

AURICLE

Auricle In Transit

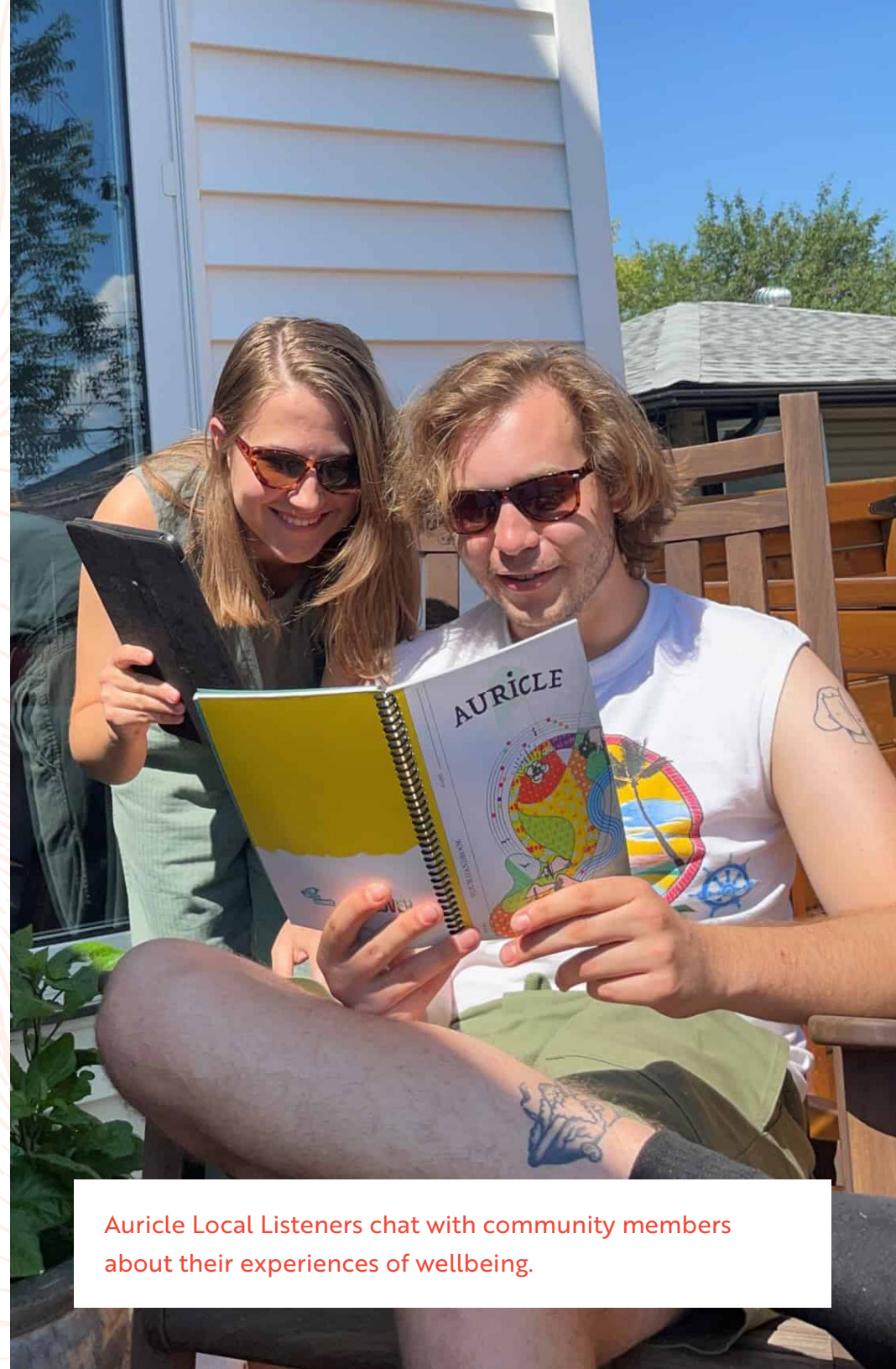
REFLECTIONS AND LEARNINGS

2023



What is Auricle?

Auricle offers a novel way for cities to both measure and strengthen wellbeing. Auricle consists of (1) a new role for residents, who are trained to gather stories from fellow community members; (2) a new tool to collect and interpret micro-ethnographic stories, which produces a real-time visual dashboard of data; (3) creative ways to engage people often left out of surveys and focus groups; and (4) a public festival & engagement process for making sense of and collectively acting on the data.



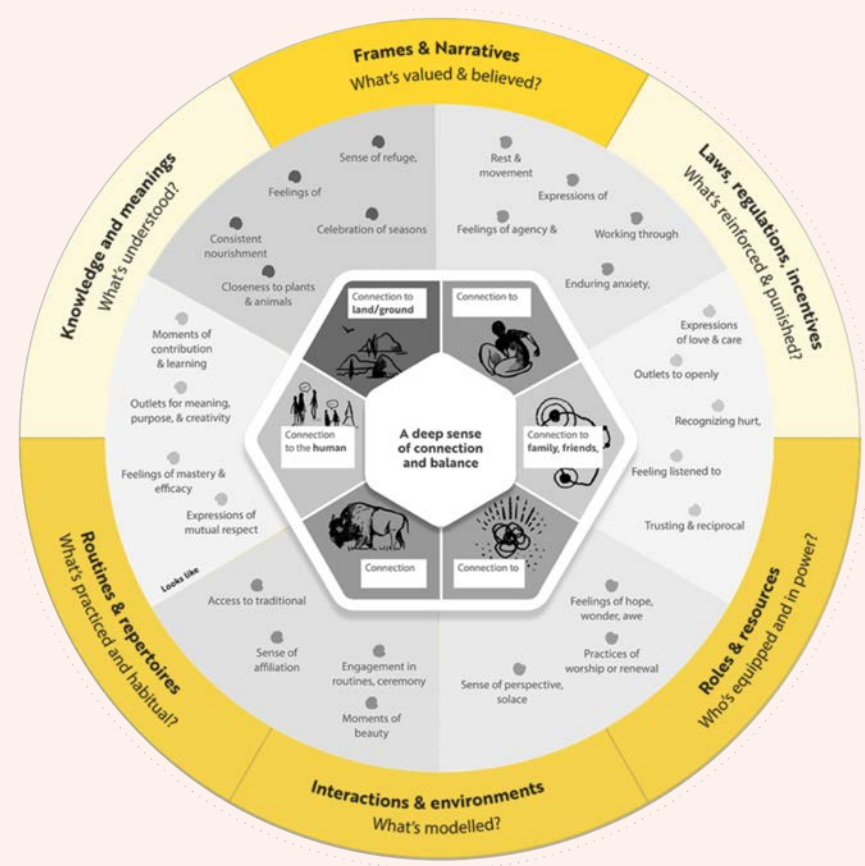
Auricle Local Listeners chat with community members about their experiences of wellbeing.

Where did Auricle come from?

Auricle comes from five years of research & development work between the City of Edmonton's RECOVER Urban Wellbeing Initiative and social design organization InWithForward. Designed to support the city's wellbeing framework, Auricle is a demonstrator of three key levers for community wellbeing: (1) knowledge & meanings; (2) frames & narratives; and (3) roles & resources.

By meaningfully listening to and engaging residents, valuing the knowledge that emerges, and using that knowledge to re-frame tired narratives, cities can actively foster respect, connection, and contribution, critical conditions for wellbeing.

In 2021, we tested Auricle in Edmonton's Alberta Avenue neighbourhood to explore the relationship between neighbourhoods and wellbeing. This year, in 2023, we tested Auricle in a transit context to learn if and how transit, safety, and wellbeing are intertwined. Our goal has been to co-create Auricle with everyday Edmontonians, and learn how it can be a tool for change.



What does Auricle value?

Underpinning Auricle are a set of values that (we hope) guide all of our interactions and data:



RESPECT

We treat others with deep regard, acknowledging their feelings, wishes, rights, and traditions, including their right to choose to engage (or not) on their own terms.



WARMTH

Our interactions are the opposite of clinical or cold: we strive for approachability, an appreciative mindset, and meaningful moments of connection.



RECIPROCITY

We believe the process of learning about wellbeing should promote wellbeing, and that community members are the first beneficiaries of their own collective wisdom.



CURIOSITY

We approach all interactions with a curious, open mind and a willingness to learn from others.



CONSENT

We are explicit in asking for and confirming an informed consent. You decide whether your story is shared, anonymously.



MULTIPLICITY

There is no single truth to uncover; instead, there are multiple truths and infinite ways of being and knowing in the world. We're not trying to uncover a dominant story.



SUBJECTIVITY

We see value in the effort to understand how individuals and communities make sense of their experiences in the world, because that's what actually shapes our behaviour.



CO-CREATION

As much as possible, we invite folks in to collaborate in a process of shared meaning making.





Why Auricle?



A. Measuring what matters

Wellbeing is an increasing focus of cities, but we know little about how people experience wellbeing and what shapes it. The City of Edmonton's Safety & Wellbeing Strategy sets out an audacious vision: "By 2030, each person making Edmonton home feels a sense of purpose, safety, and stability, curated through connectedness to self, land, culture and each other and rooted in reconciliation, anti-racism, removal of systemic barriers and transformation of thinking, interacting and being." And yet, the available data isn't granular enough to help us understand what connectedness looks and feels like for people across the places and spaces they spend time. Survey data asking people to assign a number to their life satisfaction can only tell us if people are well, not how they are well, when and where. That's the knowledge gap Auricle seeks to fill.



B. Giving Context

Context matters to wellbeing. Existing social science literature tells us wellbeing varies across time and place. We may feel good at home, but not at work, and vice versa. In our first prototype, we tested Auricle in a neighbourhood context.

We were curious about how different public spaces impact our wellbeing, for better and worse, so in this second prototype we moved Auricle to transit. Deploying Auricle at different times and in different places across a city helps to identify the elements of a context that promote or impede wellbeing.

These are the kinds of insights that can help us figure out which policies & practices can foster human flourishing.



A Local Listener collecting a story in Churchill Station

C. Broadening Narratives

Narratives hold real power. The stories that circulate about people and places influence what we think and feel, say and do. Pick up a newspaper, turn on the TV news, or scroll through social media, and you'll hear a pretty consistent story of public transit: it's not safe. The dominant discourse zooms into two aspects of transit -- adverse events and perceived safety -- without zooming out to also report on transit as a site for convivial human interactions, teamwork, kindness, care, perspective, and more.

When a narrative fixates on a single story, rather than embraces the full range of stories, it can prime a negative feedback loop and constrict the solution space. Stories of fear, worry and disgust are especially sticky and can feed mistrust, social anxiety, and disconnection.

And yet the social capital literature reveals we're safer and more resilient when we grow feelings of trust, empathy, and compassion. By eliciting and valuing a full range of stories, Auricle can help to broaden dominant narratives and, in the process, cultivate social capital.



D. Engaging people who don't typically engage

One limitation of existing data sources is who is left out. People without fixed addresses or phone numbers are often overlooked. So too are folks in and out of institutions (e.g shelters, prisons or hospitals), with low literacy or diverse ways of communicating, and/or folks who just aren't motivated to answer a battery of preset questions. Auricle aims to address this limitation by engaging the 'harder-to-reach' through activation strategies which offer an empathetic listening ear, food, snacks, and camaraderie at different times of day in the places people are passing through or hanging out. While most surveys seek to minimize the time a person engages in order to increase the response rate, Auricle prioritizes the quality of human-to-human interaction, seeking deeper insights over volume of data.



E. Tackling data extraction & interpretative bias

For Indigenous people, people of colour, and those living on the margins, research holds a dark history. While ethics protocols are now designed to prevent abuses, research can still feel extractive and opaque: taking information from people, interpreting that information for people, and drawing conclusions without much process transparency. Indeed, research design, data collection, and analysis aren't often open for community participation and input. That can open the door to bias. The way researchers frame questions, the answer choices they offer, the meaning they derive from responses, and the narrative they weave from the data are influenced by their own experiences, identities, and frames.

Auricle tries to add in some checks & balances by testing ways to open-up research design, data collection and analysis to community members. Our goal is to learn how to decolonize data, freeing it from top-down control so that it can be collectively owned and stewarded.



Participants at Knowsy Fest exploring the data together

F. Spreading delight & conviviality

Engaging with research isn't often fun or intrinsically rewarding. Answering a survey can be pretty laborious. Besides, where does the data go? Without clear feedback loops, research interactions can feel impersonal and transactional. Auricle aspires for research interactions to feel personal and meaningful. By reframing research as, first and foremost, about listening and learning from each other's stories, we place the focus on human-to-human exchange. In this way, a research interaction can itself be a positive intervention for wellbeing.

Building on research on the benefits of mingling and lingering in public space, Auricle experiments with creative ways to enliven public spaces and engage everyday folks in story gathering. We seek to collect meaningful data and improve wellbeing at the same time!

As Cattell, et. al point out in their article in *Health & Place*, "Social interaction in spaces can provide relief from daily routines, sustenance for people's sense of community, opportunities for sustaining bonding ties or making bridges, and can influence tolerance and raise people's spirits (Volume 14/3, p.544)."



Strangers having an impromptu picnic together in the middle of Churchill Station

Prototyping Auricle



What is a prototype?

Auricle is a prototype, meaning it's a live experiment, set-up to test a series of questions and interactions so we can learn, rapidly iterate, and grow what works. Just like engineers build a small-scale model of a chair before mass producing them, we craft small-scale versions of new interventions to build know-how, buy-in, and community ownership. Our first prototype of Auricle demonstrated its promise as a knowledge mobilization and community wellbeing intervention. Still, we wanted to go deeper, test drive Auricle in a different context, and explore tactics for challenging dominant narratives.

What questions have we been asking?

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- How might Auricle broaden the stories told about transit through the questions it asks?
 - How might we re-imagine the Local Listener role for a busy transit context? What backgrounds, skills, and desires might we tap into?
 - How might we broaden our activation strategies and engagement tactics given the transience within transit spaces?
 - How can Auricle data have longer-term influence? How might story gathering be the start, rather than end, of the relationship between story sharers and the city's transit team?
 - How can we maximise the richness of the data and find more ways to open-it up to others for shared analysis and learning?

What interactions
have we been
testing?

WHAT WE PROTOTYPED

A role, hiring, and onboarding process

THE BIG IDEA

Rather than relegate research to professional experts, Auricle is predicated on a new role for lay people oriented around listening & story sharing. In our first prototype, these Local Listeners lived in one neighbourhood and drew on their personal networks for story gathering. In this prototype, we set out to recruit residents from across the city who could engage with strangers on transit.

Our key question: How might we attract, select, and support everyday Edmontonians to meet a real diversity of humans & gather stories in busy transit spaces?



WHAT WE TRIED

Recruitment

Alongside using social media, posters in transit stations and job boards, we reached out to heaps of groups with theatrical & artistic orientations -- clowns, magicians, sword fighters, comedians, etc. -- to spread the word. We were looking for folks with an orientation towards creative public engagement.

Hiring

We iterated our interview process, and tried flipping the script: enabling candidates to interview us and learning about their approach to meeting people and gathering stories.

Onboarding

We designed a three-day in-person onboarding experience that started on a specially commissioned & decorated bus, gathered at the bus depot, spent time in transit spaces, and modeled public activations. Together, we tested different story prompts and practiced how to respectfully listen to strangers. It was experiential & collaborative, not didactic!

TOP LEVEL LESSONS

Local Listeners love the role



"The coolest thing so far (at least to me) is that we're building relationships in addition to collecting stories."

Paula Kirman, Local Listener

"I have discovered that I love to talk to strangers! Never thought that was something I like, but I have noticed that after each session, I feel very satisfied with getting to know others' life paths and with establishing human connections."

Graciela Morales, Local Listener



TOP LEVEL LESSONS

Transit users appreciated the role

Local listeners received regular feedback from transit users about the value of talking to a fellow resident, and the catharsis that comes from feeling heard. As one story sharer noted,

“Our conversation really helped me so I wanted to thank you for changing my day, and helping me realize some things about my life!”



TOP LEVEL LESSONS

Making space for deeper capacity

Finding novel ways to engage with strangers, week after week, isn't easy. Some days, Local Listeners experienced lots of rejection. Other days, they listened to and held really big stories. In addition to onboarding and debriefs, we'd love to make even more space for peer learning, modeling, and feedback. Finding ways to bridge difference is a skill we could all use regular time & space to hone!



WHAT WE PROTOTYPED

A set of rhythms and flows

THE BIG IDEA

One of the goals of hiring everyday residents into the Local Listener role is to explore how to tap into this dynamic resource base. Rather than try to professionalize lay folks and turn them into trained researchers, we're trying to amplify their capacity to reach out to strangers, listen with care, and spot patterns. Our hope is that they shape the prototype, gain a sense of agency and control over their roles, and feel less like staff and more like collaborators.

How, then, do we promote self-organizing teams, instill a collaborative ethos, and stray away from conventional management practices?



WHAT WE TRIED

Station teams

The eight Local Listeners divided themselves into three teams -- one at Churchill, Jasper Place, and Clareview Stations -- and took responsibility for designing activation concepts and gathering stories. Mid-way through the prototype, we explored swapping teams, but Local Listeners enjoyed building ongoing relationships at their respective stations.

Regular debriefs

We tested bi-monthly team debriefs, with a set of rituals for swapping learnings, celebrating the wins & rejections, and working through emerging challenges.

Reflective practice

We framed the role of Local Listener as a prototype with learning as a key outcome, and regular reflection as a critical practice. After an activation, we encouraged Local Listeners to post pictures, insights, and challenges on our shared communication channel. These posts provided rich documentation, and sparked helpful peer-to-peer exchange.

TOP LEVEL LESSONS

Making relationship dynamics explicit

Conscious not to replicate traditional management-staff hierarchies, we set out to cultivate a collaborative team culture and structure. And yet, there were moments where our design team felt the need to step in, course correct, or offer more direction -- and other moments where Local Listeners waited for directives and seemed unsure if they could independently act. So many of us have internalized mental models around management and control that can inadvertently shape our behaviours. Going forward, we'd like to introduce more explicit language and learning goals around self-organizing and mentorship.



TOP LEVEL LESSONS

Trying rotating roles

From designing activation concepts to making materials for pop-ups to recruiting strangers to gathering stories to documenting the process to communicating between teams, there's lots of parts to the Local Listener role. It can be tricky to balance them all! In a next prototype, encouraging team members to rotate leadership for different parts might strengthen capacity building and team organization.



TOP LEVEL LESSONS

Opportunities for co-facilitation

Another strategy for growing a self-organizing ethos is to bring Local Listeners into the design and facilitation of team debriefs & reflection sessions. Local Listeners interested in leading future cohorts might take on an apprentice-like role with the Auricle design team. This might enable us to grow Auricle to more places and spaces!



WHAT WE PROTOTYPED

Value propositions, materials, and strategies for activating public space

THE BIG IDEA

The near constant coming and going of people in transit stations creates both opportunities and challenges for engaging folks in story collection. On the plus side, there's no shortage of different people to meet. On the tricky side, many folks are in a rush, often with earbuds in, and not in the habit of stopping for a convivial encounter.

What are strategies for meeting the range of folks on busses and trains and in stations, and sparking brief but deep conversations?



WHAT WE TRIED

Activation canvases

Starting at onboarding, we introduced a framework and tool for Local Listeners to conceptualize their activations. We liken an activation to a theatrical performance -- with actors, props, settings, and scripts. Successful activations draw on a core concept or theme, bring that to life with materials, and have clear value propositions encouraging passersby to stop, get curious, and engage.

In-context modeling

Activations take a lot of energy -- and the capacity to toggle between attracting attention and putting the spotlight on other people's stories. While role playing exercises can be helpful, we found having experienced team members out with new local listeners to model & rehearse was key.

Consistent & creative signage

Alongside Auricle branded materials and posters, we encouraged Local Listeners to create their own signage, try out different messages, and experiment with language. Some beautiful posters emerged!

TOP LEVEL LESSONS

More spectacle!

Activations that really leaned into the spectacle -- e.g a beach party, a photo booth, a cozy station -- attracted more attention and collected significantly more stories. Surprising food and drink offers (e.g watermelons, fancy hot chocolate, roasted marshmallows) were consistently successful value propositions.



TOP LEVEL LESSONS

🌸 Hospitality matters

How passersby are invited to engage matters. Explicitly inviting folks to sit in a comfy chair, have a free hot beverage, and share what's on their mind works better than passively waiting for people to approach.



TOP LEVEL LESSONS

🌸 Fixed and variable timing

Teams tested weekly activations at the same time and station, and also roving activations where they dressed up in costume and hopped on a train or bus. Both had advantages.

Fixed activations enabled longer-term relationship building. Roving activations enabled us to be opportunistic and catch people in motion.



WHAT WE PROTOTYPED

Digital and paper tools for eliciting stories and interpretations

THE BIG IDEA

So much of the existing research in and popular discourse about transit zooms into safety. That can prime people to think and talk about safety when they are stopped to share a story while in transit. Auricle's remit is to zoom out to explore wellbeing and the relationship with safety.

How, then, do we prompt a different conversation and keep open the space for people to share what matters to them -- not what they think we want to hear?



WHAT WE TRIED

 Testing multiple questions

Finding an open-ended prompt to elicit a story about wellbeing in and around transit took multiple iterations. Because ‘wellbeing’ and ‘transit’ are both loaded words, we opted for a broader initial prompt: ‘Share a moment that mattered to you in or around transit’ followed by ‘Tell us how that moment shaped your wellbeing, for better or worse.’

 Co-editing questions

Local Listeners tried out a first version of the questions on each other, and had the opportunity to rate different questions based on the quality of the stories that emerged. We continued to refine questions and our ways of explaining questions throughout the prototype.

 Adding visual prompts

Even with an open-ended prompt, some folks assumed we only wanted to hear certain kinds of stories. We tested picture prompts to signal to folks that we were after a full range of stories -- theirs might be about love, purpose, independence, beauty, fear, insecurity, etc.

TOP LEVEL LESSONS

 Permissioning the small and non-normative stories

To collect a plurality of stories, we had to permission them! Far more than in our first prototype in neighbourhoods, we found people assumed we were wanting to hear particular types of stories. In a next prototype, we might want to have a booklet on hand with examples of wildly different stories collected.

 Separating stories from solutions

Auricle draws on the Sensemaker, a micro-story gathering tool developed by complexity theorist Dave Snowden. The goal is to draw out specific moments people have experienced. Sometimes people offered general observations, rants, or solutions instead of granular stories.

It's important to build Local Listeners' capacity to recognize the difference, and ask follow-up questions that can tease apart specifics from generalizations.

WHAT WE PROTOTYPED

Spaces and methods for engaging the public in analysis and sense-making

THE BIG IDEA

Knowsy Fest marks the end of story gathering, and the beginning of collective meaning making. Designed as a public-facing event to celebrate stories as data, Knowsy Fest seeks to bring a sense of whimsy, curiosity, and possibility to data analysis and narrative co-creation.

Given the transience of transit spaces, we wondered how to design Knowsy Fest with different modes of engagement: quick and slow, light and deep?



WHAT WE TRIED

Multi-site festival

Because we collected stories at three transit stations, we wanted to bring Knowsy Fest to all three stations. Two of the three stations are mainly outdoor spaces, which required us to make use of portable structures and get creative with ways to engage people in the November chill. Fresh popcorn, hot chocolate, and a fire helped.



Story witnessing

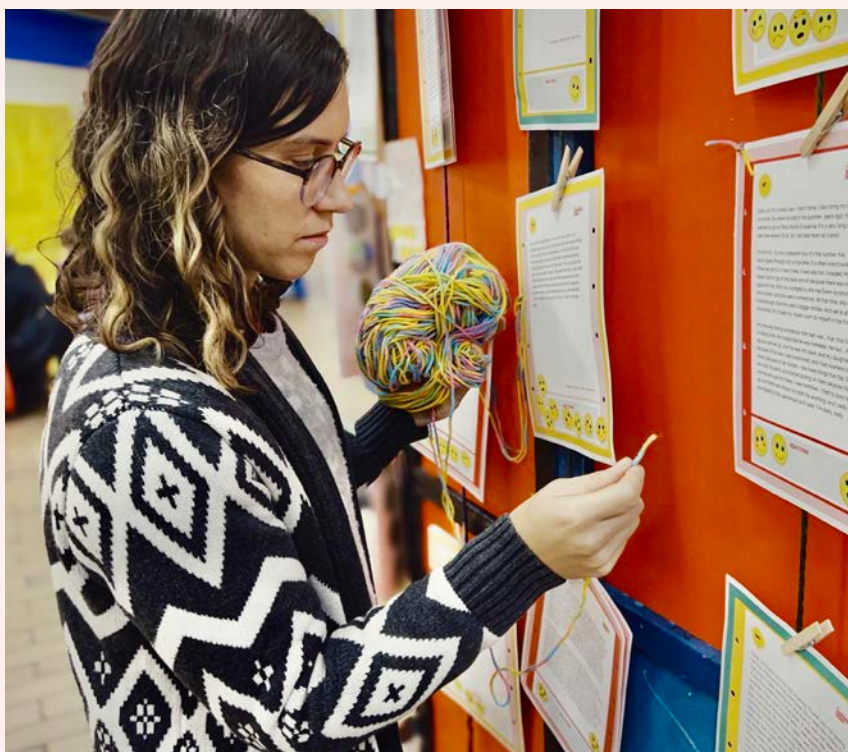
Our briefest interaction at Knowsy Fest invited passersby to engage with and react to stories strung as bunting along a wooden circus-like tent. Folks could listen to or read a story, and adorn them with emoji stickers.



WHAT WE TRIED

Pattern spotting

For folks with a little more time to spare, we asked for their help in identifying patterns between two or more stories. Using string and tags, people helped us weave similar stories together and give their connection point a title.



Giant visualizations and generative dice

Inside the portable structure, participants could see giant data visualizations, add comments, and play with 18 giant dice. Every side of the dice offered a different element to add to transit to strengthen wellbeing. People could stack dice and create their own idea sculptures.



WHAT WE TRIED

Storytelling board games & stranger picnics

At Knowsy Fest's indoor location, we tested longer-form interactions between strangers. Every couple of hours, we invited folks over to play a wellbeing board game and sit down for an impromptu picnic with strangers, complete with plates as prompts & unusual snacks.



TOP LEVEL LESSONS

Finding logistical allies

Three locations in three days for Knowsy Fest is a heavy lift, necessitating good collaboration with electricians, security staff, city staff, local listeners, team members, and more. We were so grateful to the constellation of people who assisted, often at the last minute, and could certainly improve our communication channels the next time around!

Appetite for more engagement

Three days of Knowsy Fest proved both exhausting and exhilarating, and so many participants wanted to see more. Given the depth of data we have, there is real opportunity for continued sense-making and community engagement. We collected stories over three months so what would it look like for sense-making to extend over months, not days?

TOP LEVEL LESSONS

 Cordoned off time for generativity

Most of the sense-making interactions worked, except for the generative dice. Getting folks to shift from absorbing stories to generating creative ideas takes more time and space than we had available at Knowsy Fest. We'd love to layer in the generative dice after participants have really sat with stories.

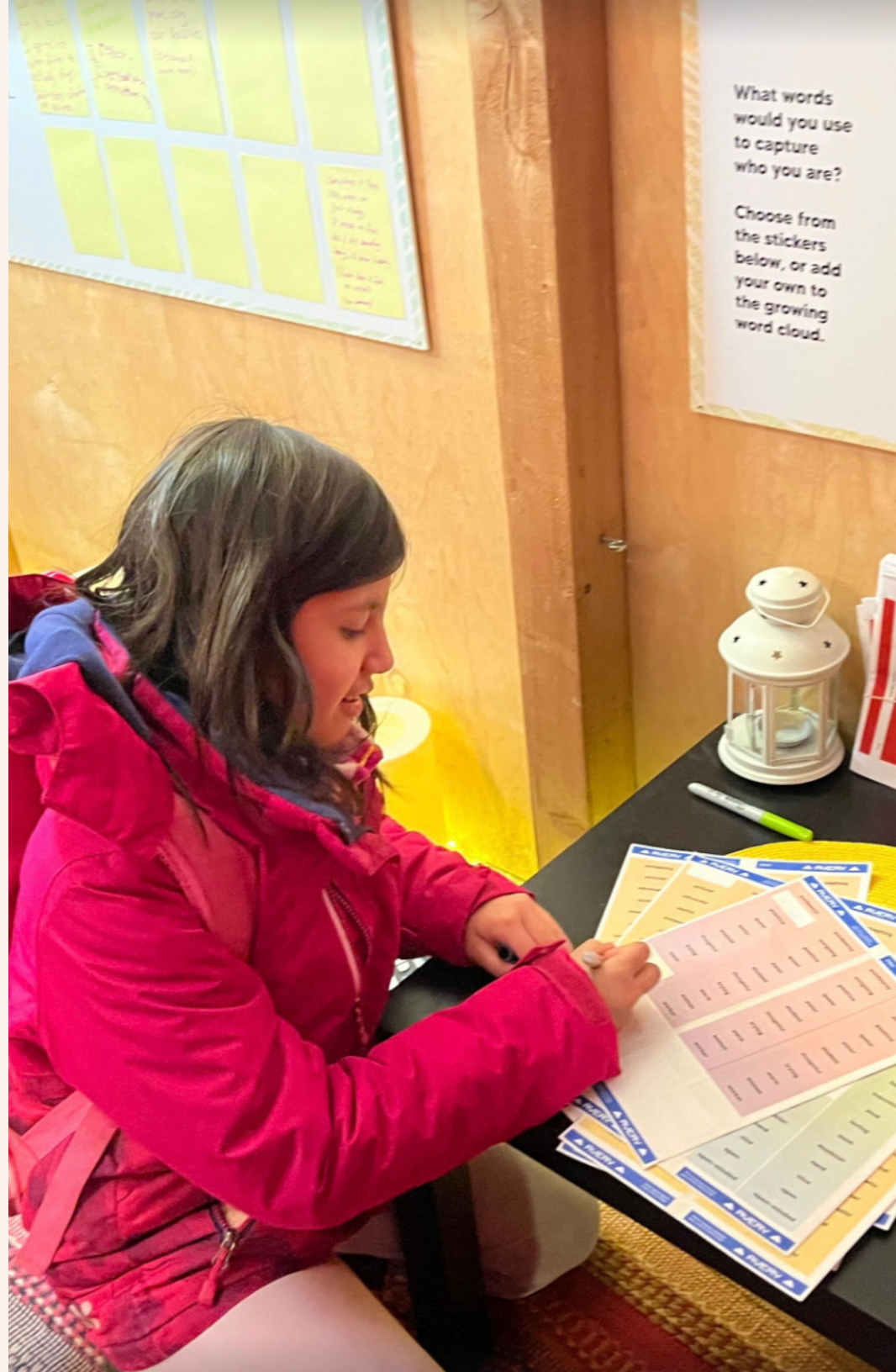


WHAT WE PROTOTYPED

Tactics for influencing-up and bringing stories into decision-making & everyday practice

THE BIG IDEA

So much data never gets used, languishing in reports and presentations. By opening-up the data collection and analysis process to community members -- including with the use of a real-time, public facing dashboard -- Auricle tries to build a sense of collective ownership and spirit of action. In this prototype, we've recognized that the dominance of the transit safety narrative might crowd out the space for broader narratives to emerge. Given the attention policymakers are placing on transit safety, we were curious how to introduce them to the ideas and possibilities Auricle can offer. How might we help policymakers expand their viewfinder and widen the solution space?



WHAT WE TRIED

Partnership building with the City of Edmonton's Transit Safety Team

At the start of this prototype, we developed a partnership agreement with the City of Edmonton's Transit Safety Team to clarify shared purposes, goals, and troubleshoot possible points of tension.

Extending invitations to city stakeholders for Knowsy Fest

We hypothesized that engaging with the data in context, plus meeting Local Listeners and community members, would give key stakeholders a better window into Auricle than just relying on official communications up.

Sharing Auricle updates with City Council

The city's Transit Safety Team included Auricle in their regular updates, and tried to integrate the work into their research portfolio.

TOP LEVEL LESSONS

Casting the stakeholder net even wider

As the prototype neared the end, we learned about other stakeholders in the transit space -- like the Edmonton Transit Advisory Board -- who we'd love to engage earlier. Although we did some early stakeholder mapping, casting our gaze even wider could be helpful!

More time with policymakers

Knowsy Fest happened during budget negotiations, and city councillors & staff perhaps had less time to engage with stories and people. Without space to see the depth of the data, and the links between strengthening connection, mental health and safety, a simplistic story of Auricle as a "fun project" can perhaps inadvertently take hold.

TOP LEVEL LESSONS

 Reframing Knowsy Fest as the start of narrative co-creation, not the end

Co-creating a more expansive narrative about the role of transit in our wellbeing is one route to shifting perceptions of safety. So many of the stories illustrate the power of small, everyday interactions to change people's days for the better. The hard stories about transit also offer insights about how to shift culture & norms in transit to foster care and reduce fear.





Auricle by the numbers



175

STORIES
COLLECTED

157

STORIES
TRANSCRIBED

8

LOCAL LISTENERS

14

ACTIVATIONS

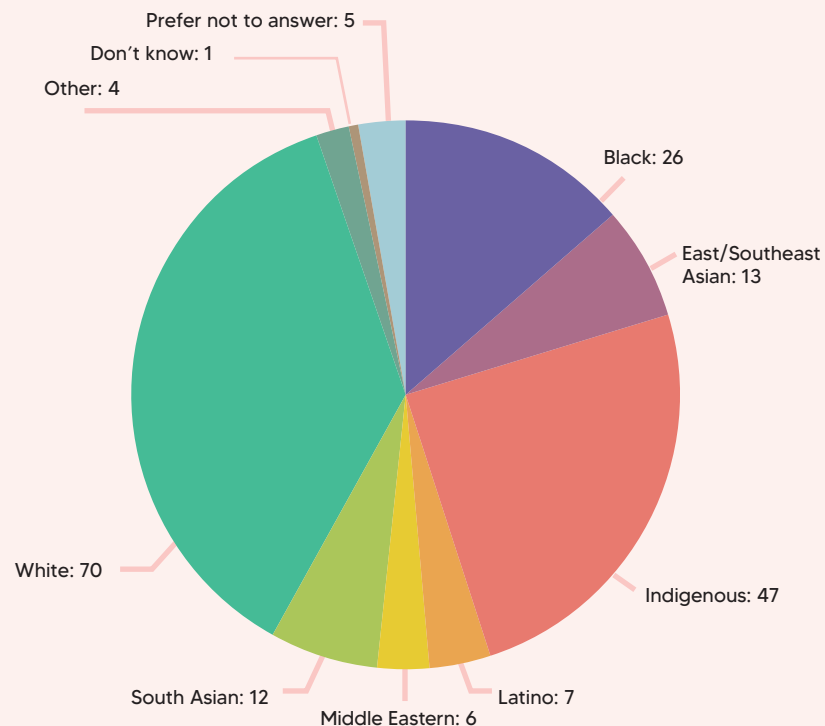
~1500

PEOPLE ENGAGED

600

PARTICIPANTS IN
KNOWSY FEST

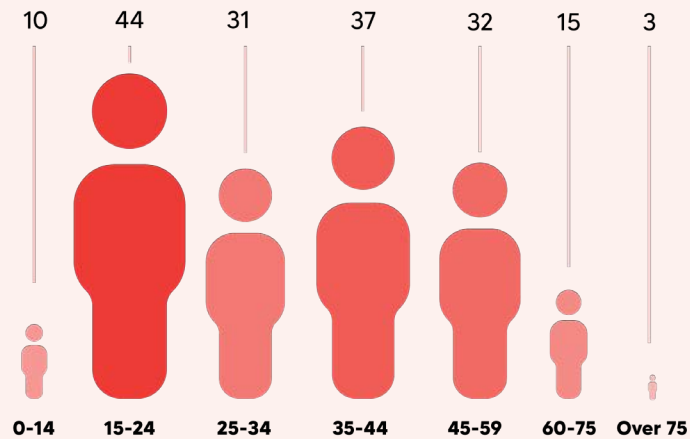
8+

RACIAL IDENTITIES
REFLECTED

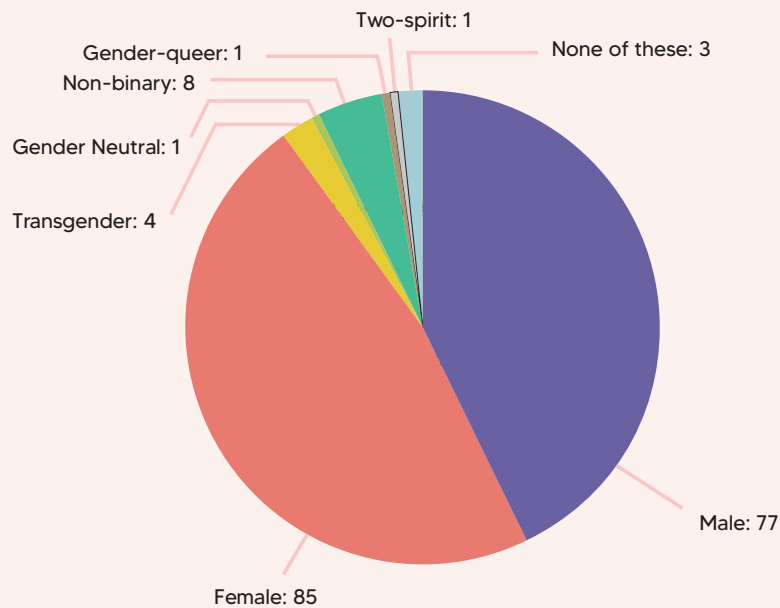
AVERAGE LENGTH OF INTERACTION

20-25 min

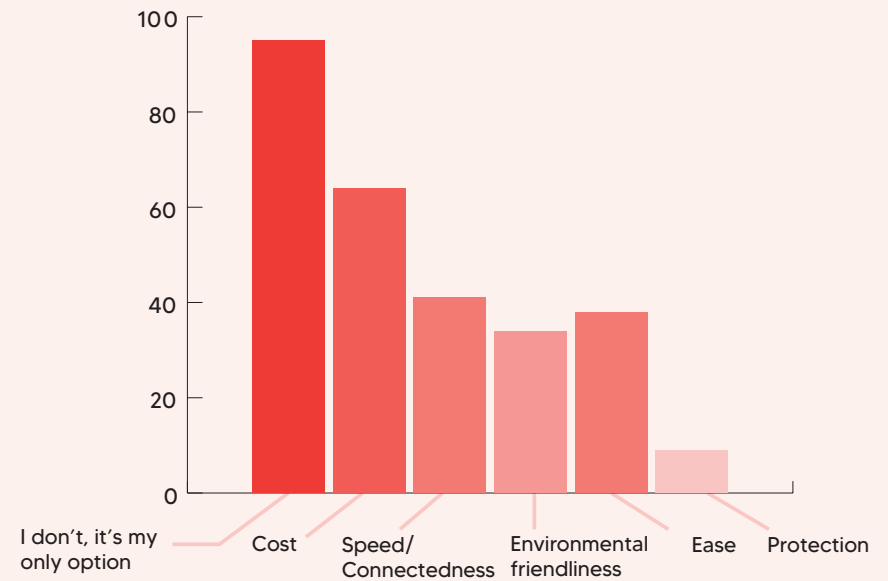
AGE



GENDER IDENTITY



REASONS FOR CHOOSING EDMONTON'S PUBLIC TRANSIT

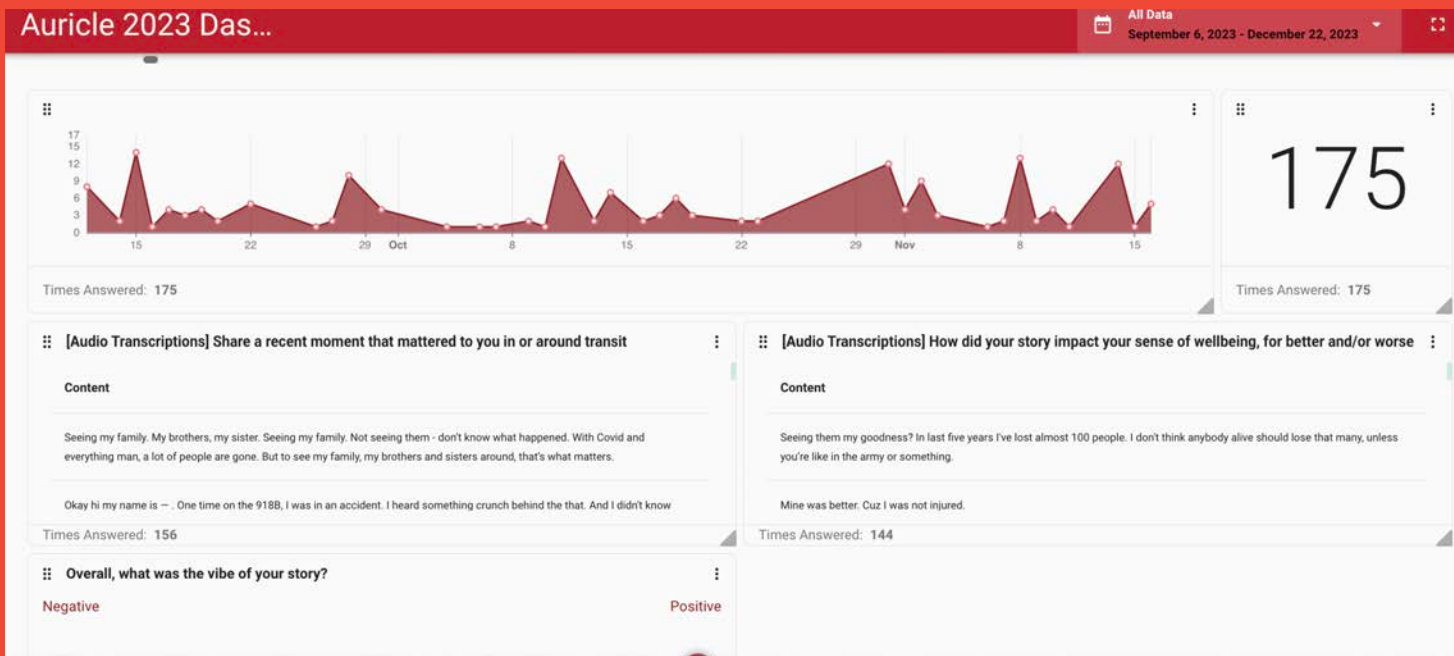




Auricle by the
insights

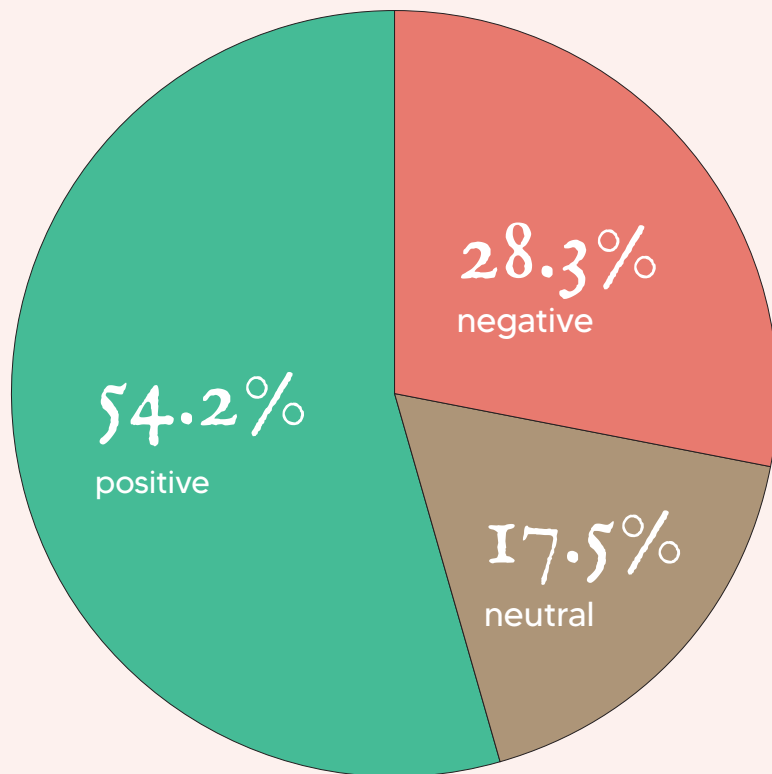


See the dashboard



[Click here](#)

What was the vibe of your story?



INSIGHT

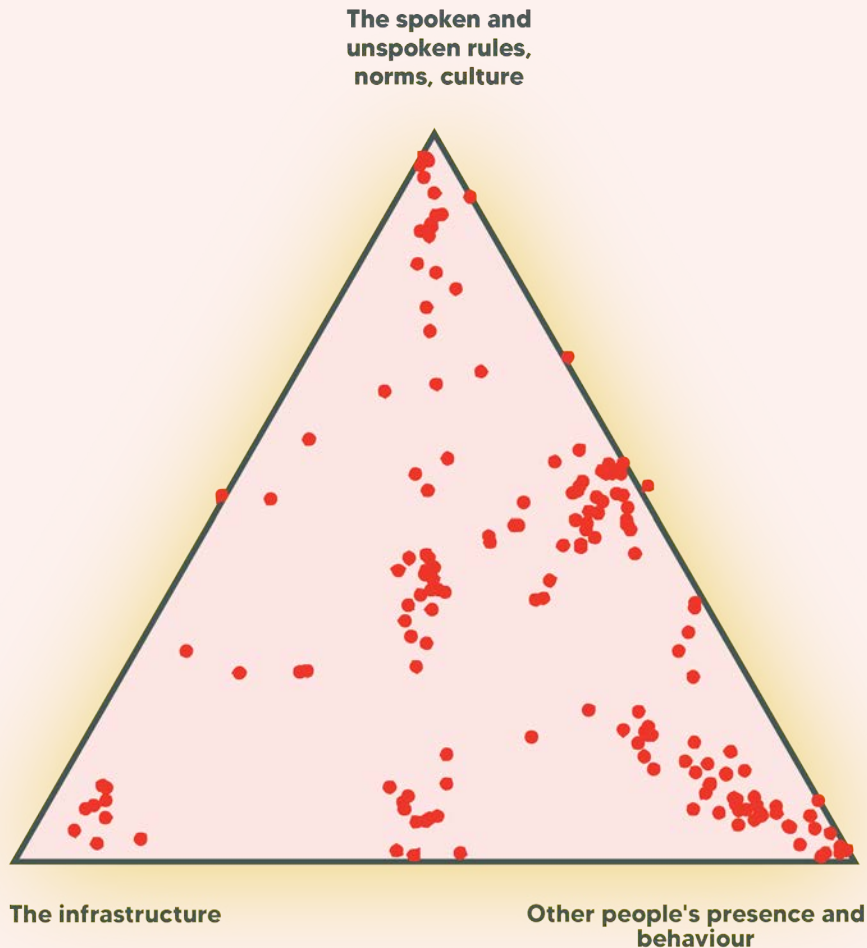
Stories trend positive

More than half of the stories Auricle collected in transit were positive. We asked people to share a moment in and around transit that mattered to them, and then to place their story on a continuum from positive to negative. Less than 30% classified their stories as negative.

SO WHAT

While there are some hard & heavy transit experiences within the 28.3%, these negative encounters are not the whole story. And yet, so much of the public discourse of transit trends scary, focused on adverse events and perceived insecurity. When the public is repeatedly exposed to a single story of transit, it can become entrenched, shaping people's perceptions of and behaviours in public space. This negative feedback loop can feed its own distorted reality. Sharing a plurality of stories and offering a more fulsome narrative is one strategy for strengthening a sense of perspective, connection and common purpose.

What parts of transit were at play in your story?



INSIGHT

Norms & behaviour are biggest levers for change

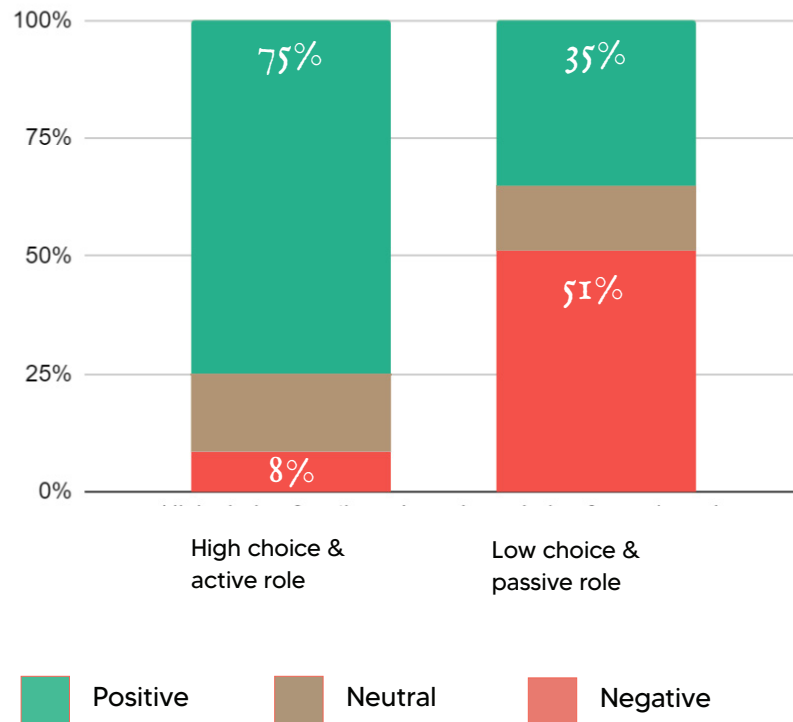
The culture & norms of transit spaces, as well as other people's presence & behaviour, mattered a lot more in people's stories than transit infrastructure.

SO WHAT

The culture of a place makes a big impact. What kind of culture do we want to co-create on transit? What kinds of behaviour do we seek to foster? Going forward, we can dig deeper into the story database to understand what types of presence, behaviour, and norms are most consequential.

What role did you play in your story?

Percent positive, neutral and negative stories by whether the person experienced high choice/active role vs low choice/passive role



INSIGHT

People who had high choice & played an active role are more likely to describe their story as positive

People were more likely to describe their experience as positive when they played an active role in their story and felt that they had a choice in the role they played (75% versus 35%).

By comparison, when people had little choice in their role and described themselves as a bystander, there was a much higher likelihood that they would describe their story as negative (51% versus 8%).

SO WHAT

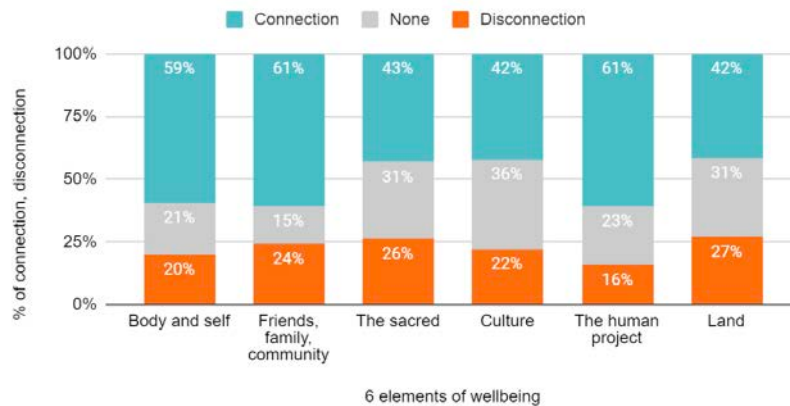
Choice, agency, and participation change how people experience a moment or event. People shared stories of problem-solving, determination, getting out of their comfort zone, and helping others. A number of stories recounting conflict and which, from the outside, seemed painful were characterized as positive because they propelled people to take action & find constructive ways forward.

How might interactions on transit serve to grow people's choice and agency? What might encourage people to take an active role? How might the city engage folks on transit in problem-solving and offer more ways to meaningfully contribute?



What role did you play in your story?

Percent of stories where people experienced a sense of connection or disconnection to 6 elements of wellbeing



INSIGHT



In the moments on transit that mattered to people, most people reported a sense of connection to themselves, to friends/family/community, or to the human project (59%, 61%, 61% respectively).

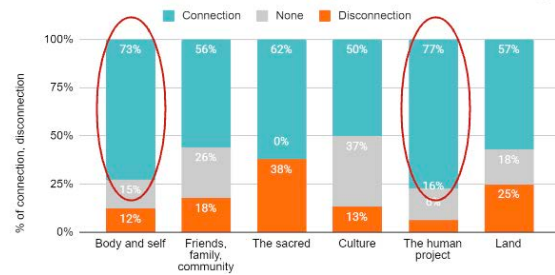
The highest levels of disconnection were felt with respect to the sacred and to land (26% and 27% respectively), however even in these two pillars of wellbeing, there were more stories that involved connection (43% and 42%) than disconnection.

SO WHAT

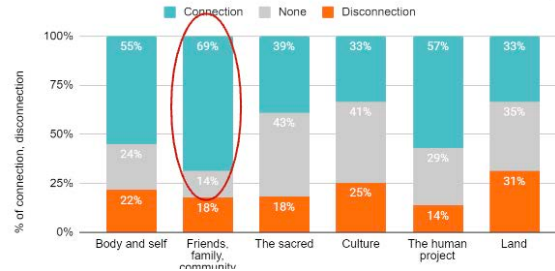


Real-time access to granular wellbeing statistics opens-up plenty of opportunity for better data-driven decisions. As jurisdictions around the world grapple with how to improve citizen wellbeing, data that can identify where people experience connection and disconnection serve as a jumping off point for more thoughtful intervention design.

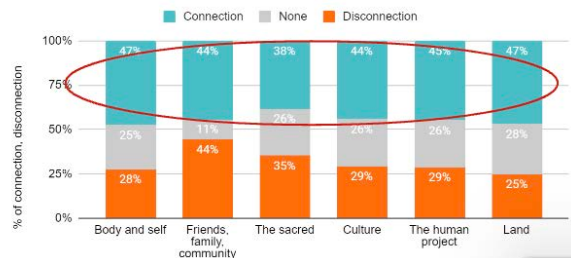
Churchill: Connection/Disconnection to 6 elements of wellbeing



Clareview: Connection/Disconnection to 6 elements of wellbeing



Jasper Place: Connection/Disconnection to 6 elements of wellbeing



INSIGHT

Types of wellbeing varies by station

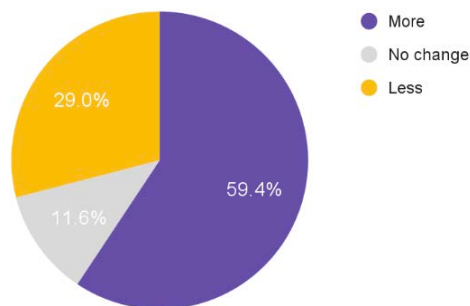
Zooming in to each station, we can observe the following trends:

- At Churchill there is a high level connection to body/self and the human project,
- At Clareview the highest connection is to friends, family and community, and
- At Jasper Place levels of connection were under 50% for each element of wellbeing

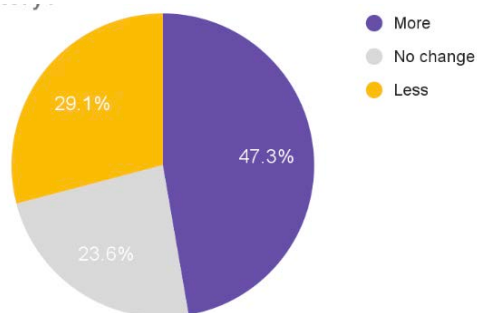
SO WHAT

- A strong sense of connection can be an antidote to feelings of insecurity. This data gives us insights into both the types of connections that people experience and the types of connections that may be missing. It could be used to enhance moments of connection by explicitly targeting one or more of the elements of wellbeing, tailored to each station.

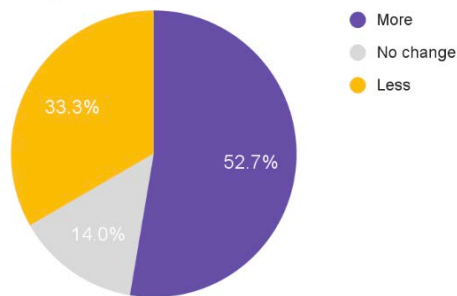
Did you feel more or less **socially connected** after your story?



Did you feel more or less **safe** after your story?



Did you feel more or less **restored** after your story?



INSIGHT

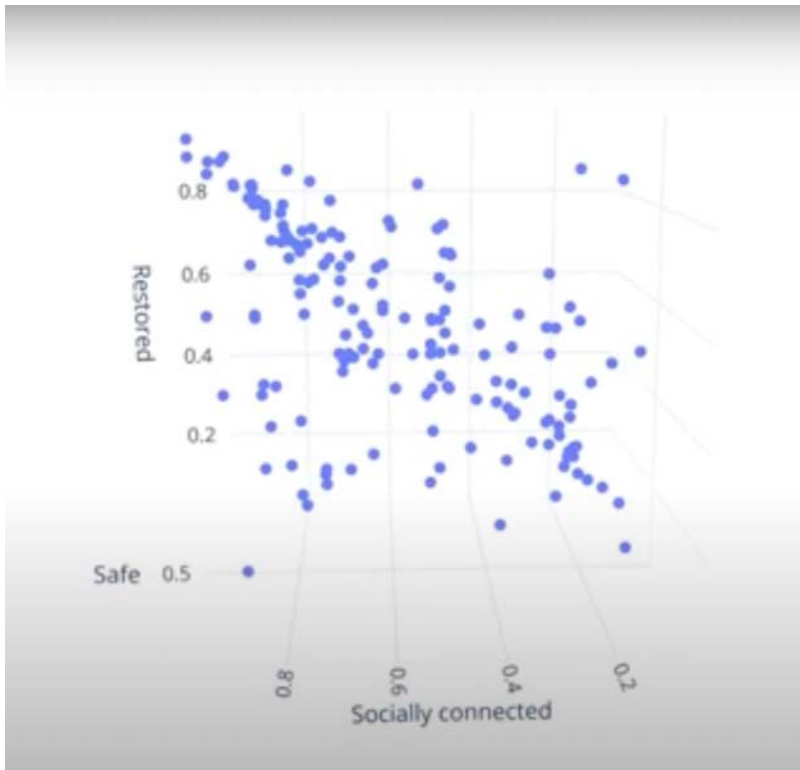
59% percent of the moments that mattered to people left them feeling more socially connected; 53% left people feeling more restored, and 47% left people feeling more safe. In comparison, 29%, 33% and 29% of the moments left people feeling less socially connected, restored, and safe respectively.

SO WHAT

Asking different questions brings out different information. Alongside safety, what else is important to Edmontonians? And what information is missed when we don't ask? When invited to tell a story that matters to them, people reported a wide range of experiences, some of which related to safety and some of which did not. Safety metrics paint one picture. Metrics on connection paint another picture. Both pictures can be true at the same time. By combining multiple metrics, we can identify a broader range of leverage points for wellbeing on and around transit.

Correlation between feeling socially connected, restored and safe after the stories people shared

Click to see recording of three dimensional diagram



INSIGHT



There's a strong correlation between feeling socially connected, restored, and safe.

SO WHAT



How might increasing levels of social connectedness and feelings of restoration improve perceptions of safety? There are many causes of violence, but the literature suggests aggression and violent events are more likely to occur when people are feeling helpless, cornered, threatened or belittled, and when stress levels rise beyond someone's window of tolerance and into a state of hyperarousal.

Belonging, a sense of welcome & respect, and being seen as having the capacity to contribute are mediating factors which can reduce the likelihood of violence in a space.

Some *moments*

At Clareview during one of our evening activations, a gentleman joined us around the fire. He was quite reserved, mostly talking to himself and sorting a set of papers. When speaking, it was clear we were experiencing two different realities. The things he spoke about -- like time travel -- didn't make much sense to our linear minds. Although our conversation felt strange and unfamiliar, his presence was warm. He sat with us for close to three hours, just being welcomed as himself. He did not escalate. There was no incident -- just a shared moment of staying warm around the fire.

One woman kept nodding off while telling her story, and we worried she might overdose. Slowly but surely, we made it through her story. While others might have looked at her with scorn or discomfort, sitting on the floor next to her allowed us to share a human moment.

A larger man was having a bit of an argument with Peace Officers at Churchill Station. He kept saying over and over how he has a mental illness and no one was willing to help. It was a hard interaction to witness. We were in the vicinity with our gourmet coffee and lawn chairs when he said, "I could really use a coffee." The officers let him come over to us. We got him a coffee (along with some water and kleenex that he asked for), and he shared that he was having a really shitty day. We ended up giving each other a huge hug, and he left the station quietly.

INSIGHT

Countless moments where Auricle providing a welcoming space improved safety and wellbeing

We didn't go into stations with the intention of being outreach workers, but we welcomed encounters with folks having a hard time. Our role wasn't to problematize interactions or fix situations. Our role was to listen and create a space of belonging and conviviality.

SO WHAT

What if being a non-judgmental presence where people can feel seen and known is a key ingredient in improving the wellbeing & safety of public spaces?

We were speaking to a lady whose story wasn't making much sense to us. Perhaps she was in psychosis, but our role wasn't to diagnose or judge. We kept listening, complimenting her purple fleece coat. It turned into a lovely conversation.

A woman at Jasper Place shared a story that was quite horrific. She told of being raped and then shrugged off by a bus driver when she most needed help. It was heart-wrenching. People's trauma is real. Holding space for it can be cathartic, and one of many steps towards healing.

At Jasper Place, we encountered a person having an especially hard time. They were changing clothes in the middle of the transit shelter, sported an open wound on their leg, and weren't keen on going to the hospital.

We set up our gourmet coffee stand anyways, and shared space with them while collecting stories. They weren't open to chatting, so we just let him be... they did their own thing, and we did ours. Rather than making a scene or escalating the situation, we peacefully co-existed.



What could
be next



I Auricle as a safety and wellbeing intervention



- Given the positive feedback we received being in transit stations, how might activations & story gathering be an ongoing intervention in transit spaces, rather than a mere research exercise? After all, enabling people to feel welcomed, seen, and heard are conditions for both safety and wellbeing. When people feel respected and understood, feelings of frustration, anger, fear, and anxiety are less likely to take over.

2 Auricle as a rich source of data & knowledge



- We just scratched the surface with analysis & sense-making. With 175 stories, a visual dashboard, and a robust Excel spreadsheet containing all the qualitative and quantitative data, how might we continue to do sense-making with transit users and transit decision-makers? Let's turn Knowsy Fest into a phased process rather than a discrete event!

3 Auricle as a tool for collaboration & learning



Within our database, we have stories about bus drivers, police officers, newcomers, tourists, families, folks struggling with addiction and so much more. How might we segment stories by user group and bring folks from those user groups together to bear witness, see patterns, and apply lessons to their own lives and practices? In this way, Auricle can be a learning & development tool for transit stakeholders!





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