

SOO DHOWAAW AAN HORE U WADA EEGNO

Come closer so we can look forward together

An exploration into Somali knowledge sharing practices



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Submitted to OCAD University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Design in Strategic Foresight and Innovation

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this major research project (MRP). I authorize OCAD University to use this MRP for other institutions for scholarly research and understand that my MRP will be made electronically available to the public.

Artificial intelligence tools, including Copilot and ChatGPT, were used to support background research, outline development and grammatical review. All content in the report was reviewed and authored to reflect the original ideas and intent.

ABSTRACT

This Major Research Project explores knowledge transfer within diaspora communities with a focus on traditional ways of knowing within the Somali Canadian diaspora.

Integrating co-creation sessions with a human-centred design thinking approach, this research explores the challenges Somali communities face in sustaining and authoring their cultural practices. Prompted by recent narratives shared about the Somali diaspora in Canada and the West, this research investigates alternative approaches to foresight and social innovation and aims to highlight and reframe the unique techniques the Somali community employs to share information and engage in foresight. The research emphasizes Somali oral traditions—specifically storytelling—as methods of knowledge sharing and education, and as tools for envisioning more inclusive futures.

Keywords: storytelling, narrative building, power, resistance, Afrofuturism, systems thinking, foresight, design research, co-creation

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ
الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ
إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ
أَهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ
صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا
الضَّالِّينَ

(Passage from the Holy Quran - Surah Al-Fātiḥah, typically read to at the beginning of a prayer)

First and foremost, this project would not have been possible without Allah guiding me to present this knowledge and giving me the strength to complete it. Secondly, my mother, who has been my anchor and the most inspiring person I know.

This work is dedicated to my brothers Yahya (Allaha u Naxariisto), Sakariya and Salman, and to my cousin Raqia. I love you all and thank you for taking the time to advise me through this process. To my extended friends and family, who have also been my sounding boards, advisors, and listening ears, thank you for acknowledging me, helping me find spaces for sessions, and supporting the many asks I had throughout the delivery of this project. To all the participants, thank you for taking the time to meet, participate in workshops, and share your insights. This project was possible because of your generosity and willingness to share knowledge with me. To my academic advisor, Peter, and mentor Rachel, thank you for taking the time throughout this year to meet with me and support, challenge, and shape my thinking. This work is as fruitful as it is due to your keen eyes!

Throughout this research project, I had the opportunity to attend a conference the Annual Youth Resiliency Conference in Somalia titled “Beyond Borders: Youth Shaping Resilient and Peaceful Futures,” where I spoke with Somali youth, community members, and members of the Somali Government. Additionally, I spoke with the EU Ambassador to Somalia. Although these conversations were not with members of my research, they informed and enriched my project, and I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to experience Somalia firsthand.

POSITIONALITY

I am a first-generation Somali Canadian, born and raised in Toronto, Ontario. This research has been both personal and professional, allowing me to expand my foresight practice while exploring Somali knowledge traditions. The project emerged from my lived experience in the Master of Design – Strategic Foresight and Innovation program. Within academic and institutional settings, I often struggled to express my insights clearly and found myself relying on idioms and proverbs to convey meaning. This challenge led me to reflect on Somali oral traditions and consider how to share this knowledge more widely.

As I continued to explore the language, I became increasingly interested in how foresight is shared and communicated within Somali culture, particularly through storytelling and traditional expressions. I want to acknowledge that I am not the creator of the idioms, quotes, or concepts shared here. Some aspects of this research may not be perfectly framed, and I see this as a continuous process. I am excited to learn alongside you.



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GLOSSARY

Hooyo

Mother

Sheeko

Storytelling

Allaha u Naxariisto

May Allah have mercy on them

Soomalinimo

The act of being Somali

Sheekoyin (plural)

Stories (multiple)

Allaha u Naxariisto

May Allah have mercy on them

Soo Dhawaawda

Come Closer

Sheekoyin (plural)

Stories (multiple)

Soo Dhawaawda

Come Closer

Hido iyo Dhaqan

Tradition and Culture

Maahmaahyo

Proverbs

Gabay

Poetry

Wallahi

I swear to God

Storytelling

The act of creating meaning by organizing experiences, event and values into narrative form (Young, Njambi-Szlapka, & Rogers, 2019)

Baati

Dress typically worn at home

Buraanbur

Women's form of poetry particularly used in wedding celebrations.

Nabad galyo

Goodbye

Fadhi carbeed

Traditional Somali seats

Xariir

Come together

Shaah iyo sheeko

Tea and talk.

Insha Allah

God willing.

Allaha u Naxariisto

May Allah have mercy on them

Foresight

Refers to the structured, exploratory practice that examines multiple plausible futures in order to help societies, organizations and governments anticipate change and prepare for uncertainty (Policy Horizons Canada, n.d)

Decolonization

Includes addressing and undoing the ongoing impacts of colonial systems, including how power, knowledge, and institutions have marginalized Indigenous peoples, and colonized peoples' (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015).

CHAPTER 1: SOO DHAWAAW



(Ahmed-Mohamoud, 2026)

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Storytelling has always served as a means for people to share knowledge and make sense of the world (Nelson, 1989). Through stories, communities exchange memories, offer guidance, and imagine what is possible (Bruner, 1991). In Somali culture, this tradition is embodied in sheeko (conversation and storytelling) that enables people to ideate, apply lived knowledge, and collectively work through problems. Similarly, maahmaahyo, or proverbs, transmit layered lessons across generations, sharing values and ways of navigating uncertainty.

While mainstream futures studies often rely on methods developed and practiced within formalized Western frameworks, this research reveals that futures thinking has always been present in Somali sheeko practices. It was embedded in the lessons and information shared, even if it was neither labelled nor recognized by institutional frameworks. For instance, frameworks such as scenario planning, STEEPV analysis, and forecasting are typically centred in institutional settings and require expert-driven validation to become legitimized. Within this epistemological hierarchy, oral, collective, and community-based practices such as sheekoyin and maahmaahyo may be regarded as less legitimate because they are not recognized as valid forms of knowledge production by institutions (Smith, 2012), but as this research will show, these Somali practices are inherently future-oriented.



(Mendel, 2018)

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Despite the centrality of the future, not all communities have the privilege of imagining the future (Appadurai 2013). Research on the residual effects of intergenerational trauma in refugee communities underscores the psychological and emotional impacts of displacement, showing how such feelings can be carried forward across generations, even amongst those without direct experiences of it. These inherited experiences shape how younger generations envision and relate to the future (Sangalang & Vang, 2017). These lived experiences directly influence how futures work unfolds within the Somali community.



1.1.2 A BRIEF HISTORY OF SOMALIS IN CANADA

Somalia is the easternmost country on the African continent, with a coastline stretching across 3,300 kilometres (Henretta, 2017). Historically a nomadic society, Somali life has long been organized around movement, with family and clan networks forming the foundation of survival, governance, and social organization (Harper, 2012). The population is predominantly Muslim, and everyday life is guided by social values and communal norms rooted in this faith. This foundation of movement, kinship, and faith would prove essential to how Somali communities endured following displacement and rebuilt life in countries like Canada

Following independence in 1961, Somalia faced persistent challenges related to governance and economic instability (Samatar, 1994). Tensions escalated during Siad Barre's regime as clan divisions deepened and fragmentation grew. The collapse of the Somali state in the late 1980s (Abdulle, 2000; Hoehne, 2010) set off a prolonged struggle for stability that persists to this day (Menkhaus, 2014; Bradbury, 2008). Violence and economic hardship drove mass migration to Western countries, including Canada and the United States (Jibril, 2011).



(Ahmed-Mohamoud, 2026)

1.1.2 A BRIEF HISTORY OF SOMALIS IN CANADA

Prior to 1988, fewer than 1,000 Somalis settled in Canada; however, by the mid-1990s, that number had grown to over 54,000, contributing to the largest refugee asylum movement in Canadian history at the time (Abdulle, 2000). Settlement brought new negotiations of identity, particularly for Somali Canadians navigating between inherited cultural practices and the realities of growing up in Canada (Berns-McGown, 2013). The residual effects of British, Italian, and French colonization continue to surface in language structures within the community (Samatar, 1994).

The history of displacement and instability within the Somali community has had lasting effects, shaping how they navigate discomfort and uncertainty. These experiences are important for understanding how Somali storytelling practices function as tools for meaning-making, resilience, and futuring.

Concentrated Historical & Cultural Timeline

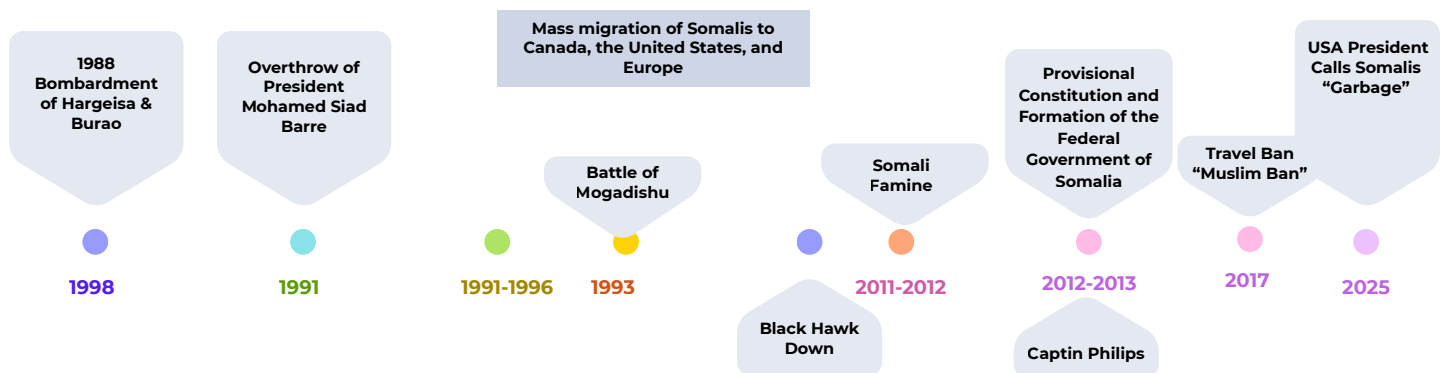


Figure 1: Concentrated Historical & Cultural Timeline

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTION & IMPORTANCE

How might Somali oral Sheeko (storytelling) and collective dialogue encourage inclusive futures?



Figure 2: List of secondary questions

The Somali community are dreamers. The older generation dreams of peace. Recent migrants dream about the possibilities ahead. The younger generation dreams about what is to come. There is a prevailing feeling of wanting to be represented in the planning of the future, but feeling left out of the future. This research is grounded in the understanding that the work of future-making is already occurring within and for the community.

This project focuses and is limited to the exploration of storytelling techniques used within the Somali community, examining which aspects of culture help frame how Somali people view and imagine the future. Current foresight frameworks predominantly reflect Western paradigms and include only a limited number of Indigenous approaches (Inayatullah, 2004; Sardar, 2010), often overlooking existing forms of knowledge that already serve anticipatory functions within Somali community settings (Samatar, 1994). This project, therefore, seeks to examine how practices such as sheekoyin are experienced within communal spaces and how this form of participatory knowledge sharing fosters belonging.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTION & IMPORTANCE

"Nothing in the world is like our culture." – Elder 6, Participant Interview

By outlining these questions, this research aims to create a space to explore themes of resilience, aspiration, decolonization, and imagination, while also identifying practices valued within the Somali community.

My working definition of foresight is the intentional practice of envisioning potential futures. When considering how individuals imagine and prepare for what lies ahead, I recognized how essential effective communication is to this process. This realization inspired my research, which began as a reflection on the different ways people communicate and connect. As I moved through the research stages, it became clear that this work could not be developed in isolation. The elders and community members engaged brought knowledge and perspectives I could not have arrived at alone, and in doing so, helped deepen my understanding of the history these cultural practices were rooted in. To ground this research in the community, I consulted my elder, sharing the research question with her to assess whether this knowledge was worth documenting and whether the community would want to see it preserved. She shared that our ways of thinking inform our outlooks and that others may benefit from this knowledge, reaffirming that this research was worth investigating and sharing.

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY



(Ahmed-Mohamoud, 2026)

2.1 CONTEXT

As the 47th president of the USA shared his thoughts on Somali people, what began as statements toward Ilhan Omar, a congresswoman in Minnesota, has now grown into vitriol directed at Somali Americans (Melimopoulos & Kasturi, 2026).



(Lang, 2026)

This targeting has created a growing state of unease felt across the global Somali community. It is within this context that this research was conducted. The narratives circulating about Somali people are not abstract, they directly shape how the community sees themselves, how they are seen, and how they imagine what is possible for their futures.

2.2 COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH

Community based research in practice means approaching the work with as much community input as possible. It was the right approach because, when research concerns a community, it is essential that they feel heard and seen, and this research was built around that intention. Standardized research approaches can move away from relationality, prioritizing extraction over engagement. My relational perspective guided me towards methods that honour how and incorporate connective and engagement elements that honour how the Somali community naturally shares knowledge.

As a first-generation Somali Canadian researching my own community, I took on an added responsibility to frame the knowledge accurately. I may miss aspects of the research framing, but I wanted to do justice to the knowledge shared with me. This positionality was not a limitation. It was what enabled me to access spaces, conversations, and levels of trust that an outside researcher could not.

Indigenous research paradigms, including those outlined by Wilson (2008) and Kovach (2009), center relationality and reciprocity, along with oral knowledge practices as ceremonial ways of gathering and holding information. These values are aligned with how knowledge has always moved within the Somali community. Drawing on these paradigms offered a framework that could hold Somali ways of knowledge without flattening them into Western research conventions.

In practicing this act of give and take, I intentionally selected a framework that offered the same flexibility. What drew me specifically to the Double Diamond was its permission to go back. Conversations with Somali elders were scattered throughout the research process, and having the opportunity to return each time new information was presented was invaluable. In practicing reciprocity, participants shared their stories and knowledge, and I hope to share my knowledge back through an exhibit that showcases this information and returns it to the community in a form they can recognize themselves in.

2.3 DOUBLE DIAMOND

This research explores how Somali oral sheeko and collective dialogue can encourage inclusive futures. The methodology is structured around the Double Diamond framework (Design Council, n.d.), a design thinking approach with four distinct phases: Discover, Define, Develop, and Deliver. The Double Diamond was chosen not just for its structure, but because it closely mirrors how oral knowledge actually moves, capturing the return of information, the repetition that surfaces in dialogue, and the refinement that ensures clarity. The process was iterative and flexible, allowing exploration and contributions to the findings along a non-linear path.

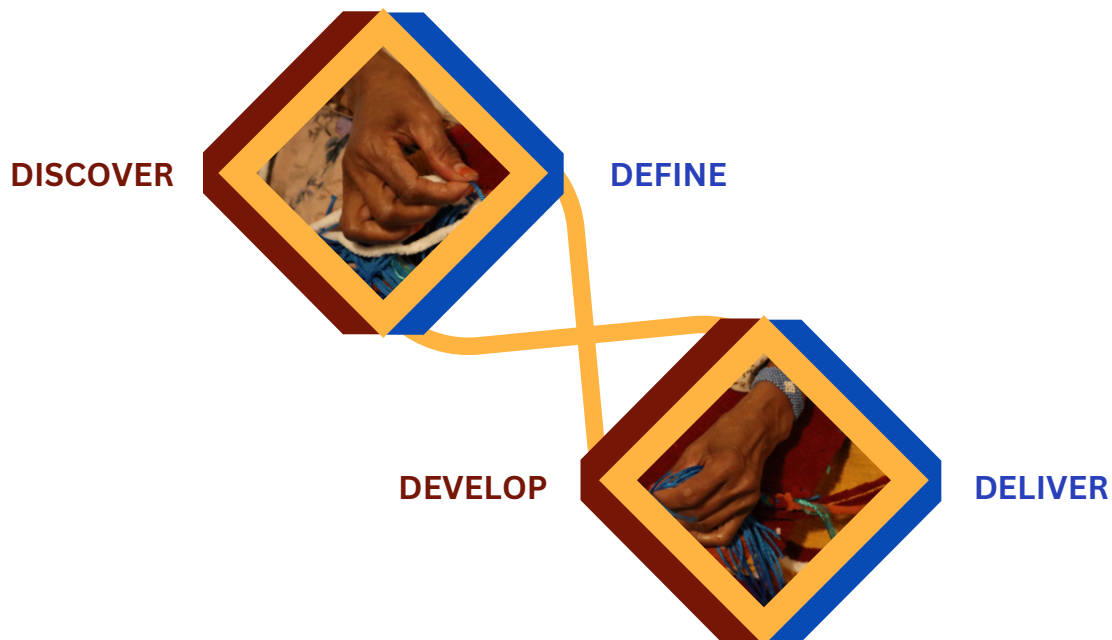


Figure 3: Adapted Double Diamond Methodology (Design Council, n.d)

This flexibility proved essential. Among participants without a background in foresight, the language used to describe futures practices did not resonate with them. This prompted my reflection and a return to the discovery phase, where we followed up with a participant and workshopped the language to land on something more familiar to the Somali community. As a result, participants were able to share more honestly. This process highlighted an important insight: the need to decolonize foresight language to promote more equitable access and inclusion in the practice.

2.3 DOUBLE DIAMOND

Each phase of the Double Diamond was grounded in the Somali community. During the discovery phase, listening was guided by elders; I sat down with them to assess the project's validity and to frame the sessions as open, allowing them to dictate the process. In the define phase, subject matter experts added nuance by highlighting how storytelling emerges in their respective disciplines, highlighting the importance of reflecting on the impact of inaccurate representation. These varied perspectives helped analyze the research from multiple viewpoints. During the development phase, participants identified areas they were interested in exploring, which were matched with emerging insights from interviews and secondary research. Co-creation sessions were then built around participants interests. In the delivery phase, I asked what giving back actually looks like for this community. The answers highlighted a few recurring themes: sharing the information back, making it accessible, and ensuring it reflects community experience. This took the form of an art exhibit from co-creation sessions, a presentation, and this report, written so that community members can recognize themselves in it.

This non-linear, iterative quality mirrors how oral knowledge moves in practice, allowing the community to shape the process and serving as a container for reflection. Central to this process was *Sug*, a Somali practice of intentional pausing and reflection, which was incorporated throughout the research to allow lived experience to confirm or challenge emerging findings. The most significant of these pauses was a research trip to Somalia, undertaken deliberately to ground the research in Somali experience before analysis. This was a methodological choice to build context, deepen connection with participants, and ensure the analysis was informed by direct experience rather than assumptions. Throughout the study, I acknowledged the tension around what is considered legitimate knowledge and intentionally treated all information collected from participants as valid and meaningful (Chilisa, 2012).

Storytelling was used as the primary mode of sharing, allowing participants to see their experiences reflected in the research findings and encouraging openness and engagement with the process.

2.3 DOUBLE DIAMOND

By creating a space that felt like an extension of home, participants were welcomed with *shaah* (Somali tea) and *fadhi carbeed* (traditional furniture) as they entered the co-creation space. One participant remarked that the space felt “way more casual than I initially thought this would be,” which confirmed that meeting the community where they are and ensuring comfort through cultural familiarity is both critical and a deliberate part of the research methodology.

Method	Alignment
Literature Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand academic context and examine storytelling through an interdisciplinary lens.
Expert Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gathered insights from practitioners within the foresight, storytelling, cultural fields.
Participant Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlighted lived experiences of the community Helping to understand and contextualize the literature findings.
Co-creation Sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sensemaking space for participants Helped envision a future that is authored by Somali people.
Diary Reflections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Captured participant reflections (4-to-6-month period) Entries provided insight into how Somali oral knowledge moves in practice and informed findings.
Causal Layered Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Framework outlined understanding of insights. Highlighted underlying assumptions, worldviews and narrative conditions that impacted Somali participants ability to participate in future work.
Autoethnographic Diary Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allowed researcher to reflect and detail their connection to idioms, proverbs and sayings.

Table 1: Method Alignment

2.4 SHEEKO WORKSHOPS

Shaah iyo Sheeko were the right framing for the co-creation sessions because the practice leveraged existing experiences within Somali culture. The moment the session name was announced, participants knew what would take place: the ritual of welcoming guests, incense burning, tea and snacks laid out. It put into practice the indigenous paradigms discussed earlier and provided a forum for dialogue. That framing mattered because participants were coming to share knowledge and deserved to be received as such. Other forums for gathering information, such as a focus group, could have worked, but would have felt too sterile and devoid of cultural context that are necessary for these conversations. Sheeko became the container for knowledge in these sessions, and it was not a formal structure. As one participant described it, "*Shaah iyo Sheeko* is not the Bridgerton style of tea. There are more people involved, and they are in your living room space; it is loud, boisterous, and warm" (Participant, anonymized, interview). That warmth was what this research needed to recreate.



(Ahmed-Mohamoud, 2026)

2.4 SHEEKO WORKSHOPS

A total of three co-creation sessions were held, organized by generational groups. The first session was with elders, the second with recent migrants, and the last with youth participants. The separation of sessions was an intentional methodological choice which focused on both cultural respect and the recognition that each generation carries a distinct relationship to Somali oral knowledge. The goal was to isolate that knowledge while also making sure the participatory groups felt comfortable sharing, regardless of cultural dynamics between elders and youth participants. Additionally, each workshop was designed to reflect the group participants priorities, using storytelling prompts and collaborative exercises to facilitate and encourage dialogue.

Somali elders represent memory, traditional narrative structure, and ancestral knowledge. Recent migrants represent adaptation, translation, and the evolving interpretation of cultural knowledge in new contexts. Somali Canadians born or raised in Canada represent imagination, hybridity, and generational futures. Separating sessions allowed each group to author their own stories and shape their perspectives freely, without the influence of inter-group dynamics or hierarchy.



(Ahmed-Mohamoud, 2026)



(Ahmed-Mohamoud, 2026)

2.4 SHEEKO WORKSHOPS

This separation also created valuable reflection as each group spoke about the other, sharing what they perceived as misunderstandings between generations. Youth participants and recent migrants had the added experience of reflecting on lessons shared by elders, building an active reflective space in which they had to consider why certain knowledge was important to pass forward and why elders felt it mattered.

Each *Shaah iyo Sheeko* session lasted approximately three hours and was facilitated by the researcher, activities conducted across sessions included:

- A facilitated storytelling circle responding to a prompt word.
- Reflective discussions about lessons embedded in the stories shared.
- A futures postcard activity, where participants shared an idiom or phrase they wished to pass to younger generations.
- Low-intensity cultural practices, such as serving tea and applying henna, to support relational comfort.
- Group discussions on how storytelling supports navigating change and identity.
- Creating a story cover as a visual representation of the future postcards.
- A Story by Us exercise, introduced in the third session, to help participants understand their connection to *Soomaalimo*.

2.4 SHEEKO WORKSHOPS

These sessions followed a participatory methodology and were shaped by participant needs, cultural expectations, and the dynamics of each group. While the core activities remained consistent across all sessions, some outputs were adapted to reflect participants' interests.

Session	Goal
Co-creation Session 1, 5 Elder Participants, Age range 50+	Explored themes of memory, wisdom, and intergenerational knowledge, drawing on traditional Somali storytelling, idioms.
Co-creation Session 2, 2 Recent Migrant Participants, Age range 30-49	Explored themes of interpretation, transition, and meaning making. Examined how recently arrived Somali Canadians adapt and reinterpret Somali stories and idioms within the context of migration and settlement.
Co-creation Session 3, 4 Youth Participants, Age range 18-29	Explored themes of creativity, belonging, and inclusive futures. Examined how younger Somali Canadians use creativity and imagination to articulate future possibilities.
Interviews	One on one interviews were conducted with 7 participants and 6 subject matter experts spanning elders, established professionals, youth, and academic and cultural practitioners.

Table 2: Session, Participants and Goals

2.5 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

I acknowledge that there are limitations to this project that are worth naming:

Due to timing constraints, a second round of the co-creation cycle could not be completed. The research would have greatly benefited from additional focused sessions with elders, recent migrants, and youth participants. These follow-up sessions would have allowed for deeper reflection on earlier insights and explored intergenerational knowledge sharing. It would have been particularly valuable to have participants engage with the more challenging lessons that emerged through activities tailored to each generational group.

This research did not include male participants in the co-creation sessions, which is a notable gap in representation. Additionally, the research would have been strengthened by running sessions across Toronto to capture a wider range of perspectives from different Somali-Canadian communities.

Language emerged as a key theme throughout this research. For knowledge translation, I relied on family, friends, and elder participants, and while their input was invaluable, translating between foresight language and Somali cultural concepts ultimately relied on my own interpretation. Without a dedicated language expert, nuances may have been lost. Further research focused specifically on language and foresight framing within Somali culture would strengthen this work considerably. Overall, the research represents a subset of insights and may not reflect the full diversity of experiences within the Somali community; rather, while the findings are specific to this sample and may not reflect the full diversity of Somali experience, they offer a foundation for broader and more expansive research to come.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW



(Ahmed-Mohamoud, 2026)

3.1 STORYTELLING AS EPISTEMOLOGY AND FUTURES PRACTICE

Said S. Samatar (1982) presents Somali oral traditions as embedded within Somali culture as social relations. He highlights how collective meaning-making and knowledge sharing are expressed through storytelling within the Somali community. Somali oral storytelling reinforces social understanding and values by standardizing collective stories and expectations across generations. Samatar also frames *sheeko* as an adaptive practice that allows the Somali community to share and interpret present conditions into future possibilities. Through this process, future thinking shows up within the Somali context as the act of sharing experiences with one another, situating *sheeko* within a futures space grounded in possibility rather than probability.

Sheeko is a collective narration that allows individual reasoning to be articulated and used as a method for thinking toward future-oriented solutions (Inayatullah et al., 2020).

In this research, futures work in the Somali community appears through the sharing of lived experiences, using proverbs and idioms as tools, within the spaces of home and social gatherings. By leveraging these communal spaces, Somali people identify with one another through acts of sharing and learning together, situating *sheeko* within a futures space that navigates possibility rather than being confined to probability frameworks.

3.1 STORYTELLING AS EPISTEMOLOGY AND FUTURES PRACTICE

Despite the centrality of the future, not all communities have the privilege of imagining the future (Appadurai 2013). Research on the residual effects of intergenerational trauma in refugee communities underscores the psychological and emotional impacts of displacement, showing how such feelings can be carried forward, even by those who did not directly experience the trauma, which may shape how the current generation envisions the future (Sangalang & Vang, 2017). These lived experiences directly influence how futures work unfolds within the Somali community.

3.2 STORYTELLING & FUTURES ACTION

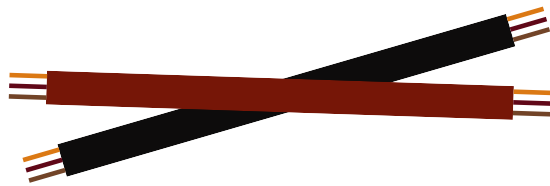
At its foundation, storytelling is an early form of knowledge sharing and provides the basis for capturing and conveying information to create meaning (Nelson, 1989). More broadly, it is how we as humans communicate, share memories, receive advice, and plan our next steps (Bruner, 1991). In futures studies, storytelling serves as a tool for imagining possibility spaces; the imagery and scenario-building it entails can help people feel less distant from the future (Inayatullah, 2004). The futures people can imagine hinge on this creativity: if individuals can imagine hopeful, inclusive futures, they are more likely to take action toward them. Conversely, if someone feels hopeless about the future, they may disengage and be unable to imagine a wider range of possibilities (Polak, 1973).

3.3 POWER, LEGITIMACY, AND WHO GETS TO DEFINE FUTURES

The future is not neutral, and power shapes how narratives are produced, shared, and understood (Smith, 2012). Western academic institutions drive and elevate certain forms of knowledge as valid, shaping which futures are featured and referenced, while non-Western, community-based forms of knowledge struggle to be recognized as accurate (Mansbridge, 2003; Mansbridge, 2011). Institutions serve as guarantors of legitimacy and embody the authority to define credible futures. When oral and community-grounded knowledge is excluded from this legitimization, it inadvertently excludes the knowledge shared within the Somali community. As a predominantly oral culture, when legitimacy is placed in controlled, regulated documents, individuals are left without representation in the spaces that shape futures.

3.3 POWER, LEGITIMACY, AND WHO GETS TO DEFINE FUTURES

Further to this gap, even when a minority identity is present on screen or in a narrative, if the writing and perspective behind it do not reflect that identity or lived experience, it remains an outside interpretation. This distinction matters because representation without authorship repackages the same external perspective in a more palatable form. To have true representation, the stories authored must reflect the context and nuanced experience of the lived experiences being described.



3.4 FUTURES AS NARRATIVE, POWER, AND REPRESENTATION

Futures are neither neutral nor as open-ended as they may appear; instead, they are shaped by a set of historically produced conditions of what is possible, organized through dominant narratives and reinforced through media and institutional storytelling. A tension exists between historical collective memory and futurity, particularly in how dominant narratives shape both the depiction of historical events and future ideas. This tension highlights how narrative power determines what is positioned as legitimate knowledge and how minority voices are portrayed as less authoritative or accurate, especially when they challenge or reimagine dominant frameworks.

For example, Somali representation in Hollywood films such as *Black Hawk Down* (2001) and *Captain Phillips* (2013) is primarily filtered through a Western lens, excluding Somali viewpoints from the narrative. In these films, Somali characters are portrayed as antagonists, with little narrative building to capture the historical, political, or socioeconomic factors that shape their actions. Important context, such as lived experiences, foreign interference, or illegal fishing, is omitted, while the focus remains on brutality and the savage imagery perpetuated by Western media (Besteman, 1996). As a result, these portrayals reinforce narrow historical perceptions that limit how futures are imagined. Eshun (2003) highlights this dynamic most clearly in representations of Black and African futures, which are frequently depicted through dystopian lenses.

These portrayals often emerge as responses to dominant narrative frameworks. They aim to recentre Black and African futures through a Black lens, serving both as interventions and as creative practices (Eshun, 2003).

3.5 FUTURES OF POSSIBILITY VS. PROBABILITY

The future is not only something that will happen but is also currently unfolding. According to Appadurai (2013), the future is a cultural phenomenon, shaped by social and cultural practices rather than simply unfolding randomly. He further explores the dynamics of power, suggesting it should be exercised through the lens of possibility rather than probability. Appadurai (2013) advocates for a shift away from perspectives that rely on forecasts and probabilities, emphasizing instead a future grounded in possibility. Finally, Appadurai (2013) argues that marginalized groups are often excluded from discussions about the future, noting that individuals who are not represented within dominant futures may retract their imagination.

Futures studies, as a discipline, are criticized for the diversity of methods and epistemological approaches (Poli, 2018; Sardar, 2010). Futures work is more than a discipline or practice; it focuses on trained, measured, and validated tools. As a result, legitimacy in futures work is tied to formal expertise within educational institutions. Futures work outside this framing captures cultural practice, reflects on collective memory, engages with oral narrative, and adapts to understand the future.



3.5 FUTURES OF POSSIBILITY VS. PROBABILITY

Therefore, *sheekooyin* can be understood as an epistemic practice that further enriches future narratives, even when it is not formally recognized within conventional foresight methodologies. In practice, futures work is captured within Somali *sheeko*. It may not be explicitly named within narrative contexts; however, when compared to foresight tools that structure pathways toward futures work, *sheeko* functions as a method that allows individuals to show up authentically, share experiences, and aspire to solutions. In sessions, coming together with an openness to possibilities allowed participants to think more creatively. Feeling represented in the room and not judged for sharing expansive or unconventional views created the conditions for genuine futures thinking to emerge.



CHAPTER 4: EMERGENT FINDINGS



(Ahmed-Mohamoud, 2026)

4.1 OVERVIEW

This chapter highlights how foresight has been conducted at the community level within the Somali context. It shows that Somali people are a sum of their experiences, drawing on those experiences and knowledge as a guiding light for their next steps. Throughout this chapter, participant voices are foregrounded, with expert insights embedded to extend, validate, and clarify emerging themes. The Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) developed by Sohail Inayatullah (2004), was applied to examine the layers through which futuring is experienced and understood within Somali communities.

At the outset of this research, it was believed that the Somali community practiced futuring in a sheeko format. What was not anticipated was how deeply that practice was rooted in collective thinking. The research began with the aim of better understanding communication, but ultimately revealed why certain thought patterns exist. Insights came most easily when framed in a mutual-benefit perspective, and it became clear that this was not a personal quirk but a shared cultural affinity among all participants. This sense of community over self is ingrained from such a young age and woven through everyday actions. From preparing for guests to raising funds to support others, it is done instinctively with the greater community in mind. This has been enlightening for both the participants and the researchers.

4.1 OVERVIEW

Participant 3 (Established Professional, 33, female) 1 captured this best when they shared, "I always wondered why I was wired like I am. I know we are told you got this, and you can't let this get to you, you're Somali, but it's really interesting to learn more about the why and how." This moment confirmed that the value of lesson-based understanding and futures thinking in this community comes from the collective, inclusive outlook ingrained in it.

At first glance, an outside observer might see a Somali community that stands together, despite the persistence of negative narratives, instability, piracy, and violence, shared over the years. Much of this stems from historical and structural conditions rooted in Somalia's instability, and from portrayals of Somalis as attacking those helping them, when the country and its people sought autonomy. Instability forced displacement, and the resulting narratives persisted, eventually becoming dramatizations that perpetuated them.

Beneath the surface, however, the stories uncovered through this research reveal people coming together to problem-solve, remaining hopeful about the future, and staying steadfast in their beliefs and sense of identity. The Somali community is one of laughter and joy, where levity and humour are central, and core beliefs guide them through times of despair. Ultimately, this research revealed active resilience as part of the Somali experience, not simply a response to hardship but a way of being that was always there.

As we move through the levels of the CLA, it becomes evident that a central issue affecting Somali participation in futures thinking is the misalignment between the communication styles and frameworks being applied. The language and tools commonly used do not reflect the community, so Somali people often do not see themselves represented or engaged in this work. To avoid this disconnect, frameworks need to center and respect Somali ways of communicating.

4.2 LESSONS IN COMMUNITY: HOW SOMALI FUTURES ARE BUILT COLLECTIVELY



"Dhaqanku dhiigaageyna ayuu kuj ira, kama bixi kartid, adiga kaliya ayaa ka saari kara naftaada, xataa hadii aad ka fogaato, waa lagugu soo celin doona"

Culture is in our blood; you cannot leave it. The only person who can take you out of it is yourself, and even then, we will drag you back.

— Elder Participant 4

Lessons in community emerged as a consistent pattern across interviews with elders and recent migrant participants. Elders noted that, even when thinking about the future, it is not approached individually but collectively. The elders shared that when they think of the future, it is built alongside one another and experienced together. This was further expressed through the phrase *"Dadkayga uun ayaa i ilaalinaya"* (Elder Participant 5), meaning only my people will keep me safe.

Similar sentiments were expressed by recent migrant participants, who spoke about community through the lens of displacement and survival. Many described their migration experience as inseparable from others. One participant who migrated to Canada attributed her ability to navigate this transition to the guidance and knowledge shared by her community, concluding with the Somali phrase *"Hooyo waa harka nolosha"* (Recent Migrant 1), which means a mother is the shelter of life. For this participant, the absence of the Somali community was not just a social loss, it was the absence of a structure that supports and guides you through your experiences.

4.2 LESSONS IN COMMUNITY: HOW SOMALI FUTURES ARE BUILT COLLECTIVELY

Youth Participant 1, reinforced this collectivist mindset: "If one wins, we all win." This was in response to the question of how the community upholds and supports each other. The participant explained that Somali people are your greatest supporters and that as long as you adhere to cultural values and norms, you will be fiercely supported. This sentiment is embedded in how knowledge and support are exchanged. As Youth Participant 6 described, the proverb "*Saxan saxan kugud*" – a plate for a plate – captures this exchange precisely. Whatever someone gives to you, you return in equal measure. Not disproportionately more, not less. It is a principle of reciprocity that engages not just in material exchange but in knowledge and support as well.

Moolla (2012) argues the importance of community and how it shapes belonging for the Somali diaspora. This interpretation mirrors participant reflections on community and how it serves as a guiding structure for imagination and survival. Futuring occurs communally and exists within the Somali context.

4.2 LESSONS IN COMMUNITY: HOW SOMALI FUTURES ARE BUILT COLLECTIVELY

Researcher's Diary Entry Reflection

Entry made on December 18, 2025, in Mogadishu, Somalia



This was the question posed to me in a hospital waiting room in Mogadishu, Somalia. While there for my research project and conference, I became ill and sought medical care. As I waited, two women approached me, curious about what had brought a young woman to the hospital. I hesitated to answer, but they said "*Miyadan dhiigayga ahayn?*", essentially saying, are you not my blood, why are you not sharing? Once I explained my circumstances, they immediately began sharing homemade remedies I could try after my visit. Even as we waited for the doctor, their focus was on what they could offer me in that moment to help prevent a return visit.

This experience stayed with me, as even in a moment of personal distress, there was a communal expectation to share knowledge and support one another. It was a reminder of the Somali community's problem-solving in action. The value the community places on generosity, collective care, and the instinct to help, all unfolding before me, was impactful. This experience encapsulates the spirit and resilience I found at the heart of my research.

“

Somali identity in the diaspora is maintained through strong family and cultural continuity at home.

Professor Safia Aidid

“

Within the community, knowledge sharing is shaped by relationships of trust. Even insiders may be excluded from deeper forms of knowledge if they are not deemed sufficiently trustworthy.

Professor Ahmed Illmi

4.3 LESSONS IN RESILIENCE: PROVERBS IN PRACTICE

The connection between storytelling, imagination, and future action enables Somali people to take the knowledge and wisdom passed down to them, frame it within their own context, and envision future possibilities that reflect their aspirations. During the sessions, participants most vividly explored these possibilities when idioms were used to frame discussions within their lived experiences. After each participant shared the idiom or phrase they wished to pass to future generations, the group discussed how the lesson might be applied in their lives. This demonstrated that storytelling within this community is an active conversation, connecting retrospective insights to forward-looking opportunities. Notably, these meaningful discussions helped participants imagine how they might apply these lessons in the future.

Storytelling has always served as a means for people to share knowledge and make sense of the world (Nelson, 1989). Proverbs anchor the conversation and create space for dialogue to unfold within it, and serve as a tool through which storytelling can flourish. When a proverb is shared, you share your story of what it meant, grounding lived experiences as forms of knowledge transfer. Without the proverb, you would still be told to keep going, but it does not reflect the depth of the experience or tie in the futuring lens of looking outside of your circumstances.

4.3.1 PATIENCE ON THE HORIZON

"Samraa sad weyn hela" – Elder Participant 2, Patience leads to something great.

The elder described this proverb as one she relied on throughout her path in Canada. She illustrated its meaning with many examples from her life, including managing challenges in enrolling her children in school, facing discrimination, and managing the everyday difficulties of being a recent migrant. Each time things did not go her way, she returned to this proverb.

In her experience, patience became an active practice of reflection, a way to prepare her to reach her future self by remaining present, even in the face of hardship and holding onto a vision of her aspired future self. This lesson is something she has passed on to her children and community members. When they come to her with a problem, she reminds them that each challenge contributes to something more significant.

For instance, the participant recalled a moment when she was denied a job opportunity and felt discouraged, only to be approached later with another opportunity. For her, patience was remaining open to all possibilities and opportunities, even those not yet visible.

This proverb encourages looking beyond current limitations or challenges, focusing on what you see yourself becoming, and taking the necessary actions today to get there. From a futures perspective, it stresses the importance of enduring during uncertainty, framing difficulty as a fundamental step toward your desired state, one understood and shared by the community.

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4.3.1 PATIENCE ON THE HORIZON

"Samraa sad weyn hela"

Patience leads to something great.

— Elder Participant 2

This proverb captures a deeply held belief: that enduring hardship with grace is not passive resignation but an active, purposeful stance toward the future. The elder described patience not as waiting idly, but as a discipline — a way of holding space for what is coming while remaining fully engaged with the present moment.

She illustrated this through her own migration journey: enrolling children in unfamiliar school systems, navigating discrimination, and managing the daily weight of being newly arrived. Each setback became a site of learning rather than defeat. The proverb served as both anchor and compass — grounding her in cultural wisdom while orienting her toward possibility.

In her experience, patience became an active practice of reflection — a way to prepare herself to reach her future self by remaining present, even in the face of hardship, and holding onto a vision of who she aspired to become. This lesson is something she has passed on to her children and community members.

continued →

4.3.1 PATIENCE ON THE HORIZON

When community members come to her with a problem, she reminds them that each challenge contributes to something more significant. For instance, she recalled a moment when she was denied a job opportunity and felt discouraged, only to be approached later with a better one. For her, patience meant remaining open to all possibilities – even those not yet visible.

Insight: This proverb encourages looking beyond current limitations, focusing on what you see yourself becoming, and taking the necessary actions today to get there.

From a futures perspective, this proverb stresses the importance of enduring during uncertainty, framing difficulty as a fundamental step toward a desired state – one understood and shared by the community. Patience here is not individual; it is collective. The elder's teaching circulates through family and community, creating a shared orientation toward possibility that sustains people through transition.

In this way, patience becomes a futures practice: it holds open the space between where one is and where one is becoming, sustained by the wisdom of those who walked the path before.

4.3.2 BUILDING THE NEXT MANGO



"Canbe laf baa ku jirta"
Inside a mango, there is a pit.
– Diary Entry Participant 2

The participant indicated that she was in the final stages of reaching a professional designation. Failing this examination extended her waiting period and impacted her progression. In her frustration at not doing well, her mother sat her down and shared this proverb.

At face value, the idiom conveys hardship and suggests that everything good requires sacrifice. However, the participant's mother explained the quote's meaning more directly: an individual starts as a core pit and gradually evolves into a mango. When you are at the pit stage, you cannot see past your difficulties. Once you develop your skin, you realize that hardship provides meaningful experiences and that you value the journey. You are the sum of your experiences; without starting out in difficulty, you would not appreciate the fruits of your labour.

The proverb served as a guide for the participant, mapping the challenge she was experiencing to a future version of herself ready for success. This illustrates how *maahmaahyo*'s allows individuals to orient themselves toward future possibilities. The idea of beginning again also speaks to the circular experience of time found in African storytelling and its practices.

continued →

4.3.2 BUILDING THE NEXT MANGO



As Dr. Katindi shared during an interview, time in African contexts is approached as continuous rather than linear, the past, present and future inform one another, and even the unknown future is understood as connected to what came before rather than separate from it (Dr.Katindi, Interview, 2026).

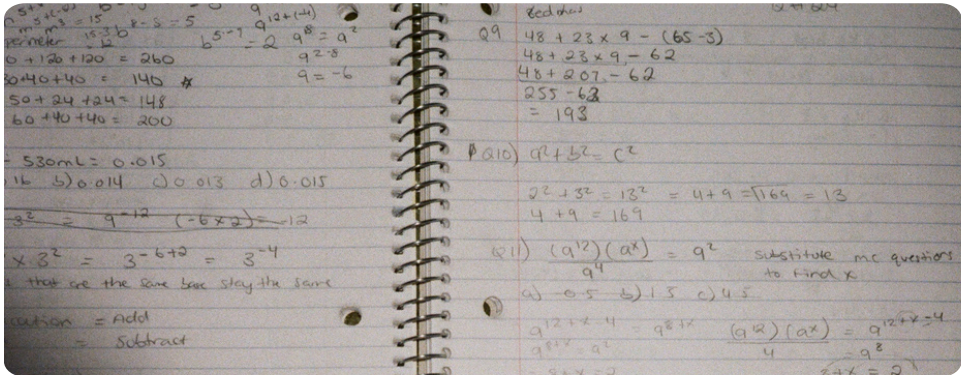
At this moment, the participant's elder relied on inherited oral knowledge to convey her message, building the participant's readiness to apply this wisdom to her own experience. This exchange took place in the participant's living room and proved just as valuable as any formal framework in helping her envision a future in which she could use her lived experiences as a foundation for growth.

Key Observation:



Futures thinking occurs over time and can be reflected through inherited oral knowledge and later experienced through your lived experience. This participant's journey was significant because it illustrated the circular process of knowledge sharing, showcasing not only how knowledge was obtained and understood but also how they carried those practices into their life.

(Amendment to diary reflection, February 10, 2026: She passed her examination.)



Diary Entry Participant 2 (2026)

4.3.2 BUILDING THE NEXT MANGO

“Qof aan dhididin ma dhergo”

A person who does not sweat does not get their fill.

– *Diary Entry Participant 2*



When the participant found out she had passed the exam, she immediately told her mother first, the same person who had given her the mango proverb when she failed. The knowledge and framing from her mother proved invaluable; the participant put the lesson into practice, worked hard, and ultimately achieved her goal. As she moved to the next stage, the participant linked her journey to another proverb: *“Qof aan dhididin ma dhergo”* – a person who does not sweat does not get their fill. While the initial mango proverb pointed her in the direction of an unseen future, this second proverb prepared her for what to do once she arrived at her desired destination. It focused on effort, emphasizing that only through hard work do outcomes emerge. Combined, these proverbs formed a learning sequence that guided the participant in pursuing her goals.

Considering her experiences, the participant described the process of building one successful mango and then starting again as a circular journey. This perspective is consistent with the continuous cycle found in African storytelling, where each ending becomes the beginning of another. The participant recognized that her goal was not a one-time achievement but a continuous progression, building her experiences and shaping how she approaches the future. In this context, futures thinking is not an individual or singular act; it is based on shared wisdom and the ongoing, step-by-step process of growth, like forming the resilient skin of a mango through different circumstances.

continued →

4.3.2 BUILDING THE NEXT MANGO

"Roonaa Rabaa og"

Only God knows what is best.

– *Diary Entry Participant 2*



In the weeks that came after, the participant found herself considering a third proverb. This saying surfaced in conversations with both a close friend and her father, neither of whom knew it had already been shared with her. Its repetition functioned as a reminder that proverbs are always contextual; at this stage of difficulty, she needed an anchor that allowed her to reflect on her spiritual connection and create space to work through her experiences.

"Only God knows what is best" became a point of release, an invitation to let go of control and trust the outcome. While the mango proverb served as her map and the sweat proverb pointed out the necessary effort, this third proverb encouraged her to relinquish control and trust that she had done enough to set herself up for success. What initially appeared as her greatest barrier became, in hindsight, her greatest preparation. She would experience more in life, and in this controlled space, this difficulty did not delay her path; it prepared her to face what was upcoming.

Drawing on the mindset modelled by her elders, the participant settled into this stage, embracing trust and the belief that things would work out as they should.

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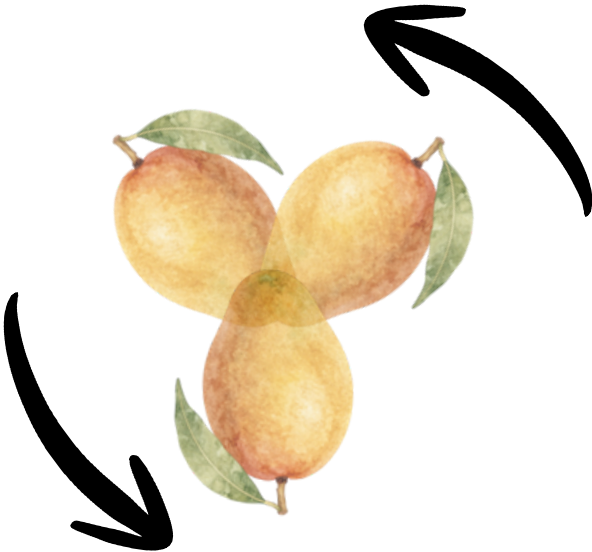
4.3.2 BUILDING THE NEXT MANGO

Researcher's Reflection



These diary entries revealed that futures thinking within the Somali community happens through lived experiences and through the application of proverbs. For this participant, it took place over months through highlighting how they persevered, anchored their core values and the wisdom of proverbs, providing a road map toward her goals. As a researcher, it was interesting to observe how proverbs served as guiding tools, helping the participant navigate her environment, validate her thoughts and situate them within a wider perspective. This storytelling system's navigation process was not created by the research; it is a part of Somali cultural practice. While this participant reflected on it explicitly, many others engage with it implicitly.

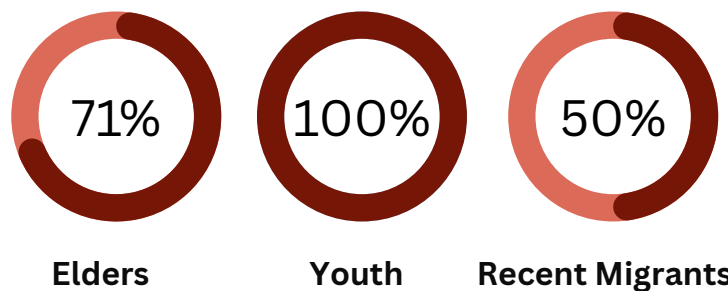
“ I don't see time as future, present, past I view it in a continuous and if anything more towards the past.”- Elder Participant 5



4.4 LESSONS IN IDENTITY: Intergenerational Alignment and Soomalinimo

Elders shared that knowledge is conveyed through stories, but understanding the language is key. Somali diaspora youth echoed this sentiment, expressing difficulty articulating themselves in Somali. Across all sessions, participants expressed hesitation about whether the language and wisdom would be carried forward authentically. Youth participants noted that their concerns were more about language ability than lack of interest.

Participants were asked: Do you think this generation will lose the ability to recall proverbs and idioms on their own ?



"I fully understand what someone is saying, the hard part is responding." – Youth Participant 2

"I feel shame not being able to respond properly, and worse, people often make fun of your accent." – Youth Participant 1

In conversation with Professor Illmi, we discussed the new generation's hesitancy to define what makes a Somali person Somali, reflecting on the tension between parents' and youth's identities. This tension also emerged from my interviews with participants, who emphasized the essence of *madax adeeg*, knowing who you are but also in tern reflecting on *Soomalinimo*, understanding how you view yourself in relation to your culture.

4.4 LESSONS IN IDENTITY: Intergenerational Alignment and Soomalinimo

Madax adeeg represents the ‘hard headedness’ of knowing who you are and not letting external ideas cloud your idea of self. It was a sentiment echoed by all participants. This resilient self-assurance is woven through Somali identity, even as it evolves, those core ideals remain constant.

This idea surfaced most clearly in an interview with participant 5, where any any sign of self-doubt she would remind herself.

"Qofna wax maku shegi karto" - nobody can tell you anything.

Yet, understanding *Soomalinimo* and oneself is more complex. Youth Participant 6, introduced the idea of cultural fossilization, describing how the experiences of the migrant generation have been passed down largely as memories fixed at the point of migration. As the new generation, participants shared the experience of reconciling this inherited *Soomalinimo* with their own realities, finding new ways to define what it means to be Somali. Navigating this in-between space often brings feelings of not fully belonging to either world. As Youth Participant 3 put it, "I feel like sometimes I am not Somali enough or Canadian enough, if that makes sense."

For many, this tension is part of an ongoing process, giving themselves permission to take up more space as Somali Canadians, without having to choose between the two. Hopeful, positive views of self were highlighted in the *Story by Us* activity, where Somali youth and recent migrants shared what it means to be Somali to them.

The *Story by Us* exercise was conducted with youth participants to interpret their definitions of *Soomalinimo* through the values they hold rather than those inherited. Youth participants highlighted feelings of confidence, hopefulness, and healing.

continued →

The story by US.....

"I say that being Somali is about being confident and that our future is full of opportunities. We are taught this throughout our lives, and I know this is how I see myself, so I would use the word confidence to describe a Somali person's outlook. For how I view the future, I definitely feel like the future is brighter, I would say full of opportunities."

— Youth Participant 1

"I say to be Somali is to be a dreamer. I think the future is what I want it to be. I have never reflected this much about what I want in life, so in terms of desire, I will have everything I need to have." — Youth Participant 3

"I say that being Somali is to spread healing. The future is uncertain, but I do feel like I am approaching it with a more hopeful outlook, one that is focused on healing. I think so much of our lives as black people, as Muslims, as women, as Somalis it is about navigating everything people place on us. What I hope I can focus on is healing others and the parts of me that have been affected by these outlooks so I can proceed toward accomplishing my goals, knowing in the end I am me and no one can change that."

— Youth Participant 2

"I say that being Somali is about never backing down. Looking ahead, I am aware of all the work everyone is doing to show who Somali people are, so I am not worried." — Youth Participant 4

SOMALINIMO

The act of being Somali

Figure 4: The story by us

4.4 LESSONS IN IDENTITY: Intergenerational Alignment and Soomalinimo

In addition to language and identity, perceptions of community orientation revealed a generational divide. Elders and recent migrant participants expressed concern that youth are less community-oriented than previous generations. However, all four youth participants described themselves as strongly community-oriented, though in ways different from their elders. As Youth Participant 2 noted, "We seek community differently, but I feel like we are just as connected." Another youth participant reflected, "I don't think we will ever be as connected as our parents, but we don't need to be; we are more accessible to one another."

Recent migrant participants acknowledged the importance of elder guidance but also recognized that their desires sometimes do not align and that they must be willing to do things differently for change to happen. All four youth participants reported that it was difficult to initiate conversations about the past with their parents, either out of concern for triggering difficult memories or due to language barriers. They noted that parents who escaped war often focused on survival and stability, frequently responding to future-oriented conversations with *Inshallah*².

One youth participant reflected that they would not have been as open to thinking about the future if it were not for their older siblings taking the pressure off, allowing them to pursue different possibilities.

“ Each generation negotiates its own Somali identity; the past is a resource, not a burden.

Professor Ahmed Illmi

“ Intergenerational dialogue fails when power imbalances remain unaddressed, and each group questions the validity of the other.

Dr. Katindi Sivi

² In this context, *Inshallah* was not used as an expression of hope or intention, but rather as an acknowledgement that the uncertainty of the future provided them with limited agency.

4.5 LESSONS IN NARRATIVE PRESSURE

Western media have historically depicted the Somali people through a narrow lens, reinforcing perceptions of lawlessness and chaos without providing the necessary context for how these situations evolved (Besteman, 1996). Such portrayals not only shape how the public perceives Somali people, but also affect how Somali people see themselves. This misrepresentation is heightened by ongoing political tensions in the United States. Across interviews, participants shared a growing sense of unease about how Somali people are portrayed in Western media.

Even though participants try not to internalize these narratives, the impact is real.

*"I feel like we just got over the whole piracy thing, and now we have to deal with someone calling us garbage. No human should ever be connected to garbage."
— Youth Participant 2*

"I had to learn that there is nothing for me to prove; a lot of what is being shared in the media is in direct contradiction to my life. If you choose to be moved by your assumptions, there is nothing I can do about it." — Youth Participant 3

"I am concerned for the next generation that grows up with this depiction of Somali people, they are the ones that will be most affected." — Youth Participant 1

Participants also pointed to forthcoming short films focused on the Somali experience as significant contributions to authentic Somali perspectives and deeper self-understanding. For example, in the United Kingdom, the BBC Three short film *Proper Ladies* (BBC Three, 2026), adapted from the award-winning play *Dugsi Dayz* by British Somali playwright Sabrina Ali, exemplifies nuanced Somali representation and provides a more accurate depiction of the community. This case demonstrates the meaningful connections that emerge when authorship comes from within the represented group.

These responses reflect both resilience and awareness. Participants were not passive recipients of such narratives; instead, they actively resisted, reframed, and, in some cases, redirected their energy toward building more accurate representations of Somali identity.

4.5 LESSONS IN NARRATIVE PRESSURE

“ *Self-representation is essential for community agency. Pandering to external validation is not productive if the community already knows the truth* ”

Professor Safia Aidid

“ *Media narratives can shift rapidly, affecting public perception and self-concept.* ”

Professor Finola Kerrigan

“ *Bad representation is worse than no representation. Silence is a curatorial choice and has consequences.* ”

Saeedeh Niktab



4.6 LESSONS IN CEREMONY

Before Somali people gather and begin speaking, there are ceremonial aspects to welcoming and sharing. One important tradition is creating a welcoming atmosphere by burning incense. Burning incense serves not only to purify and clear lingering smells, but also to signal welcome. It shows that someone has prepared for your arrival; additionally, tea is served alongside snacks.

These elements were incorporated into the sessions, and participants, especially elders, noticed the tea and incense and appreciated the extra care taken to make them feel at home.

"No way, there are baatis? Can we change into them now?" – Youth Participant 2



(Ahmed-Mohamoud, 2026)

The response confirmed the importance of feeling a sense of cultural familiarity when sharing your experiences. The tea period naturally turned into a moment of reflection on the project's purpose and my reasons for pursuing this exploration area. During this discussion, participants also shared how having these types of conversations could have greater impact for the Somali community and would bring different generations together.

continued →

4.6 LESSONS IN CEREMONY

Researcher's Reflection



When participants felt safe, it became easier for them to tap into the imaginative space. The openness observed in the co-creation sessions was very different from that in the one-on-one interviews, and the only thing that changed was the physical space where the interview was conducted online versus in-person. This concept was also shared by Dr. Katindi, who highlighted that ritual creates the conditions for authentic participation (Katindi, personal communication, 2026). Through this research, it is clear that participants feel valued when their traditions and customs are reflected in a space, which makes them feel at ease and ultimately creates the safety needed to share their aspirations openly.

4.7 LESSONS IN IMAGINATION

The future was most comfortably envisioned in terms of how it could benefit the collective. Imagining the future for the individual alone often felt unfamiliar or even uncomfortable. Participants were more willing to engage when futures were framed as serving the community. This tendency is connected to *madax adeeg* (hard-headedness), the strong ideals of knowing who you are and what you represent. In this context, that sense of self-assurance is expressed outwardly toward the group rather than focused on individual goals. It felt more authentic to discuss and share visions of the future that benefited everyone, not just oneself.

In practice, the “permission” to imagine a future that was aspirational or creative only emerged when the activity was framed as a community exercise. When asked about their individual futures, participants often gave short, highly realistic answers that lacked a personal view into their aspirations.

Youth Participant 3 shared, “I am clear about who I am and and where I am going,” but explained that this clarity mostly came from a realistic, goal setting not aspirational.

4.7 LESSONS IN IMAGINATION

However, when the conversation shifted to how they wanted to see the community prosper, the same participants suddenly offered more responses that also connected back to them. Showcasing how cultural values support futuring conversations, as the Somali community naturally imagines from collective lens . The permission to imagine is closely tied to serving others, making futures thinking more inclusive and genuine when it is grounded in benefits for the collective.

The youth participants also reflected on postcards created in previous sessions, noticing how similar their ideas were. This suggested that, despite elders' observations about changing community dynamics, the core values remain consistent across generations; the difference is simply in how community shows up for each group.

Participants were encouraged to use whatever medium best reflected their feelings; many gravitated toward art-based expressions to share their visions.



Theme 1: Community and Belonging



"To have a village is to be a villager. Everyone wants happiness and support, but to get that you need to show up for others. Bad advice throws you off – if you don't have a good community around you, you will fall short in life."

– Youth Participant 4, Future Postcard

A united connected community is what achieves success. – Elder Participant 5, Future Postcard

4.7 LESSONS IN IMAGINATION

"Centre yourself in gratitude and allow yourself to live in joy. You have no idea how much you're doing at all times. Take a moment to find pleasure and happiness in the things you've accomplished and share that with others." – Recent Migrant Participant 1, Future Postcard



Theme 2 – Resilience and Perseverance

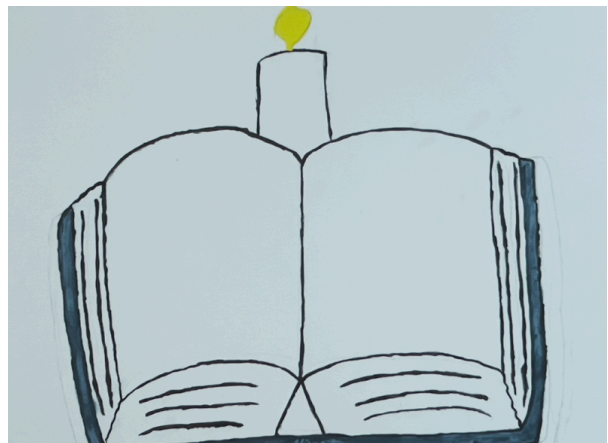
"Labaatan jir ninki shaqeeysto, lixdan jir ayuu sharaf ku noolada"

When you are young, you have both strength and intelligence. Make good use of your twenties so that later in life you can live with dignity and stability. – Elder Participant 2, Future Postcard



"Guusha mala gaaro halmar" – Slow progress is still progress. Live life freely. You are not behind. You choose what was right for you, not what was expected. – Youth Participant 1, Future Postcard

"Guul iyo guuldaro wa walaalo" – Goals and goallessness are siblings. Don't be afraid to fail. It creates a growth mindset where you are able to evaluate feedback and that will ultimately lead to success. – Youth Participant 2, Future Postcard



4.7 LESSONS IN IMAGINATION



Theme 3 – Self-Belief and Identity

"Haka daalin hamigaga, maalin uun baad gaari" – Don't give up on your dreams, you will reach them one day.

– Elder Participant 3, Future Postcard

"Naag nool iska diig" – Make yourself an alive woman. Be yourself and a path will open. Everything starts in you.

– Youth Participant 3, Future Postcard




Theme 4 – Knowledge and Patience

"Intaadan falin ka fiirso" – Think before you act. You should think carefully and take advantage of every opportunity. Always think things through before making a decision. – Elder Participant 1, Future Postcard

4.7 LESSONS IN IMAGINATION

Researcher's Reflection



Across generations, core values consistently emerged, showing strong alignment within the Somali community as it builds toward a shared future. What is especially noteworthy is that these values surfaced independently in each group. Elders, recent migrants, and youth participated in separate sessions without hearing each other's insights, yet all identified the same key values: community, resilience, self-belief, and patience. While youth participants later reflected on what others had shared, their initial lessons were based on their own perspectives. This demonstrates that futures thinking is already deeply embedded in the community. There is a collective vision being pursued, with many open and varied paths for achieving it.

In this context, futures thinking means the ability to imagine and plan for a collective future. This mindset is already present within the Somali community. Multiple groups independently expressed future visions that naturally aligned highlighting the community's unity and ongoing commitment to moving forward together.

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS & SYNTHESIS



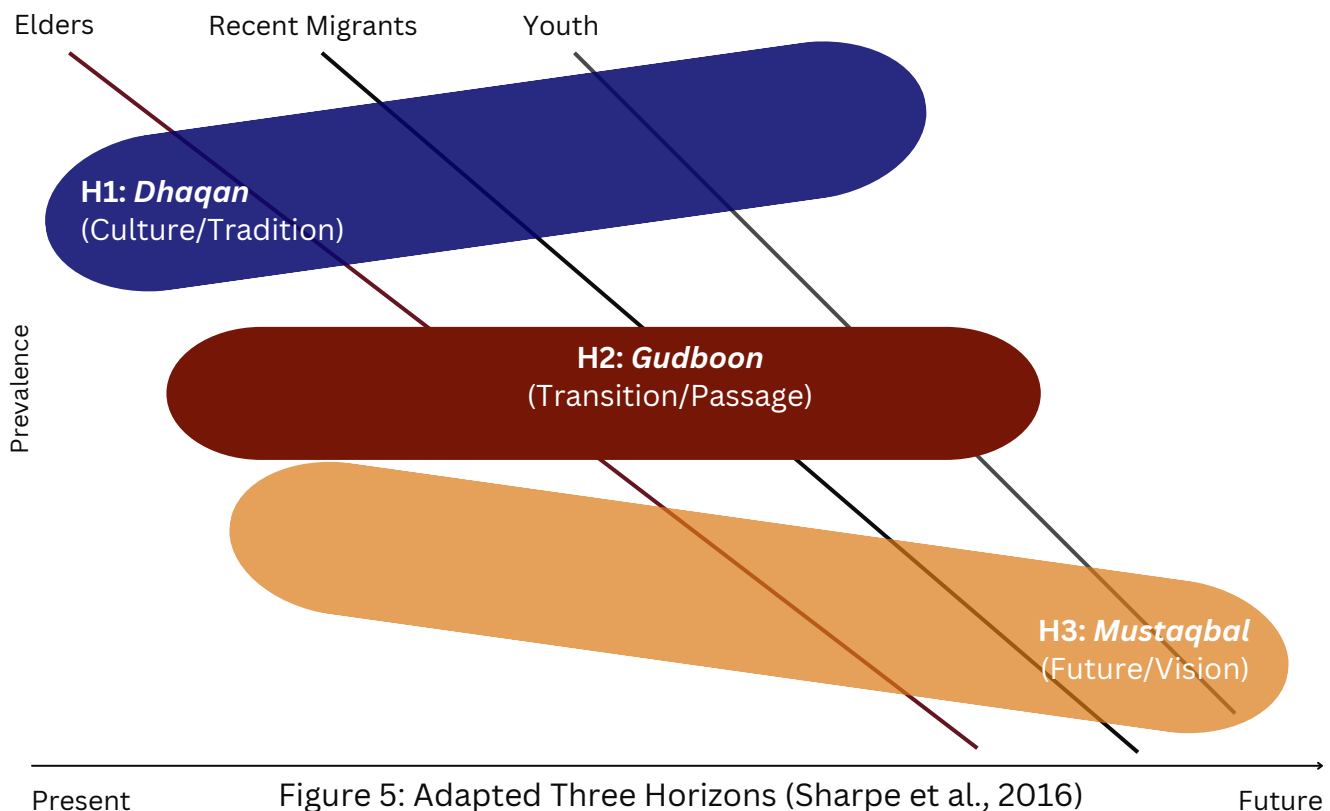
(Ahmed-Mohamoud, 2026)

5.1 THREE HORIZONS ANALYSIS

The Three Horizons framework, developed by Sharpe et al. (2016), offers a way to understand how different perspectives intertwine and influence futures thinking. Each horizon represents a specific viewpoint:

- Horizon 1 - The dominant views of the present, shaped by existing systems and structures.
- Horizon 2 - The transitional space, where tensions arise between established and emerging perspectives.
- Horizon 3 - The emergent space, where new values and visions are just beginning to surface.

In this research, generational groups did not fit neatly into a single horizon. Instead, each group interacted differently across the horizons, shaped by shared experiences of displacement, language, and inherited cultural memory.



Generational threads cross all three horizons, reflecting shared values across different starting points.

- | | |
|--|--|
| ■ H1: <i>Dhaqan</i> | — Elders |
| ■ H2: <i>Gudboon</i> | — Recent Migrants |
| ■ H3: <i>Mustaqbal</i> | — Youth |

5.1 THREE HORIZONS ANALYSIS

For example, elders are not only focused on the past. While their input often draws from tradition, their insights also guide the community toward the future. Elder proverbs such as "*Samraa sad weyn hela*" and "*Labatan jir ninki shaqeeysto, lixdan jir ayuu sharaf ku noolada*" speak to a future self that has not yet arrived, emphasizing patience and collective care. As Elder Participant 1 put it, "Culture is in our blood, even if you leave, we will drag you back." This reflects the enduring strength of Somali communal identity and the continuity of core values, even as individuals branch out in new directions. Elder Participant 3 shared a futures-oriented viewpoint aligning with Horizon 1, offering the proverb "*Ninkii seexdaa siciisa dibi dhalay*" – whoever neglects the opportunities today will miss out on major benefits tomorrow. The elder described how it relates to futures thinking by sharing that if you are not positioning yourself today for tomorrow, you will succumb to tomorrow's experiences.

In Horizon 2, recent migrants exemplify the tension between established ways of life and new approaches as they adapt to new environments and negotiate their identities. Participant 1 (Recent Migrant, 27, female) captured this tension directly by describing how, in the absence of the community, it felt like an absence of shelter: "*Hooyo waa harka nolosha.*" As they navigate a new country, this participant shared that they were not abandoning the community values and ways of thinking from H1 but were adapting them to the context in H2 and drawing on that wisdom to navigate the new circumstances.

In Horizon 3, youth participants are most visible. They are naturally defining what it means to present themselves authentically and are imagining how shared values can be adapted for the future they envision. Lastly, H3 was best illustrated through the Story by Us exercise, which demonstrated how shared values were adapted to shape new visions of *Soomalinimo*. For example, Participant 3 (Youth Participant 22, female) expressed, "I say to be Somali is to be a dreamer. I think the future is what I want it to be." This statement powerfully captures her personal definition of *Soomalinimo* and reflects the broader theme of imagining new futures.

5.1 THREE HORIZONS ANALYSIS

Across the horizons, holding onto core values while trying new things or dreaming of the future is an essential part of Somali identity. In the Somali community, navigating inclusive futures means designing spaces where oral knowledge can be shared and valued. Building this environment requires recognizing oral knowledge as legitimate and having community members author and develop these narratives themselves. Each generation informs the collective vision for the future. True inclusivity requires centring relationships and relationality, and honouring cultural practices. By doing so, we respect community sharing and make room for uniquely Somali ways of futures thinking. This is only possible when relationality, ceremony, and language are woven throughout the process of sharing and building futures together. Each group is not occupying a different horizon, but all three are reaching for the same Horizon 3 vision from different starting points. The postcard exercise made this insight visible, as the same core values of community, resilience, self-belief, and patience appeared independently across all groups. Horizon 3 is becoming the present and is navigated collectively across generations.

Additionally, the Causal Layered Analysis applied across findings further highlights this collective futuring. Somali futures thinking is not invisible because it is absent, it is invisible because the frameworks and structures currently used to identify it do not reflect or represent the community. When those conditions change, as they did in this research, futures thinking surfaces naturally

5.2 BRACING TO STRIVING: THE FIVE SHARING THREADS AS A COMMUNITY RESPONSE

Bracing posture is when an individual is focused on responding to the immediate, prioritizing survival over exploring possibilities. When participants imagine the future from this standpoint, their input remains rooted in managing risks and addressing urgent needs. Throughout this research, participants described how displacement and external narratives led them to adopt this posture. For many, the future felt like something to be managed rather than something to move toward.

The shift away from this bracing posture was supported by the combination of activities and conditions established during participatory co-creation sessions. Beginning with the arrival ceremony and creating a familiar, welcoming environment, participants were encouraged to reframe futures work as an opportunity to share lessons and to author their own narratives. The transition from reflecting on the stories told about them to creating the stories they wanted to tell was especially powerful. As participants moved into this space of authorship, they could see connections deepen and visions for the future expand through hope, healing, and a collective perspective.

The Five Sharing Threads framework emerged from these findings. It outlines how to effectively engage in futures work within the Somali community, drawing on participants' insights to create conditions for authentic, forward-looking participation. The Five Sharing Threads is a community engagement framework for culturally grounded foresight practice. Inspired by the art of weaving and Somali oral traditions, it offers practitioners a way to create the conditions for meaningful futures thinking within communities whose knowledge is carried through story, ceremony, and collective dialogue. Each thread represents a Somali word beginning with S and functions as a pillar of culturally inclusive engagement.



5.2 BRACING TO STRIVING: THE FIVE SHARING THREADS AS A COMMUNITY RESPONSE

Shuruudaha, or Setting the Conditions, speaks directly to the ceremonial practices explored in this research project. Embedding cultural familiarity, such as serving tea, lighting incense, and preparing the *fadhi carbeed* during elder consultations, made participants feel comfortable and enabled authentic participation. Without these connection-centred conditions, knowledge sharing would not have happened as deeply as required for meaningful futures thinking. By intentionally setting the stage for information sharing and dialogue, the space became more inclusive. *Shuruudaha* represents the thread of cultural inclusivity.

Sheekeysta, or Sharing Stories and Dialogue, reflects the finding that *sheeko* is the primary tool through which Somalis practice their futures. The sessions, conversations, idioms, and proverbs all drew from this storytelling tradition. *Sheekeysta* represents the thread of collective dialogue.

Socday, or Moving Forward, responds to insights about external narratives and focuses on how participants reconcile with the information presented about them, the story of us, and move toward stories authored by them, the story by us. Exercises in co-creation sessions helped participants shift from a defensive posture to one centred on striving toward aspirations. *Socday* represents the thread of passage and moving forward through time.

Saaray, or High, highlights what matters most and underscores that core values such as community, resilience, patience, and self-belief are essential to Somali futures. This thread responds to the emergent themes of celebrating the values that help Somalis navigate and reflect within futures frameworks. *Saaray* represents the thread of sharing and reciprocity.

Sug, or Wait, invites pause and reflection. This thread emerged from the need to understand each other's perspectives, connecting the other threads by helping identify divisive elements and points of connection. *Sug* represents the thread of reflection before moving forward.

For foresight practices to be truly inclusive, they must meet the community where they gather and create space for core values to be expressed and recognized.

CHAPTER 6: EXPLORING THREAD METHODOLOGIES



(Ahmed-Mohamoud, 2026)

6.1 PILLARS FOR WEAVING COMMUNITIES IN FORESIGHT



"Dhiigaynu ma badalmaayo", Our blood will not change
– Elder Participant 4

We are all connected to one another, no matter where you carry your people, knowledge, and ways of thinking.

This framework emerged from the insights shared throughout this research process. It is an invitation for practitioners to reflect on their engagement with community members. It's important for researchers who intend to engage the Somali community to situate their work around community values. The intent is for the Five Sharing Threads be adapted and expanded, and be carried over into different cultural communities.

Pictured to the right is the tapestry built with my mother during this research process, referencing the traditional Dhaqan hidiyah, colours.



(Ahmed-Mohamoud, 2026)

6.1 PILLARS FOR WEAVING COMMUNITIES IN FORESIGHT

The Five Sharing Threads



Thread	Goal	Example
 <p>Shuruudaha: Setting the Conditions</p>	<p>Create a space that reflects the conditions for comfort expressed by the community. Engage with elders and community members to understand the non-negotiables that need to happen for them to be able to share.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult with respected community elders (e.g., mothers, aunties, or other knowledge keepers) before initiating engagement. • Clearly and concisely communicate the purpose and invite shared ownership from the outset. • Note engagement might be over tea or extend past typical “coffee-chat” times, it’s important to take time to illustrate intent and reason for engagement. <p>Ask yourself: Whose guidance do we need? What dynamics or traditions need to be thought through before we engage with the community?</p>
 <p>Sheekeysta: Sharing Stories and Dialogue</p>	<p>Center conversations around sharing and sheekoyin as the vehicle for futures thinking. Share that participants can respond in various ways that feel authentic to the conversation – that may look like idioms or proverbs followed by discussing how that resonates with futures work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate sessions in comfortable, familiar language. • Encourage participants to share stories, proverbs, and advice, recognizing these as legitimate tools for planning and collective imagination. • Share your relationship to storytelling and lessons to show participants you are engaged in the work and are looking to create alongside one another. <p>Ask yourself: What stories need to be heard? Who is not captured? How do we create space for authentic dialogue?</p>

Table 3: The Five Sharing Threads

The Five Sharing Threads




Thread	Goal	Example
 <p>Socday: Moving Forward Together</p>	<p>Encourage keeping the process dynamic and forward looking. This step examines the movement between the story within the community and reflecting the community's views on futuring.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate exercises that move participants from reflecting on narratives placed on them toward authoring their own. For instance, the Story by Us exercise is one example that invites participants to define their community identity and future vision in their own words. <p>Ask yourself: How do we ensure participants feel like they are moving forward together?</p>
 <p>Saaray: Above Highlighting What Matters</p>	<p>Focus on elevating the visible values, priorities, and aspirations within the community and understanding what those values lead to within a futures framing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reaffirm and showcase themes or values surfaced during dialogue. For instance, the future postcard to 2060 exercise, invites participants to share lessons they believe will guide future generations ensuring community-defined values visible and honored. <p>Ask yourself: What values or insights are emerging? How do we celebrate and highlight them?</p>
 <p>Sug: Pausing to Reflect</p>	<p>Integrate intentional reflection moments that focus participants on honouring the communal knowledge shared and understanding what that knowledge means for each individual.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin or close sessions with sensory grounding, listening to traditional music, burning incense, or simply sitting quietly together. Encourage intergenerational reflection by inviting participants to reflect on knowledge shared with them. <p>Ask yourself: When and how will we pause to reflect on the process? What cultural practices help us do this?</p>

Table 3: The Five Sharing Threads

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION



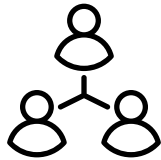
(Ahmed-Mohamoud, 2026)

7.1 NABAD GELYO

This research journey has focused on the importance of community representation. When the Somali community is inaccurately or incompletely depicted, it directly affects their sense of belonging alongside their ability to imagine the future from a striving lens. Knowledge communicated through various forms of oral storytelling carries equal legitimacy. Somali futurism is rooted in community and is shaped by narratives, belonging, patience, and resilience as threads that build foresight. For many communities, futures work already exists, even if not recognized. As practitioners and researchers, we have a responsibility to promote inclusivity so communities can share their knowledge frameworks with us. In expanding the framework and language around futuring, we begin to see the future in places it is often rendered invisible.

7.2 AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Community Foresight



Focusing on exploring and understanding how different minority groups practice futures thinking and what informal frameworks are representative across cultural contexts. Within this space, storytelling and intergenerational knowledge can be further explored.

Gabay



Examining the role of gabay and performance-based storytelling in Somali culture could highlight how memory and values are passed down. Accessibility in the language around foresight work is still needed, evolving futures frameworks to be more accessible would allow a broader spectrum of communities to recognize and engage with foresight practices on their own terms.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Research Participants

Subject Matter Experts:

Dr. Katindi Sivi: Dr. Katindi is an Afro-futurist, founder of the Longview Group, and Executive Director and Principal Trainer at the Africa Foresight Lab. Her work centers on innovative futures thinking and the empowerment of African communities through foresight methodologies.

Professor Safia Aidid: Professor Aidid is an interdisciplinary historian of modern Africa, currently serving as Assistant Professor in the Department of History and the African Studies Centre at the University of Toronto. Her work focuses on anticolonial nationalism, territorial imaginations, and state formation in the Horn of Africa.

Professor Ahmed Illmi: Professor Illmi is an interdisciplinary Black Studies and African Studies scholar whose research explores cultural identity, diasporic politics, and the intersections of Blackness and Africa.

Professor Finola Kerrington: Finola Kerrington is a Professor of Marketing at Birmingham Business School, University of Birmingham. Her expertise spans branding, digital identity, ethics, and the integration of new technologies into marketing practice.

Saeedeh Niktab: Saeedeh Niktab is the Curator of Diasporas and Multinational Communities at the Canadian Museum of History. Her curatorial practice engages with the lived experiences and cultural narratives of diasporic and multinational communities.

Sa'adatu Usman: Sa'adatu Usman is a visionary leader in reimagining Black futures. She serves as CEO and founder of Global Citizen, driving initiatives that empower Black communities and foster global citizenship.

APPENDICES

Appendix B: Steep V Literature Analysis

The STEEP V framework enabled a guided literature review to examine participants' experiences and understand how that information surfaced in inclusive futures work. By mapping the Social, Technological, Economic, Environmental, Political, and Values, themes emerged that represented the different levels of impact.

Social	Ways of life (e.g. use of leisure time, family living patterns), demographic structures, social inclusion and cohesion issues (fragmentation of lifestyles, levels of (in)equality, educational trends).
Technological	Rates of technological progress, pace of diffusion of innovations, problems and risks associated with technology (including security and health problems).
Economic	Levels and distribution of economic growth, industrial structures, competition and competitiveness, markets and financial issues.
Environmental	Pressures connected with sustainability and climate change, more localised environmental issues (including pollution, resource depletion, and associated biodiversity, and welfare concerns).
Political	Dominant political viewpoints or parties, political (in)stability, regulatory roles and actions of governments, political action and lobbying by non-state actors (e.g. pressure groups, paramilitaries).
Values	Attitudes to working life (e.g. entrepreneurialism, career aspirations, deference to authority, demands for mobility (across jobs or places, etc.), preferences for leisure, culture, social relations, etc).

APPENDICES

Appendix B: Steep V Literature Analysis

STEEP V	Literature Findings	Participant Quotes Supporting Literature Findings	Implications for Inclusive Futures
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Futures are neither neutral nor open-ended; they are shaped by dominant narratives and historical conditions (Eshun, 2003; Appadurai, 2013). • Narrative power determines legitimate knowledge, constraining minority voices and shaping representation and belonging (Mansbridge, 2011; Appadurai, 2004). • When people do not see themselves in future narratives, their ability to aspire is constrained (Appadurai, 2004). • Somali sheeko reinforces social understanding and collective identity, acting as a communal act repeated and adapted across generations, creating shared meaning and transmitting values and memory (Samatar, 1982). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established Professional: "It's how we communicate and understand one another but also, it's how we can prepare ourselves for similar hardships" • Youth Participant: "Growing up I didn't know what some stories and/lullabies meant but everyone says them to you start to understand what they mean and can apply it to your situation". 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centering oral storytelling traditions like sheeko fosters inclusive futures by making all community members active participants in shaping the future. • It expands the community's capacity to aspire and imagine beyond inherited constraints.

Table 4 - STTEP V Social

Technological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Western foresight privileges technical, expert-driven, institutionalized methods, often dismissing oral and community-based knowledge (Smith, 2012; Sardar, 2010). • Legitimacy is tied to formal expertise, excluding alternative epistemologies (Stabler, 2025). • Somali sheeko is oral, adaptive, and context-dependent, not reliant on written or digital forms; it is sustained through performance, repetition, and audience engagement, resisting technical standardization (Samatar, 1982). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established Professional: They don't need to have domain-specific knowledge, the <i>maahmaahyo</i> serve as a north star because they can be applied." • Saeedah: I use recordings to enhance the storytelling experience, sometimes there's no way to capture the information in writing it has to be experienced. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizing and legitimizing oral knowledge expands what is considered valid futures work. • Technology can amplify oral traditions, but should be used to record, share, and celebrate this knowledge
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Table 5- STTEP V Technological

APPENDICES

Appendix B: Steep V Literature Analysis

Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to futures participation is shaped by privilege, resources, and institutional gatekeeping (Appadurai, 2013). • Marginalized groups face barriers to participation, and their futures are often depicted as less attainable (Smith, 2012). • Somali sheeko is accessible, low-cost, and embedded in daily life, democratizing participation and open to all community members (Samatar, 1982). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I think the main reason Somali people are good at communication is we are forced to start sharing our understanding so early. It’s a good way to train you to share your thoughts” • “Growing up I didn’t have all these distractions as your generation does, we had our mouths and that was entertainment, so you learned quickly about sharing” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When futures work is rooted in oral storytelling, it becomes accessible to everyone, regardless of economic status.
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Table 6 - STTEP V Economic

Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous and community-rooted knowledge systems embed relationships to land, history, and memory (Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2008). • Storytelling is a living, moving knowledge system that carries memory and responsibility, connecting people, land, and history (Wilson, 2008; Kelley, 2002). • Somali sheeko transmits environmental values and adapts stories to context, carrying lessons about stewardship, accountability, and collective responsibility for place and land (Samatar, 1982). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Participant: “You get exposed to <i>sheekoyin</i> so early everyone knows the popular nursery rhymes or Cigaal Shidaad (famous non-fictional character), the stories teach us to be brave and once it’s memorized you can easily share it”. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centering oral storytelling embeds environmental ethics and relational value • Supports stewardship and collective imagination
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Table 4 - STTEP V Environmental

APPENDICES

Appendix B: Steep V Literature Analysis

Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power dynamics in futures work: dominant voices and institutions define legitimate knowledge, exclude minority voices, and restrict participation (Smith, 2012; Mansbridge, 2011; Stabler, 2025). • Representation matters: non-Western knowledge systems and decision-makers are often excluded (Mansbridge, 2011; Sardar, 2010). • Somali sheeko challenges dominant knowledge structures, legitimizing local and collective knowledge and broadening who can participate in shaping futures (Samatar, 1982). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established Professional: “For example <i>gabay</i> was used to talk about political unrest and make social commentary, storytelling is also a form of rebellion.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participatory dialogue and oral traditions redistribute power. • Highlights marginalized voices • Legitimizes narratives
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Table 6 - STTEP V Political

Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values determine what is possible and desirable in futures work (Eshun, 2003; Appadurai, 2013). • Hope, imagination, and collective capacity are emphasized over determinism and probability (Appadurai, 2013; Samatar, 1982). • Somali sheeko work with the lived values, aspirations, and hopes of the community, creating space for imagining transformative, equitable futures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established Professional “<i>maahmaahyo</i>” work as a north star basically guiding me and also grounding me. It’s like a reference point for what my parents and others would think or act” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Futures work should center equity, inclusion, and self-determination. Storytelling traditions like sheeko align futures work with the lived values, aspirations, and hopes of the community, creating space for imagining transformative, equitable futures.
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Table 4 - STTEP V Values

APPENDICES

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