

Lise Palmer



PROFILE

Lise Palmer is an experienced, dynamic process consultant and qualitative researcher specializing in workplace culture. She has helped an array of clients across North America operate more effectively - from *Fortune 500* companies, to farming cooperatives, to grass-roots non-profits. Lise's approach is collaborative, thoughtful and thorough. She often draws upon ethnographic approaches to generate practical insights.

She is the founding consultant at SPARK, a "triple bottom line" practice with a mission of helping organizations transition to more sustainable models in line with purpose-driven capitalism.

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

- **Process consultation** technique
- **Qualitative research** techniques including textual and thematic analyses, semi-structured interviewing, focus groups, and observation techniques
- **Organizational culture** concept and tools
- Experienced in a wide range of other tools and processes including **Developmental Evaluation methods, Open Space Technology, Design Thinking, Reflective Practice, Appreciative Inquiry, and Open Systems Theory**

Key Professional Attributes

- **Professional** and **thorough**
- Dynamic and engaging **facilitator**
- **Analytical thinker**
- Excellent **manner** with clients
- 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

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 worked with a cross-functional team to understand engagement challenges they were encountering in their work to reduce sexual violence on campus. We conducted a social-ecological scan, identified strategic stakeholders to interview, and conducted semi-structured interviews. By conducting a careful analysis of the interview data, we were able to unearth the insight that campus stakeholders generally believe sexual violence to be something that “just happens”. This insight led to the realization that many strategies had to be adjusted or put on hold until stakeholders believed that their actions could impact rates of sexual violence on campus, resulting in a strategic re-orientation.

Culture + Structure School Redesign | LEARN | Present

7 Québec high schools are being offered the opportunity to re-design themselves according to progressive educational best practices (cross-curricular learning, flexible school boundaries, student-managed schedules, etc). My role was to design the process that teachers and principals would participate in, guiding them through their own school re-design process across 8 sessions. I used principles from Design Thinking to support the structural design, combined with a Reflective Practice process to enable teachers to begin experimenting with and learning about cultural changes immediately. These sessions are now being facilitated by a team of 15 facilitators, for which I play a guidance and support role.

Strategic Planning | Association of Administrators of English Schools of Quebec | 2018

Partnering with Jean Fuller, we designed and facilitated a strategic thinking retreat for a 50-person membership. We used principles of Socio-Technical-Systems Theory and Open Systems Theory to gather data from everyone in the room and collectively analyze it. We then designed a survey to validate and extend the results from this session, and held a final working session with the Board of Directors to determine new strategic priorities given widescale changes in their environment.

Workplace Culture “Check-Point” | Canadian Association of Midwives | 2017

This organization had recently experienced explosive growth and were encountering challenges in balancing being open to change while retaining valued aspects of their organizational identity. I designed and facilitated a reflection and analysis process that the entire organization participated in.

Cultural Transition | Apathy is Boring | 2015

This not-for-profit organization wanted support in transitioning their culture away from rotating around their (retiring) founder and towards its next, sustainable iteration. I conducted a series of semi-structured interviews, then designed and facilitated a one-day retreat for the entire organization. This retreat focused on providing a common perspective for staff and board members, a recognition of critical tensions and challenges, and a set of anchor points to use for charting their course forward.

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

Ensured the experimental “Cities for People” initiative ran effectively during its “1.0” prototyping phase. This included improving existing processes, structure and communication; supporting a Developmental Evaluation process; facilitating new goals and establishing effective group practices; and co-leading a national learning retreat.

Developmental Evaluation | Concordia University, Dean of Students Office | 2014

This team had the goal of making Orientation Week activities more safe and more effective, but due to the complexity of the system, wanted support. I acted as Developmental Evaluator by leading a process to support the team in their real-time learning process; this involved identifying key questions, creating mechanisms to capture insights, and establishing processes to support application.

Design of learning process and structures | a Fortune 500 company (confidential) | 2014, 2015, 2016

This *Fortune 500* company brought 30 of their international leaders together for a four day leadership retreat. I 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.

Social Change Prototyper | Organization Unbound | 2013

In collaboration with another consultant, we tested a series of innovative self-guided workshops aimed at helping organizations practice “expressive change”. We developed partnerships with two social change organizations and provided a container for these groups to experiment with the materials, identifying areas of impact and recommending improvements to the curriculum.

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. I partnered with another consultant to design a strategy to support middle managers as these managers, in turn, supported their staff teams through the decisions and turbulence of much change.

Learning Jam | Concordia University | 2012 - 2013

Designed the kick-off series of interactive and innovative public learning events for Concordia's *Living Knowledge* program, which explores and supports Concordia's engagement with communities. Assembled and led a team of 9 facilitators through three “conversations” which included 300 participants.

Speaking engagements

- 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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