MOBILIZING PHILANTHROPY FOR A TRANSFORMATIVE COVID RECOVERY

An Initiative of the Foundation Academy for Collaboration

NOVEMBER 2020

ASHOKA**CANADA**

A Message
from our Leadership

In January 2020, seven leaders from philanthropic foundations across Canada gathered for a first-ever action learning experience. The gathering focused on how philanthropic foundations can be better allies for systems change, and explored emerging possibilities around partnership-based philanthropy in support of that change. Over the next nine months, this group would explore — with one another and with leading social innovators from across Canada — what it takes to collaborate effectively to address our country's most intractable, systemic challenges.

Catalyzed by the Saputo Foundation and convened through Ashoka Canada and Philanthropic Foundations Canada, this new Foundation Academy for Collaboration would provide a space for learning about effective collaboration among funders and social change leaders, and an opportunity to put that learning into practice. We knew that in order for our learning to be meaningful, we needed to apply it, collectively, to a real-world issue. That issue was yet to be determined.

Then COVID-19 arrived.

We knew that this pandemic would deeply disrupt Canada's core systems, from health to food to local and national economies. We also knew that this disruption would disproportionately impact our most marginalized communities — and that it would simultaneously create openings for new approaches and solutions to systemic problems. We saw in this crisis the opportunity to explore fundamentally, not only new ways of working but also, more importantly, working together.

Over a three-month period, we conducted interviews with two dozen leading community organizers, social innovators, and systems-change leaders to understand the landscape of COVID-recovery work. We then collectively identified key insights and possible interventions to shift systems toward a better future for Canada's most marginalized communities. This report shares both that analysis and our emerging plans to support, organize, and strengthen the voices of marginalized citizens to define their needs, identify solutions, and determine how funding is allocated.

We invite you to join us on this journey. For more information on how to get involved, please contact the Foundation Academy for Collaboration pilot lead, Danica Straith, Director of Venture & Partnerships at Ashoka Canada: dstraith@ashoka.org

Barb Steele
Executive Director,
Ashoka Canada

Jean-Marc Mangin
President & CEO
Philanthropic Foundations Canada

Claude Pinard
Executive Director
Mirella and Lino Saputo Foundation

This report is the result of a collaborative effort between Ashoka Canada, Philanthropic Foundations Canada, and the Mirella and Lino Saputo Family Foundation, with process guidance from CoCreative Consulting. We are especially grateful for the Saputo Foundation's partnership and support.

Mobilizing Philanthropy for a Transformative Covid Recovery

The Origin of our Collaboration

Our learning community was born — before the COVID-19 pandemic — out of a shared interest in learning how to better collaborate across organizational and sectoral boundaries to advance systemic change.

As the pandemic spread across Canada, however, we quickly realized that our time for collaborative action had come. We rapidly reorganized ourselves around a shared question that posed a challenge not only to us but to philanthropic leaders across the country:

> *What do we as philanthropists need to embody, know, and do, both independently and collaboratively, to most strategically funnel our energy and resources for meaningful systemic change in the COVID recovery?*

At first, frankly, we had little idea how to answer a question of that breadth and complexity. We began by grounding ourselves in the shared values of opportunity and inclusion for all Canadians. We then began a "landscape analysis" inquiry across all the major systems that significantly impact opportunity and inclusion in this country. We looked at community cohesion, poverty, education, health, early childhood development, politics, U.S. relations, the arts, and even specific challenges, such as the needs of non-governmental organizations run by women, youth, and/or people of colour. We asked a diverse range of social innovators, community organizers, and systems-change leaders about the emerging challenges and opportunities they saw across these areas. We then coupled their insights with data from an even broader set of sources. We've shared the insights from that inquiry below.

The Problem
 We Seek to Solve

All of the issues and areas we researched are important. Any one of them could have been the sole focus of a substantial collaboration among us as funders.

Our collective learning, however, coupled with our shared intent to "*most strategically funnel our energy and resources",* revealed that we needed to move beyond addressing separate issues. Rather, we needed to partner with communities to leverage our resources and their wisdom to meet their most pressing needs.

It is well known that certain populations in Canada, especially citizens with disabilities and our Indigenous communities, have experienced chronic social and economic marginalization for generations. It's no surprise, then, that the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic fallout have disproportionately impacted these citizens. If we are to truly realize opportunity and inclusion for everyone in Canada, we need to recognize that these disparities are systemic in nature, that they cannot be solved with "outside-in" interventions, and they require multi-faceted and adaptive strategies grounded in the lived reality of those most affected by them.

What
We Did

The landscape analysis described above was the key input into a "collaborative innovation" process developed by CoCreative, a systems-change consultancy.

While the process was designed to support the co-design of a meaningful systems-change strategy, it was also intended to support the development of a more connected and effective "change system." In other words, we weren't just co-designing a strategy; we were also deepening our partnership. To support that process, we identified and articulated the following objectives:

Connecting	Experience meaningful and effective collaboration based in real trust, strong agreements, respect for difference and diversity, and aligned purpose.
Aligning	Align around a common goal of tackling the most pressing social issues highlighted by the pandemic.
Learning	Develop an initial shared understanding of the current systemic landscape related to COVID-19 recovery.
Making	Identify a first round of high-leverage COVID-19 recovery opportunities to shift from the current state to our preferred future.

Co-design a first-draft, shared systems-change funding strategy to help realize a better future.

Contribute to the development of tools and resources to support implementation at the individual, partnership, and collective levels.

Contribute to the development of tools and resources to support implementation at the individual, partnership, and collective levels.

Begin to build a track record of collaborative systems-change work.

Identify and engage other partners and stakeholders to build the work going forward. |

In August and September, we held three virtual sessions that included both funders and social innovators. In those meetings, we collectively digested the complex landscape analysis. We then identified and prioritized a set of strategic "shifts" in the landscape, places where foundation leaders could have the greatest impact over the next one to two years. Finally, we drafted an initial set of solutions for enacting those strategic shifts.

From that process, a clear and powerful opportunity to significantly improve the impact of foundation leadership emerged:

Support, organize, and strengthen the voices of marginalized citizens to define their own needs, identify solutions, and determine how resources are allocated.

What
We Learned

The Process

To truly support systemic change, funders and innovators must shift mindsets in relation to each other.

As we engaged in collaborative strategy design with philanthropists and social innovators, this key insight emerged. In our inquiry across Canada, we heard versions of it repeatedly from change leaders.

To truly support systemic change, we need to show up differently, prioritize building trusting and sustained relationships with one another, create alignment around a shared purpose (without being prescriptive or wedded to predetermined solutions), and cultivate a learning environment where we can build a shared understanding of the current landscape. In this reimagined collaboration space, we will be better positioned to co-design work that we can advance together as partners.

The Landscape

As outlined above, we interviewed a diverse range of social innovators across Canada on the major systems that influence opportunity and inclusion in this country. These discussions provided rich insight into barriers, challenges, and opportunities in the face of COVID recovery. Here's a summary of what we learned:

The Big Picture

- *There is opportunity in the crisis — don't waste it.* The pandemic and its economic fallout has harmed and continues to harm people. In particular, COVID-19 has starkly exposed the deep inequities and injustices in Canada. The disruption has created a unique opportunity to advance deeper, more systemic change.
- *Don't seek a "new normal."* Rather than embracing the opportunity for systemic redesign, many social innovators worry that leaders and citizens across the country may simply "snap back" to conventional — and ineffective — structures and strategies.

Where Philanthropy & the Field Meet

- *Prioritize cohesion.* Against an international backdrop of rising authoritarianism and political polarization, we need to foster opportunities and narratives that encourage Canadians to come together and leverage our strengths for the common good.
- *Build sustained, trusting, and collaborative partnerships with grantees.* A key part of deepening collaboration is fostering longer-term and deeper partnerships among funders and grantees.

Funders need to trust grantees more deeply, and to level power differences to better leverage grantees' experience.

- *We need to shift mindsets and behaviours.* Rather than advancing single programs and quickly shifting priorities, we need a multi-faceted, iterative, and systemic approach to the work. A systems approach also means making longer-term funding commitments to enable deeper learning, strategy, adaptation, and planning.
- *Trust those closest to the pain to define needs and solutions.* We need to centre those most impacted by systems in analyzing problems and identifying and prioritizing solutions. We need to build more on their direct knowledge, and rely less on third-party experts and authorities.
- *Share decision-making power over funding.* Centring community voices is key to shifting awareness and approaches. It's equally necessary to shift more financial decision-making power to those most impacted by problems and their solutions.
- *Funders should use our voices to confront systemic racism and inequities*. To effectively support communities most impacted by the harmful realities of racism, funders must use their unique positions and voices to confront racism and inequity, boldly and clearly. They must do the difficult internal work to support that process.

What
Emerged

Critical Shifts

From our initial landscape analysis, Academy members identified a set of priority strategic shifts for meaningful systemic change in the COVID recovery. Two shifts emerged as most critical:

	SHIFT FROM current	→	TO future
Community Driven Solutions	Foundations hold the power and set the agendas and priorities.		Communities, in particular systemically marginalized communities, hold the power to define solutions and leverage funding.
Citizen Voice	Citizen voices — especially the voices of disenfranchised youth — are not driving decision-making within governments and institutions		Citizen voices — notably from young people — are supported, organized, and strengthened to enhance their agency and move decisionmakers

Our Plan for Action

Partnership-Based Philanthropy for Community-Led Solutions:
An Initiative to Advance System Shifts

As we developed and explored ideas for realizing the above shifts in power and agency, we outlined a new plan to support Canadian philanthropists in meaningfully contributing to advancing systemic change centred on the voices, needs, and priorities of communities.

We are launching a pilot project that centres around communities of focus. *Partnership-Based Philanthropy for Community-Led Solutions* involves three key players: (1) a **collaborative convener** (Ashoka Canada), (2) a **community steward** (a trusted social-change leader from the community of focus who invites other diverse leaders from the community to the collaboration), and (3) **foundation partners**.

We expect this model to work best in scenarios where there is:
- Opportunity for movement-building across community organizations that share similar goals for systemic change but do not currently work together
- Shared desire for collective learning and risk-taking around big and bold undertakings
- Shared desire to increase community and citizen representation in public policy decision-making

How the Collaborative Funds Will Work

Beginning in November 2020, foundation partners are invited to join one or more collaborations under the Partnership-Based Philanthropy for Community-Led Solutions initiative. In the project's pilot phase, collaborations will address the following three communities of focus:
- *Canadians with a Disability*
- *Indigenous Entrepreneurs*
- *Youth*

Each community will be stewarded by an Ashoka Fellow, who will leverage their deep knowledge and connections to convene a balanced set of 10-20 representatives from the community. We believe that these Ashoka Fellows — who are highly vetted for their creativity, entrepreneurship, ethical fibre, and impact track record — are well positioned to steward this work.

Ashoka Canada will provide organizational support, and will develop the governance structure and collaborative process. The process will build from best practices of other collaborations, tailored to meet the needs of each community of focus and foundation partners.

Foundation partners will participate by committing funds and engaging as active strategic contributors and learners as the initiative progresses. Collaborative funds will be held by Philanthropic Foundations Canada on behalf of the partners.

Three Initial Pilots

1. Canadians with a Disability

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the deep-seated inequities that face people living with disabilities in Canada. The pandemic has provided a window of opportunity for reimagining full inclusion, security, and opportunity for the disability movement.

The Prime Minister's Office 2020 Speech from the Throne promised a new national disability benefit, modeled after the Guaranteed Income Supplement for seniors. That plan, however, is in its early stages and is light on details. Community organizing for systemic change is needed to ensure that it is realized effectively.

Ashoka Fellow Al Etmanski has been an active parent member of the disability movement since the birth of his daughter more than 40 years ago. During that time, Al led the closure of British Columbia's three largest institutions that segregated people with developmental disabilities from the rest of society. He has helped to close segregated schools, has successfully changed adult guardianship legislation, and helped launch the RDSP, the world's first savings plan for disabled people (with combined assets now totaling $5 billion). As the co-founder of the Planned Lifetime Advocacy Network (PLAN), Al and his colleagues see the Canadian Disability Benefit as a singular opportunity to remedy the poverty experienced by people with disabilities and to reshape the disability agenda. This is a historic achievement. No other country in the world has ever made such a commitment.

2. Indigenous Entrepreneurship Community

From educational outcomes to health indicators to financial security, Indigenous peoples and communities in Canada continue to occupy the lower rungs on all socioeconomic metrics used to assess well-being. These inequities are the direct legacy of colonization and the ongoing systemic racism that permeates Canada's institutions and structures. Old approaches haven't worked: to create a country in which our Indigenous peoples do not merely survive against all odds but rather thrive, we need a new, robust ecosystem of Indigenous social entrepreneurship and social finance.

As co-founder and managing partner of the Raven Capital Group, Ashoka Fellow Jeff Cyr understands that building this ecosystem will require sustained and focused effort. The Indigenous Peoples Resilience Fund (IPRF) is an Indigenous-led effort to respond to urgent community needs while taking a long-term view on building community resilience. To complement this fund, Jeff envisions a complementary, collaborative initiative to enable Indigenous entrepreneurs to build equity in the marketplace. Jeff has the Raven Group's unique structural tools at his disposal, including Raven Indigenous Capital Partners (the first Indigenous venture capital intermediary) and the Raven Indigenous Impact Foundation for ecosystem building.
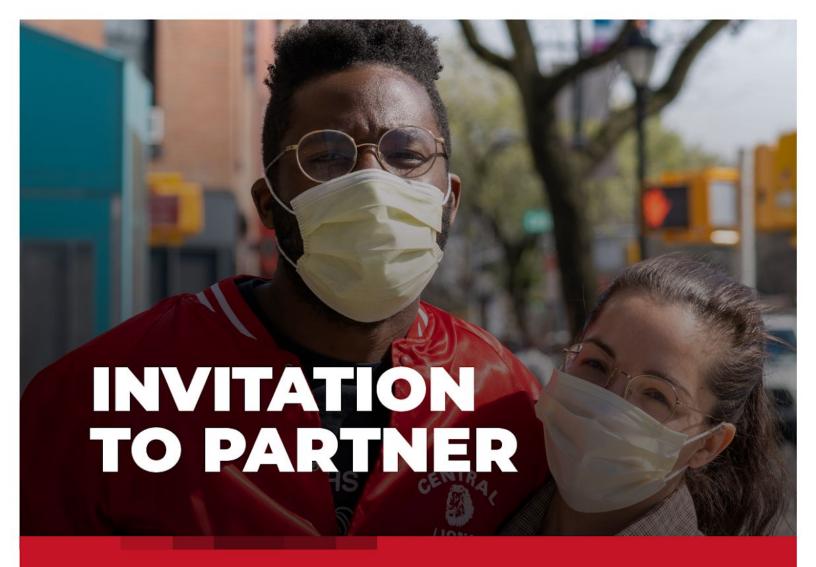
3. Youth

This collaborative fund is still being developed.

What Makes
us Different?

Many fair critiques of philanthropy emerged through our inquiry process. At the same time, the process also allowed Academy members to recognize the progressive and innovative practices of many funders across Canada. Multi-year giving, general operating support, impact investing, and community review boards are philanthropic tools that can increase impact, shift power dynamics between funders and grantees, and build sustained partnerships.

We believe that the Partnership-Based Philanthropy for Community-Led Solutions initiative builds on these effective practices and is unique in several ways. We are different because of our commitments to:
- Centre community voice, agency, and power, particularly from marginalized communities
- Support collective, community-based efforts that focus on systems-level change
- Establish generative, community-funder partnerships that serve as learning/action communities to drive meaningful social change
- Learn and contribute to new approaches for systems leadership and social innovation
- Act in partnership with transparency and integrity in building a better Canada

INVITATION TO PARTNER

- ◉ Commit to a two-year financial contribution to the community of focus that you would like to work with

- ◉ Three initial half-day convenings + annual working sessions

For more information, please contact:

Danica Straith
Ashoka Canada Director of Venture & Partnerships
dstraith@ashoka.org

Fellows and Thought Leaders Interviewed

1. Ashoka Fellow Agazi Afewerki, Executive Director, Co-Founder, Youth Empowering Parents
2. Ashoka Fellow Jean-Francois Archambault, *Entrepreneur Social, La Tablée des Chefs*
3. Ashoka Fellow Cindy Blackstock, Executive Director, First Nations Child and Family Caring Society
4. Ashoka Fellow Geoff Cape, CEO, Evergreen; Board member, Sustainable Development Technology Canada
5. Joshua Cubista, Experiential Design, Facilitation & Strategy for Personal, Social & Systemic Leadership Capacity Building
6. Ashoka Fellow Jeff Cyr, Managing Partner, Raven Indigenous Capital Partners
7. Tim Draimin, Senior Advisor, J.W. McConnell Family Foundation; Board member, Social Innovation Exchange
8. Ashoka Fellow Al Etmanski, Community Organizer, Social Entrepreneur, and author; A Good Life Consulting
9. John Fischer,   Executive Advisor, Indigenization at Mount Royal University; Director, Iniskim Centre; Board member, Calgary Foundation
10. Judy Foster, National Membership Director, Philanthropy Australia
11. Ashoka Fellow Tatiana Fraser, Co-Founder, MetaLab and The Systems Sanctuary
12. Richard Hebditch, Director External Affairs, Association of Charitable Foundations United Kingdom
13. Ashoka Fellow Shaun Loney, Founder and Executive Director, BUILD & Aki Energy
14. Ashoka Fellow Lauren McNamara, Founder/Director, Recess Project; Ryerson University, Simon Fraser University
15. Sheila North, Former Grand Chief of Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak, Director of Strategic Partnerships at Legacy Bowes
16. Ashoka Fellow Will Prosper, Founder, Hoodstock
17. Alex Ryan, SVP Partner Solutions, MaRS Discovery District
18. Peggy Sailler, Executive Director, Network of European Foundations
19. Ashoka Fellow Tonya Surman, CEO, Centre for Social Innovation
20. Max von Abendroth, Executive Director, Donors and Foundations Networks in Europe
21. Diana Wells, President Emerita, Leadership Team, Global Impact at Ashoka

Ashoka Fellows Engaged in the Collaborative Innovation Workshops

1. Paul Born, Co-CEO, Tamarack Institute
2. Jeff Cyr, Managing Partner, Raven Indigenous Capital Partners
3. Ilona Douherty, Managing Director, Youth & Innovation Research Project, University of Waterloo
4. Tatiana Fraser, Co-Founder, MetaLab and The Systems Sanctuary

Foundation Academy for Collaboration Pilot Members

1. Claude Pinard, Mirella and Lino Saputo Foundation
2. Lori Hewson, Suncor Energy Foundation
3. Tim Cormode, Power to Give
4. Kim Anderson, Hewitt Foundation
5. Jehad Aliweiwi, Laidlaw Foundation
6. Marcel Lauziere, Lawson Foundation
7. Allan Northcott, Max Bell Foundation
8. Jean-Marc Mangin, Philanthropic Foundations Canada

ASHOKA CANADA

www.ashokacanada.org