



Rough Guide to emerging practice

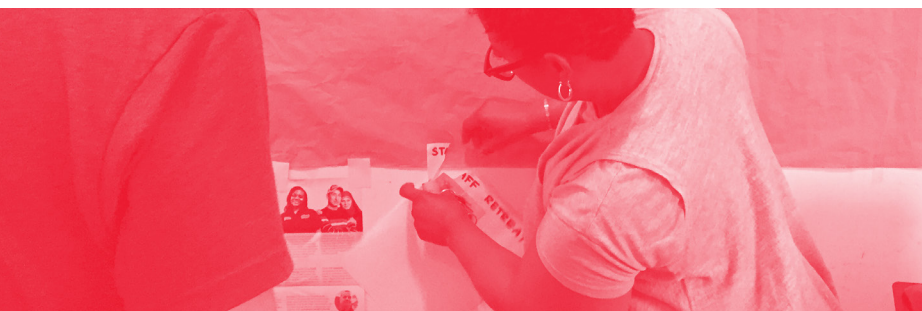


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Get ready for travel

When you see rolls of brown paper and neon post-it notes highlighting assumptions and ideas, you will know you've arrived at destination Experimentation. Locals speak an iterative language, and practice customs around reflexivity, user-centeredness, and a bias towards change. If that sounds daunting for travelers, fear not. With a curious stance, Experimentation is open for all.

Head to **Evangel Hall** to see growing reflexivity. Reflexivity is looking inward and acknowledging what can't readily be seen, but influences how we act: our beliefs, emotions, and biases. Evangel Hall's staff break routine is part of a renewed focus on team-led care and debriefing. Visit **Sketch** to take a good look at user-centeredness. User centeredness means stepping into the shoes of the people your work supports, and constructing an experience with them, from the moment you meet them to after they leave.

Sketch is enhancing how users are introduced to, reflect on, and exit their journey. Walk to **St. Stephens** to see an emerging bias towards change. On Tuesday mornings, a harm reduction group meets, offering people a place to shift how they are thinking and feeling. Tweaks to the framing of the group (the script), the room set-up (the setting), and the materials (the props) are modeling the power of seemingly small changes.

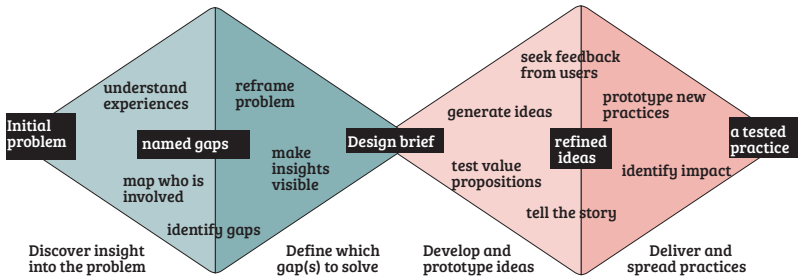
Intentional change - however big or small - is at the heart of Experimentation. There, you embark on an ongoing process of "testing something previously untried" until you find what works. Doing so requires a good dose of courage and vulnerability: a recognition you do not yet know the answer - but, through trial, error, and more trial, you get closer. Experimentation, then, is both a purposeful and humbling place.

What to expect

You can find your way around Experimentation using the double diamond as a guide. The first step is naming a perceived gap. A gap might be a disconnect between value sets: you believe in safety, but your end users believe in adventure. A gap might also be a disconnect between values and practices: choice is a shared value, but there's limited choice over meals or meal times. Next, comes research. In Experimentation, you spend time with the people to see and hear their point of view. You might use visual tools to prompt a deeper exploration of people's motivations, needs, purported preferences, and (hidden) wants. With new information and insights at hand, you can take the bridge to idea generation. There, you come up with as many different practices as possible to close the reframed gap. You dream up new or revised roles, props, settings, or scripts. All ideas need feedback. In Experimentation, you return to users to see what's attractive, what's feasible, and what creates change. By mocking-up ideas so they feel real, you get good intelligence for how to refine your practices - over and over again.

Cultural conventions

To kick off gap finding, locals in Experimentation go through a rite of passage: receiving a written story (also known as an ethnography) of their current practice. Sometimes uncomfortable to read, these stories are the product of shadowing locals in their own contexts, playing back what is observed, and posing questions about what is versus what could be. These stories are not assessments or evaluations; they are designed as inspiration for research and idea generation.



Historical underpinnings

Experimentation is already in its third historical era. The first era focused on solution sets. The second era focused on practices. And the third era focuses on mindsets.

Initiated in November 2015, Experimentation began as a six-month partnership between West Neighborhood House and InWithForward to re-imagine supports for street-involved adults. What would it look like if spaces for some of society's most marginalized folks had the luxury to think beyond survival? What if they could curate additional sources of belonging in the community, build purpose & capabilities, and ladder people to future opportunities? The InWithForward team, set-up a studio space within the Meeting Place Drop-in Centre, supported by Metcalf Foundation, United Way, and Trillium Foundation.

Tensions quickly arose.

There wasn't yet consensus on the need for inside-out change. Staff acutely recognized then need for outside-in change. Rising home prices, inadequate

mental health, scarce treatment beds, racism, and historical legacies of institutional abuse are the deep, systemic barriers to change. InWithForward agrees. They also see drop-in centers as part of the system. Designed as the place of last resort - for when the safety net utterly fails - the Meeting Place was pulled into constant crisis mode. Alongside case management and advocacy work, InWithForward wondered how safety net services could create space for development and growth. How might they re-ignite people's sense of future, stimulate healing, learning, and un-learning?

Era 1: Solution Sets (November 2015 - February 2016)

InWithForward's first hunch was to co-develop a set of solutions with end users facing similar situations. Based on conversations with 50 end users, the InWithForward team brainstormed 27 possible solutions, organized into 5 sets. The first set, for example, focused on end users experience of grief and loss. Possible solutions included creating a new role called the Grief Doula (someone to coach you through the

stages of grief) and a Day Retreat Service (a kind-of local travel agency for relaxation moments). Each of these 27 ideas was visualized into a flyer pack and tested with end users to gauge their interest and appetite. There was very little uptake. They were a developmental step too far. For many end users, they couldn't yet imagine utilizing such services. Perhaps there wasn't enough language, expectations, or social norms around change. And, given the resource scarcity of the sector, developing yet another service which required funding was unlikely to be sustainable. So, InWithForward pivoted.



Era 2: Practices (March - May 2016)

InWithForward's second hunch was to co-develop a repertoire of practice with frontline staff. For two days a week, a Meeting Place staff member joined the InWithForward team to design five practices for shifting the language, expectations, and norms around change. The goal was to learn how to equip staff with some tangible practices that brought the values of healing, learning, contribution, and choice into being. A practice is not as big as a service. It might be a fresh conversation you have, a

new tool you use, a different order in which you do something, etc. For example Curious Conversations was a practice developed with the help of two narrative therapists. This consisted of a set of questions and visual prompting tools staff could use to elicit end users' preferred developments and increase their sense of self-efficacy. Despite some promising early results, there were barriers to spreading the practices. Simply training staff to use the practices was insufficient. To use the practices well necessitates an experimental mindset. You also need to feel safe to try, fail, and tweak the practice. InWithForward pivoted.



Era 3: Mindsets (July-August 2016)

InWithForward's third hunch was to create the conditions for frontline staff to re-articulate their purpose and revise their own practices. They would do this through in-context coaching and feedback. Rather than focus exclusively on practice within the Meeting Place, other downtown Drop-ins were invited to participate - including Evangel Hall, St. Stephens, and Sketch. 16 frontline workers and managers applied to take part in a two-day boot camp to introduce the Ex-

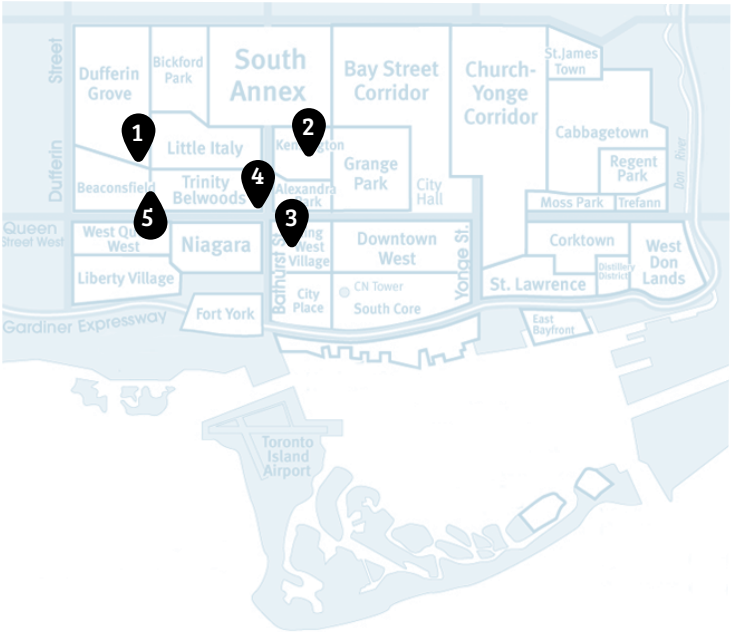
6 experimentation mindset. 8 workers, in 5 teams, continued on for six-weeks of intensive coaching. Coaching included shadowing, playing back observations, making materials, modeling methods, troubleshooting barriers, and serving as part cheerleader, task master, and therapist. All 5 teams moved from identifying a gap to doing research with end users to mocking-up emerging practices. Whilst many of these practices remain in the early days, they are sparking greater and deeper engagement with end users than before.

Drawing on Howard Gardner's book *Changing Minds*, the summer of coaching has focused on the 7 factors behind changing what you think (and do): (1) reason, (2) research, (3) representational re-descriptions,

(4) resonance, (5) resources and rewards, (6) real world events, and (7) resistances. Reason means appealing to logic; think: pro & con lists. Research means collecting and analyzing fresh information. Representational re-descriptions is about visualizing information in new ways - through a drawing, a chart, a graphic, etc. Resonance is about stories with emotional power. Resources and rewards is about incentivizing and celebrating change. Real world events are external happenings that make change urgent or feasible. Resistance is recognizing that change comes at a cost - and this costs must also be spoken aloud.

This guidebook introduces you to some of the mind shifts and emerging practices.

Places of Practice



- (1) Danielle's volunteers
- (2) Stacy's Harm Reduction Support group
- (3) Alyssa's week of staff breaks
- (4) Lindiwe's Team Self-care
- (5) SKETCH showcase their growth and learning



Danielle's volunteers



West Neighbourhood House
248 Ossington Street



Volunteer program:
population 350+



(416) 532-4828

Why visit?

Quietly situated in a little corner office at the top of the stairs is where you find Danielle. She is West Neighbourhood House's (WNH) Volunteer Coordinator. Motivated to give everyone a chance to become part of the "House", she is the one to meet if you want to volunteer with pre-school children, seniors, or everyone in between.

Context

St. Christopher House, as it was formally named, first opened its doors as a Presbyterian settlement house in 1912 in Kensington Market. Their mission at that time was to serve the many European migrants who were flocking to Toronto looking for work.

The first staff and volunteers were "social pioneers", learning first hand from folks about

the problems facing their neighbourhood and then jointly seeking solutions (WNH website).

In the 1940s the House started moving away from Church funding. Today, it is a non-denominational sectarian social service agency.

For over 100 years now the House, which officially changed it's name to West Neighbourhood House a few years ago, has played an important role in building up community, and enabling people by "removing the barriers to their personal success" (WNH website).

They try to do this through program delivery. This is where the 350+ volunteers to the House come in - and where Danielle enters the picture. Danielle meets nearly all of them in person and works to find just the right

VOLUNTEER IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Lisa, who has been teaching Nepalese youth how to use cameras and take photos as part of the Newcomer Youth program, finds spending time with kids from a different culture to be a unique opportunity. What motivates her is the inspiration she gets from spending time with some pretty resilient and creative kids.

program for them to land in.

If you visit West Neighbourhood House today you will note their several locations. The largest facility, where Danielle works, hosts programs for older adults, people with disabilities, immigrant and refugee services, as well as adult learning programs and programs for children. They also have a music school.

The other locations include the Meeting Place, which is a drop-in centre for street-involved adults.

Who uses the space?

The House sees itself as an interconnected part of the community. As such the folks who use its programs and services mostly come from the House's catchment area. Historically this area has been Portuguese and Italian - a

characteristic still reflected in some of the programs, such as the seniors program, where these two languages are the most prevalent.

The volunteers at the House are both local and from all over the city. They are young professionals who want to build up their resumes, retirees excited to share their skills, neighbours contributing to their community, and newcomers hoping to get involved and make new friends. There are a range of programs to lend time and skills to - including delivering meals to folks who are less mobile, doing crafts with seniors, tutoring young people, teaching English, etc.

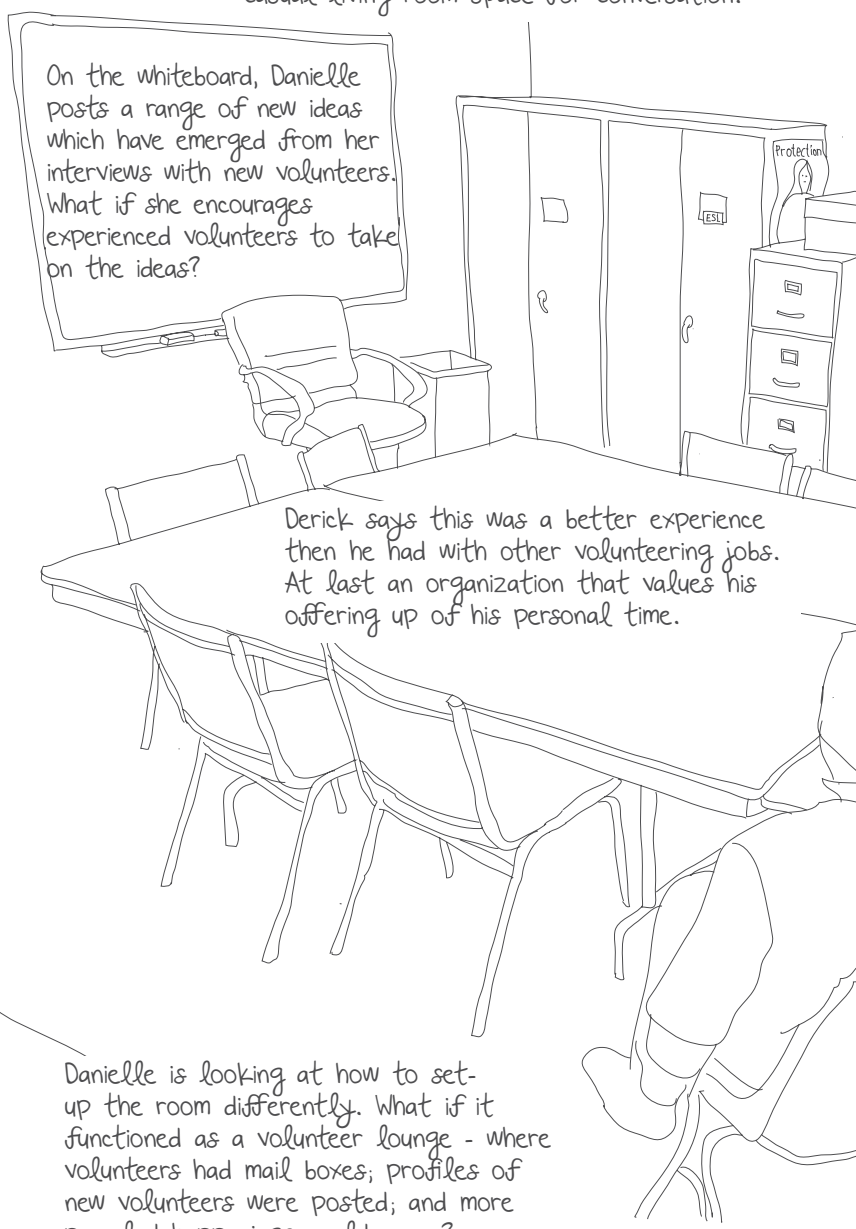
What's changing...

Right now, there is a renewed focus on the volunteer experience, as Danielle explores what it feels like to be a volunteer and where supports might be added and enhanced. How can volunteering at WNH serve as a launchpad for community connectivity, novelty, skills, and even careers?

These days if you visit Danielle, you will find her using tools during her conversations with volunteer candidates. These are tools like a Personal Journey Map - to help her find out about

"Using tools when talking to volunteers, to learn about their experience of the program, has definitely been a highlight of this coaching process"
- Danielle

By adding a few artifacts, the standard meeting room could feel more like a casual living room space for conversation.



On the whiteboard, Danielle posts a range of new ideas which have emerged from her interviews with new volunteers. What if she encourages experienced volunteers to take on the ideas?

Derick says this was a better experience than he had with other volunteering jobs. At last an organization that values his offering up of his personal time.

Danielle is looking at how to set-up the room differently. What if it functioned as a volunteer lounge - where volunteers had mail boxes; profiles of new volunteers were posted; and more peer-led happenings could occur?

Danielle is looking to use new forms of social media to connect to volunteers. All new volunteers will be given a website so they can match themselves with other experienced volunteers.



Danielle drawing a journey map to understand Derrick's preferred journey through West Neighbourhood House.



a volunteer candidate's previous experiences - and a deck of motivational cards, to find out what matters most to them. Visual prompting tools like these are helping Danielle learn about people's passions and their needs so she can match them to roles and set-up expectations.

So far, she says that a highlight of this process has been all the fresh information and insights she's gathering. *"I'm learning that volunteers want more chances for feedback. Since then I've been thinking a lot about this and about ways I can make this happen"*.

All this output from a tiny office.

Emerging practices

One of the things Danielle has been learning through prompted conversations with volunteers is that they want more support: they want contact with a person who will be able to answer their questions and provide

more of a road map about what they will be doing in their role. For example, when Alison volunteered taking people on a fieldtrip for the first time she didn't know that she needed to provide her own token when they got on the street car. She felt unprepared and also embarrassed.

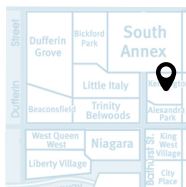
Danielle is reflecting a lot about what the volunteers are saying, and about what new supports she can design, try, and improve. So she's setting up a volunteer mentorship system where new volunteers can log onto an online platform and choose to meet with a volunteer with more experience. This more experienced volunteer (mentor) can be the point person for them, welcoming them into the volunteer role, offering tips, and signposting to the tools and resources they will need. They will also be able to link the new volunteer to the right people in the organization.

How does this work? All new volunteers will have access to an online platform featuring profiles of WNH's experienced volunteer mentors. Each profile will offer a snapshot of their volunteer experience - including a favorite story, a list of passions & skills, and details about how long they have been volunteering and the name of the program. If a new volunteer thinks they might like some more support, or even just to meet a new face, they can directly contact the Mentor through the platform and even use the calendar function to set-up a time. Danielle hopes that mentors and mentees will then develop a supportive and friendly relationship.

Getting the platform functional will enable the next cohort of WNH volunteers to have more options

when they begin their volunteer journey. During their first interview, Danielle will ask them about their volunteering history and their previous experience with the activity or program they will be involved in. They will be offered a choice of how much support they would like - from *"no support needed, i got this"*, to finding a volunteer mentors to help them as they begin.

Volunteers, exposed to early mock-ups of the idea, are saying a program like this could really add value. *"When I started I wasn't at all sure what to expect"* volunteer James told us. *"I didn't know what my role was or even who the people were who I would be helping out. Having a more experienced volunteer to talk to from Day 1 would definitely help".*



Stacy's Harm Reduction Support group



St. Stephen's Corner Drop-In
260 Augusta Avenue



population: +250



(416) 964-8747

Why visit?

Nestled in the heart of Kensington Market you will find St. Stephen's Corner Drop-in, a space set-up for folks to come and be themselves, where staff listen to you and offer constructive advice as well as practical help (St. Stephen's website).

Open six days a week, the Corner Drop-in, or the Corner, as locals call it, caters to people caught in the cycle of street life, addiction and poverty (St. Stephen's website). More than 200 people visit the Corner for hot meals, showers, computers, laundry as well as assistance with finding housing, mental health case management and addictions and crisis counselling. In addition they have supportive housing for 13 previously homeless men and hold a weekly drop in specifically for socially isolated women.

If you're interested in viewing a place with a strong harm reduction philosophy and clear structure, then be sure to check them out. The general drop-in is between 7:30am - 11:30am. The afternoon is by appointment only with a staff member.

Context

St. Stephen's Community House was established in 1962 by the Anglican Diocese. In these early years it was a Christian-based settlement house that provided community services, mostly for youth. A few years later they expanded to add English classes, counselling, job placement and various workshops. In 1964 they registered as an independent and non-denominational not-for-profit charitable organization. Since then their service offerings have grown, including opening the Corner Drop-in.

PARTICIPANT IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Jim, who recently attended the group says he really enjoyed the conversation. He found it refreshing that it didn't focus only on substance use. "Now when I see the others who were there, I know I can sit down and have a decent conversation and not feel judged".

One of the philosophies the drop-in subscribes to is Harm-Reduction. Harm reduction recognizes people's use of alcohol and drugs can be on a continuum, and rather than advocate for abstinence, emphasizes safety and health. One of the underpinning ideas is that when people don't feel judged, they can be honest about the realities of their lives and are more open to learning coping methods, life skills and other self-help practices.

This is at the heart of Stacy's weekly support group - even if you're using or drinking you are welcome to join in. "*Come as you are*" or "*come where you're at*" are two slogans he's been testing with participants. The group is an hour long discussion around harm reduction and what that means for each individual who shows up.

Who uses the space?

Folks from all over the city come to the corner drop-in. Many of

them start their morning at the corner with the breakfast, reported as one of the better ones in the city.

A handful of these folks attend Stacy's support group each week. Many of these participants struggle with daily living - from not knowing what or how to cook, to not wanting to leave their house, to looking for friends who won't judge them, to wanting to save money. For some, alcohol and drugs remain a part of their life. For others, alcohol and drugs are substances of the past.

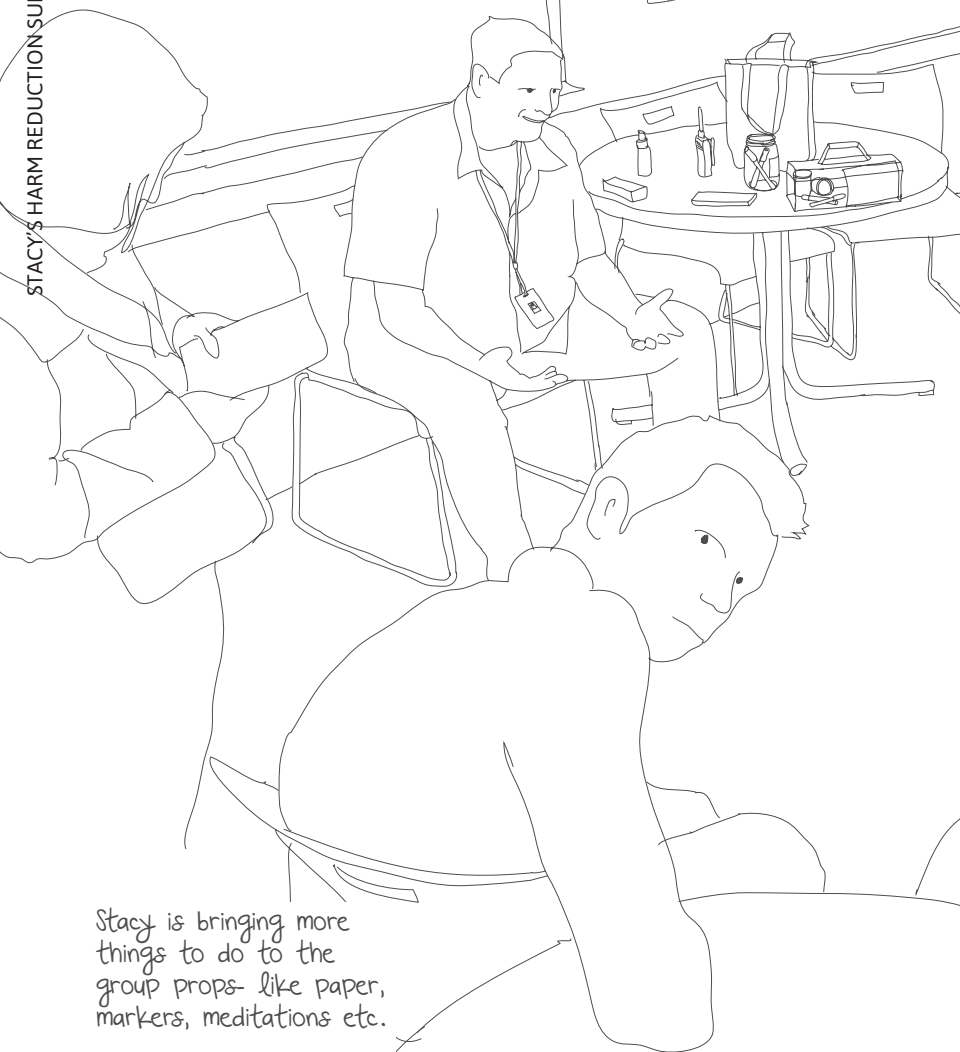
Stacy has an open door policy - anyone can come and spend an hour in this space. Participants can join the conversation late, and they leave whenever they want.

What's changing...

The group is a dynamic place to be these days, and attendance has grown in five weeks from 2 to 6-8 participants. Stacy has made time to re-visit the intentionality of the group, and is using some new tools to help him think about what's working and what's not working. He wants to bring the group to a whole new level. Small tweaks can make a difference. He recently re-configured the setting - moving the chairs from their tables into a circle formation. It feels more

"Thinking through all the different props I can use - from paper and markers, to using the white board behind me, has helped me take the group in a new direction" - Stacy

On the board Stacy writes a list of topics for the session. Folks get to choose what they want to talk about.



Stacy is bringing more things to do to the group props - like paper, markers, meditations etc.

Usually 3-5 people attend a session. People in the group sit in a circle. This helps create inclusive conversations.



Members get journals. They can revisit words and drawings to help them during the week.

intimate, and less school like. Participants say “*this is a great improvement*” and “*it helps with getting conversation going.*”

Stacy has been asking folks at the drop-in lots of questions about groups in general and his group specifically. Turns out, a lot of people thought they needed to be abstinent to participate. Since this isn't the case, Stacy has changed the name of his group from ‘relapse prevention’ to ‘harm reduction.’ He's also explored a new ‘brand identity’ for the group - a new title and new imagery to convey its essence to participants. ‘Chill and Spill’ and ‘Good Thought Group’ are 2 of 10 group names he's beta-tested.

Beta-testing just means Stacy has mocked-up different flyers advertising a range of possible groups, and walked inside and outside the Drop-in to get feedback. In doing so Stacy has been learning what participants say is the value proposition. What do participants need to get from the group to be worth their time? What makes it attractive? What makes it unattractive? People's

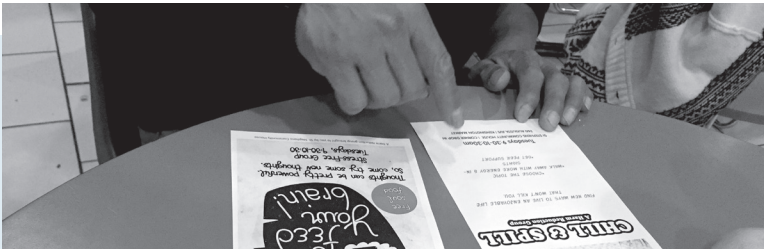
responses are directly informing the changes Stacy is making.

He notes, “*It's pretty interesting talking to people about the group. Sometimes in conversation a person will use a word, a powerful word. I will remember it so that I can then incorporate it back into something we do.*”

Emerging practices

Regular participants of the group say it really is a non-judgmental space. They are also “*wanting more*” from their time together. They say they don't want only open conversation, they want strategies to use throughout the week, and opportunities to “*act their way into good thinking.*” As one participant put it, “*Sometimes the group does help you think your way into good action, but other times, you need to act your way.*” There's 6 days in-between Tuesdays.

One idea for building up the repertoire of strategies is to incorporate more forward planning. The hunch is that if the group gives people more to chomp on, even more people might join-in.



group participant commenting on different poster language and styles

Stacy knows about props, scripts, settings, and roles - and their importance in curating a different kind of conversation. His script already included starting each session with introductions and ending with riddles. These days, Stacy can now also use a tool - a prompt pad- full of inspiration for designing the flow of his groups - from beginning to end. For starting rituals, the ideas range from drawing something on paper, to reflecting on a word, to choosing from an image bank, etc.

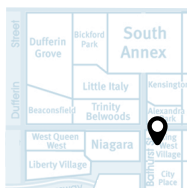
The pad also has ideas for group promotion - from putting up posters with different slogans, to setting up a table before the group starts where people can come up and find out more, to creating an informal peer role to spread the word. As he has tried out the different tactics, participation in the group has increased two-fold.

Ideas for setting-up the room include different chair formations for intimate versus group chats. They also offer suggestions of props - giving people tactile objects to play with, to tools for drawing symbols, to using the whiteboard to keep a record of key concepts and the conversational thread. Ideas for what participants can

take-away with them at the end of the session are also given - such as learning a mindfulness practice they can do on their own, writing a remarkable moment upon a business-size card they can keep in the wallets, remembering a phrase they can return to throughout the week, or a pocket-size journal they can write or draw in from week to week.

Lastly, the pad has ideas to help Stacy with ways to facilitate key content - such as creating a conversational 'menu' at the start of a group and asking participants to rank their choices. Stacy has now started writing possible topics on the whiteboard and selecting a couple for more focused conversation.

Stacy's Harm Reduction group will likely always be under construction - as new participants join - but any visitor to the group will see that the scaffolding is in place. More important than coming up with a formula has been developing a rhythm of seeking feedback. As much as Stacy is attuned to the needs of his participants, he can always pick up a surprising insight from asking a direct question and mocking up a fresh idea.



Alyssa's week of staff breaks

 **Evangel Hall Mission**
552 Adelaide St West

 **population:**
12 staff members

 (416) 504-3563

Why visit?

With its modern glass sides and 'Evangel Hall' printed in big white letters, this drop-in centre on Adelaide Street just east of Bathurst can hardly be missed.

Evangel Hall Mission (EHM) serve 2 meals each day - breakfast and lunch. If you come Wednesday mornings be sure to try one of their fresh baked muffins. The 'muffin lady', as she is called, bakes 200-300 muffins in her home kitchen each week and serves them to clients. The best ones are the yellow muffins. The muffin lady explains: *"I usually call these the pina colada muffins, but not in this context, here I just call them the coconut pineapple muffin."*

After you've tried your muffin ask for a tour - they have 84 units of long term residence, a youth centre, and downstairs they have a dental clinic, a large prayer room and a successful wax candle social enterprise that

sells house-made beeswax candles - mainly to church groups. Be sure to spend time looking at the old photographs on the wall of the drop-in's original location on Queen St. West in the early and mid-20th century.

Context

Evangel Hall Mission started in 1913, in a small space, formally a shop, deeded to the Presbyterian Church by a local politician to help with outreach for the low income and immigrant families moving into the area.

EHM has had it's ups and downs, yet continues to adhere to their mission to provide their community with "a Community of Compassion. A Place of Hope." (EHM website).

If you visit this space today, over 100 years later, you will still see the charity model in action. EHM receives most of its funding from the Church and private donors.

PRACTITIONER IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Being a smoker meant that this staff member did take regular breaks. But having a smoke by the front door with people talking to him didn't help him de-stress. Now he smokes while walking around the block. "Now that's an actual break. I felt good afterwards".

A philosophy of charity, care, and servicing the less privileged is illustrated by the abundance of food and clothing donations regularly received by EHM, and by the rotation of dedicated volunteers who take on a pretty traditional, but clearly loved, role of serving food and kindness.

Who uses the space?

Anyone who can get past Stan at the door can use EHM's services. Luckily for most folks, Stan, who is a fixture there, only restricts entry to folks whose behaviour is disruptive. Everyone else is welcome.

EHM is frequented by folks from the downtown area. The doors open at 9am. Many come for the hot meal and spend 30 minutes or so eating at the big round tables, sometimes watching a movie played on the big screen, or just looking into the distance. Some of these folks also come to pick up money from their trustee, or to speak to a housing worker or a counsellor.

What's changing...

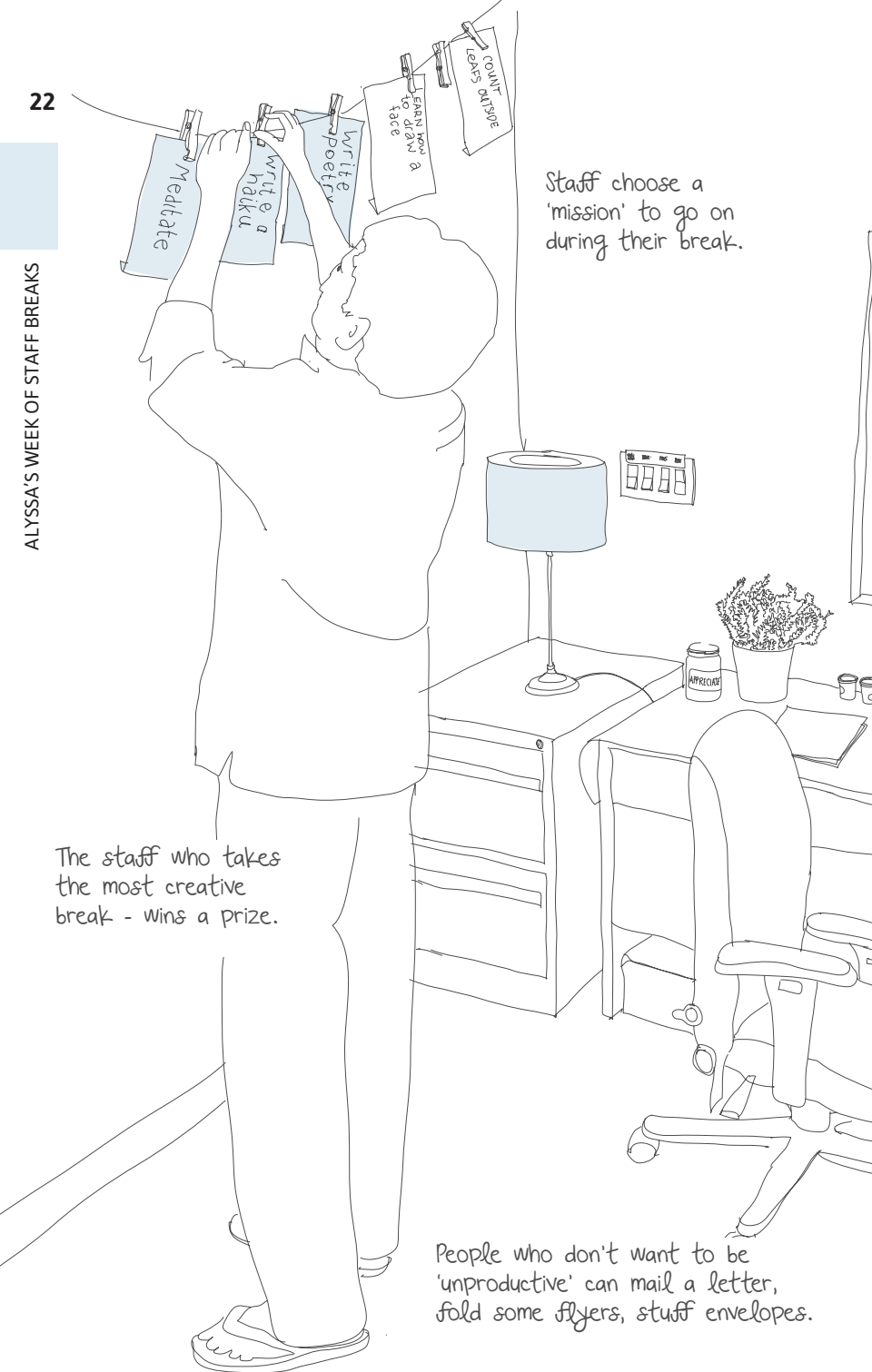
A lot is changing at EHM at the moment. If you visit you will come across some new job postings and the development of more intentional staff roles. How can the charity model be enhanced with even more intentional practices?

Throughout this transition period, social worker Alyssa has been conscious of staff self-care. She is curious about how staff manage the uncertainties of the moment, address their stress, and find renewed purpose and vigor in the team and in the work.

If you visit EHM now, you will see Alyssa actively encouraging staff self-care. It all started with research - with talking to staff about their own practices and needs. One of the insights she gleaned is that many staff didn't take their breaks, or weren't feeling refreshed from their breaks. As one staff member said: "I have too much work to do, I don't want to let people down. I don't even know if management wants us to take breaks".

What's emerged from Alyssa's insight is EVH's very own break competition. The goal was to start to create new routines, and begin to reclaim a culture of staff-led initiatives.

"One of the best parts about coaching has been making stuff. It's pretty easy to prototype an idea and test it out. The prototype doesn't have to be fancy" - Alyssa

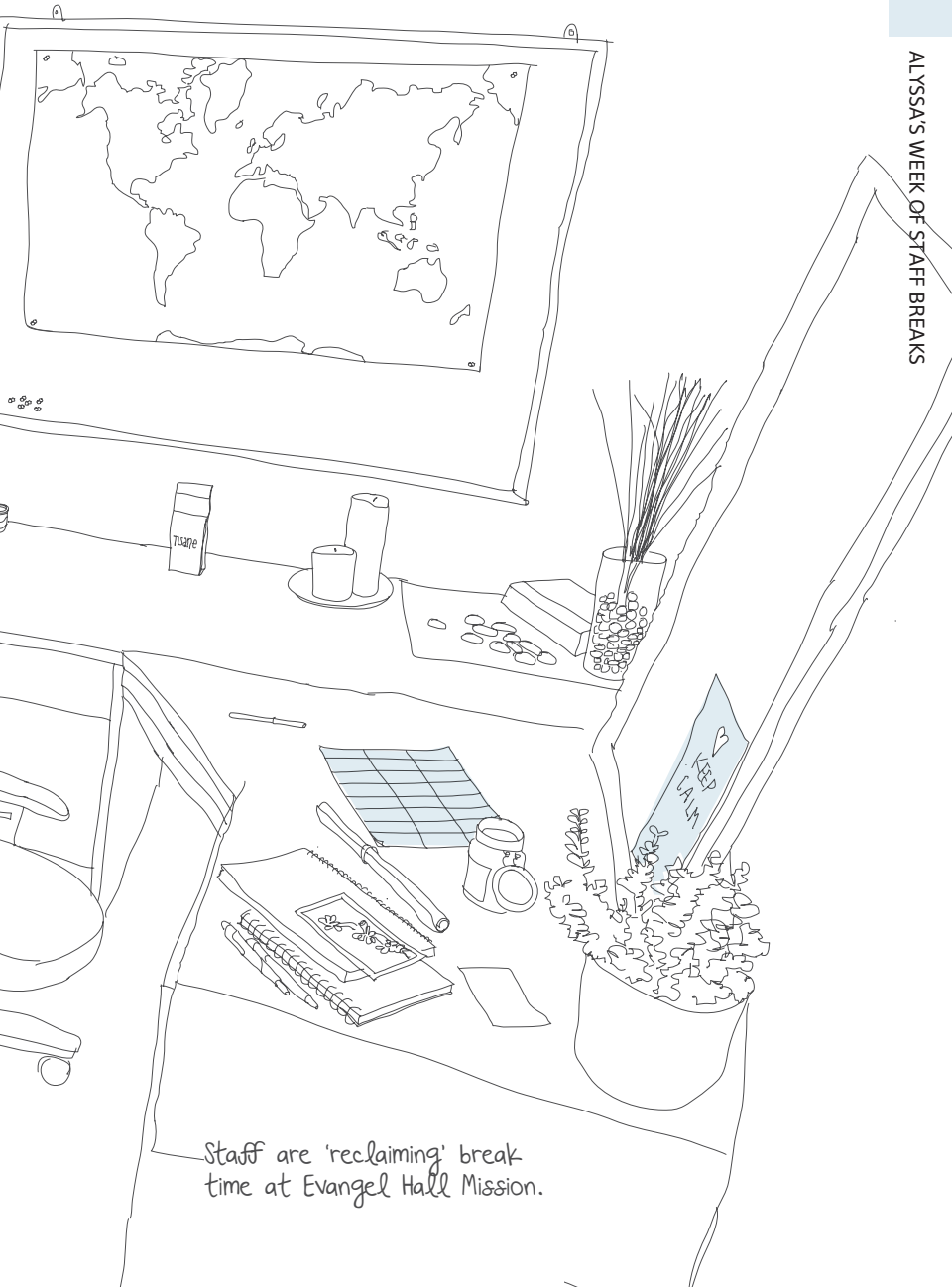


Staff choose a 'mission' to go on during their break.

The staff who takes the most creative break - wins a prize.

People who don't want to be 'unproductive' can mail a letter, fold some flyers, stuff envelopes.

Staff can enjoy 15 minutes of calm in the Staff break room. They can colour, write a poem, learn to draw a face, or choose a mission that takes them outside.



Staff are 'reclaiming' break time at Evangel Hall Mission.

When you're there be sure to visit the new Staff Break Room - just off the main space - and find yourself some inspiration for recharging. Don't be alarmed by the bright purple wall colours, research shows that purple has a calming effect!

Emerging practices

How does break week work?

Between 9:30 and 11:30am staff experimented passing a "break baton" between one another (note: it wasn't staff's highlight) When a person received the break baton, they got a 15 minute break. Another staff covered their role.

These don't have to be ordinary breaks - inside the baton is a list of 29 ideas for what to do in a short time. Ideas range from drawing clouds, to collecting leaves, to taking 15 minutes to eat an orange, to filling an entire white page with small circles and colouring them in.

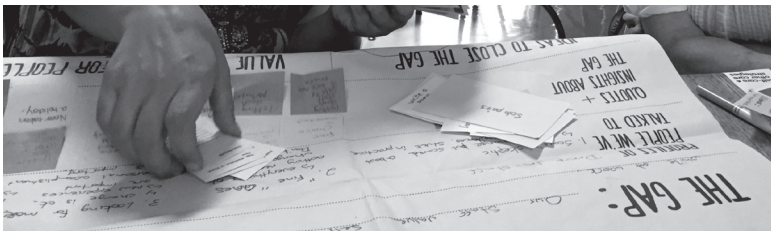
Research shows that taking breaks improves focus, leads to work being completed faster and better, reduces general stress and increases well being.

For staff who don't like breaks, such as one who told us "*I don't like being unproductive*" there are "*break missions*." Staff can choose from a number of envelopes hanging in the break room. Inside each envelope is a mission such as water the plants, see how many flights of stairs you can run up in a set amount of time, etc.

In the break room staff will also find break kits with ready-made materials to choose from such as learn how to draw a face, read some poetry, or meditate, etc.

Once a staff has taken their break they pick stickers to put on their stamp card. Sticker slogans range from "*reclaimed it today,*" "*hacked it today,*" "*loved it today.*" Completed stamp cards enter you into the prize draw.

Staff with a competitive streak can play to their strength. Awards are given to staff who take the most creative break. Ask to see the award winning break poem!




Brainstorming ideas from insights before landing on what to prototype



Lindiwe's Team Self-care

 *Meeting Place*
588 Queen Street West

 200+ members
each day

 (416) 504-3535

Why visit?

At first glance, it might look intimidating. But, walk through the crowd of people smoking cigarettes on the street outside and step into the courtyard of the Meeting Place, West Neighbourhood House's drop-in for street-involved adults. You'll likely find a lively conversation on the benches, and don't hesitate to join in the camaraderie.

Located in an old bank building at the corner of Bathurst and Queen, The Meeting Place is where folks in Toronto come who have almost nowhere else to go. Folks barred from other drop-ins are generally still welcome here. Staff and members have worked hard to create a sense of belonging for their community. This is particularly true for the Indigenous members, many who have been coming to the Meeting Place for decades.

Visit the Meeting Place if you are interested in seeing a drop-in centre in transition, re-visiting what safety and security looks like, whilst exploring how to both meet basic needs and needs for meaning and purpose.

Program staff like Lindiwe, as well as two case managers, work to connect people to housing, treatment, ODSP, and other social services on an individual case by case basis. The Meeting Place also regularly brings in a lawyer and a doctor to see members on site.

On the Queen Street side of the drop-in you will find a store - with a business model and supply chain in the works. Don't miss the chance to browse the jewelry and other items, such as Dream Catchers, made on site by a handful of members. The space beckons possibility.

Context

The Meeting Place is one of the West-Neighbourhood House Locations.

Go to page 8 to read the full context of West Neighbourhood House, formerly called St. Christopher's house.

Who uses the space?

Anyone can come to the Meeting Place and it is frequented by a large group of regulars.

For many street-involved adults, the Meeting Place is a place to come to hang-out with friends, enjoy a free hot cup of coffee, have a shower, do some laundry, use a computer, and spend some time playing pool or dominos. There is also a kitchen where folks can cook food, or purchase inexpensive frozen pre-made meals (made by staff). Every week there is a spirit circle, but it is only for Indigenous members. A big calendar on the wall shows some weekly programming such as the arts and crafts group, and there is plenty of blank opportunity space.

For all the regulars the Meeting Place continually attracts, there is also a segment of adults who actively avoid the Centre. Some say they don't feel safe there. "I can't go there anymore" said

one man. "When I go there I just get sucked back into a cycle of drinking". Because it operates on a model of helping the most marginalized folks, rather than turning them away, the Meeting Place has earned a reputation of being a place with high tolerance for a range of behaviors.

What's changing...

Things are in flux at the Meeting Place. Some longstanding and respected staff have moved on, creating a window for revisiting the purpose and refreshing the physical space. There is energy to try out some new staff roles - like a Community Engagement Leader - and explore what it looks like when the centre focuses on learning and healing.

Lindiwe is enthused by the possible directions forward, and the part she can play. She explains: "It's been really hard to engage members in meaningful conversations here, hard to offer them real help that will improve their lives. There are always so many interruptions - I'm asked to get someone something, or to answer the phone, or help someone do something. Now, that I'm able to try new things I'm figuring out ways to really help them".

For the last while, crisis management has been a primary focus

"I have learned so much through this coaching process. Especially about thinking through the props, roles, scripts, settings of each program and how each of these impacts the outcome we can achieve" - Lindiwe.

PRACTITIONER IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Staff member Damian has so many ideas of things to do to help improve the drop-in. The kanban board is helping him keep track of what they are, and reminds him that if he is the lead point on a task, that it is up to him to get it going.

of staff. Over the past months, staff like Lindiwe have begun to think about what it looks like to lift expectations and norms from just getting by to engaging in more. As Lindiwe says: "I don't want to see members just sitting around drinking and doing nothing anymore. I want to give them the opportunities to do something better with their lives"

If you've visited the Meeting Place recently, you will have seen Lindiwe eagerly conducting research. She's been finding out what members and staff want to see 'refreshed' in the drop-in. Two large brown pieces of paper now cover a wall of the staff room. On them are the headings 'to do', 'doing' and 'done'. The method is called 'kanban' and it's an approach that helps teams visualize and prioritize tasks.

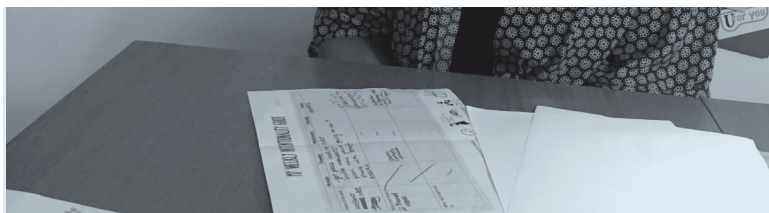
Right now, staff and members have put dozens of post-it notes on the kanban board listing tasks and goals ranging from turning the courtyard into a gym, turning one of the downstairs rooms (currently used as storage) into a staff room, painting the place, playing music of chirping birds, to developing new roles for members, and a job board where other departments in West Neighbourhood House can find people to help them, rather than seeking labour elsewhere.

Emerging practices

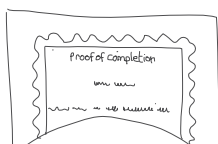
In its recent history, the drop-in has had a tough time. An outside group embedded itself in the Drop-in centre - at the behest of the Executive Director - and the dynamic was destabilizing. There wasn't consensus around what needed to change, or a lot of capacity for constructive engagement.

Lindiwe is sensitive to the stresses and tensions that these changes have created amongst the staff team.

That's why Lindiwe has also spent



Lindiwe used conversation cards to talk to staff about their self-care practices



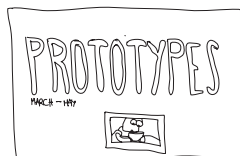
Staff and members have ideas for how to refresh the place. A kanban board is helping them visualize and act.



To Do



For 30 min every Friday staff can gather at the kanban board and plan the outcomes for the next week.



Staff are using a 'weekly guide sheet' to help create more intentional programming that starts with outcomes.



Doing

Done



Celebrating when something is 'done' builds team morale



WELLNESS WEEK AT THE MEETING PLAGE

WEDNESDAY

12-3pm Dreamcatcher Workshop

THURSDAY

12-2pm High Tea! + Soft Music in the Program Room

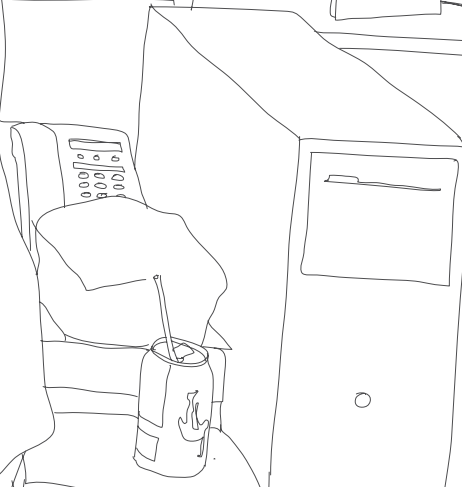
Bake your own blueberry scones

FRIDAY

1-3pm Beading Workshop with the pros!

TBA Acupuncture in the Program Room

Sign up for baking!



Regular purposeful staff meetings can lead to the writing of a staff manual.

time trying to develop some routines around 'team-care'. This involves building up productive team meetings, team support, and team planning.

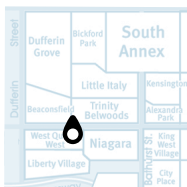
She and fellow staff member Damian curated a team breakfast - to mixed reviews. Some staff weren't used to so much effort going into an interaction. The idea is that once a month the team will meet, in a space free of outside distraction, and develop a set of scenarios and collectively agreed principles of action. These principles will be written down, and form a staff manual written for and by staff. For example, the first topic was team reactions to common events. How might staff respond if a member yells at a colleague? How might staff respond when a colleague expresses sadness about a recent death?

Planning with intention is another emerging practice at the Meeting Place. Fridays Lindiwe and other interested staff choose an outcome to focus on for the week ahead. To help with this, they are using an "Weekly Guide Sheet." The sheet asks: "What do I want to see members thinking, feeling and doing this week?" and then helps staff to break an idea into its component parts: what props need to be made, who will take on what roles, what resources need to be catalyzed? So instead of Lindiwe starting with - "I have an arts and crafts group to run this week," the sheet encourages

staff to start with outcomes - like "building up member's entrepreneurship skills". With that lens, Lindiwe might not only facilitate her typical arts group, but also spark more entrepreneurial moments. Perhaps she might invite the local gallery across the street into the Centre to share their business tactics; or maybe she will work with members to market test a new product for the store; or they might watch a documentary about shop window design, etc.


Lindiwe now also has a body of codified practices to draw on. If she wants to have more meaningful conversations that week, she can pull out the materials for Curious Conversations (based on narrative storytelling) If she wants to attract gallery owners or external community folks into the Centre, she can borrow email templates with language around value propositions (drawn from the UforU initiative). And if she wants to introduce folks to novel ways to spend time, she can dip into her 'Mary Poppins' bag of tricks to access podcasts, meditations, book excerpts to read, etc. All of these materials are open source, and available in the upstairs Innovation Lab.


The Innovation Lab is a physical space full of tested materials, inspiration, and literature that staff of any Drop-in can use to enhance their practice - or develop their own practices.



SKETCH showcase their growth and learning

 *Sketch*
180 Shaw Street

 1600 young people

 (416) 516-1559

Why visit?

Don't leave your tour of the Toronto Drop-ins without a visit to SKETCH - an arts based drop-in for 16-20 year old youth living on the margins. Julian, Rose and Sonya who work at SKETCH focus on the transformative power of the arts to build up young people's sense of self and community.

They do this through purposeful programming ranging from choreography, to beat boxing, to recording music, to mural arts, to ceramics, to culinary arts and even Kung Fu. The focus is not just on acquiring artistic skills, but on building up the confidence and learning capacity of each person. During the Kung Fu program, for example, youth are exposed to 'art for self-care'.

When you visit, definitely ask for a tour. You will see a built-for-purpose space where a lot of the

"magic" at SKETCH intentionally and serendipitously unfolds. You can visit the ceramic studio, the screen printing studio, the recording studio, and a movement studio with state-of-the-art floors.

There's also a top of the line kitchen. If you are there during dinner time then sample the tasty and healthy dinners created and plated by SKETCH's culinary artists. Food is an experience, not just a means of survival. Sit at their long wooden kitchen table and feel the dignity of high expectations.

Context

SKETCH has been working with Toronto youth for over 20 years. They started out at King and Portland as a small organization focused on helping street-involved young people. Since then they have broadened their remit to youth on the margins.



Participants are using an app to document their significant moments.

Staff and participant spend 2 hours going through all the recorded moments and co-design a reference letter.

RESUME

NAME
ADDRESS
PHONE

Participants can select how much prompting, reminders, and staff input they want.



Youth can use their phones or the dedicated ipads.



Participants self-document the soft and hard skills they learn at SKETCH



34 Staff appreciate this shift as SKETCH now brings together a kaleidoscope of backgrounds and experiences.

SKETCH is explicitly NOT a traditional social service. They lead on an area of interest & passion (art) - not on an area of need (housing). They don't do formal case management. Julian explains: "Too often, people have to tell their stories again and again, and they learn that the more negative stories get them help with services while the positive stories don't." Julian wonders aloud what this selective storytelling does for how people see themselves, and the status bestowed on them by professionals. If a person resists, then they are marked as being "difficult". This label persists, and too often, can become a self fulfilling prophecy.

Instead, what SKETCH wants is for youth to have an opportunity to express themselves better, and to do so in a way that suits them - not through answering 25 personal questions to a total stranger. Staff at SKETCH have realized that many youth don't want to focus on their trauma. Their belief is that if youth get a chance to explore other aspects of themselves, they will be able to create a new narrative for

themselves and find a path to a different life.

Their work is actually more like coaching. Rather than directing the young people's engagements, as other social services typically do, they identify what the young people aspire to, their goals and dreams.

From the moment you walk into SKETCH you feel the difference of this approach. What if adult drop-in centres adopted a similar approach?

Who uses the space?

SKETCH is used by youth ages 16-29. Many of these young people describe themselves as artists - painters, singers, musicians, dancers, chefs, graffiti artists etc. But you don't have to be an artist to be a part of SKETCH, anyone can attend.

Right now many of the young people coming to SKETCH come from across the GTA. Alexander, travels over an hour from Scarborough to attend SKETCH programs, and although Miles lives in the East end of the city, and goes to school in North York, he makes coming to SKETCH a priority.

What's changing...

For several years, SKETCH has

Before we started the coaching process I had a sense of what would help solve the gap we identified. From interviews and talking to participants I've learned to separate my assumptions from theirs" -Rose.

PARTICIPANT IN THE SPOTLIGHT

SKETCH participant Cori is looking to improve her self-expression in her work. She's excited to use the new app- not for the reference letter, but so she can see her own growth and development as an artist over time.

been trying to figure out ways to help young people productively 'graduate' from SKETCH before they 'aged out' at 30. Recently, if you've been to SKETCH, you would have seen Sonya, Julian and Rose carrying out 1:1 projective interviews with some of the participants. "*How can SKETCH help you move on to the next thing?*" has been a primary question.

Turns out that most young people want a kickass reference letter from SKETCH as they pursue their arts careers, return to school, or look for full-time employment. Moreover, they want reference letters that describe their communication, leadership, mentoring and other 'soft skills'. This has been a real

challenge for staff at SKETCH - much of the knowledge about a young person's growth during their journey at SKETCH is held by the program staff who are contract staff.

Creative with an inbuilt bias towards action, the SKETCH team has used six-weeks of coaching to kickstart a big idea: building a digital tool that enables youth to capture their learning journey, on their terms.

Emerging practices

Starting this Fall 2016, SKETCH will be beta-testing their new idea. Rather than invest upfront in expensive tech development, they will run a low-fi version to gauge its uptake and determine its design specs.

Here's how the tool will work: Young people will be invited to create an online journal, where they will be prompted to take note of significant moments as they occur (rather than in retrospect). A significant moment could be anything from trying a new painting technique, to facilitating



SKETCH participant selecting the descriptors he would like in his reference letter.

a group discussion, to taking a leadership role in cleaning up after an event, to recording one's first album, or making a beautiful meal. The moments can be documented by photograph or video or through writing a blog post. Tags and captions will be used to denote the soft or hard skills it demonstrates - be it communication, mentorship, patience, ingenuity.

Over an initial 10 week period, young people will choose what types of prompts to receive - by text message, email, or face-to-face, and at what frequency.

Where desired by youth, staff will also be invited to add feedback and commentary to photos - much as you might comment on a Facebook post.

After 10 weeks, young people will come to a group reflection session and hear from peers about selected milestones. A staff member or a trained volunteer will also spend some 1:1 time with each young person to try and translate the online record into a reference letter. The end result will be a co-designed reference letter.

Over time, the concept is that the reference letters become richer and deeper, informed by years worth of concrete significant moments with matching media files.

If you visit SKETCH over the fall period, ask a young person whether they can show you their journal - and see how well the beta-test is playing out, and what learning is emerging.

Postscript

Experimentation, by its very nature, will always have plenty of uncertain and uncharted territory. Perhaps the next area for exploration is human resources - not just in the traditional sense of hiring, training, and supporting staff, but in the sense of embracing staff's full personhood: their passions, skills, values and purposes inside and outside of work. Intentional practice seems to come from aligning an organization's mission with end users' mission with individual staff's mission and skills. What would it look like to strengthen purpose-driven teams, and really tap into people's talents and aspirations? If this question piques your interest, we recommend booking your next Rough Guide trip to:

Linked-in in Silicon Valley

Companies like Linked-in are re-thinking the world of work. Given talent is their biggest asset, they are iterating with how to get the most from their people. Instead of staid job descriptions, they are crafting Tours of Duty. A Tour of Duty focuses on a specific mission, not simply a set

of tasks. Tours of Duty specify a goal of mutual interest to the staff member and the company. Once the goal is met, a new Tour of Duty can be negotiated. What if staff in social service organizations also received Tours of Duty, and were constantly realigning their purpose?

Family Independence Initiative in Oakland

Of course, HR and renewed frontline practices will not, by itself, transform outcomes for the most marginalized and vulnerable. There are deep structural flaws that only new policies and flows of monies can address. And yet, people and practice shifts, do seem to be a prerequisite for goof policy implementation. Creating mechanisms to share what's learned from the front-lines with policymakers is a critical area for the next adventure. Family Independence Initiative, started in Oakland, has found a way to draw on the voices of immigrant families to shape corporate and government policy. How might social services better feed data of every day human experiences to policymakers?

TOP 10 PHRASES

Practice is the actual application of an idea, concept, or method. You can break down practice into a set of interactions that you perform in a particular order (script), in a particular place (setting), with particular materials (props). Take the practice of brushing your teeth. You might do it in the shower, after you've rinsed your hair, using a battery operated toothbrush.

Journey maps is a visual way of showing the order of the interactions that make up a practice. Interactions often have corresponding emotions too.

Services are sets of codified practices. Take the service of Uber. It has been codified into stages: searching for a nearby car, booking a car, finding the car, paying. Drivers and users will have their own unique practices within each stage.

Mechanisms are the factors behind a change in outcomes. Take an outcome like 'drinking less alcohol.' One mechanism might be social norms. You (often) drink less when your peers drink less.

Iteration is a fancy word for re-making materials to reflect learning & feedback.

End User is the person on the receiving end of a particular practice or service.

Assumptions are things you hold as true, but which lack proof or evidence.

Reflexivity means recognizing and taking into account your own biases and emotions.

Discernment is the ability to judge a situation and determine what is good from bad.

Generative means coming up with lots of ideas, and holding the space for multiple possibilities at once.