Living Labs

Bâtiment 7

OFFICE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Evaluation Report - Year 1

2019-2020

June 2021

Bâtiment 7

Evaluation Report - Year 1

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By Maggie Cassin and Amanda Vincelli
For the Sustainability Action Fund and the Concordia University Office of Community Engagement.

Winter/Spring 2021

Living Labs at Bâtiment 7

In Fall of 2019, the Sustainability Action Fund and the Office of Community Engagement at Concordia University partnered with Bâtiment 7, a resident-led initiative in the Pointe-Saint-Charles neighborhood. The partnership saw the emergence of a Living Labs experiential learning strategy that has since led to a number of student-led social and environmental sustainability initiatives offered in community.

Bâtiment 7 is a resident-led initiative in Pointe-Saint-Charles (PSC). Located on former CN lands at the neighborhood's southernmost tip, the heritage industrial site has been reclaimed and is now emerging as a unique model of collectively governed, citizen-led urban design project, home to 16 locally-led community initiatives.

Bâtiment 7 is an integral aspect of a neighborhood that has been a crucible of resident-led community initiatives. It is important to situate Bâtiment 7 in this context, as an offshoot to a vision that includes the Pointe-Saint-Charles community clinic stemming from a 1970s commitment to the emergence of popular health care services and an extensive community-housing base. Bâtiment 7 is led by Collectif 7 à Nous, an organization dedicated to promoting local initiatives. Bâtiment 7 emerges from over ten years of actions advocating that former CN lands be transformed into a community hub. As a successful, large-scale project, Bâtiment 7 will lead to ongoing reflections on the role and impacts of such institutions in evolving urban spaces.

There are currently sixteen initiatives based out of Bâtiment 7. Some of these are private enterprises, some are worker cooperatives while others are non-profit organizations and some are informal resident-led projects. The initiatives on site include: Le Détour: A neighborhood food coop and grocery store which residents can volunteer at in exchange for reduced food costs; Les Sans Taverne: a worker coop brew pub and live event venue; the Pointe-Saint-Charles Art School; La Coulée: a metal working cooperative and foundry led by Concordia Fine Arts students and alumni; the Cycle 7 bicycle cooperative that provides bike maintenance services and educational workshops for people and many others.

The site is now also home to an anchored Concordia University presence that supports and coordinates the emergence of Concordia-based student involvement, research and programming. This presence is coordinated by the Office of Community Engagement, with the support of the Office of Research and Concordia's social innovation hub SHIFT.

SUSTAINABILITY ACTION FUND

The Sustainability Action Fund (SAF) is a student run fee levy group at Concordia University. The organization collects approximately $205,000 of revenues a year from undergraduate (25-cent-per-credit) and graduate ($1.25 per term) fee levies. The majority of funding goes to support projects to develop sustainable infrastructure, urban agriculture, community-building, and education surrounding environmental and community issues, with the long-term goal of inspiring and developing a culture of sustainability at Concordia University.

The SAF's mission is to build an inclusive culture of sustainability at Concordia University by enabling, supporting, and financing projects that tackle interconnected environmental, social, and economic issues.

Concordia University
OFFICE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Concordia University Office of Community Engagement (OCE)'s mandate is to develop and support meaningful and mutually-beneficial relationships between the university and the diverse communities of Montreal.

The OCE connects faculty, staff and students with members of the wider Montreal community and promotes community-led initiatives and community-based knowledge through our networks and media platforms.

The OCE supports new and ongoing community-engagement efforts with financial assistance, award applications assistance, and discounts on campus space rentals for non-profit community events and builds partnerships by taking part in the planning and design of community engagement projects.This can include financial support, promotion, facilities discounts and making strategic introductions, and can lead to co-creating and developing ambitious and innovative programs with community-led organizations and groups.

The OCE places a concerted focus on the cultivation of relationships, including with Indigenous communities and is fully engaged in Concordia's Indigenous Directions.

Living Labs at Bâtiment 7

Overview of the Living Labs Strategy at Bâtiment 7

In winter of 2018, the SAF, OCE and Bâtiment 7 held initial meetings to consider the extent to which Bâtiment 7 could present an opportunity for hosting Concordia students interested in applying commitments to social and environmental sustainability, and whose educational journey connects to approaches such as urban design experimentation, popular education, community economic development, institutional management and governance, film studies, Creative Art Therapies, etc.. Bâtiment 7's space, culture and history lend themselves to: cross-disciplinary interventions, arts creation leading to experiential learning opportunities with community members, and many more possibilities.

These discussions led to a funding framework that saw the OCE and the SAF each invest 20K as part of a 2-year strategy (40K total) that would support small-scale student-led projects on site.

Core components of Program

It was initially hoped that a coordinated presence of students on site within the Bâtiment 7 project and spaces would allow for an emergent approach to experiential learning and would potentially lead to student collaborations and offshoots promoting university-led community engagement.
The program was based on a structure similar to that of an arts residency, and prioritized candidates who expressed a situated commitment to co-creating projects with members of the Pointe-Saint-Charles and Bâtiment 7 community, over the course of a one-year period.

In line with experiential learning commitments, it was hoped that participants would be spending time on site, working on their project in the context of one of the studio spaces, while interacting with community members, or in supportive cohort-based activities. At the onset of the Living Labs program, training was provided in order to sensitize participants to community-based approaches. The training familiarized participants to the Bâtiment 7 context, and to its socio-economic mission in relation to the Pointe-St-Charles neighborhood.

Over the course of the program, participants benefited from ongoing support provided by the Office of Community Engagement, the Sustainability Action Fund, and the Concordia staff responsible for holding its anchored presence on site. Over the course of the program, participants were encouraged to offer community-facing workshops as a direct offshoot to their practice and participation in this Living Labs program.

Executive Summary

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SAF delineated three main goals, which form the basis of this evaluation and report:

- **Document the 2019-2020 Living Labs' outcomes and the experience of core participants**
- **Identify areas of improvement for the program**
- **Outline an evaluation process for the 2020-2021 Living Labs**

Overall, the main purpose of this evaluation was to determine the level of success of SAF and OCE in meeting the program's core objective: "to provide a unique community work opportunity and enriching experiential learning platform for Concordia students outside of campus." The results of this evaluation affirm that the Living Labs program is successful at meeting this objective.

Other evaluation aims included:

- **To document Living Lab's outcomes:**
  - Document outcomes, and assess skills development by program participants
  - Gather testimonies
- **To gain insight:**
  - Assess the needs and wants of community members
  - Find out which participants benefit most from the program and why
  - Identify barriers to the program
  - Gain an overview of resource allocation across the program
- **To support program and organizational change and improvement:**
  - Understand how the support offered to participants can be improved
  - Decide how to best allocate resources in future iterations of the program
  - Learn how to best describe and measure program activities

Adapted from The Community Tool Box's Framework for Program Evaluation

This evaluation takes into consideration that the Living Labs is a young program, which was developed using an emergent design approach during its first year.
Despite a global pandemic striking at the onset of the Living Labs's development and implementation, a total of seven projects were realized or partially-realized at Bâtiment 7 between 2019 and 2020, engaging a reported total of 70+ people from the Concordia, B7, PSC, and broader South-West communities. The program proved to be adaptable and resilient despite these unforeseen challenges. Many of the project leads carried their projects online and others developed community structures such as playground and gardens, which altogether largely contributed to the community's well-being in a period rife with social isolation and hardships. The large majority of the Living Labs' participants, including project members and B7 hosts, reported a positive experience in the program and a strong appreciation for the opportunity and support offered by SAF and OCE. Project leads qualified their experience as engaging, supportive, empowering, connective, collaborative and enriching. They also reported meeting and exceeding their learning goals through the opportunity of working in community, where they were able to bridge theory and practice, develop new knowledge and skills. Most described this as having a significant impact on their respective field of practice, as well as an entry point and springboard to greater civic engagement. As a result of this enriching experience, more than half of these first year's project leads have re-applied to lead initiatives for a second year in the program (descriptions of the selected projects can be found at the end of this report)

While the Living Labs' first year was to a large extent experienced as positive and successful by a majority of its key actors, the findings revealed several areas of improvements at all levels of the program, which we deem important to address in order to ensure a supportive and caring environment for all stakeholders engaged in the program currently and in the future. This includes the need for greater transparency, more clearly-delineated and program-specific strategies and protocols, revisions to the application, selection and onboarding processes, improving informational and educational resources, enhancing communication and peer-support, the integration of community-building activities, a more equitable distribution of resources, the creation of public information-sharing opportunities, and the implementation of deliberate documentation and evaluation processes. The report offers concrete recommendations for program changes for current and future Living Labs.

An unexpected outcome of this evaluation was the creation of an Airtable database for the program. We hope it becomes a useful tool to consolidate and streamline the program data in a way that facilitates transparency, capacity-building and collaboration amongst the various program stakeholders.

Methodology

The evaluation was supervised by SAF from December 2020 through June 2021 and developed in collaboration with the OCE from March to June 2021. It took approximately 250 hours for the evaluators to complete the evaluation, which was conducted many months (6+ months) after the completion of the Living Labs.

Notes on Evaluation Process

- Both evaluators conducted this evaluation as part of a field placement with SAF, while being full time graduate students in the Community Economic Development program at Concordia, under the supervision of Dr. Frances Ravensbergen.
- Although evaluators worked independently for the most part, SAF approved the evaluation plan, and evaluators checked-in with SAF's ED, Sebastián di Poi, on a regular basis.
- Both evaluators were volunteers at B7 prior and during this evaluation project.
- The evaluators conducted this evaluation through the lenses of intersectionality, diversity, equity and inclusion. Closer attention was attributed to community needs and support, and the measure of social and community engagement metrics.

The following documents the main phases of this evaluation process:

Organizational Analysis

In December 2020, we conducted an organization analysis on SAF. Using COCo's Healthy House tool.

Program Analysis

As of January 2021, we conducted an analysis of the Living Labs at Bâtiment 7 program. This was done primarily through interviews and information gathering with SAF's Executive Director, Sebastián di Poi and Project Coordinator, Olivia Champagne. The program analysis required the identification of partnership roles, mapping the program structure and processes, identification of program stakeholders, identification of program objectives and evaluation of said objectives by SAF's Executive Director, and the creation of a SWOT and SOAR analysis.

Documentation Review

We conducted a thorough review of all documentation made available to us from SAF and OCE about the B7 Living Labs. We reviewed the following documents:

- SAF's website and social media
- B7 Living Labs year 1 report
- B7 Living Labs agreement
- B7 Living Labs integration plan 2019/2020
- B7 Living Labs application form
- B7 Living Labs project proposals
- Students project folders on google drive
- Articles about the B7 Living Labs on Concordia Website

Creation of internal database

We created an AirTable database to organize all the information found on the program in the documentation review.

Evaluation Plan

We researched and based our evaluation plan on the outcome harvesting approach. The outcome harvesting approach was chosen because it is useful in capturing outcomes retrospectively. We chose our primary data collection tools: interview and survey, and crafted our evaluation questions.

Interviews with Project Leads

Throughout the month of March 2021, we conducted interviews with all 7 project leads of realized or partially-realized 2019-2020 Living Labs projects. We held 30 to 45 minutes long individual zoom calls with 5 out of these 7 project leads. Two project leads answered a questionnaire through a google document. Our interview questions focused on four main aspects: the outcomes of the project for the B7/PSC community and for the student, community engagement, experienced challenges, and feedback on the support provided by SAF, OCE and B7. You may access the questionnaire by visiting the link below.

Survey

The survey was sent to all 7 of the 2019-2020 project leads and 4 of the 5 project members. We sent the survey after first initiating contact to schedule an interview. A total of 8 people filled out the survey: all project leads, and only 1 of the 4 project members responded to the survey. The survey was hosted on the online platform Typeform and included 29 questions, all multiple choice or rating scales, pertaining to the participants' experience in the program and the support provided by SAF, OCE and B7. The survey could be filled anonymously, but all students chose to identify themselves. The survey also included optional demographic questions, which are not included in this summary of findings, but can be found in the Airtable database. Time required to complete the survey was estimated at 6 minutes, however it was registered that it took an average of 11:17 minutes.

Interviews with B7 Project Hosts

After speaking with the project leads, we identified Michelle Duchesneau from Press Start, Catherine Wells from the Point St-Charles Art School, and Joseph Bergeron from the fermette committee as the main B7 hosts for the projects. We reached out to all 3. We spoke with Michelle Duchesneau and Catherine Wells answered a questionnaire through a google document. We were not able to connect with Joseph Bergeron.

Interview with SAF

Between November 2020 and March 2021, we met on several occasions with SAF's Executive Director Sebastián di Poi, for which we have recorded meeting notes. In early January 2021, we conducted an interview with Sebastián and Olivia Champagne, the Project Coordinator, which pertained to SAF at large and not the Living Labs program specifically.

Interview with Alex Megelas, Program Coordinator

We conducted a 1 hour zoom interview with the OCE liaison officer Alex Megelas

Preliminary Analysis Meetings

At the end of the month of April 2021, we facilitated 2 preliminary analysis meetings with Alex Megelas and Sebastián di Poi. Each meeting lasted approximately 2 hours, and was intended to discuss the most relevant findings from our evaluation, and collectively discuss possible amendments to the program when appropriate. Prior to the first meeting, we provided Alex and Sebastián with a copy of the summary of findings, and a list of the most relevant findings we wanted to discuss. It is important to note that some of these findings have since been updated as new information came through from project leads we had not been able to reach previously.

Data Synthesis and Analysis

In May 2021, we synthesized and began analyzing our data. We drew conclusions from this data and drafted recommendations for program amendments.

Reflections on Evaluation Methodology
(Limitations, Evaluator Biases, Weaknesses of Process)

- We did not speak with people who withdrew or discontinued their projects from the program. We are missing information on these projects.
- We did not have the chance to speak or connect with certain B7 project hosts, we did not speak to Joseph, Emma, and Mubeena. Either because we were unable to reach them, or connect with them.
- We did not speak with Mark Underwood, SAF's ED for the first year of the program.
- We did not speak to the participants of the projects, nor the partner organisations of the projects.
- Open discussions during interviews led to findings that were unexpected and not standardized across different interviews.
- Two interviews were not conducted over zoom, but rather through online questionnaires, which didn't give room for open discussions and unexpected findings.
- Blindspot: As two white Quebecois women, we didn't consider possible oppressive/ discriminatory environment at B7 and omitted questions to the project leads that pertained directly to experiences of discrimination and/or barriers of inclusion.
- Project leads interview gaps for future considerations:
  - We did not ask questions about collaboration: would project leads who worked alone retrospectively would have preferred to work with others?
  - Was it clear to you that you could pay yourself?
  - Questions on any experiences of discrimination and/or barriers of inclusion in the integration in the community organisation.
- Survey time completion took almost twice longer to complete than expected (11:17 min on average instead of 6 min)
- Survey question for future consideration: select which words least describe your experience?

Challenges that influenced our process

- There was a lack of documentation of the program information by SAF and OCE, such as project and financial info, program protocols, etc.
- There was a need to gather and organize the documentation that was available, which took a lot of our time.
- Alex Megelas, the main program coordinator, was on leave during the assessement and design phases, and returned during the implementation phase of our evaluation work
  - OCE therefore did not revise or approve our evaluation plan
  - Not being able to consult Alex Megelas had an impact on the evaluation design. For example, interview and survey questions would have likely been different.

Summary of Findings

2019-2020 Living Labs

Profiles & Outcomes

Information about the projects was sourced from application records, interviews with project leads and SAF documentation.

From *Working Towards Reconcilitation* Living Labs

Wild Green Playground

Team Members:
Sahar Alinezhad
Mohammad Abdalreza Zadeh
Christian Scott Martone Donde

Summer 2020

Project Description

The Wild Green Playground project facilitated the co-creation of a sandbox playground for the B7 community through participatory arts methods and unstructured imaginative play.

Wild playgrounds are playgrounds that are modular, flexible, and ever-changing which adapt to the needs and desires of their users and occupants. Their 'wildness' lies in the fact that natural and human-made elements are used to create them – such as wood, soil mounds, tires, recycled structures, old playground infrastructure – whatever is at hand and part of the site. This 'wildness' also brings a multiplicity of uses and spurs imagination in the players, especially when the meaning and function of a particular playground is unclear and unrestricted.

B7 Garden Committee
B7 host: Joseph Bergeron

Themes
Community, Health & Well-Being, Creative Placemaking, Participatory Design, Research

Sahar Alinezhad is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Geography, Planning, and Environment at Concordia University. She received her Bachelor's Degree in Urbanism and her Master's Degree in Urban Design. She is also a research assistant at citiesxcitizens. Her research interests focuses on the livability and conviviality of urban spaces as well as urban quality of life and wellbeing. Presently, her research focuses on collective gardens and self-organizing. More specifically, her research aims to identify if and how collective autonomous practices facilitate social inclusion processes in third places. Sahar aims to empower local communities to actively participate in decision-making processes for their neighborhood common spaces.

Mohammad Abdalreza Zadeh is an INDI PhD student at Concordia University. He investigates the potentials of design education for developing the community-university-industry partnership. He completed his MArch at the University of Tehran and his B.S.Arch at Iran University of Science and Technology. His curiosity about the social responsibility of design grew in volunteer working with local and International NGOs in Iran. He believes that community-based design is an inevitable aspect of a democratic society.

Christian Scott Martone Donde is an artist, designer, researcher, urbanist currently completing a PhD student at Concordia University in theater, urban planning and design. They study cities and people, and focus on urban play, gentrification, and place-making practices—through the use of research-creation methods and multiple media They collaborate at the Performative Urbanism Lab (PULSE), the Technoculture, Art, and Games (TAG), and HEXAGRAM.

Students' engagement at B7

Sahar is still active at B7, and with Saeid Alinezhad, they have developed a new project for B7 for winter 2021.

Other Notes

The sand box will be destroyed this summer (2021) because of a new landscape design for B7.
Christian was more involved in the earlier stages of the project, particularly with the design and conceptualization.

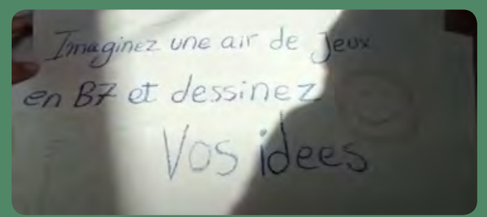
Outcomes

B7/PSC

- The resulting playground took the form of a sandbox, that was installed near the chicken coop and community gardens.
- The playground was activated by B7 community and PSC residents throughout the summer of 2020; community members brought toys that were left for everyone to use.
- The sandbox has provided a safe playground that occupied the kids of the folks who are attending to the gardens at B7.
- Placed the sandbox at the back of the building, which brought people to explore, discover and use different parts of the B7 property.
- The interplay and proximity of the gardens to the playground introduced many of the kids to gardening.
- Participants took responsibility for the playground (from giving ideas to taking care of the place). Parents even added things to toys for added safety
- The simplicity of the sandbox made it accessible to folks, who generally felt comfortable to engage with it.
- Several bbqs were organized around the playground (with limited publicity due to COVID restrictions).
- Received lots of positive feedback from community members.
- Encouraged intergenerational mingling.

Students

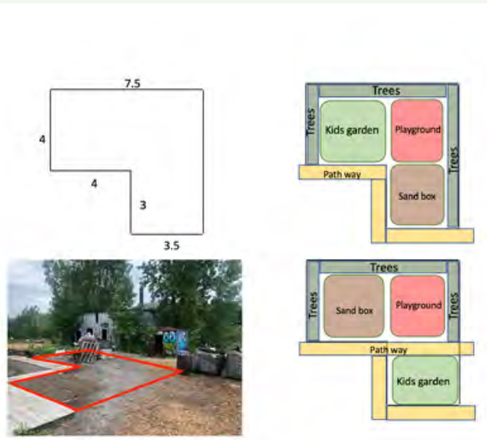
- Sahar has become an active member of B7, taking part in the garden committee.
- Sahar reapplied to the Living Labs and has been developing a new project with Saeid Alinezhad for B7 called Feel the Warmth.
- These projects and Sahar's involvement at B7 are now core tenants of her PHD thesis
- Opportunity for praxis; to apply scholarly knowledge, experiment in community, and apply participatory methods.
- For Sahar: enriching and empowering experience that aligned with her practice and personal goals to provide a platform and empower communities to shape their environment, the public spaces in their neighborhood.
- Opportunity to garden and to tend to a community resource.



Budget	**$1986**
Materials	$710
Expert services	$1276

"The first experience working with the community and it was the best, it couldn't have been better! B7 Garden is now my case study for my Ph.D. thesis."

- Sahar Alinezhad



"Thank you for your great support!"

- Mohammad Abdalreza Zadeh

The Good Drama

Team Members:
Sandy El Bitar
Soroosh Karimi (Dec. 2019)

December 2019 (in-person)
April-June 2020 (online)

Project Description

The Good Drama was a virtual creative and fun activity, offered weekly on Tuesdays from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. via Zoom from April through June 2020. It was described as a brave space to explore, experiment and take risks, and was inspired by drama therapy, theatre and clown work. Sandy used imagination, art, movement, storytelling and humour to offer exercises aiming to achieve a healthy, fun and creative goal. The Good Drama sessions provided the participants with a context to tell their stories, set goals, solve problems, express feelings and connect with oneself and with others. The workshops also aimed to provide participants with a relaxed space to acquire skills such as negotiating, meditation, artistic expression, play, and emotional regulation. She developed the workshops based on themes chosen by the participants, many of which related to their experience during COVID such as confinement, isolation, etc. Videoconferencing became "a stage for participants to connect through improvisation, storytelling and creative exchanges." (Rubio, 2020)

In December 2019, Sandy, accompanied by Soroosh Karimi, participated in the drop-in community healing days at Bâtiment 7 held by the Tiger Lotus Coop, a cooperative of alternative health workers. They offered two in-person sessions at a sliding-scale fee as part of community healing days (journées de la santé) before the COVID-19 pandemic led to their discontinuation.

Tiger Lotus & Grand Atelier

Themes
Community Arts, Health & Well-Being, Art Therapy Education & Research

Sandy El Bitar has an academic and experiential background in the art of theatre and clown, and psychology. She has worked as a therapeutic Clown in different paediatrics, oncology and nursing homes. She has worked as a life enrichment facilitator with people in physical, social and mental distress. She is currently finishing her Masters in Drama therapy at the university of Concordia while conducting her research on the impact of humour on resilience. Also, she is the coordinator of the Meet Me at the Mall Living lab project, in collaboration with the Art hives initiatives and Media Spa. Sandy believes in the power of creativity, play and humour as tools to cope with challenges.

Students' engagement at B7

No longer active with B7, but is still in touch with many of the participants.

Other Notes

Sandy offered some of the workshops as part of Art Hives, under the leadship of Concordia faculty Janis Timm-Botos

Outcomes

Participants*

- Series of accessible and free art therapy workshops
- Co-creation of a space for self-exploration, collective exploration and meaningful connection; asked for feedback from participants at the end of each session, which informed the next session. Being witnessed by others in a time of pandemic was a very important aspect. Sessions were playful and contributed to breaking the isolation that people were experiencing.
- Engaged an intergenerational and diverse audience (children, adults and older folks); regular attendance and engagement to workshops (~6-9 people showing up every week);
- Co-development processes

Student (Sandy)

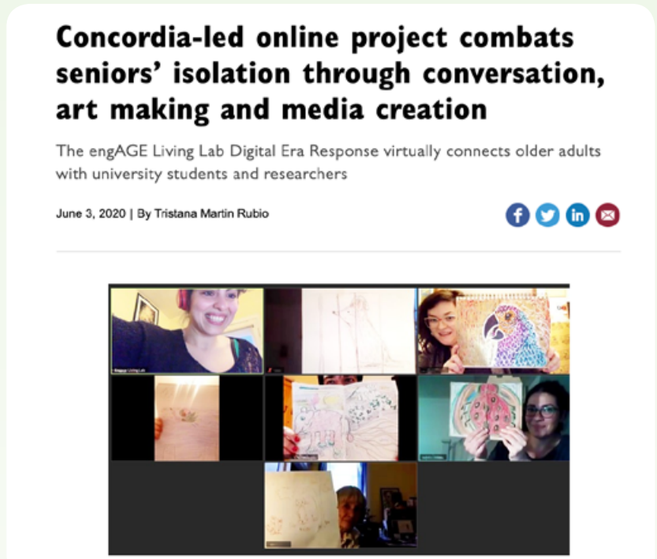
- Acquired new skills for facilitating a group and conducting art therapy online, which prepared her for her internship.
- Was able to practice the art therapy theories, modalities and approaches she has been learning in her MA.
- Built community

* A few participants were engaged at B7, but the majority of the group did not have connections to B7/PSC.

Budget	**$1700**
Honoraria	$1700

"I wouldn't have planned to make it if it wasn't for that opportunity. It was a simple process. Academia makes it so complicated."

- Sandy El Bitar



Concordia-led online project combats seniors' isolation through conversation, art making and media creation

The engAGE Living Lab Digital Era Response virtually connects older adults with university students and researchers

June 3, 2020 | By Tristana Martin Rubio

Rubio, T. (2020, June 3). Concordia-led online project combats seniors' isolation through conversation, art making and media creation. Concordia website.

"Thank you for giving me the space to remember who I am, what I need and the care that I deserve,"

- A participant of The Good Drama

Working Together Towards Reconciliation

Michelle Duchesneau

Nov 2019- Dec 2019

Project Description

This project engaged youth from Press Start, Pointe Saint-Charles and local Indigenous communities in workshops and reflection activities guided by collaborators, partners and Sedalia Kawennotas Fazio, an Elder from Kahnawake. During the first weekend of activities, participants learned about colonization and reflected on ways to decolonize themselves, their relationships and connection to the land. The second weekend was dedicated to transferring learnings into a mural. This process was guided by the artist, Megan Kanerahtenha:wi Whyte. The sizable and colorful mural that was painted on one of the inside spaces at Bâtiment 7 by the artist was created to represent reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. The project was based on collaboration and co-creation, as well as relationship-building and cultural awareness as central aspects of working towards reconciliation with Indigenous communities. For Press Start, it marked the beginning of a commitment to anti-racism practice within the organization.

The project was co-organized alongside the Montreal Indigenous Community Network, an Indigenous community organization, Canadian Roots Exchange, a national non-profit, and Concordia's Office of Community Engagement.

Press-Start
Partners: PSC St-Columba House Canadian Roots Exchange, The Montreal Indigenous Community NETWORK, OCE
Collaborators: Sedalia Kawennotas Fazio, Elder from Kahnawake, artist Megan Kanerahtenha:wi Whyte, Vicky Boldo and Faye Mullen.

Themes
Community Arts, Social Justice, Education & Research

Michelle Duchesneau is a long-time resident of Point Saint-Charles, a graduate student in the Special Individualized Program (Masters & Ph.D.) at Concordia University and part of a research collective studying emancipatory economic initiatives in Quebec. Over the past 18 years she has worked in the community primarily, supporting youth and families with a particular passion for engaging youth as political and economic subjects. She is the founding member of a community-led sexual health education project and Press Start, a youth-led cooperative arcade and up-cycling project housed in Bâtiment 7. She has spent the last six years volunteering her time and skills to the on-going development of this project, which is part of her graduate reserach. Both her work and her research is centered on experimenting with, documenting and making visible emancipatory economic practices on the margins, namely those led by youth. Supervised by Kruzynski, Duchesneau confronts the traditional power dynamic by including youth in the work as co-researchers and subjects.

Students' engagement at B7

Was already deeply rooted in the B7 community as co-founder and organizer at Press-Start

Outcomes

B7/Press Start Youth

- The project was an opportunity for engaging the 14 youths in decolonizing/ indigenous solidarity work
- Workshops offered to youth on decolonization and team building
- Reconciliation mural painted by the youth with the artist Megan Kanerahtenha:wi Whyte makes decolonizing/indigenous solidarity work more visible at B7
- Strenghten commitment to engaging in solidarity work, and an anti-racist process and practice at Press Start
- A couple of students had the opportunity to go to Saskatchewan for a workshop series through the Canadian Roots Exchange program
- Open the door for other related initiatives. Now supporting the Urban Moose Hide Living Labs project

Student

- Working closely with an elder from Kahnawake and engaging in a slow and long process made her reflect and shift the way she works as an organizer: not getting bogged down by logistics and planning too much, taking the time to slow down, to listen deeply to one another and just be together, creating the space for care. An overall shift towards more care, more space, more time; shifting from a western approach to work and "functioning." This approach helped Michelle hold a more caring space that was beneficial to dealing with the mental health struggles experienced by the youth during the pandemic that ensued.

Budget	**$3950**
Honoraria	$3700
Expert services	$250

"Working closely with an elder from Kahnawake and engaging in a slower and longer process helped me shift the way I work as an organizer, away from a western approach to work and 'functioning' that focuses on logistics and planning towards more presence and deep listening."

- Michelle Duchesneau

Portraits from the Point

Maher Kouraytem

2019-Ongoing

Project Description

Portraits from the Point is an oral history and storytelling project by Maher Kouraytem, shedding light on individuals who have worked at the old CN building (now Bâtiment 7) and/or individuals who are living or have lived in Point St-Charles. This project also culminated in a short documentary film on William Eckstein, an early 1900's musician and Pointe-Saint-Charles resident.

The short documentary film is available for viewing on youtube. Maher is currently developing a website to showcase the interviews that were conducted prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, Maher coordinated an introduction to Oral History Methodologies at the Centre for Oral History at Concordia University (COHDS) for the Press Start youth.

Press-Start
Partner: Emma Harake of Center for Oral History and Digital Storytelling at Concordia
Collaborators: Ranya Esmat Saad (PhD Student, Art Education), Stephen Poirier

Themes
Community Arts, Education & Research

Maher Kouraytem is an autodidact artist and community organizer based in Montreal (Tiohtiàke), born in Beirut (Berith). He is enthusiastic about initiatives that connect people, create awareness and care for our communities. Maher believes in art's capacity to critically reflect society while providing platforms for marginalized voices. Maher is completing a bachelor in studio art at Concordia University.

Still from Maher's film, The Life & Times of Willie Eckstein

Students' engagement at B7

Still engaged and collaborating closely with several of the folks who were/are being interviewed.

Other Notes

2019 and still ongoing: Portraits from the Point (2019) which expanded to Portraits from The South West in 2020.

"This experience has been (and still is) very rewarding as it allowed me to engage with collaborative frameworks and learn more about the social structure of the people living in the south west."

Outcomes

B7

- Close and ongoing collaboration with a diverse group of project participants (12 in total: teenagers to 80+, Black, Dutch, Irish, French Canadian, North African, South American, Anglophone, Francophone).
- Maher met with participants after the interviews and received positive feedback about their interview experiences.
- The project was introduced to the youth in Press Start. Also arranged to provide space for some of the youth to attend an introduction to Oral History Methodologies at the Centre for Oral History at Concordia University (COHDS)
- One of the youth, a highschool student, participated in the workshop at COHDS and she reported that she had a positive experience and learned a lot. Since then, the centre has reached out inviting her to become an affiliate which might be another outcome of this project.

Student

- Learned a lot about conducting oral history interviews, and how such interviews help document invisible or neglected histories.
- Learned (and still learning) a lot about the complexity and the diversity of Montreal's South West working class community and activism.
- Exchanged feedback and resources with other Living Labs project leads at B7 or through emails.
- Engagement with collaborative frameworks.

Budget	**$1150**
Honoraria	$1150

Still from Maher's film, The Life & Times of Willie Eckstein

"I couldn't have made it without the support and guidance from SAF and the OCE. Mark Underwood 2019, Sebastián di Poi 2020/21 and Alex Megelas offered their support, advice and helped a lot with resources, outreach, meetings and feedback."

-Maher Kouraytem

Stills from Maher's film, The Life & Times of Willie Eckstein

Soil Decontamination at B7

Zeina El Omari

Winter 2020: Soil decontamination
Summer/Fall 2020: Vegetable garden

Project Description

This project Zeina El Omari is collaborating on with the PSC community is one of many phases of an ongoing operation consisting of the creation of a local alternative food system including a vegetable garden and an edible forest garden for the community. The project led to the analysis of soil toxicity in the different areas where food will be grown at B7. The soil analysis was completed and an extensive report was drafted by the student to the benefit of Bâtiment 7.

As a result of COVID-19, the student discontinued her on-site involvement at Bâtiment 7 and rather allocated the rest of her allocated funds towards soil for the creation of gardens on site, which were stewarded by community organizers on site.

As a result of her participation in this project, the student anchored herself in the Bâtiment 7 site gardening community. She submitted other requests for funding from Concordia and was awarded an Experiential Learning grant to continue her work. She also pivoted her MA research into a Feminist Participatory Action Research in collaboration with refugees with an agrarian background within collectivist spaces such as Bâtiment 7.

Garden committee, Fermette
Partners: Club des Consommateurs, Action Gardien

Themes
Food, Health & Wellbeing, Environmental Justice, Energy, Resources & Technology, Reserach

Zeina El Omari is an PHD candidate in the Individualized Program in Social Sciences at the School of Graduate Studies. Her research project explores how refugee women create a sense of home in Quebec through community food production. In collaboration with Bâtiment 7, Action Gardien and le Club des Consomateurs de La Pointe-Saint-Charles, she is developing an incubator for social enterprise in food production, transformation, and distribution for refugee women with an agrarian background at the Fermette de la Pointe.

Students' engagement at B7

The student became an active member of B7: she is now participating on the HR committee and garden committee, in which she collaborated on the development of the mission and values. She is invested in creating a structure for voluntary work at B7, and an incubator for social enterprises in food production, so that people who join can more quickly understand where they can apply their skills to the benefit of the B7 project and community. Zeina has become dedicated to bring more inclusivity and diversity at B7.

Other Notes

The student wanted to decontaminate the soil with willow trees but this is not what B7 wanted. The student realized there was a need to create a bioswale garden. However, this project was also abandonned in favor of a vegetable garden

Outcomes

B7/PSC

- Benefitted from Student research (15 pages report), time and funding to test the soil
- Can grow food in the soil in confidence knowing that it is safe due to testing conducted by student + geo-textiles to make sure roots would not reach contaminated soil.
- Zeina participates actively in the B7 garden committee and throughout COVID, has posted information about growing food at home in buckets and distributed seed kits to folks in the group with the help of other B7 garderners.
- Funding was allocated to buying all the soil needed to grow vegetables during summer of 2020. Some of this food (tomatoes, basil, tobacco, etc.) was donated to the community and a portion was sold for a cheap suggested donation (ex.: for 1$, you could take 5 tomatoes).
- The project evolved into the development of a vegetable garden
- One community member (Rose-Mary) shared that the garden saved her life during the COVID months: had something to look forward to everyday and fresh vegetables to keep a good immune system.
- In collaboration with the volunteer gardeners, the student helped in the creation of a garden committee. In becoming active members in the B7 community, the gardeners felt a stronger sense of belonging and appreciation.

Student

- Student wrote a 15 page report about the project.
- Learned a lot about soil decontamination, urban agriculture and environmental science.
- Learned a lot about the challenges of self-managed groups and organizations.
- See student engagement
- Greater understanding and lived experience of sociocracy and its challenges.
- Thanks to her involvement at B7 and the Fermette de la Pointe-Saint-Charles, the student was able to integrate a Feminist Participatory Action Researchto her M.A research with contributed in part to her being fast-tracked into a PHD.

Budget	**$1009***
Expert services	$1009

*Total spent on project was $2,509

“Working on the fermette project is so unique, I’ve joined along the way and have been involved in the conception, planning and construction phases. Seeing how dysfunctional it was and being part of re-organizing it all has been amazing. It’s gonna be a quite unique project with a whole food system from production to transformation.”

“I hope Living Labs will continue to provide opportunities around Montreal for Concordia students.”

“It really helped a lot that I got really involved in many areas at B7. At the beginning, it was frustrating because I didn’t know many people but over time, I started to understand who to talk to and where to get information from.”

- Zeina El Omari

Know your Neighbors

Colleen Leonard

March 4 & 18, 2020 (discontinued)

Project Description

The Know Your Neighbors project aims at reaching new Pointe-Saint-Charles community members by offering photographic storytelling workshops. It proposed a socially-engaged exploration of place, belonging and identity that encourages bridge-building between cultures, languages and generations. The project held two workshops, and came to an abrupt end after the second week of March due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The project was discontinued.

Pointe St-Charles Art School

Themes
Community Arts, Health & Wellbeing, Education

Outcomes

B7/PSC

- The student held two workshops for community members, in the first two Wednesdays of March 2020, before coming to an abrupt end due to COVID-19 lockdown regulations.
- In it's limited lifetime the project reached a total six participants, ranging from ages 20 to 80.
- of this project.

Student

- Despite the project being discontinued due to COVID-19, the student learned that there was enthusiasm for such a project within the community, and that developing this project at a later time would be a possibility.

Colleen Leonard is a photographic artist and educator. In 2020, Colleen completed an M.A. in Art Education at Concordia University where she focused her research on alternative photography's potential in cultivating accessible, sustainable, and hands-on learning opportunities within communities and schools. Her experimentations with alternative photographic approaches grew out of an increasing need to work sustainably and create a more reciprocal relationship with the natural world that nourishes her art practice. In Montreal, Colleen teaches community photography and alternative photography workshops at the Pointe-Saint-Charles Art School based in Bâtiment 7. Before pursuing a path in photography, she studied theatre at the University of Saskatchewan and spent over a decade teaching ESL in Asia and Europe.

Students' engagement at B7

The student is actively involved at B7, and already had an established relationship with the PSC Art School before participating in the Living Labs. She gives workshops at the Art School, and she takes care of the school's social media.

Budget	**$1122**
Honoraria	$560
Materials	$12
Space Booking	$500
Food	$50

"It was very unique because of the pandemic occurring at the beginning, because we were all getting to know each other, it was very difficult to keep it going."

- Coleen Leonard

Community Kitchen

Team Members:
Saskia van Es
Brooke Rice
Victoria Palummieri

March 7, 2020 (discontinued)

Project Description

The aim of this project was to introduce Pointe-Saint-Charles residents to basic nutritional information and cooking skills, and about healthy and affordable dietary options. It was envisioned that participants would together cook healthy meals in bulk so that they have food for the week. This was framed with an objective of improving the overall health of residents and reduce their financial burden by providing cheap and healthy food options and cooking skill. The intention was to engage with folks who do not have equal or easy access to nutritious foods and resources to cook them. Further workshops were considered and participants expressed their desire to continue their engagement, but the COVID-19 pandemic led to the discontinuation of the series after the first event.

Les Sans-Taverne

Themes
Food, Community, Health & Wellbeing, Education

Outcomes

B7/PSC

- One workshop was successfully held, at Les Sans-Taverne, in March 2020
- Brought together members of the PSC community who did not know each other, and demonstrated the value and ease of cooking in bulk. It provided basic cooking instructions to members and food for them to eat for a few days, and planted the idea of creating a food exchange among community members.

Student

- The workshop offered counted as a submission towards course work for two of the students involved

Saskia van Es graduated in 2020 with a bachelor degree in Human Relations from Concordia University. She works in human resources, voluntees in community development, and is constantly striving to improve the quality of life of those around her.

Victoria Palummieri graduated in 2021 with a bachelor degree in Human Relations from Concordia University. She likes to challenge and explore outside of her comfort zone. She is interested in community development and helping those in need within it. Her philosophy is that often we are not called to do extraordinary things but ordinary things with extraordinary love.

Rae Skye Katsi'tsaronkwas Brooke Rice is Snipe clan of the Kanien'keha:ka from Kahnawake. She is currently a Concordia student in the INDI's Masters program and a student affiliate of the The Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling.

Students' engagement at B7

We weren't able to reach all three team members and therefore have limited information about the student's engagement at B7, as well as the project's outcomes and challenges.

Budget	**$450**
Space Booking	$450

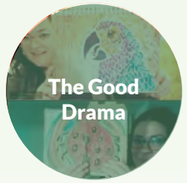
Interviews

Project Leads

Throughout the month of March 2021, we conducted interviews with all 7 project leads of realized or partially-realized 2019-2020 Living Labs projects. We held 30 to 45 minutes long individual zoom calls with 5 out of these 7 project leads. Two project leads answered a questionnaire through a google document. Our interview questions focused on four main aspects: the outcomes of the project for the B7/PSC community and for the student, community engagement, experienced challenges, and feedback on the support provided by SAF, OCE and B7. You may access the questionnaire by visiting the link below.

The following summary highlights key findings, focusing primarily on the common threads between what the project leads interviewed shared about their experience in the B7 Living Labs program.

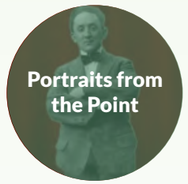
Sahar Alinezhad



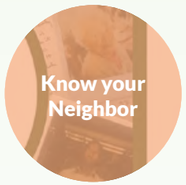
Sandy El Bitar

Zeina El Omari

Michelle Duchesneau



Maher Kouraytem



Coleen Leonard

Saskia van Es

Social Metrics & Community Engagement

3

Involved **2 Concordia faculty and staff** but those connections were not facilitated by SAF or OCE

*1 discontinued project had planned to invite 6 faculty

Involved a total of **7 external partners**

Expressed grattitude for the **opportunity to get involved in a community** and gain **practical experience**

6 Concordia students actively engaged and collaborated with the project leads

5/6

Connected with other project leads, outside of the initial and mid-year peer-support cohort meetings.

Received **positive feedback** from project participants

1/6

The project mostly **engaged a majority of folks that had no connection to B7/PSC**

~ 70 people engaged in total

Likely a greater number of people were engaged. This number is based on what was approximately recorded: it includes project leads and members, Concordia faculty and students engaged, B7 hosts, and approximate number of project participants as disclosed by project leads

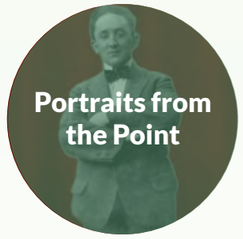
bit.ly/b7-livinglabs-questionnaire

SAF/OCE Support

- Very good experience with SAF (mostly communicated with Sebastián).
- Reimbursement was quick.
- Alex was really helpful: amazing liaison between us and B7 people.
- No flexibility from SAF about getting money advancement to pay for materials. “Having to expense when we were putting so much energy into the project already was not ideal.”
- More funding could have been helpful.

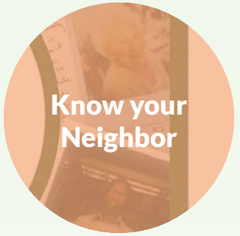
- “I wouldn’t have planned to make it if it wasn’t for that opportunity. It was a simple process. Academia makes it so complicated.”
- “Sebastián and Alex were really great and responsive and present when I needed them: giving me feedback on poster, to whom I should direct these sessions, etc. Their feedback was really helpful.”
- More help with promotion of the program could have been helpful.

- Funding was key
- Was offered support
- Appreciative of the “tremendous patience and understanding”
- Genevieve Sioui from the OCE was immensely helpful for this project
- Wished the cohort meetings were more genuinely engaging and constructive, creating a space for more peer-support outside of that one meeting.



- I couldn’t have made it without the support and guidance from SAF and the OCE. Mark Underwood 2019, Sebastián di Poi 2020/21 and Alex Megelas offered their support, advice and helped a lot with resources, outreach, meetings and feedback.

- Funding: “When I needed more funding, it was easy.”
- Sebastián and Alex were really amazing (mostly in contact with Alex)
- Alex was extremely helpful. He helped mitigate a conflict that arose. “He is an amazing person, helped me through the whole process and hardships with B7.”
- “It was crucial that Alex was so rooted in the community, so he was very aware of the realities I was navigating.”
- Pro-active when Covid happened
- Due to the flexibility and adaptability of the SAF framework, its leaders as well as the student creativity, the project evolved constantly following the circumstances.



- Would have appreciated a phone call from SAF/OCE at the onset of the pandemic, but expressed understanding for the organization and its staff navigating such an unusual challenge
- Worked very independently and largely relied on the support of the PSC art school
- Did not require much support from SAF/OCE

- SAF was crucial to the entire process of our project, from ideation to implementation. It was through SAF that I was presented the opportunity to work with Bâtiment 7, and I came up with the idea for the project in their workshop. They were an invaluable resource, without which I would not have been able to make this project happen.
- Felt wholly supported

Support

SAF/OCE

6/7

Strong appreciation for the support received

Found the **communication responsive**

Stated **funding** as SAF's main contribution to the projects' outcomes

2

Appreciated the **personalized feedback** offered throughout the development of the

Mentioned the **ideation session** as incentivizing and informing their applications to the program

1

More funding could have been helpful

1

Genevieve Sioui of OCE was extremely helpful

1

Did not feel accompanied in light of the changes brought by the pandemic

1

Appreciated the **flexibility of SAF/OCE and with the funds allocated** when the project needed to shift and more funds were required

1

Would have appreciated **more effective promotion of projects**

1

Would have appreciated **flexibility with accessing funds for expenses**

B7

3

Felt supported by the B7 community

2

Became active B7 members

Were **already active** B7 members

2

Positive, responsive and open communication

Made connections with the B7 community

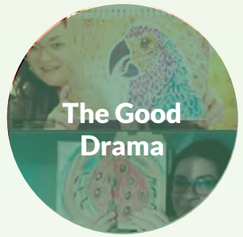
Appreciated the access to **space, materials and resources**

"B7 was the location where our project took place. They provided us with all the material and intellectual resources necessary. They rented us their kitchen space in Les Sans-Taverne to run the workshop, supplied our food from the co-op, and helped with the planning of the project. We had multiple meetings with B7 staff to help prepare and rework our project so that it could best meet the needs of the community members in a realistic way. They were always available for questions and followed up with us after the project."

- Saskia van Es, Community Kitchen

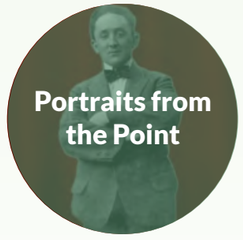
Challenges

- Shifting plans at B7.
- Expensing before reimbursement.
- Limited access to premises during COVID.



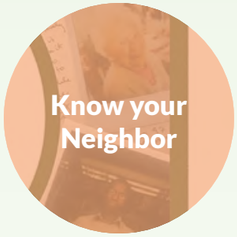
- B7 governance is slow and complicated; misunderstanding around space booking at B7.
- Online workshops felt disconnected to B7, only a couple of folks were directly connected to B7 or PSC.
- Adapting to facilitating online sessions.

- Personally challenging to hold space for a very different process working with the Indigenous folks and the youth while also unlearning/learning a lot. “It was almost too intense and emotional for me to be fully present considering I was charged with the logistics and keeping it all together.”



- The pandemic was the biggest challenge. The event and public conversation which were booked at the Bâtiment 7 were cancelled due to the pandemic: Maher was hoping that this would be an opportunity for the participants to meet in person and to engage with the public around some of the learnings and insights gleaned from this project.

- Challenging decision-making structure, planning and organization at B7; hard to figure out who is responsible and accountable for decisions/tasks in a sociocratic organization.
- Student couldn’t attend to the garden as much during months at the onset of the pandemic when the building was largely shut down to the public.
- Had to navigate a small conflict with Gregoire; Zeina wanted the food grown in the garden to be donated to community members in need, and not to be sold for suggested donation. Most people who could afford the food elsewhere are the ones who most benefited from it, which didn’t align with Zeina’s intention for the garden.



- COVID Context
- Lack of support in navigating the COVID-19 situation from SAF.

- Recruiting participants who were most in need

Challenges

7/7

COVID-19 as a dominant challenge

- 6/7 limited access to space
- 2/7 delayed project
- 3/7 change of timelines
- 4/7 cancelled events or discontinued proejcts
- 1/7 having to move projects online

3/7

Challenged by **B7 sociocratic governance structure**

- 1/7 difficult to make decisions about projects due to shifting plans at B7
- 1/7 slow structure
- 2/7 complicated decision-making: unclear who is accountable and responsible for what

1/7

Experienced a **conflict** with a B7 employee that needed to be mitigated

"My main learning from this experience was that it is crucial to be flexible to the needs of the community and the resources available to you when planning a community project. You must be willing to alter, or even completely change, your conception of what the project should be and how it should take place to meet the needs of those who you are trying to help."

- Saskia van Es, Community Kitchen

"It was really an amazing experience. There were many things I learned that I had never done before, in particular sociocracy and its challenges."

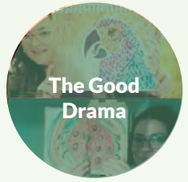
- Zeina El Omari, Soil Decontamination

Survey

Project Leads & Members

The survey was sent to all 7 of the 2019-2020 project leads and 4 of the 5 project members. We sent the survey after first initiating contact to schedule an interview. A total of 8 people filled out the survey: all project leads, and only 1 of the 4 project members responded to the survey. The survey was hosted on the online platform Typeform and included 29 questions, all multiple choice or rating scales, pertaining to the participants' experience in the program and the support provided by SAF, OCE and B7. The survey could be filled anonymously, but all students chose to identify themselves. The survey also included optional demographic questions, which are not included in this summary of findings, but can be found in the Airtable database. Time required to complete the survey was estimated at 6 minutes, however it was registered that it took an average of 11:17 minutes.

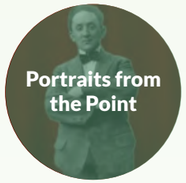
Sahar Alinezhad
Mohammad Abdalreza Zadeh



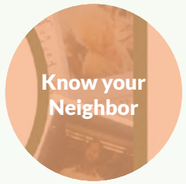
Sandy El Bitar

Zeina El Omari

Michelle Duchesneau



Maher Kouraytem



Coleen Leonard

Saskia van Es

Experience

Project Leads

4 resp. 3 resp. 2 resp. 1 resp. 1 resp.

Chaotic	Dynamic	Labor intensive	Uncomfortable
Confusing	Generative	Oppressive	Worthwile
Difficult	Grounding	Process-driven	
Diverse	Intimidating	Taxing	

*Choose up to 5 words

Prior experience

Community Work

Leading a sustainability initiative outside of an academic context

Outcomes of the experience

Through this experience, I gained more knowledge about and a greater awareness of what it takes to lead/partake in a community-based sustainable initiative

4/8 Strongly Agree
1/8 Rated 5
1/8 Rated 4
1/8 Rated 2
1/8 Strongly Disagree

*All Rating scales are set from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (7)

I made meaningful connections with the B7/PSC community

4/8 Strongly Agree
1/8 Rated 5
1/8 Rated 4
1/8 Rated 3
1/8 Strongly Disagree

Support

Project Leads

How helpful was SAF with your project development

* for example suggestions, contacts, resources allocated, etc.?

The information and resources shared by SAF and B7 made me feel well-equipped to lead my project at B7

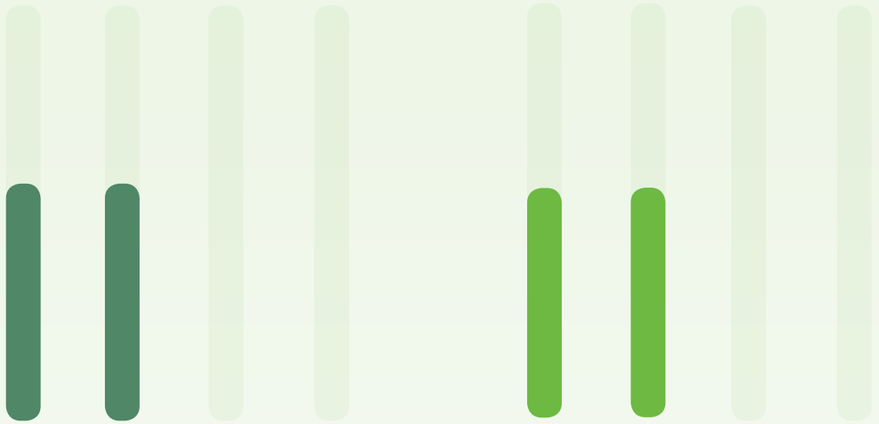
4/8 Strongly Agree
1/8 Rated 6
1/8 Rated 4
2/8 Strongly Disagree

I felt heard, included and supported in my involvement at B7

4/8 Strongly Agree
2/8 Rated 6
1/8 Rated 2
1/8 Strongly Disagree

Support

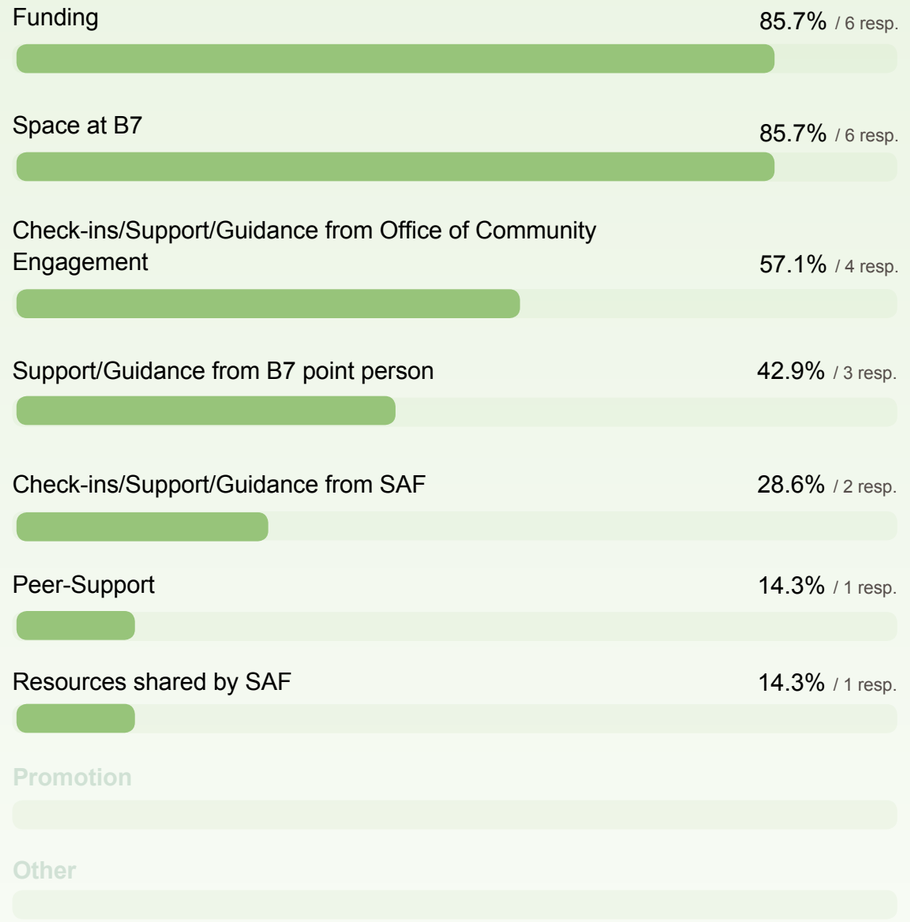
Ease of communication



Technical documentation provided by SAF

* for example the application form, contracts; were they helpful, comprehensive, clearly explained?

Most beneficial resources



*Choose up to 4

Support

Resources required

Financial
7 resp.

Space
6 resp.

Equipment
6 resp.

Other
0 resp.

*Choose as many as you like

Would you recommend the program to other Concordia students?

Yes
7/8

Not sure
1/8

Maybe

No

Sufficient funding

Yes
8/8

Financial payments and reimbursements

Good
5/8

Excellent
2/8

Satisfactory
1/8

Poor

Promotion

Excellent
3/8

Good
2/8

Satisfactory
1/8

Poor
2/8

Additional comments

"The Living Labs project is a great initiative, and a wonderful experience for me."

"My project had just been going two weeks when Covid happened March 2020 and so it never was completed."

"Thank you so much for this opportunity"

Interviews

B7 Project Hosts

After speaking with the project leads, we identified Michelle Duchesneau from Press Start, Catherine Wells from the Point St-Charles Art School, and Joseph Bergeron from the fermette committee as the main B7 hosts for the projects. We reached out to all 3. We spoke with Michelle Duchesneau and Catherine Wells answered a questionnaire through a google document. We were not able to connect with Joseph Bergeron.

Press Start

Pointe St-Charles Art School

Fermette

Michelle Duchesneau

Catherine Wells

Joseph Bergeron

Appreciation for the partnership between Concordia and B7

This experience “has been very valuable and much appreciated”

Expressed that small community organizations benefit greatly from interaction with a big University like Concordia.

Partnerships built through projects such as the Living Labs are important to creating these connections and are beneficial for both parties.

Appreciative of the support from Alex Megelas

“Alex’s professionalism, dedication to community and relaxed friendly way of connecting and communicating with us made it such a wonderful experience.”

Responded to the needs of the B7/PSC community

Long term engagement is favorable

To grow roots, having a chance to connect with a project, support them, figure out what the needs are at B7/PSC.

Preferable if projects emerged from the student's immersion in the community

"They [student project leads] should come in prior and see what it is and let their project emerge from this learning. "

Some projects compete with what is already being undertaken by local actors

There's an element of students not understanding B7/PSC and a disconnection from what already exists. Some of the projects by students offer something that competes with something that is already being done by local actors.

Bringing in new people needs to make sense with the context of B7.

A stipend for project hosts

Expressed that a stipend offered to the host project supervisor would be appreciated, to help cover the costs of administering the program and supporting the project leads.

Documentation Review

Living Labs 2019-2020

We conducted a thorough review of all documentation made available to us from SAF and OCE about the B7 Living Labs. We reviewed the following documents:

- SAF's website and social media
- B7 Living Labs year 1 report
- B7 Living Labs agreement
- B7 Living Labs integration plan 2019/2020
- B7 Living Labs application form
- B7 Living Labs project proposals
- Students project folders on google drive
- Articles about the B7 Living Labs on Concordia Website

We compiled all relevant information in a AirTable database. The following is a summary of our most relevant findings from this documentation review, in relation to our evaluation of the 2019-2020 B7 Living Labs.

General

Outreach:
None of the 13 projects selected heard about the program through SAF

- 3 learned from professors at Concordia
- 3 learned from OCE (2/3 also B7)
- 3 learned from Concordia website or newsletter
- 2 learned from Alex Megelas
- 1 from the Sustainability Ambassador Program September Newsletter
- 1 unknown

5/7 project leads are graduate students: 3 MAs, 2 PhDs

Projects attrition

13 projects were initially retained, with an additional project meeting approval during the course of the project. Out of the fourteen projects that met approval, four desisted their commitments at the beginning, and 3 withdrew over the course of the program. In the end, 5 projects were realized and 2 were partially-realized in this first year of the program.

Transparency of the projects' selection process

- Information about selection process is not public
- The selection criterias are not clearly defined and communicated publicly

Documents shared with students

- Sustainable events guide
- List to other funding sources at Concordia
- Budget template
- Sample Timesheet
- List to other funding sources outside of Concordia (new as of 2021)

Half of the projects initially retained were realized or partially-realized

Funding

Funds requested	$29,427	$1,1750 to $6,500
Funds allocated	$15,700	$700 to $4,000
Funds spent	$11,368	$450 to $3,950
	$6,035/each (SAF/OCE)	

~56.8% of the $20K was spent for year 1

7/7 projects were allocated less funds than requested

7/7 projects spent less than the amount allocated and requested

6/7 projects spent $1,000 or more

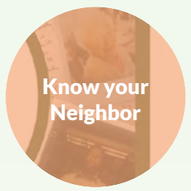
$1624 average funds spent by project

$450

$700
$1,750

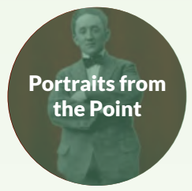
$1,009.48*

$3,000
$3,477



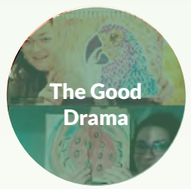
$1121.96

$2,000
$5,500



$1,150.00

$2,000
$6,500



$1,700

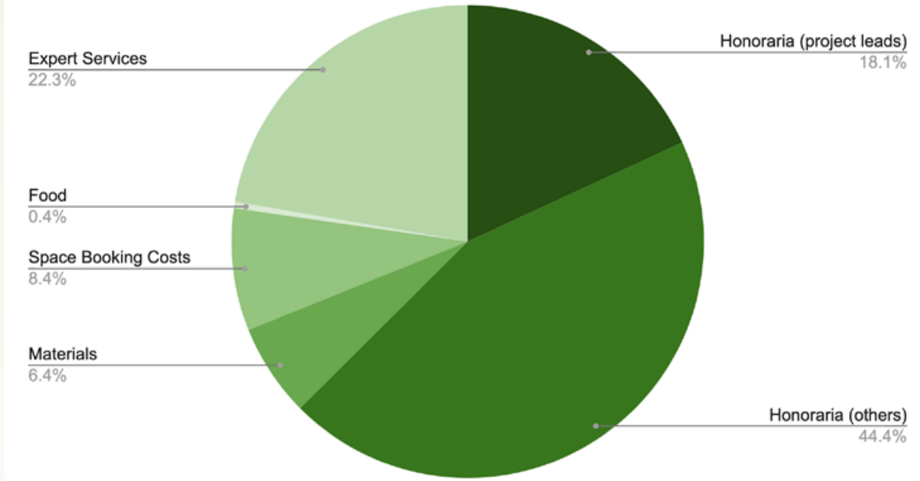
$2,000
$5,000

$1,986.20

$2,000
$3,000

$3,950

$4,000
$4,200



- 1 project lead paid participants
- Most of the funds went to honoraria
- 3/7 project leads renumerated themselves
- Project didn't spend much on materials

*Student reported spending a total of $2509, $1500 of which was covered by Bâtiment 7 and was agreed to be reimbursed

Documentation

Lack of public documentation and information about the projects

Lack of, and outdated publicly available information and documentation about the 2019-2020 Living Labs projects on the SAF website:

- No information about the projects' outcomes.
- No images/videos or link to other content
- Limited information about the project leads (short bios/link to other work)
- No information about projects' audience.
- No information about the Concordia faculty or staff engaged in projects.
- No testimony from project leads about their expereince

Not all projects budgets breakdowns were recorded

- Unclear where projects spent the most funds.
- Unclear what project leads renumerated themselves and which didn't

No demographic information recorded about program participants

Project outcomes were shared with a limited audience

There was one virtual public presentation attended by a limited audience, which was not recorded

"SAF made my involvement with B7 possible, from start to finish. They inspired me to get involved with B7 and provided me with the knowledge and resources necessary to do so."

" I don't believe that SAF could have helped me any more than they did. I felt wholly supported. I don't believe B7 could have helped any more than they did either, they provided us everything necessary and more. They facilitated a very positive learning environment for myself and the team and made it clear that if we had any questions or needs, they would be there."

- Saskia van Es, Community Kitchen

Meetings

SAF

Between November 2020 and March 2021, we met on several occasions with SAF's Executive Director Sebastián di Poi, for which we have recorded meeting notes. In early January 2021, we conducted an interview with Sebastián and Olivia Champagne, the Project Coordinator, which pertained to SAF at large and not the Living Labs program specifically. You can access the questionnaire and our meeting notes for interview with the link in the footnote.

The following is a summary of our most relevant findings from these meetings and interview.

Unique experiential learning opportunity for Concordia students	The program creates a very unique place-making and experiential learning opportunity for Concordia students.
Dynamic projects and resources for B7	The program provides dynamic initiatives, projects and resources to the B7 community
Relationship-building between Concordia students and B7/PSC	The program facilitated relationship-building between students and the B7, and Pointe-Saint-Charles community.
Challenging to navigate B7's structure and culture	It was expressed that it is challenging to understand and navigate B7's founctioning, even for SAF.

bit.ly/b7-livinglabs-questionnaire-saf

A lack of structure and accountability

It was mentioned that the program lacked structure and accountability.

Unmet program objectives

Creating spaces for peer-support was not prioritized

- There was one cohort meeting held in 2019
- There is no central communication channel for project leads to communicate and share resources with one another (aside from email)
- Lack of intentional spaces for mingling, cross-collaboration and peer-support amongst project leads

Connecting students with Concordia faculty and staff was not prioritized

Projects attrition and outcomes

It was shared earlier on that several project have withdrawn, ended, or didn't meet their initial objectives, with the pandemic playing a major role.

Selection Committee Composition

Composed of the OCE liaison officer Alex Megelas and SAF's ED, formerly Mark Underwood and now Sebastián di Poi

Projects monitoring

Check-ins with SAF and OCE at the onset of projects and informal adhoc check-ins or as needed throughout the year.

Many students re-apply to the program

4 of the 7 project leads of the 2019-2020 Living Labs are also leading 2020-2021 Living Labs projects.

Interview

Alex Megelas, OCE

We conducted a 1 hour zoom interview with the OCE liaison officer Alex Megelas. You may access the questionnaire with the link in the footnote.

The following is a summary of our most relevant findings from this interview.

Concordia's relationship with B7

The support and association from a large University like Concordia amplifies a community project's visibility and its demands, in this case B7. However, it is crucial that the University has commitments to social justice and equity, prior to engaging with a project.

B7 culture: French as dominant language & micro-aggressions

Culture at B7 can be oppressive for non-white-quebecois-francophone voices. There is an assumption that French will be used and mastered by collaborators and some resistance to English being used to communicate. There has also been instances of racist micro-aggressions at B7, though not in the context of the Living Labs. Being that Concordia is anglophone institution with an ethnically-diverse student body, this culture is problematic for the integration of students and can be harmful.

Limited influence on B7's community commitment to anti-oppressive and anti-racist practice

Although B7 has a 'code de vie' that discourages hostile and oppressive behaviour, hostile, oppressive, or racially-motivated speech, micro-aggressions and harm still occur. As partners, OCE and SAF, have limited influence on B7 and its community to engage in an anti-oppressive and anti-racist practice.

Projects have not been engaging in direct action

Projects are mostly focused on community arts and cultural programming.

There was an expectation for more projects engaging in direct actions such as anti-gentrification activism, considering it is the foundation of B7.

bit.ly/b7-livinglabs-questionnaire-OCE

Labor-intensive and demanding work

It is a ton of work working and supporting the students with their projects. There is a lot of checking-in with students. It is demanding, particularly with the project leads who are lagging behind, do not take on the initiative of reaching out first, and/or have less experience working in community.

Amount of check-ins with students is variable

The amount of check-ins offered per project depends on the project lead's comfort level at self-managing their project, and their personality rather than on the type or scope of project. It also varies depending on how embedded they already are in the B7 community, and/or whether their project has a B7 point person who is available and has capacity.

No formal facilitation or oganizing training offered to the students

"I see the Living Labs itself as a training into community organizing… I wouldn't necessarily build in more as it would risk making the project longer and potentially unwieldy. But it might also be a cool way to test methodologies and showcase this work as part of a very rich deepdive into organizing practices."

Unmet expectations for peer-support and collaboration

Despite the hope that peer-support and collaboration would organically occur between students, project leads preferred working in silos on their individual projects.

Satisfaction with application process

No plans to make significant modifications to the application process for the 2021-2022 Living Labs.

Positive feedback from B7

Overall feedback from B7 folks about the integration of Concordia students in the Bâtiment 7 ecosystem has been positive, and a majority have demonstrated patience and good-will. This is in part due to the monetary contributions that are brought by the program.

Preliminary Analysis Meetings

Sebastián di Poi , SAF
Alex Megelas, OCE

At the end of the month of April 2021, we facilitated 2 preliminary analysis meetings with Alex Megelas and Sebastián di Poi. Each meeting lasted approximately 2 hours, and was intended to discuss the most relevant findings from our evaluation, and collectively discuss possible amendments to the program when appropriate. Prior to the first meeting, we provided Alex and Sebastián with a copy of the summary of findings, and a list of the most relevant findings we wanted to discuss (link in footnote). It is important to note that some of these findings have since been updated as new information came through from project leads we had not been able to reach previously.

Here, we summarized the most salient points and new findings that emerged from our discussion.

Sebastián di Poi

Alex Megelas

Maggie Cassin

Amanda Vincelli

Overall Experience

Statement:
Project leads struggled to comprehend the B7 and PSC context, and several of the people interviewed expressed feeling challenged by B7's sociocratic governance structure.

Discussion:
- Operating within an organization with a less complex structure. (SAF)
- More comprehensive orientation. (SAF)
- There has been a fair amount of orientation to the space, possibly it reflects the reality of integrating any students in a community organization? (OCE)

Statement:
Culture within Bâtiment 7 reflects an ethno-centrist perspective with a political undercurrent of pro-quebecois sovereignty, which can be oppressive for non-white-quebecois-francophone voices. This culture is problematic for the integration of Concordia students, as Concordia is an anglophone institution with an ethnically-diverse student body. But none of this came up directly in the context of the Living Labs project.

Discussion:
- In the criteria [of partnership?], an encouragement of diversity. (SAF)
- Ensure a strong baseline to guarantee safety on site. (OCE)
- A set of mitigating strategies. (OCE)
- Conversations with folks that host us on the reality of the diversity of the student body. (OCE)
- Providing more information about the context. (OCE)
- Other partner? Mentioned in orientation? Dominant language mentioned in the application? (Evaluators)

http://bit.ly/b7-livinglabs-pre-analysis

Statement:
One project lead expressed having a conflict due to varying opinions with a B7 member that needed to be mitigated.

Discussion:
- Making it clear that Alex is there to mitigate. (OCE)
- Making it more explicit how to report harm? (Evaluators)

Program Goals and Objectives

Statement:
Expectations of cultivating peer-support amongst project leads were not met.

Discussion:
- The cohort meetings could be conducted on a more frequent basis, and build off them perhaps? (SAF)
- This is coming up a bit in year 2 as part of projects that are all linked to PressStart - but yes, this is one where we fell short. (OCE)
- Creating a slack/ discord for project leads to have a communication platform so everyone can communicate easily/share resources. (Evaluators)

Statement:
The program was successful at meeting its goal: to support student leadership in community-led sustainability projects at B7.

Discussion:
- Could professors that include mandatory volunteering in course requirements deepen their ties with communities? (SAF)
- Community-based components of course work comes with urgency and set ideas of what they want to do, and clashes with slowness of community context/work. (OCE)
- Graduate students can be there for the long haul. (OCE)
- Diversifying research methodologies into practice. (OCE)
- There are many difficulties involved in integrating community-based course work as an intrinsic part of the program:
  - First, course work comes with a sense of urgency, likely needed to be completed in a four month regular semester period, which clashes with the often slower pace of community work.
  - Second, the coursework likely comes with set guidelines and ideas of what the student wants/needs to complete within a fixed timeframe, which might not necessarily be in tune with the community's needs and/or priorities.
  - Third, academic perspectives and methods are not necessarily suited in the context of community work.
  - Fourth, the limited timeline does not allow for meaningful connection and integration within a community organisation if there were no pre-existing relationships and involvement.

Statement:
Sense of urgency of students to implement their project.

Discussion:
- We mentioned in our last meeting to integrate long-term graduate students' work into the community in order to provide opportunities for undergrads to engage (get their feet wet). (SAF)

Statement:
Expectations of cultivating peer-support amongst project leads were not met.

Discussion:
- The cohort meetings could be conducted on a more frequent basis, and build off them perhaps? (SAF)
- This is coming up a bit in year 2 as part of projects that are all linked to PressStart - but yes, this is one where we fell short. (OCE)
- Creating a slack/ discord for project leads to have a communication platform so everyone can communicate easily/share resources. (Evaluators)

Statement:
A small number of faculty and staff members were involved in the student projects but the connections were largely facilitated by project leads themselves.

Discussion:
- Not sure how to improve this - we can't oblige faculty and staff to get involved in the community if they're already stretched thin… (SAF)
- Yes. This required a fair amount of autonomy. (OCE)

Program Information and Structure

Statement:
The formal selection committee for the Living Labs is composed of two members: the OCE liaison officer and the SAF executive director.

Discussion:
- Space for including other people who have done projects or a deeper connection to B7 in the selection process. (SAF)
- Multi-tiered process already. Potential of including other people. (OCE)

Statement:
Many of the projects funded are focused on the arts, culture programming and installations rather than direct activism.

Discussion:
- Not sure how to address this - we could potentially do a call-out for projects based on needs perceived by the PSC and B7 community? We've done that before at SAF and it has worked. (SAF)
- Yes - this was a surprise to me. I was expecting more activism project and pushed hard towards profs and folks that I knew had that lens. (OCE)

Statement:
The program is labour-intensive for the supporting coordinators (OCE liaison officer and the B7 projects hosts).

Discussion:
- Perhaps a portion of the funding taken to offer support here? This is already done at OCE but not sure to what extent. (SAF)
- Need relational brokering/B7 context to offer support. (OCE)
- Advisors? Mentors? Decentralize support work. (Evaluators)

Statement:
The program is contingent on the expertise, community connection and B7 institutional knowledge of Alex Megelas.

Discussion:
- Perhaps integrating some tasks/responsibilities from a B7 member that is only part-time? Funding from this could come from my aforementioned point. (SAF)
- Other OCE members? (OCE)

Statement:
There is no stipend offered to B7 project hosts for their support/accompaniment of the project leads.

Discussion:
- Included in partnership agreement (SAF)
- Included in the project leads budget? 10% flat rate? Concordia already donates 10,000$/year funds to B7 (OCE)

Statement:
The selection criteria for the Living Labs projects are not publicly available, and thus not transparent to applicants.

Discussion:
- This could be formulated more clearly based on the criteria Alex and I use. (SAF)
- We could describe this: essentially, it occurred relationally, in collaboration with B7 coordination group first, and then with the various workshops. (OCE)

Statement:
Amount of check-ins with project leads is variable.

Discussion:
- We did this on a needs-basis. Not all project leads required a lot of our support based on their own leadership and capacity. (SAF)
- Yes - I opted for a coaching approach that essentially relied on what project leads seemed to need. (OCE)

Statement:
Majority of project leads are graduate students. Has there potentially been less outreach in undergraduate programs or a tendency to pick projects by graduate students over those from undergraduates?

Discussion:
- Linking undergraduate students with graduate students. Maybe a different process for undergraduate students? Maybe pre requirement to frame as a mentorship aspect. (SAF)
- I'd say there was more outreach to undergrads (to specific profs, presentations in class, links to student hubs). I was honestly surprised by the grad student uptick. (OCE)
- Some type of pre requirement prior to apply to the program. (Evaluators)

Statement:
Outreach-None of the projects from year 1 that applied heard about the program from SAF (that applies to year 2 as well). Out of the 13 projects that were originally accepted:

- 3 learned from professors at Concordia
- 3 learned from OCE (2/3 also B7)
- 3 learned from Concordia website or newsletter
- 2 learned from Alex Megelas

Discussion:

- Deliberate strategy to have folks who are already engaged in the community? (SAF)
- Program not so visible on the SAF website?

Statement:
There was no training offered to project leads for anti-oppressive facilitation and community organizing, however the majority of project leads expressed feeling well-equipped to lead their projects and had 3+ years experience in community work prior to their projects. Additionally, in the survey resources offered by SAF were not selected as one of the most beneficial resources.

Discussion:

- There are resources available to us that we can allocate to this. We've done workshops whose modules we can use to frame this type of training. It could also be a case where it's part of a yearly training for all NEW project leads. (SAF)
- Yeah - we had initially talked about doing an intensive one-day training. We opted for a half-day intro to B7 due to time constraints and even then not all students could attend… (OCE)

Statement:
Some project leads expressed that better promotion of their projects through the use of SAF and the OCE's networks would have been helpful.

Discussion:

- I think there was a bit of a communication gap between project leads and our communications coordinator. They were all introduced and given the lowdown on how she could support them (sharing things, etc.) but they didn't always ask for things to be shared. (SAF)
- Would be curious to know who that was. Not sure how I feel about this one. (OCE)

Statement:
There is a lack of documentation and consistent information about the funding of the projects, as well as the financial breakdown of each project's budgets.

Discussion:

- In the future I think it'd be better to use a template (we have these) for project applications instead of an open-ended question on the google form. (SAF)

Integration in Community Context (B7 and PSC)

Statement:
The program offers an entry point for students to become involved within a community, and establish a rooted presence.

Discussion:

- Yes - this is seen in year 2 projects - most of which are led by folks who were involved in year 1. (OCE)

Statement:
Students that were or became active members at B7 felt their active involvement contributed to them yielding the most benefits from the program, and expressed feeling more effective at contributing to the B7 community with their projects.

Discussion:
- Required integration period? (Evaluators)

Statement:
The 2019-2020 projects succeed in responding to the B7 and the PSC community's expressed need.

Discussion:
- B7 certainly - responding to PSC community needs requires some amount of inference, however. (OCE)

Funding

Statement:
SAF and OCE spent a total of $12,070 which is ~40% less than the allocated $20,000 for the first year of the program, which likely has connections to the pandemic and projects attrition.

Discussion:
- Exactly. I was happy with the amount we were able to deliver - despite the pandemic. Was expecting the attrition would be much higher. But we did get attrition beforehand - mainly among undergrads, however. (OCE)
- I agree with Alex's points here. (SAF)

Statement:
The average of the funds allocated per project is $1773. We were wondering if this is enough funding considering the scope of the projects: 6/7 projects spent equal or less of the amount requested, and 5/7 projects spent less than the amount of funds allocated. And all said that the funding was sufficient.

Discussion:
- I don't have much of an opinion on this. Different projects require different funding so I couldn't speak to whether it's enough or not. (SAF)
- Good point. Comparatively year 2 projects are funded at a higher level on average. (OCE)

Statement:
Funding was expressed as the top beneficial resource provided by SAF and OCE.

Discussion:
- These resources were shared with students (other funding sources). (SAF)
- We did commit to putting students in touch with other funding sources. Should this be mentioned? Sahar received a MITACS grant AND an Experiential Learning grant. Zeina received an experiential learning grant and funding from the Ministry of education. Michelle Duchesneau received Ministry of Education Funding - all to support other (subsequent) projects. Maher applied to MITACS but did not get it. (OCE)

Statement:
Information on breakdown of project's budgets not available.

Discussion:
- We usually get this information from final reports from projects - this has been a part of our regular project contracts that we have not enforced with B7 projects (lack of capacity). (SAF)

Discussion Findings

Letter to Bâtiment 7
Alex sent a letter to the restorative circle as a means demanding accountability and measures to address the internal dynamics and organizational culture aspects which are not conducive to creating a safe environment for the Concordia student body.

Analysis

Program Goals and Objectives

Limited cultivation of peer-support

The expectations of cultivating peer-support amongst program participants were not met. This was due in part to limited cohort meetings, lack of designated communication channel, and program participants' desire to work individually. This is a missed opportunity for community building that raises questions as to how the principles of collaboration and cooperation are concretely enacted within the B7 Living Labs program
.

Limited involvement of Concordia faculty and staff

A small number of Concordia faculty and staff were involved in the projects, however, the connection was facilitated by the project leads themselves. The program's expectations of involving Concordia faculty and staff were therefore largely met by program participants, and not through the efforts of the program coordinators at SAF and OCE.

Difficulties in integrating course work as part of the program

There are many difficulties involved in integrating community-based course work as an intrinsic part of the program.
Long term community-based course work is more realistic for graduate students, who have more flexibility and have more time to develop their projects. However, this might create favoritism in funding graduate student-led projects, over undergraduate student-led projects.

Students' Integration in B7/PSC community

An active involvement is favorable to yield the most benefits from the program

Program participants that became actively involved as B7 members, felt that their active involvement and effective integration allowed them to become more effective and generate more impact within the community setting.work individually. Missed opportunity for community building.

B7 sociocratic governance structure is challenging

Several of the program participants struggled to comprehend the B7 and PSC context and expressed feeling challenged by B7's sociocratic governance structure, despite the fair amount of introduction to the culture of the space provided by program coordinators at the start of the program. However, the integration of program participants in a new community setting would likely be challenging in any community organisation.

A majority of the program participants continue or have demonstrated an interest to continue working within the B7 community setting, despite the end of their projects.

An integration period for program participants could be very beneficial.

The short-term nature of the community-based projects led by students may be impeding on the program participants' capacity to integrate in the community, on the possibility to develop a relationship with community members, and the capacity to develop projects that respond to community needs, and is congruent and non-competitive with other existing initiatives within the community.

Analysis

Students' Integration in B7/PSC community

B7 etnocentric culture is an issue considering Concordia's diverse student body

B7 culture can be oppressive for non-white-quebecois-francophone individuals. This internal culture is problematic for the integration of Concordia students, as Concordia is an anglophone institution with an ethnically-diverse student body. Our data did not reveal that this was problematic for any of the projects leads we interviewed, however here we would like to reiterate our bias and blind spot, as we did not explicitly ask questions about this specifically.

- 4 of the 7 project leads became active B7 members, and remain involved within the organisation, which might suggest that this is not something they feel is overtly impeding their participation in the community context.
- Acknowledgement of this culture at B7 creates new considerations for the Concordia-B7 partnership, and how the University will position itself within this partnership and reconsider how it implicates students within this context.

Funding

Unequitable distribution of funds

There seems to have been an unequitable distribution of funds. Some projects managed to do a lot more with much less funds. There is a lack of standardization around budget allocation which leads to an uneven distribution. For example, some project leads payed themselves a lot more, for a lesser amount of work and benefit to the community

The funds allocated to the projects proved to be sufficient.

Year 1 of the program had left over capital.

SAF and OCE supported and encouraged projects leads in finding additional funding opportunities.

Projects were capable of achieving a lot with little funds.

Project leads expressed that funding as the most beneficial resource provided.

Considerations

The fact that most projects were not allocated the initial amount requested, and that there was additional funds remaining, suggests that SAF could have possibly funded projects to their initial request, or have allocated additional funds retroactively. Possibly projects spent less funds due to reduced budgets, or due to changes to their projects created by COVID-19.

Honorarium

- 62.5% of funds went to honoria (3/7 project leads selves,) for project leads and towards others
- 8.4% of funds went to Space Booking Costs- to B7 (kind of acting like the stipend/ 450$ community kitchen, 550 Know Your Neighbors)

Projects did not spend a lot of materials, but based on our interviews, a lot of materials were obtained through the host organization: B7. This might become a different consideration with a different program partner.

Analysis

Program information & Structure

Onboarding Process

Hopeful program participants attend the ideation session at the beginning of the year, they meet with other applicants and discuss possible projects. Once the projects are proposed, they are reviewed by the selection committee, the OCE liaison officer consults with the B7 coordination group, and with the various B7 poles, and then the selection committee comes to a decision on which projects will be funded. Once projects are officially selected, program participants are invited to the half-day training, and commence their integration in the B7 sphere with help from the OCE liaison officer.
Training: Program participants received a half day of training for introduction to Bâtiment 7.

- No training pertaining to anti-oppressive facilitation or community organizing. The program itself is viewed as a 'training' in community organizing

The program requires project leads to demonstrate autonomy to successfully lead their projects

Projects are led autonomously by program participants, and are guided and supported by SAF, OCE's liaison officer, B7 project hosts and other B7 members. Program participants reach out to supporting parties when required, and check-ins are done on an ad hoc or needs-basis. The OCE liaison officer has adopted a coaching approach. Program participants need to exhibit a certain level of autonomy to be successful in bringing their projects to fruition. This level of autonomy was demonstrated by the program participants of the 2019-2020 Living Labs, as the majority of the project leads had 3 or more years of experience in community work and felt well-equipped to lead their projects.

Program is contingent on Alex Megelas's expertise and community presence for its success

The program is primarily led by the OCE liaison officer, Alex Megelas, and is contingent on his expertise, community connection and his B7 institutional knowledge. Without his involvement, the program would not operate as fluently.

Lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities between the program partners

While the responsibilities between SAF and OCE were broadly assigned, there is currently a lack of specificity, which was highlighted by absense of Alex in late 2020 and early 2021. For example, we've observed that within SAF, there seems to be a confusion between their status of acting as a granting organisation or as a supporting organisation. SAF is performing support work with the best of their resources and time, however it is not the main mandate of the organisation, which is to provide funding. It does however align with the direction in which the organisation wants to evolve, as outline in their strategic directions for 2021-2024: "Improve support and resources for projects with long term impacts". The amount of and specific support required from B7 hosts was also reported as being at times unclear.

Selection process is limited to the two program coordinators

Contrary to SAF's regular selection process, which selects funded projects through the board of directors, the Living Labs program's formal selection committee is composed of two members: the OCE liaison officer and SAF's executive director.

SAF program outreach proved to be poor

The lack of documentation and information publicly available about the Living Labs limits learnings, knowledge and resource sharing, and the transformative potential of the program.

The current structure of the program is very labour intensive

for the program's supporting coordinators, meaning the OCE liaison officer and the B7 project hosts. Offering support is contingent on being capable of doing relational brokering within the community organisation, and being comfortable within the community organisation's context.

The program does not offer a stipend to B7 project hosts

for their role in supporting and accompanying the projects leads. The program coordinators encourage projects leads to integrate this stipend within their project's budget. There is no baseline standard for this stipend, and it's availability depends on the projects lead's budget and judgment.

Program Strengths

Overwhelmingly, people interviewed and surveyed expressed positive feedback for the program.

There was a strong appreciation for the support and communication offered by SAF and by the OCE.

Strong appreciation was expressed for the unique experiential learning and community engagement opportunity the program offers to Concordia students.

The program provided a lot of learning outcomes, including new knowledge and skills for the project leads, as well as an opportunity to bridge theory and practice, which had an impact on the project leads' work in their respective field of practice.

The program was successful at meeting its primary goal: to support student leadership in community-led sustainability projects at B7.

The program offers an entry point for students to become involved within a community, have a taste of community work, and establish a rooted presence in a community organisation.

The program facilitated building a mutually-beneficial relationship between Concordia (SAF, OCE, students, academics) and the B7 and PSC community.

Positive feedback on the program and the projects' outcomes was expressed by B7 project hosts.

4 of the 7 2019-2020 project leads reapplied to lead projects in the 2020-2021 cohort, demonstrating that the program and funding was strongly appreciated by project leads.

The program served as a springboard for certain students, who continued their involvement at B7, led related projects, and sought out additional external funding.

By focusing on the enabling a relatively small number of projects, the amount of funding and support afforded to project leads are adequate.

Recommendations

Creation of an informational deck

1. We recommend that SAF and OCE create a informational 'deck.' The process of creating this document could clarify the program structure and protocols for all stakeholders, what support is provided and how, as well as contribute to the documentation of the knowledge acquired by the main program coordinators since the start of the program. We believe this deck would serve as an invaluable tool for prospective and selected applicants. The deck could include:

- Detailed program information and important dates (cohort meetings, check-ins, final presentations, etc.)
- Information about B7
  - Contact list of B7 point persons and committees
  - Organizational structure and informal culture
- Clear info about what can be expected from OCE and SAF and resources provided (i.e. contact person, conflict resolution protocols, promotion, how to obtain additional funding from SAF if necessary, etc.)
- Clear budget references and guidelines
- Anti-oppressive facilitation/organizing resources
- List concrete ways program participants can promote their projects (to be clarified what B7 communication channels is available to project leads)
- Highlight the importance of project documentation and offer a variety of methods: journaling, taking photos, starting a blog, gathering feedback from participants, etc.

Revision of Application Process

2. We recommend that the program reinstates the ideation session, to promote and introduce the program, and to create possible pairing between project leads and foster collaboration.
3. We recommend that the application process makes clear that this program is likely not compatible with the expectations and timeframes related to course-based work. We suggest that the question posed in the current application process pertaining to course-based work be removed.
4. We recommend that the application process asks if applicants have experience in community work or leading similar projects.
5. We recommend that the application process asks applicants if they feel comfortable working in a dominantly french environment, while being clear that this is not disqualifying factor to their application.
6. We recommend delineating and communicating clearer selection criterias/considerations to applicants
7. We recommend the application process poses optional demographics questions, while indicating that these questions are meant for SAF's organizational learning.
8. We recommend that the application process be clear about the commitments and expectations that come with participating in the program, including all required meetings and trainings.

Revision of Selection Process

9. We recommend that the selection process be amended to include a greater number of program stakeholders. We propose that project leads from previous cohorts (who are not reapplying to the program and whose projects were realized or partially-realized) be included in the process as they have knowledge about B7 environment and community needs. We propose that an additional person from the OCE and SAF teams be included in the selection process as well. A process for this participatory selection process would need to be delineated as per the selection considerations that are outlined.

Revision of Onboarding Process

10. We recommend that the program acknowledges and communicates clearly about the community context, namely, about the ethno-centric/ francophone dominant culture within the community organization. To prepare folks and be straightforward about the challenges of community work. Making clear what is the procedure and who they can communicate with in case of the need to report an incident.
11. We recommend that the program coordinators create a central communication platform to connect project leads from the onset of their invovlement in the program, and as a way to facilitate peer-support, knowledge and resource sharing. Platforms such as Slack, Discord, Google Group, Facebook Group, etc.
12. We recommend the onboarding process includes a mandatory anti-oppressive facilitation/ organizing training, and that summary of this training and additional resources be made available to program participants in the informational deck.

Revision to Program Structure and Implementation

13. We recommend a clearly delineation of roles and responsibilities between the various partners.
14. We recommend the program implements more regular cohort meetings.
15. We recommend the creation of two pathways to implementing projects within B7, the first being if you are already involved with B7, you can directly implement your project, the second, including a short integration period within the community organization, after which a reassessment of the project proposal is conducted based on your observations from your involvement.
16. We recommend the program organizes a presentation of the projects to the community and peers at the end of the year. The presentation would be an opportunity to update information on the projects, to have a record of the learnings made, and inspire other projects, and thus used as a way to ensure documentation and knowledge sharing. Program leads could be encouraged to communicate learnings and share advice to prospective applicants and project leads, while also serving as a learning tool/ evaluation method for SAF and OCE.

17. We recommend that the program creates a rooster of mentors from Concordia faculty and staff from various expertise and who have expressed their interest and willingness to get involved and share advice with project leads of the program. This would require an information session and reaching out to Concordia faculty and staff.
18. We recommend that there be a certain standardization for the budgeting of projects. We propose the program provides clearer references and guidelines for amounts spent for space booking, honorarium (for self and others), materials, etc.
19. Considering there is rollover budget, we recommend that a separate budget be created for the program itself, which could be attributed to external evaluation work, potential training for program participants (and related expenses), and a buffer. It would also be illuminating to calculate how much of SAF and OCE's annual budget and resources go towards this program specifically.
20. We recommend that the B7 project hosts receive a stipend for the support work, and the resources and spaces shared, which is directly funded by the program's budget.
21. We recommend that SAF and OCE maintains a clearly organized and shared database of all program information to favorise transparency.
22. We recommend that SAF creates an outreach communication plan for the Living Labs at B7 program, and begins promotion of the program one month prior to the schedule ideation session in each new program year. We also suggest that this communication plan include outreach and promotion of the program and project promotion through instagram takeovers, posts on projects, sharing of progress photos, etc.
23. We recommend that the program readjust its objectives and strategies, following the findings from this evaluation, and upon which the program can be evaluated against.
24. We recommend that more diligent and engaging monitoring and evaluation mechanisms such as those outlined in the following section be implemented across the different stages of the program in an iterative process, i.e. revisited and adjusted on a yearly basis or as often as necessary.

Evaluation Process (Year 2)

This proposal for a Living Labs evaluation process was foremost conceived as an opportunity for SAF and OCE to create spaces for community-building, share knowledge, and foster organizational, collective and self-learning.

Considerations as of June 2021:

- About half way through the program (Year 2 began in early 2021)
- SAF met with all project leads and took meeting notes
- There has been only one cohort meeting on March 4, 2021
- Some projects are already completed, others are underway or ongoing
- SAF is hiring an evaluation intern for the summer 2021 which can undertake this work

Documentation

Inform all projects that are underway to document (photography, video, writing) their projects, to collect and document the feedback of the program participants' experience, and participation metrics, such as number of participants, etc.

Debriefing meetings

Begin the evaluation of each projects as soon as they are completed (and all funds allocated were reimbursed).

Hold debriefing meeting with project leads and if possible other project members (recommend that 2 people attend with one person taking notes and one leading the meeting)

- Document answers to questions (adapted by year 1 interview questions; include a question about experience of discrimination and barriers to inclusion).
- Include survey questions from year 1 or send adapted survey from year 1
- Collect documentation (photography, video, writing) from project leads

Meetings with discontinued and partially-realized

Hold and document meetings with discontinued and partially-realized projects, capturing what led to the termination of their projects..

Update database

Update Airtable database with all collected information and back up in google drive folders.

Public Presentation

Organize a public presentation of all the projects. We recommend providing some guidelines for the presentations (for example, their learnings, project outcomes, who was involved, advice for future projects leads, etc.)
*If participants consent, record the presentations. Organize to have a notetaker to document the info that is shared.

Summary of Findings

Prepare summary of findings document and validate information with project leads.

Participatory Pre-analysis meeting(s)

Organize a participatory pre-analysis meeting between SAF/OCE and B7 Project hosts to review summary of findings and discuss relevant program changes.

Analysis & Action Plan

SAF/OCE to analyse findings and consider program alterations to address program weaknesses and adjust program objectives. Create an action plan for new year.

2020-2021 Living Labs

Projects Summaries

Mushroom Project

Project Description

The B7 Mushroom Project aims to develop a mycelium incubator/ laboratory as well as a sustainable outdoor mushroom growing facility at the Bâtiment 7/ Fermette de la Pointe-Saint-Charles. The project comprises three components, the first is an educational component, the second is an integrational component and the third is access to greater food security and autonomy. The educational element of the project consists of on-site mini bilingual semi-structured workshops on how to grow mushrooms, how to prepare them for consumption, and their contribution to human and environmental health.

In the near future, these workshops will also be adapted and integrated into the Incubator, which is a series of workshops on food production, transformation, and distribution and on social entrepreneurship for refugee women with an agrarian background. Last but not least, the mushroom growing facility is one of the building blocks of the Fermette production and transformation hub whose mission is to curb food insecurity and to allow for greater food autonomy to the community of la Pointe-Saint-Charles

Project lead: Zeina El Omari
Contact: z_eloma@live.concordia.ca

Quarantine Kitchen Stories

Project Description

Quarantine Kitchen Stories is a collaborative project based in the Montreal South-West connecting Point-Saint-Charles community hub Bâtiment 7 to the work of the food business incubator of the Little Burgundy-based DESTA Black Youth Network, which delivers free food to families, sourced exclusively from black-owned restaurants, stores, community gardens, and farms.

Quarantine Kitchen Stories will consist of a series of 5 online workshops facilitated by community organizers and chefs involved with DESTA. The workshops will provide an opportunity for the general public to come together and learn about recipes and other food production techniques. The workshop series draws direct inspiration from mutual aid frameworks in recognizing the frequently unrecognized role of food and cooking in community organizing, and the extent to which the role of nourishing tends to be a necessary, but the undervalued role, frequently held by women. Participants will have the opportunity to hear the stories of community organizing that highlight the value of nurturing and collective caring work. This initiative will benefit from the ongoing support of Bâtiment 7-based food security initiatives; through this collaboration, chefs and organizers at DESTA will be able to access Bâtiment 7 kitchen space.

Project lead: Ana Milic
Contact: anatmilic@gmail.com

Feel the Warmth

Project Description

Due to the home staying orders caused by the pandemic, people are spending more time in their own neighborhood, discovering its different corners. In order to make these visits more enjoyable in the Pointe-Saint-Charles neighborhood, *Feel the Warmth in the Winter at the Beating Heart of the Neighborhood* aims to lighten up one of the Point's community hubs, Bâtiment7.

As part of this initiative, lights were installed on both floors of the interior. On the exterior, lights were installed at the entrance of the building and others will be installed towards the back of the building to enhance the experience of people coming to simply take a walk and see the chickens in la fermette or do their grocery shopping at le detour. We hope our project brings light and warmth to the heart of people who are living the hardship of COVID-19.

Project lead: Sahar Alinezhad
Contact: saharalinezhad90@gmail.

Sustainable Community Eco-Art Therapy

Project Description

This series of eco-art workshops aims to support public health and wellbeing through sustainable community action on a neighbourhood level. These workshops facilitate the community's connection with each other and their environment through artmaking with natural materials. Participants in this project will learn to connect with and use their environment in a sustainable fashion to express themselves creatively. Engaging with nature and forming deeper connections with it has a multitude of benefits ranging from improving individual mental and physical health to building reciprocity with the environment.

Project leads: Rachel Pochat Selby and Nina Pariser
Contact: art-therapie@pointestcharlesartschool.org

Portraits of the Southwest

Project Description

Portraits from the Southwest is an oral history project, in collaboration with Press Start Coop, consisting of a series of interviews with residents and activists sharing their stories of their neighborhoods.

This project will result in the transmission of these stories through an online blog and/or public conversations.

Project lead: Maher Kouraytem
Contact: mkouraytem@gmail.com

Performing Together

Project Description

Performing Together is a series of theatre workshops designed for youth ages 16-24 who speak English. Over the course of 8 weeks, the participants and facilitators will work together to create an original short performance piece exploring themes of social justice. Several artists from the Montreal BIPOC community will be brought in to lead workshops tailored to the group's interest. Workshops will be virtual with the possibility of in-person sessions.

Project lead: Olivia Woods
Contact: oliviawoods28@gmail.com

Buckskin Babes

Project Description

Buckskin Babes is a moose-hide tanning project undertaken by a group of Indigenous women. It is a tanning station constructed on contested land adjacent to Batiment 7 in Tiohtià:ke (Montreal). The moose hide will be provided by the northern community from Indigenous hunters here in Quebec.

Within the Indigenous research methodology, the processes of Indigenous cultural resurgence and the reawakening of Indigenous identity are intertwined and involve direct engagement in resurgent cultural practices on the part of the researcher. Many of these practices must be learned from Indigenous Elders, however, and given that the ratio of Elders to the younger generations is rapidly declining, there is a real risk that without timely, active research in collaboration with Elders, these practices and stories are at risk. The moose-hide tanning project aims to address this gap by creating an opportunity for direct engagement with traditional cultural and spiritual knowledge in collaboration with Indigenous knowledge keepers from Northern Quebec and local Kanien'kehá:ka Elder.

Project lead: Autumn Godwin
Contact: autumnangelique@gmail.com

Youth Anti-Racism & Climate Action Hub

Project Description

This project brings together the Press Start youth to work on anti-racist and environmental justice initiatives. Working in collaboration with community members and utilizing the tools in Bâtiment 7, youth will develop programming that seeks to educate, agitate and organize their communities around issues of racial discrimination and environmental sustainability.

During the first part of the project, youth will engage in participatory discussions about the issues as well as ongoing social movements working towards a more equitable future (e.g. Black Lives Matter). The format of discussions will vary from workshops that seek to deepen our collective understanding of the principles of anti-racism and climate justice, to collective evaluations of the role of Press Start in advancing these values in our communities.

The second part of the project will move from discussion to action. Youth will work with members of the B7 community to develop three community art projects that explore these concepts through an artistic medium. The exact format of the projects will be determined by the youth in collaboration with the PSEI mentors. In the preliminary discussions here are some of the ideas explored:

- Developing a curated exhibit with multimedia art inspired by Press Start's Hip Hop as Resistance event.
- Hosting an online video game tournament for youth in the neighbourhood. This event will have a creative component that engages with issues of sustainability and climate justice.
- The production of a short film focused on the importance of leisure in the lives of Black individuals to counter toxic expectations and norms of productivity in our capitalist system.

Finally, the last component of the project will be the implementation of these community art projects.

Project lead: Michelle Duchesneau
Contact: meshelle.d@hotmail.com