

SKOOKUM LAB



JUNE 2020

PROTOTYPES

SKOOKUM LAB BACKGROUND



A LITTLE BIT ABOUT SKOOKUM



Skookum Lab is one of the first Indigenous social innovation labs in Canada. Convened by the Surrey Urban Indigenous Leadership Committee (SUILC), the lab was created to tackle the complex issue of Indigenous child and youth poverty in Surrey.

THE CHALLENGE

Surrey is home to a growing Indigenous community that is now the largest in BC. We are a vibrant community that has so much to contribute to our city!

Having said that, there are pervasive, systemic inequities that need to be addressed. For example, 4 in 10 Indigenous children and youth are living in poverty in Surrey. We cannot be complacent with this level of poverty affecting thousands of Indigenous children and youth.

Our Goals

Through a highly collaborative and Indigenous social innovation process, the goal is to make Surrey a great place for Indigenous children and youth.

The lab is engaging community, organizations, and government agencies to address the systems that create and sustain Indigenous child and youth poverty in Surrey.



A young girl with dark hair, wearing a brown woven hat and a purple patterned garment, is looking off to the side. She has red circular face paint on her cheeks. The background is blurred.

OUR PROCESS UNTIL NOW

Community Engagement & Research

Skookum Lab has found that Indigenous residents feel invisible, disconnected from each other, and displaced from their land and culture. These factors profoundly relate to their experience of urban Indigenous poverty in Surrey; for Indigenous people in Surrey, poverty is about much more than income alone.

From the lab's engagement findings, Skookum Lab developed the "4Cs" as our theory of change which involves:

- Community Belonging;
- Connection to Family;
- Cultural Awareness/ Visibility; and
- Cash/Financial Security.

Campfire Gatherings

Campfire Gatherings are Skookum's indigenized social innovation design lab: a process that convenes key change agents to create innovative solutions. At a Skookum Campfire in October of 2019, participants processed over a year's worth of community engagement and research information collected and surfaced 16 potential prototypes.



Prototype Development

Out of the 16 prototypes identified from the October Campfire Gathering (summarized in the “Skookum Lab Progress Report”), we decided to focus on a total of 6 prototypes.

1. Guide Groups: A Culturally Connected Community of Care
2. Ambassador Program: A Surrey Indigenous Leadership Program
3. Indigenous Housing: An Urban Village Co-op
4. Indigenous Gathering Space: Many Voices, One Home – A SUILC Led Discussion Paper
5. Understanding to Action: Racism Through a Social Innovation/ Systems Lens
6. Evaluating Successes to Scale Up: An Indigenous Social Innovation Evaluation Team

At this point in time, Skookum Lab will carry out testing prototypes. We are looking for key partnerships to build on our collective impact. Each of the prototypes are described in the next section.



PROTOTYPES

PROTOTYPE #1 - GUIDE GROUPS:

A CULTURALLY CONNECTED COMMUNITY OF CARE

Skookum Lab Guide Groups have been foundational to our Indigenous Social Innovation Lab. They ensure that there is a broad range of perspectives on the experience of Indigenous child and youth poverty in Surrey and assist us to centre Indigenous wisdom and lived experience. More than that, however, Guide Groups have emerged as a focal point for creating resiliency, hope and supportive relationships through a culturally connected community of care in Surrey.

While, Skookum Lab Guide Groups have been instrumental to our social innovation methodology, they are at the same time addressing often overlooked aspects of living in poverty. For example, Skookum Lab research identified that in addition to financial insecurity, the experience of poverty in Surrey also included feeling isolated from the wider urban Indigenous community, being disconnected from culture, and a lack of kinship or community networks that can support individuals and families in times of need.

PARTICIPANTS

Guide Groups create a safe space for participants to come together and share their wisdom and create supportive and resilient relationships grounded in culture and Indigeneity. There are four Guide Groups:

- Elders Guide Group for Indigenous seniors
- Youth Guide Group for Indigenous children and youth under 25 years old
- Caregivers Guide Group for Indigenous people providing care to very young Indigenous children
- Support workers Guide Group for Indigenous front-line workers



PROTOTYPE #1 CONT'D:



Objectives:

- Create a safe container for people to gather and create community through cultural activities and learning opportunities
- Strengthen networks of supportive relationships within families and caregivers
- Increase financial stability by providing meals and small incentives and while also seeking opportunities to generate income
- Increase knowledge and access of programs, services and resources
- Support participants with immediate and emerging needs from the Covid 19 pandemic
- Build confidence of participants to engage in decision-making processes that address their needs and priorities on their own terms
- Identify individuals with leadership potential to participate in the Ambassador program (see Prototype #2)

Activities:

- Cultural Learning Opportunities (regalia making, land-based experiential learning, honouring ceremonies, Indigenous protocols, drumming, singing, and language learning)
- Community Connection & Supports (regular meetings, shared meals, facilitated discussions, referrals to services, family mentorship, and support)
- Creative Art-based Activities (murals, graffiti, portraiture, song writing)
- Financial Supports (gift cards, transportation assistance, shared meals, child care, opportunities to create supplemental revenues)

This prototype is being funded by the Vancouver Foundation, Vancity Community Foundation, and the Ministry of Children & Family Development.

PROTOTYPE #2 - AMBASSADOR PROGRAM: BUILDING LEADERSHIP CAPACITY WITHIN THE URBAN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY

In 2017 the Surrey Urban Indigenous Leadership Committee (SUILC) recognized that there were not enough Indigenous people in leadership roles in the community, in service organizations, or in civic life generally. SUILC concluded that the lack of grass-roots leadership contributes to the phenomenon of Indigenous invisibility in Surrey – despite being the largest urban Indigenous population in the province.

Up until now, there has not been a way to support and grow potential Indigenous leaders in Surrey when they do step forward. The Ambassador Program, therefore, was conceived as the means to cultivate Indigenous-centered leadership skills and create safe learning opportunities for nascent Indigenous leaders in Surrey.

PARTICIPANTS

The program will grow the pool of Indigenous candidates who are prepared to use their voices for positive change, increase the visibility and presence of Indigenous voices in Surrey, create grassroots capacity to organize Indigenous people, and provide skills and experiences that will contribute to financial security for participants. In the long term, the Ambassador Program has the potential to bring Indigenous experiences out of the shadows and give voice to Indigenous issues like child and youth poverty.

The Ambassador Program will create a safe space for eight participants to come together and learn about leadership from a perspective that is grounded in culture and Indigeneity.



PROTOTYPE #2 CONT'D:



Objectives:

- To amplify the voice and visibility of Indigenous peoples living in poverty so they can represent and advocate for their own interests;
- Increase visibility and presence of Indigenous peoples in Surrey;
- Increase grassroots capacity to advocate for Indigenous interests;
- Create a supportive environment for participants to engage in deeper learning about their own culture, protocols and family relationships;
- Compensation as participants demonstrate increased responsibility;
- Provide opportunities for skill development and experiences that will contribute to formal and informal leadership roles.

Some examples of activities are:

- Learn to make presentations to small and large groups of people
- Practice introducing oneself as per each participants' cultural protocols
- Learn and practice about local Coast Salish protocols
- Understand self-care and wellness through cultural activities
- Mentorship by Indigenous leaders in Surrey
- Represent Skookum Lab and SUILC at events and presentations
- Being present and supporting local Indigenous community events
- Learn about social innovation
- Learn how to facilitate small group sessions like Guide Groups

To fully implement this prototype, we are seeking \$35,000 for fiscal year 2020/2021.

PROTOTYPE #3 – URBAN VILLAGE CO-OP: SKOOKUM HOUSING SOLUTIONS LAB

Through the Skookum Lab research phase, it became clear that finding safe, secure, and affordable housing is a significant challenge to Indigenous people living in poverty. Quite simply, there are not enough appropriate housing options for Indigenous people in Surrey. As a result, participants at the Skookum Campfire in the fall of 2019 prioritized housing for a prototype. Participants also presented a vision of housing options that could be Indigenous, collective in nature, and facilitate both cultural and economic participation and support.

The Skookum Housing Solutions Lab prototype will allow for a deeper dive into the needs and aspirations for Indigenous housing in Surrey.

Skookum Lab infrastructure will be used to engage the community and other systems entrepreneurs that can support progressive change. The prototype will result in a clear picture of Indigenous housing needs in Surrey, an articulation of the vision for Indigenous housing in Surrey, and strategies for creating more Indigenous housing options in Surrey.

HOUSING SOLUTIONS LAB GOVERNANCE

The Housing Solutions Lab is nested within the governance ecosystem of Skookum Lab. SUILC is responsible for the overall project. The Skookum Lab Task Force will provide operational oversight and decisions will be made by the Skookum Lab Housing Leadership Group. This includes:

- Keginow Native Housing Society
- Seven Sacred Fires
- Fraser Region Aboriginal Friendship Center (FRAFCA)
- Nova Métis Heritage Association
- CMHC
- BC Housing
- City of Surrey
- Aboriginal Housing Management Association



PROTOTYPE #3 CONT'D:



Objectives:

- Assess the housing needs and aspirations of Indigenous people living in Surrey
- Create a strategy for increasing Indigenous housing options in Surrey

Activities:

- Light touch engagement
- Key informant interviews
- Ethnographic interviews
- Literature review
- Knowledge mobilization strategy
- Housing focused Campfire Gatherings
- Convene the Skookum Housing Leadership Group
- Draft a Housing Solutions report or strategy

Funding: We will be announcing our funding partner in the near future.

PROTOTYPE #4 UNDERSTANDING TO ACTION

RACISM THROUGH A SOCIAL INNOVATION LENS



Racism emerged from Skookum engagement as an underlying and pervasive aspect of poverty.

As a result, participants at the Skookum Lab Campfire Gathering in October 2019 prioritized a deeper dive into the intersection of racism and poverty.

In February of 2020, Skookum LAB convened a broad cross-section of 43 Indigenous community members, activists, and allies to learn about racism through a social innovation lens.

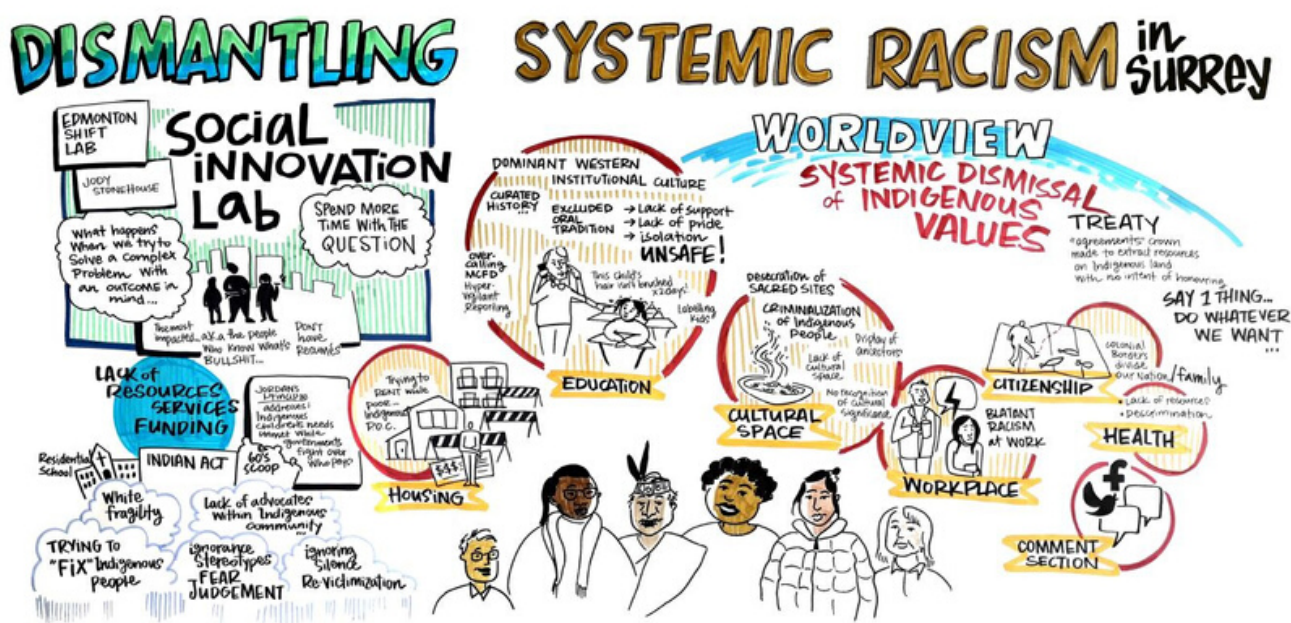
This event illuminated an understanding of systemic racism and its impact on Indigenous people in Surrey.

Captured in Skookum Lab's Report "Seeing Racism Through an Indigenous Social Innovation Lens: Learning and Reflections from Skookum Lab Anti-Racism Forum 2020", conversations generated ideas for additional learning and action to combat racism in Surrey.

Event Objectives:

- To initiate discussion and action to end racism in Surrey.
- To expand the range of Indigenous people and allies that are familiar with social innovation approaches and systems thinking analysis.

PROTOTYPE #4 CONT'D:



Activities:

- Large two-day campfire-style gathering
- Land-based acknowledgement, protocols, and learning
- Presentations by Indigenous activists about culturally informed practice and social innovation
- Activities and exercises to learn about systems thinking;
- Sharing of food
- Cultural practices to support wellness
- A summary report with practical next steps that can guide additional work to address racism in Surrey.

Next steps involve:

- Apply for more funding to continue the discussion
- Strengthen the relationship with Semiahmoo and other land based First Nations to ground the work in place-based cultural practice.
- Expand the circle

This prototype was funded [in part] by the Government of Canada. Additional funding requests will be developed to address the next steps contained in the summary report for fiscal year 2019/2020.

PROTOTYPE #5 – MANY NATIONS, ONE HOME: INDIGENOUS CULTURAL & SERVICE HUB

"WE WANT A GATHERING PLACE. SOMEWHERE WHERE WE CAN COOK, EAT AND BOND WITH OTHER YOUTH AND DO HEALTHY ACTIVITIES TOGETHER. REALLY NICE, BIG, MAKES IT FEEL LIKE YOU ARE AT HOME. LIKE A BIG HOUSE, LIKE A FEELING OF BEING ON THE REZ OR HAVING A COMMUNITY IN THE CITY."

- SKOOKUM LAB PARTICIPANT



In 2017, the SUILC recognized that the lack of an Indigenous gathering space was a challenge for building a sense of community. SUILC concluded that the lack of a gathering space contributes to the phenomenon that the Indigenous community in Surrey – despite being the largest urban Indigenous population in the province – is invisible.

The lack of an Indigenous gathering space came up in 2018/2019 as the Skookum Lab completed its research and engagement on Indigenous child and youth poverty in Surrey.

More than just a physical space, the Indigenous community also needed a place:

- to gather as the spiritual center of the community
- where people could be connected to each other and to resources and services, and
- to be immersed in culture, language and indigeneity.

Skookum Lab has connected the lack of an Indigenous gathering space to Indigenous child and youth poverty.

PROTOTYPE #5 CONT'D:

Activities:

- Review of pre-existing references to an Indigenous gathering space from SUILC and Skookum Lab;
- Design of community engagement activities to build on pre-existing information;
- Discussion with Guide Group participants to provide guidance to the prototype; and,
- Development of a report.

Objectives:

To create a report that can be used to advance the case for an Indigenous cultural and service hub in Surrey

To coalesce the vision and practical requirements for a cultural and service hub in Surrey

PARTICIPANTS

The SUILC will be working in partnership with an Indigenous architect from Urban Arts to present the case for an Indigenous cultural and service hub in Surrey.

Guide Group participants will be the primary point of contact for community perspectives.



For fiscal year 2020/2021, the SUILC will be providing funds to implement this prototype.



PROTOTYPE #6 – EVALUATING SUCCESSIONS TO SCALE-UP

Based on Skookum findings, a diverse cross-section of community members and organizational leaders developed prototypes to intervene in the systems that create and sustain child poverty. These systems entrepreneurs have moved quickly within their own sphere of influence to start innovative pilot projects (i.e. prototypes) to address findings as they emerge from the Lab research and engagement. Additionally, five of the prototypes offer practical, Indigenous-centered ways to address child and youth poverty.

Skookum Lab is only a three-year project and the commitment of the current funders is only to “test” the prototypes. This means that success (or failure) of the prototypes cannot be fully evaluated. Equally important, the successes cannot be communicated to funders and decision-makers to continue to invest in these place-based initiatives or expand them in geographic scope.

As a result, it was decided that Skookum Lab resources must go into evaluating the success of the prototypes. However, existing evaluation methodologies may not be appropriate for the task at hand.

Skookum Lab is an Indigenous social innovation lab – one of the first on Turtle Island. The evaluation prototype will create an Indigenous-centered social innovation evaluation methodology to demonstrate Skookum impact.

PROTOTYPE #6 CONT'D:

Program Participants: Guide Groups, Ambassador participants, Individuals connected to the prototypes, Skookum Implementation Team, Skookum Task Force, and SFU Radius.



Objectives:

- Develop an Indigenous social innovation methodology to evaluate Skookum Lab prototypes
- Evaluate the impact of social innovation prototypes including Skookum Lab and our partners
- Communicate the results of the evaluations to community, funders, and decision-makers
- Tell the Skookum Lab story in relevant and impactful ways

Activities:

- Learning opportunity with Indigenous evaluation experts
- Learning opportunity with Social Innovation evaluation experts
- Design Skookum Lab evaluation methodology
- Evaluation activities
- Knowledge mobilization strategy

We are seeking \$60,000 (fiscal year 2020/2021) to compensate evaluation experts; convene evaluation design participants; pay evaluators; write final evaluation report and communicate results.