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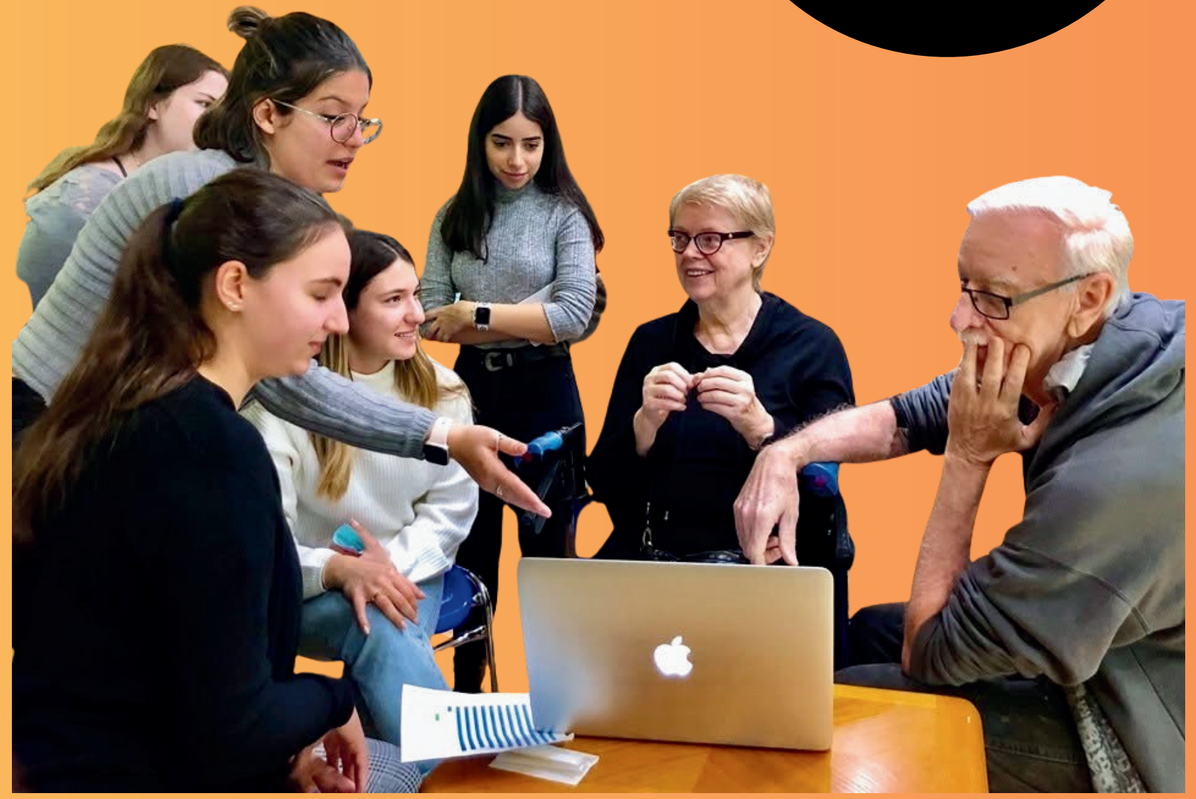
Creative Science Shop

Bridging research and community through dialogue and co-creation

engAGE Living Lab How-to Kit



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Contributors to this kit:

Concept: Janis Timm-Bottos
Contents: Carmen Oprea, Melissa Sokoloff
Editing: Janis Timm-Bottos, Mohammad Abdalreza Zadeh, Rachel Chainey
Photos and images: Rachel Chainey, Carly McAskill, Momo Escobedo
Illustration: Mohammad Abdalreza Zadeh

Fonds de recherche Santé Québec

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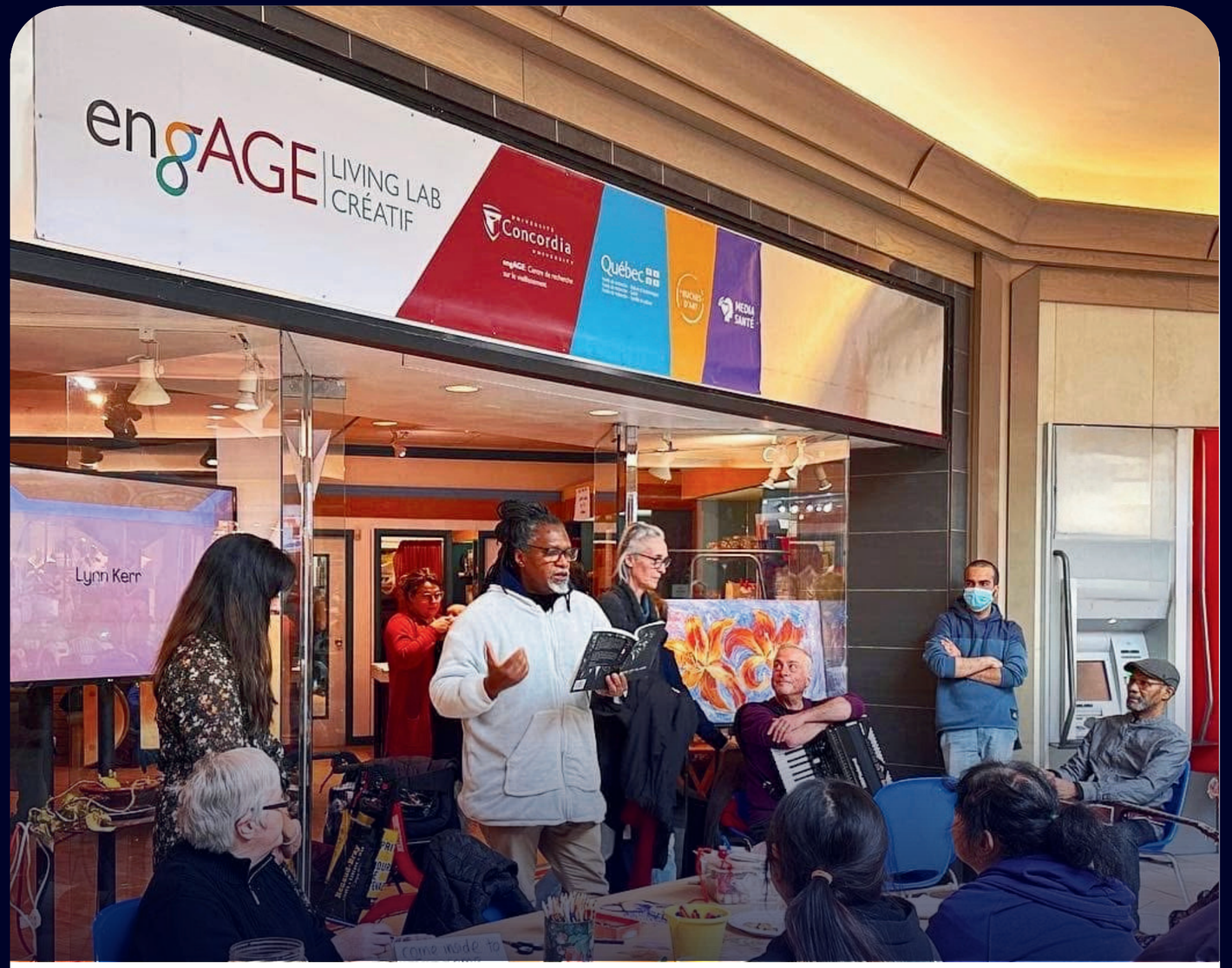
What is the Creative Science Shop?

The Creative Science Shop (CSS) is a participatory, community-engaged method adapted from the European Science Shop model, which brings researchers, NGOs, and citizens together to explore and address social issues collaboratively. At the engAGE Living Lab (eLL), this approach was expanded to include the arts and humanities, creating a unique interdisciplinary environment where creativity and dialogue support meaningful knowledge exchange. CSS sessions are 90-minute gatherings featuring two short presentations—one from a researcher and one from a community member with lived experience—followed by group discussion and optional artmaking.



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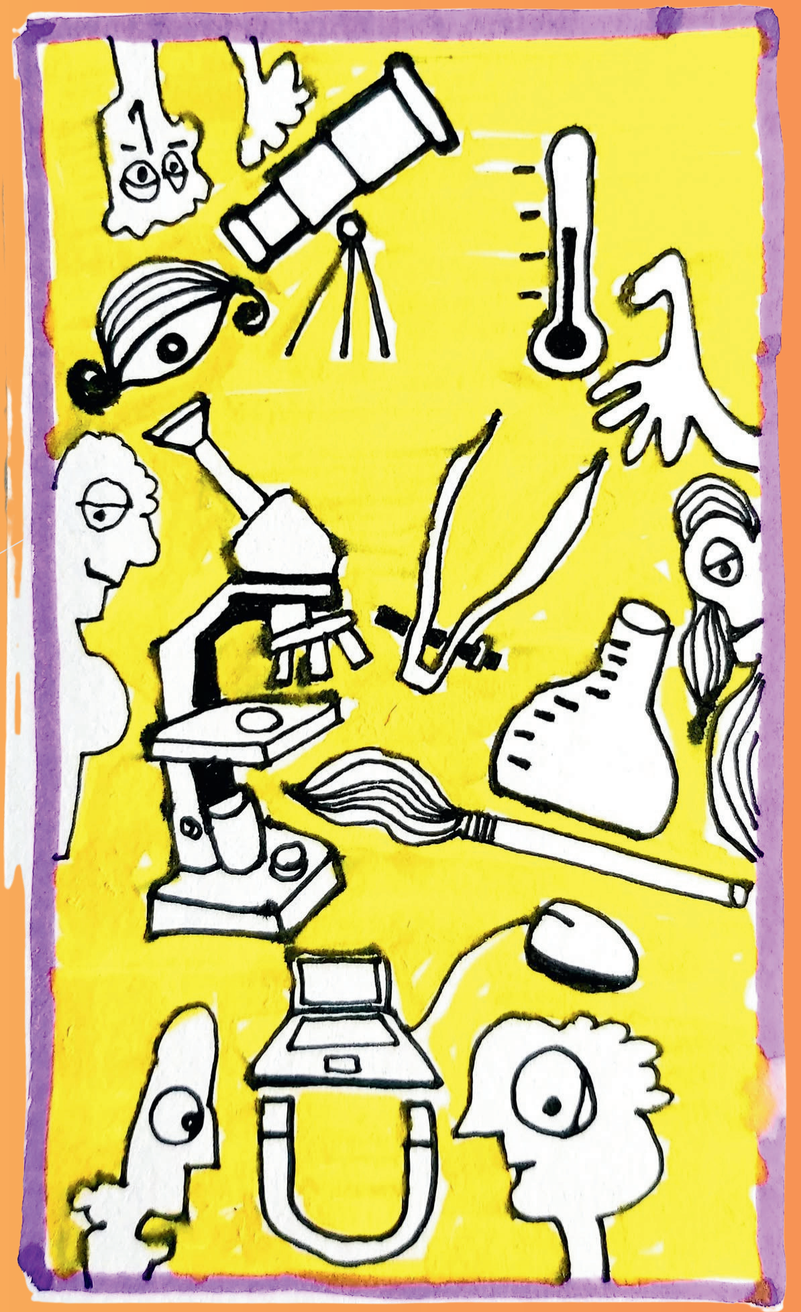
What does the Creative Science Shop aim to do?

- **Create a welcoming, creative, and interactive community space** where older adults feel comfortable gathering and sharing ideas.
- **Reduce social isolation** among older adults by fostering regular, meaningful engagement.
- **Bridge researchers, students, artists, and community members** to exchange perspectives and experiences across disciplines and generations.
- **Support interdisciplinary collaboration** by integrating scientific research with the creative arts and humanities.
- **Humanize research** by grounding it in lived experience, emotional expression, and creative practices.
- **Democratize knowledge** by valuing community expertise as equal to academic expertise.
- **Encourage active participation and agency**, giving community members a way to question research, identify priorities, and contribute to solutions
- **Ignite creative problem-solving** through artmaking, dialogue, and shared reflection.
- **Support community-defined evidence** by integrating community insights into research processes and outcomes.

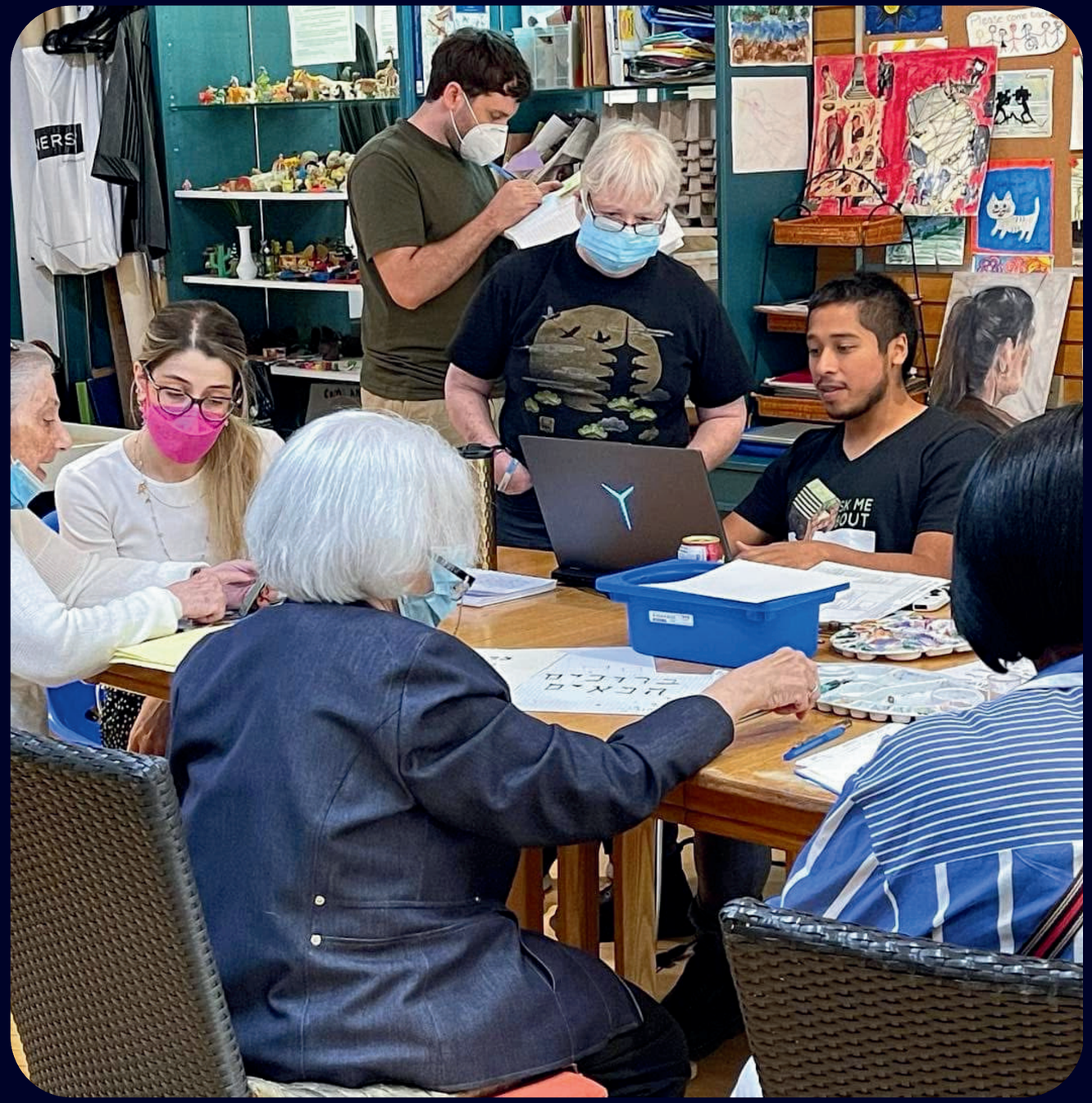


How to Run a Creative Science Shop :

Choose a topic	Themes grow out of community interests or timely issues, such as aging and memory, women in engineering, physical balance, media and stress, and the relationship between creativity and well-being.
Invite two presenters	Each session features both an academic researcher and a community member with lived experience, with each offering a 10–12 minute presentation.
Set up space	For in-person sessions, arrange chairs in a circle around a table with art supplies in a welcoming space.Online sessions require a functional Zoom setup, consent statements, and inviting participants to use simple at-home art materials.
Facilitate the 90-minute session	A 90-minute session includes a warm welcome with bilingual space-setting, a brief check-in during which everyone shares their name and interest, two presentations, a group discussion, time for art sharing, a one-word closing round, and an honorarium for both presenters.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Considerations :

- Closed captions or live translation support bilingual access.
- Equitable speaking time is carefully supported.
- Themes and guests reflect diverse voices.
- Art-making offers non-verbal ways to participate.
- Debrief forms filled with participants after the activity capture representation and reflection from diverse points of view.

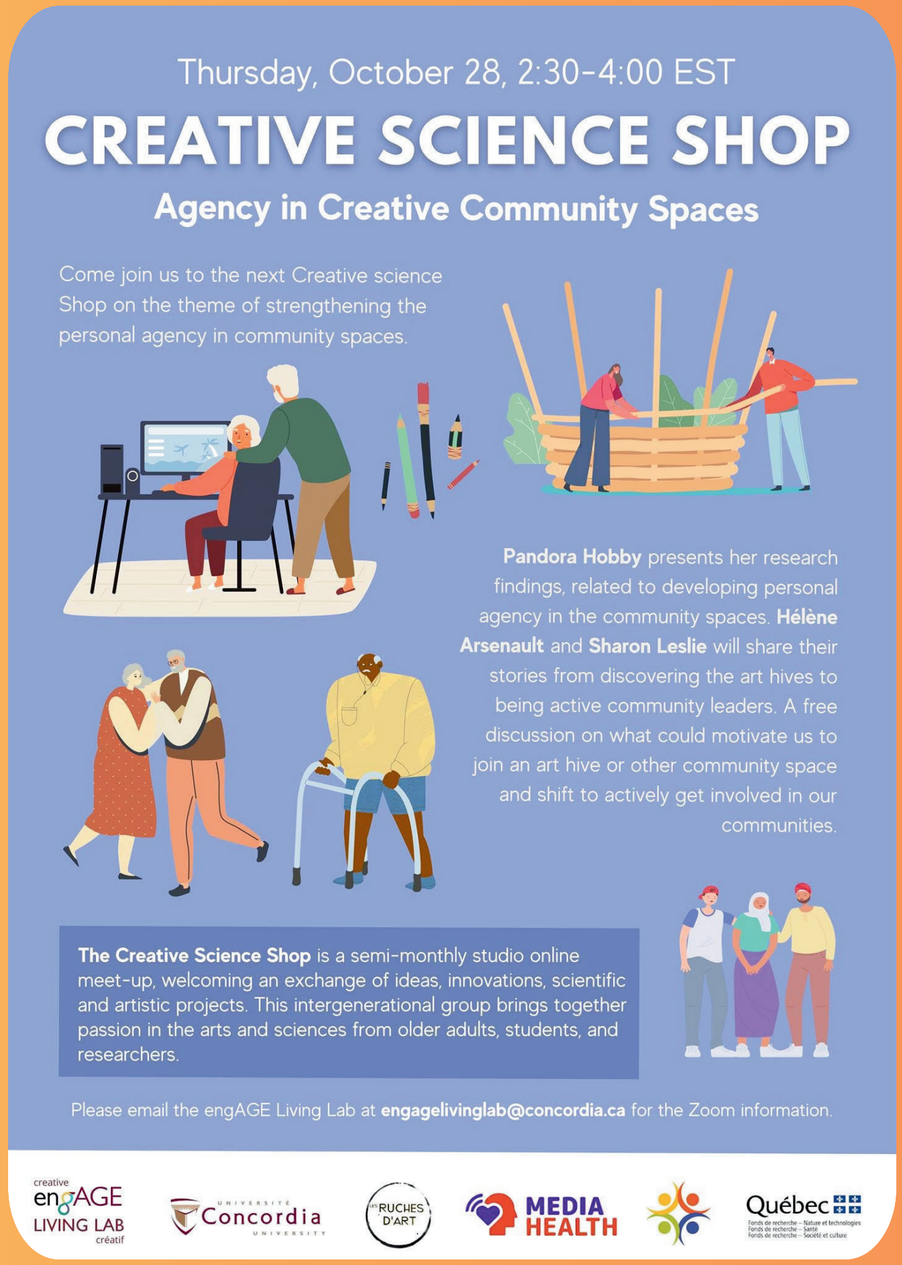


Materials and Space :

The Creative Science Shop takes place in a welcoming, flexible environment where participants can talk, listen, and create. Simple art materials—such as paper, markers, collage scraps, yarn, and knitting supplies—are made easily accessible so people can engage in spontaneous or guided artmaking during the discussion. This creative setup supports different comfort levels and ways of expressing ideas. In-person sessions often benefit from the natural flow of the surrounding community, including intergenerational participants whose presence adds energy and enriches the atmosphere. In online sessions, participants are encouraged to use whatever materials they have at home, ensuring the creative component remains accessible in any format.

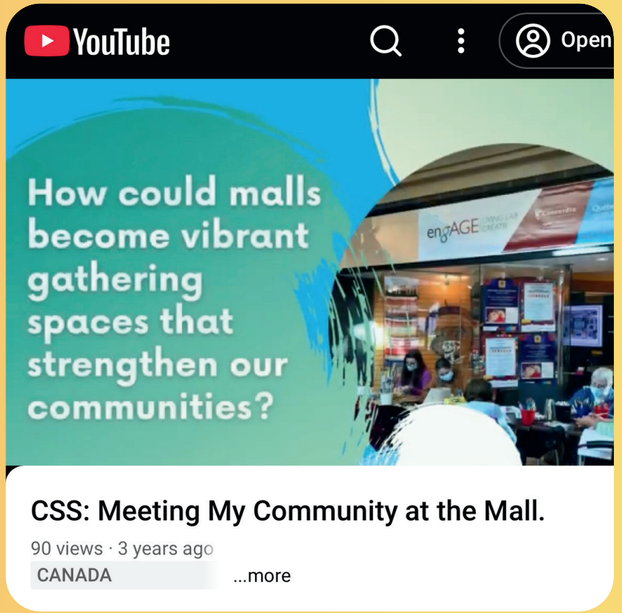
Facilitation Challenges & Solutions :

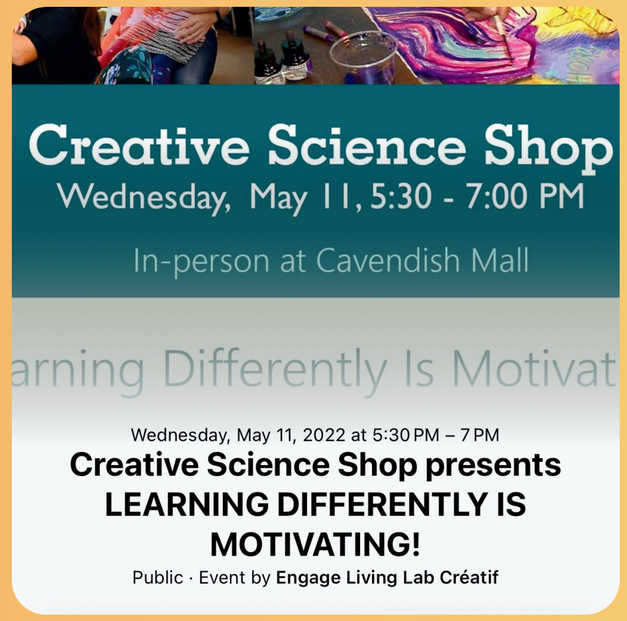
Facilitating a Creative Science Shop requires balancing structure with flexibility, and several common challenges emerged. Time management was a recurring issue, with presenters often exceeding their 10-minute limit and discussions expanding, making active facilitation essential. The format also shaped the experience: hybrid sessions were technically difficult, online sessions improved accessibility, and in-person gatherings provided richer creative connection. Real-time bilingual facilitation slowed the flow, so pre-translated slides and brief summaries were helpful. Recruiting presenters—especially during the pandemic—required ongoing outreach to ensure diverse perspectives. The 90-minute limit also left little time for art sharing, making post-session options like online galleries useful.

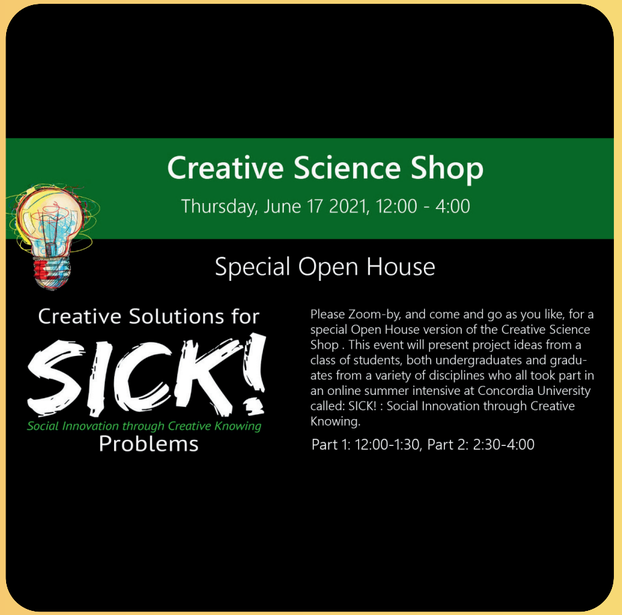


Examples of Creative Science Shop Sessions

- A wide range of i**nterdisciplinary themes** reflecting both **academic inquiry and lived community experiences**.
- Topics included: women's contributions in engineering and business, mental health and stigma, media stress, loneliness in older adults, intergenerational perspectives on aging, physical changes in aging such as balance, and the use of poetry, music, and visual arts to humanize research.
- **CSS events** explored a variety of special formats such as online Open Houses featuring student's work, multidisciplinary art exhibitions that invited public reflection, YouTube-based sharing, formal roundtables, and conference presentations.

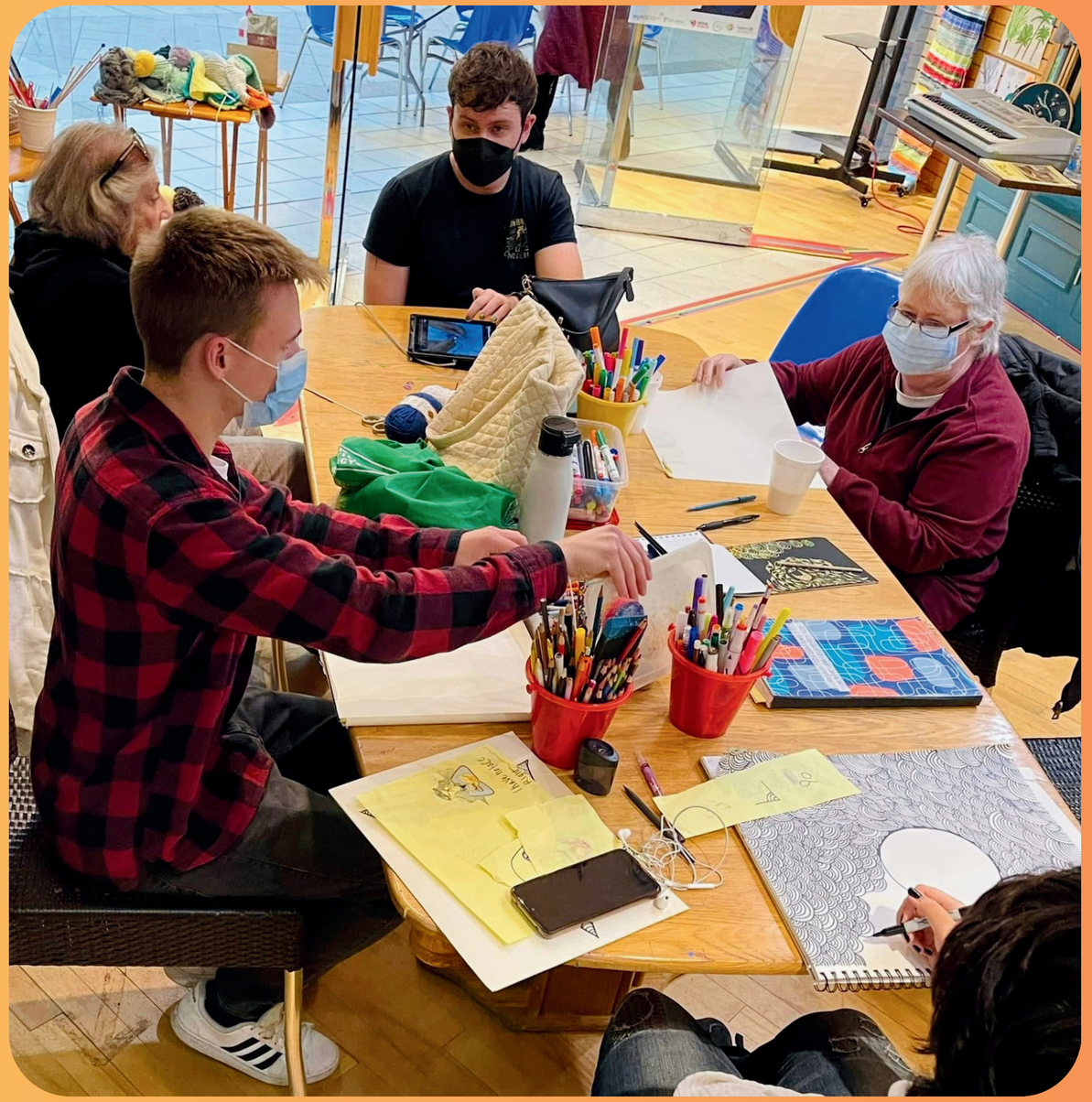






Debriefing :

After each session, facilitators and willing participants completed a debrief form to reflect on the event and identify opportunities for improvement. This process included documenting who participated, noting representation across identities and communities, and evaluating which elements of the session worked well. Facilitators also recorded challenges that arose—whether technical, logistical, or related to participation dynamics—and identified concrete actions to improve future sessions. The debrief form enabled the team to track ongoing learning, strengthen ethical practice, and ensure that the Creative Science Shop remained responsive to the needs and experiences of diverse participants.



Highlights & Impact :

Across sessions, the Creative Science Shop consistently nurtured a strong sense of community belonging. Older adults, students, researchers, and practitioners inspired one another through shared stories, creativity, and open dialogue, often feeling energized by intergenerational learning. Artmaking—whether drawing, crafting, singing, or sharing media—deepened emotional connection and opened new ways of understanding research topics. The space encouraged courageous participation, as people took risks to present, share artwork, or speak about personal experiences. Many ideas from these discussions grew into community projects, research directions, or creative initiatives, reinforcing that lived experience and artistic expression are meaningful forms of knowledge that shape research and social change.

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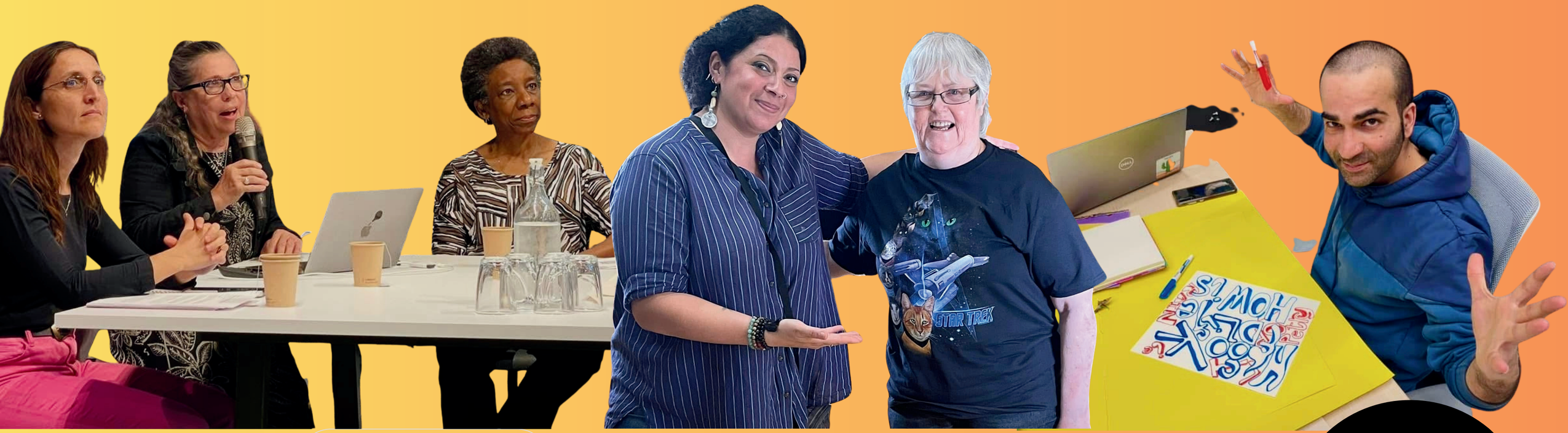

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