ADVANCING HUMAN RIGHTS IN ALBERTA :

A Response to Poverty, Racism and Climate Change

Report from the Human Rights Action Lab

January 2022

Conference co-hosts:
Canadians for a Civil Society, University of Alberta Department of Political Science (Faculty of Arts), the Canada Research Chair in the Politics of Citizenship and Human Rights, and the Centre for Constitutional Studies

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A session within
The Charter at 40 – From Isolation to Inclusion: Navigating the Post-COVID World

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INTRODUCTION

Righting Human Wrongs: The Human Rights Action Lab in Brief

"The issues discussed at the Action Lab were not ours, but those of community organizations."

"In June we were trying to harvest issues; now we were looking to take the first steps and start wrestling with strategy."

"We often think we can solve things with a model, but we need to customize our approach to the topic that we're discussing, and to the participants. So everything needs to be built for the purpose."

PURPOSE OF THE ACTION LAB

- Participants will gain human rights insights relevant to their policy development and advocacy efforts.
- Participants will be exposed to methods and participatory approaches they can apply to their own work.
- The workshop will generate prototype solutions/recommendations to address human rights issues.
- The workshop will identify crosscutting themes, principles and insights that can be applied to rights-based policy-making.

If you were tasked with taking specific action to reframe and address issues that compromise the human rights of vulnerable people, where would you start? That's the challenge put to two dozen individuals with on-the-ground understanding of needs related to poverty, racism and/or climate change in a Human Rights Action Lab co-hosted by Canadians for a Civil Society, the University of Alberta Department of Political Science (Faculty of Arts), the Canada Research Chair in the Politics of Citizenship and Human Rights, and the Centre for Constitutional Studies. Spanning November 4 and 5, 2021, the Action Lab was convened by Vasant Chotai, president of Canadians for a Civil Society and Jared Wesley, associate chair, Political Science, University of Alberta, conceptualized in consultation with Peter Faid and Nariya Khasanova, and designed and facilitated by Pieter de Vos. For more about the Action Lab team, see ***Appendix I***.

The issues chosen for analysis were not arbitrary, but based on advice heard during earlier community consultations. Through a survey and a series of workshops with people on the frontlines in June 2021, the team had gleaned insights on the most burning issues impacting human rights in Alberta and beyond. For a summary of the consultation findings, see ***Appendix II***.

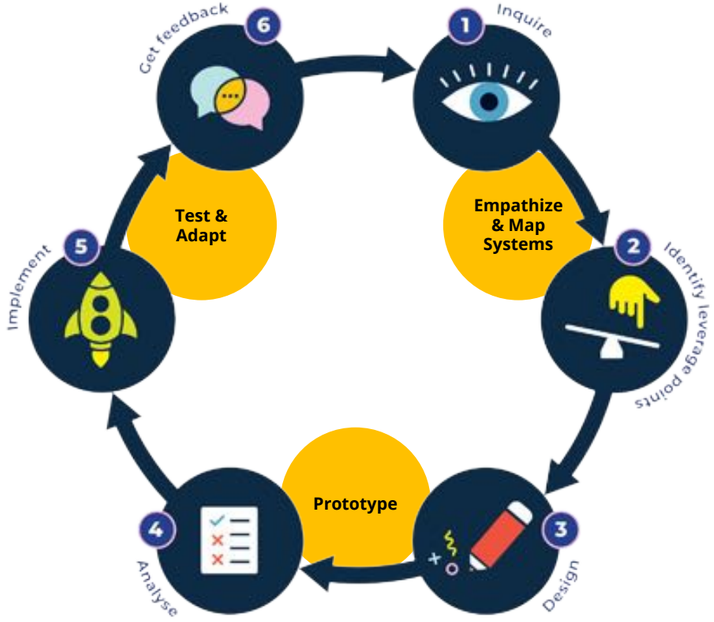
Informed by those findings, and inspired by social innovation and community organizing methods, the Action Lab was custom-designed to draw participants beyond free-floating conversations, to dig into particular issues and propose solutions. In short, it drew upon research-informed tools and best practices for facilitating social change while being purpose-built to guide the gathered citizens in tackling topics of urgent concern.

By the close of the two-day Action Lab, six teams of participants had drafted six prototype proposals:

- Team 1, Poverty – Provide rent subsidies to all low-income households as a human right
- Team 2, Poverty – Ensure access to child care as a human right
- Team 3, Racism – Expand and coordinate anti-racist mental health capacity
- Team 4, Racism – Implement media literacy curriculum in K-12 schools
- Team 5, Climate Change – Broaden climate change conversations and action to include under-represented groups
- Team 6, Climate Change – Make access to water and energy free to low-income and vulnerable Edmontonians as a human right

Equally important, perhaps, participants practiced systemic ways of seeing and responding to issues. Ways to use a human rights lens as an analytical tool and lever for change while being open to other avenues, including the sharing of findings and policymaking solutions. Ways to identify those who agree as well as those who may disagree, and to create opportunities to expand common ground. Ways to keep human beings at the centre of the work.

The Action Lab was part of a larger human rights conference entitled The Charter at 40 – From Isolation to Inclusion: Navigating the Post-COVID World. Learnings from the Action Lab were shared with the conference in a session entitled "Prototypes for Action – Report from the Human Rights Action Lab." That session is available at ***charteratforty.ca*** (see video 3), as are other conference sessions. This report walks through the Action Lab in greater detail, peering behind the scenes at the logic behind its structure while also sharing its preliminary outcomes. Our hope is that this document will serve as a springboard for continuing the work done here to address three of the thorniest human rights abuses of our time: poverty, racism and climate change.



Key stages in systemic design

HOPES FOR THE ACTION LAB

Early on in the Action Lab, participants met in their working groups to share hopes for what the time together would accomplish. Their conversations helped set the direction for each team's work. Reports back to the full Action Lab revealed a desire to imagine beyond traditional responses and reach beyond traditional networks to solve problems. And an openness to thinking systemically, using a human rights lens.

Highlights of those conversations are captured in the bullets below and in the accompanying visual.

POVERTY & ECONOMIC DEPRIVATION

- Examining poverty through a human rights lens
- Building relationships with others to tackle other poverty issues
- Working together to develop solutions and related concrete actions
- Strategizing how we might assert housing as a human right
- Refreshing the conversation around definitions of poverty and the linkages with wellness and participation
- Discovering how disability and childhood policies might be advanced through a human rights approach
- Establishing opportunities for on-going networking beyond these two days

RACISM & DISCRIMINATION

- An opportunity for a thoughtful and critical look at how far the Charter might take us
- Developing practical solutions that will lead to meaningful changes
- Taking ideas and concrete actions back to our own organizations
- Strategizing how we might assert housing as a human right
- Strengthening our ability to collaborate, learning how to use our voices effectively, because our voices matter, and speaking with courage
- Understanding how the Charter might be used to protect the interests of Indigenous people
- Developing an implementation framework that will genuinely impact social change

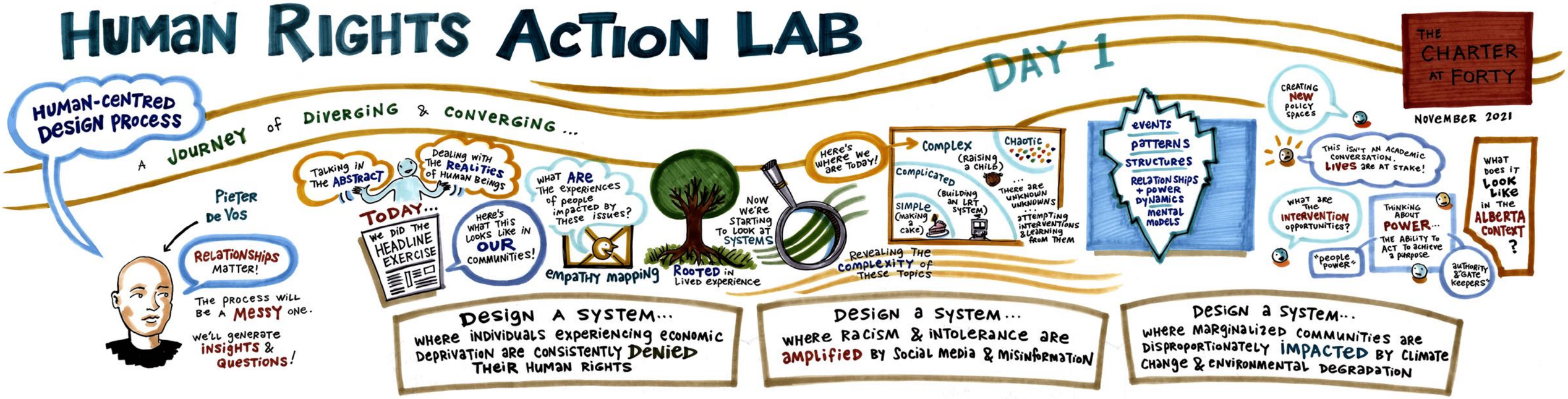
POVERTY & ECONOMIC DEPRIVATION

- Seeing climate change from different perspectives
- Sharing practical objectives and suggestions for addressing climate change that break away from traditional solutions
- Shifting the conversation about climate change from mainstream white leadership to allow us to hear many other perspectives, such as an equity perspective
- Identifying the most critical issues and then focusing our conversations around them
- Looking for solutions that are multi-dimensional, intersectional and respond to evident environmental racism

Graphic recording by Sam Hester, the 23rd Story

PART ONE

Setting the Stage



Graphic recording by Sam Hester, the 23rd Story

"Visualizing matters – it's a way of seeing relationships and naming things we don't otherwise name."

ARC OF THE PROCESS

Day One

- Identifying shared aspirations
- Reflecting on burning issues
- Reflecting on human experience
- Mapping the system
- Identifying leverage points

Day Two

- Solution showcase
- Prototyping policy & advocacy recommendations
- Drawing Insights from the lab process
- Testing & refining the recommendations

Due to restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Human Rights Action Lab occurred virtually, via Zoom. Co-convenor Vasant Chotai, president of Canadians for a Civil Society, welcomed participants and acknowledged the significance of meeting on treaty land, traditional territory of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. Vasant then urged everyone not to restrict themselves to what has been widely discussed, but to seek solutions that "go not only outside the box, but beyond the box."

Facilitator Pieter de Vos gave the space dimension by emphasizing the systemic and human-centred approaches imbedded in the Action Lab design. As he spoke, using visuals to animate concepts, it became clear that the lab was designed to examine both the "how" and the "what" of initiating change. In the process of generating potential solutions to urgent human rights issues, participants would glean insights and tools to apply in their own work.

The arc of the Action Lab took participants through two distinctly different days. Day One was dedicated to recognizing the complexity of the contexts surrounding the chosen issues and identifying leverage points for change.

LEARNING FROM WHAT WORKS

The Action Lab was structured as a mini institute of learning; participants prepared by reading a package of resources in advance. Those included "the Limitations Clause" and "Human Rights Law and the Charter" by ***Patricia Paradis***, a ***primer on charter rights*** related to poverty, racism and climate change by Richard Mailey; briefs on ***poverty***, ***racism*** and ***climate change*** prepared by graduate students at the University of Alberta; ***articles*** and ***toolkits*** on ***how*** social movements have influenced systemic change; and an edition of Vital Signs, an annual check-up co-produced by the Edmonton Community Foundation and the Edmonton Social Planning Council, focused on ***making ends meet in Edmonton***.

The following key ideas for achieving impact are distilled from those readings and the conversations they sparked:

- This work is as much about changing hearts as changing policies.
- Bringing those with lived experiences into the work is essential.
- Grassroots energy matters when effecting social change.
- Engagement needs to happen at multiple levels.
- Complicated relationships will almost surely arise; even your allies may be adversarial.
- Look beyond familiar echo chambers to engage unusual suspects in the work.
- Be leader full – engage and animate multiple forms of leadership rather than hierarchies.

Graphic recording by Sam Hester, the 23rd Story

Day Two set each of the six teams loose (in a carefully structured way) to identify a specific issue, then create and showcase prototype solutions.

Each day, the six teams met in separate Zoom rooms to tackle assigned tasks, then reported back to the full group before preparing for and participating in the next exercise.

"This is big work that requires collective action, which means we need relationships to accomplish what needs to be done."

LAB VALUES

- Patience and compassion for yourself and others
- Respect for everyone in the room
- Listen to understand rather than to respond
- Embrace ambiguity
- Challenge our own assumptions
- Speak honestly and with intention
- What we share in the group stays in the group
- Expect unfinished business

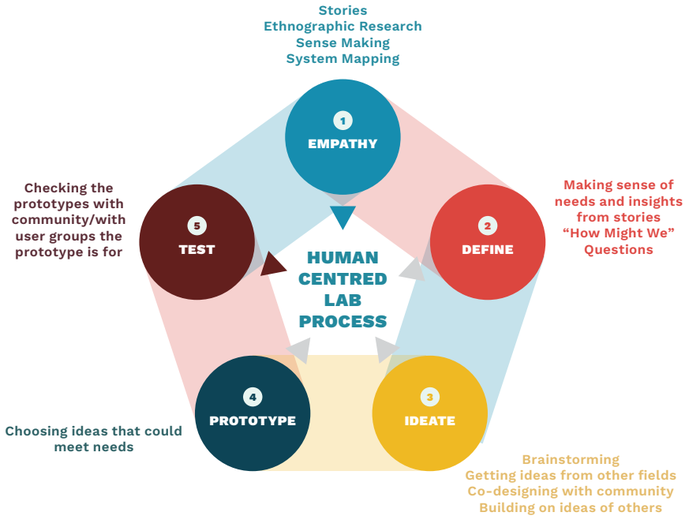
"Getting to know team members and feeling connected as a team was, in my opinion, a significant contributor as to why the final product turned out as well as it did."

HUMANITY MATTERS

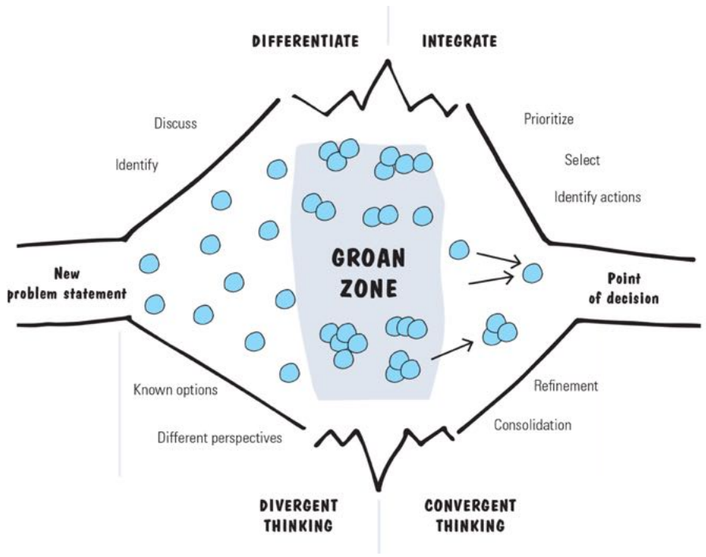
Underlying the entire Action Lab process was the belief that relationships matter when working for change, both among those seeking to make the change and with the individuals and communities the change is intended to benefit.

Many aspects of the Action Lab were shaped by the desire to foster comradery and expand action networks. Toward that end, diverse and engaged community members were recruited and formed into consistent teams throughout the two days. A set of Lab Values also helped set the stage for mutuality and respect. Although the virtual environment sharply diminished opportunities for informal chats, understanding grew as teams wrestled with the issues at hand.

The Action Lab also emphasized the importance of keeping human beings at the centre of the design process by grounding action in lived experience and ensuring those same people are involved in evaluating the results. To root their work in the reality of personal experience, each team read and discussed two articles related to its topic, identifying key challenges, missing perspectives and connections to their own lives. Their conversations began to tease out issues they were passionate about pursuing. Reports back to the full group underscored the complexity of human-centred change in contexts where multiple vulnerabilities often overlap and power is not equally shared.



A human-centred lab process keeps the focus where it should be



Ideas often diverge before agreement emerges on a way forward
Michael Lewrick, et al in *The Design Thinking Playbook*, 2018

Given the complexity of the problems before them, de Vos predicted the teams would find their ideas diverging and converging repeatedly in the search for agreement on priorities and potential action. Only by navigating through that messiness would they identify areas of possibility. He also warned that the process would be compressed timewise, and that the ideas produced by the end would need more refinement.

"I gained more of an appreciation of how messy the process can be when coming up with tangible solutions to complex problems. Messiness in the first several stages of the process is a good thing; it means you are not over-simplifying an issue, which can lead to major problems or consequences down the road."

FIRST-HAND EXPERIENCES IN THE ROOM

As the Action Lab progressed, and in later reflections, it became clear that several participants were speaking from experience about poverty and racism.

One grew up with piano lessons and plenty of other good things, but then an abusive relationship sent her through a time when she needed to choose between buying a bus pass and putting food on the table. Between having utilities cut off and letting other bills go unpaid. For a few months, between couch surfing and having nowhere to sleep. That time in poverty changed her perspective, she says. "Growing up in a comfortable life, you can feel care toward people, but you don't really know what it's like. Having been through that experience now, I know what it's like to not have food in the cupboard."

Others, racialized women, report lived experiences with racism, sexism/misogyny, fear of being deported and being "either invisible or hyper-visible." Times when they are treated as an inferior intellect, dismissed in conversation, included as a token, "etc." A third writes in a survey response: "Being a black, queer, migrant researcher, I understand the power and importance of intersectionality in research and policy development. I was able to draw on my diverse background. Also, I worked in the oil sands for seven years and was able to provide insights into the limitations of a corporate social responsibility approach (having applied this approach myself in the mining environment)."

Another – a scholar, mother, research assistant, human rights advocate, student – reflects: "It's interesting how identity transforms. Before, I was a successful professional. Then I came to Canada and at some point I became a migrant – an immigrant. It felt as if I had just one identity."

LAB ANCHORS

- Advancing human rights requires an intersectional approach. Various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other.
- Judicial remedies to human rights issues are often inadequate. By their nature, courts and tribunals are adversarial, often resulting in disjointed and unequal outcomes for rights seekers.
- Policymaking and "advocacy around policies" offer alternate ways of advancing human rights.
- Change requires understanding and working with different forms of power.
- Power = the ability to influence an outcome.

"Am I in favour of amending human rights legislation in a positive way? Absolutely, but it will take a lot of work."

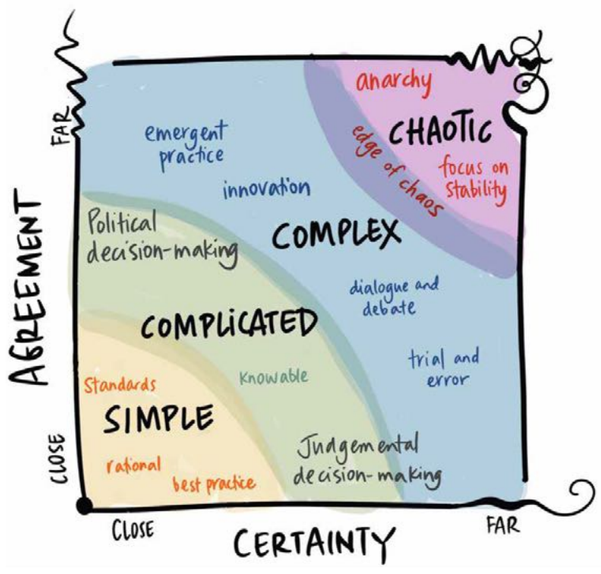
"With wicked problems, if you address one part it may make another part worse. But I've never bought into the idea we shouldn't try."

LINKAGES MATTER

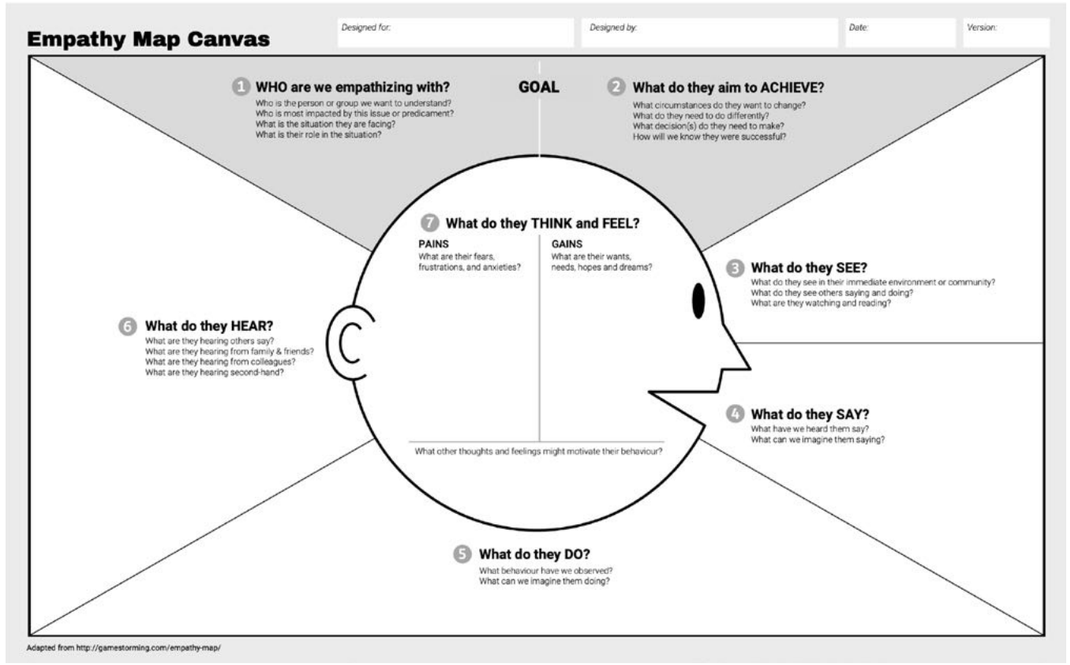
The Action Lab was also grounded in several key assumptions or "Lab Anchors" that emphasize the importance of stepping outside of silos to find "unusual partners" when tackling complex social problems. By recognizing the interconnected nature of the problems chosen for the Action Lab from the start, de Vos hoped to shift the conversation from merely talking about those overlaps to actually using a multifaceted frame in problem solving.

As part of that approach, although this event occurred within the context of a conference on the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, participants were invited to extend their search for solutions beyond constitutional framing and legislation, where the bar limiting change tends to be very high. As de Vos put it: "Wrestling with the charter is wrestling with an elephant."

The Cynefin framework shown here helped situate the analysis and match problems with solutions: Is the problem simple, complicated, complex, chaotic? What level of agreement and certainty (or lack thereof) swirls around it? How many entities are in charge, and will they need to step outside their comfort zones? The problems explored in the Action Lab inhabit the complex adaptive space – the unknown unknowns. In such complex challenges, a change in one factor can lead to a far-reaching chain reaction.



The Cynefin framework matches problems with potential solutions



An empathy map helps keep the focus on lives impacted by human wrongs

Each team's conversations regarding this and other exercises are included in Part Three of this report, which steps through the work of the six teams and presents summaries of the six prototypes.

Participants also put themselves in others' shoes by filling out an empathy map. Each team identified a particular group experiencing vulnerabilities, then envisioned what those folks might be experiencing, expressing, fearing and desiring. Some participants lamented not hearing directly from individuals with first-hand experience of poverty, racism and/or climate change. "If we were operating in the real world, much of our work would be engaging communities to figure out the issues, and through that work create movement," facilitator Pieter de Vos agreed. "We used the empathy map as a surrogate to sensitize ourselves that issues impact real people. It was useful, but not ideal."

"People's private struggles are often connected to public concerns. As we hear the stories of people talking about their challenges, we want to listen carefully to figure out the policy or advocacy dimension of that challenge. And not come up with solutions that rob others of agency and choice."

"Building bridges between communities requires getting into the same physical space."

"Power is something we need to figure out how to distribute more equitably, but power is also necessary to affect change."

A TYPOLOGY OF POWER

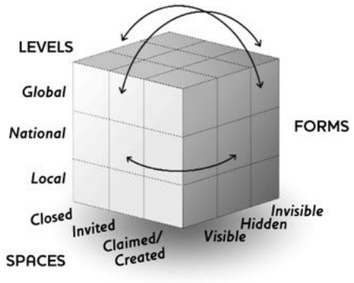
- **People power**. Power built through leadership development and an active, grassroots base.
- **Influencer power.** Power to develop, maintain, and leverage relationships with people and institutions that have influence over and access to critical, social, cultural or financial resources.
- **Independent political power:** Power to influence the who, how, and what of visible decision-making, so that affected communities are authentically represented in decision-making processes, structures, and tables.
- **Narrative power.** Power to transform and hold dominant public narratives and ideologies and to limit the influence of opposing narratives.

POWER MATTERS

The Action Lab offered tools for not only recognizing but influencing the power dynamics imbedded in inequities. Attention to mobilizing power needs to be part of a change strategy from the beginning, de Vos said. "We really do need to uplift the stories of those most impacted. We need to develop solid arguments and analysis that complement those human stories; otherwise, we fall into sentimentality. But we also need the ability to influence change. So a key part is increasing the power of individuals and communities to actually act on their interests."

Using power as a vehicle for change requires organized people and organized resources, but also alignment with windows of opportunity in the broader political and social context.

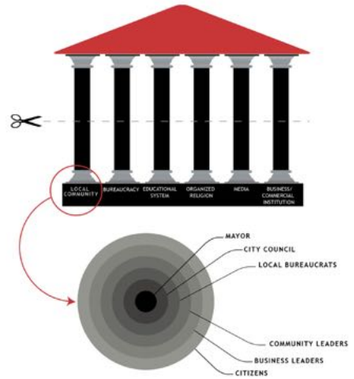
The "powercube" developed by John Gaventa offers a way to analyze those windows and consider which power strategies would enable the change we hope to see.



John Gaventa's power cube

SPACES	LEVELS	FORMS	STRATEGIES FOR EXERCISING POWER
Visible: observable decision-making mechanisms: legislature, City Councils, courts, etc. **Hidden**: shaping or influencing the political agenda behind the scenes **Invisible**: norms and beliefs, socialization, ideology	▪ Household ▪ Organizational ▪ Local ▪ Regional ▪ Provincial ▪ National ▪ Global	**Closed:** decisions made by select groups **Invited**: people asked to participate but within set boundaries **Created/Claimed:** less powerful actress claim a space where they can set their own agenda	Advocacy & lobbying. Campaigns, negotiations. Representation, engaging in formal politics Organizing communities, strengthening organizations, alternative research, media cations Popular education. Discourse analysis, awareness-raising, building self-esteem, media and cultural action

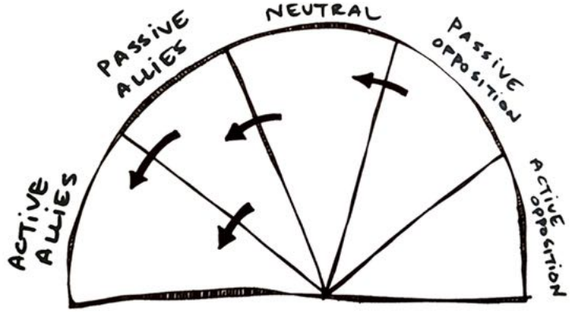
Differing strategies are needed to address differing dimensions of power



It's useful to analyze the entities keeping the powerful in power

Focal points of power can also be seen as pillars of support. When planning to shift those pillars, it's crucial to identify key gatekeepers by position and even by name – and to realize that shifts typically happen in small, strategic increments. The suffrage movement, for example, faced multiple issues at a time when women were treated as property but chose at first to focus on the right to vote as a way to attract advocates of democracy. Similarly, early civil rights strategies focused on cafeteria counters in stores and malls where Blacks were welcome to shop, but not eat – a discrepancy people could visualize and understand.

As those examples illustrate, every use of power relies on allies. Thus a crucial step in effecting change involves mapping out likely allies and opponents and considering what it would take to shift them closer to active allyship.



Attracting allies is crucial

THREE INGREDIENTS NEEDED TO CREATE CHANGE

1. **Stories**. Personal stories that put a human face on the issues, so people care.
2. **Analysis**. Careful framing of the issues, drafting potential solutions, identifying windows of opportunity.
3. **Power.** Individuals and communities banding together to effect the change they need.

Based on work by Pieter de Vos, 2020

"Getting to the decision-making tables is key. Identify small winnable issues you can expand, and if you can get people to honour their commitments, it creates space to make the change bigger."

"Movements seldom win by overpowering the opposition, but by shifting support out from under it."

"The more I learn about intersections, I think it's weird that we expect people to live under an income line and consider that normal."

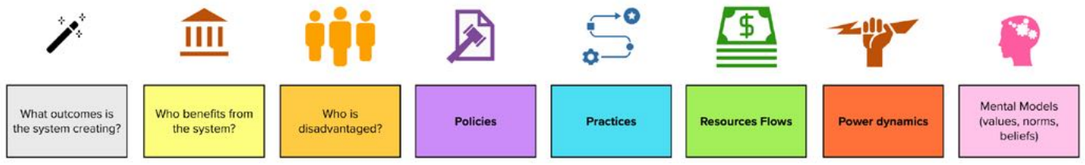
SYSTEMS MATTER: REVERSE THINKING EXERCISE

After reflecting on the human toll extracted by poverty, racism and climate change, the Action Lab shifted to investigating the systemic factors that bring those experiences about. To begin, each team engaged in a "reverse thinking" exercise that challenged them to design a system deliberately intended to create the issue they were wrestling with.

Common themes emerged as the teams described their imagined systems. These systems are hierarchical, self-perpetuating, dehumanizing and divisive. It's normative for those seen as "undeserving" to endure poverty, racism, the worst impacts of climate change – perhaps all three and more. Yet belief persists that the system is beneficial.

The six "reverse thinking" systems and other aspects of each team's deliberations are included in Part Three of this report.

"Often, reverse thinking allows us to name the elephants in the room by revealing factors and realities that are already part of our world."



Using these categories, teams designed systems deliberately intended to create poverty, racism or climate change

CONTEXT MATTERS: MAPPING RICH PICTURES

Next the teams were challenged to create a "rich picture" of a human rights issue related to their larger problem, considering six contextual conditions: policies, practices, resource flows, relationships/connections, power dynamics and mental models. In doing so, they were to examine not only observable events, but patterns, structures, dynamics and mental models buried beneath the surface.

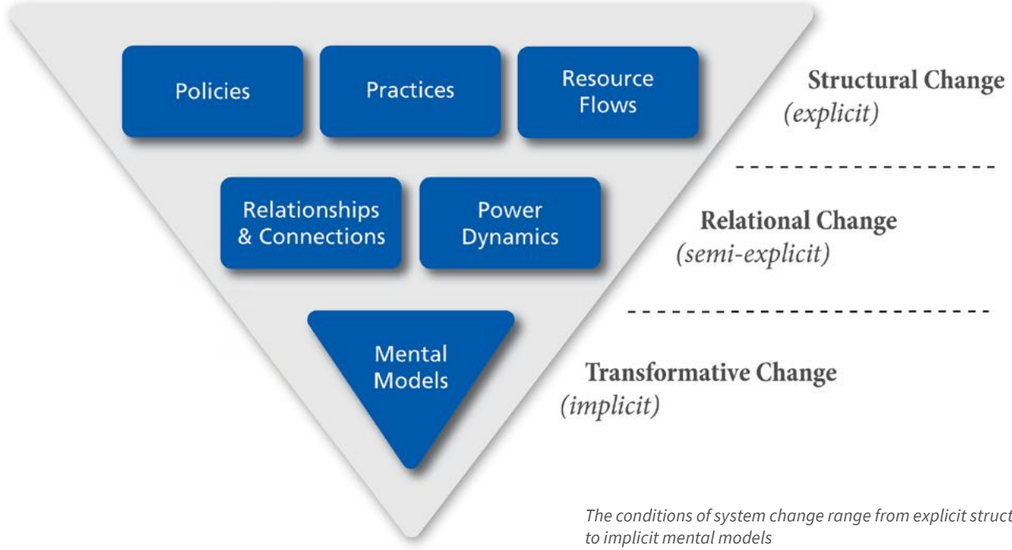
Had the Action Lab occurred in person, the teams might have drawn pictures of their issues. In the virtual environment, they employed Mural, an electronic whiteboard. As ideas arose, the graduate students serving as facilitators moved symbols representing those ideas into the picture and added annotation.

Mapping their rich pictures helped the teams "zoom out" to systematically consider the context surrounding their issue, an important precursor to developing prototype strategies.

"Patterns are useful; they help us anticipate what's coming. But if we want to change reality, we need to look at structures. And if we really want sustainable change, we need to work at deeper cultural levels."

"Poverty, racism, climate change – we can't deal with them separately, as one issue on its own."

"The pictures you painted are a very good starting point, because many of those elements are places where changes are



The conditions of system change range from explicit structures to implicit mental models

PART TWO

The Prototyping Process

Armed with insights about grounding change in personal experience while also zooming out to understand systems, contexts, intersections and power structures, each Action Lab team turned to the task of drafting a specific proposal related to poverty, racism or climate change. Again, the work proceeded stepwise, with time for planning followed by time to present and then time to refine the plans.

Problems *are complex, entrenched, made up of multiple issues, often with fuzzy accountability.*

Issues *are narrower in scope, can be acted upon, have identifiable stakeholders and clearer accountability."*

IDENTIFYING ACTIONABLE ISSUES

First, the teams met to identify an actionable issue within their big problem – an issue small enough to be winnable but big enough to make a difference. Guided by an issues identification template, and drawing from their earlier analysis, each team selected an issue and began analyzing its context. The six specific proposals are included in the next section of this report.

How might we remove the socioeconomic barriers to rights?		How might we eliminate the racism and intolerance that is being driven by misinformation and amplified by technology?		How might we protect vulnerable groups from the impacts of climate change and environmental breakdown?	
Nelson	**Natalie**	**Victoria**	**Hannah**	**Samantha**	**Alicia**
Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6
Program-oriented support and housing	Establish child care as a basic right	Hate speech in Alberta Racism in the workplace	Media literacy to combat misinformation and racism	Reliance on oil revenue	Acceptance of moving to low carbon economy

Identifying an actionable issue was an important step for the six groups

PLANNING TO ACT

By the afternoon of the second day, each team was ready to draft a proposed plan of action. As a guide, they used Plan to Act, a tool that incorporates many of the concepts introduced and practiced in previous exercises: mental models, power dynamics, drivers and trends, allies and opponents, compelling stories. They were also challenged to envision the new reality they were hoping to achieve, craft a call to action and think about how they would build momentum and track progress.

"The more precise we can be about what is happening, and what laws allow that to happen, the more precise we can be in our interventions."

ISSUES IDENTIFICATION TEMPLAT

1. What specific **issues** might we tackle?
2. What pattern of **outcomes** do we want to shift?
3. What are the **root causes** underlying this challenge?
4. What are the **leverage points** for change we aim to address?
5. What is **our role** in pushing for change?
6. Who are **allies**?
7. Who might **oppose** our efforts?
8. What are the **starting point** strategies for addressing this issue?

Adapted from Mark Cabaj, Here to There, 2012

The Challenge/Opportunity					
Intervention:					
1. What is the **focus** of our action?		2. What **issues** are we trying to address?		3. Who is most **impacted**?	
Our Bold Vision	**What needs to be done?**		**Our Strategy**		**Our Targets**
2. What are we aiming to **achieve**?	3. How can we shift **policies**, **practices** & **power dynamics**	4. How can we transform **mindsets** and **mental models**?	5. Who are our **allies**? 6. Who might **oppose** our efforts?	7. What is our **Call to Action**?	8. Which **decision-makers** or **stakeholders** are we holding accountable?

This template guided the teams' work on specific action plans

TESTING AND REFINING

Each team then met with its counterpart, the other team tackling the same problem, to present its emerging plan of action and hear feedback. Six evaluative questions and a testing template aided in that analysis. Each team had five minutes to present, five minutes to receive feedback and another five minutes to field questions. Then the teams switched roles and the process repeated.

Each of the six teams then had 15 minutes alone to refine their ideas, incorporating whatever feedback they found useful

"The logic behind having two teams tackle each topic area was to create a space where they could actually test their ideas against the other, with the purpose of making their ideas better."

"I have facilitated many processes. This was one of the more engaged and dynamic. I do hope some of what you've done here together gets carried forward."

PROTOTYPE SHOWCASE

Finally all six teams came together as a committee of the whole to showcase their prototypes. Each team had five minutes to share its ideas, followed by five minutes for questions and discussion. In brief, the prototypes proposed these actions:

- Team 1, Poverty – Provide rent subsidies to all low-income households as a human right
- Team 2, Poverty – Ensure access to child care as a human right
- Team 3, Racism – Expand and coordinate anti-racist mental health capacity
- Team 4, Racism – Implement media literacy curriculum in K-12 schools
- Team 5, Climate Change – Broaden climate change conversations and action to include under-represented groups
- Team 6, Climate Change – Make access to water and energy free to low-income and vulnerable Edmontonians as a human right

Six questions framed the feedback teams received from their peers

Even in the short time provided, most teams identified a rich list of likely allies (as well as potential opposition) and noted the importance of building on what others have accomplished rather than reinventing the wheel. The teams also recognized the reality that some players (such as municipalities and school boards) can prove to be either ally or opposition, depending on such factors as whether they are (or represent) rural or urban communities.

"Often we're operating in silos and don't realize it's just a matter of building off what's been done and addressing gaps."

As the teams showcased their visions, ideas emerged for how they might dovetail with each other and with existing initiatives for greater impact. Some examples:

- Include a module on equitable water and energy access in diversity curriculum.
- Team up to address both rent subsidy and child care strategies as human rights.
- Ensure that students learning to think critically about social and other media know there's somewhere they can turn if they need mental health support.
- Work with national groups already advocating to frame housing as a human right.
- Inventory the capacity available among Action Lab attendees in areas related to the envisioned projects.

The teams also stressed the necessity of engaging the individuals and communities these interventions aim to benefit, just as the lab itself would have benefited from more of those voices: "Nothing about us without us."

"There will be room not only for those in the room for but other folks to take this and run with it."

PART THREE

The Work of the Six Teams

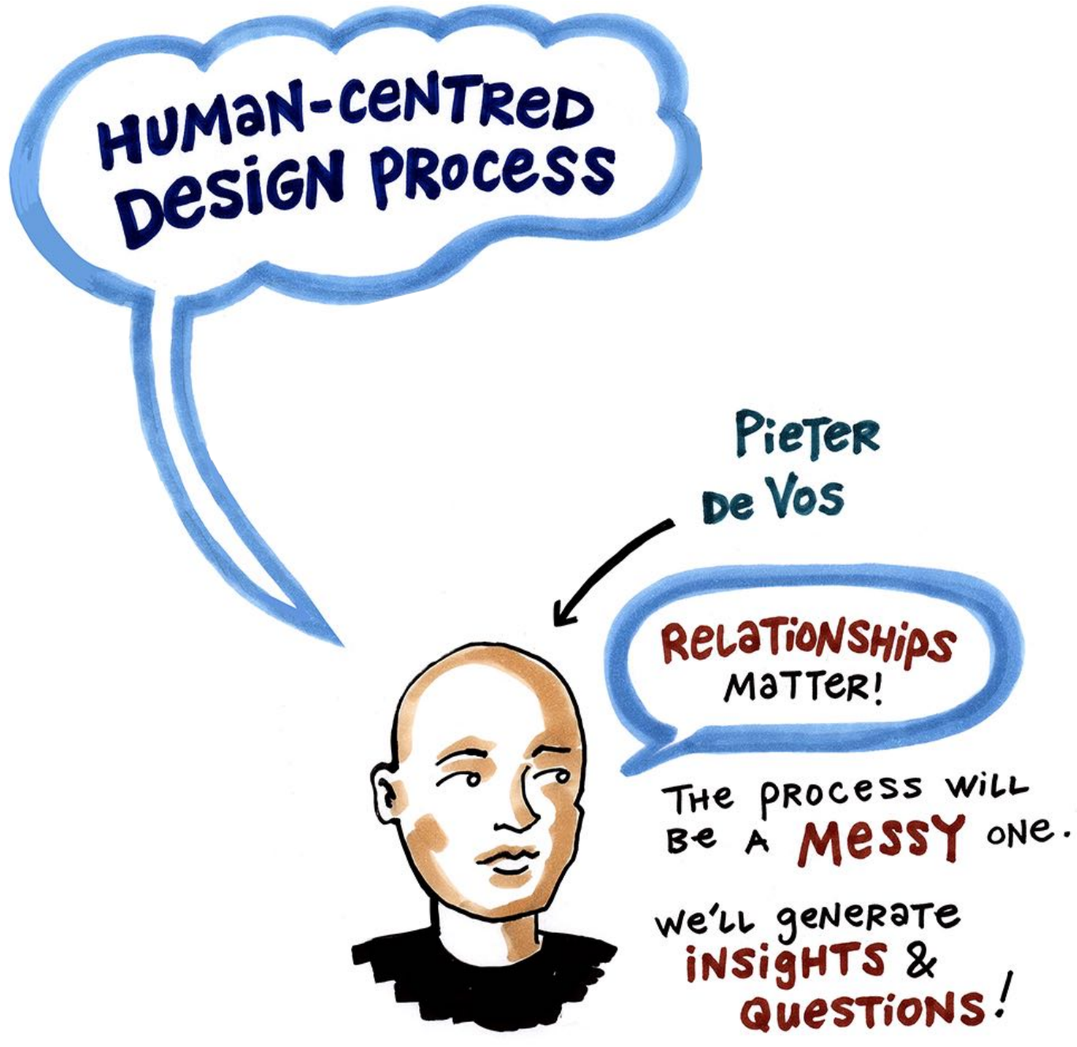
"Being involved in the Action Lab shifted some of the students' career aspirations. An overwhelming number want to get out there and do systemic design work."

The following sections walk through the steps followed by each of the six teams as they assessed their problem, narrowed its scope to a particular issue, identified a desired change – and finally began crafting a proposed intervention, or "prototype."

Alongside short summaries of the teams' conversations and snippets of their dialogue are the templates the student facilitators used to capture their thoughts at each step. These documents and ideas are included in hope of informing any future efforts to carry these visions forward.

Graphic recordings as the teams showcased their ideas convey the energy present in the virtual room. Even in the limited time available to share these concepts with the full team, synergies appeared within and among the prototypes.

Note: the original prototype proposal developed by each team will be made available to any group desiring to take the work forward.



Graphic recording by Sam Hester, the 23rd Story

MEMBERS OF TEAM ONE

"Living in the inner city neighbourhood of McCauley, I have seen firsthand how failing to find better solutions to poverty, homelessness and addiction has negative effects for both those involved in these struggles and the broader community."

"I made a decision in 2008 to orient my work and activist life around leaving the world a little better than I found it. My mother was not quite 59 when she passed away, so there's a real realization that I only have so much time. I need to do the important things now."

Ilene Fleming is director of strategic initiatives with the United Way of the Alberta Capital Region. Her work focuses on creating pathways out of poverty through early child development, supports for children and youth to succeed in school, community-based mental health initiatives and seamless navigation through 211 Alberta.

John Kolkman is active in Edmonton's McCauley neighbourhood, where he lives. He volunteers with both the Right at Home Housing Society and the Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness. His decades of dedication to advancing human dignity and rights include helping to found the Boyle McCauley Health Centre and senior roles with the Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, the Edmonton Social Planning Council and the NDP caucus.

Bridget Stirling is a PhD student in education at the University of Alberta whose research explores the view of human rights imbedded in Alberta's education act, which speaks of parents' rights but neglects those of children. As an Edmonton Public School trustee from 2015 to 2021, she worked to protect students' rights and expand their opportunities to be heard. With the Child Friendly Housing Coalition of Alberta, she helped overturn an Alberta law that allowed discrimination against children in rental housing on the basis of age. As a social justice advocate she speaks from experience, having struggled to make ends meet after leaving an abusive relationship.

Nelson Dakurah, facilitator, is a MA student in political science policy studies at the University of Alberta and a research assistant with the Edmonton Metro Region Board. His work with the board focuses on planning sustainable growth initiatives for the region by promoting collaboration among regional partners.

TEAM 1

POVERTY: FRAMING ACCESS TO RENT SUBSIDIES AS A HUMAN RIGHT

The first of two teams wrestling with the impacts of poverty spoke from decades of experience in initiatives that put them in touch with the challenges faced by individuals who are struggling to find good homes. They chose to focus on people in rental housing, and to frame the need for safe, affordable, appropriate homes as a human right. That idea takes root in Step 1 of their process as they discuss media articles related to poverty, re-emerges in Step 4 as they create a rich picture of our current system and becomes a central focus in Step 5, when they craft their prototype.

"Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control." – Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 25.1

STEP 1: IDENTIFYING AN ISSUE IN THE HEADLINES

Focus: Power imbalance in public housing

This team read two media articles about housing as an equity issue: ***Poor residents get all the acoustical trash*** and ***Why Canada needs universal public housing***. The conversation that followed identified a need for a multifaceted rather than a one-size-fits-all approach to publicly supported housing. An approach that ensures agency and dignity while respecting community needs when issues such as excessive noise arise. For a summary of their conversation, see ***Appendix III***.

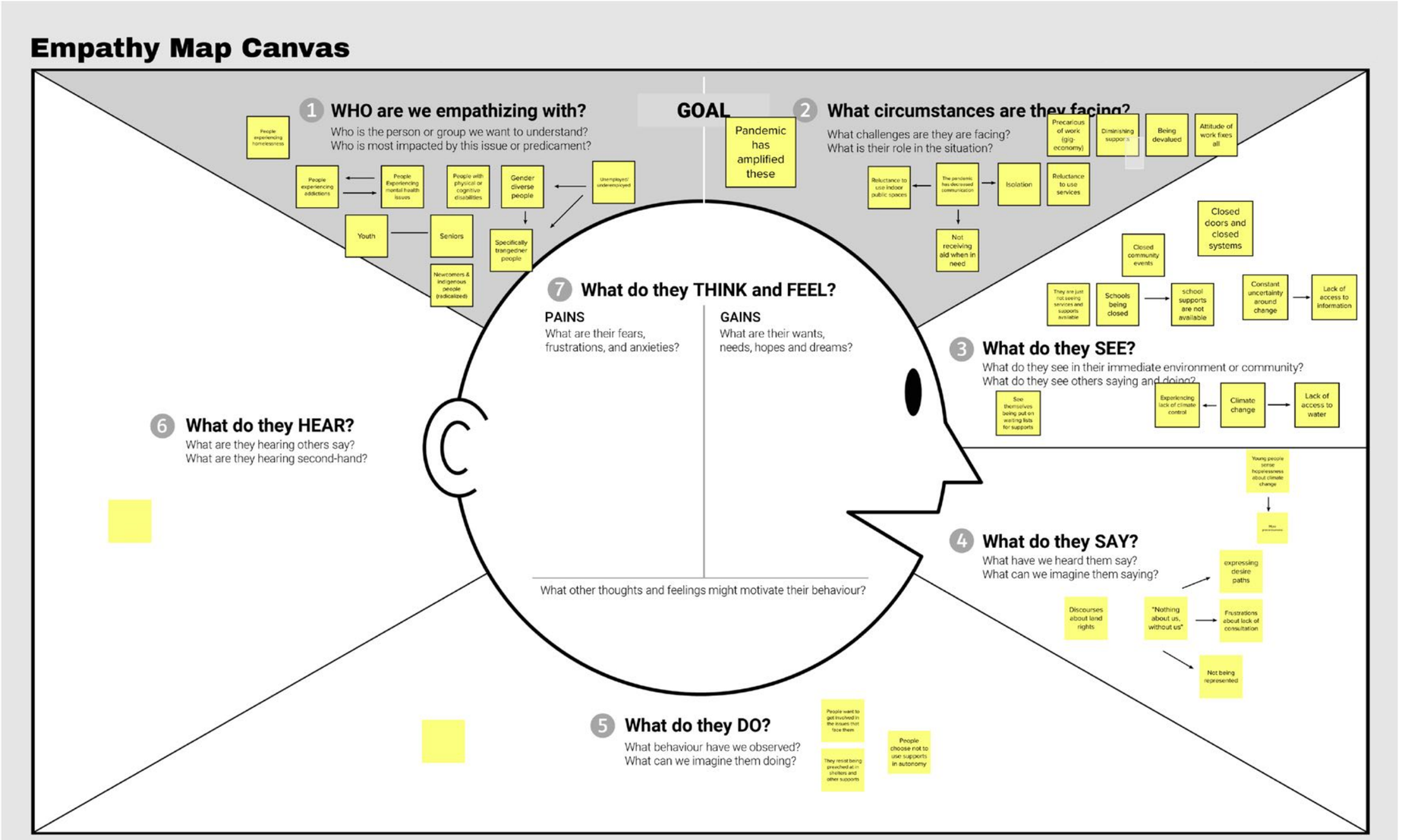
"Canada already has universal public health care. As the country moves into its new post-pandemic normal, it should implement universal public housing, too." – Charlotte Dalwood, in Why Canada needs universal public housing, CBC

"Can we look deeper than giving people houses? Can we have a discourse involving the people being housed and not just the housing itself?"

STEP 2: EMPATHY MAPPING

Focus: People with limited income

Members of this team focused their empathy map on people with limited income. They observed “a lot of convergence as well as huge divergence” in the lived experiences of people struggling to make ends meet, noting that their challenges may include homelessness, substance abuse, addictions, mental health issues, newcomer status and/or a failed business. Group members added that some of these same issues surround the other two big problems wrestled with in the Action Lab: racism and climate change. And that the COVID-19 pandemic is exacerbating those issues, adding to the complexity and urgency of responding.



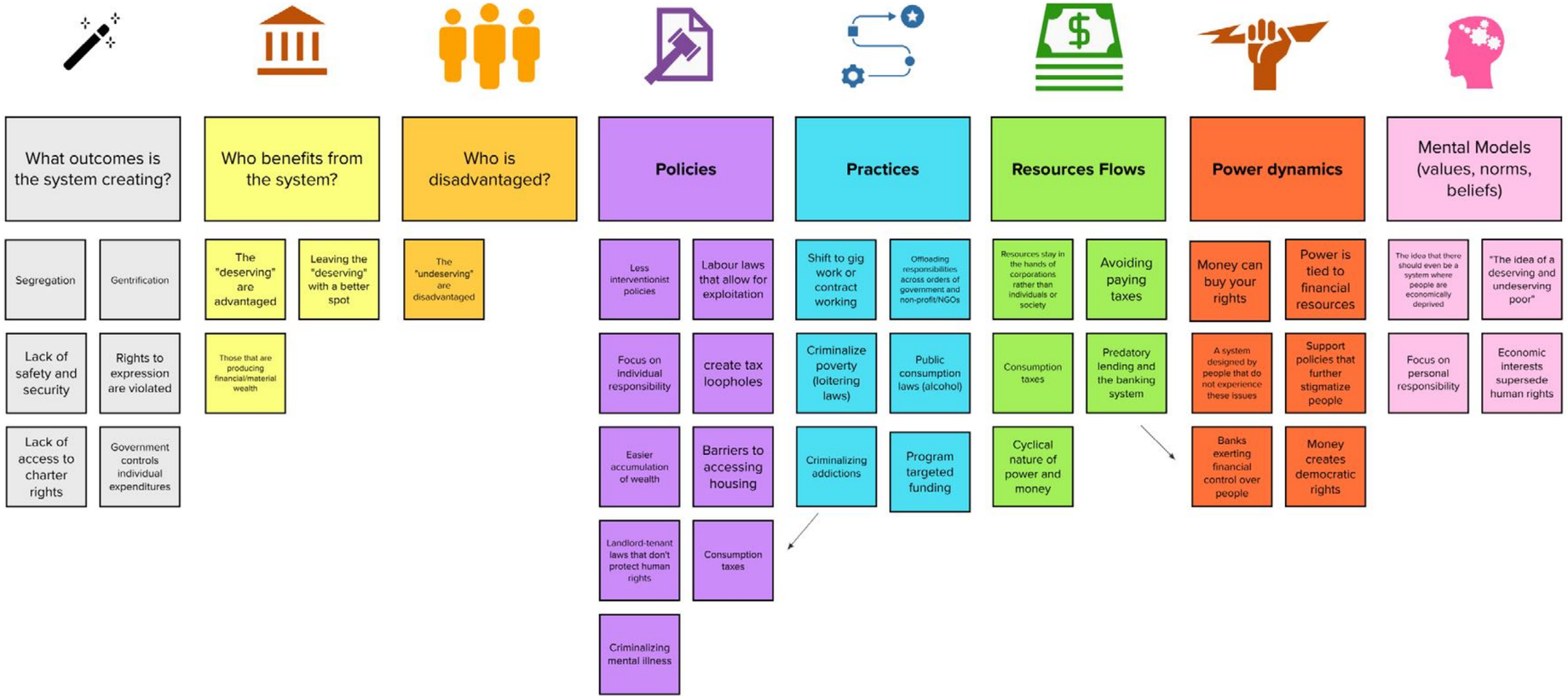
Team One empathy map

STEP 3: REVERSE THINKING

Designing a system where individuals experiencing economic deprivation are consistently denied their basic human rights

This team imagined a system in which people are divided into the "deserving" advantaged and the "undeserving" disadvantaged. A system designed by the ones least impacted by its worst consequences. A system that entrenches, exaggerates, stigmatizes and criminalizes poverty. In this system, money can buy rights. Corporations rather than individuals or society have first dibs on resources, and labour laws allow abuse and exploitation. Banks have power, and predatory banking keeps people at the mercy of the system. As team members noted, "There is an inadvertent nature of the system to perpetuate itself."

"It felt like we were describing our current system."



Team One reverse thinking system

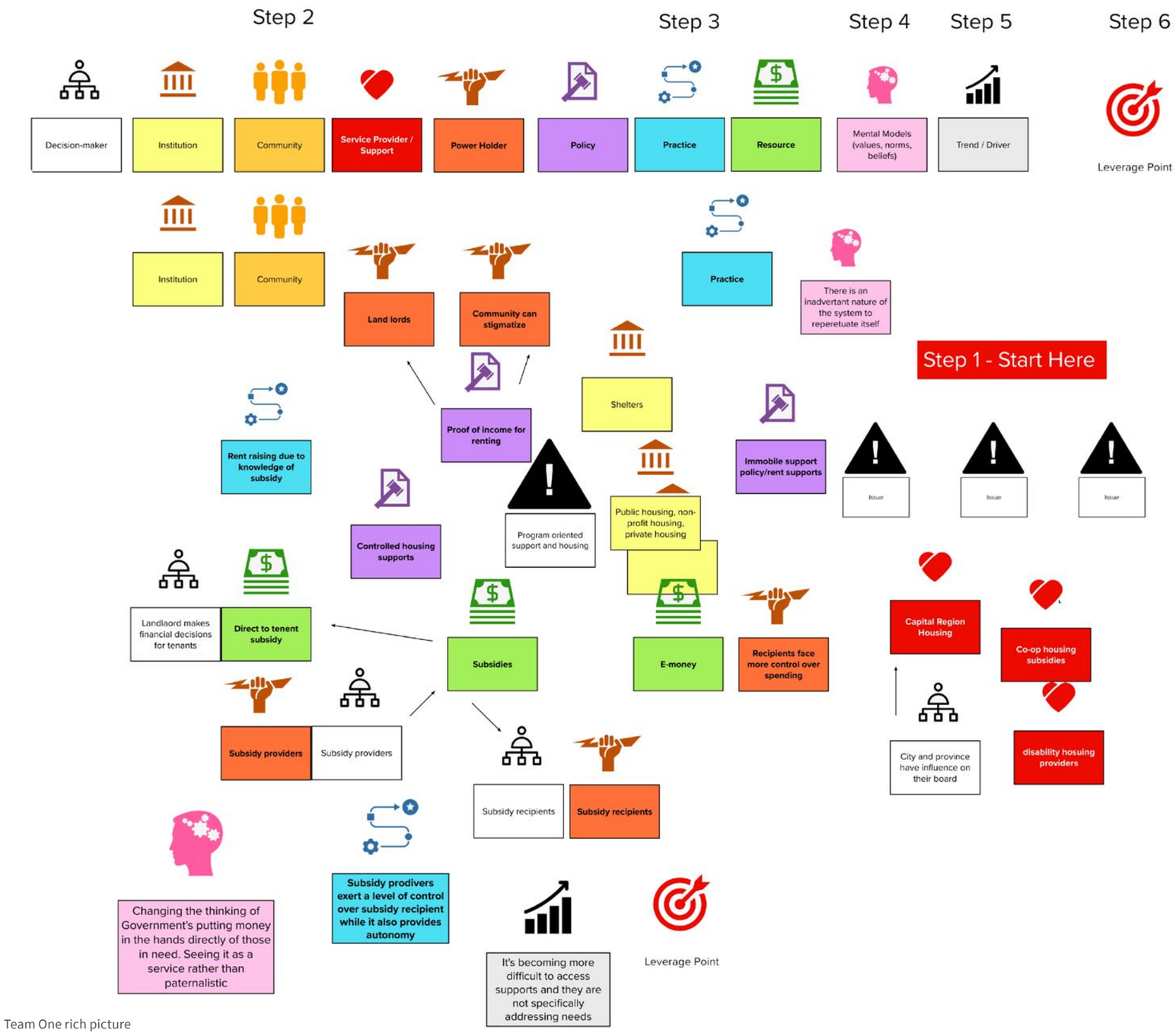
Team One reverse thinking system

STEP 4: RICH PICTURE OF THE CURRENT SYSTEM

Focus: Public housing and supports

The team chose to focus its picture of our existing system on subsidized housing and support programs. They noted that requiring renters to share proof of income and other personal information can stigmatize tenants while handing power to landlords and others in privileged positions. Renters become dependent on situations that may be far from ideal, enabling providers to exert inordinate control.

- *"Lots of times our policies and responses further stigmatize the people they are intended to support."*



Team One rich picture

STEP 5: THE PROTOTYPE

Proposed intervention: Implement article 25.1 of the universal declaration of human rights by providing rent subsidies to all qualifying households

Maintaining its focus on challenges faced by people in subsidized housing, the team proposes working toward a future in which safe, suitable, affordable housing is acknowledged as a human right. Just as all qualifying seniors receive an old age subsidy, so all households meeting a threshold of need would receive rent subsidies and access to safe, suitable, affordable housing. To eliminate waitlists, budgets for affordable housing in this future are not capped but based on need, and subsidized renters have access to market housing. Safeguards are in place to avoid escalating rental rates. The Alberta Human Rights Act and/or Bill of Rights Section 1.6 are amended to include housing as a human right, aligning with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and influencing legislation in and beyond Alberta.

- *"Our vision is to go beyond housing policy reform, but really target the idea of housing as a human right."*
- *"When a system funds programs, it limits government's responsibility. But if a policy said we will fund individuals to be supported wherever they want to live, that's more open-ended."*

Graphic recording by Sam Hester, the 23rd Story

The shift (in policies, practices, power, mental models)

- From stigma to increased autonomy and respect for those needing housing support
- From housing as a reformist project to housing as a human right under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 25.1
- From waitlists as inevitable to waitlists as a contravention of human rights
- From programs with a set limit to serving all individuals who need support
- From economic rights solely as property rights to economic rights that include renters
- From human rights as only individual rights to rights also within relationships and collectives
- From problems to neighbours

Further questions

- Would it be better to focus on the federal Charter of Rights and Freedoms or the Alberta Bill of Rights as a starting point? The latter may be more achievable (the UCP government recently added a section about the right of parents to make informed decisions regarding their children), but it's a weaker document and would require aligning legislation. That said, there are examples where action at the provincial level has catalyzed national change, as in Tommy Douglas's work in Saskatchewan on public health and Quebec's child care system.
- What is the best way to ensure that an influx of subsidy money does not result in an equal rise in rental rates?
- Would it be possible to work with others already busy in this area, such as the National Right to Housing Network?

"We really want to open the conversation about collective rights. This is an excellent time, given COVID and what we've learned about what we owe each other in society."

"Rental subsidies would be helpful. Perhaps a guaranteed annual income is the real answer. But nothing can be done without input from those affected."

MEMBERS OF TEAM TWO

"From where I started, penniless, skipping meals as an immigrant student, and then having reached the stage where I could actually develop policy – that's an opportunity our country gave me. In Kenya, would I have that opportunity? No. We have an excellent system set up. Let's use it, keep making it better and make sure everybody in our country has that opportunity."

Vasant Chotai is president of Canadians for a Civil Society, and co-hosted the human rights Conference. After graduate studies and three years as science teacher, his 29 years with the Government of Alberta included time as social policy director with the Ministry of Employment, Immigration and Industry. In that role, he was appointed policy expert to a MLA committee that developed a new model for supports to low-income Albertans. The new model recommended various policy changes, including a single system that crossed ministerial boundaries and targeted the client as the centre of decision. Post retirement and after consulting work, he provided leadership to three non-profit organizations; helped develop provincial policies on minimum wage, SFI and AISH benefit levels; and presented a proposal for a provincial health advocate.

Kelly Hennig is director of operations with GRIT and a sessional instruction with MacEwan University. His work involves supporting young children and their families in family-centred inclusive early learning environments. Previous positions include more than 15 years with Head Start programs in Edmonton, followed by a director position with the Alberta Ministry of Education, where he worked to advance early childhood and inclusion policy.

Laura Murphy coordinates research at the Affordable Housing Solutions Lab in Earth & Atmospheric Sciences at the University of Alberta. This initiative grew out of End Poverty Edmonton as a community-based learning project to develop and support housing innovation in Edmonton using an equity-centred design framework.

Natalie Schmitt, facilitator, holds a BSc in human ecology from the University of Alberta and is an MA candidate researching the psychosocial determinants of health over the span of life, with a focus on equity. It's her desire to work across disciplines to enact change through value-based policies and programs, especially regarding equitable access to healthcare.

TEAM 2

POVERTY: DEFINING ACCESS TO CHILD CARE AS A HUMAN RIGHT

This team's initial conversation focused on noise as an inequity, a topic introduced by one of the media accounts they read. Their empathy map returned to the issue of inequity, as did the system they devised through reverse thinking. As they worked to create a rich picture of the current system, child care surfaced as a focus, and the group began envisioning what it would take to reframe child care as a basic human right. Their prototype further fleshes out that vision, calling for quality, affordable child care that suits each family's circumstance as a legally protected right.

STEP 1: IDENTIFYING AN ISSUE IN THE HEADLINES

Focus: Who decides when "sound" becomes "noise"?

The article entitled ***Poor residents get all the acoustical trash*** sparked discussion in this team about inequities in the ability to control noise. For a summary of the conversation, see ***Appendix III***. Team members noted that people living in less affluent communities may endure more noise from nearby industries, passing emergency vehicles and other life on the street, yet have poorer soundproofing inside the home and a dearth of sound-absorbing greenery outside. What's more, those residents may have fewer opportunities to advocate and less access to the decision makers who could effect change. On the other hand, some street sounds considered an asset, such as outdoor music, may be driven away if an area is gentrified. What constitutes noise rather than sound, and who decides?

- ***"I think that our acoustical soundscapes are a sign of poor urban planning practices that overly discriminate against poor people because they just don't have the resources to fight back." – Erica Walker, Brown University, in 'Poor residents get all the acoustical trash,' CBC Spark***

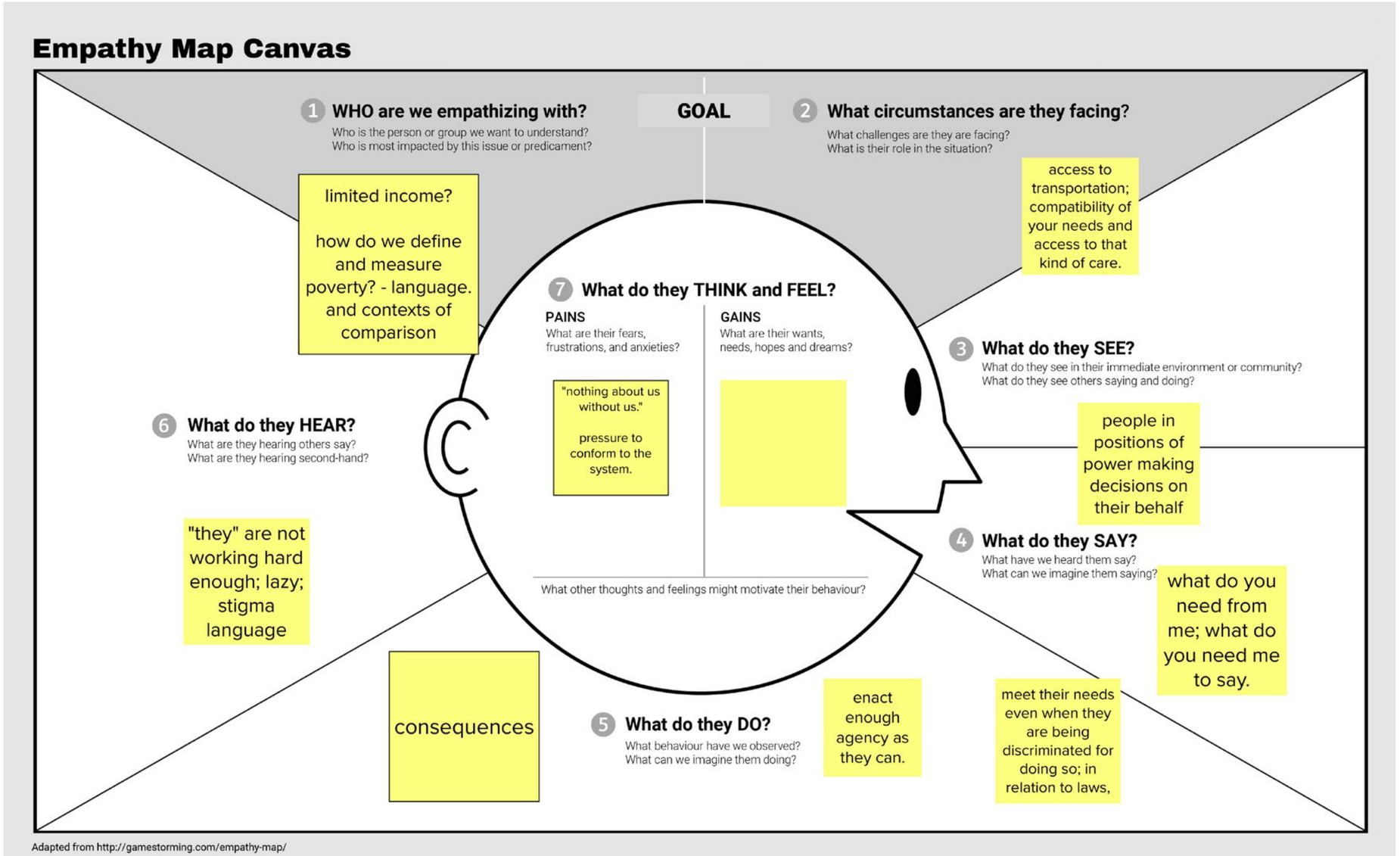
- *"How we design and create spaces for human interaction is a human rights issue."*

STEP 2: EMPATHY MAPPING

Focus: People living in poverty

This team reported struggling to define the "who" they were empathizing with. They wondered whether the exercise as designed assumes that everyone living in poverty shares similar experiences. Yet they persevered, creating a map that emphasizes power imbalances. All too often, they said, people in power make decisions on behalf of those with limited income, ignoring their plea: "Do nothing about us without us."

> *"Maybe the empathy map would have more relevance later, once we've identified an issue that impacts a definable community and are starting to think of a particular program or intervention."*

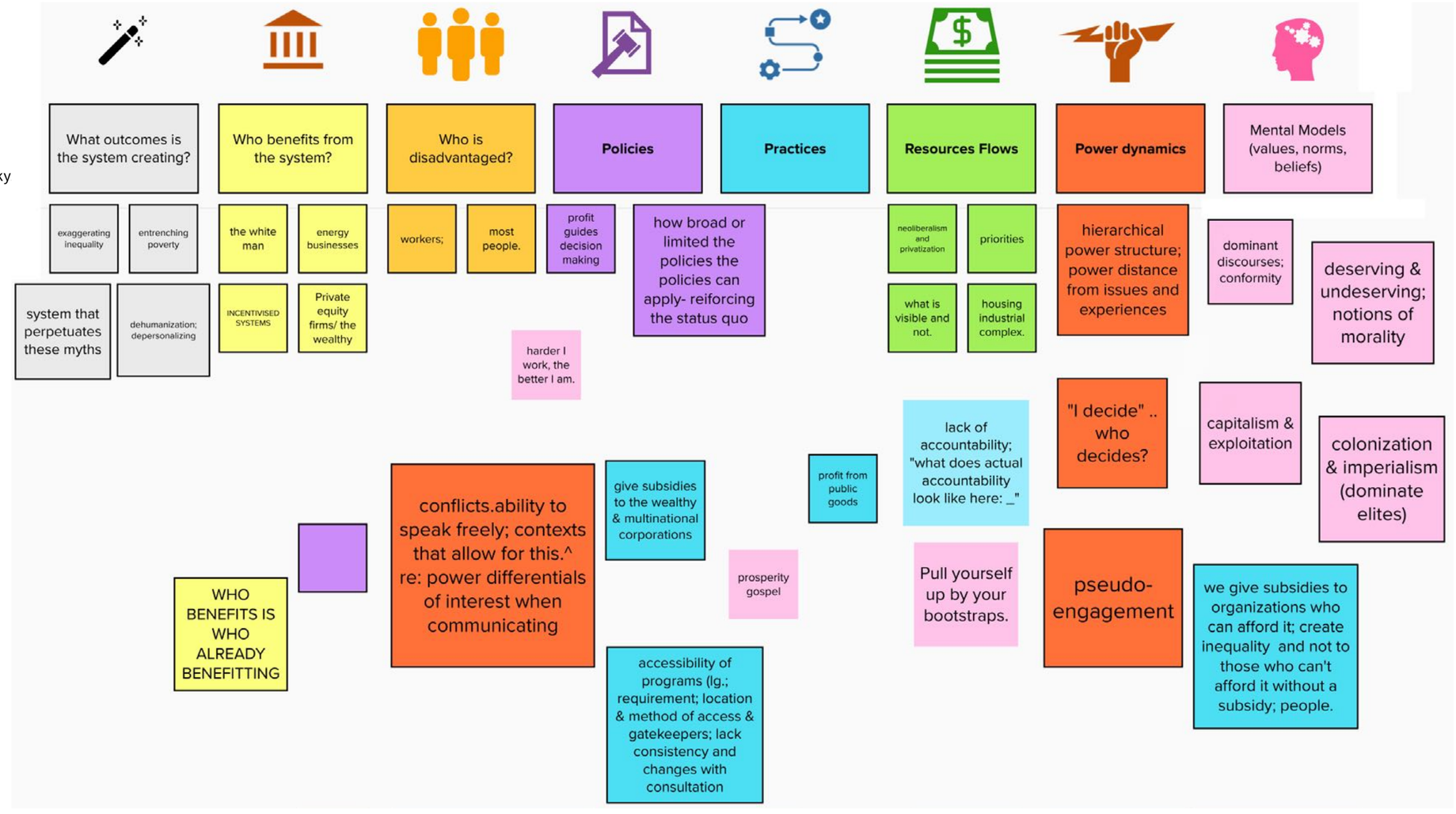


Team Two empathy map

STEP 3: REVERSE THINKING

Designing a system where individuals experiencing economic deprivation are consistently denied their basic human rights

Like the other poverty team's imagined system, this one exaggerates inequalities and entrenches poverty. People in economic straits are expected to pull themselves up "by their bootstraps," yet they're also seen as undeserving and "less than." Policies, practices and resources benefit individuals and organizations that already have rather than those who need. Power is distanced from the many it impacts and driven by hidden interests, with no explanation required. Protesting is risky The system expects conformity, in the end dehumanizing and depersonalizing even those it intends to benefit.

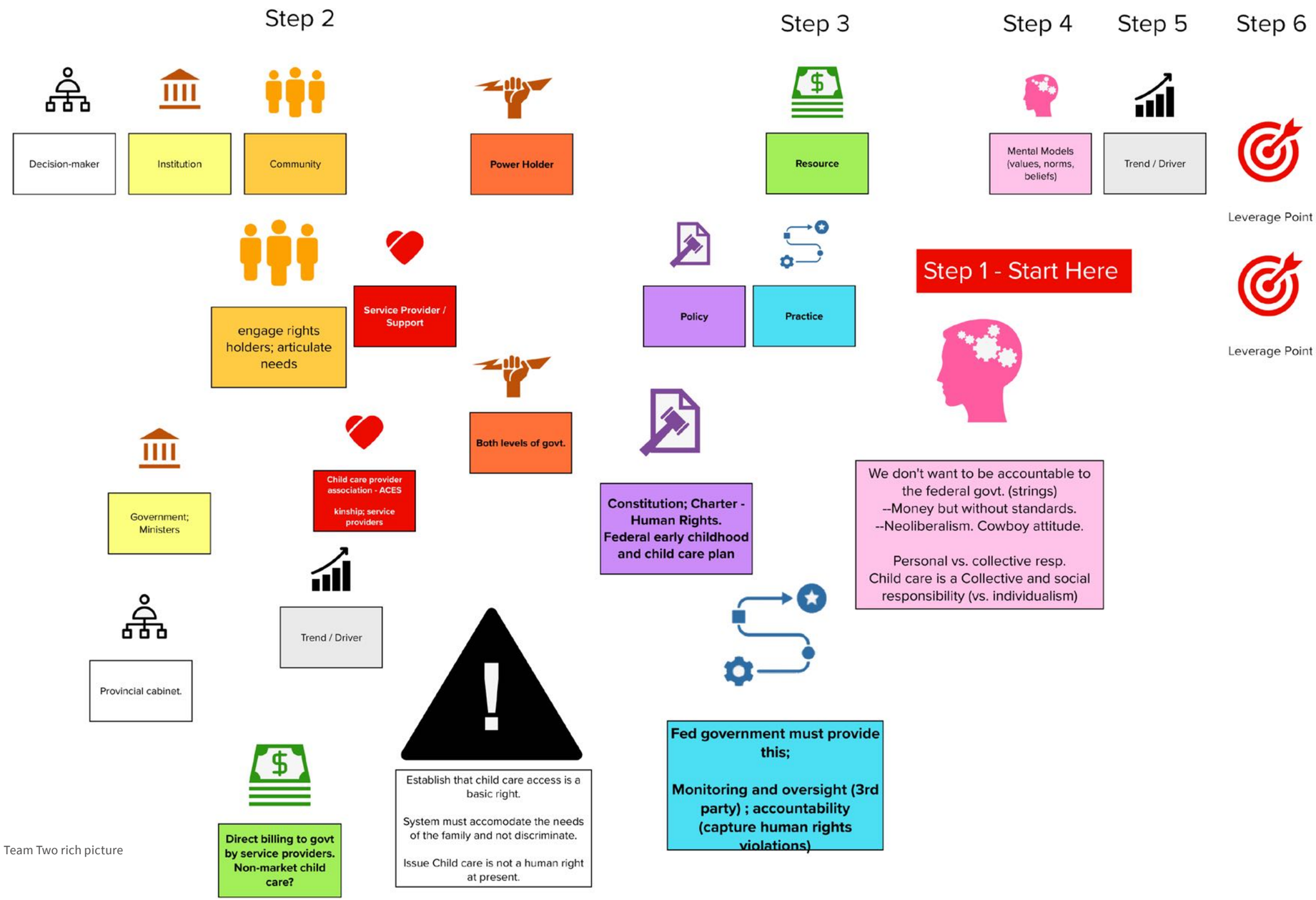


Team Two reverse thinking system

STEP 4: RICH PICTURE OF THE CURRENT SYSTEM

Focus: Child care as a human right

This team's picture of our current system focuses on reframing access to child care as a basic human right – a reframing that could support momentum already building through the recent federal-provincial child care agreement. Just as all children are supported to attend school regardless of ability to pay, so the team envisions a government-funded child care system that accommodates all families' needs without discrimination. They also address the need for accountability, perhaps through third-party oversight. And they propose rethinking how funding flows, terming current models problematic.



Team Two rich picture

STEP 5: THE PROTOTYPE

Proposed intervention: Access to child care as a legally protected right

This team would build on the momentum surrounding the federal-provincial child care agreement by specifically framing child care as a human right. Their call to action: Make child care a child's basic human right. Noting that far too many children do not have access to care, let alone care that suits particular situations, they envision legally protecting access to appropriate child care. Care that suits income, employment status, household structure and work schedules. Care that is physically accessible – nearby, flexible and available. Care staffed by professionals with training, wages and working conditions appropriate to their significant role. The hope is that enshrining child care as a human right would build in a level of assurance for children and families that does not exist when availability is limited by set budgets.

"We want to complement efforts already happening around child care by specifically naming child care as a human right."

Graphic recording by Sam Hester, the 23rd Story

The shift

- From focusing on parents' responsibility to recognizing the child's welfare as a human right
- From the most vulnerable being poorly served to equal access to child care that works best
- From child care as employment support to child care as family support and respite

Potential steps along the way

- Seek municipal declarations of child care as a human right
- Tie bilateral funding for early childhood care to the human rights framework
- Enshrine access to child care as a human right in Alberta

Further questions

- How can we ensure protection of child care workers and avoid exploitation of foreign nannies?
- What will it take to ensure all forms of care are high quality, run by excellent providers who offer humane workplace conditions and require professionalization of staff?
- What is the most effective way to use human rights legislation, which is complaint-driven and slow to see results?

"Existing human rights legislation gives some protection to families, but those rights are only protected if you're a worker. Child care is not just a right of employees but of children, fundamentally, to have adequate and responsive care."

"Many like-minded folks are already coming together, galvanizing action. Some will not be interested in child care as a human right, but a lot more will want to take these conversations to the next level. It's a unique opportunity to further the cause."

MEMBERS OF TEAM THREE

Gurpreet Bolina is a sociology student at the University of Alberta whose goal is to become a community or human rights lawyer. She coordinates Social Stride, a John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights program that provides outreach and education to victims and perpetrators of online hate, racism and discrimination. A Punjabi Sikh woman, she is also outreach vice president for Sangat Youth, which connects youth in the Sikh community to resources, opportunities and community in Edmonton.

Carla Hilario is an assistant professor with the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Alberta. Her parents immigrated to Canada in the late 1980s from Pampanga, Philippines and she was raised on the unceded lands of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Səl̓ílwəta (Tsleil-Watuth) and Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) Nations of the Coast Salish peoples. Carla's research explores youth health equity with a focus on the mental health of marginalized and vulnerable young people.

Rob Houle, BA, University of Alberta, is from Swan River First Nation in Treaty No. 8 Territory in Alberta. In 2005, he and his brother were victims of brutality and inhumane treatment at the hands of Edmonton Police Service, which he described at length to City Council during a public hearing. He has worked as the City of Edmonton Indigenous relations consultant and officer and as a manager of audits and retrofits in the provincial Ministry of Indigenous Relations. He now works for the Cash Back Project at the Yellowhead Institute, a First Nation-led research centre based at Ryerson University.

Robert (Bob) Philp is a former provincial court judge and former chief commissioner of the Alberta Human Rights Commission. A respected jurist and lawyer, he earned both his BA and a law degree from the University of Alberta and received both the Queen's Jubilee Medal and the Alberta Centennial Medal. He has been involved with Boyle Street Community Services in various capacities for years, and is currently on the board of Boyle Street Community Services. He is also on the board of Canadians for a Civil Society.

"Very few human rights cases end up in the courts. The process is extremely slow, and it doesn't give people big monetary rewards. We need to do more because the system is pretty weak."

Kerry-Ann Sitcheron is an educator turned change management specialist, most recently with ECVO. An advocate at heart, she grew up in Jamaica and saw first-hand the negative impact of racism. Believing in the power of education to lift folks out of poverty, she volunteered as youth mentor, developing and participating in community literacy programs. She taught high school before moving to Canada in 2016 to pursue a graduate business degree that led to work in change management, policy and evaluation.

Victoria Matejka, facilitator, has a BA in political science and sociology from the University of Alberta and is working on an MA in policy studies. Their research interests focus on the accessibility of health care, specifically how Indigenous peoples are often denied access and mistreated within the health care system. And further, how to create policy solutions to mitigate this reality.

TEAM 3

RACISM: EXPANDING ANTI-RACIST MENTAL HEALTH CAPACITY

The members of Team 3 brought lived experience in multiple cultures to the question of how best to address racism and hate speech. Two themes surfaced early as they worked together: the need to ensure that those involved in racist attacks can access culturally sensitive mental health services and the need for education as a preventative measure and antidote. In the end, the group's prototype put mental health needs front and centre, calling for a one-stop service offering culturally diverse mental health support for both victims and perpetrators. Education became one of the pillars supporting that central idea.

STEP 1: IDENTIFYING AN ISSUE IN THE HEADLINES

Focus: The trauma of experiencing racism

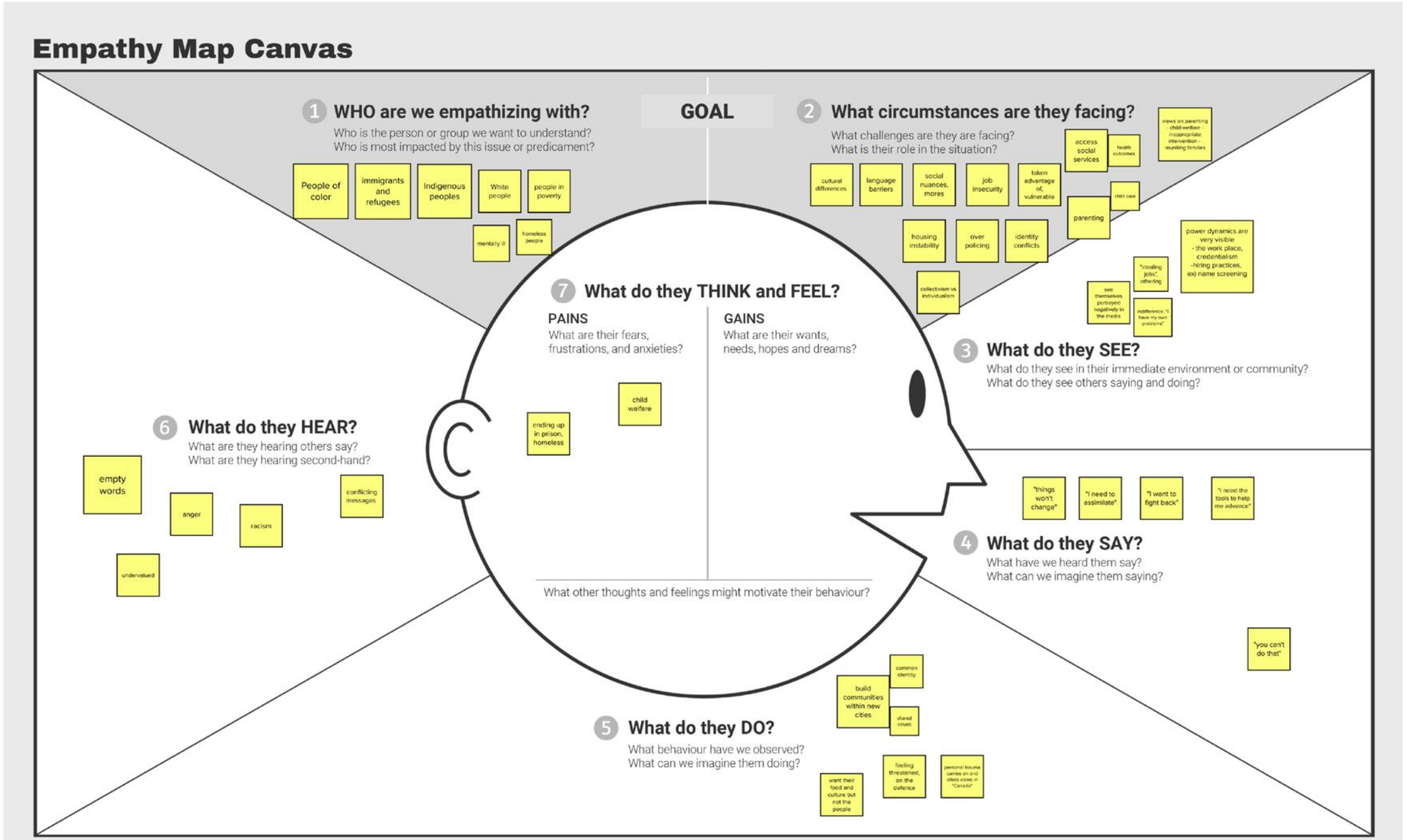
An article entitled ***Attack was 'horrific and brutal'*** and an opinion piece called ***It's time to take action against growing extremism in Alberta*** prompted discussion in this team about the fact that being non-white, Indigenous and/or a newcomer can make a person feel unsafe and unwelcome – wanting to assimilate into Canadian life but unable to do so, due to outward appearance. People of colour are over-policed in their daily lives, yet when racist attacks occur police do not seem trained to respond sensitively, and delays occur in the justice system. Media may report attacks, but are quick to move on. Education is key, the group concluded. Positive steps would include empowering people to be active bystanders and ensuring that people of diverse cultures have access to mental health support they can relate to. For a summary of the conversation, see ***Appendix III***.

"Interacting with legal services, scouring for support services and meeting person after person who was ill-equipped to dealing with hate crimes has been disheartening and disenchanting." – family member quoted in Attack was 'horrific and brutal,' Edmonton Journal

STEP 2: EMPATHY MAPPING

Focus: People experiencing racism and hate speech

While recognizing that many circumstances can set a person up for racist responses, this team decided to concentrate their empathy mapping on experiences common to immigration: cultural differences, language barriers, housing instability, job insecurity, parenting issues, negative media portrayals, over-policing, discrimination, feeling threatened and undervalued. In response, they noted, many newcomers form communities with others from their own culture. Places where they have the comfort of shared values, but may also live with unresolved personal trauma.



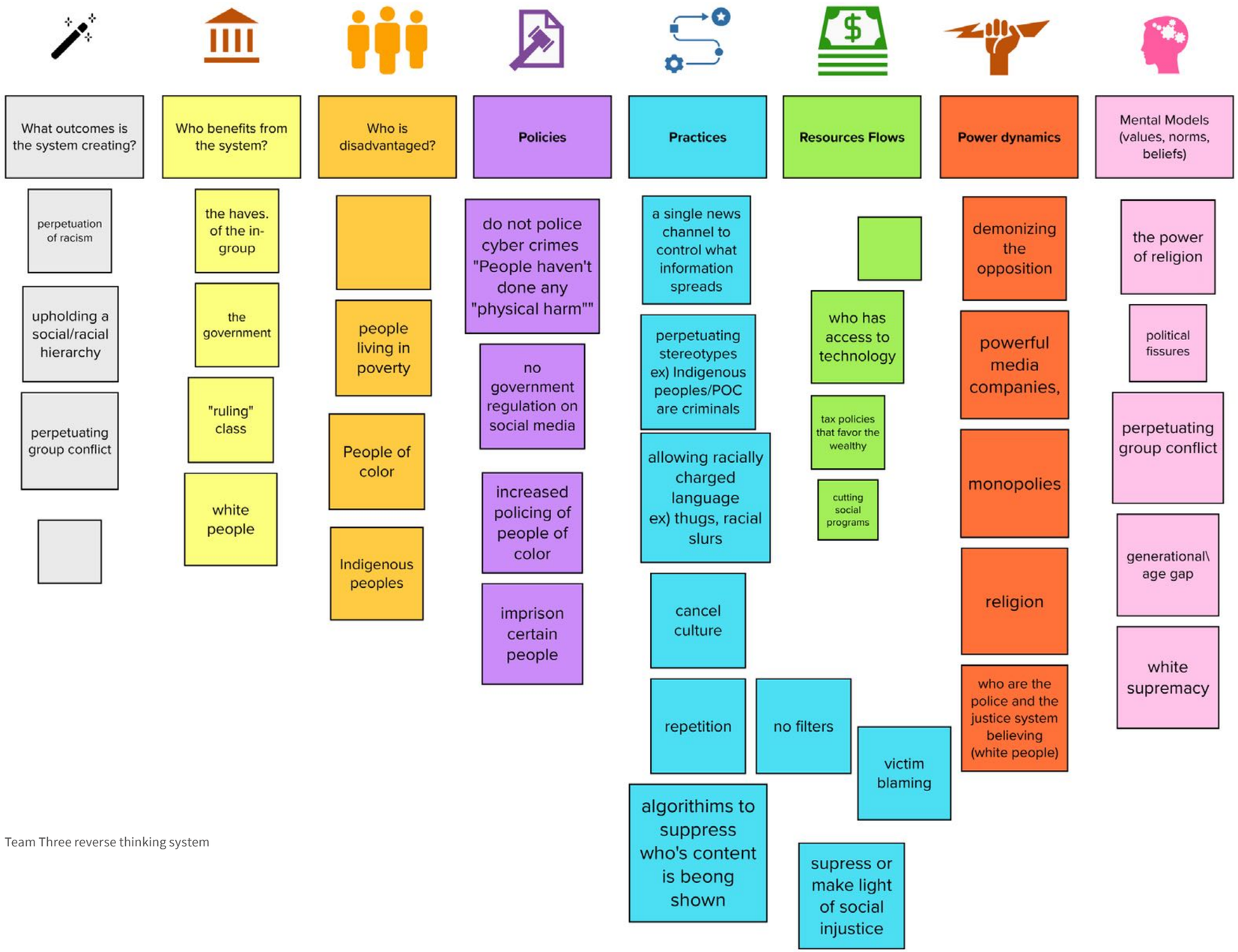
Adapted from http://gamestorming.com/empathy-map/

Team Three empathy map

STEP 3: REVERSE THINKING

Designing a system where racism and intolerance are amplified by social media and misinformation

The “reverse thinking” system designed by this team intentionally perpetuates racial hierarchy and conflict for the benefit of a ruling class of white people at the top. Those at the bottom include people of colour, Indigenous peoples and anyone living in poverty. In this system, information is carefully controlled. A few powerful media conglomerates perpetuate stereotypes, aided by unregulated social media that suppress unwanted content. Religion is also a powerful force. A “divide and conquer” mentality prevails, and any opposition is demonized.



Team Three reverse thinking system

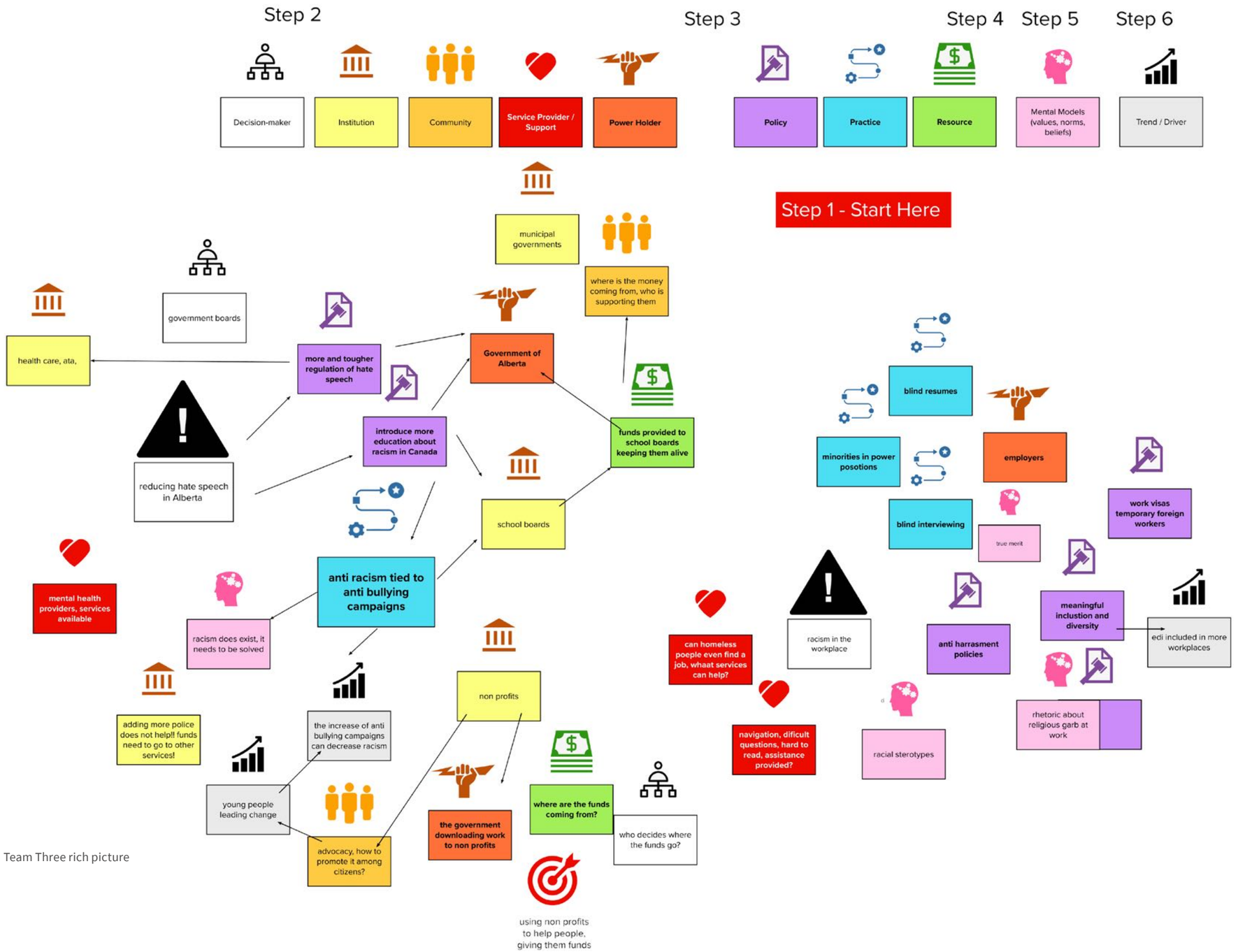
STEP 4: RICH PICTURE OF THE CURRENT SYSTEM

Focus: Hate speech and racism

The Team 3 picture of our existing system focuses on two issues: reducing hate speech in Alberta and addressing racism in the workplace.

Identifying schools as a place to foster advocates of inclusion, team members suggest incorporating anti-racism education into anti-bullying campaigns within the Alberta curriculum. They also identify the importance of ensuring that school boards remain alive, given their close ties to community, and note the key roles played by non-profits as actors and advocates. While advocating more and tougher regulation of hate speech, they caution against adding more police, adding, “Funds need to go to other services!”

To address racism in the workplace, the team suggests such strategies as blind resumes and interviewing, assistance with systems navigation and translation, work visas for temporary foreign workers and other regulations mandating meaningful inclusion and diversity.



Team Three rich picture

STEP 5: THE PROTOTYPE

Proposed intervention: Creating more anti-racist mental health capacity

Central to this team's proposed intervention is a one-stop, government-funded centre offering affordable racial and trauma-based care and resources. Current supports for those who experience racial trauma are scattered and tend not to be culturally appropriate, they observe. For victims carrying memories of adverse childhood experiences and past interactions with police, it's all the harder to report their experience and receive help. The team suggests tying their envisioned centre to an existing agency and staffing it with BIPOC therapists and legal experts. The centre would serve trauma survivors in rural communities (virtually) as well as urban areas while also working to rehabilitate perpetrators.

Several other pillars undergird this plan:

- Mental health is incorporated into provincial legislation and the Canadian Health Act, making those services more affordable and available.
- Government funding expands culturally specific resources and enables more BIPOC students to become mental health professionals, mentored by BIPOC experts already in the field.
- Alberta's K-12 curriculum incorporates anti-hate modules at various ages.
- A media campaign highlights the impact of racism and hate speech on BIPOC communities while also countering stigma within those communities about accessing mental health.

"Our plan spiraled from an article we read yesterday regarding a woman who experienced hatred and racial violence. One described it as haunting, and she still didn't have the necessary resources to navigate the resulting trauma. Our intervention is to create a safe physical space for those who experience racial trauma, so they don't have to describe it over and over."

Graphic recording by Sam Hester, the 23rd Story

The shift

- From "racism doesn't exist in Canada" to knowing our neighbours are targeted on racial grounds
- From mental health as a taboo topic to normalizing conversation and crucial support
- From diffuse and spotty services to centralized, well publicized, culturally sensitive care

"In schools, gay/straight alliances have advanced LGBTQ2+ more than Alberta Education did. School boards also played a leadership role, and where they stepped up, there was a domino effect."

Further questions

- Where might a one-stop trauma centre with a BIPOC focus be located? Would the Centre for Race and Culture be a candidate?
- Where are the funds coming from? Who decides where the funds go?
- How might this initiative tie into recent efforts to make all psychological access free, as well as other initiatives already underway across Alberta to support victims of racism? (CMHA, EPSB anti-racism campaign)
- Could there be a mandated program aligned with legal services for perpetrators, to help them unlearn their behaviour?

"I really love how extensive and thoughtful and multi-pronged this plan is. It's a strategy with many layers that seems to have a restorative justice dimension as well, which is quite compelling."

MEMBERS OF TEAM FOUR

"I do think coalitions are effective. It's hard because everybody is devoting their time alongside their own work, but your voice is stronger as a collective versus a lone voice in a sea of voices."

Rosalind Kang is western regional program coordinator with the Canadian Race Relations Foundation. With a Masters in social work, she has worked cross-culturally to build coalitions, implement anti-racism strategies, do community outreach, support multi-stakeholder engagement and create strategic plans for the settlement sector. After being the target of a racist attack, she helped lead the Asian Canadians Together to End Racism national network and served as project consultant for the Action! Chinese Canadians Together Foundation.

Amrita Mishra is an action researcher and capacity builder at the Indo-Canadian Women's Association, where she develops evidence-based tools and service models against gender violence. She has researched and published academic papers on immunization policy, improved platforms for science collaborations, screening for cervical cancer and power-authority configurations in science labs. She also blogs on social justice issues and is an athlete, graphic artist and avid reader.

Parveen Parmar is a human rights officer and research consultant with the John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights. Passionate about social justice and access to justice, she has also worked under the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights in Serbia on ending violence against women in the region, strengthening protections for transgender health rights, and the transparency and accountability of national human rights institutions around the globe. She is a Member of the Bar in Ontario.

Hannah MacKay, facilitator, holds a BSc in political science and government from the University of Alberta and is engaged in graduate studies.

TEAM 4

RACISM: IMPLEMENTING MEDIA LITERACY CURRICULUM IN K-12 SCHOOLS

This team, too, brought both lived experience and professional expertise to the search for a specific plan to combat racism and hate speech. Indeed, some members of the team have been the target of racist incidents. Early conversation focused on the fact that support for victims of racism is often too little, too late. And that media coverage often harms more than helps. The team's imagined system began zeroing in on how and why hate spreads, prompting attention to the need for a more media literate citizenry. That concern became the dominant focus of the team's prototype, which envisions incorporating media literacy curriculum into K-12 schools, journalism training and community settings.

STEP 1: IDENTIFYING AN ISSUE IN THE HEADLINES

Focus: Racism and hate speech

This team read the same media accounts as Team 3: ***Attack was 'horrific and brutal'*** and ***It's time to take action against growing extremism in Alberta***. They too noted that the justice system is not properly equipped to deal with hate crimes. The first article told of two Muslim women who endured a racially charged attack outside a mall in south Edmonton and later said that, while the initial attack was horrific and brutal, "navigating resources and avenues for support has been additionally traumatizing." The article brought back memories of similar incidents for some members of the group. Noting that not all incidents are as overtly violent or public, they observed: "Hate can operate at a barely noticeable level. How do we address hate incidents vs. hate crimes?" The team also noted that the incidents in the news accounts involved angry white men attacking women of colour: "racism meets gender, an intersection of issues." For a summary of the conversation, see ***Appendix III***.

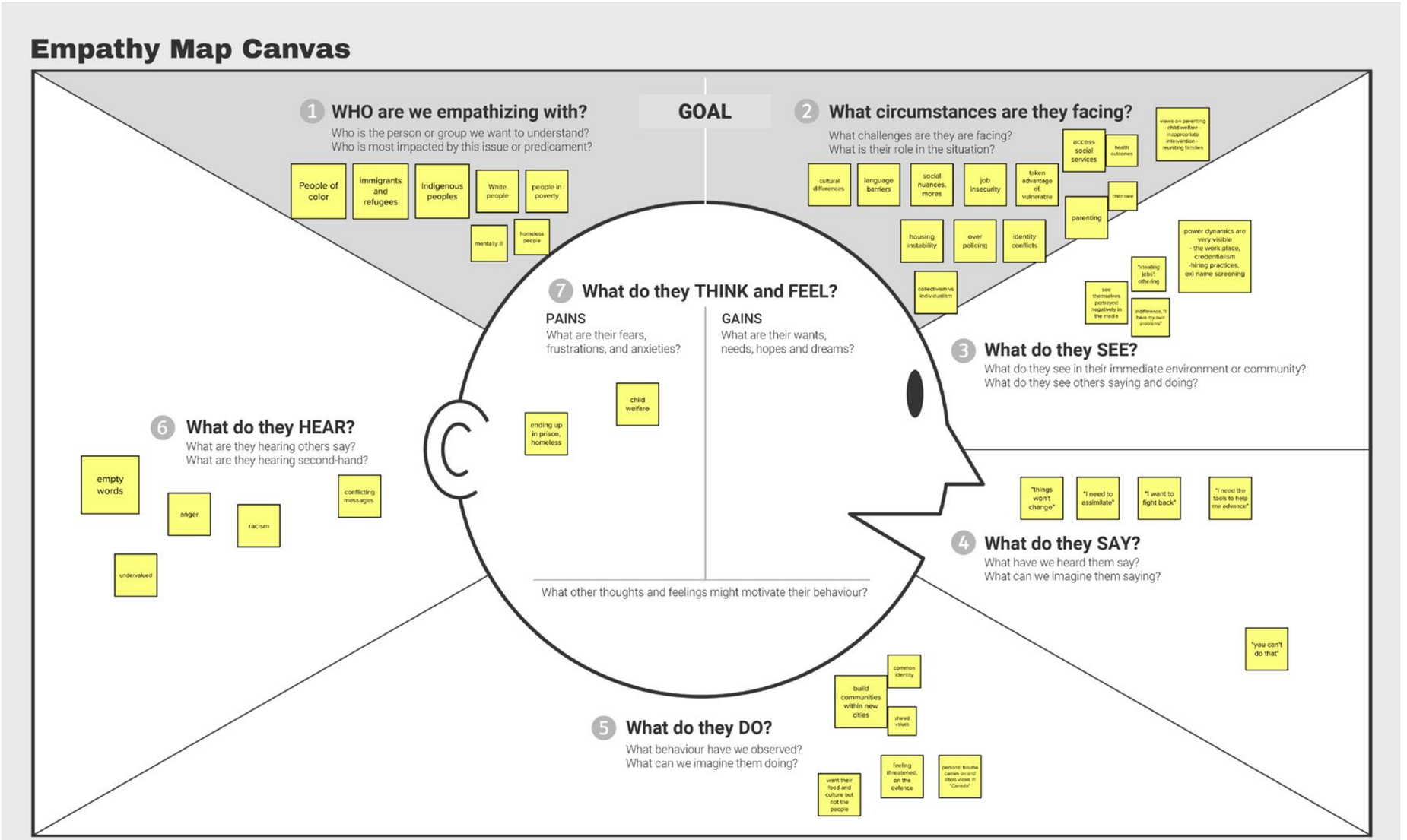
"We're at a juncture where the need for a provincial media literacy curriculum has never been more urgent. If adults can't differentiate between real events and inane conspiracies, how can we expect their children, who are growing up immersed in digital and social media, to do any better?" – Claire Porter Robbins, It's time to take action against growing extremism in Alberta, CBC

"How do we change public perception about racism? Do we start with education? With young people?"

STEP 2: EMPATHY MAPPING

Focus: Black Muslim women in Edmonton

This team's empathy map zooms in more narrowly than some of the others, seeking to understand Black Muslim women in Edmonton who experience racism. Team members noted that anyone who has the courage to report hateful incidents is often re-traumatized through media reports. As attacks continue, fear grows about being in public spaces. Yet police, justice and social service responses remain inadequate and siloed, focusing on the individual when in reality entire networks are impacted. Opportunities are also missed to address the intersection of race and gender. Targeted communities may come together to offer services, team members noted, but why must this be done by volunteers?



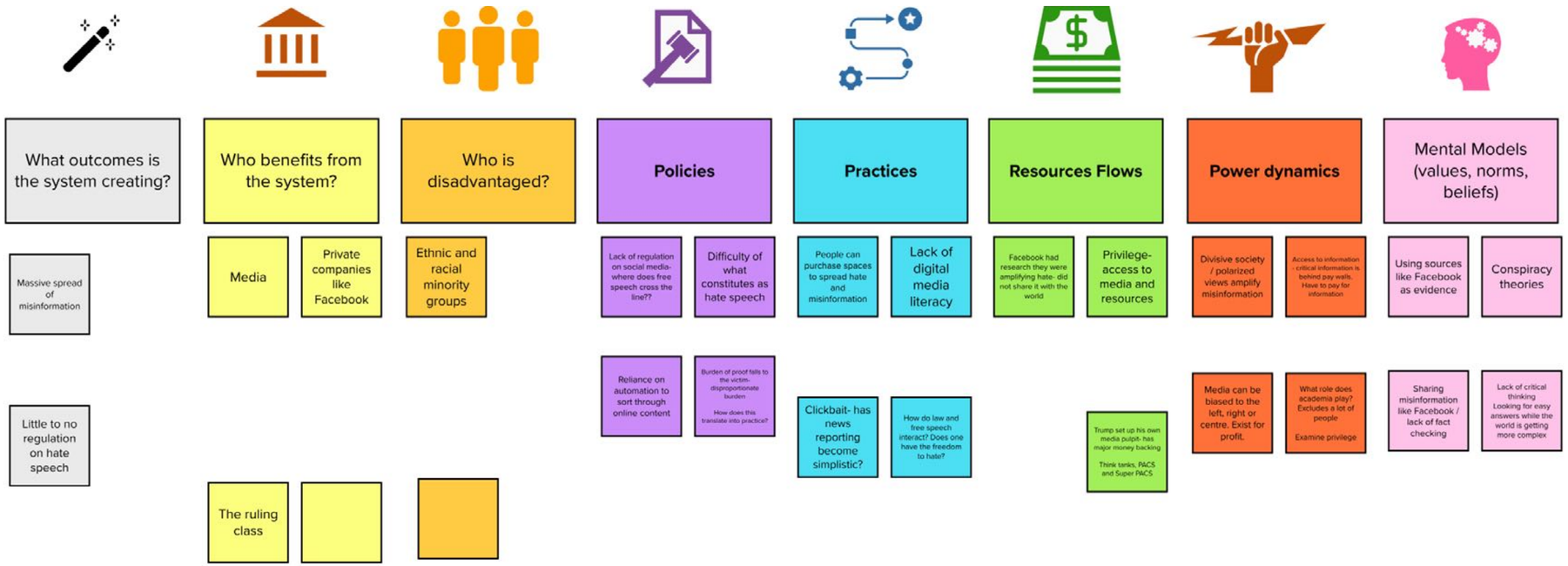
Team Four empathy map

STEP 3: REVERSE THINKING

Designing a system where racism and intolerance are amplified by social media and misinformation

The “reverse thinking” system imagined by this team is designed to enable massive spread of misinformation and hate speech, with little to no regulation. The team began by identifying the mental models likely to underlie such a system, including a desire to cope with an increasingly complex world by searching for easy answers. In this system, conspiracy theories abound. Trustworthy information is hidden behind paywalls, and the rich can buy their own pulpits. Polarized, profit-driven media oversimplify reality and amplify untruths, aided by a lack of digital media literacy. Academia is exclusive, and privileged. Hate speech is poorly defined, leaving victims – primarily ethnic and racial minority groups – with a disproportionate burden of proof.

- *“How do law and free speech interact? Does one have the freedom to hate?”*



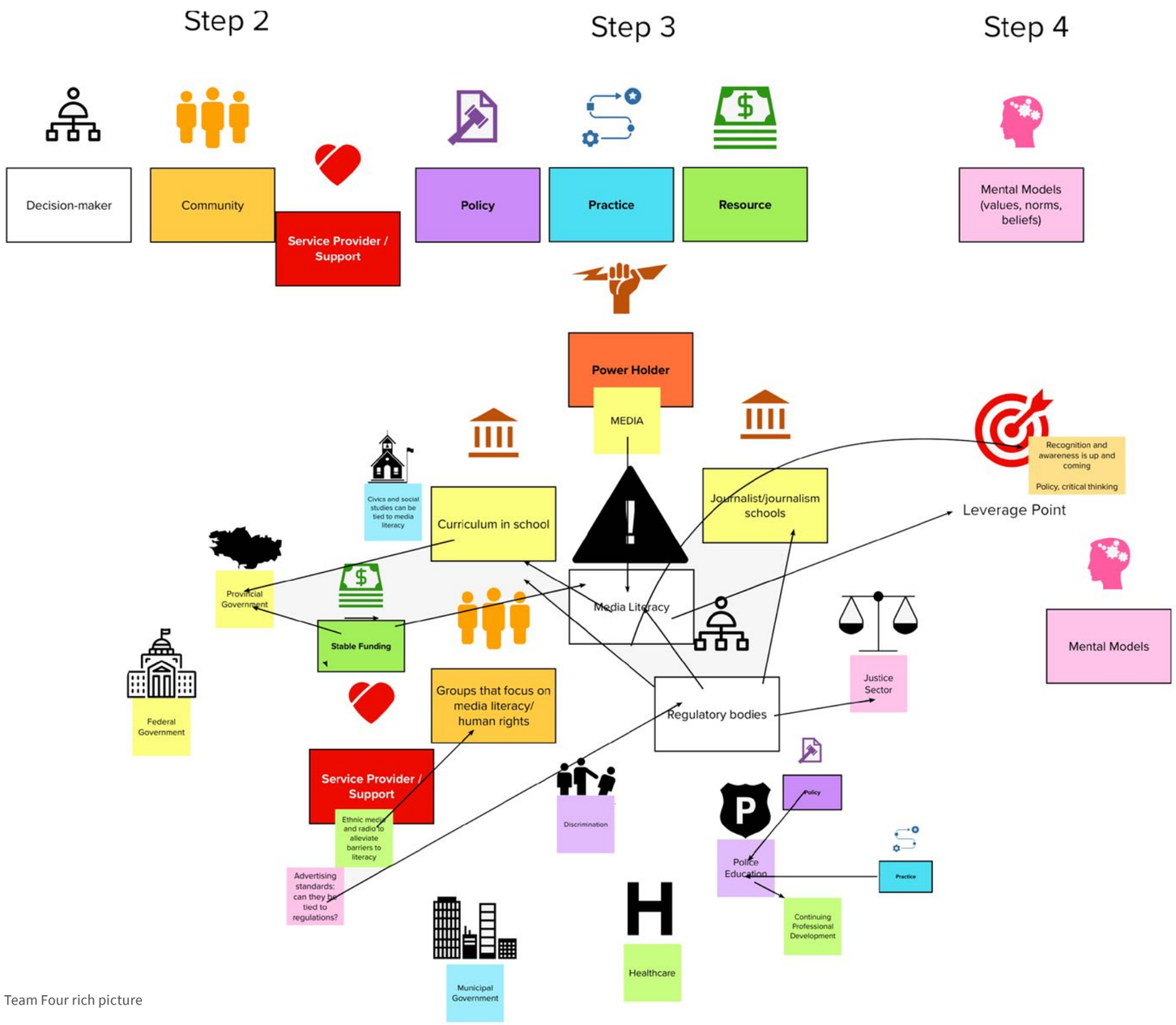
Team Four reverse thinking system

STEP 4: RICH PICTURE OF THE CURRENT SYSTEM

Focus: Media literacy as an antidote to hate speech

This team's self-described "messy" picture of our current system uses education to address the media literacy deficit that allows misinformation to fuel hate. In this picture, learning to think critically about all forms of media becomes an integral part of the K-12 social studies curriculum. In journalism schools, dedicated attention to media literacy sensitizes and equips those shaping the news. Ethnic media, which reach audiences in diverse languages and typically have an educational component, include segments on the need to consume media critically. The team noted that other community providers also could be tapped to reach folks not in school. And that this initiative would need stable funding from provincial and other coffers, perhaps coupled with policy change.

"We need to consume media critically, but people don't do it."



Team Four rich picture

STEP 5: THE PROTOTYPE

Proposed intervention: Implement media literacy curriculum in K-12 schools

Building on the ideas crystalized in its previous work, this team envisions an Alberta in which all K-12 students gain skills in critical thinking, ethical reflection and wise use of social media through school curriculum focused on race, gender and health. The curriculum includes a toolkit for integrating those ideas into various subjects as well as standalone modules. This is immersive learning that puts students directly in touch with individuals and communities impacted by racism (whether in person or virtually) and invites students to walk in others' shoes through scenario-based examples. It might draw from existing models, including curriculum developed by the Canadian Mosaic Foundation. A marketing campaign extends learning into the community and opens space for conversation about the impacts of using social media to spread hate.

> *"This past summer, the Canadian government proposed Bill C36 to combat online hate speech and crimes, with remedies for victims and holding perpetuators accountable. It has been met with so much pushback that it almost counteracts the good being done by this legislation. How can we shift policies, practices and power dynamics? We really need to create spaces where conversations are not as polarizing, so we can engage and really understand."*

Graphic recording by Sam Hester, the 23rd Story

The shift

- From blind acceptance of polarizing rhetoric to a media literate citizenry
- From hateful speech and racist attacks to increased understanding and empathy
- From slow, siloed, re-traumatizing reaction to rapid, coordinated, healing supports

Steps along the way

- Develop and distribute a policy brief about the need for enhanced media literacy in K-12 curriculum
- Contact the appropriate groups/stakeholders, such as human rights groups, minority groups, school boards and parent groups
- Support and draw from the work of diverse groups, including Canadian Mosaic Foundation, John Humphrey Centre, Centre for Race and Culture, Canadian Race Relations Foundation, Canadians for a Civil Society
- Create an evaluation framework with clear indicators and use it to guide the work

Further questions

- How much media literacy is already incorporated into K-12 curriculum, and is it effective?
- What policy changes, if any, would be needed to implement this vision?
- What existing curriculum would offer immersive media literacy education?
- What other vehicles might be effective for carrying media literacy into diverse communities?

> *"We need to contact the appropriate groups/stakeholders, such as human rights groups, minority groups, school boards and parent groups."*

MEMBERS OF TEAM FIVE

"I have been able to use my own positionality as a black queer researcher, along with the lived experiences of Indigenous communities in the region, to think critically about federal, provincial and municipal policy initiatives within the context of the Anthropocene."

Rabia Naseer has contributed to discussions and initiatives in women's leadership, anti-racism and human rights with Shift Lab, the John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights and other community organizations. She holds an MA in educational policy studies from the University of Alberta and is doing public sector research, most recently analyzing and seeking improvement in children's services with the Government of Alberta.

Seon Yuzyk is a doctoral student and cross-sectorial researcher at the University of Alberta with focus on oil and gas futures in the province. Years of energy development and environmental management in Alberta's oil sands put him directly in touch with the specific challenges faced by First Nations and Métis peoples in the region and with the immense socio-economic, political and ecological challenges permeating Alberta's political landscape.

Breanne Aylward is researching the mental health impacts of climate change as a PhD Student at the University of Alberta's School of Public Health. She holds a BSc and an MSc from the University of Alberta and is passionate about the social and environmental determinants of health, as well as community-based participatory approaches to research.

Che-Wei Chung grew up in a southern Alberta village and now works with communities as director of advocacy and policy with Alberta Municipalities, where his roles include supporting diversity and inclusion. As the organization's environmental policy lead, he is responsible for climate change, recycling, water and wastewater management and brownfields. His volunteer roles include serving on the board of the Cultural Connections Institute - The Learning Exchange (CCI-LEX) in Edmonton.

"I have done so much theoretical work. The Action Lab was a time to do something more experiential, to work on my facilitations skills and to think about real-world policy. It was an incredibly powerful experience."

Samantha Papuha, facilitator, is a PhD student in gender and comparative politics at the University of Alberta. She is researching media representations of refugee victimhood through comparative analysis of Canadian and Italian television news, and is interested in learning how those portrayals influence attitudes to newcomers. She is also a research collaborator on a project comparing the framing of climate discourse in corporate annual reports to the companies' actual commitment to climate change mitigation.

TEAM 5

CLIMATE CHANGE: BROADENING PROGRAMS AND POLICIES TO SERVE UNDER-REPRESENTED GROUPS

From the beginning, this team's conversation focused on people shifted to the margins in an oil-rich province. Midway through their work, team members were inspired by a CBC call-in show about energy efficiency incentive programs to ponder what it would take to design a more inclusive program that reaches not only homeowners with money for retrofits, solar panels and/or electric cars but renters and others with no home of their own and little extra cash. "How do we ensure that energy transition is truly inclusive?" That central question informs their prototype, which seeks to involve under-represented groups in designing and benefiting from future climate change programs and policies.

"We are seeking a democratization of energy, grounded in a human-centred perspective. Not to take away today's programs but to add to them."

STEP 1: IDENTIFYING AN ISSUE IN THE HEADLINES

Focus: The impact of climate change on vulnerable communities

This team read two media accounts on the impacts of climate change: ***What Canadians need to know about how climate change is affecting their health*** and ***Climate crisis negatively impacting already stressed communities in Arctic, says human rights activist***. Team members noted that both reports communicate the suffering of localized communities to a broader audience, showing the human dimension of global climate change. And that local communities experience climate change in diverse ways. For example, Canada's prairie farmers depend on water to grow crops and livestock and may hear calls for water conservation quite differently than a city dweller, yet they will be among the hardest hit by increasing drought. Team members also observed that the source of a society's riches may affect how the climate message is presented and acted on. Could Alberta learn from Norway, an economy that seems to be managing its oil industry (and riches) with more social responsibility? For a summary of the conversation, see ***Appendix III***.

"Climate change is hurting us, and. . . those most at risk are society's most vulnerable — people facing social disadvantages, children less than 1 year old and seniors older than 65 years." – What Canadians need to know about how climate change is affecting their health, quoting a report in the Lancet, CBC

"Our right to health, to educate our children, our right to safety and security – all those rights that are already entrenched in international law are being minimized because of climate change." – Sheila Watt-Cloutier, quoted in* Climate crisis negatively impacting already stressed communities in Arctic, says human rights activist*, Vancouver Sun

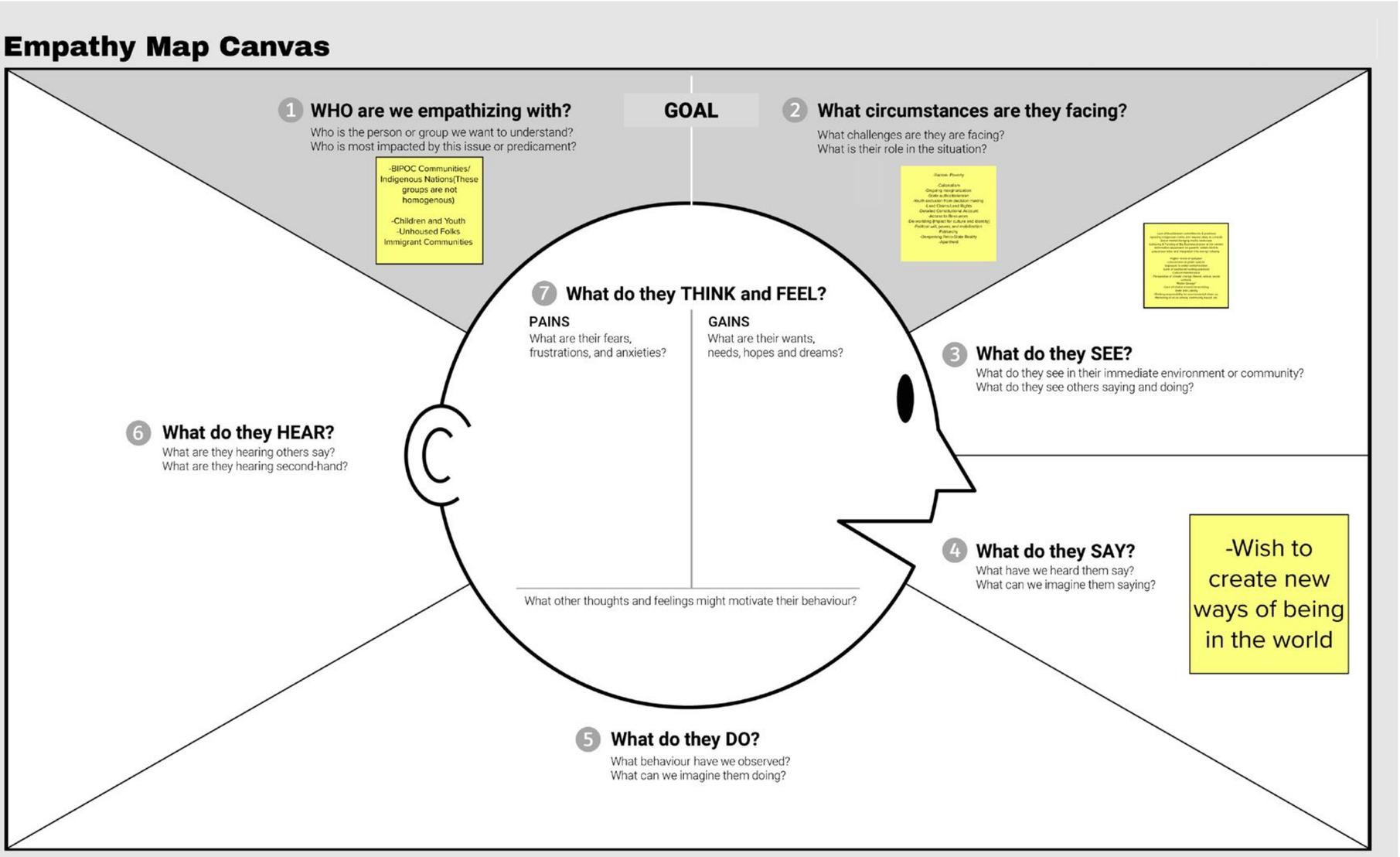
"Farmers may have a different perspective on climate change solutions than the average environmental activist, researcher or politician. What causes farmers to see climate change differently? There are significant inequities present in rural communities."

STEP 2: EMPATHY MAPPING

Focus: People shifted to the margins

This team focused its empathy map on anyone shifted to the margins by racism, poverty, colonization, patriarchy and/or ageism in "a deepening petro state reality." People barred from decision-making, land, resources, culture and identity, including BIPOC communities, the wide variety of Indigenous Nations, children and youth, unhoused folks and immigrant communities. People on the receiving end of broken commitments and promises: Indigenous claims ignored. Precarious labour. Big business (and oil) voices drowning out calls for climate action. People exposed to the greatest impact of environmental degradation: pollution, water contamination, shrunken green spaces, diminished opportunities for traditional hunting. Many may wish to create new ways of being in the world, to minimize the debt and liability left to future generations. What are their chances?

> *"Women, particularly women of colour, experience climate change very differently due to the inequality of a system based on oil and gas."*



Team Five empathy map

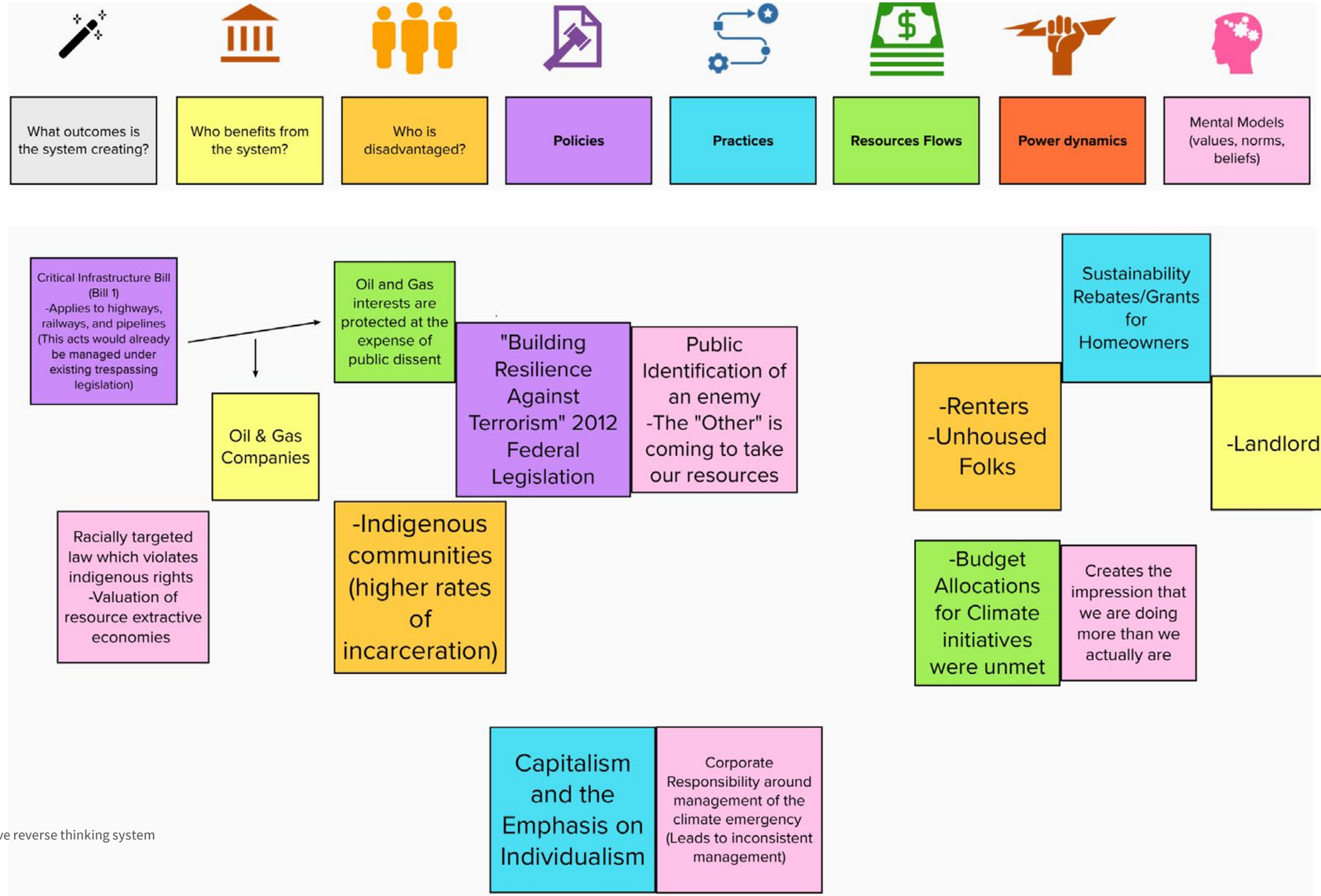
STEP 3: REVERSE THINKING

Designing a system where marginalized communities are disproportionately impacted by climate change and environmental degradation

The “reverse thinking” system imagined by this team is inspired by a real-world event: passage of Alberta Bill 1, the Critical Infrastructure Defence Act, which came into force in mid-2020, limiting opportunities to mount public protests. The act applies to activities already managed under trespassing legislation, but broadens their application in a way that benefits oil and gas companies and violates Indigenous rights, team members said. The act also perpetuates an individualistic response to the climate emergency that depends on corporations to take responsibility, with inconsistent results.

The team also discussed a second real-world topic, inspired by a CBC call-in show on government incentives for boosting residential energy efficiency. As structured, those programs focus on homeowners, excluding renters and anyone who is precariously housed. Meanwhile, landlords may disproportionately benefit by claiming on multiple properties. What’s more, at times funds budgeted for climate initiatives go unspent, creating the impression that more is being accomplished than actually is.

“When climate change is localized to a specific area, policymakers tend to ignore the broader reaching impacts.”



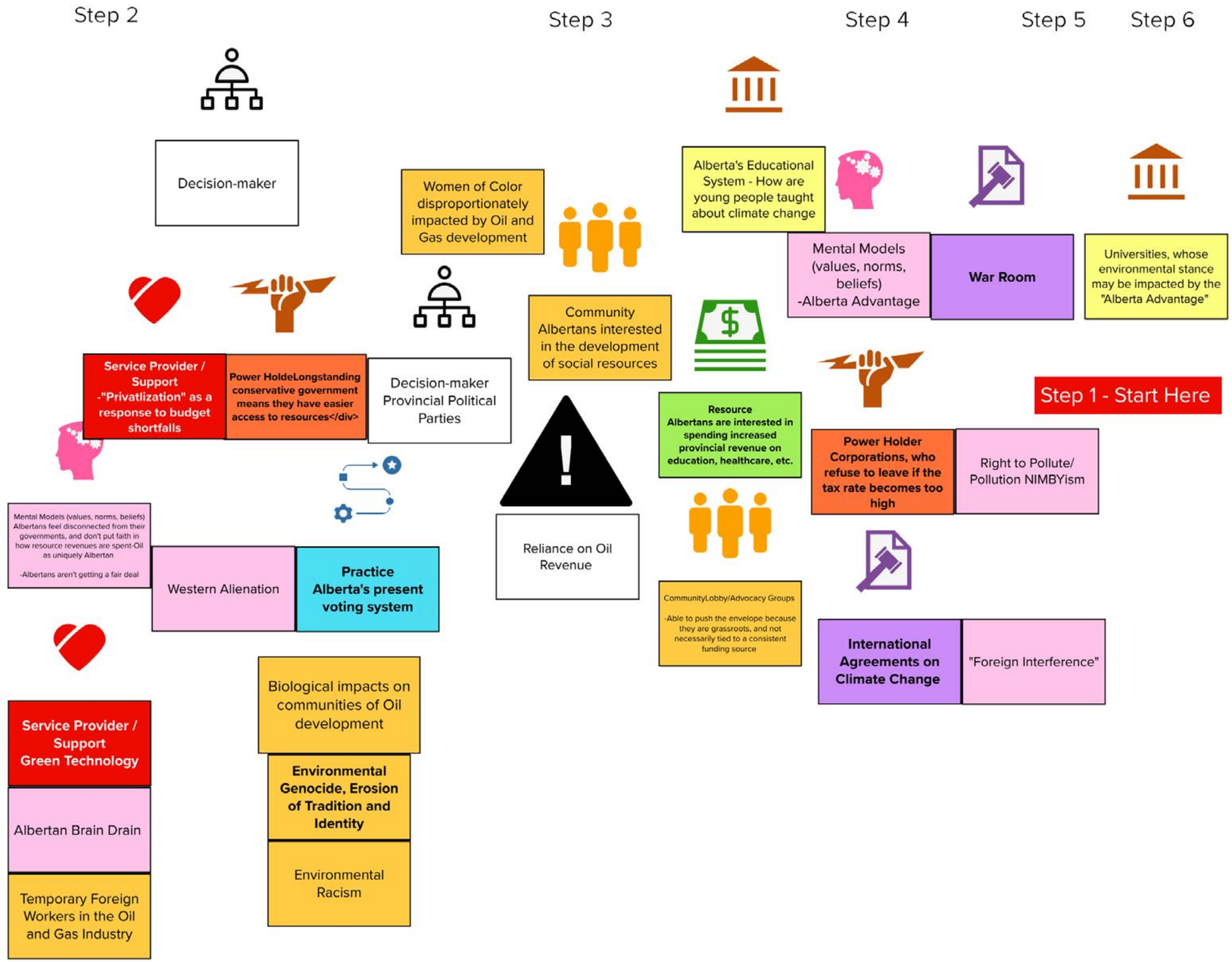
Team Five reverse thinking system

STEP 4: RICH PICTURE OF THE CURRENT SYSTEM

Focus: Media literacy as an antidote to hate speech

This team's picture of our existing system focuses on how Alberta's reliance on oil and gas revenue impacts other crucial decisions. Polls show most Albertans are interested in spending more provincial revenue on developing education, healthcare and other social resources, but corporate leaders (who have developed cozy relationships with government over time) threaten to leave if their taxes or environmental responsibilities increase. Group members see a link between this disconnect and the current first-past-the-post electoral system, which enables a minority to decide who governs. The impacts of environmental inaction hit disadvantaged groups the hardest while also causing a brain drain to regions that are moving ahead faster with green technology. Meanwhile, international agreements on climate change and grassroots advocacy are dismissed as "foreign interference" in the Alberta Advantage.

- *"The election system is not representative of overall society. It doesn't reflect how Albertans see climate change, homelessness, racism. If we still want to be a democracy and solve all these issues, we need a way to reflect more opinions in the legislative body."*
- *"Institutions, even our universities, can be hesitant to promote things about climate change because of Alberta's reliance on oil revenues."*
- *"Essentially we base the provincial budget on a commodity that goes up and down, like going to a casino in some ways. And every time there's a revenue shortfall, there's talk of privatization. It seems like they just want to get the expenditure off government's book."*



Team Five rich picture

STEP 5: THE PROTOTYPE

Proposed intervention: Broaden climate change programs and policies to include under-represented groups

Typical energy efficiency programs are designed for people who already have means and own property. What if you're not a homeowner? Can't afford a Tesla? Use transit instead of a car? What if you are homeless or a newcomer or part of the shadow economy? This team envisions using community engagement strategies to connect decision-makers with Indigenous peoples, newcomers, temporary foreign workers, students, those with lower incomes and others excluded from current climate mitigation programs. Those authentic conversations would inform existing and new programs, with the underlying philosophy that equal access to climate-mitigation strategies is a human right – an important right, since climate change impacts vulnerable peoples the most. The initiative would expand the focus of incentives beyond individuals to community-level climate mitigation. Particular attention would be paid to integrating traditional cultures, languages and practices and serving under-represented groups and communities. This approach would be tested in the Edmonton metropolitan area and, if successful, expand across Alberta.

> *"Our program would act as a resource to help community organizations lobby big government about their objectives and access municipal funding."*

> *"We are pushing for a community energy perspective, from owning 'green' things toward a model based on community engagement."*

Graphic recording by Sam Hester, the 23rd Story

The shift

- From energy efficiency programs for some to ensuring access as a human right for all
- From top-down to citizen- and community-informed energy reduction strategies
- From a climate movement dominated by white leaders to diverse leadership
- From individuals owning "green" things toward a mitigation model based on community engagement and action

Further questions

- How can we create a climate mitigation program that benefits community members in the daily life of their neighbourhoods?
- Which decision makers do we want to work with? What positions are they in? How can we ensure that grassroots voices are heard?

> *"A huge part of the conversation we had in the lab dealt with the depravation of Indigenous peoples in Alberta due to oil and gas development, but this is nowhere to be found in the actual policy prototype, which leads me to think that the prototype itself is not representative of the group we were targeting."*

MEMBERS OF TEAM SIX

"I would be prepared to support this work in any way I am able, from assisting with research, meeting with allies, drafting policy, to pretty much anything."

Bradley Lafortune, executive director of Public Interest Alberta, is committed to building diverse, inclusive and equitable networks to help shape our province's future. He has worked most of his life as an advocate for worker rights and social, economic and environmental justice, most recently with Point Blank Creative, a progressive communications firm. He served as chief of staff to the Minister of Labour in the previous government, where he helped implement Alberta's $15/hour minimum wage.

Joshua Buck works for Green Economy Canada managing the City of Edmonton's Corporate Climate Leaders Program, part of Edmonton's Energy Transition Strategy. He also chairs the Board of the Alberta Environmental Network. Throughout his career, he has worked to advance progressive environmental policies in Alberta, working with diverse stakeholders to build alliances to effect change.

Natalie Odd is executive director of the Alberta Environmental Network, which co-leads Defend Alberta Parks, Alberta Beyond Coal and Drawdown Alberta. A frequent Green Party of Canada candidate, she holds an MA in environment and management and has 25 years of experience as director, strategist and researcher in non-profit and private settings. Besides advocating for human rights, poverty, education and the environment, Natalie volunteers as a youth sports coach.

Soni Dasmohapatra is a management consultant (sonidasmohapatra.com) with an MA in public administration from the University of Victoria and a certificate in gender studies and human rights from Oxford University. She has worked with the Government of Alberta, is a core team member at Edmonton ShiftLab 1.0 and was grants coordinator at the Edmonton Heritage Council. Previously, she supported social innovation and community philanthropy through work with the City of Toronto, United Way Toronto, Laidlaw and Maytree Foundations, the Government of Ontario and the United Nations.

"Although the social effects of climate change are not areas I explicitly research, nearly every aspect of the problem intersects with my areas of study on global and local levels."

Alicia Bednarski, facilitator, is an MA student in political science at the University of Alberta. Her areas of interest include immigration and citizenship in settler-colonial contexts. Her current research examines the gendered and racialized rhetoric underpinning the allegations that foreign women are traveling to Canada solely for the purpose of giving birth so that their children are granted Canadian citizenship.

TEAM 6

CLIMATE CHANGE: EMBEDDING THE HUMAN RIGHT TO CLEAN WATER AND ENERGY SECURITY IN EPCOR POLICY BY PROVIDING FREE ACCESS TO WATER AND ENERGY TO LOW INCOME AND VULNERABLE EDMONTONIANS

Team 6, which also wrestled with the impacts of climate change, chose to focus its empathy map on communities where dependence on oil riches fosters denial of the need to shift to a low-carbon economy. The team's "reverse thinking" exercise continues that theme, identifying the factors that create a world where communities support resource extraction to survive. Their rich picture of the current system asks (and begins to answer) a crucial follow-up question: What would it take to gain acceptance of a low-carbon economy? The team's prototype heads in a new direction, proposing that access to water and energy be recognized as a human right regardless of ability to pay.

STEP 1: IDENTIFYING AN ISSUE IN THE HEADLINES

Focus: Power imbalance in public housing

Like Team 5, this team read two media accounts on the impacts of climate change: ***What Canadians need to know about how climate change is affecting their health*** and ***Climate crisis negatively impacting already stressed communities in Arctic, says human rights activist***. The team noted that the articles were "different but complementary," one telling a more intimate story of Inuit communities inundated by climate change, the other heavier on information and statistics. Both approaches are needed to convey the impacts of climate change, they said. Reflecting on aspects missing from this and other coverage, they noted that some media accounts descend into sensationalistic "climate porn" without offering opportunities for hope or issuing calls to action. For a summary of the conversation, see ***Appendix III***.

"It's important to self-reflect that we are part of the climate change story. What can our action be, and if we don't act, what are the consequences?"

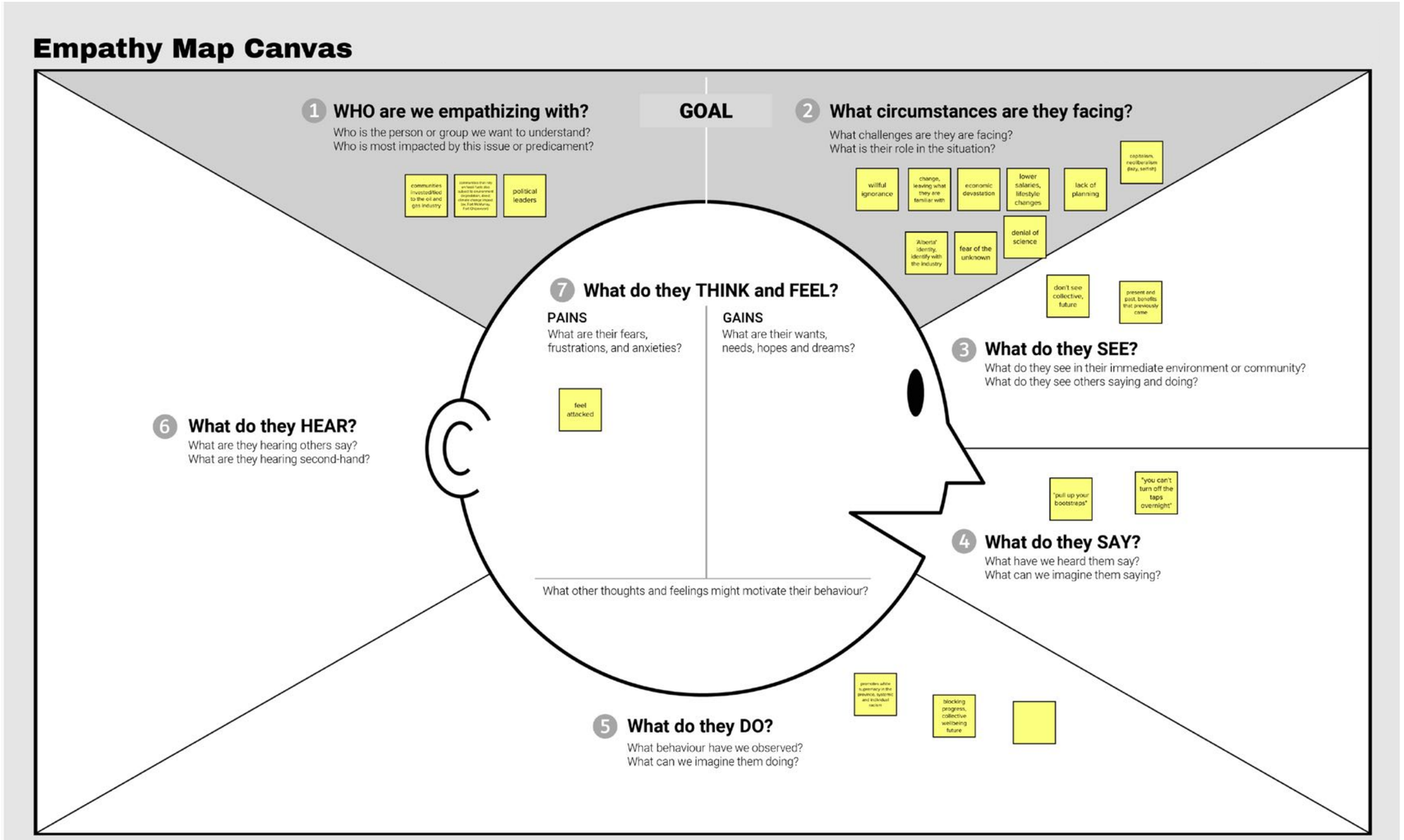
"How do we understand how change happens, especially in a space where we're implicated? Our economic and social systems are woven into the climate change challenge, and that's very much apparent in Alberta."

STEP 2: EMPATHY MAPPING

Focus: Communities that rely on the oil and gas industry

This team focused its empathy map on communities that rely on fossil fuels but are also subject to environment degradation and direct climate change impacts. Places such as Fort McMurray and Fort Chipewyan – and their leaders. Places where multiple forces push against planning for a different future: the economic benefits of the status quo, belief in the "Alberta Advantage," fear of the unknown, denial of the science behind climate change. "You can't turn off the taps overnight" is a frequent refrain, and inaction blocks progress toward collective wellbeing. Individual and systemic racism increase as the community is attacked – and responds in kind.

- *"Our group focused our empathy exercise on understanding climate deniers better, which was a twist on how others used this tool."*



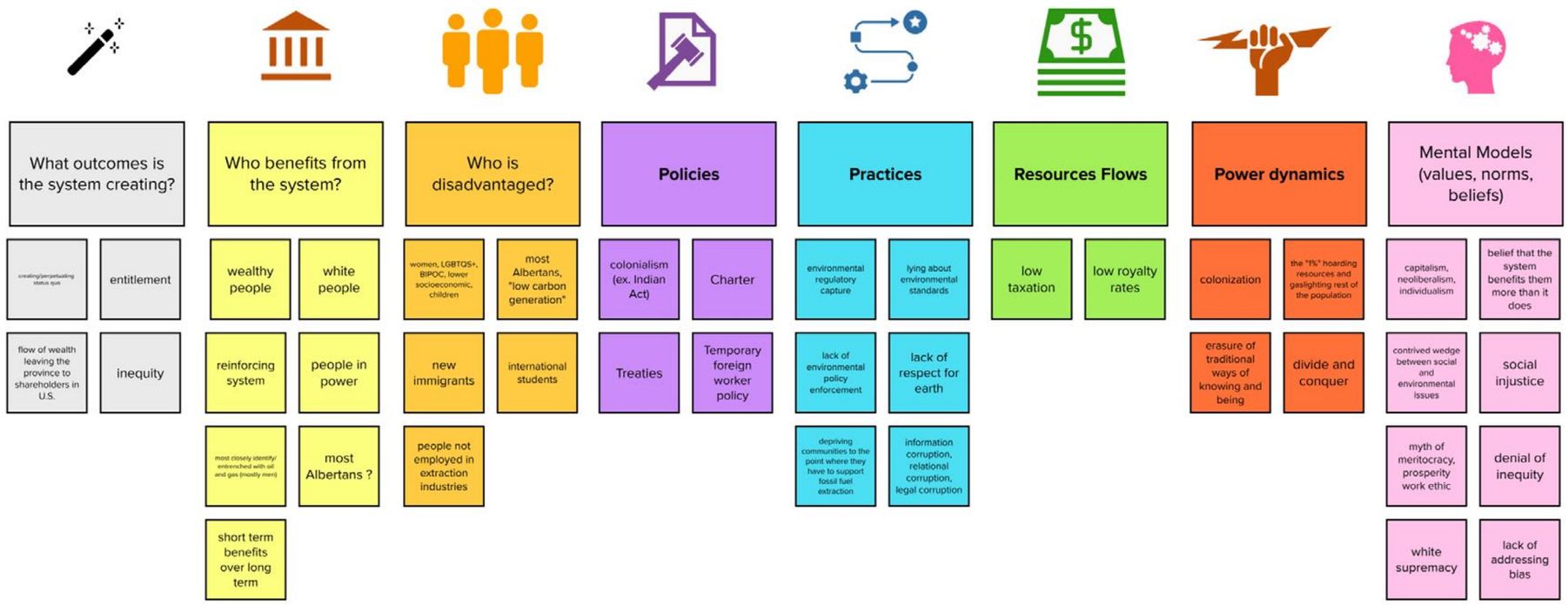
Team Six empathy map

STEP 3: REVERSE THINKING

Designing a system where marginalized communities are disproportionately impacted by climate change and environmental degradation

Who exactly are “marginalized communities”? That question led this team to design a system in which most Albertans not employed in extraction industries are disadvantaged, including children, women, LGBTQS+, BIPOC, international students, new immigrants and the “low carbon generation.” The system shares many elements with those imagined by the other five teams, including colonialist policies, “us vs. them” mental models, hierarchical power structures and resources constrained by low taxation and royalty rates. Traditional ways of knowing and being are erased, replaced by corruption, lying and disrespect for the earth. There’s a contrived wedge between social and environmental issues, coupled with a belief that the status quo offers more benefits than it really does. In fact, the system deprives communities to the point where they have to support resource extraction to survive.

- *“There’s a belief that the system benefits people more than it really does, especially long-term.”*



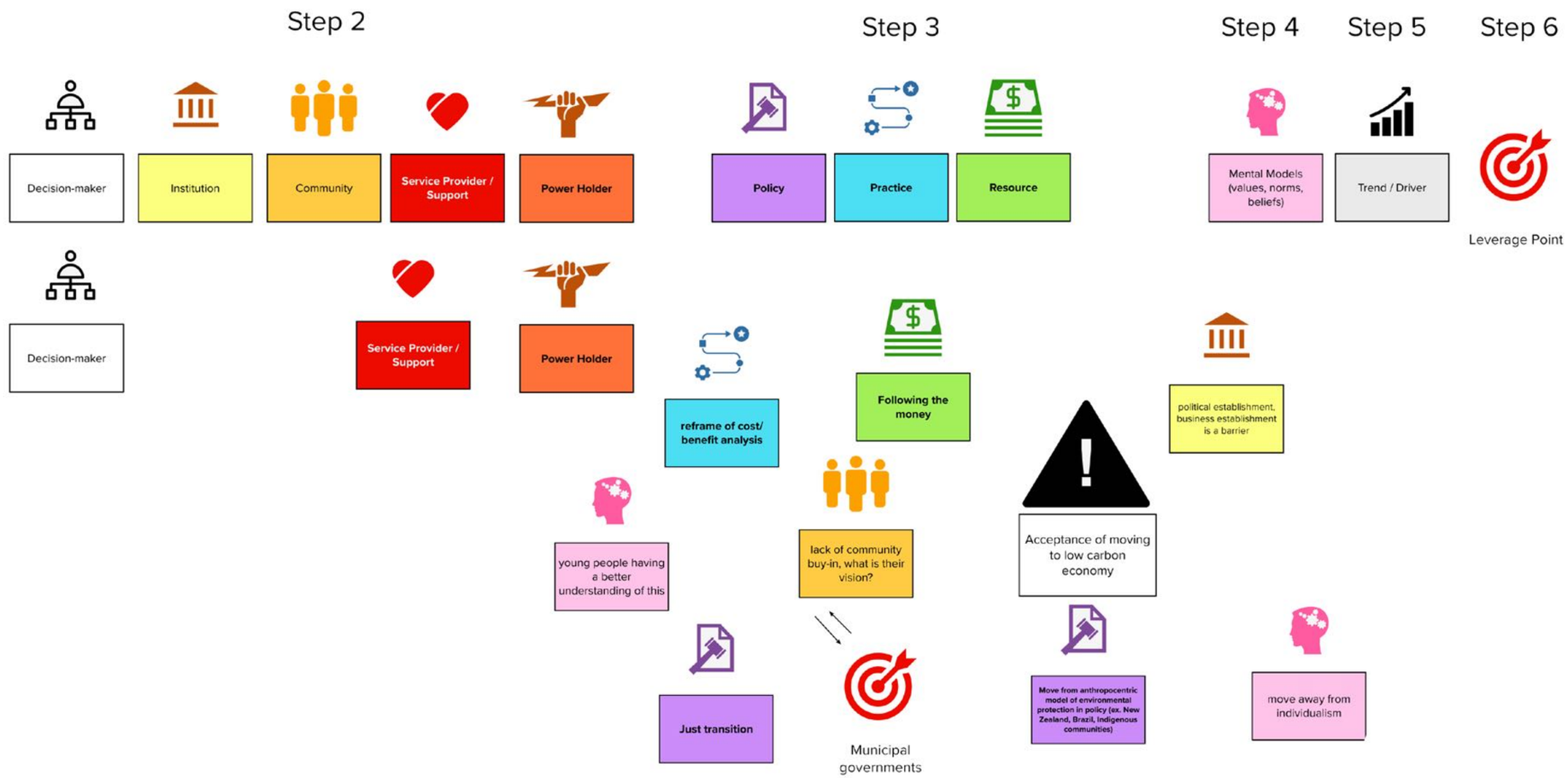
Team Six reverse thinking system

STEP 4: RICH PICTURE OF THE CURRENT SYSTEM

Focus: Acceptance of moving to a low-carbon economy

This team pondered the difficult task of gaining acceptance of the move to a low-carbon economy. Noting lack of buy-in among political and businesses establishments as well as grassroots communities, they see a need to reframe the cost/benefit analysis so that the true costs of inaction are apparent. They view municipal governments as key players and see a need to engage with communities to understand their vision and discern potential leverage points. Young people also offer hope. Team members noted that a just transition may demand a move away from anthropocentric environmental protection policies, following New Zealand, Brazil and various Indigenous communities.

> *"To get more people on board, we need to reframe the cost-benefit analysis. Even on an individual basis, at the end of the day people want to put food on the table."*



Team Six rich picture

STEP 5: THE PROTOTYPE

Proposed intervention: Embedding the human right to clean water and energy security in EPCOR policy by providing free access to water and energy to low income and vulnerable Edmontonians

This team's prototype issues a specific call to action: that Edmonton City Council recognize the intrinsic human right and social value of providing low income and vulnerable Albertans with energy and water security, and ensure that EPCOR embeds policies to protect those rights. With water becoming scarcer and extreme weather not only adding to the cost of heating and cooling a house but causing more deaths, team members argue, it's increasingly important to acknowledge access to water and energy as a basic human right.

In their envisioned future, EPCOR would provide free or subsidized water and energy to all households that meet a threshold of need. As a utility wholly owned by the City of Edmonton, EPCOR pays millions in dividends into civic coffers each year. This initiative would reduce the amount of that dividend, but would offer significant benefits in return. Vulnerable tenants would no longer be squeezed by rising utility costs, whether directly or through rent increases, and the municipality would have greater incentive to ensure that publicly subsidized renters are living in energy-efficient spaces. This commitment could advance EPCOR's stated pledge to help end poverty and could extend to First Nations communities, where the utility is already collaborating to address water advisories. Internationally, the initiative would support Sustainable Development Goals 6 (access to clean water) and 7 (access to affordable energy).

> *"In Edmonton, we haven't been investing in upgrading public housing for a long time, and energy costs are rising. That plus the carbon tax really threaten to target households that are already having a hard time."*

Graphic recording by Sam Hester, the 23rd Story

The shift

- Water and energy shift from commodities to basic human rights
- Energy upgrades in rental units shift from low to high priority
- Low-income households shift from anxiety to certainty regarding access to water and energy they can afford

Further questions

- How many dollars would go uncollected under this initiative? The team estimates approximately 46,134 low income households (119,950 low-income Edmontonians, 2.6/household) with an average monthly energy bill of $225 would result in a decrease in revenue of $10.3 million a month.
- What would the threshold be for receiving free or subsidized utilities under this initiative?
- What will happen if we don't do this? What is the cost to society?
- What mechanisms are needed to prevent abuse? (E.g., free energy/water based on historic use, with fees applied if use spikes beyond a threshold)
- How might this initiative dovetail with a push for net zero in non-market housing?

> *"To advance this work we would need support in researching and drafting a policy that could be presented to City Council and other allies."*

PART FOUR

Evaluating the Experience

"I expected two days of dialogue, brainstorming and cogent visioning. I was not disappointed. My small group created a workable action plan that was based on a good understanding of the policy variables involved. Regardless of the potential for implementation, I loved the process of building the plan. I loved the conversations in my group – how they combined professional and lived experience, critical thinking and civility."

"It seemed we were being asked to come up with actions that are already being done more effectively by other organizations/coalitions in the community."

"New connections with people in community working toward similar or aligned goals would be the biggest personal takeaway."

"My key takeaway was the importance of having a clear vision and providing space for critical analysis."

Participants in the Human Rights Action Lab were invited to reflect on the experience by responding to a survey and by participating in an interview by phone or Zoom. More than half accepted the invitation. The resulting 13 surveys and 10 interviews provide useful insights for planning future action labs, and for contemplating ways to advance the prototypes the teams developed.

HOPES FULFILLED?

Asked why they chose to invest two days in the Action Lab, most participants indicated a two-fold desire: to broaden their networks by meeting people from various sectors with similar goals, and to expand capacity for joint action on issues they care about using a human rights lens. Were those hopes fulfilled? Seven of the 12 participants who responded to this question said their hopes were fulfilled "quite well." Other answers range from "neutral" (2 responses) to "somewhat" (2 responses) to "not at all (1 response).

Those most enthusiastic about the experience expressed appreciation for a chance to work on real-life problems and issues with people who share their concerns, using step-wise tools they may incorporate into their own work.

Common comments among those less enthusiastic about the experience include a sense of feeling rushed, desire for more cross-fertilization of ideas among the groups and regret about not focusing as much as expected on ways to use human rights documents as vehicles for change. Imbedded in many responses to this and other questions is concern that work on the prototypes will not continue, and regret about that – although some note that existing groups are already hard at work in these areas.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Key takeaways from the Action Lab tend to echo hopes for the event. Most frequent takeaways focused on strengthening connections with others who share similar goals and building capacity to think systematically about human rights issues.

PRELAB PREPARATION

All but one respondent found the background reading provided before the Action Lab helpful. One person termed the backgrounders "well-written, thoughtful and a good summary of research of the issues on the table." Another liked the fact that the challenges were presented with related policy content, while another appreciated "covering positive vs negative rights." A few said they didn't learn anything new and/or suggested incorporating more diverse viewpoints and deeper analysis.

Some student facilitators reported confusion in their groups about what the Action Lab was intended to accomplish. "Reinforce to the group what the key purpose of the lab is and what the expectations are for the participants," one suggested. Interviews also revealed some confusion about the event's purpose. One person assumed he was signing on to the larger ***Charter at 40 conference*** rather than an arms-length event.

HUMAN RIGHTS LENS

All respondents welcome the use of a human rights lens to examine thorny challenges. Indeed, it's what attracted many of them to the Action Lab. As some noted, a human rights lens puts the focus where it belongs, on the people impacted by an issue, while potentially attracting new allies and leading to larger effects. Many appreciated that focus in the pre-event readings and hoped to learn more about using human rights as a lever for change in the Action Lab.

Several cautioned that politics and economics often outmuscle human rights in the public square. "Talking about these issues using a human rights lens is politically meaningful, draws validity from legal and policy frameworks that are internationally accepted (if not implemented) and brings a certain poignancy to the dialogue," one wrote. "However – it's pretty obvious that human rights statements remain in the zone of elegant formulation when material and political structures are geared to reproducing inequality and deprivation."

Yet at least one participant has been personally involved in using a human rights lens to effect change. The Child Friendly Housing Coalition of Alberta, which participant Bridget Stirling cofounded, took advantage of a time when the province needed to comply with an Alberta Human Rights Commission decision limiting age restrictions for seniors in rental housing to advocate for similar attention to children's rights. As a result, changes in the tenancy act opened more doors to children as well as seniors. "Alberta used to legally discriminate against children in housing," she said when interviewed about her Action Lab experience. "It was pretty amazing to start down a path and actually change the law to expand human rights."

"More background on some of the legal thinking that went into the amendments for the Charlottetown Accord would have been useful, or other examples of modern constitutions that have included environmental protections. It was challenging to think about the types of charter changes that are possible without a better sense of modern legal philosophy."

"Either having more conversations about the charter related to the issues or just framing the lab more around human rights in general rather than charter activity would have alleviated frustrations."

"After the first day, I left with a sense of the incredible opportunity for learning and connection to a human rights lens posed."

"I find it useful always to approach these questions through that lens, but I didn't feel that the Action Lab process allowed for a deeper dive into this area because it moved so quickly to an organizing training model."

"The classic rights lens that comes through liberal thinkers is grounded in ideas of rationality, property. But if you think about rights in that way, you can't get to rights for children, other than as a fiduciary responsibility towards the future rational adult they will be. Also, people with intellectual disabilities are not seen as equal persons. What if we think of rights as a kind of care we show each other in society? Then to protect someone's rights is a way to care for them, a relational responsibility. That allows us to get to a different way of thinking about rights."

"Certain elements may work but not necessarily in a linear fashion. Often the process for many community organizations is a bit more haphazard and not as clearly defined."

"This model is interesting, but I didn't feel our group was the target audience. It felt dismissive of our collective knowledge and experience. I can see using a model like this to train new organizers and activists."

INCORPORATING THIS APPROACH

Half of the survey respondents indicated they can envision incorporating the methodology used in the Action Lab into their work, or already do so. They see this systematic and contextual approach as a way to "advance thinking around challenging/complex issues" and develop a proposal "step by step and clearly." In interviews following the Action Lab, several participants said they had already used and/or shared tools gleaned from the lab. Specific tools mentioned as helpful include the overall design thinking approach, empathy mapping and prototyping.

A few individuals with significant advocacy experience said the overall approach, with its focus on introducing and using tools, did not leave enough time to accomplish what they'd hoped, although one noted, "With the right group of people, it could be powerful."

SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS

Invited to suggest improvements for future action lab processes, several participants urged that relevant funders and other decision-makers be involved and invested from the first, and that support be secured in advance for a concrete plan to carry the prototypes forward. One wrote: "I imagine this process would be an incredible accelerator for groups working in the areas as an already formed team and with ongoing commitment to each other. If groups were invited to apply to advance their own work with the support and process of the Action Lab, it could provide fuel and new energy/ideas to those moving the ideas forward. The Max Bell Public Policy Institute uses this model where there is support to advance work that will be ongoing."

"I enjoyed the Lab immensely, so I am not sure what I would do to improve it. Maybe having a scholar participate directly with one of our small group sessions, as I would have liked the opportunity to ask some specific questions."

Some also recommended allotting more time for teams to do their work, and to exchange ideas across groups "so we could learn about other issues and how they impact each other and also learn from those working outside our sector issues." One person offered several recommendations, some of which echo responses to previous questions: "First have multiple and diverse facilitators for the session, allow space to build relations, do not rush the process, embrace critical analysis, be open to change, use material sources from diverse authors, have funding secured, create a space to continue the momentum and have clear objectives."

A few questioned whether the Action Lab as structured was the best use of time for people who have already developed expertise in advancing change. "When inviting very experienced people in a field, consider offering something that adds value or inviting them in a mentoring role rather than a participant role," one wrote, adding when interviewed: "I would like to get together with that same group to have a deeper conversation. Maybe less about that ground level piece and more about, 'What could we work on?'"

"Some of this stuff is about signaling change. It might not be the perfect mechanism, but it has other dimensions in terms of shifting the conversation, and symbolism."

"Face-to-face, there are always the benefits of people being able to bump into each other more. That could have changed the experience for people, although I do like people working in a shared document. It creates a level of shared accountability you sometimes don't see with sticky notes or worksheets."

Despite the constraints added by the shift to virtual sessions due to pandemic concerns, just one person wrote, "Have them in person if possible!" That's a credit to the skill with which all facilitators, including the students, set a welcoming tone and manipulated the online platforms.

INTEREST IN CONTINUED INVOLVEMENT

As the Action Lab drew to a close, participants were invited to consider playing a lead role in next steps, perhaps by convening a working group and/or inviting others to the table. Although no one volunteered, several expressed significant interest in being contacted once a document summarizing the Action Lab is available as a reminder of what was accomplished and a resource for whatever may happen next.

As a further indication of interest, nearly everyone responding to the Action Lab survey expressed willingness to be involved in continuing the conversation. At least three would contribute research and/or policy expertise. Three would invite others to be involved in exploring next steps for one or more issues. Two are interested in working in the anti-racism arena, one with grassroots organizations and the other to ensure a human rights/legal lens is applied to curriculum promoting inclusivity. Another offers effort and experience in all three areas – poverty, racism and climate change. One is interested in reconvening to explore what resources are being devoted to the work. Another would be involved "if there is a commitment to engage in critical analysis."

"I will continue to do advocacy on the Group 1 action through my volunteer involvement with the Right at Home Housing Society, the Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness and initiatives in my own neighbourhood."

A few signaled they will continue the research and advocacy they've already been doing, although in interviews at least one of those individuals expressed a desire to be involved in Action Lab follow-up as a way of advancing human rights initiatives.

In sum, an appetite is there to continue the work begun at the Action Lab, particularly if resources can be found to provide strategic leadership.

"Everybody's responsibility is nobody's responsibility. Where do we go from here?"

CONCLUSION

At a Critical Juncture

"In exploring solutions, we did not want to restrict ourselves to what is; we wanted to innovate. Our objective is to come out with concrete proposals that can be considered for action."

THE SIX PROTOTYPES IN BRIEF

- Poverty Team 1 – Provide rent subsidies to all low-income households as a human right
- Poverty Team 2 – Ensure access to child care as a human right
- Racism Team 3 – Expand and coordinate anti-racist mental health capacity
- Racism Team 4 – Implement media literacy curriculum in K-12 schools
- Climate Change Team 5 – Broaden climate change conversations and action to include under-represented teams
- Climate Change Team 6 – Make access to water and energy free to low-income and vulnerable Edmontonians as a human right

The Human Rights Action Lab had its genesis in a desire to mark the upcoming fortieth anniversary of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms not only with academic analysis, but with concrete proposals for change. The Action Lab generated not just one but six action plans that, with broader listening, further analysis, careful honing and effective promotion, hold promise to effect change. Plans that, while not easy to carry out, are reasonably practical and actionable.

Three of the Action Lab teams deliberately framed their issues as human rights, in hope of winning new allies and ensuring equal access to key essentials. Team 1 would ensure that all households meeting a threshold of need receive rent subsidies rather than excluding people after a program maximum is reached. Team 2 would ensure that all families have access to affordable, appropriate child care that suits their needs. Team 6 would provide free or subsidized water and energy to every Edmontonian who meets a threshold of need.

Especially in the child care arena, the timing is excellent: action at the federal and provincial levels is already building momentum that could be augmented by a rights-based emphasis. There may also be windows of opportunity regarding housing and utilities. Housing advocates have been pondering ways to declare housing and income security human rights within Canada, as they are internationally. EPCOR, which delivers residential water and energy, has committed to helping eliminate poverty and is wholly owned by the City of Edmonton, which has already proclaimed that housing is a basic human right.

The other three teams propose strategies for expanding conversations and building bridges to address crucial issues: the dearth of mental health resources for victims (and perpetrators) of racist incidents (Team 3); the urgent need for a media literate citizenry, able to identify falsehoods and hate in traditional and social platforms (Team 4); and the lack of environmental programs and resources for vulnerable people, the ones most impacted by our changing climate (Team 5).

UNDERPINNINGS

Behind the scenes, the following ingredients helped set the stage for an interactive and productive Action Lab. A time that, in the words of Pieter de Vos "tackled in two days what we might do in a social lab over six months."

1. **Courageous convenors**. Leaders representing both Canadians for a Civil Society and the University of Alberta were willing and even eager to take a risk on an immersive format that demanded more from participants than usual.

2. **Logistical support**. Graduate students from the University of Alberta prepared backgrounders, made the technology work, helped turn the virtual environment into a welcoming place, and more. In return, they say they benefited from working with "much more experienced and knowledgeable" team members and seeing "how policy solutions can be approached and workshopped."

3. **Thoughtful recruitment**. Peter Faid's months of effort to engage a diverse and engaged mix of participants, coupled with Jared Wesley's recruitment of student facilitators, helped draw the right people into the space.

4. **Conceptual rigour**. Both the pre-session briefings and the materials used during the event had solid theoretical underpinnings and were carefully curated to highlight key social change concepts.

5. **Learning by doing**. Student facilitators were introduced to Pieter de Vos's approach to systemic design through a lecture and later received a tutorial on the virtual tools used to capture ideas. Participants had multiple opportunities to apply key concepts and tools throughout the two days.

6. **Participatory theatre**. A series of team-building, sense-making and problem-solving steps built progressively over the course of the Action Lab, creating a sort of "participatory theatre" complete with a stage, set pieces, transitions, narration, rising and falling action. As one person commented, "It helped us think and develop a proposal incrementally, step by step."

7. **Passionate commitment**. Facilitators, convenors and participants all care about these issues, and therefore were invested rather than simply going through the motions.

"I was quite amazed how clear and articulate each of the solutions was. That has a lot to do with the quality of the process. There's a great list of ideas here."

"A lot of this work is about relationships. Building links across different movements, you can find places of solidarity to create change. That's really, really powerful. But you have to have those relationships first."

"Each of these actions requires community listening to understand on-the-ground realities."

"Some other issue may bubble up that binds two issues together. My sense is you really don't know that until you start diving in and wrestling with these issues."

"I am a firm believer that all effective democracy happens as part of a conversation. This is part of that conversation."

Team 3 envisions a one-stop centre with culturally diverse mental health experts who support victims while also working with perpetrators in a restorative justice approach. Team 4 envisions equipping Alberta's K-12 students to be media literate through immersive learning that becomes a regular part of their curriculum – and expanding that learning into the community. Team 5 envisions connecting decision makers with vulnerable citizens unserved by existing climate mitigation programs, which primarily benefit homeowners who have money to buy solar panels, electric cars and other goods. All three proposals have touchstones in current events, from the recent rise in racist attacks and mental health concerns to the scramble to deal with untruth in social media to last summer's deaths from extreme heat.

As the teams showcased their visions, ideas emerged for ways to work across issues and with existing initiatives for greater impact. That hunger for cross-fertilization also emerged in survey results and interviews. Several participants expressed a desire to build relationships and exchange ideas with advocates working on issues other than their own.

Reflections since the Action Lab suggest that open-minded listening will be crucial to moving the visions forward – both with communities impacted by the issues and with community leaders already addressing those issues. What's learned may prompt changes in the prototypes and even in the issues addressed. Already, one person who heard the Action Lab described at the Charter at 40 Conference recommended adding health care as a focus issue. Action Lab leaders expressed openness to those shifts, and in fact expect they will occur as the voices around the table expand.

The work of the Action Lab now stands at a critical juncture. Moving the prototypes forward requires both a coalescing of energy and windows of opportunity in the decision-making context.

One window of opportunity has already opened. In his presentation at the Charter at 40 Conference, City of Edmonton Mayor Amarjeet Sohi welcomed community leaders to share with him the issues affecting people and possible solutions to ensure the human rights of vulnerable Edmontonians. This may be the best immediate window for righting human wrongs. Calgary's new Mayor, Jyoti Gondek, has also stated that she is open to consulting closely with impacted communities. Opportunities are also opening up during the pandemic as some businesses indicate willingness to introduce changes that protect their workers.

As requested by Action Lab participants, the co-organizers will arrange a virtual meeting of the participants early in 2022 so all can gather the necessary energy and explore next steps. As they work together, participants and their organizations will have opportunities to forge stronger networks and take leadership in specific issue areas. They will have time to work jointly on solutions, cross-fertilize ideas and ensure their proposals are viewed through the human rights lens. Each group will need to decide whether and how to refine their preliminary prototype solution, innovate other approaches and share their ideas with the community and decision-makers.

This report will be available on the ***Charter at Forty Conference website*** so that all participants can access the summary of the discussions as well as the prototypes they drafted at the Action Lab.

We'll leave the last words to Vasant Chotai, who is passionate about maintaining momentum to protect human rights of those whose rights are being violated through policy, procedures, practice or public belief: "Let's not miss this opportunity. Change is possible. We simply need the will!"

"I want to not just talk, but hit the ground and actually see a change that affects people's lives in a positive way."

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: THE ACTION LAB TEAM

Vasant Chotai, President, Canadians for a Civil Society
Co-convenor of the Human Rights Action Lab and co-chair of the Conference Committee with Professor Yasmeen Abu-Laban and Professor Catherine Kellogg

Dr. Jared Wesley, Associate Chair, Political Science, University of Alberta
Co-convenor of the Human Rights Action Lab and mentor to student facilitators and authors of prelab briefings

Peter Faid, Founding member, Alberta Community Support Network
Conceptualization and participant recruitment

Nariya Khasanova, PhD student in political science, University of Alberta
Conceptualization and logistical support

Dr. Pieter de Vos, Postdoctoral Fellow, Evaluation Capacity Network, School of Public Health, University of Alberta
Action Lab design and facilitation

Dr. Gillian Harvey, Assistant Professor, Design Studies & Coordinator, Visual Communication Design, University of Alberta
Mentor to students who designed the prelab briefings

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APPENDIX II: SUMMARY OF PRELAB CONSULTATIONS

Human Rights in Alberta – Issues and Opportunities

A summary of conversations held in June 2021 to hear the perspectives of frontline community stakeholders in Alberta regarding the key factors threatening human rights in the province.

Issue 1: Poverty and economic deprivation is a violation of human rights

• People's ability to fully realize their rights depends on their socioeconomic status and other enabling conditions such as access to personal identification, to resources, and to legal representation.
• Economic deprivation and income inequality is a human rights issue, because it creates barriers to services, resources, and opportunities. In doing so, it limits the ability of individuals to fully participate in society. Poverty "erodes or nullifies economic and social rights such as the right to health, adequate housing, food and safe water, and the right to education." It also increases vulnerability, including the risk of experiencing victimization and violence, including family and domestic violence.
• Despite gains over the last few years, women in Alberta face the largest gender pay gap of any province, and experience poverty at a greater rate than men, especially if they are single parents or on their own. Indigenous peoples in Canada experience the highest levels of poverty: 1 in 4 Indigenous peoples (Aboriginal, Métis and Inuit) are living in poverty and 4 in 10 of Canada's Indigenous children live in poverty.
• The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recognizes the "right of everyone to an adequate standard of living," but the notion of "basic needs as a right" should be expanded to include other essentials of modern life such as access to childcare and the internet. "A lack of affordable childcare creates significant barriers to working outside the home, creating financial security, and securing independence." Similarly, studies show that the availability of the internet is "vital for access to jobs, to education, for improving worker rights, and to ensure freedom of expression and access to information." Unfortunately, a digital divide exists with many people experiencing barriers to technology due to factors related to income, language, literacy, and ability. ("The Internet is inherently unfriendly to many different kinds of disabilities.")
• Constitutional Framing: Universal Basic Income, Rights to Remedy, Rights to Justice
• In 2016 the UN General Assembly passed a non-binding Resolution that "declared internet access a human right." This created global headlines, but the Resolution did not address governmental responsibility to provide access to all. Instead, it focused on preventing governments from "taking away" access.

Issue 2: Environmental degradation, loss of biodiversity, and climate change are jeopardizing human rights

• The climate crisis threatens the effective enjoyment of a range of human rights including those to life, water and sanitation, food, health, housing, self-determination, culture and development. This includes the negative impacts on Indigenous communities and their traditional ways of life.
• Constitutional Framing: Courts have been reluctant to recognize that Charter imposes positive state obligations related to social, economic, and environmental rights (economic disparity, including the right to housing and environmental protection)
• The OHCHR is promoting rights-based climate action.
• The UN Declaration for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples provides a framework for recognizing the inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples, including the "right to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands or territories and resources" (Article 29)

Issue 3: Racism and discrimination are being fueled by misinformation and amplified by social media

• Social and mass media have provided channels for the amplification of misinformation, extremism, and hate speech/hate-motivated incidents and attacks. This has contributed to growing polarization, conflict between communities, and racism. Recent assaults on Muslim women in the Greater Edmonton area highlight this concern.
• Constitutional Framing: Misinformation Legislation, Anti-hate legislation, Freedom of Expression. "The protection of freedom of speech is very individualistic. Is this a protected speech?"

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APPENDIX III: FROM THE HEADLINES EXERCISE

Members of each team spent 10 minutes reading two news articles related to their topic, followed by 20 minutes sharing reactions to the articles. They were prompted by the following questions:

A. Which of these articles most **resonates** with you? Why?
B. What key **challenges** are revealed in these stories?
C. How does this relate to what you have **witnessed** or **experienced**?
D. What other **factors** or **perspectives** should we be considering?

Responses to the questions the teams completed are shown in full on pages 111 to 113.

Poverty Team One

A. Which of these articles most **resonates** with you? Why?

• Noise pollution - There is a big urban divide in noise levels. The Environmental impacts on urban noise, and how things like bikes and EVs deal with noise as well as environmental issues.
• Certain noises like Children playing are actually positive. Different communities with gentrification change community noise.
• Public housing - there is a concern with free housing and quality assurances. There is more of a concern with no one spending more than 30% of their income on housing. How to empower people to make choices on their own housing.
• Non-profit housing for people with high acuity and lack of income.
• Building public and group housing can be problematic because it can be stigmatizing for people with disabilities. This applies to seniors as well.
• Portable rent subsidies are more attractive.
• Public housing - Personal experience. Interest in a **multifaceted** approach to public housing. There was an interest in subsidies for income as well as childcare for these housing opportunities. There was also interest in addressing specific cases. Taking a more comprehensive approach to a complex issue.
• Public housing - the Issue of autonomy and power. Public housing brings in the question of where are the power relationships. The people that are being addressed in these policies lose their autonomy. There is a disempowerment in both public housing and rental housing. Where is the space for tenant voice, and what are other ways to address this. Can we empower them beyond just where they live?
• It spoke to how rights relate to housing and legalized discrimination on the basis of age.
• Sound Article - What is sound vs. what is noise and how that is defined by the community and how.

B. What key **challenges** are revealed in these stories?

• **Autonomy** in both articles.
• With the pandemic living in designated facilities don't have the right to determine who could visit, when they could go.
• Is there a way to protect these rights?
• Do facility based approaches inherently alienate these rights?
• The sound brings the idea of balancing rights. How do we balance the right to being quiet and right to space and making sound?
• In the example of facilities how do we recognize the right to risk especially in collective environments.
• Problem definitions are deeply contested. This comes back to children's noise being pleasant or annoying. Can it be climatized?

C. How does this relate to what you have **witnessed** or **experienced**?

• Noise from Emergency vehicles is a bit more problematic given what they represent. Compared to the noise of children playing, the neighbourhood has more positive associations.
• Being in a younger generation the expectation for owning a home is not very high. Discourses around people who rent are disempowering.
• Ideas that renters don't belong in communities, don't pay rent and are less valid.
• This relates to those in rental housing and how the discourse disempowers them, and has connotations of care.
• Landlords take on some of your autonomy, and they can game the system against you.
• Can we look deeper than giving people houses. Can we have the discourse involve the people being housed and not just the housing itself.

Poverty Team Two

A. Which of these articles most **resonates** with you? Why?
B. What key **challenges** are revealed in these stories?
C. How does this relate to what you have **witnessed** or **experienced**?
D. What other **factors** or **perspectives** should we be considering?

• stability and community mobilization. being there for the long term and persisting with an issue.

• not coming to either of these issues from a human rights issue. neoliberalism.

Racism Team Three

A. Which of these articles most resonates with you? Why?
- Kerry - being black and an immigrant makes you feel unsafe and unwelcome
- history of community policing
    - over policing of black people by eps
    - 2000s Somali people targeted

B. What key **challenges** are revealed in these stories?
- The trauma of experiencing racism
- haunted and always feeling threatened
- identity - want to be Canadian (assimilate) but your outward appearance doesn't allow this
- increased or is it just in the news more, or more people reporting.
- inadequacies of policing
    - stop crime - but rather find crime and report it
    - incapable of keeping people safe
        - not the right training
- failure of the justice system
    - this man had been arrested before and each and every time he goes out and assaults someone
    - difficult to convict hate crimes but then they pour resources into community policing.
    - slow to convict
- Where are these ideas being learned?
- Very little legislation to stop hate crimes
    - hate speech and free speech are not the same

C. How does this relate to what you have **witnessed** or **experienced**?

D. What other **factors** or **perspectives** should we be considering?
- what policies can be put in place to help people
    - ex) finding a black therapist
    - mental health availability that you can relate to
- media
    - news is so fast moving tomorrow people already don't care
    - american media
    - opinion news
- citizens
    - advocacy
    - policies to get citizens to be active bystanders
    - Where is the outrage?
    - empowering - a place to report, media campaign to promote
- education is the key piece

Racism Team Four

A. Which of these articles most **resonates** with you? Why?
- Article describing attack
    - esonates on a personal level
        - Emotional reaction
    - Hate crimes tell the broader community they do not belong
    - Direct impact of racism and verbal abuse suffered, descriptive and depicted the trauma suffered
    - Not properly equipped to deal with hate crimes
    - Angry white men and women of colour
        - Racism meets gender (intersection)
    - Women in public spaces are not safe
    - Anyone who deviates from the gender binary could be affected
        - Who are these public spaces for?
- Article describing extremism
    - Policy gaps - need to address racism
    - Women were attacked and forced to move online
        - Intersection of angry white men and women (and women of colour)
        - Could be anyone and everyone who does not suscribe to the worldview angry white man are the best

B. What key **challenges** are revealed in these stories?
- Policy gaps - need to address racism
- This was overt violence- what if it had been a micro level?
- The justice system is not properly equipped to deal with hate crimes
    - Hate crimes are difficult to establish and prove
        - Charged with assault, not hate-motivated crime
        - Hate crime definition is not standardized
    - Hate incident vs hate crime
    - Prosecute hate crimes
- How do we change public perception about racism?
    - Do we start with education? With young people?
- Hate can operate at a barely noticeable level

C. How does this relate to what you have **witnessed** or **experienced**?
- Trauma of not feeling safe in a public space
- Spoke about incident on the news, had hate comments similar to the attack on the Muslim women
- Senior leadership suggest to drop Muslim resumes in the garbage
    - Is it hate, discrimination, or both?

D. What other **factors** or **perspectives** should we be considering
- Angry white men and women of colour
    - Racism meets gender (intersection)

Climate Change Team Five

A. Which of these articles most **resonates** with you? Why?
- Rabia - Arctic Communities Article - Connected climate change to other community issues, including mobility, health, transportation, education, etc
- Seon - Health Article - Climate change is not localized to one region, but is mapped within a larger geographic area
- Brianne - Both articles felt tailored to her PhD research interests
- Che-Wei - Extensive discussion of agriculture may indicate the importance of the province's farmers as a voting block

B. What key **challenges** are revealed in these stories?
- Rabia - Depending on where funding is provided/is coming from, this may affect how the message is presented
    -People living in urban areas may see climate change as a global, rather than a local issue.
- Considering the international perspective on the issue of climate change - What does it mean that the largest emitters are developing economies? How do they see climate change differently than us?
    - Conversely, there might be countries who use climate change as part of their economic policies
- Management of Alberta's oil industry in comparison to that of Norway - Are the funds from fossil fuel projects used for social responsibility work?
- How are social responsibility projects harmed by the overdependence on oil revenue?
- How is climate change threatening identities?

C. How does this relate to what you have **witnessed** or **experienced**?
- Seon - Previous work in the oil sands led him to his position as a researcher; how do we step back and address these challenges at the macro-level
- Che-Wei - Grew up in a small village in Southern Alberta, now works with rural communities outside of the Edmonton and Calgary regions.

D. What other **factors** or **perspectives** should we be considering
- Rabia - Health Impacts Article - Focusing less on concrete facts, and more on how the individual person will be affected by climate change
- Seon - Health Article - No mention of the energy industry, emphasis instead on agriculture; this perspective is going to impact how the post transition economy will take shape
- Brianne - when climate change is localized to a specific area, policymakers tend to ignore the broader reaching impacts.
- Rabia - Emphasizing the impacts on the younger generation
- Che-Wei - Difficult for people who do not live in Northern Canada to understand what conditions are like there
    - Farmers - May have a different perspective on climate change solutions than the average environmental activist/ researcher/politician
    - But what causes farmers to see climate change differently than these other perspectives?
    - There are significant inequities present in rural communities

Climate Change Team Six

A. Which of these articles most **resonates** with you? Why?
- Vancouver sun article: personal story of how Inuit communities are impacted by climate change, severe health impacts and cultural impact, intimate, less often told story (vs. the CBC article, lots of stats/ information but both were necessary articles, complementary)

B. What key **challenges** are revealed in these stories?
- getting general population to understand how severe climate change is getting, effects we can now see with our own eyes (human suffering difficult to quantify), instill action, not hopelessness
- Canadian privilege/Alberta privilege, culture of wealth, privilege, fossil fuels, capitalism

C. How does this relate to what you have **witnessed** or **experienced**?
- self-reflection that you are part of the story, what your action can be, and if not, what are the consequences?
- if people don't think they are personally affected and don't see it, they don't care

D. What other **factors** or **perspectives** should we be considering
- framing of opportunity and hope
- no theory of change presented in mainstream media, no calls to action
- climate porn? sensationalism, negative emotions drive content consumption
- critical lens needed when reading these articles, where is the power? where are the points of intervention?

Report from the Human Rights Action Lab

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