

Lise Palmer



PROFILE

Lise Palmer is an experienced, dynamic process consultant specializing in organizational culture. She has helped an array of clients across North America bring their values to life, align culture and strategy, and address complex challenges - from *Fortune 500* companies, to farming cooperatives, to grass-roots non-profits. Lise's approach is collaborative and rigorous, and she is known for her warm and pragmatic style.

She is the founding consultant at SPARK, a "triple bottom line" practice with a mission of helping organizations transition to more environmentally and socially sustainable models. She is also an associate of DLC (Toronto).

Academic Qualifications & Training

- **MA, Organizational Anthropology** (2017; University of Auckland)
- **MA, Human Systems Intervention** (2011, Concordia University)
- **Intern Teacher, Open Systems Theory** (2012, Residential intensive program, Concordia University)
- **90 Hour Internship, Group Dynamics** (2012, Residential intensive program, Concordia University)

Expertise

- Organizational culture concept and tools
- Complex change initiatives
- Process consultation technique
- Qualitative research, including ethnographic
- Experienced in a wide range of other tools and processes including Developmental Evaluation methods, Open Space Technology, Design Thinking, Reflective Practice, Appreciative Inquiry, Polarity Management, Immunity to Change, and Open Systems Theory

Key Professional Attributes

- Professional and thorough
- Dynamic and engaging facilitator
- Analytical thinker
- Excellent relationship builder
- Able to make theoretical concepts accessible
- Strong ability to manage complex projects
- Able to move with ease between big picture strategic thinking and pragmatic application
- Results-focused with a proven track-record

Portfolio

Core Purpose & Strategy | Eastern Shores School Board | ongoing

In collaboration with another consultant, we are helping a regional school board articulate their core purpose, vision, and values; to provide leadership coaching to the senior team; to define their strategy and priorities; and to identify their communication needs. Throughout the process, trust is built throughout the system by offering a meaningfully inclusive process to teachers, students, parents and staff.

Market Insights | Graduate Studies, Concordia University | ongoing

Partnering with [Origami Branding](#), as part of a market analysis, we are conducting qualitative research to better understand students' decision-making journeys as they consider graduate studies, particularly in today's context of covid-19, the climate crisis, equity issues and other societal changes.

Values Schism | Black Mental Health Connections | ongoing

This grassroots not-for-profit organization is experiencing a division amongst its members in terms of its vision and values. I am providing a process for the organization to choose a direction, articulate their strategy, and manage the dynamics along the way.

A Culture of Innovation | Environment and Climate Change Canada | 2021

Partnering with [Effiqua](#), we designed and delivered an intensive learning program for a group of high-powered employees from across the country over a period of six months. We combined Design Thinking with training on workplace culture to offer a program that taught participants to address workplace barriers to innovation.

Clarity of Purpose | Hands On Media Education | 2020

This organization had recently transitioned from a social enterprise to a not-for-profit format. I worked with their board of directors and senior leaders to clarify their purpose, vision and values and identify strategic priorities.

Polarity Management | Canadian Association of Midwives | 2019

To address a long-standing challenge, I used a Polarity Management framework to help management and staff members to explore the issue from multiple perspectives. We then formed a small action group who generated proposed steps to disrupt existing dynamics that aligned with the organizational culture. These steps were adopted by the organization and integrated into action plans.

Culture Insights | Concordia University, Dean of Students Office | 2018

This team wished to better engage stakeholders to improve annual Orientation / Frosh events. Using Schein's 3-Level Culture Model, we discovered a gap between the team's implicit assumptions about Orientation / Frosh as a critical entry point for new students (leading to a social impact orientation) and stakeholders' view of it as "just a party" (leading to a risk-management orientation). From this insight, we were able to develop strategies to promote effective cross-sectoral collaboration.

Culture + Strategy | Concordia University, Sexual Assault Resource Centre | 2017 - 2018

I helped the SARC understand engagement challenges they were encountering in their work to reduce sexual violence on campus. We adapted a Community Readiness tool to help us understand the university community's readiness to engage in sexual violence prevention. We were able to unearth the insight that campus stakeholders generally believe sexual violence to be something that "just happens". This insight resulted in a strategic re-orientation of their communication and education campaigns.

Culture + Structure School Redesign | NEXTSchool | 2018

7 Québec high schools were offered the opportunity to re-design themselves according to principles of progressive education. My role was to create a Design Thinking process that would be facilitated in each of seven schools by a team of 15 facilitators across eight sessions. I complemented Design Thinking with a Reflective Practice process to enable teachers to begin experimenting with and learning about cultural changes before the school designs had been finalized.

Innovation Lab: "Failure by Culture" | Desjardins Financial Group - Master's Thesis Research | 2016-17

For my master's degree in organizational anthropology, I investigated Desjardins shift in core purpose, from being a values-driven cooperative to a financial group dominated by a "shareholder value orientation". The erosion of their cooperative values was explored in their newly launched Innovation Lab.

National Coordinator, Cities for People | J.W. McConnell Family Foundation | 2014 - 2015

Ensured the experimental "Cities for People" initiative ran effectively and was able to capture learnings during its "1.0" prototyping phase. This included supporting a Developmental Evaluation process; identifying priorities; establishing effective workplace practices; and co-leading a national learning retreat.

Leadership Development and Strategy | a Fortune 500 company (confidential) | 2014 - ongoing

This Fortune 500 company brought 30 of their international Vice Presidents and Country Directors together for a four day leadership retreat. Working with DLC, we observed the retreat, then recommended strategies and built tools to support ongoing learning between leaders and to help them cascade key insights throughout the organization.

Change Management | a Fortune 500 company (confidential) | 2013

This Fortune 500 company was closing an office campus requiring the relocation of 10,000's of employees. Working with DLC, we designed and delivered learning experiences to support middle managers navigating this change.

Speaking engagements

2019: Presented on uncovering hidden assumptions in organizations to the HSI Alumni Network
2018: Guest lectured for graduate-level course on Educational Change (Education-McGill)
2017: Guest lectured for graduate-level course on Working with Complex Change (Education-Concordia)
2012-2013: Guest lectured for graduate-level courses on Appreciative Inquiry methodology (Concordia)
2012: Presented the Polarity Management approach to conflict at PACE, McGill University
2011: Presented an Appreciative Inquiry case study to the Montreal Trainer's Group
2010: Presented on the Process Consulting approach to the B.C. Organization Development Network
2010: Presented a community development case study at the ACFAS Conference, Montreal, Quebec

Awards and distinctions

2005: Graduated with **1st class honours** distinction in anthropology class of 2005, University of Auckland
2004: **General Scholarship** award, University of Auckland
2001: **Senior Anthropology Prize**: top anthropology graduate for class of 2001, University of Auckland

Memberships and affiliations

- **Member**, Society for Applied Anthropology
- **Member**, Organization Development Network Quebec
- **Member**, Academy of Management

References: Provided with pleasure.

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