

# THE SHIFT CENTRE FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

Activity Report (2022-2023)

SHIFT  
SHIFT  
SHIFT  
centre for  
social transformation  
CONCORDIA





## SHIFT VISION

To be a transformative collaboration ecosystem where diverse people, communities, and organizations work together to address major societal challenges and create a more just, inclusive, and broadly prosperous Montreal.

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# SHIFT



## MESSAGE FROM THE SENIOR DIRECTOR

Back in early 2019, when the SHIFT ball was just getting rolling, we only had 1 full-time staff person, an Interim Leadership Team comprised of 12 internal stakeholders and no real activities to speak of. Despite just getting started, what we did have back then was a vision. Inspired by your interest in encouraging the university to take on more work that was impact-oriented and community-led, we dreamt of a future where community ideas and expertise were paired with university resources to make Montreal more just, inclusive, and broadly prosperous.

In the years since these initial conversations, we've been on a continual path of growth and experimentation. Today, we find ourselves operating at full capacity with a diverse team of 5.5 permanent staff members and an equal number of part-time employees to support our work.

Our leadership has expanded to a dynamic participatory governance model with 27 active members representing a multitude of university and community stakeholders. Our activities have grown to include funding programs, event series, partnership building, internship placements, and space sharing.

Most importantly, we've supported over 40 projects who in turn have made notable impacts on a variety of social issues, ranging from waste management to mental health, to post-carceral reintegration.

In the pages that follow, you will read about the outcomes of our most recent year of operations, with highlights including the opening of our new collaborative space in downtown Montreal, the expansion and ongoing evaluation of our governance model, and our pivot towards investing more deeply in the highest potential projects in our ecosystem. I hope you'll enjoy discovering what we've been up to over the past 12 months.

I can't wait to continue the good work we've started and to see what possibilities we are able to unlock in the year ahead!

Sincerely,

**Susan Edey**

Senior Director, Community Engagement and Social Impact



## HIGHLIGHTS FROM YEAR 4

### Fall 2022

- The new Deep Investment Fund program (DIF) is announced to SHIFT's Learning Community.
- The second batch of Gateway projects participate in a redesigned Horizons Learning Journey.
- Staff and Steering Committee members travel to Halifax to present SHIFT's governance model at the International Social Innovation Research Conference.
- SHIFT interns are invited to participate in a series of workshops to complement their experiential learning.
- The SHIFT Centre officially opens its doors with a launch week filled with activities, including the first Learning Community Showcase.
- Co-working days begin with desk space available two days every week for internal and external community members working towards social change.
- The Clear and Aligned Coaching program concludes its inaugural edition with rave reviews from the participants.
- The final report of the "Transforming Montreal in Time of Crisis" research project is released at a public event.

## Winter 2023

- Akina Matsuo joins the SHIFT team as the Ecosystem Activation Coordinator, replacing Elisabeth Cramer during her parental leave.
- The Learning Community Showcase series continues with events held on the first Tuesday of each month.
- The DIF selection jury decides on the first 3 recipients of the Deep Investment Fund, while the OCG selection jury awards additional funding to 1 project team.
- Interest in the internship program continues to increase, resulting in our highest number of student placements to date.
- SHIFT's Impact Evaluation launches with a series of interviews and focus groups.

## Spring/summer 2023

- SHIFT hosts its first Governance Learning Lab for other community members interested in participatory governance.
- Our selection juries continue their work, choosing 5 new projects through the Gateway Program; awarding funding renewals to 5 projects through the OCG, and investing in 1 additional project through the DIF.
- Staff travel to Thunder Bay to present about the Impact Evaluation, the Governance Evaluation and the CELFIS collaboration at the Community-College-University (C2U) Exposition.
- The governance evaluation concludes with a series of recommendations developed by the Governance Hub.
- The Steering Committee meets for their annual retreat and decides on a new strategic orientation: "Connecting to Amplify."
- Staff engage in a strategic and annual planning process to integrate this new orientation into their Year 5 plans.

## Celebrating new milestones!

- \$300,000+ awarded through 3 different funding programs.
- 5 new projects welcomed into our Learning Community.
- 50+ events hosted at the SHIFT Centre.
- 125+ individuals used our collaborative space during co-working days.
- 70+ students accessed experiential learning opportunities through a total of 99 internships.
- 4 project teams clarified their mission and vision through our coaching program.
- 900+ followers reached through SHIFT's social media platforms.
- 8 conferences attended; 4 presentations given about SHIFT's work.
- 2 new program-area hubs and 16 new stakeholders added to our governance committees.
- 30+ community members participated in collaborative decision-making.

## STAFF UPDATE: WELCOMING 7 NEW TEAM MEMBERS DURING YEAR 4

### Full-time staff

- **Akina Matsuo**, Ecosystem Activation Coordinator - Works to develop meaningful relationships for SHIFT by bringing together a diversity of actors from within and outside Concordia to collectively work on social transformation. Akina is currently replacing Elisabeth Cramer during her parental leave.
- **Emma Harake**, Space and Events Coordinator - Responsible for the structures and processes to ensure that the SHIFT Centre becomes a vibrant, welcoming place for the diverse and engaged members of the SHIFT community. She also leads the development and execution of activities that brings the space to life. This is a new position tied to the opening of our new space.
- **Richenda Grazette**, Funding and Evaluation Coordinator - Oversees the funding programs and works to create innovative and accessible granting opportunities for socially transformative projects. She also leads and coordinates the Impact Evaluation model.
- **Ludvine Kodjane**, Administrative Assistant - Oversees the administrative and financial processes for both SHIFT and the Office of Community Engagement.

### Part-time staff

- **Lena Andres** works as the Evaluation Program Assistant. They support Richenda in developing and implementing all the phases of the SHIFT's Impact Evaluation model.
- **Abigail Cole** is the Communications and Events Assistant. She creates content for SHIFT's social media and supports other communications efforts.
- **Valentina Plata** supports Emma in the role of Events and Operations Assistant. She works at the SHIFT's welcome desk where she acts as a key person to welcome our community members in our space.



## **A COLLABORATIVE SPACE IN THE HEART OF CONCORDIA'S DOWNTOWN CAMPUS**

Our vision for the SHIFT Centre embodies the value of bringing people together to spark new ideas, and connecting different individuals and groups to amplify their impact as they join resources and forces. We are pleased to see this vision continue to come to fruition thanks to the contribution of our new physical location.

As we approach a successful first year in our space, we are proud to see the SHIFT Centre evolving into a convening and learning space, where transformative initiatives within the university and beyond are supported.

Since its official inauguration in early November 2022, the SHIFT Centre has been the scene of countless opportunities to create meaningful connections, for collaborations and skills sharing between members of our community and the wider ecosystem of social transformation.

After a few quieter months following the opening, during which staff and community members tested the space's possibilities, we were excited to see more and more individuals and organizations reaching out to SHIFT to use the space by the end of the Winter semester.

As we are about to enter our second year in our new home, our hope is to continue implementing processes to cultivate a shared sense of ownership and to solidify the space as a resource that our community members and partners can rely on to support their social transformation efforts.

## **Rich and diverse programming**

Whether through events organized by our partners or through our own programming, having easy access to a collaborative space has greatly enhanced SHIFT's ability to foster collaboration across differences and sustain strong relationships.

The following are some examples of how the space has been used throughout the year.

## **ACTIVITIES LED BY SHIFT**

### **Co-working Days**

Members of the SHIFT community, Concordians, and the broader public working on social change and community engaged projects were invited to drop in and use SHIFT's collaborative space every Tuesday and Thursday.

### **Lunch and Learn: SHIFT Learning Community Showcase**

On the first Tuesday of the month, members of SHIFT funded projects came to present their work, talk about their learning and share how they are tackling systemic change. By means of an open conversation format, these events created space for speakers and participants to engage in deeper exchange and learn from each other.

### **Learning and Reflection (Internship Program)**

Each term, SHIFT organized four events as part of a series of workshops for students enrolled in our internship program. Participants were convened to reflect on their experiential learning experience with one another and to learn more about social transformation.

## **ACTIVITIES LED BY OUR FUNDED PROJECTS**

### **Harambec**

Harambec, a new Black feminist collective funded through the Deep Investment Fund, held a press conference in our space to announce their creation. The event filled the space with Concordians, activists, and community organizers from across Montreal.

Additionally, Harambec hosted a Black Feminist Summer Camp at SHIFT. The programming included seven workshops led by Black feminist leaders and experts exploring topics such as wellness, mental health, self-love and activism.

### **Concordia Precious Plastic (CP3)**

CP3, a student initiative to repurpose plastic waste on campus, hosted workshops to outline the environmental issues with 3D printing and to share tips on how to reduce plastic waste. CP3 presented these events in collaboration with the Canadian Society for Mechanical Engineers, Concordia chapter.

### **The Decolonial Perspectives and Practices (DPP) Hub**

The DPP Hub hosted a series of "Decolonial Chats" bringing together like-minded peers to exchange on the lands they come from, their journey's belonging within higher education, and ways to challenge the status quo. Together, participants unpacked methods to maintain wellness, passion and hope while striving for institutional change.





## ACTIVITIES LED BY OUR PARTNERS

### **First Peoples Studies course**

Students enrolled in the Advanced Topics class in First Peoples Studies convened every week in our conference room, occasionally moving to the kitchen making food together. This unique use of the space provided significant opportunities to integrate decolonial teaching structures.

### **Pop-Up Art Hives**

Hosted monthly by the Concordia Art Hive, these events are welcoming spaces for exploring creativity, socializing, sharing skills and building communities. Participants had the opportunity to connect with other individuals and to discover the SHIFT space.

### **Social Justice Fellows Lunchtime Seminars**

A series of talks organized by Concordia's Social Justice Centre; these lunchtime seminars were opportunities to engage in meaningful conversations led by the Graduate Fellows. Recurrently once a month, each event addressed a different justice-oriented topic.

### **Accelerating Social-Ecological Projects Workshop**

Concordia's Next Generation Cities Institute hosted a workshop for delegates from across Europe about the social and ecological transformation of the built environment.

### **Coming Together Series: Say Less/ Say More**

Coming Together is a series of events aimed at supporting and creating community for Concordia Indigenous and racialized faculty and staff members. The program comprised two streams: "Say Less," a monthly coworking space inviting people to meet in the SHIFT space, and "Say More," a monthly lunchtime get-together involving a community facilitator. The series was led by Concordia's Equity Office in partnership with the Office of Community Engagement (OCE) and SHIFT.



## **A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO FUNDING DISBURSEMENT**

Since our pilot year, in which we received guidance from our Program Evaluation Working Group, SHIFT has been investing in an agile and resilient funding structure to better support social transformation.

Over the years, we have continued to redesign and adopt models that are low burden for applicants while allowing our various juries to engage with project proposals in a collaborative decision-making environment.

In Year 4, we continued our experimental approach anchored in humility and openness, where community members and Concordians collaborated on making decisions at all levels of our funding programs.

### **Investing with intention**

This year, our funding programs were redesigned to create more profound and tailored relationships with our funded project teams. We continued offering different pathways for financial support to community-led projects, while being intentional with the capacity required to meaningfully accompany teams.

While we have funded over 40 projects since our pilot year, in Year 4, we only welcomed five new projects to our ecosystem. These new projects came through a redesigned version of the Gateway Program. Teams received \$5,000 to support their work while also joining a peer-based mentorship program, through which they were paired with existing SHIFT members.

We also expanded the Ongoing Connections Grant (OCG), increasing funding to a maximum of \$10,000 available per eligible team. The OCG is a renewable resource for previously funded projects that remain tightly connected with the SHIFT ecosystem and are actively continuing work that aligns with our mission and values.

Lastly, as a key component of our strategic orientation for Year 4, we introduced the Deep Investment Fund (DIF). With this new approach, we allocated more substantial funding to projects that had reached a stage of readiness where they could leverage SHIFT and Concordia resources to amplify their work. The pilot edition supported four projects across various areas of focus, allocating \$50,000 to each, with the possibility for a one-time renewal.

## FUNDED PROJECTS – YEAR 4

### Gateway Program: \$25,000 – 5 projects

The Gateway Program provides an entry point into the SHIFT ecosystem for community-based projects committed to combating systemic inequity, injustice and unsustainability.

- **Estran - Quebec Transitional Services Portal**

Concordia's Community-University Research Exchange (CURE) is developing Estran – Quebec Transitional Services Portal. The service will help to address the gaps identified by the transgender community in accessing transition services, including mental health, medical and juridical services.

In the first phase of the project, Estran will design roadmaps to support the development of an application aimed at sharing reliable and user-friendly content and information about relevant services for the transgender community.

- **Kapwa Rising**

Kapwa Rising aims to foster and strengthen community care within the Filipinx diaspora in Montreal.

Through participatory workshops the team will create space for decolonizing mental health, addressing anti-Asian racism and exploring the experiences of migration.

This project is a first step in the long-term vision of developing a network of individuals committed to the collective well-being of the Filipinx community through solidarity, advocacy, and mutual aid.

- **The Welcome Haven**

Welcome Haven tackles the challenges faced by refugee claimants with a community-based approach to promote well-being and support upon their arrival and integration.

Working with a multidisciplinary team of social workers, art therapists, community workers, and researchers, Welcome Haven provides comprehensive support and emergency assistance to address the social and health challenges faced by claimants.

- **Press Start Employment Initiative (PSEI)**

PSEI is a mentorship program that looks to address the needs of marginalized youth in the Pointe-Saint-Charles neighbourhood, through fostering community and transforming youth's access to employment opportunities.

The PSEI program pairs youth with mentors that guide them through different positions with work placements in Batiment 7, in Pointe-Saint-Charles, and around the greater Montreal area. The program also offers weekly workshops and check ins to engage in collective learning and decision making, and to enrich their educational experience gained through internship placements.

- **Chinatown Reimagined Forum**

The Chinatown Reimagined Forum 2023 is a three-day event that took place in Montreal from September 28 to 30, 2023.

The conference has the overarching objective of envisioning a new future for Chinatowns across North America. The organizing team will work on mobilizing and bringing together community stakeholders, urban planners, social housing professionals, policymakers, government officials, and change makers from across North America to share innovation, best practices, and current knowledge.

## Ongoing Connections Grant (OCG): \$55,000 – 6 projects

The OCG allows SHIFT to keep supporting projects through their long-term journey for social transformation.

- **I know why the caged bird sings**

This project addresses the challenges that formerly incarcerated Black men face as they attempt to successfully transition back into society. Stemming from learning from the previously funded project, this portion of the work will focus on developing a printed pamphlet with re-entry needs and resources for individuals exiting prison.

- **Hamidou Horticulture**

This OCG renewal for Hamidou Horticulture will support the development of a network of strong Afro-descendant communities. The network will offer workshops, training, and horticultural coaching, and will support the organization of volunteer days during which locals can come and learn in groups and share their harvest.

- **Black Mental Health Connections (BMHC)**

BMHC will expand their Peer Support Program into a Care Network Program to provide a combination of clinical care options to participants in addition to facilitating peer support. BMHC hopes to recruit other practicum students as facilitators and open new groups based on the intersections of the facilitator or on the therapy option they can provide (e.g., drama, music, arts, etc.).

- **Brick by Brick (BxB)**

BxB will build on the success of the previously funded project, The Freedom Workshops, to continue supporting communities living in the Parc-Extension neighbourhood with resources and networks. They hope to develop a better understanding of local needs and aspirations, nurture grassroots leadership and coordinate various forms of collective action.

- **enuf**

*enuf* will expand on their in-schools composting pilot program launched in Laurier Macdonald High School. They are also growing the team to include Concordia professor experts and members from other schools. The team will continue to advocate for and inspire broader systemic transformation in the waste management sector through communication campaigns targeting parents, principals, school boards and municipalities.

- **CultivAction**

CultivAction will work with the Comité de vie de quartier Duff-Court (COVIQ) to continue to transfer the day-to-day management of the Duff-Court Urban Farm to new leaders. The project will hire an additional community member to provide help with the farm. CultivAction will assist the new Duff-Court team with crop planning, regular farm visits to provide advice and seedlings grown at the Concordia Greenhouse.

## Deep Investment Fund (DIF): \$200,000 – 4 projects

The DIF is SHIFT's newest and biggest funding opportunity, focused on developing deeper relationships and providing more substantial support to the most socially transformative projects in our ecosystem.

- **The Community Care Practitioner Program – Black Healing Centre**

Based on Dr. Lisa Ndejuru's research and insights from its own mental health support programs, the Black Healing Centre (BHC) has identified gaps in mental health support for Black communities in Montreal. These gaps are particularly associated with a shortage of Black practitioners and the challenge of reconciling traditional mental health practices with community care rooted in the Black community's history and culture.

To address this, BHC is launching the Community Care Practitioner Program, intended as a formal training in decolonial, anti-racist, and afro-positive approaches to racial trauma and community health.

The program will help expand the pool of Black practitioners serving Montreal's Black communities and provide a peer support space for practitioners navigating the lines between colonized and cultural mental health practices.

- **Harambec**

The term "Harambec," coined by Shirley Small, situates the African principle of self-help "Harambee" in the lives of Black women and their families in Quebec.

Harambec is the next progression of work from the SHIFT funded project "Parcours des Femmes Noires dans le milieu féministe Québécois," through which Marlihan Lopez and Jade Almeida documented the mechanisms of exclusion and oppression of Black women within organizations and the Quebec Feminist movement.

Now, joined by Pauline Lomami and working with Concordia's Simone de Beauvoir Institute, the Black Perspectives Office, the Feminist Media Studio, and the Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling, the team is expanding the scope of the project by launching a Black feminist collective to continue fighting against the systemic erasure and violence experienced by Black women and gender-expansive people in Quebec institutions.

- **Tkà:nios**

"Once we are in charge of our food ways, the rest fall into place: socially, economically and politically".

Tkà:nios, which means "it grows" in Kanien'keháka, brings together a group of women, including Elders and Concordia students, to work towards Indigenizing and *re-matriating* the lands and gardens in the Kahnawake community. Through hands-on activities focused on low-impact, sustainable, and seasonal living practices, the project creates ground for the community to foster a more harmonious relationship with its natural environment.

- **Community Healing Days**

While hands-based healing modalities have a long history of offering holistic support to physical and mental wellness, they remain mainly accessible to those who have the privilege to benefit from private insurance and considerable wealth.

Community Healing Days (CHD) will build upon previous work to run specialist clinics addressing transpeople healthcare, perinatal health, and reproductive and menstrual care. The team will use these clinics to create a proof of concept with the goal of reforming Quebec's health care system.



## **A YEAR OF OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT PEOPLE, EXPERTISE, AND IDEAS.**

SHIFT's journey has been guided by our deep commitment to nurturing meaningful relationships across diverse communities. Over the past years, we've experienced firsthand the transformative power of collaboration, connecting individuals with diverse perspectives and expertise to tackle social issues that impact us all.

As we prioritize relationships built on trust and reciprocity, we also recognize that fostering such bonds takes time and investment to flourish. This is why, over the last year, we have embraced a more committed approach, devoting more resources to deepening and enriching relationships with our ecosystem. At the same time, we challenged ourselves to invest more time in exchanging ideas and expertise with other social transformation actors, participating in key conferences and contributing to other knowledge mobilization efforts.

### **IN-KIND SUPPORT**

#### **Clear and Aligned Coaching Program**

The pilot edition of the Clear and Aligned Coaching Program, led by Lise Palmer, an expert in organizational culture and strategy, came to a successful conclusion last fall. Four project teams received coaching and support over a six-month period to help them clarify and activate their organizational mission, vision, and values. Participants found the process to be high-value and appreciated the chance to connect and work with other social change organizations.

## Deep Investment support

For the Deep Investment Fund (DIF), we looked for projects already in our ecosystem that were on track to progress to the next level. We aimed for projects ready to expand on their previous work or organizational structure, to take their work out into the world and share their expertise, or with a desire to pursue the embedding of their projects and models into formal institutions like Concordia.

Here is an overview of our collaboration with the teams funded through the DIF:

- Harambec is working on establishing its governance and fund management structure. The team is being accompanied by two members of the SHIFT ecosystem: Princess Symonds, a member of the Ecosystem Activation Hub, and Alysha Maxwell-Sarasua, a member of the Fund Disbursement Hub.
- Conversations are in progress with the Concordia Greenhouse to facilitate a knowledge exchange with the Tkà:nios team. Furthermore, we are working to connect the team with engineering students, with the hope of initiating a Capstone project. This project would involve students designing plans for a solar greenhouse, informed by Indigenous perspectives and priorities.
- The Black Healing Centre is collaborating with a student specializing in Educational Technology to develop a curriculum for their Community Care Practitioner Program. We are also establishing connections with the Applied Human Sciences Department to explore the possibility of obtaining Concordia University accreditation for participants in the program.

## COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH

In December, the report of the community-based action research led by Dr. Jen Gobby, “Transforming Montreal in Time of Crisis”, was released. The report amplifies the voices of over 30 community groups and grassroots initiatives. It sheds light on the challenges and opportunities faced by these organizers when collaborating with municipalities and city officials as they try to advance systemic change during the pandemic.

[The report](#) now lives online on a website designed through a collaboration with students from Concordia’s Design Lab.

## INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

SHIFT’s internship program serves a dual purpose of providing [experiential learning opportunities](#) for Concordia students while increasing operational capacity for our community-led initiatives.

Every term, we keep being inspired by the shared experience for both our interns and the host organizations.

We take pride in this model, which creates opportunities for students to contribute to social causes close to their hearts while also receiving financial compensation. Likewise, we are pleased to offer an additional pathway of support to our project teams, who often work with limited staff capacity.

This year's highlights:

- SHIFT funded a total of 99 internships: 70 Concordia students were welcomed by 27 project teams for roles that lasted 1 or 2 terms.
- Students were primarily from the Faculty of Arts and Science, but students from the Gina Cody School of Engineering, the Faculty of Fine Arts and the John Molson School of Business also participated.
- We experienced a significant uptake in demand for interns from our project teams, this resulted in a 55% increase in the number of students placed this year compared to the year before, with corresponding budget implications.
- Our offer to students has been enhanced by the addition of the Learning and Reflection program, a series of events where interns come together to learn more about social transformation and reflect on their respective internship experiences.

## **CONFERENCES AND KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION**

This year, our staff members have made significant efforts to connect with the broader social transformation ecosystem. Here's an overview of the events and activities we've participated in.

### **International Social Innovation Research Conference (ISIRC)**

In September, staff, and representatives from some of SHIFT's governing bodies collaborated to present the learnings that are emerging through our experimentation with participatory governance. The intent was to present alternative governance both as a form of social innovation in and of itself and as the ground in which socially innovative practices are most likely to take root.

### **C2 Montreal 2022 conference**

Also in September, our Communications Coordinator participated in the C2 Montreal 2022 conference. A place of exchange and sharing under the theme of creativity and innovation, this edition was particularly focused on the influence of human potential within Montreal organizations. Many fruitful exchanges were made, and it was an opportunity to talk about SHIFT and our vision for a more just and equitable Montreal.

### **W100 Annual Conference**

In October, Concordia senior administration invited a group of 80 delegates from universities from North America and the United Kingdom to tour SHIFT as part of the 2022 W100 conference: "Connecting the Future: Connectivity and Innovation in University Reputation." It was a great opportunity for SHIFT to develop our story for an external audience and to be centred in the university's communication efforts.





### **Philanthropic Foundations Canada Conference (PFC)**

Also in October, our Funding Coordinator participated in the Philanthropic Foundations Canada Conference. It was an avenue for SHIFT to be acquainted with the current philanthropic trends and with what the sector is advocating for. In addition, our presence allowed us to see the potential for SHIFT to speak at this type of conference, to share the knowledge we have gained through our participatory funding model.

### **Community-College University Exposition (C2U Expo)**

In June, SHIFT visited Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario, for the annual C2U Expo, a week-long conference dedicated to community-based research and community-campus engagement. Members of our staff and participatory governance committees had the opportunity to connect with and be inspired by individuals from across Canada working on community-based research.

SHIFT staff led presentations where we shared insights from the Governance evaluation research, presented the design process of our ongoing Impact Evaluation, and highlighted the impact of the SHIFT-funded CELFIS program.

### **The Great Transition Conference**

In May, Akina and Stephanie gave a workshop at the La Grande Transition Conference held at Concordia. The workshop, titled “Experimenting with decolonial approaches to grant-making and resource distribution” showcased some of the ways that SHIFT is experimenting with shared governance, participatory funding, and non-hierarchical internal operating practices with the intention of moving away from replicating dominant power dynamics.

### **Acfas (Association francophone pour le savoir)**

In June, our Funding and Evaluation Coordinator presented at an event organized by PhilLab during the Acfas annual congress. At the congress, Richenda introduced SHIFT’s shared decision-making model for participatory grant-making. In addition, she was joined by Kristen Young, a member of the BMHC and the SHIFT steering committee, to record a podcast series where they discussed governance models within the context of decolonizing resource distribution.

### **Université d’été féministe d’Afrique de l’Ouest et du Centre (UEFAOC)**

In August, our Communications Coordinator attended the inaugural edition of the Université d’été féministe d’Afrique de l’Ouest et du Centre hosted in Dakar (Senegal). The conference united Afro-feminists and activists from diverse backgrounds, providing a platform to engage in discussions and enrich collective understanding under the theme “Leveraging research to guide strategies and co-construction of our activist identity.”

In addition, the conference featured talks from two members of the SHIFT-funded project Harambec, Marlihan Lopez and Jade Almeida, who respectively spoke on panels addressing intersectionality in feminism research and women and sexuality.



## **A COMMITMENT TO SHARING LEADERSHIP AND POWER AMONG THE COMMUNITY.**

We continue our commitment to building systems that enable community leadership and shared power and have seen a lot of momentum in this area. In addition to the high volume of applications we received during this year's governance recruitment, the enthusiastic reaction to our governance model at the International Social Innovation Research Conference reinforces to us how important and innovative our experimentation in this field is.

Over the past year, we've onboarded 16 new governance members and launched two new program hubs. We are also proud to have successfully completed the evaluation of SHIFT's governance model, which highlighted some interesting recommendations that we will be implementing from Year 5 onwards.

### **STEERING COMMITTEE**

The Steering Committee welcomed four new members this fall and continued their work of leading SHIFT's strategic orientations through bi-monthly meetings on topics such as evaluation, budgeting, and future planning.

Members continue to appreciate the rich exchanges between the different expertise, perspectives, and disciplines of the committee, which brings together community members, activists, students, academics and professionals.

As one member commented, "As a researcher and student, I read about decoloniality, inclusion and diversity, and I'm passionate about learning more. But being involved in SHIFT gives me access to other kinds of learning - it's an opportunity to apply what we learn." The ability to create a safe and open environment where differing opinions can be heard, valued, and inform decisions about SHIFT's future is essential to our continued shared learning about collaborating across differences.

## PROGRAM AREA HUBS

### **Collaborative Space Hub**

The newly formed Collaborative Space Hub is working to ensure that our collaboration space grows into a valuable resource for the SHIFT community, Concordians and the wider social transformation ecosystem.

### **Ecosystem Activation Hub**

Members of the newly formed Ecosystem Activation hub come together to share their expertise and networks to identify opportunities for mutually beneficial collaboration between SHIFT project teams and relevant actors within and beyond Concordia.

### **Fund Disbursement Hub**

This well-established hub continues to nourish the direction and orientation of SHIFT's funding programs, enhancing transparency and accessibility.

The hub undertook an in-depth review of different stakeholders' experiences of applying for and deciding on SHIFT funding, identifying key strengths and challenges. One of the key areas of focus identified by the hub was the need to move away from the project-based funding model and towards a more holistic structure that would consider the potential of a group or organization.

Moving forward, our intention is to discontinue project-based assessments for future funding renewals and new disbursement programs.


### **Governance Hub**

Since SHIFT's inception, an integral part of its mission has been to establish an internal structure that enables community actors to take leadership in decision-making concerning the Centre's mandate and the allocation of its resources. Indeed, an essential aspect of SHIFT's uniqueness lies in its collaborative, community-oriented governance structure, nested within the existing hierarchy of a post-secondary educational institution.

A main project of the Governance Hub over the last year has been the completion of an evaluation aimed at clarifying the extent to which the model is successfully reaching our objectives. In collaboration with hub member Dr. Cheryl Gladu, a specialist in dynamic governance systems, the group carried out an evaluation designed to improve the governance model's effectiveness by identifying gaps and creating opportunities for those involved in governance to collaboratively identify solutions.

Analyzing the findings of the evaluation, the SHIFT governance hub members identified three priorities for the year to come:

1. Increase opportunities for hub members to connect, build relationships and exchange information across hubs.
2. Develop additional visual representations of SHIFT's governance model, to make information about our systems and processes more accessible and transparent to the whole SHIFT community.
3. Offer resources for hubs to establish more clarity around their internal processes, to help identify the difference between when members are making binding decisions about strategy and processes, and when they are offering advice and diverse perspectives to inform operational decisions.



In the upcoming months, we will make a full evaluation report available on the SHIFT website. In addition, we will be developing some simple visual communication materials to celebrate our achievements and share our learnings with our community members.

With increasing invitations for speaking and writing engagements about our governance work, it is clear that the wider social transformation community is eager to explore positive and successful models of how to integrate diverse perspectives and community leadership in decision-making. We look forward to continuing to grow our experiment and share our learnings over the year to come.

## **AN EMERGING METHOD FOR EVALUATING OUR IMPACT.**

SHIFT initiated a comprehensive evaluation this year to explore our relational impact and our role in fostering unlikely alliances and, ideally, trust between community actors and Concordia University.

The development of SHIFT's Impact Evaluation framework involved three distinct phases of consultation with various stakeholders, with the actual evaluation set for fall 2023.

- In the first phase (October 2022), the Steering Committee engaged in defining impact. SHIFT staff led the committee through an exercise examining different models of systems change, with the goal of identifying personal changes they had experienced through their involvement with SHIFT. From this, the staff formulated SHIFT's Impact Hypothesis, which identified SHIFT's primary strengths as lying in building relationships, reshaping power dynamics, navigating institutions, and influencing mental models.
- Phase two (March 2023) involved consultations with project teams to define the approach and commitments. Six project teams participated in discussions about successful relationships with SHIFT, openness to criticism, and desired outcomes from the evaluation process.
- Phase three (May 2023) introduced a Stakeholder Roundtable to pilot the evaluation's storytelling methodology. Participants were invited to map their journeys through SHIFT, highlighting touch points, participation, and impacts. This day-long event, involving 12 ecosystem members, generated initial data and feedback for the development of the evaluation tool, and refined facilitation techniques.
- The fourth and final phase, the evaluation, will be conducted in November 2023, utilizing insights from the preceding phases. The evaluation will involve focus group sessions and a digital survey to collect data from SHIFT ecosystem members, including governance, funded projects, and interns.

The evaluation process has already yielded some key insights. The data suggests a strong positive correlation between the number of "touch points" individuals or groups have with SHIFT and the level of clarity they have about its mission, and the strength of the positive impacts they feel. Community members and partners have expressed a lack of clarity about SHIFT's mission and offerings. Despite this, participants consistently cite relationships, skills, and capacity building as the main benefits of their experience with SHIFT.



## **A PURPOSEFUL ORIENTATION FOR THE YEAR AHEAD: CONNECTING TO AMPLIFY**


Following the annual retreat of this year's Steering Committee, and in response to the fundamental question, "What role does SHIFT play in advancing social transformation?" members have articulated our Year 5 orientation as "Connecting for Amplify."

Under this orientation, SHIFT will leverage its resources and position to help project teams create and strengthen the relationships required to take the social transformation aspects of their work to the next level. Where possible, SHIFT's programming will be focused and oriented towards supporting this orientation from various angles.

Leaning on its strength in relational impact, SHIFT is moving away from generalized support, administrative or service provision, towards being a proactive partner in systems change. This implies implementing approaches that cater to multi-level relationship building, convening, influence to help policy proposals get adopted into practice, changing resource flows, and building the specific capacities required for systems change.

This orientation implies four main objectives for which we will start laying the foundations in Year 5, with the aim of achieving them by the end of Year 7.

1. Members of SHIFT's ecosystem have built clusters or coalitions to combine and create tools, networks, and knowledge to harness their complementary powers to change systems.
2. Members of SHIFT's ecosystem have an increased understanding of social transformation and their power and abilities to create change within those systems.
3. Community actors and structural power holders are working alongside one another towards integrating policies, actions, and alternative models inspired by the work led by SHIFT's partners.
4. Members of SHIFT's larger ecosystem are informed, engaged, and supported in being collaborators towards social transformation.



The following is an overview of how this new orientation will be deployed across SHIFT's program areas.

**Objective 1: Lateral convening to build stronger movements.**

SHIFT engages in uniting likely allies through lateral convening both within and across different systems change sectors.

Key activities:

- Launch of a new pilot fund to support coalitions and collaboratives.
- Encourage organizations that are accessing training through SHIFT's in-kind support to mutualize their learning with other project teams.
- Continue the matching of new projects from the Gateway Program with preexisting funded projects in a peer mentorship program.
- Work with project teams directly to connect them to other teams or units at Concordia that will support sustainability and impact.

**Objective 2: Collective learning for systems change through amplifying community-based knowledge.**

Through collaborations with community experts, documenting and sharing learning from our project team partners, SHIFT will offer learning opportunities that mobilize knowledge around systemic change from across and beyond our ecosystem.

Key activities:

- Host monthly Learning Community Showcase events, where project teams present their approach to systems change.
- Offer public-facing training on skill building for social transformation in partnership with other groups.
- Host a Keynote Speaker Series with speakers selected by Deep Investment Fund project teams.
- Support project teams in hosting their own workshops and public-facing events at SHIFT.
- Host governance Skill Share events.
- Launch of a new representation of SHIFT's governance model.

### **Objective 3: Vertical convening to amplify grassroots impact.**

SHIFT engages in uniting unlikely allies through vertical convening both within and across different systems change sectors. SHIFT will work to facilitate access to levers of power through bridge building and capacity building. We will also establish structures and approaches that address societal power dynamics by prioritizing the allocation of resources and space to community actors.

Key activities:

- Acquire an understanding of what vertical influence means and the role SHIFT can take in the process. This involves conducting research on relevant cases, engaging with community and institutional figures to gather insights on their vertical convening experiences and identify key allies within Concordia.
- Work alongside interested project teams to experiment with approaches for vertical influence.
- Utilize communications to target power holders (reframe the website, launch a LinkedIn account for SHIFT).
- Create opportunities for power holders to take part in specific events and discussions at SHIFT.
- Integrate vertical convening goals with learning objectives for two public events that are oriented towards building relationships with traditional power holders.

### **Objective 4: Nurtured and engaged ecosystem**

SHIFT will continue to maintain regular operations that are anchored in SHIFT's values and structure, while being dynamic in offering multiple avenues for engagement.

Key activities:

- Continue communicating openly about SHIFT's activities.
- Align communications content with SHIFT orientation as a convener.
- Continue to facilitate governance processes and meetings.
- Organize recurrent opportunities for connections across hubs.
- Finalize SHIFT's Impact Evaluation.
- Launch of a new In-Kind Capacity Support Fund for previously funded project teams.
- Re-scope and revamp the Internship program to fit within budget constraints.
- Maintain a calendar of programming that includes SHIFT events, project teams and partner events.