pandemic, other community spaces.
- *Social service complement:* Many of the individuals engaged through Soloss are clients of social support programs, such as addiction and housing services. Soloss allowed them to build bridges to community, establish their own healing practices, and bring family, friends, and support staff around them to commemorate their grief & healing.

## **(2) Soloss is an exemplary model of community care.**

Soloss is an example of a distinct, but lacking, piece of social infrastructure. Sounding Board member and PhD candidate Salima Versi, a psychotherapist and a Canadian Certified Counsellor with a master's degree in Counselling Psychology, sees Soloss as a great model of what community care can look like. Versi argues that professional services cannot replace the value of community care and support. Optimally, she argues, counselling clients would all have access to the experience Soloss offers, which reinforces organic ties to place and culture, through a common human experience.

## **(3) Soloss works systemically to shift outcomes at the level of culture and community.**

Soloss aims to introduce new conversations and understandings of grief and loss among Edmontonians, strengthen the capacity of communities to respond to individual and collective loss when it happens (upstream), and shift systems' practices, policies, and resource flows to more effectively support the resilience of citizens experiencing loss.

## Where to From Here

To take Soloss forward, we are looking to ...

1. **Build a partnership governance model**, with anchor organizations from social services, the arts, and the healing sector.
2. **Secure the resources to grow Soloss over the next three years**, to operate in at least nine neighbourhoods. Operating costs for Soloss are estimated around \$275K a year, enabling 24 Losstenders to be hired and 250+ community members to be engaged.
3. **Invest in the backbone systems, tools, and website necessary for Soloss to operate at scale**, and be a replicable model in other jurisdictions. Start-up costs are estimated around \$50K, and over three years, we believe cost recovery is likely through a monetization strategy including workshops, paid newsletters and training offers.



## The Context - Basic Thinking Behind the Prototype

Increasingly countries, cities and communities around the globe want to know if people are happy and well. Current methods try to quantify happiness and well-being using standardized scales or generic indicators (like access to parks or primary care doctors). But, the indicators don't tell us how happy or well people *feel* and standardized scales hold different meanings to different people based on their own lived experiences.



Ancient and intuitive wisdom tells us that well-being is about more than the absence of illness or the presence of material things. Well-being is personal, rooted in the different connections we feel: to ourselves and our bodies, to the land, to family and community, to the sacred, to culture, and to the human project of finding purpose and self-actualization.

We know that many individuals, particularly those from marginalized groups, face systemic barriers to participating in these sorts of civic processes and that "data collection" as it's typically practiced has a long history of extraction and exploitation. We respectfully acknowledge that Indigenous Peoples of these lands have long been the objects of research that has taken 'data' out of context to tell stories that reflect researchers' beliefs and philosophies, often dehumanizing and reflecting at best partial understandings that reduce the complexity of culture. That kind of research becomes a tool of colonization which Indigenous peoples have long resisted by continuing to tell their own stories, and assign their own meanings to those stories. We seek to discontinue that legacy.

The central question for this prototype is: what would it look like for a city to engage citizens in more humble and authentic ways, deeply listening and understanding what well-being means to them?

## Relation to RECOVER's Well-being Framework

**Targeted Outcomes:** connections to community and the human project

**Tools/Levers:** knowledge & meanings, frames & narratives, and roles & resources

### What We Did

- Researched well-being and happiness measures being used around the world
- Engaged in learning around decolonizing data
- Created a public-facing website, brand identity, and narrative
- Created a new role called a Local Listener, recruited and oriented ten people from the Alberta Ave area to respectfully and warmly engage neighbours who might experience barriers to participation
- Recruited a Sounding Board made-up of scholars and practitioners, with a background in community-based research, well-being, data visualization, and intercultural approaches to data ownership and sense-making.

### What We Learned

- Measures are often driven by infrastructure planning decisions and not directly related well-being
- Commonly used terms, including “well-being” & “wellness” are not well defined and are subjective. Existing measures give the illusion of certainty and validity.
- Context of data is lost
- Broad surveying and averaging practices eliminate nuance and localized findings
- There is no single truth to uncover; instead, there are multiple truths and infinite ways of being and knowing in the world. We're not trying to collapse these into one, dominant story, but learn how to attend to many experiences.
- Well-being is personal, rooted in the different connections we feel: to ourselves and our bodies, to the land, to family and community, to the sacred, to culture, and to the human project of finding purpose and self-actualization.
- There is a great deal of curiosity about this particular prototype from others in the City of Edmonton organization who are also wrestling with measurement and evaluation. There is a particularly interesting applicability of the learnings that emerge from this prototype to the District Planning work currently being developed to support the implementation of the City Plan.

## **Where to From Here**

Ten “Local Listeners” are recruiting and talking to people from all walks of life in the Alberta Avenue neighbourhood, inviting them to both offer a story and tell us what their story means. The Listeners are gathering short stories about well-being from 10-20 different community members each, and spending two weeks cataloguing their own wellness by responding to prompts using an app. This work will take place over the course of summer 2021. Sensemaking and data analysis will occur in September/October, including the creation of a well-being dashboard.

# Old Strathcona Neighbours Project

## The Context - Basic Thinking Behind the Prototype

The Old Strathcona Neighbours Project is community led, and is being done in partnership with The Neighbour Centre. It formed in 2019, after learning that there are people on the southside/Strathcona area who are looking for work on a regular basis, and there are businesses and neighbours in the area willing to support them. We have been exploring ways to bridge the divide between housed and unhoused neighbours through opportunities for casual work.

After several months of prototyping in 2019-2020, we quickly learned that our challenge was not about providing jobs to create community, but about creating community through a variety of means (which could include jobs).



Our plans for 2020 included community dinners, presentations at community leagues and business associations, and more time spent at the Neighbours Centre. We wanted to meet with unhoused community members, community groups, and business associations to better understand what stakeholders were looking for in building a community. Of course, everything changed. While public health restrictions limit our ability to work on our prototype in the way we had hoped, we are determined to continue exploring the question at the core of our social innovation mission: how do we build a community where everyone has the opportunity to contribute to their community, build relationships with their neighbours, and be valued for their presence?

## Relation to RECOVER's Well-being Framework

**Targeted Outcomes:** connection to community and the human project

**Tools/Levers We Are Using:** roles & resources, and routines & repertoires

## What We Did

- We prototyped early concepts in 2019.
- The COVID public health restrictions put a pause on all of our work in 2020. However, we continued to virtually meet on a weekly basis to work on our social innovation journey.

- Secured a Social Innovation Canada grant to tell our story. We spent weeks recording our experience since the very beginning of our prototyping journey up to this moment. Not only did this allow for us to pause and reflect on the past, but it made us recognize some interesting “aha!” moments we had overlooked.
- When we were able, we connected with community members at the Neighbour Centre, maintaining connections through arts and activities.

## **What We Learned**

- Through planning and running the prototype, our thinking about the true meaning of the project evolved. We realized that the question was not about how to connect community members through jobs, but about how community can be built through a variety of means, including through odd jobs.
- Planning a prototype is a valuable exercise, but executing it is an entirely different, and extremely beneficial, activity. We found the holes in our concept, made appropriate changes, and developed a more robust approach that considers the needs of everyone taking part.
- Establishing trust between the participant, business, and The Neighbours Project is going to be the linchpin for success.

## **Where to From Here**

We plan to focus on what community building really means, and how we can bridge divides between neighbours of different socio-economic statuses through different means.

# The Gallery

## The Context - Basic Thinking Behind the Prototype

The Gallery is a place-based prototype that is focused on the sidewalk space on the north side of Edmonton City Centre, on 102A Avenue, between 100 and 101 Street.

The Gallery seeks to bring together people experiencing the downtown space from different perspectives, often in tension; specifically, members of the business community and street involved Edmontonians.



The Gallery is being done in partnership with the Downtown Business Association, Edmonton City Centre, Boyle Street Community Services, and the Neighbourhood Empowerment Team. Norma Spicer, Jacquelyn Cardinal, and Jan Fox from the Catalyst Group have also provided support.

The goal of this prototype is to explore how a streetscape can play a role in supporting more authentic connections in the sidewalk space or even through elements in the space. The main question it tackles is how it can become a space that brings them into healthier relationships with each other. More specific things we hope to learn include:

- What makes for a good encounter, for whom?
- What grows motivation to engage, despite discomfort?
- Who are our champions?

The basic thinking behind the prototype is that experiencing a moment of connection with someone with which they currently experience tension could unlock possibilities. It's also about changing the narrative around tension - that it isn't inherently bad, that it shouldn't stop us from connecting. Finally, it is about practicing new behaviours.

## Relation to RECOVER's Well-being Framework

**Targeted Outcomes:** We are hoping to strengthen the community and culture connections.

**Tools/Levers:** We are intentionally trying to pull the roles & resources, and frames & narratives levers.

## **What We Did So Far**

Lighting and art have been installed. The art is made by street-involved, Indigenous artists and features their stories of how their connection to culture, to making the art has nurtured them and connects them to family and community. We have been meeting to identify our key assumptions, key interactions to explore, key questions, to make plans for testing programming options in the space, and timing. Jacquelyn Cardinal from Naheyawin has drafted a framework for a series of “Surprising Office Events”, targeted at the business community and those who have lived experience with marginalization. The hope is that these events would be opportunities for these two groups to practice connecting in spite of tensions.

## **What We Learned**

- We have learned that we need to be very careful not to get too caught up in planning the physical elements of the space, that we also need to think hard about the connections we are hoping to nurture, the relational aspects.
- We have learned that we really need to focus our efforts on specific people and interactions, that this place-based experiment cannot be all-encompassing.
- We have learned that navigating the City’s bureaucratic requirements is difficult.
- We have learned that we have to wait to run “meat” of our experiment until COVID restrictions ease and more people return to downtown.

## **Where to From Here**

We will offer some “Surprising Office Events” targeted at the business community and those who have lived experience with marginalization - in July and August of 2021. We hope to try at least six programming options in the space to learn about what ideas work, or which parts of ideas work, for whom, and under what circumstances.



exploring “the soul space.” So that they could be supported on their journey towards fostering a sense of greater well-being in themselves.

As the prototype team continued its explorations through conversations with service organizations, together with a deep dive as a prototype team into more deeply understanding the well-being framework, a new narrative emerged.

Much of the work in the social services sector has been rooted in the notion of being trauma Informed. However, in understanding that the well-being framework is attuned towards assets, as opposed to deficits, the existing orientation of organizations towards being trauma Informed, further perpetuates notions of separation and othering. Seeing people primarily through their trauma narrows the possibilities available to both the service provider, and the person receiving services. As a result, this prototype team has begun to use the language of being healing Informed, where addressing grief and trauma is one step on the healing journey, but is not the destination in and of itself.

To test out this notion of influencing organizations towards being healing Informed, the prototype team offered two workshops for staff of the Candora Society. The first workshop was designed around introducing unlearning practices, to open up the space for staff to think about their challenges differently. The second workshop was designed around introducing the well-being framework.

## **What We Learned**

The prototype team is learning that the notion of organizations and institutions moving from being trauma Informed, towards being healing Informed, has the potential to be transformational. Healing Informed Care has the potential to open up space for care to be done in reciprocal and relational ways, so that the power balance between the receiver of service and the practitioner of service can be more level. It opens up space to imagine different futures, one in which a person who has experienced trauma has healed, and is flourishing.

We’re also learning that in order for the well-being framework to really come alive for people, it helps to set the stage with opening rituals, and with conversations about what well-being means to people as individuals. For the prototype team’s second workshop with Candora, the team invited participants to come to the meeting “with an object that for you, represents well-being.” People brought an array of objects with them, each of which could be linked to at least one of the well-being outcomes. In addition, by playing [\*The Good Life Game\*](#), workshop participants were able to reflect on the aspects of well-being that were meaningful for them. This opened up important space for the prototype team to introduce

the well-being framework, provide a real life example of how the outcomes may be met or harmed through *The Tale of Two Shelters*, and then, provided staff the opportunity to reflect on how the outcomes may or may not be realized through their existing programming.

This aligns with what RECOVER staff have noticed about the ways in which they have been successful or unsuccessful in socializing the well-being framework with other groups and organizations, both internal to and external from the City. People on the whole are very receptive to the well-being framework. But unless intentional time is taken -- as was the case with Candora -- to explore it deeply and personally, it's tricky for the framework to really come alive for people immediately in a way that would help them design their programs and services differently.

### **Where to From Here**

Candora is considering how to incorporate the well-being framework into their work, including the organization's evaluation framework. Staff at the Candora Society have also indicated that they are interested in hearing more about the original baby box idea, to see how the concept and ideas may be applicable to the work they do.

# The Green Violin Way

## The Context - Basic Thinking Behind the Prototype



Green Violin is a new not-for-profit developer of affordable housing in Edmonton, who wants to test new ways of engaging neighbours in the communities where they want to build affordable housing, and new ways of engaging potential residents, in the earliest stages of development planning.

Questions being explored include:

- How can we provide affordable housing that is well integrated into the surrounding neighbourhood?
- How can we use existing urban infill lots that are only 50 feet wide with infill apartments for affordable housing while providing community programming spaces for social connectivity between residents and neighbours?

Green Violin's objectives are:

- To increase the supply of much needed housing affordability while honoring the community needs and community voices and adding to neighbourhood well-being.
- To be present on the land (in the community) before determining where to place our projects; to be active on the land once we have identified it (vacant lot); and to direct the stewarding of the project in a good direction after construction is complete.
- To create the space for existing neighbours and new neighbours to find their Connection and Balance (while making room for each other) following the RECOVER Wellness Wheel.

## Relation to RECOVER's Well-being Framework

**Targeted Outcomes:** connection to body & self, community, and land & ground

**Tools/Levers:** interactions & environment, roles & resources, and routines & repertoires

## What We Did

The Green Violin team and RECOVER worked together to build out a series of storyboards to describe interactions with different audiences in the early development process. The storyboards described the interactions between;

- Green Violin and potential future residents - including needs assessment and design input.
- Green Violin, neighbours in a community with a lot proposed for development, and the vacant lot - includes a public, open-house style event with both information out and input collected from neighbours. The site will also have a community garden and demo models of potential development types to encourage community use of the site and engagement in the development process on an on-going basis (until construction).
- Green Violin and other developers - as the engagement process is built out through testing, a tool-kit is created to help other developers become better neighbours.

The storyboards were tested with various audiences along the way and refined. The refined boards were then presented to the RECOVER Catalyst Group for further feedback, relationship building and guidance for next steps.

## **What We Learned**

Housing is about more than four walls and a roof. It is about community. The physical housing is just the starting point; it takes care of basic human needs like sleep, food prep, safety of self, security of belongings, and toilet and cleaning needs. Other aspects related to housing are critical to fulfilling social needs, and affect how the person in the house goes about their life within their community after that. By providing community spaces where socialization can occur, we can combat social isolation.

## **Where to From Here**

The next step is to move into field testing. Green Violin has a vacant lot in the Parkdale neighbourhood where many of the neighbourhood engagement ideas will be tested. Green Violin has partnered with the Parkdale Community League for the community garden and has applied for the City's community garden grant to extend garden boxes onto Green Violin's lot. Informational signage is being designed for placement on the site, to keep neighbours informed. Three different demonstration units are being built for placement on the lot, representing different types of development Green Violin is proposing in the city.

# Socially Active Business Network

## The Context - Basic Thinking Behind the Prototype

Business owners are struggling with issues related to what is often called “social disorder” in and around their businesses, a situation that has been amplified now with COVID and pandemic conditions. Many business owners and managers have said that they want to move from complaining to being a part of the solution.



Today, more than ever, the corporate world is conscious of its social responsibility. There is understanding of the concept of the triple bottom line which consists of three elements: profit, the planet, and people. While there are numerous resources for the first two, there is less support for the social side of things, and most are focused on more removed transactions, such as donating money or volunteering, and not much about supporting the neighbourhoods and neighbours of businesses. The challenge is that many do not know what to do to help marginalized people and need support. The challenge is to connect and build a supportive community of business owners to collectively address and advocate for change relating to complex social issues that exist in our community.

We know that well-being is a whole community responsibility, and this network would support businesses in developing healthy, reciprocal relationships with marginalized members of our communities. The idea for a network is to offer support to members - training, scripts and other tools, as well as mentorship - to become more successful socially active businesses, experiencing more of the multiple kinds of profit. The idea is to bring people into conversations, figure out what their needs are and find ways to address them.

## Relation to RECOVER’s Well-being Framework

**Targeted Outcomes:** connection to community and the human project, for businesses, patrons, and those who may be seen as contributing to social disorder

**Tools/Lever:** roles & resources, interactions & environments, and frames & narratives

## What We Did

We created a platform for Edmonton businesses to help them to strengthen their triple bottom lines, starting with a website collecting information about who wants to be part of a network. It is a hub and community for advocacy and support.

In addition to the website, REACH and The Nook have worked to develop workshops and have done some small presentations. They are keen to dive into communications, engagement, and developing a working board.

## **What We Learned**

- There are wide-ranging ideas on what it means to be a socially conscious business.
- Personal beliefs and values, as well as cultural background and life experiences have a significant impact on the motivation for a business owner to adopt socially active business practices.
- Adopting sustainable socially active business practices requires connectedness to the community.
- Support to businesses is required to help overcome challenges.
- There are potential economic returns as well. The Socially Active Business Network could assist local businesses in developing business/service models that are not only mindful of, but also act and respond to the social and environmental needs of the community in which a business is a part.

## **Where to From Here**

Based on a positive first meeting with the Downtown Business Association, we are working towards establishing an information session for businesses. The next step will be the development of a working committee to take this to pilot implementation.

# School of Well-being

## The Context - Basic Thinking Behind the Prototype

In 2020, The Social Innovation Institute at MacEwan University and RECOVER drafted a strategy to bring together students and faculty at post-secondary institutions, as well as community stakeholders, to engage in learning and projects that would improve the well-being of Edmontonians. We are learning how to work with post secondary institutions to connect individuals, classrooms, and teams to RECOVER's well-being framework and prototypes.



The objectives of the strategy are to:

- Strengthen the partnership between RECOVER and post-secondary institutions.
- Build a larger pool of innovators equipped to engage in urban wellness projects.
- Build capacity of post secondaries to support scaling of prototypes and understanding of urban wellness.
- Better equip post secondary students with social innovation tools.

## Relation to RECOVER's Well-being Framework

**Targeted outcomes:** connection to community and the human project

**Tools/Levers:** knowledge & meanings, frames & narratives, and roles & resources levers

## What We Did

During 2020, we worked with two courses at MacEwan University: BUSN 201 – Introduction to Sustainable Business and ANTH 394- Ethnographic Research Methods. The BUSN 201 course integrated RECOVER's research and well-being framework into existing case study assignments. The assignments were tested in the Summer 2020 and Fall 2020 semesters. For the ANTH 394 course assignments and materials were co-created by the RECOVER team and the professor and used in the Fall 2020 semester. The assignments focused on using ethnographic research methods to understand current work being carried out by the City of Edmonton and applying the well-being framework.

## **What We Learned**

The RECOVER Team and MacEwan University inadvertently experimented with different ways of being in relation to each other: a way of being that was transactional in nature, and a way of being that was relational in nature. For the relational interaction, the relationship between team members has extended beyond the individual course, and has resulted in items and actions that achieved more engagement and excitement in the well-being framework, and better outcomes for both parties, as well as promising future collaborations.

While the students reported to understand the framework, it was observed that putting the framework into practice was more challenging. People who currently work in strategy and systemic change have learned how to interpret frameworks and tools, and how they can be applied to different situations. Undergraduate students have not yet had that opportunity. This brings forward the importance of RECOVER to create tools and techniques to enable non-experts to understand and apply the framework. Students provide an optimal audience of testing, and even co-designing such tools, in the future.

The team also learned that RECOVER's involvement in the classroom can be off-the-shelf or custom-built. The two courses utilized two different models that provided a glimpse of how RECOVER's post-secondary strategy might be scaled.

The "off-the-shelf" version allows RECOVER to scale out -- basic existing research could be provided to professors to include as case studies within their existing course materials. RECOVER would be able to reach a larger number of professors and students using this approach.

The "custom built" version allows RECOVER to scale deep -- working closely with a smaller number of professors and students, RECOVER would be able to more deeply understand the nuances of the desired outcomes of each course, and co-create course material that would help deepen RECOVER's application of the well-being framework; and at the same time, help students more deeply explore the well-being framework.

## **Where to From Here**

The team will continue to work today to determine shared outcomes. In addition, the team will explore options for future course-based learning, and how RECOVER might work in partnership with researchers. Finally -- and importantly -- the RECOVER team will continue to nourish existing relationships with post-secondary partners, and cultivate new ones.