

WeavEast

We are a collection of individuals and organizations committed to working together to create positive social change in Atlantic Canada.

Our story

There is no shortage of work aimed at finding ways to address social problems, injustices and inequalities in Atlantic Canada. New projects, organizations and leaders are emerging that are advocating for different and better ways of tackling tough issues so that we can all have a better life. Despite this energy, more can be done to connect efforts so that we can learn from our experiences, align work for greater impact, and scale successful endeavours. **It is from this thinking that #WeavEast emerged.**

In early May 2019 a diverse group of 25 people from across Atlantic Canada spent 4 days at Windhorse Farm in Nova Scotia, to explore how to work together to create a better future for people in the region. We chose to meet in nature in acknowledgement of the land that connects us.

Those invited were recommended by their peers as inspired change-makers with a collaborative mindset. During the gathering, the group explored possibilities for working collectively, guiding principles, potential value of the ecosystem, and governance options for working horizontally.

At the end of the day, **WeavEast is about coordinating conversations across the region to move important work to action more quickly**, and to leverage this action to attract larger and broader support. **This gathering was just the beginning.** Read on to find out more about what was discussed, who was involved, what's next, and how to get involved!

*Do you want to be a part of a growing movement of change makers in Atlantic Canada?
Join us!*



Backbone team and Facilitation

Inspiring Communities is a not-for-profit organization in Nova Scotia that is playing a backbone role for WeavEast in its early development. Rather than taking a top-down, centralized approach to decision-making, the backbone team is supporting from behind to create a container from which an inclusive network can emerge and grow. Staff are helping to make connections with potential stakeholders, develop a framework for evaluation and learning, identify communications tools and approaches, and support those involved however needed.

An early group of advisors from the region helped to shape a proposal for supporting an ecosystem of change-makers that was funded by the McConnell Foundation. Together, these advisors recognized the importance of co-creation and shared leadership in this work. As a result, Sam Slade from Percolab was invited to be part of the facilitation team at the Windhorse gathering to share her practices related to Going Horizontal. She introduced approaches to meeting design and decision-making that engaged the collective, and which will serve as a foundation for how we work together.



Core Values and Guiding Principles

This initial gathering provided the space to think through the foundational values and principles that will guide our work together. There was great alignment in the group about what is important to have show up in the work.

This list will evolve and grow with the network, but here is where we landed as a shared starting point (in no particular order):

Think about the whole over the self: *we're working towards a common collective good*

Carry an abundance mindset - follow the spark: *Watch for and follow the energy and momentum, then adjust direction, process and structure as needed*

Be action-focused and iterative: *take risks - decisions need only be good enough for now and safe enough to try*

Focus locally, connect regionally: *we need participation, value and focus at the community and regional levels*

Allow for self-directed leadership: *people can move in and out in ways that allows them to step into work that energizes them and step back when needed*



Incorporate two-eyed seeing: *work with both traditional and western knowledge for better results*

Be truthful: *Speak truths that honour differences - they may rock boats but are the path towards positive change*

Be caring and kind: *acknowledge, embrace and work with conflict proactively - show up for each other and avoid judgment*

Hold honest accountability: *be respectful of realities (for yourself, others) that may affect how you engage and deliver*

Honour the power of storytelling: *bolster our shared efforts by telling our tales to help shift the narrative and float the boat on our tide*

Key Decisions

Together, we made two important decisions that will affect the work going forward:

1. We have a name! #WeavEast was voted on by the group with unanimous support. Going forward it will inform branding, web presence and social media.
2. A "Yoda Council" will be formed including two representatives from each province to provide wisdom and guidance. Other issue or task-focused groups can form where there is energy. The governance structure will be re-examined and adapted as needs change.



The Impact of Bringing People Together

In a follow up survey, participants reported on the most significant impacts of the gathering for them.

Here's what some had to say:

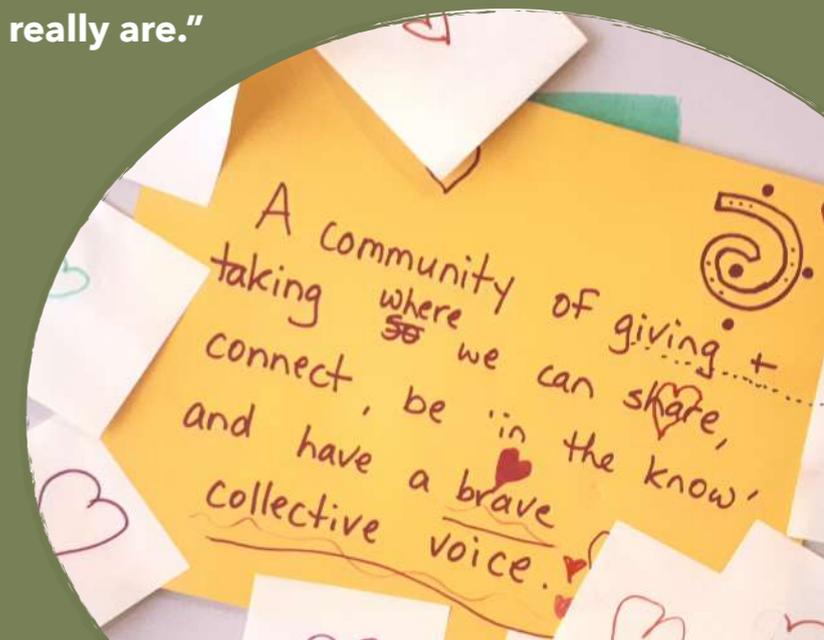
"Time for reflection in a natural setting with people who care about the Community Sector was a precious gift. **It is rare to be able to connect and reflect with peers in a focused manner**, but with no "performance pressure."

"Making connections with people dedicated to making a better world. A truly inspiring group of people. **I am humbled to be considered a peer.**"

"**I was most impressed with the group decision making.** I have used the techniques within my workplace to great success, I learned from the facilitators and believe in horizontal management structures."

"I appreciated the inclusion efforts and **willingness to go forward collectively.**"

"It prompted a lot of thought about how I want the next phase of my work to look, and what the big picture goals really are."





Next Steps

A cohort of nine fellows from across the region will engage with their local communities to collect stories, populate a system map of social innovation in the region, and discover insights about what's needed to amplify change efforts. These fellows will also work together to identify patterns and leverage points in the system. They'll be coached by the team at [The Systems Sanctuary](#) to help build their capacity for supporting an ecosystem.

The Yoda Council nominations will be completed and this group will start meeting. First steps will be to develop a collective understanding of purpose, role and focus.

Self-organized working groups will emerge on a variety of tasks and topics. Already there are people meeting in regards to the design of the fellowship, approaches to communications, and evaluation.

A communications strategy is being developed to help engage people via social media to share stories and support connections.

Want to be involved? Have an idea for a working group? Want to connect with our fellows?

Follow #WeavEast

Connect with Jennifer at the backbone team for more information!

jdecoste@inspiringcommunities.ca

Participants at the Gathering



Rachel Mathis, NB
Sackville Commons



Jason Doiron, NB
NouLAB



Julia Feltham, NB
Sackville Commons



Marcia Carroll, PEI
PEI Council of People
with Disabilities



Maggie Burton, NL
Municipal Government



Chelsey MacNeil, NL
Choices for Youth



Diedre Smith, NB
Provincial Government



Kim Nash-McKinley, NB
Saint Mary's First Nation



David Daughton, PEI
Community Sector
Network of PEI



John Kelesi, PEI
Student UPEI



Joanna Thompson, NL
The Gathering Place



Jane Severs, NL
Association of Heritage
Industries NL



Ryan Veltmeyer, NS
Youth Art Connection



Tara Taylor, NS
Emerging Lens
Cultural Film Festival



Amanda Peters, NS
Glooscap First Nation



Kevin Hopper, NS
United Way Halifax



Joshua Smee, NL
Choices for Youth



Kristie Jameson, NL
Food First NL



Carolann Harding, NL
SmartICE



Margaret Drescher, NS
Windhorse Farm



Miranda Cobb, NS
Inspiring Communities



Annika Voltan, NS
Inspiring Communities



Samantha Slade, QC
PercoLab



Jennifer DeCoste, NS
Inspiring Communities



Kate McKerlie, ON
Inspiring Communities