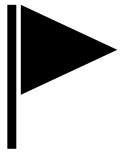


Welcome to:

EDMONTON GROUNDED DATA

*What is the lived experience of Edmonton
citizens living with a combination of
homelessness & mental health?*



OUR STARTING POINT

What is the lived experience of Edmonton citizens living with a combination of homelessness & mental health?

At its core, that's what our Grounded Data project in Edmonton seeks to understand. We want to make visible people that are often invisible - not as statistics, but as humans with richly textured stories.

These stories can illuminate pain points and opportunities, and serve as an assumptions check and opportunity canvas for the Community Wellness Planning Process.

Research Questions:

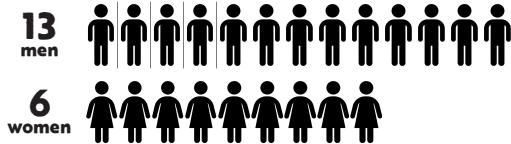
- Is lack of coordination amongst existing services preventing better outcomes? If the coordination problem were solved, would folks likely experience better outcomes?*
- What is a good outcome, for whom? Where does well-being sit?*
- What does well-being look like, for whom?*
- Who is experiencing their version of well-being despite risks & challenges? Why?*
- What types of supports and interventions might enable well-being? What might be standing in the way?*
- Where are the opportunities spaces?*



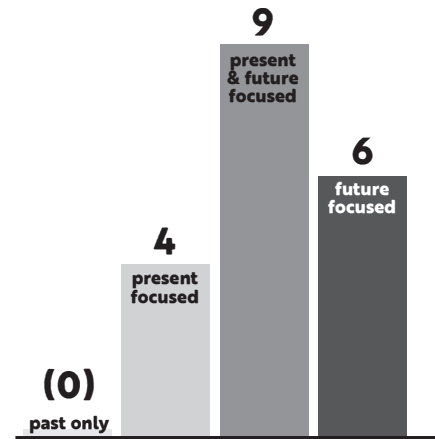
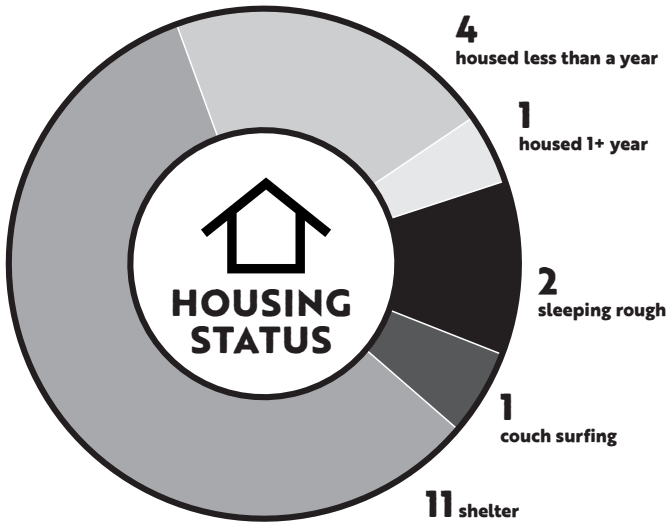
WHO DID WE MEET?

n = 19

GENDER

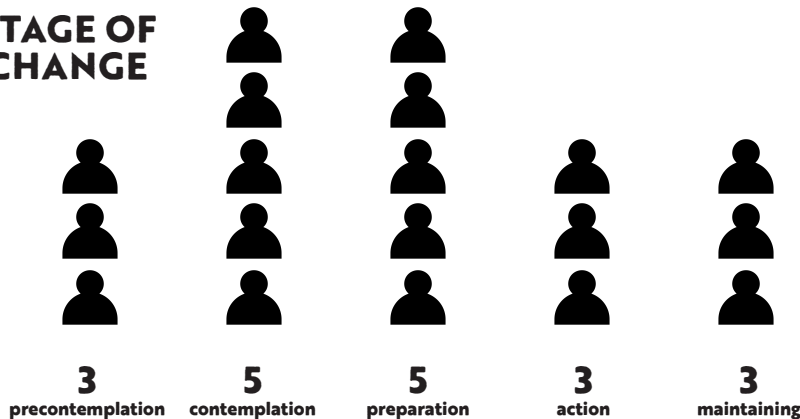


11 Indigenous
8 White



TIME ORIENTATION

STAGE OF CHANGE



TOP THEMES



Theme 1:

Ambition

Many were drawn to Alberta by ambition and have had a taste of success. Most aren't dwelling on the past; they're future-oriented, but without a clear way to channel or act on their ambitions.

- > Matt
- > Opportunity 2
- > Opportunity 4

Theme 3:

In Search of Meaning

There are lots of high quality subsistence services, but existential services - that is, services explicitly focused on purpose & self actualization - aren't as diverse or pervasive.

- > Al, Eileen, Leroy & Monique

Theme 5:

Dignified spaces

There are surprisingly welcoming & humanizing third spaces in the inner city, where anyone can feel legitimate, and without stigmatizing line-ups or eligibility criteria.

- > Mint Pharmacy - Church Street, Stadium Mini Mart
- > Opportunity 3

Theme 7:

Reciprocity

It feels like you're always on the taking end in services. People wanting change are just as concerned with finding ways to give back.

- > Monique & Leroy
- > Opportunity 3

Theme 9:

Just-in-time supports

Timely upstream interventions for common sources of trauma (i.e the loss of a spouse or child) could prevent street engagement.

- > Patrick
- > Opportunity 4

Theme 2:

Shame

Latent support networks abound but how to reach out and tap in when you're ashamed by the ups and downs in your progress?

- > Patrick
- > Brett
- > Opportunity 5

Theme 4:

Adventure

There is a sizeable street crew attracted to novelty & adventure, but policies and services are oriented towards being settled in one place.

- > Jen
- > Opportunity 1

Theme 6:

The freshman

With less of an entrenched street culture than Toronto or Vancouver, Edmonton boasts a larger 'new to the streets' population - and yet, for these newbies, it's a bit of a crapshoot, who they meet, and where they end up.

- > Brett
- > Opportunity 3

Theme 8:

Good taste

Everyone is eating, but few folks get a chance to cook, share recipes, choose their own ingredients, embrace their cultural or familial identities, or use food to show care for others.

- > Crazy
- > Opportunity 6



TOP PAIN POINTS

Pain point 1:

Lost souls

Too many people find themselves in downtown, following a stint in prison or hospital, without ID, belongings or a shortcut out of the social and service landscape.

> Crazy, Ko, Matt
> Opportunity 3

Pain point 3:

Not using & losing

Too many people are running on adrenaline, caught exercising the primitive rather than rational parts of their brain, with few means to feed their intellectual appetites.

> Ko, Clare
> Opportunity 2

Pain point 5:

Housing for companions

For too many people in recovery, being alone is a trigger. And yet, inviting friends over is an unsupported risk, while having a roommate can be out of procedural bounds.

> Leroy, Al
> Opportunity 1

Pain point 7:

Gangs and introverts

There are too few shelter or service options for people who are uncomfortable in crowded loud places, and those put in danger by past or present gang affiliations.

> Ko, Crazy
> Opportunity 8

Pain point 9:

Storage

For too many people a barrier to leaving the inner city, or exploring non-social service environments within it, is not having places to store personal and valuable items each day. Keeping clean and neat is important for people sleeping rough, yet collecting possessions and carrying around heavy bags is a burden and a risk for theft.

> Jen, Al, Crazy
> Opportunity 8

Pain point 2:

Idle nights & stultifying weekends

With little to do after dark or on weekends, too many people fall back in with the people and substances they're trying to avoid, or lose momentum towards their chosen goals.

> Albert, Eileen, Clare
> Opportunity 6

Pain point 4:

Menial work

Too many people with high motivation and desire to work find themselves waiting for inconsistent temp jobs that can exacerbate physical pain and which don't typically offer a greater sense of camaraderie or purpose.

> Al, Matt
> Opportunity 4

Pain point 6:

Lines and waiting

Folks like Al estimate they wait 4 hours a day for food, medical attention, and social services. Waiting not only fills a significant portion of people's days, but stands in the way of them pursuing other opportunities.

> Al, Crazy, Yvonne, Clare
> Opportunity 8

Pain point 8:

Limited pathways

Too few people have a vision for their life after recovery from addiction and securing housing - it can seem like a big black hole. Without a future they can believe in, it can be hard to keep motivation up.

> Brett, Ko
> Opportunity 2 & 7

Pain point 10:

No legit place to camp

For too many people there's no legit alternative to bed bugs, intoxication, mandatory meetings or being around a lot of people and a lot of noise. But camping sometimes means coming home to find all your belongings gone or being moved along.

> Jen, Albert
> Opportunity 1

SEGMENTATIONS



Segment 1:

Adventurers

People who choose to live on their own terms, unencumbered by institutional rules, and attracted to novelty, adventure, and movement. This segment rarely stays housed for long, and chooses to sleep rough. Their version of well-being can often clash with services' version of well-being.

> People like Jen, Nicki & Al

Segment 3:

Opportunity Makers

People with future focused narratives, seeking out the 'next' thing, and with a natural inclination to make lemonade out of lemons. As opportunists, this segment is open to most things. Of course, not all opportunities propel forward movement. Finding the 'right' kind of opportunities can be the challenge.

> People like Leroy, Monique, and Yvonne

Segment 5:

Lonely Actors

People just on the cusp of action, navigating the loss of a former identity, weighed down by feelings of shame, and avoiding engaging with friends and families - lest they let them down, again. Without access to their natural support network, this segment is influenced by who they happen to meet on the streets - be that workers or peers. Their well-being and the sustainability of the changes they are starting to make is particularly shaped by the dynamic of new and old relationships.

> People like Patrick, Brett, Crazy, and Ko.

Segment 7:

The Contemplators

People questioning their own status quo, and thinking about making a change, yet often bogged down by day-to-day realities, perceived obligations, internal fear, and emotional baggage.

> People like Wayne, Al, and Clare

Segment 2:

Precarious Optimists

People just leaving the peak of crisis, with some aspirational language, but \$100 away from eviction or "one screw-up" away from a downward spiral. Their ups and downs leave them mistrusting themselves and feeling out of options for what could be next - after treatment, after securing a house, etc. They are searching for a next milestone on the path forward.

> People like Clare and Brett

Segment 4:

Newbies

People new to downtown Edmonton and fresh on the streets, trying to navigate services, build the right kind of alliances, and figure out their next moves. These folks have a desire not to get entrenched, but easy access to drugs & alcohol doesn't always help, nor does all the idle time, waiting for things to emerge.

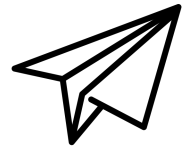
> People like Brandon, Matt, Ko

Segment 6:

Old Timers

People who have been around for years, and see inner city Edmonton streets as their home, intertwined with their identity. They've got local knowhow and history, but are finding there are fewer places to spend time without threat of public intoxication tickets, etc.

> People like Jen & Nicki



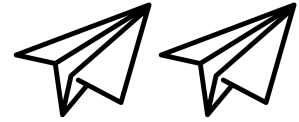
WHAT IF... WE REDEFINED WELLBEING?



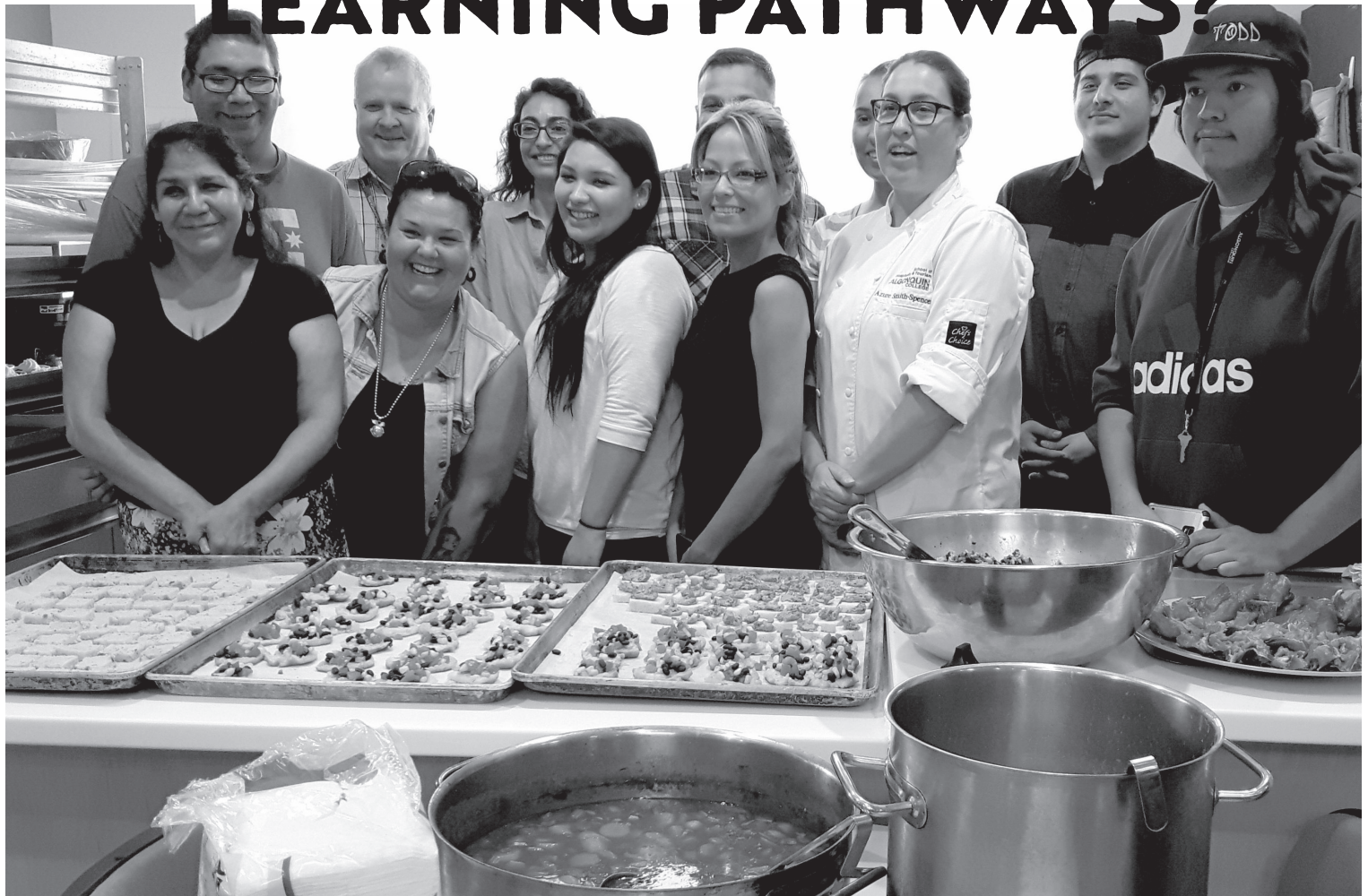
One of the pervasive assumptions behind services for street-involved individuals is the desire for 'rootedness' and 'in-placeness'. What if there were a set of supports with a different assumption - that of adventure, novelty, and movement? How might there be types of housing (or yurts and teepees) that accommodate more fluid swaps, diverse geographies, roommates, and inter-city travel?

- *What if services felt more like travel agencies, brokering people to stimulating experiences?*
- *What if there was more of a network of legal campsites, hostels, rooms, across geographic bounds to allow for seasonal travel?*
- *What if there were roommate matching services and supports to enable different combinations of living?*

Opportunity 2:

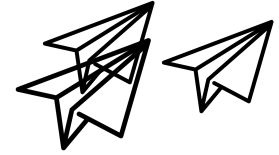


WHAT IF... WHAT IF WE CREATED NEW LEARNING PATHWAYS?



Addiction and housing programs often focus on immediate next steps - encouraging folks not to get ahead of themselves. For some folks, the inability to imagine what happens after treatment or after getting a house, generates too much uncertainty and anxiety. What if there were a range of 'thematic fellowships' and 'life apprenticeships' for folks that enabled people to have a structure and to build a network around something other than their struggles - but around interests, skills, and next career moves?

- *What if there were writing & poetry fellowships building on some of the storytelling programs at the library?*
- *What if there were sports fellowships for getting people back in shape, training, and working with youth?*
- *What if there were furniture making & fashion fellowships - building on iHuman style programming for youth?*
- *What if there were cooking fellowships - ala Jamie Oliver's fellowships for youth?*



WHAT IF...

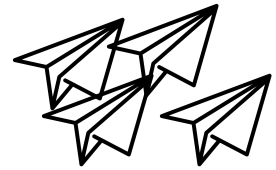
WE CURATED PEER & PLACE BASED NETWORKS?



Police, hospitals, truck drivers, and buses often drop off people without anywhere else to go in downtown Edmonton. Folks ask around, and find their way to the drop-ins and shelters - their experience highly shaped by who they meet first. What if there was a network of bus drivers, convenience stores and pharmacies who could link people to peer navigators and peer groups, and help newbies find the right kind of formal + informal resources?

- *What if there were small grants and a practice network amongst convenience stores, pharmacies, and peer-led groups?*
- *What if there was a new role of a peer navigator?*

Opportunity 4:



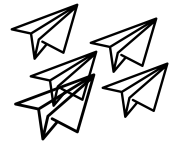
WHAT IF... WE EXPANDED AND BUNDLED SMALL JOBS?



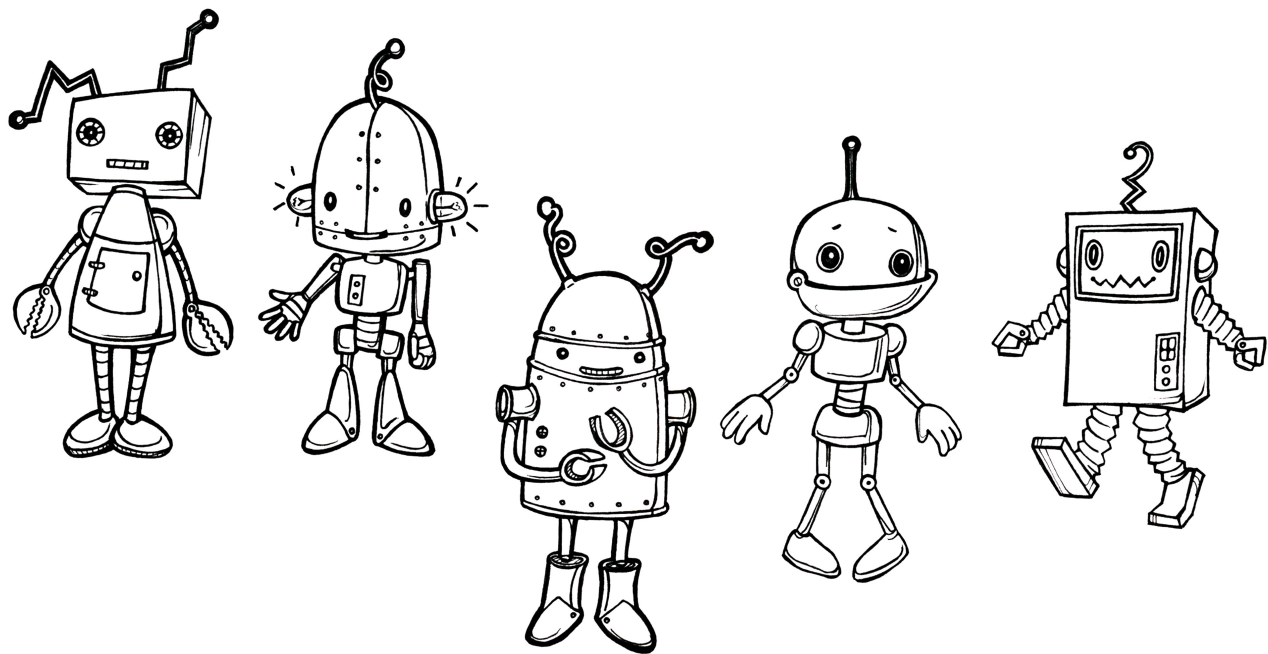
Folks new to the streets are often hustling, looking to make some money. They are appreciative of temp work agencies, but frustrated by the limited number and type of jobs, as well as by the sense of 'meaninglessness' of the work. Often the work is hard, and can exacerbate physical injuries that lead to increasing drug use as a form of self-medication. What if there were more of a Task Rabbit based system - where one could take up 'small jobs' from local non-profits, government, BIAs, housing associations, etc?



- What if you could apply for a role like a 'Recycling Guru,' made up of small jobs from across organizations with a similar need?

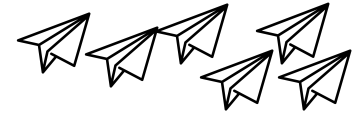


WHAT IF... THERE WERE MORE UPSTREAM SUPPORTS? ...AND WE OFFERED RELATIONSHIP HELP?



Relationships matter. And yet there are few services and supports that directly: Engage friends and family of folks struggling with mental health & addictions prior to their life on the streets Focus on relationship repair, and ways to acknowledge and wade through the messy morass of expectations and shame Build new, intentional support networks around people in the early stages of change

- *What if there were supports that engaged friends & family early, guided relationship repair, and more intentionally brokered people to bridging support networks?*
- *What if there was a role like a Family Doula?*
- *What if there were workshops & resources for friends - to be shared on Facebook and make use of people's social media?*
- *What if there were micro-boards and circles of supports (like in the disability space) for folks making it through recovery?*



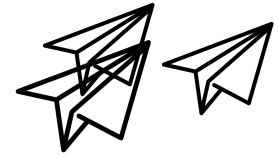
WHAT IF...

THERE WERE MORE VIBRANT THINGS TO DO AT NIGHT & WEEKENDS?



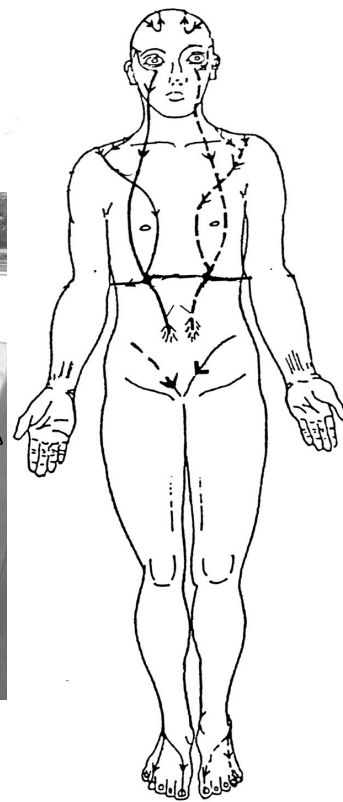
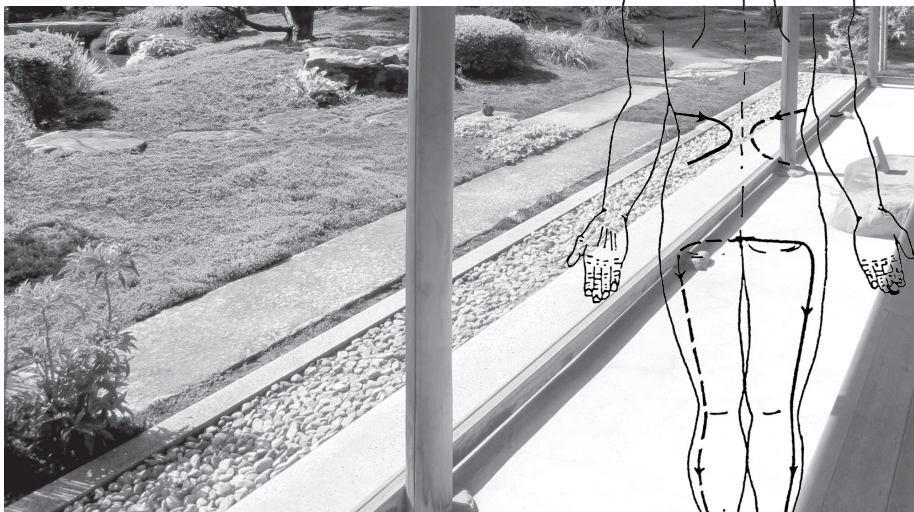
Evenings and weekends often stretch on. Places like the Mustard Seed are roaring places at night - and with the vibe of a music hall, rather than a service, it's an attractive place to be. There are few other options for places to go at night that feel 'normal' and 'dignified.' What if there were more physical spaces with a vibe of normalcy, where people might start to build other networks and find activities to fill their day?

- *What if there were pubs modeled after those in The Netherlands and Nordic countries where beer / wine is made by members, and dosage is facilitated?*
- *What if there were supper clubs, shared meals, and neighbourhood dinners for small groups of peers who could access a kitchen and subsidized food?*
- *What if there was a 'City Learning Pass' that brokered folks on the streets to cultural excursions - like art galleries, symphonies, theatres, and helped manage empty seats?*



WHAT IF...

THERE WERE WAYS TO TASTE HEALING & GAIN DISTANCE FROM WHAT AILS YOU?



Healing services that bring people with shared trauma together around a set of rituals and practices, are powerful, with some beautiful examples in religious and Aboriginal-run services. What if healing wasn't just the domain of culturally specific services?

- *How can we extend shared healing spaces to those with different backgrounds or belief systems? With a mix of people from different walks of life?*
- *What if places that triage symptoms of trauma (Emergency rooms, police, 24/7 Diversion Teams) had healing spaces to welcome people into?*
- *What if, the sense of shame and helplessness of 'the morning after' a binge was seized as an opportunity to build people's feelings of agency, and broker them to a retreat, rather than simply releasing them from intoxic or the drunk tank?*



WHAT IF...

WE TWEAKED THE SERVICE EXPERIENCE?



Waiting for food, waiting for medical attention, and waiting for shelter are common threads to people's social service experiences. What if food kitchens operated a little more like restaurants? What if wait time felt less idle? What if there were smaller, more intimate settings to lessen tensions and better accommodate the introverts?

- *What if there was a way to book tables and introduce more choice into the soup kitchen experience?*
- *What if there were 'bureaucracy busters' that spent time in lines, helping people fill out paperwork, book appointments, make phone calls, and use time more productively?*
- *What if the network of convenience stores, pharmacies, etc. had portable storage options to enable people to spend their days less encumbered by stuff?*