



# Engaged Scholar Journal

community-engaged research, teaching, and learning

Volume 1 | Issue 1



BUILDING ENGAGED  
SCHOLARSHIP IN CANADA

Spring 2015

# Engaged Scholar Journal: Community-Engaged Research, Teaching and Learning

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Canadian — Multidisciplinary — Peer-Reviewed — Open Access

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## From the Editor

### “Building Engaged Scholarship in Canada”: Introducing the First Issue of the *Engaged Scholar Journal*

Dear readers, you are holding in your hands, or reading online, the inaugural issue of the first Canadian scholarly journal on collaborative and community-engaged research, teaching, and learning. The idea to create such a journal was born on the University of Saskatchewan campus in 2013 as a result of a growing realization among many people that such a journal is long overdue. Conceived first by Dr. Keith Carlson, professor of history and then the University’s Special Advisor, Outreach and Engagement, the visionary work began, carried on by a group of committed scholars who soon became the journal’s advisory committee. I was invited to become the journal’s convener. In its first year of operation, the group worked very hard to promote the idea of such a journal on campus and among other Canadian scholars as well as non-academic organizations. It has been a productive year during which various consultations and forums were held on and off campus with diverse groups and CES practitioners, working across Canada and internationally, on what kind of journal the *Engaged Scholar Journal* should be. By April 2014, the Journal was established. With the generous support of the office of Vice-President Advancement and Community Engagement, the Journal’s office was opened, a position of a managing assistant funded and filled, and the Journal’s advisory and editorial boards struck. We then began our work in earnest towards the production of this inaugural issue as well as other issues that are already lined up for publication.



Natalia Khanenko-Friesen, Editor  
(Photo: Erin J. Weiss)

In the first year of the Journal’s operation, our capable advisory committee supported the expansion of the scope of the Journal beyond the regional and its establishment as a national venue for all Canadian community-engaged scholars to present their work. We wanted to offer a shared forum for in-depth discussion of the meanings and applications of the work Canadian engaged scholars pursue with various partner communities across our nation and elsewhere. In their work, the advisory committee were guided by the following: (a) their own experience in community-engaged scholarly work; (b) the long history of community-engaged scholarship at the University of Saskatchewan; (c) the University’s integrated plan and its emphasis on community-engaged research, teaching, and learning; and (d) by the vibrant national debate on the meanings and directions of community-engaged scholarship that has been unfolding in Canada for the last several years.

This initiative to build a national journal on our campus has strong roots in the long and at times pioneering history of University of Saskatchewan’s collaborative work with various

communities, stakeholder groups, and constituencies. *The Foundational Document on Outreach and Engagement: Linking with Communities for Discovery and Learning*, prepared in 2006, while proposing further avenues for strengthening the community-engagement links between the University and external partners, also offered a brief overview of the history of such engagement at the University. Here are a few examples from that document.

The University of Saskatchewan tracks its own history of community engagement back to the early twentieth century. As early as 1907, the year the University was founded, its first president Walter Murray referred to the University of Saskatchewan as “the people’s university” that belongs to the people of Saskatchewan. The University historian and biographer Michael Hayden (as cited in University of Saskatchewan, 2006, p. 6) asserts that no other university in Canada can make such a claim. The emphasis on the University’s responsibility of sharing its wealth of knowledge with the province’s citizens generated a number of important initiatives. The Extension Department was founded in 1910 and soon took over a number of provincial agricultural extension programs. A famous undertaking, the “Better Farming Train” (1914-1942), brought faculty members in the College of Agriculture into various farming communities around the province where they exchanged their expertise with the farmers. Heritage preservation efforts in the province were spearheaded by the University professors of history and led to the establishment of the Saskatchewan Archives Board in 1945. Saskatoon Symphony Orchestra was founded by the first professor of music. All in all, as *The Foundational Document* states, “until the 1930s, all professors at the University were expected to be involved in extension work of one form or another (University of Saskatchewan, 2006, p. 6).”

In the 1960s and 70s, many changes took place in the University, stemming from its expansion and influx of new faculty, by now commonly recruited from out of province. The role and nature of the links between the University and the province and its people also continued to evolve, with some projects ending their life and others beginning. In that period, much of what was known back then as extension work was performed through the Division of Extension that housed its own faculty responsible for maintaining the links with various provincial regions and for properly responding to educational and research needs in these regions (University of Saskatchewan, 2006). In years to come, many other outreach and partnership-based initiatives have been pursued in and with various communities and groups in the province and beyond.

At the same time, the University continued to evolve into a nationally and internationally recognized institution of higher learning. It is not until the 2000s, though, that a conceptually new approach towards university-community partnerships in research, teaching, and learning began to be promoted on our campus, as evidenced in a number of initiatives directed at strengthening the institutional foundations for community-engaged and community-driven co-production of knowledge through research, teaching, and learning. *The Foundational Document* of 2006, a product of many minds, is a good manifestation of the University’s renewed commitment to effective and mutually beneficial university-community collaboration to the benefit of the people of Saskatchewan and other communities with which the

University collaborates.

In 2012, after an extended period of self-study and analysis, the University developed an action plan, *Engaging with External Partners: Recommended Principles Guidelines and Action Plan Components* as a part of its Second Integrated Plan. This programmatic document, drawn under the skilled leadership and guidance of Vice-President Advancement and Community Engagement Heather Magotiaux, now serves the University as a strategic framework for action when it comes to many community-engaged scholarly activities pursued by the University.

Such renewed commitment to and reconceptualization of community-engaged scholarship at the U of Saskatchewan in the 2000s followed important developments in national academia as well as in the Canadian society as a whole. Among other things that informed such reconceptualization was the 1998 addition of the Community-University Research Alliances Grants Program (CURA) to the grants portfolio of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, a publicly funded national agency. This reconceptualization also followed, at least in chronological terms, the emergence, in the 1990s, of a lively debate in the United States on the nature and purpose of a university in general and of the “scholarship of engagement” in particular.<sup>1</sup>

In his preface to a thought-provoking book *Engaged Scholarship: The Politics of Engagement and Disengagement*, edited by one of our contributors Tania Kajner and Linette Schultz (2013). Budd L. Hall (2013) indeed asserts that Canadian community-engaged scholarship evolved into a strong field of its own not so much in response to the above American debate but rather out of Canada’s own internal developments in academic and social fields. In Canada, claims Hall, one can divide the history of engaged scholarship into three periods.

The first period preceded the creation of SSHRC’s Community-University Research Alliances Program in 1998. Hall refers to this period as the “old days,” and links it to the creation of various early extension programs and educational institutes in Canada, such as Frontier College (1899) and university extension (University of Alberta, 1912). Through the first part of the twentieth century, other Canadian institutions of higher learning continued to collaborate with various communities and constituencies in their localities as exemplified by the Antigonish Movement at St. Xavier University (1930s-60s) and the Workers’ Education Association with links to the University of Toronto (1930s) (Hall, 2013). The creation of the Extension Department in the University of Saskatchewan in 1910 and the work of all University faculty in the early decades of the twentieth century also are the highlights of this period.

The 1960s and 1970s signaled a significant departure from the original forms of engaged scholarship that university extension work was presupposed to be. These changes were certainly rooted in the overall global transformations of that time. The collapse

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<sup>1</sup> The concept and the phrase ‘scholarship of engagement’ was first introduced by Ernest Boyer in the 1990s, in the context of a wide national debate in the United States on the role and purpose of universities. Boyer (1997) further focused on the notion of scholarship of engagement in his article “The Scholarship of Engagement.”

of the centuries-old European colonial order, the appearance of new nations on the world map, and the emergence of worldwide cultural and ideological movements (for gender equality, human rights, global ecology, and so on), all of this coupled with technological revolutions in communications and transportation led the humanities and social sciences and eventually the sciences into a new phase of their development. Whatever it is called (late modernity, postmodernity, globalization, and so on), this new era has also been characterized by a growing recognition that the universities and their scholarly agendas need to focus on the needs of the real social worlds in which they operate.

As a part of these global developments, in Canada, according to Hall (2013), the emergence of Indigenous researchers (1960-70s), the arrival of participatory action research from the anti-colonial struggles of the Global South to Canada (1970-80), and the development of various human rights movements had a substantial impact on scholarly agendas of the day. So distinct was the historical context of the 1960s that in my opinion this decade may be recognized as the beginning of yet another phase in the evolution of engaged scholarship in Canada. Involved in the social movements of the 1970s and 1980s, Canadian scholars participated in and advanced epistemological transformations in the social sciences and humanities and eventually in the sciences, advocating for reflective and socially responsible scholarship and promoting the new idea of engaged scholarship based on collaborative and mutually beneficial research and co-production of knowledge.

The establishment of SSHRC's Community-University Research Alliances Grants Program followed these important developments and was directly informed by this increased interest in socially responsible and engaged scholarship. In Hall's (2013) periodization, CURA's establishment in 1998 signaled the beginning of another phase in the history of Canadian engaged scholarship. As Hall writes, "academics whose ideological or epistemological preferences made working with community groups, listening to their issues and concerns, and co-constructing knowledge together natural and inevitable, flooded the SSHRC offices with proposals which were, for the first time, products of alliances between scholars based in universities and scholar-intellectuals located in community groups (Hall, 2013, viii)." It was the CURA, continues Hall, that informed the directions and prerogatives in the development of the engaged scholarship practices in Canada, not the American debate that has been unfolding at the same time in the United States.

On May 26, 2012, the Governor-General of Canada delivered a paper to the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences on Knowledge Democracy, and, in the eyes of Hall, this signaled the beginning of a new phase in the history of Canadian community-engaged scholarship that will no doubt see new developments in the field of engaged scholarship in Canada. Engaged scholarship continues to receive further recognition on the Canadian campuses and partner organizations. Thus, by 2013, some 50-60 universities in Canada incorporated engaged scholarship in their plans and or pledged university-wide support to engaged scholarship. Today several national



networks spearhead the community-engaged collaboration in Canada, *Community-Based Research Canada*,<sup>2</sup> *Research Impact* focusing on knowledge mobilization,<sup>3</sup> *Engaged Scholarship* Canadian partnership with a focus on faculty policies<sup>4</sup> and the *Canadian Alliance for Community Service Learning*.<sup>5</sup> Many other local and regional organizations contribute to this work as well.

The creation of our Journal in 2014 is another recent development that coincided with the beginning of the latest phase in the Canadian history community-engaged scholarship. Much networking and discussion has been taking place these days in the Canadian field of engaged scholarship, but so far academic and community-based scholars have not been served by a national scholarly venue for community-engaged scholarship. This is the niche that we hope to fill. We hope that our multidisciplinary Journal will further enhance the Canadian practice of community-engaged scholarship and directly contribute to the growing dialogue and vibrant debate on what sort of engaged teaching, research, and learning Canadians are practicing. I would like to project that this latest phase in the development of engaged scholarship in Canada so far may be best defined by the metaphor of “network,” rather than “framework” as might be the case with our colleagues in the field of engaged scholarship in the United States. To strengthen networks and networking, a sustained productive dialogue informed both by theory and practice is needed. Our Journal has been indeed conceived as a platform for such a dialogue.

Though it may not be immediately obvious from the essays and reports profiled in this inaugural issue, a lively and very honest dialogue on engaged scholarship in Canada has already been initiated by our Journal, months before the publication of its inaugural issue. Such dialogue began with the assignment of each submitted article to two anonymous peer-reviewers, established scholars and practitioners of engaged scholarship. One of the privileges of being on the editorial team is the ability to have a sustained exposure to this dialogue as we monitored and managed the exchanges that took place behind the scene between the authors and their reviewers (all remaining strictly anonymous to each other). These exchanges were constructive, critical, and well-grounded in the existing literature and debates on scholarship of engagement. We are very grateful to the twenty-six reviewers, out of eighty-four we contacted, for their thorough reading of the manuscripts and commitment for quality and high standards

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<sup>2</sup> Community-Based Research Canada (CBRC) is a coalition of a five Canadian universities, research networks, and community organizations. CBRC’s mission is “to be a national champion and facilitator for community-based research (CBR) and campus-community engagement in Canada”; cited in <http://communityresearchcanada.ca>

<sup>3</sup> *ResearchImpact* (RIR) is a pan-Canadian network of eleven universities focused on knowledge mobilization and committed to “maximizing the impact of academic research for the social, economic, environmental and health benefits of Canadians”; cited in <http://researchimpact.ca/about/about-research-impact/>.

<sup>4</sup> The partnership is comprised of eight universities and an international organization that have pledged to work together to change university culture, policies and practices in order to recognize and reward CES, cited in <http://engagedscholarship.ca>

<sup>5</sup> The Canadian Alliance for Community Service-Learning (CACSL) supports, educates and networks to ensure the effective growth of CSL in Canada. Cited in <http://www.communityservicelearning.ca/en/>

in scholarly engagement. Most of the presented articles here underwent substantive revisions as a result of such writer-reviewer exchanges and therefore already reflect a built-in dialogue among at least three or more individuals in the case of each article. All in all, a collective intellectual input into this issue is generated by seventy three scholars, including forty one co-authors, twenty-six reviewers, three book reviewers and three members of the editorial team. This is quite an extended network of scholars! We extend our sincere thanks to all those scholars for their contributions to our inaugural issue.

The submissions profiled in our inaugural issue represent the diversity of scholarly engagement in Canada as evidenced in the titles and abstracts of the essays. Our authors come from the health sciences, the arts, sociology, education, linguistics, policy studies, business, women and gender studies, psychology, biodiversity and environmental studies, and other scholarly areas. They speak about their work conducted in Canada and abroad, with various social groups, ethnic and indigenous communities. Most of them are university-based researchers; others are community-based co-authors while some are students, and yet others are firmly positioned in both academic and community worlds. All are united by their commitment to real community-driven partnerships and engaged scholarship (see the statistical overview of the first issue in the table below).

A single issue of our multidisciplinary journal, even if inaugural, by default cannot present all the complexity of Canadian community-engaged scholarship, neither can it provide a comprehensive overview of its history. Rather, with the publication of the first issue, we hope to initiate a sustained discussion on the meanings, applications, joys and challenges of doing engaged scholarly work in Canada and abroad, in local settings and global contexts. What is the relationship between the vibrant fields of engaged scholarship in Canada and the United States? Is there a productive dialogue between the Canadian practitioners of engaged scholarship and those outside of North America? What are the challenges in designing and executing a community-engaged collaborative work locally and in a global context, in uni-cultural or cross-cultural settings? How do engaged scholars address the imbalance in power relations in their work? What are the political implications of community-engaged research? What will drive Canadian engaged scholarship in the near future? We hope that our readers, be they Canadians or not, will become contributors and will offer their own reflections on these and other questions in the near future, by sharing their work and their ideas on the pages of our *Engaged Scholar Journal*.

Sincerely,

Natalia Khanenko-Friesen  
The Editor

**Table 1. Inaugural Issue Statistics****A. Authors and Submissions**

<b>Authors and Co-Authors</b>	
University-based	29
Community partners	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>

<b>Article Submissions</b>	
Original proposals for peer and editor review	22
Articles submitted for editor review	2
Articles submitted for peer review	13
Peer-reviewed articles accepted for publication	8
Book reviews submitted for editor review	3

<b>Geographic Distribution (Corresponding Authors Only)</b>	
<b>Atlantic Canada:</b>	
<b>Eastern Canada:</b>	<b>6</b>
<i>University of Guelph</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Ryerson University</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>York University</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Carleton University</i>	<i>1</i>
NGOs	<i>1</i>
<b>Western Canada:</b>	<b>17</b>
<i>University of Alberta</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>University of Saskatchewan</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>University of Victoria</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Brandon University</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>University of British Columbia</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>University of British Columbia - Okanagan</i>	<i>1</i>
NGO	<i>1</i>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>23</b>

## B. Peer-Reviewers and Peer-Reviewing

<b>Peer-Reviewers</b>	
Total invitations to peer review	82
Number of peer reviewers who accepted invitations	26

<b>Geographical Distribution (Peer Reviewers)</b>	
<b>Atlantic Canada:</b>	<b>1</b>
<i>University of New Brunswick</i>	1
<b>Eastern Canada:</b>	<b>2</b>
<i>University of Guelph</i>	1
<i>Lakehead University</i>	1
<b>Western Canada:</b>	<b>20</b>
<i>University of Alberta</i>	3
<i>St. Thomas More College</i>	1
<i>University of Saskatchewan</i>	10
<i>McEwan University</i>	3
<i>University of British Columbia</i>	1
<i>University of Victoria</i>	1
<i>Royal Roads</i>	1
<b>Abroad:</b>	<b>3</b>
<i>University of Brighton (United Kingdom)</i>	1
<i>University of Michigan (US)</i>	1
<i>Columbia University (US)</i>	1
<b>Total:</b>	<b>26</b>

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Tania Kajner  
Marie Lovrod  
Veronika Makarova  
David Maurasse  
Heather McRae  
Roman Petryshyn  
Ulrich Teucher  
Wilfrid Thurston  
Crystal Tremblay



# Essays





## Construction and Mediation of the “Other” in Community-Engaged Scholarship: The Importance of Not-knowing

**Tania Kajner**

**ABSTRACT** In this paper I share and analyze a subset of findings from a qualitative research study on community-engaged scholarship in Canada. I explore how engaged scholars participating in the study conceptualize community in their engagement experiences. I suggest that in articulating their work, participants depict the contradictory tensions of constructing community as an Other in a way that reflects the dominant European legacy of colonial relations while at the same time leaning towards forms of interaction that are decolonial and challenge this model of colonial relations. This leaning is important and, as I will argue, needs to be nurtured if engagement in Canada is going to escape the pragmatic instrumentalism that marks much of engaged scholarship and if Canadian scholars are going to relate to partners in truly reciprocal and equitable ways.

**KEYWORDS** community-engaged scholarship, Canadian scholars, conceptualizing community, and decolonial relations.

In the time since Boyer (1990, 1996) introduced the term scholarship of engagement, engagement activities and practices have expanded enormously. How scholars understand these practices is subject to debate, informed by the existing traditions of theorizing and critical scholarship within different activity domains. In analyzing individual practices, for example community-based research or experiential learning, scholars can draw from conceptual debates and critical assessments explored in the published literature. In the case of the community-engaged scholarship (CES)<sup>1</sup> as a field of practice, however, there is very little conceptual or theoretical material from which to draw. Further confounding the issue is the fact that scholars’ social and institutional positioning affects how their engagement is understood (Kasworm & Abdrahim, 2014). It is no surprise, then, that community-engaged scholarship is marked by confusion and contested practices, demonstrating the need to move to a more philosophical and theoretical exploration of engagement (Sandmann, 2008) that might overcome the “unclear goals and historical fragmentation” (Shaefer & Rivera, 2013, p. 127) of the field.

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<sup>1</sup> I am using the scholarship of engagement, engagement, and community-engaged scholarship interchangeably throughout this paper.

Though many Canadian institutions and scholars are embracing engaged scholarship and working to open up higher education spaces, the few studies that do delve deeper into conceptualizations of community-engaged scholarship do not reflect Canadian scholars' perspectives. At the time of this study, no pan-Canadian research had been done on Canadian scholars' conceptualization of CES. This invites questions about how Canadian scholars understand their work with communities.

In this paper I share and analyze a subset of findings from a qualitative research study on community-engaged scholarship in Canada in order to explore how community-engaged scholars in Canada conceptualize community in their engagement experiences. I suggest that in articulating their work, scholars depict the contradictory tensions of constructing community as an Other in a way that reflects the dominant European legacy of colonial relations while at the same time leaning towards forms of interaction that are decolonial and challenge this model of colonial relations. This leaning towards decolonial relations is important and, as I will argue, needs to be nurtured if Canadian scholars are going to relate to partners in truly reciprocal and equitable ways.

## **Background**

Despite the lack of conceptual clarity in the field of community-engaged scholarship, many explorations of engagement explicitly call for partnerships marked by reciprocity and mutual benefit. For example, Holland (2005) suggested that community-engaged scholarship could be understood as the intentional collaboration between higher education institutions and their larger communities for mutual beneficial exchanges of knowledge and resources in the context of reciprocity and partnership. The National Centre for Outreach Scholarship at Michigan State University views outreach and engagement as scholarship that involves generating, transmitting, applying, and preserving knowledge for the direct benefit of external audiences in ways that are consistent with university goals (Glass, Doberneck, & Schweitzer, 2010). Similarly, the Kellogg Commission (1999) envisioned engagement broadly, as reciprocal and mutually beneficial partnerships: two-way streets defined by mutual respect for what each brings to the table. Saltmarsh, Hartley & Clayton (2009) pointed to distinctions between two forms of engagement: civic engagement and democratic engagement, and made a case for democratic engagement because it better captures the principles of reciprocity and bidirectionality. It is these principles that Sandmann, Kliever, Kim and Omerikwa (2010) cast as two core values of engaged scholarship in their emphasis on the importance of attending to power and the underlying philosophical constructs in engagement. Using the theories of Freire, Foucault, and Rawls, the authors examined engagement and offered a relational engagement framework as a tool for thinking deeply about issues of power in engagement.

With an eye to power, Watson, Hollister, Stroud and Babcock (2011) asserted that engagement in higher education, as a global phenomenon, is very much marked by differences in North and South that call for attention to the interconnection of epistemic and social exclusions. Smith (1999) argued that reciprocity in education implies a way of being together that includes an emphasis on a shared journey, rather than just the accumulation of knowledge.

To ensure scholarship is relevant to those outside the academy can be an act of anti-oppressive education and research (Strega, 2005); it can transform the structure of self-other relations that underpins activities of co-creating knowledge. However, without this attention to how we are co-constituted, intersubjectively positioned by our interactions with one another, community engaged scholarship might lead to knowledge that seems to be co-created, but in reality is a relationship of exploitation and oppression.

Given the centrality of reciprocity and mutual benefit in understandings of community-engaged scholarship, and the recognized importance of asking questions about power in the co-creation of knowledge, engagement provides fertile ground to explore questions of identity and difference in scholar-community relations.

### **About the Study**

In this paper I share results of a pan-Canadian qualitative study on the scholarship of engagement. The study received research ethics approval in the fall of 2012. Positioning the study within a hermeneutic framework, which focuses primarily on the meaning of qualitative data and development of an interpretation of the phenomena in question (Fleming, Gaidys, & Robb, 2003), I sought to address gaps in the research on Canadians scholars' conceptualization of CES and develop a deep understanding and conceptualization of community-engaged scholarship in Canada.

Hermeneutics is an important research framework particularly well suited to this interpretive study. In undertaking hermeneutic research, the researcher creatively interprets, creating meaning, not just reporting on it (Smith, 1991). Hermeneutic inquiry begins with a recognition that we are born into a pre-existing world, born into traditions and language systems within which we come to know others and ourselves. While at first this world might seem complete, we soon learn that the languages we inherit cannot fully articulate what we mean and that "reality is always reality for us, but it always opens out into a broader world which serves or can serve to enrich our understanding of who we are" (smith, 1991, p. 197). It is by seeking to understand both the world we inhabit and ourselves within it, that we interpret and create them.

Given the hermeneutic recognition that understanding is always incomplete, it was impossible in this study to unpack all of the complexities of engaged scholarship. What I offer here is an interpretation and since all interpretations are partial, my study findings are also partial. Because of this partiality and because interpretation is shaped by the researcher's interpretive horizon, the direct empirical transferability of these research findings is limited. It is my hope, however, that the interpretation and ideas explored in this paper might be useful in their theoretical transferability, that the ideas here might resonate with engagement scholars and inform interpretations of community-engagement.

### **Data Collection**

Three research questions guided this study. How do scholars in Canada conceptualize engaged scholarship? How do engaged scholars position themselves and Others in the engagement

experience? How does the changing context of higher education interact with the growing interest in community-engaged scholarship in Canada? These three questions were explored through a qualitative research design that included two semi-structured interviews with each of nine scholars occupying varying social, institutional, disciplinary and geographic locations within Canadian higher education.

For the first semi-structured interview, I developed a list of guiding questions and conversation prompts to ensure the interview conversation maintained an orientation to the phenomenon of engagement. After conducting the first interview I undertook a preliminary identification of emerging themes, writing them up in a summary that included a second set of questions as conversation prompts. This document was shared with participants in advance of the second semi-structured interview. Two participants were recruited late in the study and only available for one longer interview. In these cases, I shared the commentary and questions developed for the second interview but used conversation prompts intended for both the first and second interviews.

The audiotapes from participant interviews, conducted between January and June of 2013, were transcribed and, along with my notes and the literature, formed the basis for my interpretation.

### **Participants**

Participants were selected for inclusion in the study through two forms of purposive sampling: intensity sampling, whereby participants are included on the basis of having rich information and experiences that manifest the phenomena intensely (Creswell, 1998) and snowball sampling, a method of developing and expanding a sample by asking one participant to recommend others (Babbie, 1995).

Fourteen participants were selected for inclusion. Nine participants agreed to participate in the study, a number that Boyd (2001) suggested is sufficient for a study of this nature. Of the nine participants, six identified as female and three as male. Geographically, four participants worked in Western Canada (Manitoba westward), three in Central Canada (Ontario), one in Quebec, and one in Eastern Canada (all provinces east/south east of Quebec). Participants worked in various faculties/ areas including: arts, humanities, education, extension, business, science, planning, social work, and history. Two participants were in their early career (0-9 years working fulltime in higher education), four in their mid career (10-20 years working fulltime in higher education) and three later in their careers (20+ years working fulltime in higher education).

The following profiles offer a brief glimpse of each participant. All names have been changed to protect participants' anonymity.

*Sandy* works in a tenure track position and describes her work as “community-engaged scholarship”. Though she completed a “traditional dissertation project”, she states, “I always wanted to do my work in this [engaged] way.”

*Amy* describes her work in a variety of ways including “public involvement, public

engagement, community engagement.” Amy began her engagement journey as a research coordinator at a university, which motivated her to continue her studies: “So, got the bug and did the PhD and then still wasn’t sure if I wanted to come into a traditional academic setting.” She found academic work in a unit that supports community engagement.

*Corey* is a mid career professor who completed a “very traditional [discipline] master’s degree” and then secured a job working with a community. This exposed Corey to community-based approaches and motivated him to do a PhD: “I was doing [topic] research in the community...that made me decide, I gotta go back and get my PhD but I’m going to do it in [discipline] that is community-engaged.”

*Denise* is a tenured professor who describes her area as “education and research involving the First Nations and Aboriginal people.” After graduating with her PhD, Denise wanted to develop educational programs that were “more responsive to the learning ways of Aboriginal people.” This desire exposed her to community engagement, which resonated with the approach already embedded in her academic work.

*Henry* is a tenured professor who worked for many years doing research in community. He joined the university at a time before community engagement “was allowed, let alone semi-fashionable.” Henry describes himself as a “knowledge worker” who is “interested in ways in which construction of knowledge can be done that makes it more likely that we would have social change.”

*Jen* has been in both administrative and tenure track positions and is currently working as an administrator. She describes herself as a “practitioner of community-university engagement.” and describes her work in the following way: “I write about it [engagement], and I think about it, and I am a critical advocate for it”

*Jim* is currently in a significant administrative position in higher education and is in the middle of his career. He has a doctorate, but has not worked as a tenure track professor: “I have a PhD...but I’ve never really wanted to be a faculty member.” Jim sees himself as someone who bridges different sites/ideas/ways of thinking and has spent his life trying to link the university and community.

*Mary* is a tenured professor who describes her research area as “social movements, globally and locally, grass roots, with a definite focus on feminist movements.” Mary does not identify herself as a community-engaged scholar, though she works extensively in community. This is because “the academic field doesn’t define me.” That being said, Mary is clear that the academy fits with her own interests: “what I like to do is to think.”

*Mona* is a tenure track professor early in her academic career. In describing herself she notes, “there are times that I do more traditional research, teaching, and service. But more generally I’d consider myself a community-engaged scholar.” Mona worked extensively with community before beginning her academic career.

## **Findings**

In the following section, I summarize research findings relating to how scholars understand community. I share examples of the ways in which participants constructed community

through difference, and how they sometimes problematized this dichotomous construction. I also share how participants sought to navigate their relationship with community, particularly as it relates to difference, and their emphasis on the importance of openness and listening in the engagement endeavor.

### ***How Community is Understood: Variable Ideas***

Participants in this study recognized that when talking about community in community-engagement there is “enormous variability amongst people’s understanding of what that means.” One participant pointed out that community is an entity that “could be defined in any kind of way” and another asserted that it “can mean different things.”

Despite this definitional openness, participants described communities as held together by some unifying factor, be it culture, interests, class, geography, or even political values. For example, one participant described community in the following way: “Like a First Nations community, an agricultural community, you know, a class identified community, a rural-urban community, a northern community, whatever it might be.” Another asserted:

It [community] can be: it can be local, it can be national, it can be international, and it can be a much smaller concept. It can be referred to something much larger. So, you know, I think it’s important that the notion of community have some variability to it.

While a third shared: “The community that I identify with are those people who are, you know, on the left, or social change people, or activists, or whatever.”

### ***Community Constructed as ‘Outside Academia’***

While the concept of community may be variable, mean different things, and perhaps even be impossible to define, in community-engaged scholarship community is conceptually positioned as “outside of academia.” For example, one participant asks, “For people in the academy, why don’t they understand that people out there in the community understand things?”

The binary positioning of community as outside university, while sometimes questioned by participants themselves, is consistently present in their discourse on community-engaged scholarship. The irony of this is not lost on one participant who points out that despite scholars’ desire for “a partnership that really integrates our work”, when discussing community-university engagement “we are using language to put ourselves in one or the other of those places.”

The conceptual positioning of community as outside the university is perhaps best captured by the way in which differences are described. The differences between community and university partners in community-engaged scholarship are expressed as a series of opposites: expecting practical results vs. research and knowledge-based results; working on the front lines vs. having some distance from the issues; possessing practical, contextualized knowledge vs. global or theoretical knowledge; and finally being part of different knowledge cultures.

Community is defined against the work and focus of scholars in a whole host of ways.

For example, participants assert that “the distinction is really clear”, community members hope for different products out of the partnership than their academic partners. Communities want “something very practical” and “might want publications, but they want accessible communications”, while scholars want “to publish in this critical reflective way in a peer reviewed publication where my publication is going to potentially help me get a promotion or a merit increment.” One participant draws the distinction by pointing to the immediacy of the situations faced in community as opposed to the luxury of reflection without the pressures of doing:

Working on the front lines... their [community] focus is so immediately grabbed by the immediacy of the situations that they are in. Like, they're fighting fires everyday, every moment. So they don't have the luxury to sit back and say, gee, I'm noticing this trend.

The emphasis on doing in community is also captured by a participant who describes community as “people who work in the field” and yet another who notes that community members “have their own expertise. They have very hands on, very practitioner focused [expertise]” while university partners “can bring new concepts, new theories, you know, a lot of the stuff that they [community] don't have the time to do or the expertise.”

Echoing this statement, another participant states:

It's the marriage of the, of what is academic, the value of the academy at its finest, where it is taking a large perspective and a broad perspective and a long perspective and is able to say, 'this is what we've learned collectively over time and over space and how it can be applied to this particular set of circumstances' and where the community comes in saying 'we know what is going to work in our location or what is not going to work in our location. Let's bring together our instrumental local knowledge and your more academic, theoretical, more macro level knowledge and try to build something that is going to solve the problems that we're facing that neither of us could have done on our own.'

The practical knowledge held by community and the critical, theoretical knowledge held by scholars are described by one participant as different “knowledge cultures” while yet another suggests community is “a different world.”

### ***Dichotomous Positioning of Community is Problematic***

Though participants in this study tended to use dichotomous language in describing community and university, some recognized that “as much as we are talking about partnerships and mutual benefit and reciprocity, we continue to make a distinction between community and university and I think there is a problem with that.” this description is problematic and fails to capture the complexities of the relation. For example, one participant points out:

... because they happen to be scholars, I don't think they would dissociate themselves from being part of the community. And vice versa, that because you are, quote, 'community' means you don't have a clue about research or scholarship and you need somebody over in that other camp called university in order to engage in this process that is going to give you this great outcome.

The struggle, this participant suggests, is to talk about differences between community and university, and recognize "there is a history of work done within institutions of higher education that has missed a whole lot... the institutions have created this very insular world", while not constructing a dichotomous conceptualization of community and university scholars:

So, if we just said engaged scholarship... that opens itself up for, to hmmm... to miss the invitation to those who historically have not gotten an invitation to participate... But the language of community... I can tell you that there are people that I have engaged with for research purposes who would now be considered community, who are also academics. And so what the heck do we do with them... There is lots of folks working in what we define as community that are also scholars, that also have an academic background/experience whatever... all academics in some way or another are also part of community... I understand that there are differences, but I also think that sometimes solely talking about these places as though the people in these places are totally different, I think it is a problem.

The distinctions between community and university do not have "such clear-cut parameters", which points to the ways in which participants' understanding of community as outside academe is a construction, one that constructs a scholar's role in opposition to community. Though many participants in this study were sure to talk about the strengths that communities bring, their "practical", "local", "contextual", "front lines" knowledge, at the same time they described community as lacking in "research skills, macro perspectives", and "critical, theoretical knowledge". This lack is sometimes attributed to ability, sometimes to time constraints or interests. Nonetheless, communities need help to research their own issues, to develop better policies, to refine practice, to be more strategic in addressing community issues.

While some participants explicitly recognized that there is an academic community to whom they are accountable, they did not identify this community as the central entity to engage with in terms of the focus of their work. That said, in virtue of being located in a university, they recognized that some level of attention to the community of peers is important, particularly as it relates to tenure and promotion.

### ***Navigating Relations with Constructed Community***

Given the construction of community as outside academia, and community partners as different according to the various binaries invoked above, it is important to ask how participants



understand their interactions with, and orientation to, community partners. Study participants asserted that when working with community partners it was extremely important to mitigate differences by approaching community from a position of openness, and being willing to listen and learn from community. Participants stressed the importance of not operating from a place of knowledge when engaging community, not assuming the power to define the issue or situation, but approaching the engagement endeavor with curiosity.

### ***Difference in Community-Engaged Scholarship***

Difference is an important element of learning in community-engaged scholarship. For example, one participant points out:

You just keep learning and learning and figure out new things, and then get confused by what you thought you knew... it develops as we learn and as we are exposed to different situations with different opportunities and different people in different contexts.

Another participant notes the when scholars enter community, “there is, I think, a realization that they are entering into a different world.” This difference can invoke a fear response, leading scholars to fall back on their privileged position as the possessors of knowledge:

“The fear that they’re carrying about, ‘oh my goodness what am I getting myself into? I have no idea what I am doing here!’ The reaction to that is people falling into this expert role which then offends people in the community...I can’t tell you how many times I’ve seen professors who think of themselves as highly engaged, highly capable community-engaged scholars coming into community environments and, for example, in an hour long meeting, taking 45 minutes to introduce their topic... their conditioned response in environments where they’re afraid, and they don’t quite know what to do, is to talk, is to present themselves as experts.

One participant, who does not identify as an engaged scholar, highlights the kinds of complications that arise when students and researchers work on a project where difference is embedded within the idea of a definable Other:

Other times there is research money for some project that is absolutely contrary to everything they said they wanted to try to achieve, and so they go in and they take the money for that research. You see what I mean, because they don’t have a real experience of a real research relationship that really is mutual. So they don’t know the distinction between that kind of research relationship and a research relationship that is, you know, a paid piece of research to explore those Other people over there... There isn’t the context within the academy these days... Even a notion that a mutual research relationship of [topic] for a common cause could be attempted... and that’s

very different from thinking ‘oh, we’re all in it together, we’re all the same... It’s being able to be there differently and in fact to appreciate each other really.

This same participant explains her sense of connection with the community she engages as coming together in a way that creates a “rich stew” of knowledge and strength:

I was a lot better off financially than a lot of the women, but those differences were not just me, the academic researcher, in this community of poor women. We were all women coming together to use our resources to make the [Project]... we understood we had interests in common. We had to be aware of those differences of course. But it wasn’t me as the researcher who was in a very privileged position. There were all kinds of diversity in terms of women’s needs and circumstances and there was, everybody was giving. And those are lovely contexts, when you get a project where everybody is committed and everybody is giving what they have and people have various things they can give, in a really, in a woman, a woman defined space, which is a very unfashionable term now, very unfashionable, essentialist term supposedly. When you can create that space, and I think many people have never even experienced it or can’t even imagine it... it’s a fabulous rich stew of women’s knowledge and power, strength not power, strength.

Another participant shares the hope that community partners will come to see him/her as an ally: “...In good relationships you will be in service to each other. So I would like them to see me as their ally.”

### ***Openness and Listening as a Response to Difference***

In navigating difference, study participants emphasized the importance of openness, listening, and not-knowing. For example, one participant explained: “I mean you basically, you lay yourself out and you open yourself up. Like, you have to.” Another participant describes a mentor, a scholar whom he/she respects, and that scholar’s way of interacting with others as important to engagement:

He was absolutely open to others, to learning from others, absolutely porous. He just had this capacity for, he had this capacity for friendship, you know? You felt like a friend of his, which meant that you shared. You talked easily to him and he listened and all of that. Listening is the main thing.

Listening, explained one participant, is an important part of being open to community: “part of that openness is really being able and interested in listening for and looking for what is needed, what makes sense, what is sort of the way to proceed.” Another participant explained that engaging community respectfully “means listening to people and framing the research... and using their language and playing it back and not saying, ‘oh well we better put it

this way because this is the way we do it.' Listening is important and might also be a mutual endeavor, suggested another participant: "I think what is important is that there is time and an interest in hearing about what is going on for both of us."

The need to listen and learn as a starting point for community-engagement can be difficult for those who experience privilege. One participant asserts:

I think the biggest challenge for us, and the more education we have the bigger of a challenge it is, the more White you are, the more male you are, the more straight you are, and all of that stuff, the more of a challenge it is to learn to listen.

Without the important step of listening and learning, scholars might make assumptions about community needs, such as in the case of a community-focused approach described by one participant:

What is missing in a community-focused approach is that you're making a lot of assumptions about the organization, about the need, and about what you think might make a contribution... I think it can actually get us, lead us to some of what has been really problematic and been criticized about the work and the history of university and community involvement.

Part of the reason that listening is difficult is because it assumes one does not know and, as one participant explains, not knowing is discouraged in the academic culture:

What the academy is missing at this stage in its evolution is that allowing of not knowing, the allowing of ignorance and the allowing of confusion and the allowing of the discomfort of not having the answers. That has kind of been eliminated from the culture of the academy... in the sort of dominant norms of the culture, you are not supposed to talk about magic and you're not supposed to talk about inspiration, you're not supposed to talk about um, the power of ignorance, you're supposed to talk about the power of knowledge.

## **Analysis**

The findings shared by study participants are complex and invite exploration of a number of themes. Given the limited amount of space here, I focus my interpretation on two key dynamics: the Othering of community and participants' experiences of and leaning towards decoloniality. Both dynamics, seemingly contradictory, are present in participants' conceptualization of community. I begin with an overview of Othering as understood by G.C. Spivak, an analysis of how this dynamic is visible in CES, and the resulting silencing of community desire. I then turn

to the potential for shifting relations through decolonial ways of interacting, arguing that it is within decolonial relations that the potential for reciprocal and equitable relationships resides.

### ***What is Othering?***

In articulating their work, study participants engaged in an othering of community, both on an organizational level, and at the more specific level of individual attributes, skills and abilities. othering both creates and subordinates difference, simultaneously excluding and including the Other (Morton, 2003).

A number of theorists have contributed to the concept of ‘othering.’ Said, for example, in *Orientalism* (1979) wrote about the problematic and oppressive process of creating and maintaining a dichotomy between the Self as a Western identity and Others as identified with the East in European colonialism. He explained, “Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, “us”) and the strange (the Orient, the East, “them”) (Said, 1979, p. 43). The Other here can only be understood as not-us, as the binary opposite of the European identity. Fanon (1963) also emphasized the necessity of binary constructions to the colonial view of the social world and to the dynamics of Othering. Spivak (1985) explored the logic of othering in her analysis of the ways in which Europe created itself as a sovereign subject by othering its colonies while simultaneously creating these colonies in its own image. She asserted that Europe’s identity was secured by the simultaneous exclusion of the Other, as non-European, and the inclusion of the other as a subordinate being, as those against whom the European identity is established. To be European becomes understood as not being one of “them”, a move that positions the constructed non-European at the foundation of European self knowledge. Jensen (2011) describes Spivak’s conceptualization of othering this way:

To sum up, the theory of identity formation inherent in the concept of othering assumes that subordinate people are offered, and at the same time relegated to, subject positions as others in discourse. In these processes, it is the centre that has the power to describe, and the other is constructed as inferior. (p. 65)

Spivak (1988) questions the extent to which those who are othered can speak and be heard, an important question for scholars working with community. Battiste (2011), in her exploration of the colonialist project embedded in Canadian educational systems and practice also drew attention the silencing of the constructed Other when she stated that “Aboriginal people continue to be invisible” (p. 198). Battiste is one of a number of theorists who point to the othering of Indigenous people in Canada, further expanding on understandings of othering in imperialist and colonial histories (e.g., Stewart-Harawira, 2005 & Henderson, 2000).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> I am grateful to the reviewer of an earlier version of this paper for pointing me towards these particular thinkers.

Though the dynamic of othering is complex, the heart of the matter is one of self-validation through the creation of an Other who is not seen in their specificity but only as the binary opposite of oneself, and the subsumption of that difference within a unity of self-understanding.

### ***Organizational Boundaries and Othering***

At the broad level, community is constructed as Other for scholars in higher education by their invoking of organizational boundaries. As the logic of othering reveals, this both excludes those outside higher education and includes them. It both affirms the organizational boundary of institutions of higher education by pointing to what is outside that boundary as a binary opposite, at the same time as bringing what is outside within. The binary opposite, the Other or outsider to the organization becomes that against which the institution and scholars in it understand their work and their role. Thus the Other is a necessary part of their self-understanding and it is in this way that the Other comes to be included inside, as an outsider. This has the effect of shoring up institutions of higher education and, despite the call to co-create knowledge and share power on behalf of some engaged scholars, reaffirms higher education's role in granting legitimacy to knowledge even while recognizing that legitimate knowledge rests in multiple locations.

By embracing multiple sites of knowledge and working toward knowledge co-creation and mutual benefit, CES reaffirms the role of institutions of higher education as central to knowledge legitimacy and the knowledge validation process. As a result, even while scholars might critique the organizational discourse of CES (e. g. Fear, Rosaen, Bawden, & Foster-Fishman, 2006) and scholars might see themselves as working quite apart from the interests of administrators in their institutions, they construct community in a way that serves to solidify the organizational identity and boundaries of higher education.

Thus the embracing of community engagement by institutions of higher education not only offers a powerful rhetorical device for fundraising and building public support, but also solidifies higher education's role in the validation and legitimation of knowledge. Because the othering of community is an othering based on organizational status, it serves to position the institution as dominant in the arena of knowledge and scholarship even as it recognizes and includes community knowledge.

### ***Community Specification and Othering***

There is a second dimension of othering that takes place in CES that is important to examine here. When describing community, participants in this study ascribed to them a host of attributes that were the binary opposite of their own attributes: scholars are theoretical, community practical; scholars' knowledge is global and abstract, communities have context specific knowledge. Scholars assert their desire to value community knowledge, yet this binary description is suspect, as are comments about community being "on the front lines" "fighting fires" and "in the trenches" all of which imply that community partners are not only action oriented but also at the command of leaders. The power relations invoked in these examples seem to point to a hierarchy of power. The claims made in CES literature relating to mutually

beneficial partnerships become suspect when we understand the power dimensions in othering at the specific level of community partners.

Despite the emphasis on relationships of trust and working for mutual benefit in CES and in participants' responses in this study, their description of community members interests, skills and attributes reveals an othering that is highly problematic. Community partners are constructed as different at the same time as they are being reconstructed in the model of the scholar, reconstructed as desiring to co-create knowledge. In reality, communities have diverse interests. One participant recognizes this when she notes that community agreement to undertake research is constrained by funding parameters that emphasize research:

The power still remains with us because it is money flowing to their community and so even if they have the power to say no, do they really? I mean, cause if they chose to say no, it's not something this community wants to do, they forfeit hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Would research, course development, or other forms of knowledge creation be the first choice of community partners if funds were not earmarked and could be spent on anything? Community desires, their self-determination and the kinds of projects they might want to undertake as mutually beneficial are obscured by funding policies that shape what is possible, as well as by scholars' assumptions about what communities desire and what they can bring to a partnership.

My point here is not that engaged scholars completely oppress community, nor that they are not genuine in their engagement, I don't doubt that some CES endeavors are very beneficial to community. But it is the way community is constructed in relation to the scholar within the realm of knowledge that is problematic. By othering community in this way, binaries are supported even as they are challenged. Participants' responses in this study reveal an othering that is larger than their individual perspectives. I do not want to suggest that the issue here is a group of individuals who in their written communications are careful, but when speaking freely reveal their own "real" perspectives on community. I think it is far more complex than that. Speaking freely, scholars mediate the dominant discourse on Self-Other relations that many theorists point to as an oppressive European legacy. Without problematizing this discourse, without careful attention to how relations are logically structured in CES, the aims of trusting and reciprocal relations cannot be achieved.

### **Opening, Listening and Not-Knowing as the Seeds of Non-oppressive Interactions**

While participants in this study articulated their relationships in a way that reflects othering, they also talked about their approach to the Other in terms of openness and listening. In adopting a position of not knowing, participants opened up and listened carefully to community. While this may not in itself be enough to lead to non-oppressive forms of interaction, it reflects an almost intuitive orientation towards new ways of interacting with Others. It leads to moments such as the one that one participant described as magic and collaborative knowledge creation that generates power for everyone involved. It is within these moments that scholars are taught

new ways of interacting and co-creating knowledge. Because knowing that takes place outside of colonial relations is embodied, experiential and non-binary, it is difficult to articulate. Thus it gets described as magic, or another participant puts it, ineffable. From the platform of openness, listening and learning in community engagement, a decolonial approach to collaborative knowledge creation might emerge, one that does not rely on problematic self-Other binaries and the power hierarchies that accompany them.

That being said, good intentions and a desire to listen do not necessarily ensure that scholars are capable of hearing community. Within binary relations of Self and Other, the Other cannot speak, they become invisible, which means that listening in this relationship form may not lead to deeper understanding. Additionally, good intentions towards the Other do not in any way reposition the larger systems and structures of power that are at play in the social world; one's positionality is not so easily overcome and the social structures of inequality remain incredibly resilient. It is only when scholars are willing to start somewhere else, to delink from the colonial structure of binary Self-Other relations that a decolonial listening and learning becomes possible.

The struggle to find a non-dichotomous way of relating, and the desire to expand beyond binary Self-Other relations is evident in participants' insistence on being humble and open, listening to learn from community. In purposely taking a position of not knowing, participants are, I believe, trying to find non-oppressive ways of interacting. While participants tended to fall back into ways of describing their relations with community through an othering lens, they also recognized the limits of this approach as overly dichotomous and contrary to the aims of CES. They described strategies that they use when working with others that reflect new ways of being together and learning together: openness, listening, learning and delinking from the position of knower. They are, I'd like to suggest, learning to unlearn in order to connect with community in new and equitable ways.

Andreotti (2014), recognizing the ways in which Self-Other relations are understood and discussed in literature about essentialism and education, pointed to the importance of mourning the limits of "over-socialization" in "the use of modern reason with its focus on 'knowing' the world and the Other", a process that involves "learning to unlearn, to listen and to reach out" (p. 142). This mourning, Andreotti (2014) asserted, is an important first step in shifting Self-Other relations that have rightly been critiqued as oppressive. She suggests that new ways of interaction can only emerge from residing with the discomfort of provisional understandings, dissensus, not knowing, non-teleological futures, and where difference is positioned as a powerful force that pushes up against the limits of existing possibilities.

As Tlostanova and Mignolo (2012) commented, "the decolonial is an option for all those human beings who want to participate and share rather than be managed and integrated to master plans that are not theirs or to be expelled and marginalized" (p. 192). They assert that theories that emerge in the Third World<sup>3</sup>, such as decoloniality, can be picked up by all those

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<sup>3</sup> I am using the terms Third World and First World here because Mignolo uses them in his original text. The terms reflect the kind of valuation that has, under coloniality, been given to differing geographical and economic locales.

seeking knowledge. This is not an appropriation, rather, it is a recognition that knowledge emerging in the Third World is just as globally valid as knowledge emerging in the First World:

...there is an unconscious tendency to think that theories that originate in the Third World (or among Black or gay intellectuals), are valid only for the Third World (or Black and gay people) while theories that originate in the First World (and created by White and heterosexual people) have a global if not universal validity. (Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2012, p. 3)

We might add to this idea feminist critiques of patriarchy that are mistakenly thought to apply only to women, and Indigenous critiques of settler-colonialism in Canada that are cast as only a concern of Indigenous peoples, as well as other forms of critique. It is from those whom Western binary logics have positioned as Other, that we might all learn different ways of knowing and being.

Part of the richness of decoloniality lay in its refusal to be positioned as against the dominant logics currently circulating. In their critique of post-coloniality, Tlostanova and Mignolo (2012) pointed out the ways in which post-colonial critique cannot be written without a reference to, and therefore a reinforcing of, European history. Positioning a critique in relation to the dominant discourse continually draws us back to that discourse, supporting it even as it is challenged.

Within binary Self-Other relations, the Other functions as a negation, as difference against which the Self learns about itself. To reconceive this relationship would require of community-engaged scholars that they be open to learning from the Other, who ceases to be an Other once they are heard. This learning is not just about local circumstances or experiences of the topic of scholarship, but learning about a different way of being, non-binary ways of interacting with one another. It is about challenging the binary logic underlying exclusionary and oppressive practices; a move that I have previously (2013) asserted is necessary if CES is to enact social transformation. Tlostanova and Mignolo (2012) emphasized this point when they talked about needing to create new subjectivities in order to move beyond oppressive relations. These new subjectivities would not be a result of a centered Self, learning about itself by creating and negating difference. Rather, they would emerge from a deep listening and learning that can only develop through a de-linking with the colonial matrix of power. Learning that comes from starting someplace else, and which thus appears to us as magic.

## **Conclusion**

We find in participants' conceptualization of community the contradictory tensions of the dominant Western discourse of othering and a leaning towards decolonial relations that is manifest in openness, listening and non-knowing. I have suggested that decoloniality provides another way of envisioning relations between people. Through decoloniality it is experience, not academic disciplines, that becomes the guide for a narrative that captures how the colonial



matrix is lived (Ilostanova & Mignolo, 2012). This emphasis on experience might resonate well with many community-engaged scholars. Being guided by experience requires taking a position of epistemic equity, not relying on the sanctioning of knowledge by authorities, either individually or organizationally.

The abilities of being open, listening and taking a position of not-knowing are the ground on which learning to unlearn can occur. They are the foundation for delinking from oppressive colonial relations. For this reason, it is important that these abilities be supported, developed, and nurtured. Nurturing decoloniality in CES might disrupt the power of institutions of higher education and the scholars who work within them to legitimate knowledge. Instead, knowledge might be positioned in multiple places and might move towards genuinely achieving the reciprocity and mutual benefit that form the core of community-engaged scholarship.

## About the Author

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## Building Critical Community Engagement through Scholarship: Three Case Studies

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**ABSTRACT** Drawing on a shared recognition that community is defined, understood, constructed, and reconstructed through contextually inflected relationships, collaborating authors use diverse interdisciplinary case studies to argue that rigorous community-engaged scholarship advances capacities for critical pursuit of cognitive and social justice. Whether through participant-centred projects undertaken with youth in government care networks, cross-cultural explorations of Indigenous and non-Indigenous science and culture as resources for food security, or facilitated dramatizations of community relations impacted by neo-liberal ideologies, contributors affirm welcoming co-learning environments that engage multiple forms of knowledge expression and mobilization. The respectful spaces held in these community-researcher collaborations enable new advances beyond hegemonic knowledge development institutionalized through colonialist histories. This essay theorizes prospects for building transformative community through scholarship, citing practical examples of the principles and practices that foster or frustrate sustainable communities. It explores the institutional arrangements and power dynamics between and among actors, asking who gets included and excluded, and what boundaries are created and crossed around complex, contradictory, and contested notions of “community.”

**KEYWORDS** community-engaged scholarship, food security, cognitive justice, decolonizing methodologies, participatory theatre

With the aid of three interdisciplinary case studies in local, national, and international contexts, this essay examines the different ways that “community” is defined, understood, constructed, and reconstructed by community-engaged and contextually inflected scholarship. If community-engaged scholarship has responded to concerns about overly detached universities needing to become more relevant and responsible (Smith, 1999; 2005), community both inside and outside universities has often been presumed to be unproblematically available—unusually singular, stable, and self-evident—for both study and action. The left and the right, individualist and collectivist traditions, all desire but cannot attain “exclusive title to community” (Findlay & Findlay, 1995, p. 4). Similarly, community-university partnerships are often seen as panacea, glib guarantors of culturally and politically productive partnerships (Macdonald & Chrisp, 2005). In other words, like community-university partnerships, community itself is insufficiently theorized.

This essay aims to contribute to such theorizing, unpacking seductively familiar formulae, while exploring the successes and ongoing challenges of building transformative, critical community capacity through scholarship in three examples of the principles and practices that foster or frustrate sustainable communities in Canada and beyond. From researching in partnership with youth transitioning out of government care in Saskatchewan to rethinking food security within and across Indigenous and non-Indigenous worldviews to acting out and working through impediments to, as well as facilitators of, collaboration among sexual assault centres across Canada, contributors examine how community is continually redefined through engaged and engaging forms of research. This essay explores the institutional arrangements and power dynamics that enhance or inhibit comprehensive and culturally appropriate local engagement and decision-making via participatory action research (PAR) (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005; Stoecker, 2005). It asks who gets included and excluded, and what boundaries are created and crossed around complex, contradictory, and contested notions of “community,” imagined and material (Anderson, 1991).

Communities survive and evolve, struggling and learning together to build and rebuild organizations and institutions. Individuals and organizations learn from each other in different ways. Sharing effective models as well as relevant and reliable knowledge is key to community success and sustainability. This essay focuses on decolonizing and democratizing knowledge-building with partner organizations and the broader communities they represent. It explores relational projects involving innovative knowledge-sharing strategies that transcend the theory-to-practice gap and stretch beyond academic journals and text-based processes of knowledge mobilization.

Community is understood here as a complex, dynamic system and field of action, as both social and physical space (Arce, 2003), with normative dimensions that signal belonging, acceptance, shared concern(s), and mutual interests (Bauman, 2001). Community is also a site for economic, political, and social projects that may reveal contested directions and objectives (DeFilippis, Fisher, & Shragge, 2006). Community is where we negotiate differences of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, age, and ability that are more “dangerous trope” or “arbitrary constructs” than “reports of reality” (Gates, 1986, pp. 5-6). Yet metaphors or social constructions for which researchers are accountable prove at least as powerful as material conditions in shaping—for good and ill—our identities, realities, and any shared sense of the possible. If identities can be constructed, they can be reconstructed and conditions changed if we recognize “the central role of communications in building community cohesiveness within Aboriginal nations and fostering relationships between cultures. . . . We actually construct who we are” (RCAP, 1996, pp. 620-621). Community is where we live and make a living, but it is also where we exercise capacity and commitments to “responsible renewal” (Findlay & Findlay, 1995, p. 5), going beyond kinship and friendship in recognition and negotiation, confidence building and collaboration, through institutional and organizational innovation (Alperson, 2002). Sustainability is less about endpoints than re-imagined processes; it enables social learning and principled responses to emergent challenges and opportunities (Dyball, Brown, & Keen, 2007).

If colonial research has been a destructive force—“complicit with . . . imperial domination” (Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 31)—we have opportunity and obligation to *rewrite* stories to “*re-right*” relationships and realities (Smith, 1999; 2005) by unpacking the complicity of professional academic knowledges in producing and reproducing inequalities and injustice (Razack, 1998; 2002). Retelling the history of “disinterested” expertise—privileging Western scientific rationality as the exclusive route to narrowly defined progress, while disparaging and discounting Indigenous and other knowledges (Smith, 1999; 2005)—exposes a deplorable waste of lives, lands, voices, and knowledges (Bauman, 2004). This colonial process of knowledge building effectively produced a cognitive *terra nullius* where different epistemological, spiritual, territorial, and other dimensions of knowing were reduced to caricatures in the interests of intellectual speculation and practical exploitation of Indigenous land and labour (Findlay, 2014). This is why de Sousa Santos, Nunes, and Meneses (2007) argue that cognitive justice precedes social justice and why Tremblay, Hall, and Tandon (2014) promote “knowledge democracy” (p. 8). What Harding (2005) calls “strong objectivity” is impossible without inclusive accountabilities in knowledge production.

In step with de Sousa Santos and Harding, this essay shares our experience of rethinking research as a platform for building relationships within and across communities targeted too often by researchers, policy makers, and broader community as rich sources of data to be plundered (Smith, 1999) or as “problems” to be solved (Findlay & Wuttunee, 2007). Those problems are typically articulated in terms of gaps, lags, or divides, in terms of a deficit model of Aboriginal people—or youth (O’Dell, 2003)—in a legacy of colonial binary logic on which so much social and political theory is founded (Henderson, Benson, & Findlay, 2000). Such thinking is, ironically enough, the legacy of “the epistemologies of ignorance” whereby the social contract has been defined by those who “count,” their cognitive and cultural norms producing what has been called a “consensual hallucination” (Mills, 1997; cit. in Sullivan & Tuana, 2007, pp. 3-4), which has proven especially hard to dislodge.

Decolonizing habitual thinking across public institutions is no small task and one that cannot be effected without both unpacking the colonial legacies and reclaiming Indigenous voices and vision (Battiste, 2000) in order to “nourish the learning spirit,” resist “cognitive imperialism,” re-imagine Aboriginal-non-Aboriginal relations, and remake our world in holistic ways (Battiste, 2013). If the “tragic experience of colonization is,” as Daes (2000) reminds us, “a shared experience,” then oppressor as much as oppressed is in need of healing (p. 6) and we share the need and obligation to re-imagine in engaged scholarship who we are and would like to be.

Re-imagining sustainable communities is urgent in the face of the often contradictory and confounding effects of globalization and neoliberalism (Bauman, 1998). Collectively, these processes contribute to trade liberalization, deregulation, and governments downloading social responsibilities to individuals and targeted communities, resulting in uneven development in both universities and communities. Community-based organizations (CBOs) experience government downsizing and offloading as increased demands to partner in order to meet growing needs without adequate resources (Cooper, 2007). Citizens—Aboriginal and non-

Aboriginal alike—experience funding decisions as “subjective, made by distant bureaucrats with no knowledge of local realities” and find few opportunities to be heard (Women’s Economic Council, 2010, p.ii; Chandler, Lalonde, Sokol, & Hallet, 2003). These processes promote voter skepticism, alienation, and low civil society participation (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2008), while simultaneously forcing groups to find new ways to work together for survival.

Attempts to re-imagine and reclaim governance (Ostrom, 2009) also reflect a growing sense that collaborating and partnering are fraught activities often doubling as alibis for neoliberalism. Instead of the uncritical assumption that partnering will solve all problems, partnership dynamics need probing. This includes links among structure, power, and process, as well as tensions between leadership and partnership, among different partner objectives, among the complex politics of partnership within which partner cultures often remain invisible or underestimated (MacDonald & Chrisp, 2005). Like “community,” “partnership” is a term that needs to be read for presumption as well as reassurance if we are to get at the roots of problems rather than aggravating domination and entrenching business as usual (Cornwall & Brock, 2005; Tremblay, Hall, & Tandon, 2014) and if we are to support effective “place-based learning communities” (Davidson-Hunt & O’Flaherty, 2007, p. 291).

While the literature is clear on barriers to equitable engagement in partnerships, our community-engaged research paints a picture of collective accountability for factors that foster or frustrate healthy, sustainable communities. Our community partners demand a role in governance and the recovery of voice and choice—of self-determination—as a key part of relearning positive situated selfhood and making a sustaining and sustainable life narrative. They also underline the persistently gendered challenges and the need for co-operative and intergenerational restitution of relations to self, community, and land, underlining our collective responsibility to all of creation, including all that it sustains and is sustained by. Each of the case studies presented here speaks to the challenges and opportunities, the enormous investments of time and talent, as well as the rich rewards of trusting relationships built in the research process.

### **Case Study 1. Partnering with Youth: Rebuilding Community Capacity**

The history of youth in care and custody in Canada is—in part—an effect of persistent public disengagements from targeted communities. Social stratifications established in the process of colonialist nation-building continue to produce measurable impacts on quality of life and learning, along lines of tenacious social inequities and constructed differences (Battiste & Henderson, 2000). Because the young have been construed as the primary responsibility of female care-givers in Canada, disproportionate concentrations of neglected and abused children are a strong indicator of neglected and abused women, families and communities, who live with enduring social injustice at the intersections of race, class, gender, disability, citizenship status, and expressions of sexual and gender diversity. Such “big picture” awareness means little, however, when a young person is “apprehended” into government care or custody. Immediate challenges are too pressing to support sustained reflection on such difficult circumstances as

produced socio-historical effects, a life-story likely shared with many others.

The university-community partnership with the Saskatchewan Youth in Care and Custody Network (SYICCN) which grounds this case study reflects a commitment to mutuality in research design and delivery that seeks to repair social bridging capacity (Odora Hoppers, 2008), even where bonds may have been stretched—sometimes to the breaking point—by barriers to fair and equitable access to opportunity. One measure of such deferred actualization can be seen in the significant numbers of youth in and from government care who, for myriad reasons, do not complete public, let alone post-secondary educations. If universities, colleges, and technical training centres are, among other things, class-climbing institutions (Smith, 1990), hierarchical social systems have functioned efficiently to divert many youth in care from advanced education, and to construct educational environments as unresponsive to their learning needs. How might community-engaged research reverse low educational attainments among youth in care and custody, particularly in a province where Aboriginal youth are over-represented? How might such efforts help to change educational practices and power dynamics?

Modest gains have been made. Increasingly, university students themselves recognize the absence of peers from care and are demanding change. Student unions at both Saskatchewan universities have joined other Canadian counterparts in pressing for tuition waivers for qualifying youth in and from government care. This welcome gesture of allegiance currently represents limited institutional investment, owing to the few young people from care who are encouraged to view post-secondary training as an option. Too often, such ambitions are discouraged; youth from out-of-home care are constructed as too “damaged” to aspire to higher education, even though it is clear that multiple disruptions in living arrangements during formative years contribute to uneven preparation for post-secondary learning opportunities. Significant skills for coping with the chaos that failures of cognitive and social justice produce may also result.

Classified as a vulnerable population, youth in care are commonly perceived as a difficult group with whom to develop public knowledge in rigorous research, given received interpretations that personalize structural deficits. However, in a series of initiatives undertaken together with SYICCN leadership, collaborative faculty, student, and youth-led research teams have identified favourable conditions for research conducted with, by, for, and about youth in and from government care and custody. These efforts include supporting young people to negotiate their own research agendas; recognizing that research design need not be overly complex or invasive; and appreciating frameworks that affirm the aspirational energies of young people, rather than bolstering the “harm narrative” (O’Dell, 2003), which distorts public discourse about child welfare through target blaming. Youth appreciate research projects that welcome their voices in processes that are fun, transformative and rewarding, and researchers learn at least as much as the young people do in the process. When constructive, peer-supported knowledge-building relationships lead to healthy naming of challenges that participants have faced or can expect, no attempts are made to erase, diminish, or sweep under the rug, any of those lived experiences, positive or negative. The point is to honour youth choices in framing individual and shared life events and conditions—“nothing

about us without us”—without adopting tired scripts that serve adult agendas.

Established in 1991-92, SYICCN is a non-profit, community-based network of distributed local youth groups, connected through an arms-length provincially-funded office in Regina. Where community supports have been systematically undermined among those most impacted by social disparities, youth attempt to rebuild connections among themselves and wider constituencies, including with adults who co-learn how to build respectful, ethical, youth-centred research around topics chosen by youth themselves. Affiliated with a national umbrella organization (Youth in Care Canada [YICC]) which connects provincial networks through research initiatives and conferences, SYICCN has developed clear youth-centred protocols for evaluating potential research and other partnerships.

SYICCN members stay in contact with local, provincial, and national networks through email, Facebook, text messaging, biennial conferences, and adult supports who keep provincial leadership informed about emerging issues/opportunities. In provinces where many foster families live in rural communities, youth who stand out among peers as wards of the state flourish in the company of *compadres* to whom nothing need be explained; all understand what it means to have government as custodial parent.

Past research collaborations at the national level have included a report for the Federal Advisor on Child Sexual Abuse; research on the challenges of teen parents in and from care; and a study on the overuse of psychotropic medication among youth in government care (Lambe, et al., 2009). The provincial network has, meanwhile, contributed to Saskatchewan’s Child Welfare Legislative Review, conducted research with the Council for Children, and met with the Minister of Social Services to outline evidence-based proposals for action. As a result, Saskatchewan held its first “Child and Youth in Care” week in 2014, profiling the positive potentials of young people in and from care. A direct intervention in the stigmatizing stories that still circulate in public imagination, this event is one of several successes arising from recent research collaborations. Baseline funding for the network has been stabilized, and one-time funds to hire a part-time research coordinator were recently awarded by the province.

Every aspect of the research we conduct together is generated with network members, in order to develop age-appropriate research questions crafted by and with young people. When youth have direct input into the design and completion of research, they are better able to convey clear responses to questions that make sense to them, and are more invested in research outcomes. They also develop confidence presenting research results in appropriate venues.

The title of our first longitudinal baseline study, *Our Dream, Our Right, Our Future* (SYICCN, 2011), was generated in a youth focus group. Methods used were proposed, designed, and vetted with and by youth. One of the first lessons we learned together was that surveys are less fruitful than creative expression through photo-voice, scrap booking, and community mapping, in part, because coming to language about lives disrupted by removals to “the system,” is not always easy. Collaborative right-brain activities support young people to “find the words” in safe spaces created among youth and supportive adults. These methodological techniques have taught us that dialects of dominance have too often underestimated and obscured the voices of young people, who have a strong grasp on their own best interests, and



on practical ways of sharing their ideas within youth networks and to wider public audiences. Creative inquiry can be corrective and healing when protection has undermined participation among youth in care.

Remembering and making meaning from lives that do not follow an expected pattern requires supportive community (Campbell, 2003). In fact, YICC has argued that peer networking creates a subculture where youth learn together to navigate sometimes traumatic, sometimes restorative experiences. Early plans to co-create a guide for healthy transitions from care included basic recipes for healthy meals interwoven with strategic life-skills information, a survival resource since updated for the computer age. An enduring coping strategy operates through resilient use of dark humour through which youth in care reach for laughter, while articulating the challenges they face.

Once an affirmative peer-support network has been established, it becomes possible to engage in more sustained story-telling practices such as oral histories, digital stories, and collective co-biographies, which need not over-personalize systemically reproduced forms of social ignorance, neglect or abuse. Rather, iterative and cumulative spaces that welcome youth voice and vision enhance shared awareness of how interruptive structures can be re-imagined as surmountable. Community-based research, then, becomes a resource in youth development, reframing tensions as potentially productive, even when difficult to navigate. As one member of the organization's leadership team has remarked, the network is a healing environment because it is a shared learning environment where, in the face of difficulties and error, it is possible to "try again." As young people strive to learn through community-engaged research how best to transition toward more inclusive forms of adult citizenship, they demonstrate that trajectories shaped by historical inequities need not be surrendered to them. Rather, by building on collaborative, creative approaches to knowledge construction, capacities to imagine new ways of being are supported, through more nourishing configurations of community.

### **Case Study 2. Indigenous Food Knowledge: Hybrid Modes of Existence?**

Food security is another arena where modern colonialist science has produced and legitimized cognitive injustice (de Sousa Santos, 2007). Two-thirds of World development schemes, instead of creating justice and equality, have become "a continuation of war by other means against marginals, tribals and peasants" (Visvanathan, 2007, p. 337). This section casts some light on struggles for food security faced by Indigenous peoples, in Malaysia and Saskatchewan.

Global threats to food security are well-rehearsed: our world population will reach 9 billion by 2050 while we have been losing biodiversity, arable lands, and traditional nutrition sources, and struggling with food production and distribution. Today, only three crops—wheat, maize, and rice—provide 60% of the world's carbohydrates; of 7000 known food plants, only about 120 account for 90% of all plants used for nutritional purposes (CFFRC, 2011).

The usual agricultural research response to these problems has been to try increasing the yields of our global major crops, supported by economically expensive and environmentally destructive agro-chemicals (Patel, 2009; Shiva, 2013). Research at the Malaysian Crops for the Future Research Centre (CFFRC, 2011) has been taking paths less trodden, studying instead

the thousands of underutilized food plants in local environments, with findings to be shared in broad databases. Arguably, since much of the knowledge of underutilized food plants has been in the provenance of the world's Indigenous peoples (Balick & Cox, 1996), food security studies might best document and preserve this Indigenous knowledge of biodiversity in the interests of the survival of Indigenous peoples and of the cultural commons of humanity. However, several impediments have kept the West from considering such knowledge—from engaging with and learning from Indigenous peoples and communities as important knowledge experts (Visvanathan, 2007; Teucher, 2010).

### ***Positivistic Food Studies***

Non-indigenous food research has, historically, approached food more or less as an instrumental means for biological survival. However, humans have used food not only for survival but for many symbolic purposes:

Everything about how humans eat has meaning: who is allowed to fish for it, mill it, or kill it; what vessels and utensils are used in the preparation; what time of day the meal is eaten; who sits where at the table (if you're eating at a table), how close to an important person, a certain food, the salt, a person of another gender, race, or class; what order the food is served in; who serves it; whether it is hot or cold, cooked in water or by direct fire. (Citivello, 2008, p. xiv)

Further, many Indigenous peoples have often viewed food resources, including food plants, as sentient beings enlivened with spirits with whom human beings share familial relationships and responsibilities. For example, Canadian Métis people view flora and fauna, in terms of evolutionary history, as older, more knowledgeable brothers and sisters on whom we depend, can converse with, and should treat with respect (Dorion, 2011). Similarly, for Malaysian Indigenous peoples, the world, including each leaf of grass, is filled with sentient spirits, some amenable, others quarrelsome, who must be respected so as not to incur bad harvests, illness, or death (Nuek, 2005; B. Dowel, personal communication, June 2012). Rice was—and still often is—treated as if it had a soul. Long lists of rituals prescribe how rice fields should be chosen (considering omens), cultivated, harvested (cutting only at prescribed angles), rice eaten (for example, not letting rice fall through floor boards), and always retaining some food for the ever-present spirits (Biswas, 2003). Non-indigenous researchers are often ignorant of, and thus seen as disrespectful towards, such modes of existence, practices, and rituals where food resources are seen as agentic beings and voices in dialogue with humans and the environment (Bierwert, 1999). Where Western eyes may see only subsistence farming to be overcome, indigenous food practices reveal cultural systems and epistemologies that are central to social participation (Visvanathan, 2007) and to cognitive justice (de Sousa Santos, 2007).

### ***Culture Change/Loss of Indigenous Knowledge***

Much traditional Indigenous knowledge, including food and food plant knowledge, has

been lost, eliciting calls for its restoration (Hansen, 2014; Morrison, 2011). In West Malaysia, where Indigenous communities have no title to their lands, land development (e.g., oil palm plantations) and industrialization have been displacing communities, pressing them to abandon traditional hunting and gathering and assume day labour in nearby factories. Confronted with different local environments, and knowledgeable elders dying out, these hunters and gatherers often can no longer apply and hand down their traditionally oral knowledge (Nicholas, 2000), unable to recite even the first lines of their once many traditional stories and songs. Such knowledge loss has been raising questions about whether artifacts and once lived practices and rituals should, or even can, be usefully preserved in cultural centres or museums or be taught in schools. Yet many Malaysian Indigenous peoples appreciate some cultural changes such as the ban on headhunting, the reduction of superstition, and the possibility that Indigenous mothers about to give birth can be flown by helicopter from the jungle to the nearest clinic, significantly decreasing birth mortality. Some Indigenous members have acceded to the highest positions in Malaysian society and politics, serving as respected ambassadors overseas, while others, perhaps ironically, may be involved in logging companies that clear primary and secondary forests for oil palm plantations. In any case, how does change affect their traditional knowledge systems? In the interest of cognitive justice, can Indigenous and non-indigenous ways of knowing, including food knowledge, enrich one another?

### ***Hybrid Ways of Knowing and Modes of Existence?***

Scholars have mapped different cultural knowledge systems (Battiste, 2000; Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Beeman & Blenkinsop, 2008; Derbyshire, 2014; Kusch, 2010; Settee, 2013; Teucher, 2010). Yet Indigenous researchers in particular have been expressing the hope that the differences between Indigenous and non-indigenous ways of knowing can be reconciled in order to solve common environmental challenges (Hansen, 2014; Morrison, 2011). For example, the members of the Métis community of Beauval (Saskatchewan) embrace traditional ways of knowing, while employing technological solutions (such as greenhouses) to grow crops locally and reduce long distance food transportation. Members of the Malaysian Bidayuh community Peninjau Lama seek to preserve traditional knowledge while embracing farming strategies from their Chinese neighbours; some of the former work as biodiversity scientists at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak.

Indeed, there seems to be common ground between Western and Indigenous ways of knowing (Balick & Cox, 1996; Teucher, 2010). For example, Indigenous knowledge has always been carefully empirical, relying on systematic observations of patterns of continuity and change in the environment (Kidwell 1992). Until the advent of colonialism, American Aboriginal technological knowledge and application was on par with Western cultures (boat technology or watering systems) before being left out of the benefits of the emerging technological revolution (Kidwell, 1992; Teucher, 2010). Philosopher of science Bruno Latour (2014) may well have taken Indigenous ways of knowing into account when he invests his different “modes of existence” (humanity, science, environment) with creative agentivity in their mutual interrelations. Such “ecological interwovenness” (Beeman & Blenkinsop, 2008)

may make possible new hybrid modes of knowing. Moreover, a comprehensive science of biodiversity, the environment, and cultural food practices may well create the space and new, vital rituals for an overall awareness, spiritual or secular, of the fragility of our planet, the transiency of life, and our human responsibilities not to squander our planet's limited resources. These emergent rituals might provide novel points of connection between Indigenous and Western ways of knowing—growing out of an ethics of respect and cognitive justice.

### ***The Engaged Scholarship Project: Partnering Saskatchewan and Sarawak***

An interdisciplinary approach to food security studies driven by cognitive justice might bring together Indigenous knowledge experts (from communities and academic institutions) and researchers from food security institutes, even across seemingly incompatible modes of existence. In exploratory work with the Malaysian CFFRC, we have assisted in creating an innovative crop database of thousands of understudied crops, including bio-botanical, nutritional information, and cultural knowledge associated with each plant. In addition, we have had conversations with 31 Indigenous knowledge experts in remote as well as urban communities and at universities, and we have undertaken a pilot study of ethno-botanical food plant knowledge at the Indigenous Bidayuh community of Peninjau Lama in Sarawak, Malaysia. Indigenous knowledge experts and participants have shaped the preliminary research and interview guide questions, as well as the selection of food plants for an educational poster. Bidayuh artists, shamans, a sociologist, biodiversity experts, and graduate students have all helped us appreciate Bidayuh sociocultural knowledge and cosmovision with regard to food plant knowledge. Currently, we are building contacts in Saskatchewan, including the Beauval Métis community and Global Institute for Food Security, for a partnership with Malaysia, based on the same engaged principles. As ethnobotanists Balick and Cox (1996) have noted, the relationships between plants and people are profound, affecting nearly every aspect of our lives. The very roots of human culture are deeply intertwined with plants—in particular the plants that we eat.

### **Case Study 3. Using Participatory Theatre to Explore Challenges to Collaboration among Community-Based Organizations**

In the context of the chronic underfunding of community-based organizations addressing aggravated social and economic inequalities in Canada, collaboration among these organizations is increasingly necessary, but also made more difficult. This case study describes participatory theatre techniques used with local community-based organizations to explore barriers and facilitators to successful collaborations.

The impetus for the participatory theatre session was a project on attributes of effective campus-community partnerships in sexual assault survivorship and advocacy (Quinlan, Clarke, & Miller, 2013). The project was undertaken in the wake of a high profile sexual assault on the local campus that made evident to institutional leaders and activists alike the need to foster durable relationships between campus and community groups. Recommendations emerging from the project's pan-Canadian scan of collaborations between community organizations

and campus sexual assault and/or women's centres focused on improvements to the local university's procedures on sexual assault prevention, advocacy, and care. Other outcomes of the analysis were more generic in nature and audience: all community-based organizations, whether addressing homelessness, poverty, or food insecurity, can relate to the shrinking government funding and escalating human need.

The campus-community boundary was the particular divide explored in the project; however, there are many others, most rooted in organizations' differing resources and status. Because these divisions abound, the community-based organizations represented at the session had a stake in exploring collaboration and examining the attendees' role, behaviours, and actions in facilitating and impeding their organization's collaborations with other CBOs. Despite the shared stakes and laudable intentions, who of us wants to consider ourselves as part of the problem? How do we explore our own role in the re/production of the deleterious social interactions and imagine alternative social structures among and within community-based organizations? How do we investigate these questions without giving further voice to hegemonic ideologies? Required was a form of collective problem-solving that offered the safety of representational forms connected to, yet separate from, participants' existential realities: a process that short-circuits cerebral censorship; a protected space where participants can activate their experiential knowledge and 'rehearse' actual dilemmas with emotional authenticity but without real life consequences. Enter participatory theatre, stage left.

Participatory theatre (PT), an embodied form of social learning, is based on critical performance theory, a dialectic of Brecht's modernist liberatory tradition combined with postmodern dramaturgy's unresolved narratives and multiple stages and actors (Boje, Luhman, & Cunliffe, 2003). Participatory theatre takes inspiration from the Boalian tradition (Boal, 2000; 2002) of theatre empowering individuals to become protagonists in their own lives by recognizing that social problems can be experienced individually but have structural antecedents: Participatory theatre's explicitly political ambition is for oppressed groups to seize the means of aesthetic production, to occupy the stage in order to radically transform society. Currently, participatory theatre endorsed by UNESCO to generate social change is being used in over 70 countries (UNESCO, 1997).

In participatory theatre, tableaux and short scenarios are developed by a core group of (non-actor) participants that reflect the underlying stories of their everyday lived experiences. By working through the body, participants' tacit, common-sense knowledge is made transparent through the group experience. No previous acting training is required and only a minimum of sets, props, and costumes. To confront the cultural hegemony of elite theatre, participatory theatre facilitators often need to assure participants that everyone—those with or without training or "talent"—can take part. Our session's facilitator opened the session by affirming the experiential knowledge present in the room was the only expertise necessary:

This isn't Hollywood. In this setting, authority comes from our experience, whether that experience is working in a CBO. We are drawing on our experience as volunteers, executive directors, or in other roles working with organizations broadly

defined as pursuing social change. The aim of what we do today is to express as many different points of view as possible for our collective consideration.

Very quickly, we were active. The participants were out of their chairs and engaging in a series of games to de-mechanize our response patterns, create group cohesion, and relate the embodied experiences to aspects of cross-CBO collaboration (Boal, 2002).

PT's explicit intention is to hone participants' creative capacities, to envision new social structures, and create non-hierarchical social relationships. In this way, participatory theatre stands in contrast to the function of psychodrama, which evokes catharsis for therapeutic purposes (Moreno, 1947). The transformative potential of participatory theatre lies in its power to ignite participants to recognize their shared interests, envision alternative social orders, and address identified barriers collectively. Participatory theatre mobilizes knowledges for the explicit purpose of dismantling systems of oppression and creating a more equitable, sustainable world.

Our participatory theatre session proceeded with the carnival activity. In groups of three, each member took a turn making a repetitive movement and accompanying sound, continuing long enough for the other group members to learn it. Then, without speaking, the group formed a singular movement and sound, morphed from the elements of the three precursors. Once the group-specific movement and accompanying sounds were solidified, the groups amalgamated theirs with the other groups using the same silently negotiated process: the groups of three formed groups of six, then groups of 12 and, eventually, a single group of 24. The end of the activity was signaled by a unified room in which everyone was moving and sounding together.

The carnival was a site of individual and group acts of reflectiveness and creative responses to the dominant social and economic order within which community-based organizations operate. It enlivened participants' capacities to self-consciously interpret social arrangements that impede collaboration and to imagine new, alternative normative structures that support collaboration. In the post-carnival discussion, participants connected their experience in the activity with cross-boundary collaborations. For instance, one participant remarked that the game revealed her tendency to reject others' initiatives or proposals for action and resist emerging consensus in multi-organization meetings. Long after most in the room were moving in unison, she held out with her own motion and sound, rallying for them to adopt what was hers rather than conceding to the group will.

In the session's final activity, participants took turns creating tableaux that reflected their experience of an unsuccessful collaboration. The tableaux were built from the sculpting clay of the bodies of other participants and then used as collectivized social experiments in which new characterizations and outcomes were investigated. In the discussion that followed, participants were invited to reflect on their roles, life scripts, and the hegemonic narratives represented in the tableaux. The enactments uncovered essential truths of CBO contexts without resorting to spoken language. The ensuing dialogical interactions arising from the theatrical constructions gave participants control over the social construction of meaning, their own identities, and the

development of a 'moral community.' Mutual understandings were forged based on recognition of participants' shared values of social justice. Tacit assumptions and unwritten rules about how community-based organizations should function were articulated and challenged for their disabling effects: adoption of corporate staffing models, dogged reliance on government funding, and 'othering' CBOs with differing mandates.

Based on the recognition that we are all responsible for uprooting social injustices and that it is possible for agents of oppression to reinvent themselves as agents of liberation, participatory theatre tackles the unlearning of embedded historical patterns of dominance (Mindell, 1995). However, because it has no choice but to work within the oppressive systems it intends to sunder, participatory theatre is never free of contradictions. The dialectic relationships between actors and audiences and CBO directors and staff they represent must be interrogated simultaneously. The very structures of domination are operating while we work to dismantle them. Giving equal airtime to racist, homophobic, misogynistic views in the protected space of a participatory theatre workshop perpetuates the very power structure participatory theatre aims to unseat. The perennial tension between the imperative to disrupt hegemonic knowledges and the democratic impulse to let all voices be heard falls to the facilitator to negotiate.

Rendering the status quo visible is the first step to collectively imagining, enacting, and assessing alternative social orders. The session's CBO representatives investigated the ideological legitimation of the current climate of competition among organizations for limited funding sources through their embodied ways of knowing. Participants' experiential knowledge in dynamic, multiple interactions gave way to an emergent collective identity, a heightened sense of validation, agency, and understanding of new potentials.

## **Conclusions**

Networks, research teams, and communities are built through interpersonal and intergroup connections that may help to re-negotiate and re-imagine commonalities on the one hand, or bind resources to power systems that mine and undermine capacities for belonging and cooperation, on the other. Rarely are these processes mutually exclusive. Rather, variously imagined communities seek ways to balance the powers that accrue to collective accountabilities and their failures with the potentials that are enabled and disabled by past and emergent configurations of social relations.

Each case study attempts to hold accommodating space for expression and re-articulation of relationships that have been distorted by unjust power-differentials, often advanced during imperialist (knowledge) processes that still undergird contemporary globalization. Whether grounded in the intersectional forms of domination that produce relational distortion among community-based organizations; or in the aspirations of young people displaced to government care; or in pursuing cross-cultural understanding to facilitate responsible food security, each of these community-university projects stretches the terms of engagement toward greater inclusion and elasticity of knowledge frameworks. Working across disciplines and layers of power relations, each contributor uses research platforms that support communities to

resituate their understandings of social relations in order to advance cognitive and social justice. By affirming that all voices and knowledges count in any rigorous scholarly response to the challenges humanity faces, each case promotes relationality as a resource in knowledge creation.

Participants bring to the table of knowledge development issues requiring creative modalities ranging from visual expression and ritual to interactive play in order to challenge the primacy of the written word as a privileged site for knowledge development and dissemination. Refusing to sever cognitive from social, spiritual, and cross-cultural domains, each community project negotiates evolving forms of co-creative knowledge development.

These three cases show research to be less about “discovery” than reconstituting communities in the research process and recognizing accountability for the interventions we make and the learning and outcomes we generate together. It is about growing respect for the reciprocity associated with “All my relations.” Adopting flexible timelines, investing additional resources, and obtaining diverse input, our research seeks to decolonize itself for rich community building results. Universities are still learning how to live up to community-based research values by adjusting entrenched specializations, tenure and promotion standards, and collaborative goal setting in order to permit genuine commitments to community-engaged scholarship. Mono-disciplinary journals are rarely the site of cutting-edge work in this area or of professional practices to support knowledge mobilization that is useful to community and consistent with “reporting back” responsibilities (Smith, 1999, p. 15). The mutual learning in participatory action research benefits community by unleashing individual and collective knowledge and heightened capacities for agency, understanding, and innovation. It benefits the university in developing methodological theory and practice, as well as pedagogy and curricula that better serve those who might be more fully engaged in education and governance.

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## Community Engagement in the Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences: Academic Dispositions, Institutional Dilemmas

Sara Dorow and Nicole Smith Acuña

**ABSTRACT** Engaged scholarship is increasingly concerned with how community engagement might be institutionalized in the contemporary university. At the same time, it must be attentive to diverse academic approaches to knowledge and to the forms of engagement associated with them. Attention to this plurality is especially important in the humanities, arts, and social sciences (HASS). Based on a multi-method study conducted in the Faculty of Arts at a large western Canadian research university, this paper maps the demographic positions (gender, rank, and discipline) and scholarly dispositions (stances adopted toward the production of knowledge and the role of the academic) of HASS faculty and contract instructors onto the range of ways they perceive and practice engagement. Against this backdrop, we present a qualitative case study of two pairs of faculty that fleshes out the complexities and possibilities of divergent dispositions and the forms and experiences of engagement with which they are associated. We assert that understanding differentiated starting points to knowledge production among HASS academics is an important pathway to the fuller recognition and flexible institutionalization of engagement in research universities.

**KEYWORDS** humanities, arts, and social sciences; institutional rewards; engagement; dispositions; faculty

“Community engagement is essential not only for the benefit of the University but for the benefit of society in general.” (faculty member)

“This is to be a research university and internationally recognized research is the priority, so any community engagement should fit into or be a product of that mandate.” (faculty member)

“[The push for engagement] is just another way for the university to corporatize further.” (faculty member)

- Smith Acuña (2012)

Engaged scholarship in Canadian higher education sits at a crossroads. On the one hand, it must forge ahead with the work of engagement: creating and nurturing knowledge that builds

on the combined strengths of university and community partners and that “contributes to making a concrete and constructive difference in the world” (Loka 2002, cited in Flicker et al. 2008b, p. 242). On the other hand, it must face head on some of the institutional realities of community engagement. These include first, a culture of reward in research universities that is slow to integrate full recognition of a range of engaged practices, and second, the co-existence of diverse and sometimes contradictory set of perspectives on knowledge production within individual departments and faculties of the university—perspectives that invite varying emphases on conducting research and teaching “by,” “for,” or “with” community members (Loka 2002, cited in Flicker et al. 2008b: p. 242). As O’Meara et al. (2011) have argued, the complex motivations of faculty as well as the exigencies of their particular disciplines and institutions mean that “it is critical to examine the factors that influence faculty members’ own civic commitments, practices of engagement, and outcomes” (p. 85).

The humanities, arts, and social sciences (HASS) constitute one key domain of higher education where highly differentiated dispositions toward engagement co-exist. It is also a domain that struggles as much if not more than most academic sub-areas of contemporary research universities with how both to practice and to communicate its relevance amidst the radical restructuring of higher education (Benneworth and Jongbloed, 2010). As suggested by the opening quotes, faculty and instructors in HASS perceive institutional calls for community engagement as a panacea and/or a threat. Differences in their perspectives depend on how they understand their roles as scholars within the context of the contemporary research university: what is the mandate of the institution and of the individual scholar? what kind of value does the institution and the individual scholar place on knowledge? These perspectives are crucial because the success of community-engaged research and teaching for both university and community stakeholders depends on the energy, ability, and willingness of academic players to act as “boundary spanners” (Weerts and Sandmann, 2010).

Drawing on a multi-method study of perspectives and practices of community-engaged research, teaching, and service among faculty and instructors in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Alberta (Smith Acuña, 2012), our paper develops a typology of dispositions—philosophical and practical stances toward the production of knowledge and the role of the academic—and explores its implications for approaches to community engagement. The study was prompted by experiences in the Community Service-Learning Program at the University of Alberta, which is housed in the Faculty of Arts. While the Faculty and the institution as a whole have increasingly embraced CSL and other forms of engagement, legitimate concern and resistance from some faculty and instructors (including engaged scholars) piqued our desire to better understand views on engagement and on its institutionalization. Survey responses from over one hundred tenure-track faculty and contract instructors revealed dispositions that ranged from “two-way” to “one-way” (Weerts and Sandmann, 2010): from understanding knowledge as jointly produced between academy and community, to positioning the university and the individual academic as the prime locus of knowledge production and dissemination. This spectrum of dispositions depended in part on differences in discipline, rank, length of time at the University, and, to some degree, gender. Furthermore, and most importantly

for our purposes here, subsequent in-depth analysis of open-ended survey responses and qualitative interviews with a select range of faculty showed great complexity in their individual practices and philosophies of engagement, and illuminated the institutional structures and cultures that did or did not allow that complexity to be recognized.

Based on these findings, we argue that the quest to integrate and value community-engaged research and teaching in HASS disciplines in the Canadian research university, must take into account the differentiated starting points of academic dispositions and support flexible models of engaged scholarship. As one respondent in our study put it, “Any inclusion of community engagement in an academic plan should recognize that it isn’t a one-size-fits-all kind of issue, and allow for great variation between programs.” Indeed, such variety is important to meeting the needs of community partners and partnerships; in a recent survey of community organizations partnering with the University of Alberta (Dorow et al., 2011), many respondents emphasized that their research and learning needs were multi-faceted, interdisciplinary, and variable by project and partnership (see also Sandy and Holland, 2006; Flicker et al., 2008b).

### **Universities, Engagement, and the Arts: Institutional Dilemmas in Knowledge Production**

Because community engagement requires infrastructures of support, the engaged scholarship literature has necessarily been as concerned with the organizational and professional cultures of the university as it has been with the actual practices by which university and community players come together. Building on Boyer’s pivotal 1990 book *Scholarship Reconsidered*, Sandmann et al. (2008) call for “second-order” changes in universities that would fundamentally revise “institutional culture and underlying policy” (p. 50), including a major re-thinking of the role of faculty and the models of knowledge generation within which they work. These scholars assert that fundamental change is necessary to sustaining an ethically and professionally high standard of engaged practice, to ensuring that postsecondary institutions—and particularly public ones—carry out their mandate to contribute to the public good (see, for example, Hall, 2009; Stanton, 2008; Boyer, 1999), and to realizing the continued relevance and viability of higher education. As Finkelstein (2001) points out, these efforts must address both “an academic culture that views engagement as secondary to the ‘real’ duties of the university [and] a public that increasingly perceives faculty interests as disconnected from societal needs (Mathews 1996; Rice 1991)” (p. 43).

One of the main tasks of engaged scholarship thus becomes to study the barriers and opportunities for formalizing engagement as a core institutional value and practice in higher education (Holland, 2005; Watermeyer, 2011; Sobrero and Jayaratne, 2014). This body of research has foregrounded successful models of institutional transformation in support of community engagement, including collective efforts to re-orient tenure and promotion standards (see, for example, Ellison and Eatman, 2008 and <http://engagedscholarship.ca/>). Organizations such as the Kellogg Commission and Campus Compact in the United States,

and Campus Community Partnerships for Health and the Canadian Alliance for Community Service-Learning in Canada, have been important leaders in these efforts. At the same time, this body of work has contended with where and how change within higher education—the downloading of administrative work, a general mismatch between rhetoric and reward, an instrumental flattening of disciplinary distinctions, the increased power of external funders to shape university agendas, and growing compartmentalization of teaching, research, and service—poses ideological and institutional tensions for community-engaged scholarship (Diamond and Adam, 1995; Colbeck and Wharton-Michael, 2006; Winter et al., 2006; Wade and Demba, 2009).

Amidst these changes, the very questions of where and how knowledge is produced and which knowledges “count” are at stake for both university and community partners. Gibbons et al. (1994) distinguish between Type I knowledge, which refers to the conventional one-way creation and dissemination of expertise, and Type II knowledge, a development of the later twentieth century which understands knowledge as inseparable from the multiple contexts and interests in which it is situated and applied. This second mode, where knowledge production is “no longer the privileged possession of the university” (Onyx, 2008, p. 93) is a double-edged sword: it has the potential to invite both the corporatized imposition of instrumental forms of community-university engagement *and* the transformative integration of more collaborative and sustained forms (cf. Ang 2005). Szorenyi-Reischl (2005) is among those scholars offering a “cautionary tale” about the instrumental role that engaged scholarship can and does sometimes play in the bid by universities to compete and survive in the marketplace of knowledge, for example, in misdirected vocational creep or in delimiting the terms of scholarly production (Winter et al., 2006; O’Meara et al., 2011; Watermeyer, 2011). As we found in our project, this is a concern voiced by both detractors and advocates of engaged scholarship. Community engagement suffers without institutional supports and guiding principles, but it is not an easy task to operationalize it in ways that embrace flexible and diverse approaches to knowledge.

The variety of ways in which academics approach the production and use of knowledge—what we here call their dispositions—thus becomes an important entry point for understanding and responding to the complex relations between postsecondary education and community engagement. These dispositions “mediate” university-community partnerships; furthermore, better understanding of them (of what makes academics “tick”) can illuminate the challenges and possibilities for community-engaged research and teaching. A small body of existing research addresses this link between philosophies of knowledge and the place of community engagement in higher education at mid-levels of analysis, comparing, for example, the shaping effects of modes of knowledge in professional and non-professional disciplines or of pre- and post-tenure faculty rankings on attitudes and approaches to engagement (Vogelgesang et al., 2010; Doberneck et al., 2010; O’Meara et al., 2011). While some of this literature takes into account both individual-level identity factors and broader institutional and cultural factors (Wade and Demba, 2009; Colbeck and Wharton-Michael, 2006; see O’Meara et al., 2011 for an overview of this research), it is mostly concerned with whether faculty or whole institutions are engaged, what types of engagement (e.g., service-learning, community-based



research, etc.) are being pursued, and/or to what degree (see Sobrero and Jayaratne, 2014; Vogelgesang et al., 2010; Doberneck et al., 2010; and Colbeck and Wharton-Michael, 2006). Some useful, basic typologies of academic perspectives on knowledge have emerged. Colbeck et al., (2006) differentiate among faculty approaches according to what they call epistemes of “objectivity” versus “solidarity.” Bloomgarden and O’Meara (2007) find a continuum of approaches to linking research, teaching, and community work: integrated, (i.e., if only there were appropriate time, resources, rewards, etc.) and non-integrated. For the most part, however, the literature has only minimally attended to the nuanced relationship between modes of knowledge production (how academics understand their own and the university’s role) and compartments of engagement (how academics approach and undertake community-engaged research, teaching, and service).

Asking about perceptions and practices of engagement in the context of an Arts Faculty brings its own forms of complexity. Types of knowledge production across HASS disciplines vary dramatically, from the literary and performative to the statistical and experimental. What’s more, some aspects of HASS can quite easily be understood as a contribution to the public good by enlivening public culture, while others can seem obscure and unrelatable. HASS fields are vulnerable to accusations of irrelevance and to pressures to demonstrate “what good we are” (Denning, 2005; Giroux, 2010). Part of the rub lies in the commitment across many HASS disciplines to research “that makes issues more complex rather than more simple. . . whose usefulness lies in opening up new questions rather than providing answers to existing ones” (Ang, 2005, p. 481). In addition, Arts Faculties usually have not been as centrally engaged in debates about continuing education as other sectors of the university, such as education or extension units (see, for example, Fenwick et al., 2006).

It is on the shifting and uncertain terrain of institutional restructuring, and the place of arts and of engagement within it, that we undertook the Arts Community Engagement Study (ACES) in the University of Alberta’s Faculty of Arts (Smith Acuña, 2012). While the study was initially aimed at discovering how faculty and contract instructors perceive and practice community-engaged research, teaching, and service, the questions we asked revealed a range of approaches to the academic role and the locus of knowledge production; these approaches varied by gender, discipline, rank, and length of service, and just as importantly, engendered varying definitions and practices of community engagement.

### **The Study Context and the Study**

The Faculty of Arts at the University of Alberta houses more than twenty departments and interdisciplinary programs encompassing humanities, social sciences, and fine and performing arts. In response to the University’s “Dare to Deliver” academic plan, which espouses “citizenship,” “connecting communities,” and “uplifting of the whole people,” the Faculty of Arts’ own plan asserts that it strives to “increase collaboration with each other and involvement in our communities: local, national, and international” (<http://uofa.ualberta.ca/arts/about/academic-plan>). The document does not particularly emphasize engaged scholarship; it does,

however, refer to community partnerships, engaged citizenship, and CSL alongside discussion of topnotch research and innovative learning.

This context of renewed discourses of engagement prompted several Faculty units to collaborate on the ACES project in 2011.<sup>1</sup> The study was deliberately designed as a multi-method, multi-stage study that would unfold over several months. Two exploratory focus groups with Faculty-level committees were followed by an Arts-wide survey sent to all faculty and contract instructors (appointed at two-thirds' time or more). Once the results were in, a dozen in-depth interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of survey respondents who had indicated openness to being contacted.

Of the 350 faculty and more than 100 contract instructors who work at least two-thirds' time in the Faculty of Arts, a total of 115 responded to the survey, for a response rate of some 25%. Respondents represented all HASS sub-areas within the Faculty, although the majority of respondents identified themselves as from the humanities or social sciences.<sup>2</sup> While respondents also came from all ranks, the highest numbers of respondents were full professors and contract instructors—those, perhaps not surprisingly, who sit in the positions of most and least power in the system. In the conversational interviews that followed, we deliberately sought perspectives across the range of areas and ranks represented in the survey, although the final sample of people who agreed to be interviewed (and thus the case studies presented below) was mostly from the humanities and social sciences. Closed-ended questions were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The twelve interview narratives and the qualitative survey responses, which were received from three-quarters of respondents and ranged from short phrases to paragraphs, were coded thematically. Identifying information of all participants was anonymized.

Below we extend the findings summarized in the official ACES report (Smith Acuña, 2012) by providing deeper and more focused analysis of the project's qualitative data. The goals and findings of the original report thus form a crucial backdrop to our discussion. One such goal was to discover “from the ground up” how people defined community-engaged research, teaching, and service in their reflections and descriptions of practice. Arts academics were found to eschew rigid definitions of community engagement in favour of dynamic, interdisciplinary, and flexible conceptualizations. In addition, participants' motivations (the why) were inseparable from the what and who of their community and public activities, and the configurations of these relationships were by definition quite variable (Smith Acuña, 2012).

In addition to asking respondents to define engagement and to describe their own community practices and partnerships, the survey also asked them to rate and reflect on the importance of engaged research, teaching, and service in the Faculty and in their own work.

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<sup>1</sup> The study was funded and advised by the Community Service-Learning Program, the Faculty of Arts, and the Office of Interdisciplinary Studies. Nicole Smith Acuña was the lead researcher and writer for the project; Sara Dorow (then director of the CSL Program) was the principal advisor on the project.

<sup>2</sup> This includes Anthropology, Economics, English and Film Studies, History and Classics, Modern Languages and Cultural Studies, Philosophy, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology and Women's and Gender Studies.

These latter findings also provide useful context for our qualitative analysis of dispositions. The majority of respondents placed importance on community-engaged teaching (60%), research (65%), and service (70%) as part of their scholarly practice, although community-engaged service was the only category where actual activity in the last three years (75%) exceeded the degree of importance placed on it. Only 50% and 55% reported actually doing engaged practice in teaching and research, respectively. As Sobrero and Jayaratne (2014) point out, academics continue to correlate engagement with the category of “service,” especially given the ways institutional reward systems and disciplinary cultures work. Indeed, in another set of survey responses, faculty and instructors indicated that they saw service as the area where Arts should most increase recognition of engagement. However, some of what respondents reported as “service” (such as public workshops or conferences) could probably, under different institutional circumstances, be considered engaged research.

### **Positions and Dispositions**

In keeping with a number of previous studies (Bloomgarden and O’Meara, 2007; Vogelgesang et al., 2010; Colbeck and Wharton-Michael, 2006), the ACES project included analysis of how philosophies and practices of engagement vary by gender, discipline, and rank; not wanting to assume that rank was a proxy for length of experience, we also looked at the influence of number of years at the University of Alberta. These demographic variables, or positions, have significant explanatory power in part because they are inseparable from the epistemologies and philosophies, or dispositions, of academic practitioners. Put another way, being a woman or an associate professor or a sociologist is probably more meaningful as a correlate of community engagement if it is also examined in relation to philosophies of knowledge and perceptions of the professional role of the academic.

Themes emerging from our rich array of open-ended survey responses suggested that dispositions among faculty and contract instructors varied along two key spectra. First is what we call a spectrum of dispositions toward the *locus of knowledge production*. This ranged from a philosophy and practice that espoused the Joint and Collaborative production of knowledge by multiple institutions and actors, to a philosophy and practice of University-Centric knowledge production. Most respondents fell somewhere in between these two ends of the continuum: some saw engaged activities as adding interest and meaning to the central activity of university-produced knowledge, while others (especially in the fine and performing arts) saw community-based collaboration as a built-in disciplinary necessity. The second is what we call a spectrum of dispositions toward the *role of the academic*, which ranged from those who placed themselves in the role of Networker/Facilitator of knowledge to those who understood their role as that of disseminator, or Knowledge Provider (akin to what Colbeck et al., 2006 call positions of “solidarity” and “objectivity”). Again, there was a range of qualifying dispositions in between, such as those who actively sought to disseminate their expertise outside of their usual academic subfields, or who saw their engagement as fulfilling the public mandate of the university. Analysis of these two spectra also took into account variations in respondents’ definitions of community and in their ideological views and experiences of the university as an institution.

In what follows, we analyze position (demographic characteristic) and disposition (philosophical and epistemological tendency) together, considering in turn gender, rank, number of years at the University, and disciplinary area. We first compare the statistical survey outcomes on each factor, and then enhance these findings with discussion of the more in-depth understanding of disposition afforded by the qualitative analysis. While tendencies in community engagement certainly vary by demographic characteristic, these are given more meaning when studied in light of people's lived philosophies and practices of engagement. The subsequent case study of two pairs of faculty allows us to take our understanding of dispositions even further and to demonstrate the complexities of engagement as they play out in the humanities and social sciences.

We start by considering gender. A number of studies have found that female academics are more likely to report involvement in their local communities than males (see O'Meara et al., 2010 for an overview). The ACES survey found no difference between male and female respondents in the reported levels of engaged teaching and research, even though women were more likely to take part in the survey (53% of participants identified as female in a Faculty that is about 40% female) and to report engagement in the area of service (Smith Acuña, 2012). Perhaps, as Ward (2010) suggests, gender is significant as a predictor of engagement only insofar as it is aligned with more collaborative knowledge modes and professional goals. Along these lines, qualitative analysis of open-ended responses by females and males in the ACES project showed a clear tendency for females to describe a disposition espousing the Joint Production of knowledge and the role of Networker/Facilitator. This was especially pronounced among women in disciplines in the humanities and in the fine and performing arts, a disciplinary difference discussed below.

Previous research has also been quite attentive to professional rank as correlated with engagement, usually finding that faculty in higher ranks are more likely to be involved in community-engaged scholarship (Vogelgesang et al., 2010), although contingent teaching staff have been found to be more involved in engaged teaching practices such as service-learning (Antonio, Astin, and Cress, 2000). In the ACES survey (Smith Acuña, 2012), associate and full professors were most apt to report community engagement of any sort. Both contract instructors and assistant professors were significantly less likely to report engagement in the service category, and assistant professors were significantly less likely to report engaged teaching. Interestingly, there was no significant difference in engaged research across the ranks. Dispositions toward knowledge production help to flesh this out a bit more. We found associate professors most apt to espouse a model of shared and collaborative knowledge production compared to their junior colleagues. Full professors, however, were quite split between the two "ends" of the disposition spectra: about half expressed a more traditional University-Centric knowledge position (see also Bloomgarden and O'Meara, 2007; Finkelstein, 2001) skeptical of the "push" to engagement, while the other half were quite favorably disposed to collaborative engagement. In describing why engagement was part of her practice, one full professor wrote, "[because of] my public role as an intellectual, my sense of where my richest learning happens, and my desire to be part of broader social, cultural, and political communities."

If anything united supporters and detractors among the full professors, it was a concern with the lack of infrastructure to support engaged practice if it was to be built into institutional expectations. Further investigation, however, suggested that this was more an effect of length of service. Professors with the longest tenure (25 years or more) by and large saw institutional espousal of engagement as both a positive and an increasingly necessary direction, even if it should be exercised with some caution. As a professor with more than twenty years of experience and a history of active engagement put it, “It is to be recognized and rewarded in those people or areas where the work is most vital and obvious. It is not to be expected that its value will be the same for everyone.” Mid-career tenure-track faculty (with 10 to 15 years of service) were often concerned with implications for the reward system and with individual and institutional prestige (cf. Bloomgarden, 2008). For contract instructors, on the other hand, rank overwhelmed length of service in shaping their perspectives on engagement. Regardless of length of time at the University of Alberta, and regardless of level of involvement in engaged scholarship, they tended to express concern about the implications of formal adoption of engagement for workload and for the plurality of academic practice. As one contract instructor wrote, “I’m not sure how you can demand that we . . . work with fewer resources and support staff, all the while suggesting that we broaden our research scope and do more to put your name in the community.”

There was shared concern across all ranks and lengths of service that institutional adoption of community engagement needed to support and recognize the diversity of approaches found within and across disciplinary cultures. For the purposes of this project, and in keeping with the Faculty of Arts’ own practices, respondents were coded into the broad disciplinary areas of humanities, social sciences, and fine and performing arts.<sup>3</sup> When compared to their colleagues in the humanities (see also Vogelgesang et al., 2010), respondents from the fine and performing arts were significantly more likely to report involvement in both community-engaged research and teaching, and respondents from the social sciences were significantly more likely to report involvement in community-engaged research (Smith Acuña, 2012). Qualitative analysis of responses from fine and performing arts disciplines showed a clear pattern of identifying with Joint Production of knowledge and with the academic role of Networker/Facilitator. Their examples and perspectives were replete with reference to the absolute necessity of such collaborations to success in both research and teaching. “Being part of a community of like-minded performers, listeners and supporters is important for development and growth as an artist. There are opportunities for students to meet and interact with others pursuing similar careers and studies,” said one respondent. This was not a purely instrumental position; most respondents in the fine and performing arts also spoke to the need for the university as a public institution to share resources and facilitate research for the public good. Similar perspectives were found across other disciplinary areas, but not with the

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<sup>3</sup> While “Interdisciplinary Studies” was initially included as a code, this category was not included in statistical analysis because of overlap, by definition, with the other three categories.

same consistency.

There is an important caveat to these findings. Whereas respondents from the fine and performing arts often expressed frustration that their engaged work was not recognized within the formal tenure and promotion system, some respondents from the humanities and from interdisciplinary programs expressed frustration that their engaged work was not recognized as engagement. One person wrote that the survey's assumptions about community engagement reflected those of a "social science model." Many others in the humanities emphasized that for them, engagement was about igniting passion and interest in a theory, topic, or even a method—what one respondent jovially called "academic evangelism"—whether it be in a public talk on linguistic preservation or in a partnership with a local youth organization or even in other disciplines within the university. These varied configurations of engagement challenge the respective end points of the two spectra of dispositions; they also blur the boundaries separating teaching, research, and service. In the following section, we further muddy the waters of relationships between modes of knowledge and approaches to engagement through a case study of two pairs of faculty—one from the social sciences, the other from the humanities.

### **Digging Deeper: the Muddy Waters of Arts' Dispositions toward Engagement**

As Smith Acuña (2012) suggests, practices and forms of community engagement are a matter of the complex lived reality of academic work. Dispositions shed light on how academics understand their work, and thus, in turn, on the range of approaches they take to engagement. Part of what qualifies these dispositions, as discussed in the previous section and in the extant literature, are factors such as rank, experience, and discipline. But there is more to it than that, as was evident in the narratives collected from our follow-up interviews with survey respondents sampled from across disciplinary areas and ranks. These interviews highlighted the "messy" world of human practice (Wolf, 1992) where academics perceive and practice engagement in ways that contradict or at least complicate the modes of knowledge production they espouse. Two pairs of interviews stood out as especially instructive because they both reinforced and unhinged the relationships between positions and dispositions that emerged from the survey results. The first two are, at first glance, "one-way" social scientists who understand themselves as experts; the second two, on the other hand, appear as "two-way" interdisciplinary humanities scholars who understand themselves as collaborators. Yet in both cases, their actual practices and experiences of engagement unsettle the predictive power of positions and dispositions. Their narratives also highlight activities not necessarily recognized as engagement by themselves, their colleagues, or the institution.

*Case 1.* David and Michael are two male professors in the social sciences who have been at the University of Alberta for at least fifteen years. Initial coding of their responses to the survey pegged them as disposed to the more traditional academic role of providing knowledge to the "outside" world from a position "inside" their domain of expertise. This outside world included government and private industry as much as outreach to other departments and

universities. Both David and Michael saw this sharing of knowledge as part of the public mandate of the university, and located it mostly within the domain of service rather than research or teaching. Michael, for example, indicated that he saw engagement as a matter of aiding public understanding, and when responding to a question on the institutionalization of community engagement wrote: “We already have service as an area of activity and community engagement falls under that. This is to be a research university and internationally recognized research is the priority so any community engagement should fit into or be a product of that mandate.” While David also located his work within the domain of academic service, he indicated some frustration that the university system did not recognize it more as a part of his role. When discussing this frustration in the interview, he explained: “I wouldn’t make community engagement a compulsory part of the annual evaluation but. . . it could be fleshed out more and made on the same par as administration and professional activities [within the service category]. I think that would help.”

Interviews with David and Michael reinforced but also unhinged some of these basic dispositions. First, the “obligation” to engage communities, whether local or international, turned out to be more than a matter of capitulation to institutional mandate: it stemmed from a personal-professional commitment to responsive dialogue. “The taxpayers pay my salary, right?” said David. “Given that there’s a demand for [my knowledge], I should provide it.” Michael was driven by an interest in “good public policy,” emphasizing how it involved “me taking some of the results of my work out to the community to try and educate, or, alternatively, being approached to participate in some work that helps somebody solve some problem.” In other words, these two long-time social scientists narrated a combination of internal and external stimuli for their advice-giving activities, including a regular stream of requests from a variety of communities.

Second, this was not purely a one-way street, but rather one where engagement fed, in turn, the primary work of the academic (albeit on a parallel track). Both professors understood the work of disseminating knowledge as further enhancing their own expertise as researchers and thus, to some extent, their work in the classroom. In this way, David and Michael represent a softer and more versatile version of what Bloomgarden and O’Meara (2007) call the “non-integrated” view (where academic activities of research and teaching remain separate, and engagement is not integrated with them). As Michael put it: “Those kinds of experiences which, over a lifetime you get quite a number of, do provide some good examples in courses . . . I think it helps you as an individual see and look at issues with a degree of practicality but it also helps you, especially in the classroom, talk about real world examples.” David saw public engagement as always a secondary consideration to “pure” research with the added if unintentional bonus of contributing to classroom instruction:

My personal interest is in research and I think that reflects the University’s priorities to be internationally recognized. That’s the first thing in terms of thinking about a project. . . . And then secondly I guess is, is it something that maybe is a benefit to the community? I guess this is where community engagement comes in. I regard

that as the service role that I would have in the University. . . I have probably done almost nothing that has been focused simply on [community-engaged] teaching but I guess a number of the things that I've been involved with that might be considered community engagement are things that provide examples in the teaching environment. So that's sort of my perspective on I guess part of my role at the University that might overlap with what I consider community engagement. I think it's community engagement. I'm not certain exactly what community engagement is.

David's uncertainty around the parameters of what "counts" as engaged scholarship is what we thought, and hoped, might surface through the ACES project. David said that his public engagement work was "mainly one directional," contrasting it to the "real community engagement" exemplified by colleagues involved in activities like community-based theatre. Not long after the interview, however, he sent an email to the interviewer to say that their discussion had sparked further reflection on the benefits of his public engagement to his scholarship. "I now want to acknowledge that my 'community involvement' has played a crucial role in my research productivity," he concluded. While faculty for whom engaged scholarship is a core value, and community organizations frustrated by shallow involvement from university partners might rightly balk at the idea of engagement serving primarily the purposes of traditional academic goals, the point is that for both David and Michael this is, in practice, a version of the two-way street, where public engagement pumps knowledge in and out of the academy. Attention to these social scientists' actual forms of engagement thus problematizes the easy description of their dispositions as purely University-centric Knowledge Providers. David's revised understanding of engagement suggests an opening between the very service and research categories that he had initially insisted remain discrete. The invitation to narrate his actual practices revealed this opening, much as Bloomgarden and O'Meara (2007) found that "on reflection, the simultaneous pursuit of teaching, research, and community goals did yield practical or intellectual synergies [individual faculty] had not previously realized" (p. 11).

*Case 2.* Carl and Renata are, respectively, male and female assistant professors in the humanities who see themselves as engaged scholars—as inciters and facilitators of learning and discovery in multiple arenas. This was already somewhat evident in their survey responses, which had shown them to be disposed to a Networker/Facilitator role and to a philosophy of knowledge production that if not purely Joint was strongly motivated by its relevance beyond the university. In the survey, Renata defined engagement as "taking research beyond the borders of the university and engaging the broader public," while Carl indicated that it meant "being open to public involvement in one's work, and extending one's work into the public" across the domains of research, teaching, and writing. Indeed, he was frustrated that something like a widely read magazine piece was relegated to professional service; "in some cases, publishing for a wide audience should be considered as valuable as publishing in a scholarly journal."

Renata and Carl located engagement outside of service and largely outside of the university,



and (yet) integrally linked to the academic enterprise. In their respective interviews, they both gave examples of creative public projects that were part and parcel of their core research but were also meant to facilitate input and learning and access for diverse audiences—a democratization of knowledge. Carl pointed out that “whatever it is I’m researching, my first and foremost thought when I sit down to actually write or present at a conference is not to specialists. I think, how would I explain this to one of my cousins at Thanksgiving dinner?” Their networker roles were not only about the mobilization of ideas, but about the people and places involved, i.e., an event held in an outdoor public venue or a long-term collaboration with a non-academic practitioner. Stepping outside of the “actual physical barriers” that made the University “ghettoized” and “onerous” to navigate was important to both of them, as was embracing the idea of the public. Indeed, they similarly eschewed the word “community” as either too specific or a hollow buzzword. As Renata put it, “When I’m thinking about my research in this event, it’s about non-academics and the general public, meaning all ages, free event, open access and hopefully in an accessible environment.” Such public outreach and in-reach was both enjoyable and rewarding. As Carl put it, “It’s just more rewarding to have your work connected to people outside.” Renata emphasized not only that public engagement projects needed to be fun, but that she herself was having fun in the process.

Not surprisingly, Carl and Renata were both unequivocally supportive of engaged scholarship as part of institutional mission and policy. Carl said of community engagement, “I think it’s essential. I’m totally behind it one hundred percent.” Where they parted ways, however, was in their sense of efficacy and recognition in the institution. Much of Carl’s interview narrative was devoted to the barriers to both doing and being recognized for his community-engaged research and teaching:

There are the barriers of your day-to-day life. I feel like I have a full slate of things to do between teaching, all these students who want to come talk to me about their papers, all these emails I get, all these service requirements I have to do, all the committees I have to serve on. The demands to constantly have something published . . . . A lot of this community engagement stuff requires extra effort and extra time. It’s simply not there. That’s why I’m a big proponent of it being a part of the academic plan and having it be more a part of the job description because if it were rewarded and it were sort of seen as something that was inextricable from scholarship, then I would do more of it.

Like Carl, Renata was a supporter of more formal institutional supports and rewards for engagement, but precisely because she was rewarded for what she saw as unique circumstances. Her particular academic research was not possible without public input and practitioner collaboration, allowing her to dovetail public engagement with research in ways that were not as readily available to many of her colleagues: “I do it because it’s part of a larger cultural movement and I just think it’s so important . . . and because [at the same time] it serves my own selfish research interests.” This match between scholarship and engagement afforded

some recognition within the parameters of the academic system. She expressed admiration for those who “really” did engagement, including colleagues who established partnerships in both research and teaching. Carl fit that description but was stressed and frustrated, especially as an assistant professor, because his scholarship and engagement did not match up in ways that were fully recognized. As a result, Renata could take up an “integrator” position while Carl was left positioning himself as “if only...”: he would do more if all the pieces fit together better, or if public scholarship were better rewarded (Bloomgarden and O’Meara, 2007).

Despite their different experiences, Carl and Renata located themselves as engaged scholars in a system where collaborative public work is not always given the central academic relevancy it deserves—or, put another way, where the culture of scholarly standards has difficulty integrating various forms of community engagement. This disconnect between practice and reward is especially poignant given the strong connection Carl and Renata made between the relevance of their work and the pressure on the Faculty of Arts to demonstrate its relevance to the University, the provincial government, and the general public. At some point in their respective interviews, they each said, “Arts is under attack” for allegedly having “no” impact or value, when they knew that its social value was both deep and in some ways immeasurable. “There is this idea that studying literature or studying films or that kind of thing is a waste of time; it doesn’t lead to high paying jobs in science, technology, or business,” said Renata. It thus made perfect sense to both of them that there should be more incentives and rewards for public engagement as integral. This was especially urgent for Carl: “The whole model of the University ‘uplifting the whole people’ [the U of A’s central motto], that’s part of the job description,” he said. “Rather than it being an aside, it should be part of what people think about when they propose a new course or propose a new grant or a new topic of research.” This is why the lack of an “incentivized structure to go out and do it,” as Carl put it, was so disheartening.

### **In Conclusion: Dispositions and the Recognition of Engaged Practices**

These cases demonstrate the usefulness of dispositions as a starting point, or vantage point, for understanding the variety of meanings and approaches that academics in HASS fields bring to engagement. By “meeting faculty halfway” (i.e., getting closer to standing in their dispositional shoes), we gain a more enriched understanding of what engagement means in their everyday worlds, and of why and how various communities do and do not figure in them. As we have tried to show, individual genders, ranks, and disciplines are important contextual factors, but when married to knowledge dispositions, they provide a richer and deeper understanding of perspectives on, and practices of, engagement. Importantly, these do not fall neatly along a continuum from “less” to “more” engaged, nor do they constitute discrete categories. As Smith Acuña (2012) phrased it in the original ACES report, “community engagement is often context specific, and . . . some teaching and research endeavors lend themselves more readily to engagement with the community than others” (p. 13).

At the same time, an analysis of dispositional approaches to engagement highlights the

institutional cultures and systems that allow or disallow teaching and research endeavors to be recognized and invited as engaged practices. Across the quite different sensibilities of the faculty in our case study—assistant professors in the humanities who saw themselves as networkers and integrators versus full professors in the social sciences who positioned themselves as expert disseminators of knowledge—there were important points of resonance in how they positioned community engagement in relation to the Faculty of Arts and to the University. All four of them saw engagement as part of the job description, emphasized the need for further recognition, and advocated for flexible conceptualizations of engaged practice. After all, it was from her unique context as an integrator that Renata both supported a better reward system and cautioned against a one-size-fits-all institutionalization of engaged scholarship. And it was from reflecting on his experience that David saw the relationship between traditional scholarship and engagement shifting from a one-way to a two-way track.

HASS faculty and instructors in the research university live within a system that tends to silo research, teaching and service from each other, and that is still unsure of whether or how to think of engaged scholarship from within the “economy of prestige” (Bloomgarden, 2008). Those economies vary by discipline, generation, and disposition. Some academics support breaking down those walls and transforming systems to recognize and reward such work, whether done by themselves or colleagues; others cannot fathom how any of this is relevant to the work they do. Indeed, recognition and relevance, and more specifically the relevance and recognition of HASS research and teaching in the changing sociopolitical landscape of higher education, were front of mind for many of the ACES participants. Many respondents directly experienced or at least saw the possibilities of community engagement for enhancing the actual and perceived relevance of Arts-based scholarship, while being simultaneously wary of a static, universalized model of engagement that could not take into account the plurality of their modes of knowledge production. Equally if not more important, however, were the formal and informal systems of recognition. For Carl, an assistant professor whose academic practices involved ongoing collaboration with multiple publics, the lack of formal recognition was disheartening. For David, a seemingly “conventional” full professor, an entrenched academic culture seemed to obscure his own recognition of where engagement did and could figure in his research and teaching. As Weerts and Sandmann (2010) point out, the boundary-spanning work of technical experts requires a host of other boundary-spanning roles focused on site-specific problem solving, institutional culture change, and infrastructural capacity.

Both relevance and recognition depend on more thoroughly understanding and communicating the types of publicly engaged activities in which HASS academics are indeed already involved, and to which they lend a variety of dispositions. They also depend on a transformation of institutional culture that takes that variety, as well as the variety of interests and needs of community partners (Flicker, 2008b; Sandy and Holland, 2006), as its starting place for enabling nimble modes of community-university engagement.

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# An Institutional Process for Brokering Community-Campus Research Collaborations<sup>1</sup>

David Phipps, Michael Johnny and Jane Wedlock

**ABSTRACT** Knowledge mobilization seeks to identify and support authentic research collaborations between community and university so that benefits of the research accrue to both partners. Knowledge brokering is a key knowledge mobilization mechanism that helps community and university partners connect and build relationships in order to share expertise for mutual opportunity. There remains a need to describe in detail the typical knowledge brokering devices and methodologies. This paper presents a detailed description of York University's knowledge brokering service which is based on eight years of knowledge mobilization practice. The process is broken into 5 broad stages: 1) in progress; 2) no match; 3) match and no activity; 4) match and activity; 5) match and project. Stage 5 includes a step to identify the non-academic impacts of the collaborative research project. This process is illustrated using examples from York University's practice in which a match was brokered for 82% of the 342 knowledge mobilization opportunities received between 2006-2014. York University partners with United Way York Region (UWYR) to create a regional approach to knowledge mobilization supports. This paper illustrates the impacts on community and university knowledge mobilization partners following the introduction of a community-based knowledge broker at UWYR.

**KEYWORDS** knowledge mobilization; knowledge broker; community campus collaboration; engaged scholarship; research impact

## **An Institutional Process for Brokering Community-Campus Research Collaborations**

Knowledge mobilization seeks to identify and support authentic research collaborations among university researchers, students, and community partners so that benefits of the research accrue to both community and campus alike (Hart et al, 2013). Unlike established institutional programs such as technology transfer (AUTM, 2013) that support university-industry collaborations, institutional programs that support community-campus collaborations are only beginning to emerge (Hart, Maddison & Wolff, 2007; Rickenson, Sebba & Edwards, 2011). Where they do exist, they often take the form of an institutional research unit hosting community-campus

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collaborations (Hall & Tremblay, 2012) or may take the form of a service unit supporting engaged research (Phipps & Shapson, 2009) and/or teaching (Hart, Northmore, Gerhardt & Rodriguez 2009) leading to benefits such as social innovation (Nichols, Phipps, Provencal & Hewitt, 2013).

Knowledge brokering is one knowledge mobilization mechanism. In addition to building capacity for knowledge mobilization and supporting knowledge mobilization strategies



*Authors Jane and Michael speaking to the students working with the York Region Food Network (Photo: United Way York Region)*

for grant applications, knowledge brokering is one of three knowledge mobilization services provided by York University's knowledge mobilization unit (Johnny, Phipps, Jensen & Wedlock, 2014). Knowledge brokering is supported by a help desk similar to that provided by the University of Brighton's Community University Partnership Program (Rodriguez & Millican, 2008). As summarized previously (Phipps, 2011), knowledge brokering via a help desk provides a service whereby community (usually community service agencies but also school boards, police services, faith groups, and government agencies) or campus (faculty or students) members can obtain support for developing a community-campus research collaboration. The knowledge broker seeks to understand the needs of the requesting party and then to make a match between the requesting party and a potential collaborator from the other sector.

Knowledge brokers span community and university contexts and must be mindful to create the conditions that support equitable partnerships between community and university collaborators. Key determinants of successful knowledge mobilization partnerships include trust, openness, a common framework (i.e. shared language), and a flow of information across partners (Bennet & Bennet, 2008). These determinants help to mitigate potential barriers that arise as a result of power differential among partners.

In their seminal text, *Using Evidence*, Sandra Nutley and colleagues write about power describing how "giving weight to research as a fundamental 'truth' also denies or suppresses alternative forms of knowledge" (Nutley, Walter & Davies, 2007, p. 121). In many community university collaborations, the processes, frameworks, and resources needed to produce and use knowledge are more likely to favour more powerful actors (Jones, Jones, Shaxon & Walter, 2012). These processes reinforce the power of those who control funding, have research skills and access (such as access to knowledge in university libraries) and those who define the question, undertake the analysis, and control the dissemination of results. This traditionally privileges academic expertise over community (practice-based or citizen-based) expertise (Nation, Bess, Voight, Perkins & Juarez, 2011; Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Brown, 2014).

Creating democratic partnerships supports the diffusion of power. Democratic partnerships are supported by 1) conditions that locate the partnership in the context of community, 2)



learning interactions that encourage full participation of partners, and 3) personal attributes that promote depth of involvement (Dostilio, 2014). Ultimately, democratic partnerships “may be able to provide a locus of action and resistance to the dominant culture of higher education by calling attention to the structures and norms they encounter in their pursuit of democratically oriented public work” (Dostilio, 2014 p. 242). By being responsive to the needs of community, supporting collaborations that originate from community, and maintaining a commitment to working towards a balance between community and academic expertise, a knowledge broker can begin to address power differentials between community and university collaborators.

Despite a growing literature (see below) on knowledge-brokering theory and practice, there remains a need to describe in detail the typical brokering devices and methodologies (Meyer, 2010). We have previously described in detail our knowledge mobilization services (Phipps, 2011) including clear language research summaries (Phipps, Jensen, Johnny & Myers, 2012) and social media (Phipps, Jensen & Myers, 2012). Consistent with the call for more knowledge-brokering methodologies (Meyer, 2010), this paper presents a detailed description of York University’s knowledge-brokering activities. We present the knowledge-brokering process and analyze the results of eight years and 342 knowledge-brokering opportunities. We also present the impact of partnering with United Way York Region (UWYR) to invest in a community-based knowledge broker and reflect on how these initiatives help to create democratic research partnerships that diffuse power between community and university contexts. Greater clarity on the process of institutional knowledge brokering will provide other universities and communities with a tool to forge research collaborations that can have social, environmental and/or economic impacts as well as academic impacts.

### **Knowledge-Brokering Literature**

Jonathan Lomas defines knowledge brokering as “all the activity that links decision makers with researchers, facilitating their interaction so that they are able to better understand each other’s goals and professional cultures, influence each other’s work, forge new partnerships, and promote the use of research-based evidence in decision-making” (Lomas, 2007, p. 131). Reflecting on knowledge brokering as a social activity, Jonathan Lomas also writes, “This social focus points to human interaction as the engine that drives research into practice. It implies the need for both human intermediaries between the worlds of research and action (knowledge brokers) and supporting infrastructure (knowledge-brokering agencies and resources)” (Lomas, 2007, p. 130). He calls not only for knowledge brokers but also support for these brokers by the right infrastructure. Knowledge brokers have been described as one solution to overcoming the challenges of transferring research evidence into health policy and practice (Ward, House & Hamer, 2009). In policy implementation, research evidence is said to compete in an “open market of knowledge sources” (Caswill & Lyall, 2013, p. 365), and it is knowledge brokers who have the appropriate skills and market awareness to be able to support social scientists competing in this space.

Knowledge brokers have been reported to have a huge diversity of roles: creating relationships; promoting mutual understanding; facilitating exchange of knowledge across

boundaries; facilitating social interaction to bring about knowledge exchange; building capacity and supporting organizational change for knowledge exchange while engaging in all the analytical tasks (such as monitoring and evaluation) to support all of these activities (Conklin, Lusk, Harris & Stolee, 2013; Dobbins et al, 2009). This diversity of tasks has also been observed in two papers (Lightowler & Knight, 2013; Chew, Armstrong & Martin, 2013) in a special edition of *Evidence and Policy* (August 2013, volume 9, number 3) focused on knowledge brokers. These two papers highlight the dissatisfaction of project-based knowledge brokers due to lack of long-term employment, lack of training, isolation and role ambiguity.

Most of this literature describes knowledge brokering in research projects or in discipline specific research programs. van Kammen has called for institutional (i.e., not project-based) mechanisms for knowledge brokering: “We believe that intermediary organizations, such as regional networks, dedicated institutional mechanisms and funding agencies, can play key roles in supporting knowledge brokering” (van Kammen, de Savigny & Sewankambo, 2006, p. 608). In our experience, knowledge brokers hired into an institutional infrastructure do not share the challenges reported above for project-based knowledge brokers. In York University’s Knowledge Mobilization Unit, we are able to offer ongoing employment, training (albeit mostly “on the job” training) and clear role definition as the institutional knowledge brokers are core funded by the university and part of the university research infrastructure (Phipps & Morton, 2013). Nonetheless, there remain few examples of university-based, institutional knowledge brokering as opposed to project-based knowledge brokering. In addition to University of Brighton’s Community University Partnership Program and the Canadian ResearchImpact-RéseauImpactRecherche (RIR) network for which York University is the lead institution ([www.researchimpact.ca](http://www.researchimpact.ca)), there is a group of 24 African universities working to develop a profession of research uptake management so that development research can benefit local communities ([www.drussa.net](http://www.drussa.net)). There is also the newly formed Mid-Western Knowledge Mobilization Network (<http://midwestknowledgemobilization.wordpress.com/>).

### **Knowledge-Brokering Process**

Knowledge mobilization contributes to York University’s University Academic Plan which features Community Engagement as one of five institutional priorities. The institutional knowledge-brokering process has become a central feature of our knowledge mobilization service (Phipps 2011) and addresses the need for appropriate infrastructure (Lomas, 2007) and institutional knowledge brokering (van Kammen, de Savigny & Sewankambo, 2006). The Knowledge Mobilization Unit provides a brokering service to identify and support sustainable research collaborations between academic (student and faculty) and non-academic research partners. The Knowledge Mobilization Unit and UWYR (as well as other intermediary organizations) work in concert to respond to each knowledge mobilization opportunity. The process is illustrated in Figure 1 and each stage described in greater detail in Table 1 and in the text below. Each knowledge mobilization opportunity is tracked stepwise from initiation to one of a number of possible results.

1. Opportunity received and in progress (assessment, seek match, contact match,

- introduction)
2. No match
  3. Match and no activity
  4. Match and activity (shared activity such as panelist or speaker at an event but falling short of collaborative project)
  5. Match results in a collaborative research project potentially with impact on the non-academic partner

**Table 1: The process of knowledge brokering**

Stage	Title	Description
1a	In Progress: Interview and Assess	Seek clarification, scope, purpose, expectations, resources
1b	In Progress: Seek Match	Use website, research officers, internal data sources
1c	In progress: Contact Match	Introduce opportunity, provide background information, seek permission for introduction
1d	In progress: Introduction → Interest	Following introduction seek mutual interest in meeting
2	No Match	After 3 tries, abandon
3	Meeting: No Activity	Meeting occurred but no activity arising
4	Meeting: Activity	Such as Lunch & Learn speaker, KM in the AM events
5a	Meeting: Project	Collaborative research
5b	Project Impact	Change in partner's program, policy, product, service

### **Stage 1a. In Progress**

*Interview and Assess.* The Knowledge Mobilization Unit participates in or exhibits at many externally facing events creating opportunities to connect our services to researchers, students, and potential research partners. The process of knowledge brokering starts with a request for service. This request can come directly through in-person, telephone or email contact. In 2006, we developed a one page Opportunity Description Form which provides brokers a chance to solicit common information in areas of objectives for collaboration; specific needs from the collaborator; specific needs from York knowledge brokers. In addition to this information on the Opportunity Description Form, the broker will seek details on desired timelines and availability of any fiscal resources to support the request.

The knowledge broker contacts the requesting party (30% of requests come from York faculty or students; 70% come from non-academic parties) to describe the process of knowledge brokering, explain the values of mutuality underpinning our service and to manage expectations. We emphasize that there is no guarantee that a match will be found

(see below for reasons). Managing expectations is critical to ensuring that the trust and credibility of the knowledge broker remains understood. During the first contact with the requesting party, we seek to clarify the request and work to refine the request to a research question. Many requests are expressed in very broad terms, so it is important that we help the requesting party narrow down the request to a manageable question. It is this question that we then use to seek a match to a person or organization that might be able to collaborate on the specific question.

*Seek Match.* York University knowledge brokers leverage resources and networks within and outside the university to help support the matchmaking process. The university lacks an institutional expertise database, although most Faculties have developed some researcher profiles. Each Faculty has at least one Faculty-based Research Officer who provides direct grant facilitation services to researchers and thus can act as a guide to researchers who may be a good match for a particular opportunity. To date, the Faculty-based Research Officer remains a critical and trusted source of knowledge of research expertise and capacity across the university. Similarly we work through external intermediaries such as UWYR and the Human Services Planning Board of York Region for contacts in York Region. We also work with Policy, Innovation & Leadership for contacts in the Ontario Public Service and with the TD Centre for Community Engagement for contacts in Jane/Finch (another community neighbour of York University). Using trusted university and non-academic intermediaries rather than websites or databases that lack context reduces the risk of seeking someone who might have relevant community or academic expertise but might not be predisposed to collaborative research.

*Contact Match.* The knowledge broker identifies individuals with a potential interest by providing clarity of purpose, expectations, structure and supports for the opportunity. A process is developed which covers the following: introductions, process, expectation, and overview of the opportunity and any action items, timelines, and clarity on next steps. The knowledge broker addresses difficult issues like timelines and fiscal resources that are not always easy to address when exploring a collaborative relationship. The knowledge broker finally seeks permission to make an introduction to the requesting party.

*Introduction and Interest.* Once a match has been identified, the knowledge broker makes an introduction between the two parties. This is usually through a mutual email presenting background on the knowledge mobilization opportunity and background information on the two parties. The email provides the parties with the opportunity to exchange further information with the knowledge broker being copied on this correspondence. If mutual interest is established, then the knowledge broker seeks permission from each party to proceed with an introduction that will usually be by telephone but may be in person. The knowledge broker is part of the early conversations and meetings to help scope out the knowledge mobilization opportunity and ensure that the interests of both parties are being met. York's knowledge brokers are 93% successful in getting at least an introductory conversation between the parties.

**Stage 2. No Match**

In the event the knowledge broker has been unable to find a match after contacting three possible matches, then the knowledge mobilization opportunity is abandoned. This is done by email and/or phone to the requesting party with constructive feedback as to the reasons for failing to find a match. The requesting party is encouraged to undertake some refinement of the opportunity and return once additional work has been completed. York is part of the ResearchImpact network ([www.researchimpact.ca](http://www.researchimpact.ca)) that includes eleven universities who are making investments in knowledge mobilization services. As the network matures, we shall explore inter-institutional knowledge brokering. In the event that appropriate academic expertise cannot be found at York University, the knowledge mobilization opportunity will be made available to the other nine universities to seek academic expertise to match a non-academic knowledge mobilization opportunity.

**Stage 3. Meeting - No Activity**

In some instances, the parties express mutual interest in meeting but the match does not result in any activity. This may occur as the parties explore the opportunity: resources may not materialize; personnel or priorities may change; unanticipated needs may arise. Should no activity occur, then the knowledge broker offers to restart the process of match making.

**Stage 4. Meeting - Activity**

York's knowledge brokers successfully identify matches that result in an activity or a project for 82% of knowledge mobilization opportunities. Once the parties meet and agree to collaborate on the opportunity, some activity ensues. Sometimes the requesting party is not seeking a collaborative research project but is seeking an expert (community or academic) to be part of an event such as a Lunch and Learn or KM in the AM (Phipps, 2011) or to be part of an expert panel or dialogue. One example of this was the involvement of a York University researcher as part of an expert panel with representatives from York Region community agencies including Kinark Child and Family Services, York Region District School Board, and Catholic Children's Aid Society to provide input into the development of a community data-sharing platform. No collaborative research arose, but the parties shared expertise from their own perspectives. This was a short-term engagement but it met the needs of both parties and provided opportunities for longer term collaboration should the parties wish to explore an ongoing relationship. Short-term engagements are often good ways of building trust and developing a shared understanding of issues and opportunities. The knowledge broker usually attends these short-term activities or events.

**Stage 5. Meeting - Project**

*Collaborative research project.* In the event the parties seek a longer term collaborative research partner and the match is successful, then a project may arise. This project might be a long-term research collaboration such as Mobilizing Minds (see below) or involvement in a community development project such as the York Region Food Charter (see below). It may also involve a graduate student internship (Nichols, Phipps & Johnstone, 2014). Importantly, in all such cases the knowledge broker is not one of the collaborating parties. As shown by the dotted line in Figure 1 after Stage 4, the role

of the knowledge broker is complete when a match has been made or the knowledge mobilization opportunity abandoned. The knowledge broker will check in with both parties occasionally to identify stories of impact (Stage 5) but does not become part of the collaboration. In one instance, the knowledge broker was asked to help the parties resolve a dispute which resulted in the facilitated termination of the collaboration to the mutual appreciation of the parties.

*Project Impact.* For York's Knowledge Mobilization Unit, impact is measured as a change (i.e., in policy, practice, service and/or product) at the level of the non-academic partner(s). We acknowledge the importance of academic impact as measured by funded grants, published papers, creative endeavours, and graduate theses, but these activities accrue in the absence of knowledge mobilization and engaged scholarship. Knowledge mobilization and engaged scholarship seeks to maximize the economic, social and environmental impacts of university research. Since impact on the lives of citizens is created through public policies, commercial products or social services, this impact is mediated by collaboration with government, industry and community agencies respectively. In some cases, a collaborative research project ends up having such impacts. In all cases, this impact occurs years after the end of the collaborative research project and can only be identified by staying in touch with partners and asking about the long-term impacts of these projects. York University's knowledge brokers reach out annually to partners from past opportunities that reached Stage 4, seeking feedback on any impacts of the collaboration on the activities of the non-academic organization. In this way, knowledge brokers have been able to identify success stories. These stories are drafted in a one page template to showcase the non-academic impact of knowledge mobilization brokered collaborative projects in areas of public policy or professional practice. In some cases, a short video is made of a success story illustrating the academic and non-academic impacts of the collaboration (see [www.youtube.com/researchimpact](http://www.youtube.com/researchimpact)).

### Knowledge Brokering – Results

The numbers of knowledge mobilization opportunities received by York's knowledge mobilization Unit are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Knowledge Brokering Opportunities (May 1-April 30)**

Year	# Knowledge Mobilization Opportunities
2006-2007	4
2007-2008	55
2008-2009	50
2009-2010	41
2010-2011	63
2011-2012	47
2012-2013	22
May-July 2014	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>342</b>

In 2011 the number of opportunities for which brokers were unable to make a match was 37%. Seeking to understand this 37%, we examined each opportunity in more detail by contacting the requesting party of the 37% to determine the reasons for the unmatched opportunities. The common reasons for not making a match included: (a) the opportunity was withdrawn from the organization or individual making the request. It may no longer have been a priority or capacity within the organization and support for it may have diminished; (b) brokers were simply unable to make a match; and (c) the question was deemed to be too vague to follow up with and the originator was unavailable to provide detail.

This examination resulted in changes in how opportunities are solicited and followed up. We removed a web form used by organizations/individuals seeking knowledge mobilization service. Opportunities using this form made up the majority of the 37%. The form appeared to enable poorly developed requests, meaning opportunities which were vague without an appropriate follow-up mechanism with the requestor (cause 3 above). Direct follow-up now with the requestor allows brokers to have a clearer sense of the request and has resulted in greater success. At the time of writing this paper, the rate of the 'Unable to Match' (Stage 2) dropped to 18% of all requests since 2006 with withdrawal from the knowledge mobilization opportunity by the requester (Cause 1 above) being the most frequent cause of failure to make a match.

The matchmaking process is not an exact science. In some cases, opportunities are assessed (Stage 1a) by the knowledge broker but not acted on by the originator if s/he requires more time to refine the question or the goal of the knowledge mobilization opportunity. Only when the originator feels they have landed on the right question will they provide the broker the freedom to seek a match. Conversely, some requests are very well constructed and address key organizational goals. In some cases, brokers are able to locate a match within days and an exploratory meeting or conversation can take place quickly. In other cases, it can take weeks or months to secure a match, often depending on the time of the academic year when faculty may have less capacity to respond.

Occasionally, the knowledge mobilization opportunity results in an impact on agencies and/or citizens (Stage 5b). We have previously described some success stories (Phipps, Jensen and Myers, 2012; Nichols, Phipps and Johnstone, 2014) and illustrate this impact with two new stories.

### ***Story 1. Mobilizing Minds***

Our first collaborative opportunity continues to have a significant impact on our community partners. Our first KM in the AM (a breakfast brokering event), back in November 2006, was on youth mental health which was identified as a priority by our partners at that time: The Regional Municipality of York, and the York Region District School Board. Over 30 people assembled for our breakfast event with featured speakers from York's Faculty of Health (Psychology Department) and the York Region Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA). They had never met. They presented briefly about their own work and the overarching issues around youth mental health separately, but connected during dedicated networking time. The York and CMHA colleagues were joined by researchers from University of Manitoba and

Brock University as well as lead community partner Mind Your Mind and other partners (listed at <http://mobilizingminds.ca/partners/community-partners>) and received \$1.5M from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and Mental Health Commission of Canada to form Mobilizing Minds: pathways to young adult mental health. The funding also engaged young adult leaders to become a national team to develop and disseminate research on youth mental health to consumers and organizations.

This grant supported numerous academic papers and graduate theses but also allowed the academic, community and young adult partners to co-create the Mind Pack (<http://depression.informedchoices.ca/wp-content/uploads/mobilizing/index.html>). Mind Pack is a multimedia on-line tool that provides access to research-informed evidence about mental health topics. These topics were identified and designed by young adults in a format for young adults. Academic researchers provided the evidence-informed messages and tested the Mind Pack in clinical settings. Community agencies and the mental health services of Mobilizing Minds universities will disseminate the Mind Pack to their clients, providing young adults with an evidence-informed tool to aid in making decisions about their own mental health.

### ***Story 2. York Region Food Charter***

In 2011, the UWYR knowledge broker (see below) supported a collaboration between the York Region Food Network ([www.yrfn.ca](http://www.yrfn.ca)) and Rod McRae in the Faculty of Environmental Science, York University. This collaboration was instrumental in helping community partners in York Region determine how best to approach the development of a food charter and provided connections with other jurisdictions engaged in the same work. He also provided insight into the academic cycle in order to foster engagement of students who might be interested in field experience or a major research project. A team of seven students from a fourth-year undergraduate Geographic Information System (GIS) Mapping Course mapped food access projects across York Region as part of preliminary work related to a Community Food Assessment. They presented their work to a Community Forum “Food for Change” in March 2012. These data became part of the evidence that supported the development of the York Region Food Charter (<http://yrfn.ca/issues/york-region-food-charter/>). The York Region Food Charter provides guidance for the development of food related policies and programs in York Region.

The York Region Food Charter Working Group has substantial interest in academic partnerships to support ongoing efforts to advance policies and programs that support the development of a sustainable food system in York Region. Four of nine municipalities (Aurora, King, Markham, and Whitchurch-Stouffville) have endorsed the York Region Food Charter. The Newmarket Environmental Action Committee has taken up the Food Charter and recommended that Council endorse it. In addition, it has been presented in Committee in the municipalities of Georgina and East Gwillimbury. This is an example of policy influence as municipalities that endorse the Food Charter are setting the stage for establishing sustainable food policies and programs that will have an impact upon residents, including those experiencing food insecurity as well as other sectors/stakeholders.



### **Community-Based Knowledge Broker**

York University's Knowledge Mobilization Unit and UWYR started out by being gateways for exchange of information between our organizations. We deepened our relationships by supporting each other in governance and decision-making roles. This partnership has extended to supporting collaborative research projects. Of the 342 knowledge mobilization Opportunities above, 48% engage York Region partners, the most from any single jurisdiction. By way of a few examples, one collaboration examined mental health services for teen moms in York Region and another collaboration explored youth homelessness. York University researchers and students collaborated with the Regional Municipality of York to evaluate immigrant settlement services which informed a decision by the Regional government to invest over \$20 million to expand these services. York University and UWYR funded three graduate students to research social asset mapping in York Region which generated the evidence to support a new form of UWYR funding, Strength Investments. As described in the success story in Appendix 2, Strength Investments are now a regular feature of UWYR funding with \$2M committed over the next four years.

In September 2011, York's Knowledge Mobilization Unit partnered with UWYR to pilot an expansion of the knowledge broker model within a community organization. This was a natural extension of our five-year knowledge mobilization collaboration (Phipps and Zanotti, 2012). York's Knowledge Mobilization Unit and UWYR co-authored a successful one-year grant application to the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) to undertake community knowledge mobilization services to connect research expertise on social determinants of health. Because this was a collaborative application with York University and UWYR, co-Principal Investigators, we were able to transfer the majority of the \$93K to UWYR. In community campus collaborations, it is important to create authentic partnerships. This means that power and funding must be shared between partners. Transferring the funding to UWYR allowed them to hire the community-based knowledge broker and become the lead organization for the project. In 2012 we jointly applied for a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) grant of \$149,000 to continue the work and focus on economic and housing vulnerability, an issue that emerged as a priority from the social determinants of health project. Again, the majority of the funds were transferred to UWYR who hired the community-based knowledge broker.

UWYR has continued their commitment to this partnership by hiring Jane Wedlock to continue her work in community engagement, research and knowledge mobilization. Co-authors on this paper, Jane Wedlock (Community Engagement and Research Manager, UWYR) and Michael Johnny (Manager, Knowledge Mobilization, York University), continue to work in partnership to create processes and opportunities for two-way connections between community and campus partners so that practice-based evidence can inform academic research and research-based evidence can inform community practice. To our knowledge, this partnership of dedicated resources for university-based and community-based knowledge brokering is unique in Canada.

The addition of the community knowledge broker has resulted in some significant changes

for York knowledge brokers:

1. Greater outreach in the community increased the quality of knowledge mobilization opportunities
2. Having a community-based knowledge broker provided more time for York knowledge brokers to work on campus and resulted in the launch of on-campus workshops which raised the capacity for researchers, students, and research staff to engage in knowledge mobilization (<http://researchimpact.ca/fall-2013-york-kmb-learning-events-les-activites-dapprentissage-offertes-par-york-mdc-en-automne-2013/>).
3. Tracking and data sharing was refined as brokers from York U and UWYR were engaged in similar opportunities and needed to share data. This resulted in the tracking stages 1-5 above.
4. With almost two-thirds of opportunities originating outside the university, placing additional resources outside the university allowed for greater and more meaningful engagement with community leaders and organizations. Community organizations had a trusted advocate for research engagement in UWYR, and UWYR was able to build community capacity for engaging in collaborative research.

Partnering on knowledge mobilization has also had an impact on UWYR and York Region community agencies. The role of a community-based knowledge broker has been more than brokering—it also includes community development, and builds the capacity of community organizations to think about how research/academic partnerships can support/inform their work. At the same time, the community-based broker working in partnership with the Knowledge Mobilization Unit sheds additional light on the social infrastructure, geographical and political contexts which inform their collective endeavours of knowledge brokering in a particular place.

The second year of the partnership through the SSHRC grant created an important opportunity to take a systems approach to a complex issue: re-imagining our response to youth homelessness in York Region. Our activities involved an adaption of the knowledge mobilization tools and brought us into a new collaborative space. Activities were deep, in terms of being focused on one complex issue, but also wide through the involvement of a professor in the Faculty of Education at York University and Director of the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness. Over 12 months, we held two research forums, brought leading researchers/practitioners from across Canada to be part of an innovative seven-part learning series in York Region that was live-streamed and is now permanently hosted on the Homeless Hub web site (<http://homelesshub.ca/learningseries>). Community agencies and other stakeholders are benefitting from research conducted by five graduate students who were funded by an external grant to undertake the research. These students created baseline data to better understand the pathways of youth into homelessness in York Region and those points at which early

intervention could be beneficial. The twelve-month grant has ended, but commitment to the systems approach and developing ways to continue the collaboration is ongoing, and have resulted in the commitment to create a community task force to inform both practice and policy related to ending youth homelessness in York Region.

This shared community university knowledge mobilization service helps to support democratic partnerships which address power between York University (and its faculty members) and United Way York Region (and its member and associated community agencies). The research question is located in the needs of community in 70% of knowledge mobilization opportunities. The knowledge brokers act as coaches for community and university partners to promote equity between academic expertise and community/practice-based expertise and build capacity to collaborate. The majority of knowledge mobilization projects are funded through the in-kind contributions of the collaborators, and for those that receive external funding, the knowledge mobilization unit helps to structure the funding application so that funding can be shared with community. The knowledge brokers also make training available to help community members participate as research partners not research subjects. These actions of the Knowledge Mobilization Unit support democratic partnerships that begin to share power between community and university collaborators.

One issue that remains unaddressed by the knowledge-brokering process is the time available to community to participate as an authentic partner in the research process. University faculty members have the privilege of protected time for research. This is not the case for community collaborators. Faculty members also tend to control dissemination of the research. Authors of this paper were co-authors on an editorial for a special edition of *Scholarly and Research Communications* that included papers from the first York Symposium on the Scholarship of Engagement (Phipps, Gaetz and Wedlock, 2014). Despite a requirement that all presentations at the Symposium be co-authored between community and university partners, we observed that only three of seven papers submitted for scholarly publication included non-academic co-authors. Full participation in democratic partnerships means university collaborators need to work with community collaborators from conception to dissemination. The knowledge mobilization partnership between UWYR and York University sets the expectations and creates the conditions to support these authentic partnerships.

## **Conclusions**

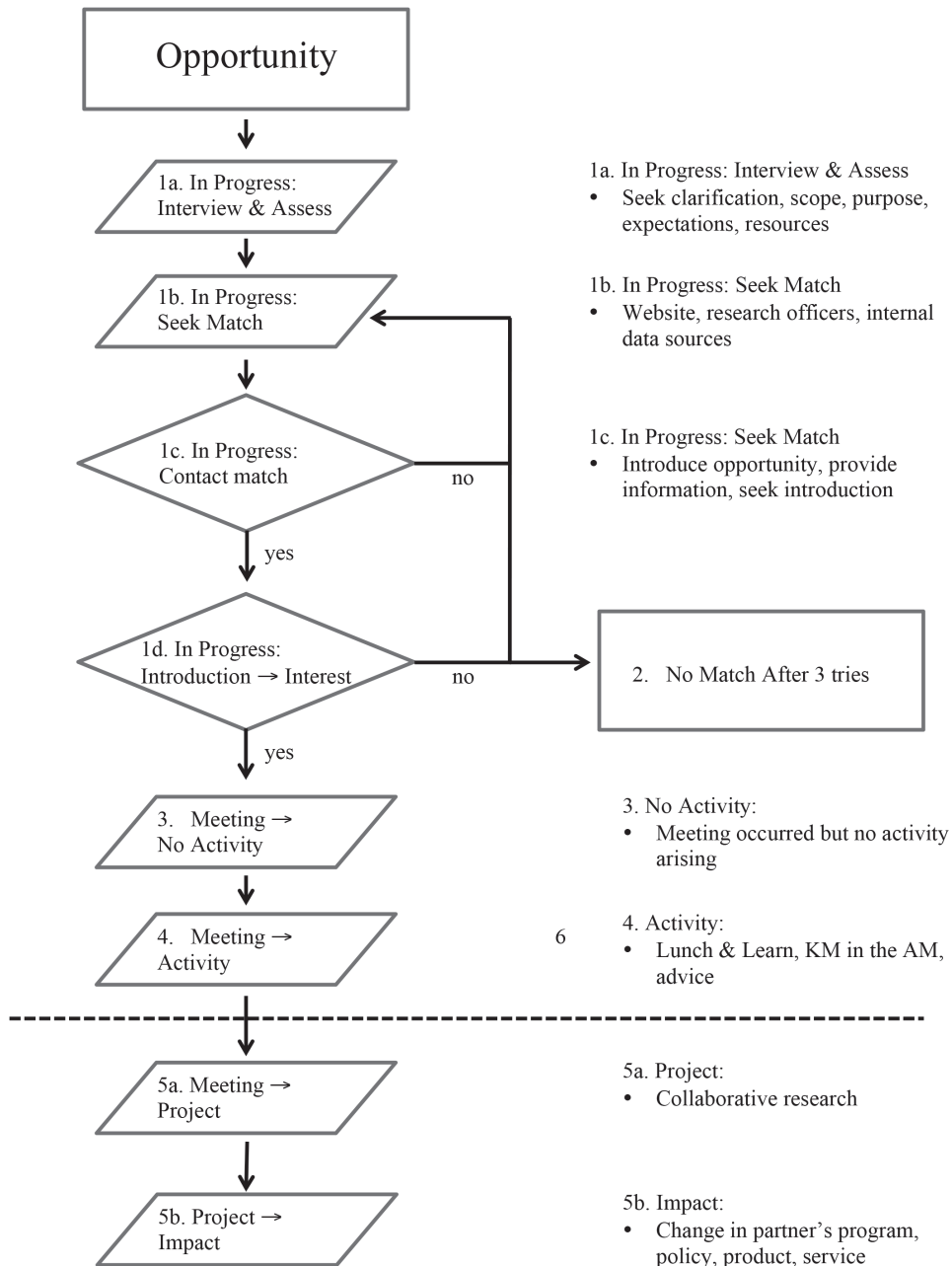
There are two fundamental knowledge mobilization processes: “end of grant” knowledge mobilization which supports tailored dissemination strategies designed to make research evidence accessible to end users; and “integrated” knowledge mobilization which engages end users throughout the research cycle (CIHR, 2012). By identifying and supporting sustainable community campus collaborations, knowledge brokering is a mechanism that supports integrated knowledge mobilization. It is a service that essentially says, “If you want to connect to community or academic expertise, give us a call.” As a key knowledge mobilization tool, knowledge brokering supports engaged research and thus supports institutional priorities such as community and/or public engagement.

Both York University and UWYR knowledge brokers were initially hired through grant funds. Success in knowledge brokering created the evidence for both organizations to identify community engagement, research and knowledge mobilization as institutional priorities and make ongoing investments in knowledge brokers. This has created numerous community campus collaborations that have had academic and community impacts and have helped to diffuse power between these constituencies. This success has demanded the development of tools to support this knowledge mobilization system. The structured tracking process identified above creates an evidence-based process for monitoring a system of knowledge mobilization. It is a tool for the knowledge broker to be able to monitor progress of projects from inception (Stage 1) to community impact (Stage 5a). This monitoring tool does not create impact but provides a tool for knowledge brokers to identify projects that have an impact and work with academic and non-academic project partners to communicate those impacts.

While York University and UWYR knowledge brokers seek to support democratic community campus partnerships, this knowledge mobilization system in York Region is itself a democratic partnership. The partners have worked together for eight years developing trust through joint activities that have progressed from shared communications to shared funding supporting shared personnel. The CIHR and SSHRC grants included York University and UWYR as co-Principal Investigators meaning that both community and university partners were involved in setting the priorities. Importantly, grant funding was transferred to UWYR giving the community partner the authority over hiring of personnel.

The university and community based knowledge brokers form a unique knowledge mobilization pairing by working together to build community and university capacity for engaged scholarship to increase the quality of knowledge mobilization opportunities. Both bring their own expertise to the knowledge mobilization pairing, creating equity between community and university knowledge. Making joint presentations and publications (such as this one) is further evidence of the authenticity of this partnership. This knowledge mobilization practice begins to address the critique of power differentials inherent in community university collaborations. By creating collaborations that respond to the needs of community, building capacity for authentic participation in research, and acknowledging the value of academic and community/practice-based expertise, the knowledge brokers in this knowledge mobilization practice diffuse power and help collaborators to create new knowledge that is relevant to both community and academic partners. This satisfies the determinants of democratic partnerships as identified by Dostilio (Dostilio, 2014). This process for mapping knowledge brokering from inception (Stage 1) to impact (Stage 5) also provides a standardized, evidence-based tool for academic institutions to monitor their knowledge mobilization portfolio or knowledge mobilization system and articulate the non-academic impacts of their investments in institutional knowledge brokers.

Figure 1: The knowledge brokering process



## About the Authors

As Executive Director, Research & Innovation Services, **David Phipps** (*corresponding author*) leads York's award winning Knowledge Mobilization Unit. It provides services to researchers, community organizations and government agencies that wish to use maximize the economic, social and environmental impacts of university research. He also leads ResearchImpact-RéseauImpactRecherche, Canada's knowledge mobilization network including 11 universities from across Canada. Email: [dhipps@yorku.ca](mailto:dhipps@yorku.ca)

**Michael Johnny** was appointed as Manager, Knowledge Mobilization for York University in 2006. He has over 13 years of experience in educational research and development with specific skills in program development, contract management, strategic planning, program evaluation, stakeholder consultation, proposal writing, budget administration, and policy development and analysis.

**Jane Wedlock** is currently the Community Engagement and Research Manager of the United Way York Region, which is a partnership between United Way and York University's Knowledge Mobilization (KMb) Unit. She facilitates the development and delivery of community-based KMb services in York Region. Her work over the past 20+ years has focused on food security, poverty, homelessness/affordable housing and youth at risk within the York Region context.

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# Best Practices for Implementing a Living Wage Policy in Canada: Using Community-Campus Partnerships to Further the Community's Goal

Natasha Pei, Janice Felthan, Ian Ford, Karen Schwartz

**ABSTRACT** The study explores one longitudinal case of engaged scholarship, the collaborative ABSTRACT “Best Practices for Implementing a Living Wage Policy in Canada: Using community-campus partnerships to further the community’s goal” presents best practices for implementing a living wage policy, based on surveys and interviews of living wage advocates across Canada. This paper is a product of the ongoing partnership between Vibrant Communities Canada and Carleton University which is conducting a seven-year, SSHRC-funded study on how community-campus relationships can use joint resources to create practice and policy changes in the battle against poverty. For eight months, a group of Master of Social Work students researched the status of the working poor and the progress of living wage campaigns in North America, and analyzed data collected through surveys and interviews with individuals engaged in living wage campaigns. Recommendations for best practices to implement a living wage policy are discussed and include (a) developing a core group of individuals, (b) engaging champions to extend the buy-in of companies, (c) establishing a positive framework for the campaign, and (d) dedicating more resources to research and knowledge. This work is intended to facilitate discussion and create real impact on minimum wage regulations and business practices, resulting in increased social inclusion for individuals who identify as living in poverty.

**KEYWORDS** living wage, collective impact, engaged scholarship, vibrant communities

## Introduction

Among many innovative approaches to reduce poverty in Canada, Communities First: Impacts of Community Engagement (CFICE) is spearheading an exploratory investigation on using community-campus partnerships to create policy and practice change. The project that this paper will report on operated on three levels simultaneously.<sup>1</sup> On a macro level, the

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<sup>1</sup> This project has received Carleton University Research Ethics Board approval for the period of December 4, 2013 - May 31, 2014

federally funded (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council- SSHRC) CFICE project designated one hub of this project for pairing an academic faculty member with a community organization (Vibrant Communities—a Pan-Canadian network of anti-poverty groups) to engage in demonstration projects that would illuminate the benefits of community engagement with a university. On a mezzo level, the research course was guided by the Poverty Reduction Hub's academic and community co-leads and taught by a third-party academic member. This community-based research course pairs students with community organizations to engage in research that the organization has identified as a need, but does not have the capacity to carry out. For course credit, students were engaged in a project that was an off-shoot of one of the CFICE projects, exploring best practices for implementing a living wage. On a micro level, students engaged in an actual research project and identified important strategies to encourage employers to implement a living wage.

It is always a challenge to find adequate funds to do community-engaged research, and often these projects operate at such a high level of complexity to garner enough resources to collect the evidence needed to have an impact upon policy development. Since literature already exists on community-engaged research (Hall & Keller, 2006; Seifer, 2006; Flicker, 2008) and community-engaged research is being incorporated into coursework (Hyde & Meyer, 2004; Hayes, 2006; Schwartz, 2010; van de Sande & Schwartz, 2011), this article is focused on the research that contributes to policy change in keeping with the spirit of the CFICE project.

At the macro level, Communities First: Impacts of Community Engagement (CFICE) has engaged faculty members and community partners across Canada in exploring whether community-campus partnerships benefit the community. CFICE has created five thematic hubs, including the Poverty Reduction Hub, established to maximize the synergy created from community-based organizations and university partnerships, with the mandate of using these synergies to reduce poverty across Canadian municipalities. Vibrant Communities, a backbone of Canada's national poverty activism and the living wage movement, contracted MSW students to carry out a descriptive study of the experiences of living wage advocates around the country and suggest best practices for convincing businesses to implement the living wage policy to strengthen the organization's living wage campaign, increase utilization of university resources (i.e. students), and create community awareness of issues.

At the mezzo level, the research course that enabled the students' participation in the project is a full-year course structured to enable small groups of students to engage in research with community agencies. Each July community organizations are invited by letter to submit a request for research. The submitted proposals are situated at various points along the continuum of community-campus research as described by McDonald (2007). The community partner in the case under consideration here, Vibrant Communities, acted as a consultation group, allowing students considerable liberty in designing the research protocol and carrying out the



research. The students conduct the research while simultaneously learning about community-based research methods.

Providing a living wage is one of many recommended methods for combating poverty for which Vibrant Communities and other community-based organizations have advocated. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) conceptualizes it as “a wage that allows working people not just to survive (in minimal physiological terms) but to enjoy a decent quality of life in which one can raise a family, be healthy and enjoy recreation, culture, entertainment and participate fully in social life” (Mackenzie and Stanford, 2008, pg.7). In other words, a living wage provides enough income to ensure full social inclusion for healthy families and individuals. In contrast, social exclusion is identified by the CCPA as principally income exclusion, but also includes other dimensions of community life exclusion, such as “health, education, access to services, housing, debt, quality of life, dignity and autonomy; [social exclusion] is deeply rooted and relational” (Mackinnon, 2008).

The living wage calculation varies across time, place, and employer. It is affected by the cost of necessities required for social inclusion (e.g. internet access, cell phones), by financial and service supports provided by governments, and by any benefits individual employers already provide. Groups across Canada and around the world have lobbied for living wage programs, some with great success. This paper will present a brief overview of the experience of living wage advocates in Canada and make recommendations on best practices for implementation. The goal of these best practices is to connect patterns and success stories that will assist other advocates to effectively convey the message of the need for a living wage to business owners and employers.



## Literature Review

In reviewing the literature pertaining to the living wage implementation and advocacy in North America, it is important to recognize that the proposed change in wages has implications for numerous members of society: people who have a low income and experience poverty, and businesses that provide living wages. The Literature Review begins with a definition of living wage, including its benefits and limitations, considers barriers living wage advocates face in implementing the living wage, reviews living wage campaign methodology of successful regions, and describes benefits realized by living wage employers.

### *Definition of Living Wage*

While there are technical calculations that constitute the definition of a living wage, the point of such a definition is to ensure that children grow up to lead more fulfilling and successful

lives. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) has recently released a standardized definition and calculation guide for living wage advocacy groups to use across the country. The most recent version, which serves as the basis for calculation in twenty-five communities across Canada (Ivanova & Klein, 2013), states:

The living wage is calculated as the hourly rate at which a household can meet its basic needs, once government transfers have been added to the family's income (such as the Universal Child Care Benefit) and deductions have been subtracted (such as income taxes and Employment Insurance premiums). (Ivanova & Klein, 2013, p. 2)

Another Canadian definition states, "a living wage is based on basic working conditions, seventy hours of work per week between two people, and already incorporates government transfers (e.g. the Canadian Child Tax Benefit) and deductions (e.g. taxes, E.I. and CPP premiums)" (McCarthy Flynn, 2012, p. 13).

There are numerous limitations to these kinds of calculations. These calculations rely on a limited household budget that does not consider minimally expected entertainment, inflation, increased transportation costs, food, and child care (Ivanova & Klein, 2013). The calculation subtracts government transfers such as childcare, and does not provide room for payments of any family debt (Graces, 2011). While some may challenge the assumption that a living wage is an effective means to address a broad range of social issues such as child poverty, health coverage, and housing, the authors argue that it is the government's duty to increase transfers to families, such as higher childcare subsidies, and the private sector's responsibility to provide a living wage (Ivanova & Klein, 2013).

One barrier to the implementation of the living wage is that employers are not legally obligated to provide a living wage, although they are obligated to pay minimum wages (Graces, 2011). Presumably, employers must be convinced to provide a living wage through advocacy and a demonstration of its potential benefits.

The main beneficiaries of a living wage will be primarily individuals and families with low incomes, who will enjoy an increased quality of life (Graces, 2011). Outcomes of a living wage for employers include Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) benefits, showcasing a more humane, positive brand. Such a wage has also been predicted to increase productivity and decrease employee absenteeism and turnover rates (Graces, 2011) (Brenner, 2005).

There is also a compelling argument to be made for a living wage as a human rights issue. Cornish (2012) makes the case for implementing a living wage to counter the effects of historical discriminatory practices, including pay gaps, among governments and employers. Low wages can be viewed as bad public policy, and bad pay leads to negative health and social outcomes (Cornish, 2012). Historically, women and people who face racism make significantly less money than those who have not been marginalized (Cornish, 2012). Additionally, a country that does not implement a living wage will not be able to compete in a global economy because low wages devalue the skill of vulnerable workers, especially during a time when the economy

requires highly skilled workers (Cornish, 2012).

### ***Implementation of Living Wage***

The literature and primary research on the living wage is largely American-centric, and while our cultural and socioeconomic systems are comparable and living wage advocates have borrowed lessons and theories from living wage success stories, the approach of American and Canadian living wage advocates and their outcomes have been somewhat different. American living wage advocates have focused predominantly on legislating a living wage through city ordinances. In 1994, Baltimore became the first city to adopt a living wage before being followed by 200 more communities (Brooks, 2007). Brooks (2007) highlights how Baltimore's increasingly privatized economic system in the 1990s created a shift in the labour market towards poor quality jobs, and a noticeable increase in the number of paid employees accessing charitable and social services. Stevenson (2010) builds on this, arguing that as the social and economic climate frustrated clientele across several service sector providers, it united the goals of faith-based groups, unions, and community organizations. Stevenson (2010) and Niedt et al (1999) both describe the campaign being led by a single organization, forging an economic case for the redirection of public finances; advocates argued for the community as a whole to benefit from livable wages, rather than government spending on social programs for the poor. Using Baltimore as a case study, Stevenson (2010) claims that the energy driving the living wage is the recognition that full-time employment no longer ensures a decent standard of living, and implies that the current competitive economic climate set the conditions which create the working poor.

Strikingly similar to the Baltimore case, Brenner and Luce (2005) add to the post-living wage body of information with their research on the Boston, Massachusetts, experience. As in Baltimore, privatization and low-wage, low-benefit jobs spurred multi-sectoral living wage advocates into forming a collective in Boston, successfully influencing a living wage ordinance.

In contrast to the American experience, Canada has been slower to adopt living wage practices, and Canadian living wage advocates have opted to focus more on bringing municipal representatives into their cross-collaborative living wage campaigns, instead of lobbying businesses to voluntarily adopt the wage. Yet our economies are relatively similar and greatly intertwined; Canadians tend to look south of the border for relevant theories, comparable experiences, and lessons learned. For instance, the Simon Fraser Institute opposes the living wage in Canada based on data and analyses being published out of the States (Lamman 2014). Moreover, as the living wage is still a relatively new practice, living wage advocates are left to arm themselves with American studies to make their case.

As of January 2014, the City of New Westminster, B.C. is the only Canadian city with a living wage ordinance (Lamman, 2014, pg.1). However, Michael McCarthy-Flynn's 2012 report gives an overview of Simon Fraser University's (SFU) decision to become the first living wage employer in Canada in 2013; the decision was influenced by an internal collaborative table of student groups, unions, and social justice organizations who appealed to the university in business terms, framing their argument around Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). These

advocates raised questions about the university's failure to provide a healthy and sustainable quality of life to their low-waged auxiliary workers, contrary to the university's vision and public image, and presented an opportunity to the university to act as a leader in its sector (McCarthy Flynn, 2012).

The research by McCarthy Flynn (2012) on SFU's implementation focuses on exploring the multi-dimensional impact of living wage policies on individuals and families as well as implications for the university as a living wage employer. Benefits to employers who adopt living wage policies are described as follows:

- i) Decreased employee turnover; cost savings for staff hiring and training; lower absenteeism, ii) Improved job quality, productivity and service delivery, iii) Benefits the broader economy by stimulating consumer spending, and iv) Greater corporate social responsibility and organization reputation. (McCarthy Flynn, 2012, pp. 30-31).

### ***Engaging Stakeholders***

Advocates for a living wage often make the argument that engaging the business community and employers is necessary. Robert White (2012) states that antipoverty groups and stakeholders must engage and collaborate with employers. White explains that the benefits to the employees and employer are reduced stress for employees and increased productivity (2012). In addition, White (2012) argues that the CSR model, which proposes that implementation of a living wage is socially responsible, is a benefit to employers that has not been adequately utilized. Loewen (2008) outlines pillars for social groups to frame their business partnerships, and to engage the private sector. He uses case studies to convince the reader of the benefits of involving businesses in advocacy work, identifies challenges, and offers methods to overcome them, and tools for engaging business partnerships (pp.5-6).

### ***Gaps in the Literature***

Most of the literature on living wage focuses on how a living wage is calculated and where it has been implemented. One gap is a business and economic-centric compilation of data, which focuses on understanding how the living wage will affect business owners and employers. There is a lack of literature on the role that social justice organizations play in the implementation and the realized outcomes for the working poor and communities that have experienced wage increases. This research will attempt to address the former of these gaps, as the group intends to focus on practice strategies for living wage advocates. Further, the implementation of the living wage policy has focused on the United States. This research will provide a useful description of the Canadian context; in the long-term, it is hoped that this will enhance the probability that Canadian businesses will adopt the living wage policy.

### ***Methodology***

In the Social Work Research Methods course (September 2013- April 2014), students were able to select their research projects in the first two weeks depending on the project title and community

partner. The research planning commenced immediately, and occurred simultaneously with weekly course lectures on best practices for community-based research. Students were instructed on how to prepare an ethics proposal, reminded of the importance of including all stakeholders in the research, and assigned to prepare their proposals during the first semester. The community partner provided recommendations and supervision throughout the research project.

This research project was reviewed by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board and received approval effective December 4, 2013 until May 31, 2014.

### ***Sampling Procedures***

Quantitative data was collected using a purposive sample that met the inclusion criteria of being living wage advocates across Canada who were connected to Vibrant Communities Canada. They were invited to participate by clicking on the FluidSurvey link in the invitations they received through email and/or via Vibrant Communities Canada's Twitter feed. Members of the research team also encouraged participation at Tamarack's monthly living wage community of practice teleconference.

The qualitative data was collected upon completion of the survey phase of the project. A convenient sample of living wage advocates was identified with the help of the Advisory Committee.<sup>2</sup> The research team contacted seven potential interview participants by e-mail, inviting them to participate in an interview as a means to obtain information related to their experience regarding living wage advocacy. Potential interviewees were drawn from across the country and from communities of varying population size.

### ***Data Collection Method/Instrument***

Quantitative data was collected first through an on-line survey designed by the research team in consultation with the Advisory Committee and hosted by FluidSurvey. The survey, available for seven weeks, invited participants to share their living wage advocacy experiences by responding to a diverse range of questions. The survey, consisting of fifty questions, included:

- non-identifiable demographic data (i.e. province of residence, population of city, participant's role in their community organization and years with the community organization),
- community organization participation,
- living wage calculation,
- information related to potential/actual living wage employers,
- strategies and data used when advocating for a living wage,
- experiences in living wage advocacy including barriers, and
- perceived benefits of a living wage.

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<sup>2</sup> Our Advisory Committee consisted of academic and community partners engaged in poverty reduction work, and who provided support, input and feedback throughout the research project.

Participants were informed of their right to exit from the survey at any point prior to the selection of the “submit” button at the end of the survey. Un-submitted survey data was not included in the data collection and analysis; however, due to participant anonymity, responses could not be withdrawn from the compiled data once surveys had been submitted.

The qualitative data collection consisted of 30 - 45 minute semi-structured interviews with living wage advocates representing diverse geographic locations and population sizes. Although the interview included demographic information and information relating to a living wage definition, the primary focus of the discussion regarded the interviewee’s advocacy experience. Participants were known to the research team; however, identifiable information is not included in this article. With the express consent of the interviewees, the interviews were audio-recorded. Interview notes were then reviewed by the participants to ensure that all responses were accurately represented.

### ***Analysis***

This research project is descriptive in nature, with the intention to provide the readers with a picture of the experiences and approaches used by living wage advocates. The survey data was analyzed using SPSS software, providing the researchers with the ability to assess the presence of trends, experiences of, and outcomes obtained by living wage advocates through the use of frequencies and measures of central tendencies.

A qualitative data analysis was performed using the data obtained during the interview phase of the project. At least two research team members conducted each interview with one taking responsibility for transcribing the interview. To ensure that the analysis could be confirmed, the research team used the triangulation method as each of the three members independently reviewed data to identify themes for approaching businesses. The research team then discussed and further organized the original themes into four broad themes and related subthemes, and compared and incorporated relevant quantitative data to create recommendations for advocates.

## **Quantitative Data Results**

### ***Demographics***

The questionnaire was available to living wage advocates across the country. Thirty-six individuals accessed the survey, of which ten completed the survey. For reasons that have not yet been analyzed, the respondents resided either in Ontario or British Columbia, representing centres ranging from a population of 8,000 - 3,000,000 (mode population of 100,000 - 199,999;  $n = 4$ ). Respondents represented a range of experience based on years involved in their organization (.5 - 15 years; mean = 5 years; median = 3.5 years) and roles (coordinator, community developer, executive director, chair, founder, member, public health nurse, research and policy analyst, social planner).

The majority of survey participants ( $n = 9$ ) identified partnering with other organizations in their living wage campaign group. The number of partner organizations ranged from 1 to



15+ partners (with one participant describing “lots” of partner organizations). Within the living wage campaigns, participant responses indicated diversity in the number of individual advocates involved, ranging from 1 to 200 advocates per campaign group (the approximate mean number of advocates per campaign is 40.4, with the median being 15). When asked to identify their biggest allies in the community, the survey participants noted “other advocacy groups” (n = 4), “unions” (n = 3), “Living Wage campaign groups in other cities” (n = 2) and “unskilled labourers” (n = 1).

When asked to describe their campaign’s progress in their community, five participants indicated that the living wage had been or was in the process of being calculated, three indicated that they were approaching employers/governments, and three indicated that they were certifying living wage employers.

### ***Experience with Living Wage Employers***

*Whom to Approach?* Surveyed living wage advocates are in contact with a wide variety of populations and organizations. Through their living wage campaigns, survey participants are most frequently in contact with municipal government (n = 8), community organizations (n = 8) and small to medium businesses (n = 7). It is noted that these same sectors were perceived to be the most receptive to the living wage (with seven participants identifying community organizations and five identifying municipal government and small-to-medium businesses as most receptive), and, in two cases, are further considered to be the main targets of participants’ living wage campaigns (communities and businesses representing 30% of responses each). Neither federal nor provincial governments were identified by survey participants as being receptive to the living wage.

When approaching an organization, 50% of survey participants identified management as being their point of entry, with a personal contact being the most frequent first approach (n = 6). However, front-line staff (30%) and individuals in human resources (20%) were found to be more responsive toward the living wage than management, directors/chief officer(s) and volunteers—each representing 10% of responses—while no one identified members of the board, CSR teams or elected representatives as being the most responsive.

Survey participants have approached anywhere from 0 to 20+ employers, with 50% approaching two to four employers at the time of the survey (20% have approached 0 -1 while 20% have approached 5 - 10 employers). Out of those approached, the greatest number of survey participants indicated that 1 - 15% of employers have been “receptive” to the living wage (n = 3), with 20% indicating 15 - 30% have been “receptive.” Although half of the participants indicated that 0% of approached businesses have “adopted” a living wage, four indicated that 1 - 30% have done so, while one participant indicated that 45 - 60% have adopted a living wage. Additionally, two participants each indicated that 1 - 15% and 30 - 45% are in the process of adopting a living wage while one indicated that 90 - 100% of approached employers are in the process of adopting it. Businesses that chose to move forward with the living wage were noted by survey participants to share some common characteristics which include being non-profit/voluntary organizations (n = 4) and/or organizations with a

sympathetic manager/employer (n = 4).

*How to Frame the Argument?* Survey participants were provided with a list of eleven potential reasons describing why businesses may choose to implement a living wage. Participants were asked to rate each potential reason, based on their experience, as “very important,” “somewhat important,” or “not important.” The top five “very important” reasons for businesses choosing to implement a living wage are sympathetic employer/personal characteristics (n = 5), improved ability to recruit and/or retain employees (n = 4), worker/union pressure (n = 4), community pressure (n = 3), and care for employees (n = 3).

The most frequently perceived reason for business refusal of the living wage was that the wage is considered “too expensive” (n = 3). Additional perceived reasons for business refusal of the living wage include (a) no one else is doing it, (b) not enough benefit returns promised to the company, (c) worry about union/wage demands increasing, (d) not wanting to overpay unskilled workers and (e) fundamental perspective differences (n = 1 for each additional reason).

After initially being approached by a living wage advocate, survey participants responded that the business’ first reaction is to (a) ask for more information about the living wage (n = 2), (b) debate the living wage in terms of economics and the effects of increasing the minimum wage (n = 2), (c) ask for a more detailed list of benefits to the company (n = 1) and (d) ask for a written proposal (n = 1).

*Which Data to Use and Present?* Government data (i.e. data from Statistics Canada, Health Canada, etc.) is one of the main data source used by 90% of survey participants, with data from socially-progressive think tanks and published organizational data also noted (n = 6 each). Other main data sources include scholarly articles/peer reviewed journals (n = 4) and personal internet-based research (n = 4).

Survey participants were asked what type of data, in their experience, generally leads more readily to actual living wage implementation, data that appeals to knowledge such as empirical data or data that appeals to emotion such as case studies/ideological arguments/images. 70% of participants selected data that appeals to knowledge while 30% selected data that appeals to emotion. This data most often lists benefits to society and workers (n = 8); benefits to the company (n = 7); economic problems of the current system for society (n = 7); and economic problems of the current system for workers/economic problems with Living Wage (to address/refute) (n = 4) (five participants identified the use of case studies/examples from other regions, four participants present local case studies/examples, and none of the survey participants indicated that they present data such as leadership promises to the company and cost/balance projections for the company’s bottom-line).

Participants classified fourteen types of data as (a) very useful to have, (b) somewhat useful to have, (c) not useful, or (d) data which they already have. It was noted, by the greatest frequencies of responses, that a range of empirical data would be very useful to the survey participants. Table 1 represents data most frequently determined to be “very useful” by survey participants.

<b>Table 1- Data perceived to be "very useful"</b>
Realized standards of living comparisons (before/after) for Living Wage employees (n = 9)
Best practices for approaching business about a Living Wage (n = 8)
Material benefits to workers/society (after the Living Wage is implemented) (n = 8)
Realized standards of living comparisons (before/after) for communities with Living Wage policies (n = 8)
Best presentation methods for convincing businesses about a Living Wage (n = 7)
Profile of the structure of societies that have been successful with implementing a Living Wage (n = 6)
Wages/expenditure analysis of your region (city/province) (n = 6)
Data on increases/decreases in wages for Living Wage employees (n = 6)

### **Barriers to Living Wage Implementation**

Survey participants were provided with a list of twenty-seven potential barriers that they might encounter during their advocacy efforts regarding the implementation of a living wage. For each barrier, participants were asked to rate it as (a) a large barrier, (b) a small barrier or (c) not an issue. The top five "large" barriers were lack of human resources, lack of supportive data, inability to reach top company decision makers, lack of interest of government and policy makers, and lack of interest of companies (all n=5). When asked what they considered to be the biggest barrier keeping companies from implementing a living wage, participants most frequently noted a lack of community support (including municipal government) and lack of funds (n = 2 for each reason).

### **Qualitative Data Analysis**

The research team conducted 20 - 45 minute telephone/Skype phone interviews with four living wage advocates representing living wage campaigns in British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario. Interview participants represent diversity with respect to regional representation, role within their living wage campaign, and gender. Additionally, the four interviewees represent living wage campaigns at various stages of development and activity, as identified by the participants themselves. For example, one participant identified their campaign as being "more mature compared to other living wage campaigns in" their region (i.e. calculated the living wage, engaged employers, had a few champions sign-on) while another participant noted that they are at the beginning stage (i.e. have established a core group yet haven't moved forward into certifying living wage employers). It is important to note that, due to the small sample size, the scope of the analysis was limited and results cannot be generalized. However, this analysis does provide a snapshot of the ideas, insights and experiences of living wage advocates in two broad themes.

## Importance of Networks

“we think it’s important that if we are approaching a business in another municipality, that it’s somebody from that municipality that approaches the employer, rather than us coming in from another saying we suggest you do this.”

Networks are important to interviewees, are not limited by geographic location, and may comprise connections across the country. For example, it was noted by one interviewee that communities of practice (“small, interactive groups of practitioners who meet by telephone and online to learn and share their experiences”<sup>3</sup>), such as the “living wage community of practice” facilitated by Tamarack, provide opportunities for individuals to connect with others involved in similar campaigns. Additionally, work done by other communities was seen as a resource, especially in the beginning phases of a campaign, and facilitated the progress of living wage implementation. One interviewee noted that he/she would “encourage other groups to get involved in the living wage community of practice and participate in that for the experiences of other communities.”

The interviewees discussed the practice of starting with a “core group” of individuals and organizations to create the foundation of the campaign and drive it forward. Interviews revealed that these core individuals and organizations had been largely from the community/non-profit sector, but advocates saw the importance of including representation from other sectors. Two individuals identified the core group as a major strength because of the “conviction” or “passion” they have for the benefits of a living wage on the community. Two of four interviewees stated that respondents come to the table with their own contacts and expertise, and could create more networking throughout the community. In fact, another two of four participants regarded personal contacts as their main form of first approach to other businesses/organizations, and one considered networking as a primary campaign activity.

Having a diversity of membership within the living wage campaign and collaboration with allies was also seen as important; this diversity includes skills, resources, connections and expertise/knowledge. One interviewee recognized the diverse skills and experience already within their core group, commenting that some organizations do fundraising and know how to talk to businesses and have contacts established already through that network. Another identified financial contribution, time and energy support from core individuals and organizations as key strengths of the campaign. There was an overall effort to have a core group of organizations to support and lend credit to the campaign. As well, one mentioned the value of partnering with the local business school, and its ability to lend credibility to the campaign where he/she felt they lacked credentials, as such a business school already has respect from the private sector in the community. Having an overall diversity of sectors was

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<sup>3</sup> As described online at Tamarack Institute’s website: <http://tamarackcommunity.ca/events.html>

also important to participants. Each campaign had already initiated or had plans to include various combinations of government, businesses, non-profit (including post-secondary and secondary schools) and communities (including faith groups, labour unions, etc.).

Overall, collaborating and creating allies and partners within the community was an important aspect of the living wage campaigns. Along with various individuals committed to the living wage campaign, participants saw a benefit in allying with other progressive organizations, such as the local Chamber of Commerce or environmental organizations. As well, when prompted about union participation, three of four participants said that they have contacted unions or had a union member in their group, though one cautioned about difficult conversations with union leaders and members because of pay grids.

### Campaign Approach

“...we really want to work on showing them what the value of this is for employees and for communities as a whole.”

How the participants approached their campaign was found to be very positive. The participants were all very knowledgeable and understood the need for having a living wage— data and knowledge were seen as an important aspect of their campaigns. Furthermore, the importance of not having a fear-driven campaign was noted. A pattern evident in each interview was the lack of negative language and the positive campaign outlook held by the interviewees, especially in their discussion of private enterprise engagement. Only one interviewee reported using a message of compassion; it was more common to perceive participants expressing the desire for positive data to buttress their campaigns, such as successful case studies on the living wage. One participant mentioned a lack of diversity within the living wage campaign group that would have allowed people to challenge each other, and another mentioned that financial resources were limited, making human resources also limited.

Knowledge was highly prized by four of four interviewees, especially information obtained from other living wage advocates or campaigns. Some interviewees acknowledged informing their activities by looking at living wage campaigns in other regions, and/or using the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and Vibrant Communities for technical support and background information. One interviewee was very adamant that their core group should first build a solid base of knowledge and become informed before launching their campaign because he/she recognized that it was a very new concept for them. Three participants recommended studying or getting involved with other campaigns first to inform their own; other campaign models, background



information, arguments and strategies were mentioned by interviewees as being useful.

Three of four participants talked about the importance of awareness and/or the need to engage the community in conversation about the living wage, and all four saw the importance of using media to facilitate this visibility in the community. Media was mentioned multiple times with respect to creating awareness and knowledge of the living wage, sparking conversations or capitalizing on similar ones that are already happening. One interviewee mentioned that the current climate is conducive to having this discussion with employers. Multiple interviewees also reported using the initial hype of the campaign launch or wage calculation to keep the living wage continually in the forefront of conversation. Methods used include online social media (blogs, Twitter, Facebook, websites) or local media outlets such as news organizations.

Another strategy that participants used in their approach to campaigning was the use of “champions” and living wage “leaders.” Mentioned in three of four interviews, champions/leaders are not only employers who have adopted the living wage, but who lead by example to actively promote the living wage policy. Champions were seen to encourage others, and speak the specific language of businesses and governments. Interviewees mentioned their strategy to gain one or two of these champions in diverse sectors to help navigate among the different values of the sectors and to speak the same language.

## **Recommendations for Facilitating a Living Wage Campaign**

Drawing on complimentary data from interview themes and survey frequencies, the following best practice recommendations have been prepared for living wage advocates, researchers, and interested parties:

### ***1. Develop a Dedicated Group of Core Individuals and Organizations that have Diverse Skills and Contacts***

The survey data shows that the majority of groups have one to sixteen advocates in their living wage working group, (range of 6-15 “core” individuals). Interviewees identified this group of advocates as one of the main strengths of their campaign. These advocates are truly dedicated and believe that a living wage policy would positively impact the community. These core individuals are often associated with organizations that also support the living wage campaign, donating their diverse skills, knowledge and contacts. Diversity in the campaign group is seen as being a great asset because it brings new voices to a group of often like-minded people. Most advocates ranked “other advocacy groups” as their biggest allies, followed closely by “unions,” “living wage campaign groups in other cities,” and “unskilled labourers.” The use of individual and organizational contacts is also seen as important for the initial introduction of the living wage, with 60% of survey responses indicating personal contacts are their main method of approaching businesses or organizations, and 60% saying management is generally their main point of entry. Among other methods, participants identified networking as a good strategy to spread the word about the living wage.

## ***2. Engage a Couple of Champions to Help Extend the Range of Buy-in by more Companies and Organizations***

It is important to find one or two members in the business sector to become living wage employers, who can then get more companies involved. Champions in the business (or other) sectors can lend credibility to the living wage debate and can assist by speaking the same language; they understand the other party's values when trying to persuade them of the living wage's viability. The importance of employers buying-in and appreciating the "value . . . for employees and the community as a whole . . . , how it creates a better quality of life and [a] better product . . .", rather than being shamed into offering the wage was addressed by one interviewee. As well, a couple of interviewees felt they lacked business credentials in the community, making it harder to be taken seriously; however, with the partnership of a well-known for-profit organization, they have been able to appeal to other businesses more effectively. To find these champions, suggestions include starting with small CSR-minded businesses, businesses who are already close to being living wage employers (i.e. living wage would be the next logical step) and/or those who have a progressive mentality (e.g. environmental organizations). Survey data supporting this indicates that community organizations, small to medium local businesses and municipal governments have been more responsive to the living wage case than large companies (national/international).

## ***3. A Positive Framework for the Campaign***

A common trend in both the survey data and interviews is the construction of an overall positive framework for the campaign, rather than a deficit-framed or fear-inspiring campaign (e.g. messages evoking sympathy, deficits in society, shaming or blaming approach, etc.). Three interviewees use a positive values-based approach, and survey respondents also indicated that benefits to society, benefits to workers, and benefits to companies were among the most presented types of information. Further, participants generally indicated that successful living wage cases, realized standards of living for workers and the community—before and after the living wage—and material benefits to society and workers would be the most useful information. When asked, three of four interviewees identified businesses not as "barriers" "harder to penetrate." One interviewee stated,

each sector will have those who are a little more on board than others and a little more accepting of the information . . . I think the business sector is a little more than others, but there are still people who are interested in it. I think each sector has people who are a little more on one side versus the other.

As well, 40% of surveyed individuals indicated they do use a hook or promise to appeal to businesses, with most offering "awards and other recognition events for employers" or "reduce[d] cost to society," and when met by employer concern about market effects of the

living wage, more campaigners used successful case studies as their counterarguments. It was mentioned numerous times by interviewees that encouraging, rather than shaming or attacking businesses, is an important tactic for them. Therefore, results suggest positive messages (i.e. benefits) rather than fear messages (i.e. consequences/poverty) are most useful for framing the campaign.

#### ***4. Dedicate More Resources to Research and Incorporate a Diverse Range of Data/Information in Your Presentations***

The importance of Canadian data was one of the most frequently discussed topics during the interview phase, and surveys additionally reveal that lack of supportive data is one of the biggest barriers faced by participants. As the majority of participants noted government data (especially Statistics Canada) as their main source of data, this data source has been jeopardized by the cancellation of the mandatory long-form census. Other knowledge resources for living wage advocates were Vibrant Communities Canada and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

As perceived by surveyed living wage advocates, the top reason for businesses implementing the living wage is having “sympathetic employer/personal characteristics.” It is recognized that having access to a diversity of information and resources will facilitate the advocacy process, by providing an increased ability to appeal to a diverse range of individuals/potential living wage employers. There were no apparent sectors of an organization that respond more readily to the living wage argument: frontline staff were only slightly more receptive than human resources, followed by volunteers, executives and management. The use of empirical data to support a values-based case was noted, as 70% of survey respondents answered that “appeal to knowledge” (rather than “appeal to emotion”) is more effective in convincing employers to implement a living wage, while 4/4 interviewees indicated the use of a values-based approach (i.e. showing employers how workers, communities, and the company can benefit from a living wage). Based on results, empirical data supporting actualized benefits to workers, communities, society, companies, etc., may be most useful when used to support values-based arguments.

### **Discussion**

At the micro level, the research adds to the literature by compiling best practices in implementing a living wage policy. Many poverty reduction advocates are now using the living wage strategy to combat poverty. One participant stated that their campaign’s biggest strength is “[their] ability to advocate on the basis that [they] recognize there are 30,000 people going to work every day but are still in poverty. This sentiment was echoed by other interviewees who mentioned how important it was for them and their campaign team to be convinced that a living wage would benefit the community. Further, nearly half of all survey participants responded that for them, the main benefit of a living wage is increased community standards of living.

At the mezzo level, the positive outcomes of the community-based research course have



been numerous (Schwartz, 2010). Its design allows students to complete a full research project, experience the ethics review process, and comprehend CBR ideals and realities of working with community partners. Social work students in this project gained exposure to prominent organizations in their community and learned about the challenges of participating in truly inclusive research projects. Students completed the course with tangible knowledge products with potential for scholarly publication, delivered their first conference presentations to their professional associations and other research groups, and finished their coursework with the knowledge that living wage advocates have used the primary information to inform their own research and/or practice. One author made the transition to employment at Vibrant Communities. This course has not only facilitated the student learning experience, but also built résumés and introduced students to professional community networks.

At the macro level, the fact that living wage advocates used the best practices information gleaned from this research in their work in advocating for a living wage is documentation of the benefit to the community of partnering with a university.

### **Limitations**

The most significant research limitation is the small sample size of participants. Technical difficulties with the survey software, and limited time (research was part of a required course in the MSW program) prevented the research time from recruiting more participants. The length of the survey (fifty questions) may have led to lower response rates as the literature on community-based research and community-campus engagement indicates community-based organizations (CBOs) are often very busy and low on various resources. Feedback was received from potential participants indicating that the questions were primarily aimed at more mature living wage campaigns, and were therefore not applicable to the entire population. Further limitations include (a) the potential that other non-advocacy individuals filled out the survey (offered via e-mail and shared on Vibrant Communities' Twitter feed), (b) inability of survey participants to ask clarification of questions from the research team, (c) the limited ability of the research team to follow-up with individuals to ensure completion of the survey, and (d) possible deliberately distorted data.

With regards to the community-based research course, limitations include finding the correct match between students and community organizations. While all researchers are at the Masters level, students come to the program from a wide range of background, interests, and strengths. Planning and meetings between the course instructor and community partner take place prior to the beginning of the semester; however, student characteristics are an unknown factor in the planning, and students are given very limited time and information for selecting their research projects. One reflexive journal was assigned to the class in each semester to provide insight into how the project is influenced by each individual, and attempt to overcome this bias. While student characteristics have not limited the living wage project in a visible sense, it is possible that differing political views and/or student strengths have limited student investment and research potential of the project.

## **Conclusion**

This has been CFICE's first trial in doing community-engaged scholarship on multiple levels, using student community service learning to complete community-based research together with project partners, facilitating community-campus engagement for poverty reduction. The student project concluded with several expected and unanticipated results. Students gained course credit and were exposed to working with community-based organizations in their field of study; students gained knowledge of community-based research; and both they and the community learned about best practices to implement a living wage. Value was also created as students took their learning outside of the classroom, presenting information to community members in a way that allowed networking and the easy dissemination of knowledge; through this process, students experienced the exchange of information between classroom and community and could see the response to their eight months of research. The community gained a trained employee, and their larger membership gained a new tool to facilitate their advocacy efforts.

Creating and managing a living wage campaign to tackle poverty reduction is a big undertaking, and advocates are still navigating the system to identify what is most successful. This study is unique as the majority of research on the living wage has been conducted in the United States. One participant specifically noted the lack of Canadian literature on the viability of the living wage as an impediment to their campaign. This information provides a good snapshot of what various groups have experienced as successful or unsuccessful strategies in varying geographical areas and situations. This study will materially contribute to the pool of knowledge on the living wage and inform advocates as they begin and continue forward with their campaigns.

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# Ukrainian Language Education Network: a Case of Engaged Scholarship

Alla Nedashkivska and Olenka Bilash

**ABSTRACT** The study explores one longitudinal case of engaged scholarship, the collaborative practices in the Ukrainian language educational network from the 1970s to the present. The focus is on the Ukrainian Language Education Centre (ULEC) at the University of Alberta, which over almost four decades has worked with the community in the development of Ukrainian education by keeping approaches to language learning and its use on the cutting edge of practice. Over the years, ULEC engaged with the community seeking to respond to the community's needs. Past and present practices of ULEC and its partners are studied through the prism of the engaged scholarship framework (Boyer, 1996; Barker, 2004; Sandmann 2008, 2009). These practices are analyzed through three strands of engagement: purposes, processes, and products, which are defined, explored, and discussed. The study also describes engaged scholarship projects related to Ukrainian language education currently being conducted by ULEC, with a focus on collaboration with communities in the production of knowledge and their potential for strengthening a network of reciprocity.

**KEYWORDS** Engaged scholarship; university-community engagement; purposes, processes, products; Ukrainian Language Education Centre (ULEC); ethnic community

## Introduction

The present article studies the Ukrainian language education network as a case of engaged scholarship (ES) in its evolution. Specifically, the study focuses on activities of the Ukrainian Language Education Centre (ULEC), housed in the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies (CIUS) at the University of Alberta, from past and present perspectives through the prism of the ES framework (Boyer, 1996; Barker, 2004; Sandmann 2008, 2009). We reflect on purposes (reasons), processes (methods) and products (outcomes) of engagement, three strands that are defined and discussed below, from the time of ULEC's inception in 1976. We study this case of engagement as an example of connecting "the rich resources of the university to our most pressing social, civic, and ethical problems, to our children, to our schools, to our teachers, and to our cities" (Boyer, 1996, p. 32). As a model of commitment to language education, ULEC has been an essential hub for both the development of Ukrainian language education in the province of Alberta (and beyond), and the creation of "knowledge for a public purpose"

(Checkoway, 2013, p. 7). Although brief histories of the creation and early initiatives of the Centre have been published (Lupul, 2005 and n.d.), no study has framed its practices within the ES framework. Therefore, in the present study, we explore the Ukrainian language network established through ULEC as a case of ES to advance two interconnected goals: (a) to present and reflect upon past and present practices of ULEC as a long term case of ES and (b) to identify and outline engagement efforts in research and collaboration with community by addressing complexities and challenges in sustaining mutually beneficial partnerships between the university and community.

### **Theoretical Framework**

In the emerging field of engaged scholarship, numerous terms define this field of inquiry: “engaged scholarship” (Franz, 2009; Sandmann 2007), “the scholarship of engagement” (Boyer, 1996 and 1997; Barker, 2004; Sandmann, 2008 and 2009; Checkoway 2013), “the scholarship of outreach and engagement” (Simpson, 2000), “community engagement” (Bernardo et al., 2013), “community-university engagement” (Brown-Luthango, 2013), “university-community engagement” (Onyx, 2008; Winter et al., 2005), “community-engaged scholarship” (Calleson, 2005), and “public engagement” (Flower, 2008) among others. In the present study, we view engaged scholarship as a two-way relationship between academia and community, in which collaboration between academia and community (on local, regional, national, or international levels) is focused on “the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity” (*Carnegie Foundation*). The concept of the community is understood as “constructed, not found—a symbolic space that comes into being when issues of mutual concern call people into existence as a public” (Flower, 2008, p. 3). As Flower (2008) notes, “the most significant feature of a community is not what or where it is (with its shifting features and overlapping boundaries) but how it *functions*. The meaning of a symbolic community is in how it works and the consequences it produces” (p. 10).

We define engaged scholarship as the academy’s call to become “a more vigorous partner in the search for answers to . . . most pressing social, civic, economic and moral problems” (Boyer, 1996, p. 11) within the community and among the various stakeholders locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. ES constitutes an engaged knowledge generation, which in contrast to traditional scholarship, is “applied, problem-centered, transdisciplinary, heterogeneous, hybrid, demand-driven, entrepreneurial, and network-embedded” (Gibbons at al. 1994). In addition, ES stresses “the mutuality of the academic-public partnership focused on producing a beneficial legacy” (Franz, 2009, p. 35).<sup>1</sup> This academic-public partnership stresses engagement

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<sup>1</sup> The academic-public partnership is normally initiated out of the expressed need of a community, a university interest in an identified community need, or an interest that is mutually beneficial to both the university and the community (Bernardo et al., 2013, p. 104).

*with* community in defining the purpose of the scholarship, in arriving at the questions driving the scholarship, and in the design, analysis, and dissemination of the scholarship. In this co-creation of knowledge and problem solving, community stakeholders (broadly defined) and faculty members, students, and staff are collaboratively involved in framing the “driving intellectual question,” in generating and interpreting the evidence, and in using the evidence for diverse purposes. (Sandmann, 2009, p. 4-5)

We propose to study the case of ES as it concerns the Ukrainian language education network through the following strands: purposes, processes, and products. These three strands are normally used as criteria for an assessment of engagement practices in higher education institutions and examined according to their alignment with the civic and democratic mission of these institutions (“New times demand new scholarship,” 2005, 2007). The concepts of “processes” and “products” (Calleson, 2005) and “purposes,” “products,” and “outcomes” (Sandmann, 2007) are found in studies that offer frameworks for measuring, documenting, and assessing engaged scholarship. In our study, we utilize this categorization to reflect on and explore engagement of the stakeholders through these three strands. We offer the following understanding of the three strands of engagement:<sup>2</sup> (a) *purposes* are the focal reasons for engagement, as well as the driving intellectual questions that are of mutual concern and/or benefit of the stakeholders at a particular point in time and space; (b) *processes* relate to methods of engagement with the stakeholders in generating and processing evidence, which include ways of co-creating knowledge by linking intellectual assets of the university to address public issues, as well as cultivating relationships of outreach and/or reciprocity; and (c) *products* are the outcomes of the engagement in using the evidence from processes at diverse levels: co-production of knowledge on community issues that transforms into concrete action steps, influencing current practices at various levels of impact, providing benefits to community and university, creating forums for multidisciplinary and multispectral audiences, securing financial support from potential funders, and disseminating scholarship at academic and public venues. We situate our arguments below within these three strands of engagement.

### **Identifying the Ukrainian Language Education Network**

In this study, we acknowledge the following stakeholders: the Ukrainian community (local, regional, national, and international), an active ethnic group within Canada’s multicultural communities; educators who oversee Ukrainian language education within the community and through professional public educational affiliations; and related academics, departments, centres and institutes.

The Ukrainian Canadian community is broad and somewhat difficult to define. Canadians who identify themselves as Ukrainian Canadians constitute 3.74% of Canada’s population of 33.5 million. In 2011, 1.25 million Canadians claimed to have Ukrainian roots, with 276,055

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<sup>2</sup> These definitions are partially inspired by Sandmann’s (2009, p. 4-5) core ideas of engagement scholarship, which are collaborative creations of knowledge and problem solving cited above.

being single origin and 975,110 having multiple origins.<sup>3</sup> The largest number of Ukrainian Canadians can be found in the provinces of Ontario, Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Quebec and Nova Scotia, with the Prairie provinces having the largest percentage of the provincial populations. In 2006, of Alberta's 3.3 million residents, 7.68% claimed Ukrainian origin. Of the 332,180 Ukrainian Albertans, 82,185 claimed single origin and 249,990 multiple origins. However, only about eight percent of Ukrainian Albertans view Ukrainian as their mother language (29,455 in 2011).<sup>4</sup> The city of Edmonton is considered to have the second largest Ukrainian population in Canada.

The community is well organized at international, national, provincial and local levels through the Ukrainian World Congress, Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC) and its provincial branches, the Ukrainian National Federation, the Ukrainian Professional and Business Association, as well as other organizations such as *PLAST*, *CYM*, *SUSK*,<sup>5</sup> Ukrainian dancing and the church. Ukrainian is offered in heritage language community schools across the country on Saturday mornings for children from 5-16 years of age. Instructors for these programs, often provincially certified teachers, collaborate to develop curricula and learning resources. In 2010, a national Ukrainian Teachers Association was formed (the previous one, initiated in the 1960s, had been inactive for at least a dozen years). These organizations all have some Ukrainian speakers and provide various forms of support for Ukrainian language development and use. For example, youth participate in weekend and summer scouting activities in Ukrainian through *PLAST* and *CYM*, while the Alberta Foundation for Ukrainian Education Society, Alberta Ukrainian Commemorative Society, Alberta Society for the Advancement of Ukrainian Studies, Canada Ukraine Foundation, Ukrainian Foundation for College Education Trust, the Shevchenko Foundation, among others, raise and distribute funds (on a competitive basis) for language and culture activities. Parents also play an important and significant role in all of the above, not only in their own organizations, but also in making most decisions about initial registration in Ukrainian language and culture activities, and then for providing long-term transportation and hours of voluntary commitment to them.

University of Alberta affiliates include ULEC and faculty members specializing in language, linguistics, literature and folklore from the Department of Modern Languages and Cultural Studies (MLCS) in the Faculty of Arts, as well as academic staff in the Faculty of Education. Other professionals interested in or responsible for Ukrainian language education include

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<sup>3</sup> 2011 Statistics Canada National Household Survey: <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/dp-pd/dt-td/Rp-eng.cfm?LANG=E&APATH=3&DETAIL=0&DIM=0&FL=A&FREE=0&GC=0&GID=0&G-K=0&GRP=1&PID=105396&PRID=0&PTYPE=105277&S=0&SHOWALL=0&SUB=0&Temporal=2013&THEME=95&VID=0&VNAMEE&VNAMEF>

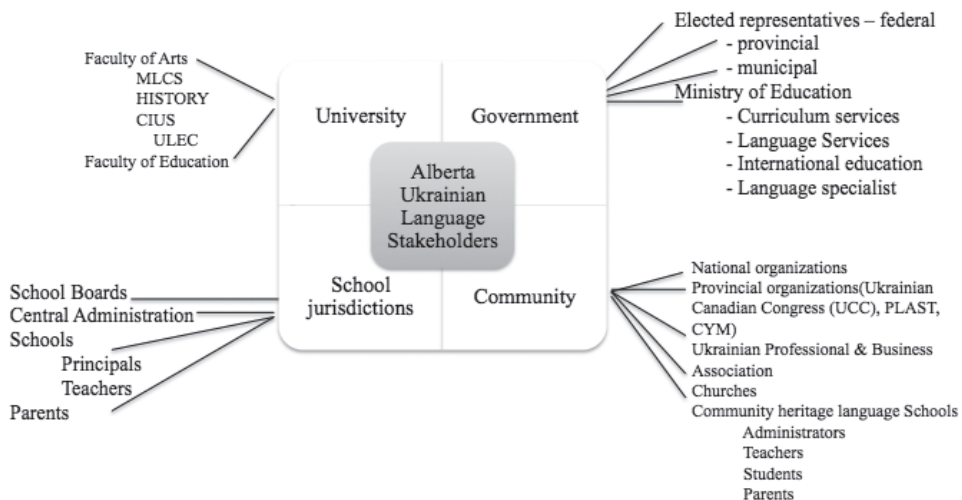
<sup>4</sup> Demographics of Alberta: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics\\_of\\_Alberta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Alberta) and <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/hlt/97-562/pages/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo=PR&Code=48&Data=Count&Table=2&StartRec=1&Sort=3&Display=All&CSDFilter=5000>

<sup>5</sup> *PLAST* and *CYM* are Ukrainian scouting organizations, and *SUSK* is the Ukrainian Canadian Students' Union.



consultants and directors of languages in the Alberta Ministry of Education, as well as local school boards, teachers and administrators in publicly funded schools that offer Ukrainian language instruction. In 1997 members of these groups formed the Ukrainian Language Education Consortium (ULECON) comprised of educational stakeholders whose mandate is to facilitate the formation of partnerships for carrying out mutually beneficial Ukrainian language projects in the following areas: learning resource development, acquisition and publication; curriculum development; student assessment; student and educator exchanges; and professional development of educators.

The cross section of participants in the Ukrainian language network of Alberta seen in Figure 1 is paralleled in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, though both are smaller in scale.



In this paper, we study the Ukrainian language education network through the three strands of engagement: purposes, processes, and products, as defined above. Because ES “is influenced by the specific mission and history of universities, and the location of individual campuses” (Winter et al., 2005, p. 11-12), as well as histories of the stakeholders, we propose to begin the discussion from a historical perspective.

### Ukrainian Language Education Network: Past

*Early beginnings.* Among the social, civic, economic and moral issues (Boyer, 1996, p. 11) of the 1970s was the initiation of programs that reflected Canada’s new policy of multiculturalism. The Ukrainian community was eager to enact this policy and the U of A benefitted from being a leader in its enactment. Specifically, the establishment of the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies (CIUS) in 1976 happened in the context of the advent and growth of federal and provincial policies on multiculturalism in Canada, as well as a response to the Ukrainian community’s concern about the policy of increasing Russification in the Ukrainian

Soviet Socialist Republic. Leaders from the Ukrainian Canadian community advocated strongly for the implementation of legislation that recognized Canada as a multicultural country and society, in line with the recommendations made in 1963 by the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. The Commission was instructed to take into account contributions made to Canada by the other ethnic groups to the cultural enrichment of Canada and the measures that should be taken to safeguard that contribution (“Report of the royal,” 1970). This framework allowed Ukrainian Canadians to claim that governments have an obligation to support minority languages and cultures in public institutions (Petryshyn & Bilash, 2014). CIUS was created to advance Ukrainian Canadian studies, encourage studies about Ukraine, and support the teaching of Ukrainian in the Ukrainian(-English) Bilingual program (UBP) by producing bilingual teaching and student learning resources. ULEC was established in 1976 within CIUS to meet the needs of the UBP. Adapted after the French immersion experiment of Lambert in the late 1960s, the UBP was a pedagogic innovation that spread to other language groups across three provinces and yielded a network of professionals dedicated to Ukrainian language education.

*Purposes.* The vision for ULEC was established by CIUS’ first Director, Dr. Manoly R. Lupul: “Oversight of the bilingual program was an integral part of the “Detailed Proposal” for the institute” (Lupul, n.d., p. 45). How far this responsibility had to stretch was clear in Lupul’s (n.d.) mind, though not always easily accomplished: “Practically, oversight of the bilingual program meant that the institute’s role had to encompass much more than the teacher education discussed in the ‘Detailed Proposal’ ” (p. 45). It included servicing, expanding and sustaining the UBP as well as developing a library collection.

*Processes.* Lupul (n.d.) recognized the collaboration that would be required to provide security and support for the evolution of the UBP and set out to hold monthly meetings of all of the stakeholders, which he chaired: the Faculty of Education, including curriculum committees and School Book Branch, the school boards’ language supervisors and consultants, the teachers’ professional organization and the parents’ associations. He noted that establishing the relationships was very challenging because the teachers and public officials “did not always appreciate input from the academy – the proverbial ivory tower” (p. 45-46). ULEC’s first director Olenka Bilash followed up on all points discussed. Lupul and Bilash both recognized the need to integrate the UBP onto the agenda of all groups involved in language education, a network-embedded engagement, despite the fact that many of these responsibilities extended beyond what would normally have been considered the university’s mandate.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> “To improve the skills of bilingual teachers, courses in the Faculty of Education were needed. To maximize enrolments, the annual recruitment campaigns by parent-led associations had to be assisted. To increase the pool of possible student recruits, extension of the educational ladder downward to the nursery school was important. To reinforce language learning in public schools, the community’s own language schools (the *riadni shkoly*) had to be reoriented to supplement, rather than duplicate, the bilingual classes. To help the Ukrainian community to access government programs, representation on departmental committees was important. To develop additional Ukrainian teaching materials, expansion of the program in Alberta and elsewhere (especially in the Prairies) was also important. To provide a forum for pedagogical issues, a strong professional teachers’ organization was needed, especially for those in the bilingual program. And to provide to the university, the department and the teachers with readily accessible resource materials, a first-class Ukrainian Language Resource Centre had to be created” (Lupul, n.d., p. 45-46).

Lupul supported Bilash's efforts to develop a full stream of access points for Ukrainian language learning and use for youth, especially for those from homes in which Ukrainian was not the primary language of communication: from Ukrainian language pre-schools to summer camps and immersion programs for high school students who resided outside of the city. This approach would be documented by Fishman over a decade later as strategies for prevention and revitalization of communities that had succumbed to language shift (Fishman, 1991, 2001) and reflects actions taken by Francophones hors de Québec to increase language use among youth (Moulun-Pasek, 2000). To this end the processes at work were also politically facilitated.<sup>7</sup>

*Products.* In its early years, ULEC attempted to create five significant products, evidence of multilayered engagement: a Ukrainian Bilingual Resource Centre, a local network of language use projects for children in the UBP (discussed as multiple access points in the foregoing), a publication "Why Bilingual Education?" and a videotape that served to promote bilingual education and "assist in recruitment" (Lupul, n.d., p. 47), as well as the lobbying for a liberal approach to second language promotion at the university level. Efforts to create a coordinating body for UBP were not successful.

Originally known as the Ukrainian Bilingual Resource Centre in CIUS, ULEC in its early years (1976-80) focused on amassing all language learning resources available in the West. The centre was "designed to become *the* place in Canada where all the materials important to teaching Ukrainian at the pre-university level could be accessed by teachers and researchers" and housed a variety of print and audiovisual resources and teaching aids (Lupul, n.d., p. 46-47) gathered from collections in New York, New Jersey, Toronto and Edmonton, where the largest Ukrainian Book Store in the diaspora was located.

ES in these years tapped into the knowledge of academics to serve the community in new ways. It took the form of assisting the community in imagining new possibilities and the community responded to many of the initiatives, showing both demand-driven and network-embedded engagement. Parents eagerly supported summer camps for their children and worked hard to organize recruitment and advocacy meetings. In order to provide assistance

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<sup>7</sup> "Bilash was a regular dynamo who not only developed the Resource Centre but imaginatively reached out to others . . . . [H]er initiatives were encouraged and funded as generously as possible. A former Ukrainian University Students' Union (SUSK) president, she knew how to access government grants, and my political influence occasionally assisted her. In 1978, for example, her "Camp Osvita," a summer day-camp project for the Ukrainian Bilingual Association (UBLA) budgeted at \$10,000, had received \$2,500 from Alberta Culture, the standard educational grant. After parental fees, the shortfall was \$1,680, which my letter to Minister Horst Schmid, coupled with a phone call from Savaryn, quickly remedied. Next year, having learned that two of Edmonton's day-camp directors were of Ukrainian origin and fluently bilingual, Bilash and the UBLA approached the Parks and Recreation Department to establish two Ukrainian day camps. Rebuffed, I then wrote Alf Savage, the city commissioner for public affairs, known to me from my days on the Edmonton Historical Board, and Bilash got her camps. In 1981, with Bilash proposing five UBLA camp counselors through a federal Summer Youth Employment Program, Laurence Decore, Bill Pidruchney and I (from the Multicultural Committee) met with Savage, and the department again accommodated the camps. Besides the day camps, Bilash initiated the "Summer Immersion" (Osvita) secondary school courses (Ukrainian 10, 20 and 30) at St. John's Institute in 1979 and the Ukrainian language daycare and play school at St. Matthew Separate School in September 1979" (Lupul, n.d., p. 46).

with recruitments, “in February 1978 the institute published *Why Bilingual Education?* A well-researched brochure by Olenka Bilash; *Osvita*, a videotape also by her, followed.”<sup>8</sup> Bilash utilized these and other resources to educate elected officials as well as parents, administrators and teachers, while travelling throughout Alberta and to Saskatchewan and Manitoba to explain and promote Ukrainian Bilingual education. Lupul also engaged additional academic staff in these efforts. Roman Petryshyn was involved in local recruitment efforts and Bohdan Medwidsky from the Slavic Department was seconded by CIUS to promote the program (Lupul, n.d., p. 47).

The Institute and rich resources of the university served, as Boyer (1996) would describe several decades later, “the most pressing social, civic, and ethical problems” of the era of introducing the new policy of multiculturalism (p. 32). Lupul was unrelenting in his vision for languages in this emerging policy. A member of the Canadian Consultative Council on Multiculturalism, he also attempted to bring its tenets to the University of Alberta.<sup>9</sup>

Arguments favouring multiculturalism addressed to bodies like the University of Alberta Senate invariably included languages (Lupul, n.d., p. 50). In January 1980, a Task Force on Second Languages at the University of Alberta, chaired by Joseph Kandler, was established. This committee prepared recommendations to the U of A and the government, one of which was to (re-)introduce the second-language entrance requirement. Despite this steady and strategic lobby, the Senate did not approve it. Later in 1982, the Senate, chaired by Peter Savaryn, who was determined to continue discussions on this matter, established a Progress Review Committee for Second Languages, which, albeit furthering its efforts towards second language instruction, remained unsuccessful well until the mid-1980s (Lupul, n.d., p. 50-52).

ULEC again attempted to play a coordinating role to ensure the UBP’s future through its early years by hosting monthly meetings of consultants from the local school boards, representatives of the provincial government’s Department of Education and the Faculty of Arts, school trustees, principals, teachers and community heritage language schools. While the exchange was beneficial and resulted in quick responses to needs expressed by teachers (e.g. constructing travelling libraries), the committee was short-lived as jurisdictions resisted any form of coordination, particularly from the U of A.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> These products earned Bilash and ULEC recognition for their contribution to bilingual education from Joshua Fishman, Yeshiva University.

<sup>9</sup> As Lupul notes, “by the early 1970s the study of languages was no longer required for either high school matriculation or undergraduate (and most graduate) degrees in state universities in North America, part of the continent’s gradual abandonment of liberal education at the postsecondary level. Second languages were very vulnerable on utilitarian grounds and their demise on campuses had a devastating impact on their study in the public schools, a likely factor in the low bilingual enrolments” (n.d., p. 50).

<sup>10</sup> “As limited as was the institute’s impact on the bilingual program on campus, its influence was no greater off campus. Confined largely to political brokerage among the program’s various stakeholders—the parents, the teachers, the school boards, the departmental officials, the politicians—the institute could determine little of what actually occurred in the classroom. It was at best a facilitator—a go-between—among the program’s various caretakers” (Lupul, n.d., p. 51).

From 1977-1979, Lupul continued to invite a number of stakeholders for periodic meetings to “air and possibly resolve mutual problems.” To Lupul’s amazement, he discovered “how real or imagined bureaucratic restrictions, as well as personal feelings and mutual suspicions, could inhibit the sharing of information, despite the similarity of interests” (Lupul, n.d., p. 51). This jockeying for power led ULEC in the coming decades to expand its network-embedded practice, that of building relationships within the provincial government in order to stay abreast of changes in mandates, tapping into resources, and capturing opportunities. It would be almost two decades before these groups recognized the benefits of collaboration and united to create ULECON.

In its early years, ULEC began to build its network in ways that Bernardo et al. (2013) might consider as the university leading the community. Academics took cutting-edge ideas, informed community groups and co-participated in their enactment. The community participated knowing that these initiatives were shaping the next generation of its membership. This collective social capital led the charge to reconstruct the symbolic space of both the Ukrainian and other ethnic communities (Prokop, 2009).

### **The 1980s**

In this decade, the universities heightened their recognition of an obligation to attend to public needs and assist community in solving their social problems. Derek Bok (1982), Harvard University President in the early 1980s, reconsidered basic academic values and questioned the emerging ethical and social responsibilities of universities. Specifically, Bok underscored the need for universities to re-evaluate their academic efforts with respect to social problems and relationships with society, and called for universities to be leaders in social reform, importantly through academic means (Bok, 1982).

*Purposes.* As noted above, ULEC was established at CIUS in response to the needs of the then newly created UBP, a demand-driven engagement of the 1970s. Even prior to the publication of Fishman’s Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (1991), the Ukrainian community recognized the importance of establishing language programs in both the community and state/public institutions in order to keep the language (a crucial part of identity) alive by maximizing sites for development and use of professional domains of language for the youngest generations and future community leadership. By the 1980s, having progressed through several pilot stages, the Ukrainian-English program had become a prototype for publicly funded bilingual programs in seven other languages (Arabic, Chinese, Cree, German, Hebrew, Polish, and Spanish) in Alberta and spread to the other prairie provinces (Sokolowski, 2000). If the driving intellectual question of the 1970s focussed on overturning monolingual attitudes toward bi- and multi-lingual education, the focus for the 1980s turned toward the classroom and applying cutting-edge research to creating learning resources and offering teacher professional development, demonstrating applied ES. During the 1980s, the UBP became a permanent part of Alberta’s education system and university expertise was needed to attend to this community need. The recruitment challenge remained and new challenges emerged, including ones with the community language schools, which in Lupul’s (n.d.) view

“functioned as alternatives to the bilingual classes,” instead of being supplementary, thus competing for enrollments with the UBP (p. 54-55). At this time political influence in the development of the network studied remained visible and required.

*Processes.* In the 1980s, ULEC became immersed in applied ES, that is learning resource development. Xenia Turko had written a set of readers and workbooks for the UBP, funded by a special grant from the provincial government. This basal approach to early literacy was more suited to first language speakers, and was not aligned with current bilingual literacy approaches. Further, Turko’s successor in the provincial government, John Sokolowski, and Bilash, who had moved on to establish a UBP, German bilingual program and French immersion program in a neighboring school jurisdiction, noted “the stacks” of materials for the French program and the paucity in the Ukrainian one. With Sokolowski’s guidance, Bilash undertook a feasibility study of a new Ukrainian-language development series, inspired by the French *Méthode dynamique*.

*Products.* In May 1983, “with the study completed, Bilash and Sokolowski approached CIUS, which they saw as a partial source of funding for a language series projected at \$600,000. Such were the origins of what eventually came to be known as the institute’s ‘Nova Project’” (Lupul, n.d., p. 58). Lupul (n.d.) strongly supported the project, assisted with fundraising, albeit seeing the project as a very ambitious undertaking with a budget “prohibitively high and likely to increase” (p. 58). Interestingly, he also noted that in the 1980s, this project was seen as non-academic and “outside the institute’s scholarly mandate” (p. 58), an example of the challenges faced in the ES practices of the time. By the mid-1980s, Bilash had developed a complete draft of *Nova* 1-3 and by the end of the decade had collaborated with Kathy Sosnowski and Sokolowski to complete *Nova* 4-6. The publishing of these resources, as Lupul predicted, was an enormous financial undertaking, and despite the strong capital investment in *Nova* of the Ukrainian Professional and Business Association, the search for support to complete the language development series continued and continues. Financial challenges aside, results documenting the learning of Ukrainian through the *Nova* approach proved positive (Ewanyshyn, 1985).

Later in the decade, ULEC had two new directors. Andriy Hornjatkevych completed the cataloguing of the children’s library collections and still later, Anna Biscoe (1987-1990) undertook the following: prepared and completed for piloting *Nova* 1, 2 and most of 3 materials, especially the illustrations; coordinated and carried out the piloting of *Nova* 1 with Bilash (*Nova*’s author) at Edmonton Public and Edmonton Catholic schools; and met with teachers and community members in Lamont and Vegreville to establish Alberta Parents for Ukrainian Education society, which provided opportunities for parents of students in the province’s varied Ukrainian programs. The successes were mirrored in Manitoba by Myron Spolsky, who assisted the emergence of Manitoba Parents for Ukrainian Education.

As Lupul (n.d.) has so carefully documented in his memoirs, ULEC’s activities and products fully integrated not only the creative linguistic and cultural knowledge, skills and talents of children of the then third and most recent wave of immigration from Ukraine, but also the political and financial capital of people like Peter Savaryn, Laurence Décor, Mary

Lobay, Bill Pidruchney, members of the Ukrainian and Professional Business Association, and Lupul himself (p. 45-51). University expertise and intellectual capital meshed with political, financial and social capital from community organizations to sustain the applied and network-embedded ES, which, as many would write in later decades was, underappreciated (Boyer, 1990; Sandmann, 2008). In fact, Bilash's emerging expertise as a language resource designer would be taken up by First Nations communities and publishers. As Simpson has noted, "Sometimes the very act of application leads to new insights, methods, policies, theories and practices that contribute directly to the scholarship of discovery and integration" (2000, p. 9).

### **The 1990s**

The next few decades witnessed the continued thrust for parity in bilingual programming. ULEC leadership played an instrumental role in putting languages on the political agenda and in the integration of technology. In addition, in 1991, Ukraine gained its independence and this shifted many practices of the network. Specifically, independence not only allowed for the building of relationships with new educational stakeholders in Ukraine, but also led to reconsideration of various practices within the Ukrainian language education network under study.

*Purposes.* During the 1990s, the Ukrainian language education network might be considered as an early adopter of technological innovation of the time. ULEC director Marusia Petryshyn (1990-2013) vowed to complete a set of print and digital learning resources for K-12 students in the UBP. With Ukraine's independence, new partnerships became available. Responding to the demands of the time, Petryshyn also strove to build capacity of teachers to become learning resource developers and facilitators of professional development for the *Nova* series.

*Processes.* Driven by intellectual questions about developing learning resources, Petryshyn actively sought funds to support the above projects and in so doing led ULEC into the international arena. With funding possibilities being tied to collaboration, ULEC partnered with government and a variety of community agencies across Canada and internationally (e.g. leading the demand-driven creation of the national Ukrainian Knowledge Internet Portal Consortium (UKiP-CA in the early 2000s) and working with a guild of children's writers in Ukraine), showcasing demand-driven, applied and network-embedded engagement (whose network had now extended from local and provincial to national and international levels). Such initiatives also aligned with the rising focus on both technology and internationalization of universities (Sadlak, 2000; Morley, 2013).

*Products.* The 1990s were marked by responses to teacher-generated queries and demands for continued learning resource development: as extensive piloting of *Nova* 1-6 continued, teachers across the continent requested in-servicing on the *Nova* approach; teachers in junior-high requested learning resources for students and a draft proposal for *Collage* was born; queries on literacy practices led to research (Bilash, 1998; Bilash, 2002); inquiries about grammar in the whole language approach of *Nova* resulted in collaboration with linguists to explore grammar concurrences; and the long-term struggle to create high interest, low vocabulary texts for learners sparked projects with writers from Ukraine to generate more contemporary

language use in the diaspora. New partnerships for a variety of digital products and teacher professional development projects with teachers in the broader diaspora (e.g. in Australia, England, Germany, Poland, Serbia, and the United States) were also cultivated.

As mentioned earlier, ULECON, a consortium of professionals in the education field, was established in 1997. This consortium brought and continues to bring together educational stakeholder groups whose mandate is to facilitate the formation of partnerships for carrying out mutually beneficial Ukrainian language projects. Membership includes ULEC, MLCS, Faculty of Education, Alberta's Ministry of Education, the Alberta Teachers' Association, and each school board offering Ukrainian language education.

Since its inception, the products of ULECON have been (a) Western Canadian Protocol Bilingual International Languages Programming Framework (in collaboration with Saskatchewan Education, Manitoba Education, Edmonton Public Schools, Alberta Education, 1998); (b) celebrations of the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the UBP (1998-2000); (c) summer professional development institutes (1998, 2000); (d) Team Canada Trip to Ukraine for resource acquisition and investigation of teacher/student exchanges; (e) Building Community Conference (1998); (f) Ukrainian Language Arts Development Project (1999-2000); (g) International Languages Symposium (2000); (h) piloting of the Ukrainian Language Entrance Exam for Foreign Students (2005-06); (i) development of Ukrainian Language Arts Performance Assessment Tasks (grades 2-9) (2005-14); and (j) facilitation of school twinnings (since 2008). ULEC has played an instrumental role in keeping abreast of initiatives in language learning, seeking equitable opportunities for lesser used languages such as Ukrainian, and securing funding for such equity projects through government and community organizations, thus sustaining its applied and network-embedded practices. And because ULECON does not include parent groups or community schools, ULEC has created new liaisons with these groups, widening its local network.

The 1990s revealed that ULEC's ES continued as demand-driven, applied and network-embedded with its network expanding and its reputation growing at all levels from local to international.

### **The 2000s**

*Purposes.* Working with ULECON members and partners across eleven language groups in the province, the Ukrainian language education network began the new millennium by participating actively in Alberta's attempt to see a second language become a compulsory part of a student's education in the province (2001-2006). However, in February 2006, then Education Minister Gene Zwozdesky reported that "10 of Alberta's 62 school boards, mainly serving rural areas, are not ready to offer the language programming and to push ahead would be a mistake" (The Edmonton Journal, B1, February 26, 2006). A few months later, in reaction to resistance and uncertainty throughout the province, he announced that the language initiative had been indefinitely postponed.

Meanwhile, Petryshyn's leadership continued into another decade of print and online learning resource development, research related to learning resource development (Bilash,



2005; Bilash, 2007; Bilash & Shyyan, 2015), collaboration, fund raising for resource development and digitization projects, a UBP high school graduation recognition project, and securing a consultant from Ukraine in Alberta Education (akin to the consultants from China, Germany, Japan and Spain who were sponsored by their governments to support language learning). With K-12 learning resources underway and an applied linguist at the post-secondary level secured in MLCS, ULEC was now able to give needed consideration to high school credentials and university level learning resources. Attention to enrollment issues was addressed by attempts to have the Ukrainian Canadian Congress (Alberta Provincial Council) coordinate parental and other groups involved in advocacy and promotion of the UBP. On the civic front, ULEC also contributed significantly to another effort to bring second language learning to the public agenda (Huculak, Kastelan-Sikora, & Bilash, 2008). However, the biggest challenge was perhaps responding to the revised mission of the University of Alberta, a part of the globalizing and standardizing process of aiming to become more research-focused institutes (Sadlak, 2008; “Dare to discover”).

*Processes.* Since its inception, ULEC, in Boyer’s terms (1996) has had an obligation to be “vigorously engaged in the issues of [its] day” (p. 28). In the 2000s, the centre continued its ES through collaboration with community organizations at various levels to keep approaches to language learning and language use on the cutting edge of practice. As European languages began to create international exams for fuller participation in the multilingual European Union, and such exams were available to Canadian high school students (e.g. Delf in French or Dele in Spanish), ULEC facilitated a partnership with Ukraine’s L’viv University to offer a similar international exam for high school students in the UBP. Those students who achieved a score of over 80% qualified to study at the university level in Ukraine.

Among its many projects, the field of online communication was a focus in the work of both ULEC-CIUS and MacEwan University’s Ukrainian Resource and Development Centre (URDC) who had collaborated on advancing multi-modal online communications with Alberta Learning, UKiP-CA and the high school series *Bud’mo* for the UBP, thus reaching children, teachers and parents of the UBP across Canada, as Lupul had envisioned in the 1970s. In addition, ULEC’s collaborative networks brought technology into the fore in the early 2000s with the establishment of a portal and an interactive animated website to teach language learning strategy use (*oomRoom*).

*Products.* With respect to post-secondary education, in its early years as noted above, ULEC lobbied for a liberal approach to second language promotion. However, the development of products for post-secondary Ukrainian language and culture education were not in the focus of the ES practices of the Ukrainian network until the first decade of 2000s.<sup>11</sup> In the early 1990s (continuing to present), resource development for teaching and learning Ukrainian at

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<sup>11</sup> At this time ULEC’s director Marusia Petryshyn supported the idea of publishing the first textbook for advanced Ukrainian for post-secondary levels “Ukrainian through its living culture” written by Alla Nedashkivska and published by the University of Alberta Press in 2010, by assisting with fundraising for the project.

the post-secondary level was carried out by individual professors Andrij Hornjatkevych, Natalia Pylypiuk and Oleh Ilnytzkyj in MLCS, joined in 1999 by Alla Nedashkivska.

During the second decade of the 2000s, ULEC broadened its scope of ES, casting its net into the process of developing resources and support for post-secondary Ukrainian education, thus widening its applied focus. Currently, in collaboration with faculty and graduate students from MLCS, two resource development projects are being carried out: an online textbook for Business Ukrainian (Nedashkivska, 2014c), including related research (Nedashkivska, 2014a,b), and Blended-learning resources for teaching and learning beginners' Ukrainian, a model that combines traditional in-class instruction with an online component (Nedashkivska, Sivachenko, and Perets, 2014). Both are contributions to the growing field of computer-assisted learning and instruction of foreign languages (CALI). Furthermore, Nedashkivska was becoming sought after for her expertise in blended learning across campus. More recently, ULEC has continued to promote CALI by offering workshops to UBP teachers on utilizing technology and posting strategies on its Facebook page so as to be accessible across the country and beyond, thus strengthening its network at several levels.

### **Ukrainian Language Education Network: Present**

The second decade of 2000s continues to redefine the university, its mission and organization, influencing the direction of ES in Ukrainian language education. As Lupul had predicted, the development and production of K-12 learning resources was an enormous financial and human resource undertaking. Its support through fund-raising with and by community groups continues as it seeks to benefit Ukrainian language learners and the next generation of the community. Unfortunately, this is often in competition with calls for aid to Ukraine in light of its fight for independence. Developing and publishing learning resources for the public school audience has never been seen to fit neatly into the U of A's mandate. Furthermore, changing demographics have increased enrollment challenges. When Ukraine was not accessible for courses and travel, those interested in Ukrainian studies flocked to Canadian universities, foremost among them the University of Alberta. However, its independence in 1991 opened new doors abroad, so at a time when the University of Alberta cuts created minimal class sizes for courses to be offered, competition for students was at its peak.

*Purposes.* As in earlier decades, enrollments have always been a pressing matter for Ukrainian language programs. Declining enrolments across Canada have rendered publicly funded and supported Ukrainian language programs at risk. Despite the fact that UNESCO's vision for a pluri-lingual world posits that every person would speak at least three languages (a mother tongue, a local or regional language, and an international language), globalization and social media have anglicised or English-ified much of the world, shaping the North American public attitude that other languages are of less value and expanding the gap between international languages and less commonly used languages such as Ukrainian. These trends have been accompanied by a decreasing birthrate in Canada (Foot, 1999). Further, while other bilingual programs (Chinese, Spanish, Arabic) are strengthened by immigration, the number

of Ukrainian or Slavic language speaking immigrants has decreased.<sup>12</sup>

These trends fall short as explanations for policy and decision makers rendering fragile the stability of the UBP and Ukrainian studies at the University of Alberta. In fact, in 2013, one of the last acts of the former Superintendent of Edmonton Public Schools was to cancel the UBP (Wittmeier, 2013). In 2013, the provincial government of Alberta continued funding rollbacks to the post-secondary educational system as well. The Ukrainian Culture, Language and Literature program was cited as not supporting a sufficient number of students pursuing the Ukrainian Major and the option of a BA Major in Ukrainian was eliminated. The Faculty of Arts introduced a quota system of class approval, which led several courses in Ukrainian studies to be cancelled due to insufficient enrolment. This troubling news for the Ukrainian programs from kindergarten to university sparked reactions from both the University of Alberta and the community.

*Processes.* To attend to these mounting concerns, an informal, ad-hoc sustainability committee was formed in spring of 2013, which included concerned members of the community from various walks of life, but all sharing the one common goal to respond to the time-sensitive issues related to Ukrainian education in the province, specifically, its preservation, development, enrollments, and promotion. The work of the committee represented a forum between the U of A and the community on issues that both identified as sources of tribulation that needed collaborative solving, that is, a problem-centered engagement. In 2013, a ULEC advisory board, composed of representatives of Ukrainian community and professional organizations, was established, which continued the forum around the future of Ukrainian studies. These undertakings led to the initiation of a series of research projects, the aims of which are to involve the community for the good of both the community and the U of A. Although collaborative efforts were foregrounded during the forum, it became clear that ULEC was to take the lead, acting on its mandate to develop Ukrainian language education in Canada and abroad. Below are examples of ES projects on Ukrainian language education currently being conducted by ULEC, with a focus on collaboration *with* communities in the production of knowledge and their potential for strengthening the network of reciprocity.

From a small multi-school exit survey of parents and students in grades 6 and 9 in 2013, ULEC learned that there are new constituencies of parents (e.g. recent immigrants from Ukraine) with children in UBP and their responses to the survey revealed different expectations of UBP than other parents. The survey also revealed that not all parents are content with all aspects of the UBP; however, their reasons and requests have not been studied in detail. Further, several changes are taking place at the post-secondary level and to our knowledge, aside from our study which is described below, no other study of the needs and motivations of students in university Ukrainian studies has been carried out.

While bodies such as the European Bureau for Lesser-Used Languages strengthens

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<sup>12</sup> Demographics of Alberta: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics\\_of\\_Alberta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Alberta) and <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/hlt/97-562/pages/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo=PR&Code=48&Data=Count&Table=2&StartRec=1&Sort=3&Display=All&CSDFilter=5000>

contacts and mutual co-operation between 46 million speakers of lesser-used languages and facilitates links and communications between these communities and European institutions, North American education, and in particular that of Alberta, is being shaped by five new and different trends. First, in 2012, the province passed a new Education Act, which redefined the roles of students, teachers, principals, superintendents and trustees, thus changing the educational landscape. Second, Alberta Education has organized a one-day symposium with the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer Languages Articulation Committee to develop articulation between secondary and post-secondary schools in the area of languages. Third, preliminary research in Alberta suggests that twenty-first-century parents use different ways of searching for schools and programs, and have distinct ways of seeking out a quality education program for their children (Bossetti, 2004). Fourth, a large groundbreaking national study in the U. S. identified six educational program preferences of parents: pragmatic job-related programs; a citizenship and leadership orientation; a focus on high test scores; a desire for strong multicultural experience; a fine arts emphasis; and a strong academic focus (Zeehandelaar & Northern, 2013).<sup>13</sup> Finally, research in second-language acquisition at the post-secondary level shows that there is a shift in motivational factors driving students' learning process and its success (Dörnyei, 2001, Lamb, 2004, Chen et al., 2005, Shahbaz & Liu, 2012). In this new landscape, the following research questions were formulated: Why do some UBP graduates send their children to the UBP and others do not? Why are some parents choosing to send their children to Ukrainian language community schools or activities such as *CYM* and *PLAST*, but not the UBP? Why are people willing to donate funds to support Ukrainian language programs but not send their children to them? Why are university students willing to support and rally for Ukrainian causes but not take Ukrainian studies classes? What motivates and what de-motivates university students to take Ukrainian? What do twenty-first-century parents and students look for in quality educational programming and how do they think the UBP and university offerings could be strengthened?

*Products.* These research questions were addressed by designing six interrelated studies, thereby engaging in the process of creating knowledge by linking intellectual assets of the university to areas of public concern. The data for these studies is collected by using both questionnaires and interviews. The first study consists of an online survey of pre-school parents looking at how they select schools. This study will serve to provide evidence for a base of strategies used by the general public in the Edmonton area. The second study interviews approximately 50 parents with children in the UBP to learn about their reasons for choosing the UBP and their expectations. The third research project interviews a dozen parents who send their children to Ukrainian community activities (e.g. *CYM*, *PLAST*, *Kuryy*, *Ridna shkola*), but not the UBP. These three studies will offer comparable data that should reveal patterns in decision-making (or not) between different constituencies.

The fourth study focuses specifically on Ukrainian Saturday schools, consisting of an on-

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<sup>13</sup> See <http://edexcellence.net/publications/what-parents-want.html>

line survey for parents in order to learn what motivates them to enroll their children in these schools, which factors contribute to student learning success from parents' perspective, and which aspects of the programs promote sustainability and influence retention rates. The fifth study focuses on the post-secondary level, specifically, what motivates or de-motivates university students to pursue Ukrainian studies. The sixth study constitutes an in-depth visioning process for ULEC 2030. By tapping into the aspirations of youth, parents, young professionals from many walks of life, and the wisdom of community elders from local to international levels, the aim is to broaden understandings of ES and mobilize a new perspective on scholarly work: "a way to think about the totality of faculty work in ways that connect it with the greater public good" (Ward, 2005, p. 227).

All six of the above studies will provide a basis for comparing attitudes, strategies, preferences and perspectives of different parents and adult students, as well as educators in the Ukrainian language network. At the current stage of the ES projects outlined above, community partners participate as true partners in the "purpose" strand of engagement, that is, in formulating the driving questions to be addressed. In the "process" strand, community involvement can be described as that of providing research participants, which, although not purely reciprocal in the process of knowledge creation, provides the community with an outlet through which they can air their needs and opinions, thus contributing to our mutual understanding of the functioning of the community, a significant step toward developing a shared purpose. As Checkoway (2013) notes, "[p]eople are practicing the 'scholarship of engagement' when they develop knowledge for a public purpose" (p. 7). In the six studies discussed, the public consists principally of the Ukrainian community. As such, this serves as a well-researched case that can shed light on other ethnic minorities, each of which can draw upon the experience of others to aid in its own work. As an added advantage, this then broadens the general public's understanding and approach to diversity.

The research projects discussed exemplify ES by addressing pressing issues of the community that affect the society at many levels. We agree with Boyer (1996, 1997), who notes: "each stage of research—from defining the problem, to gathering information, to using the findings—can have civic potential" (cited in Checkoway, 2013, p. 12). The primary product of the research projects outlined above is new knowledge that offers insights into the decision-making processes and strategies used by those who make decisions about school- and program-choice. The results will be of benefit to school jurisdictions, principals, teachers, parents, and community organizations, as well as post-secondary institutions and students.

In general, the studies discussed contribute to ES research on community issues that will result in transformative outcomes at individual, community and societal levels, ultimately leading to concrete and relevant action steps and applications in society, that is, from a problem-centered to an applied engagement.

### **Ukrainian Language Education Network: Discussion**

We propose to review the Ukrainian language education network practices, looking at their evolution at each strand of engagement. Chart 1 summarizes the purposes, processes and products of engagement.

**Chart 1: Summary of the Purposes, Products and Processes of ULEC over four decades of engagement**

<b>Time period</b>	<b>Purposes</b>	<b>Processes</b>	<b>Products</b>	<b>Engagement</b>
1970s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish language programs in community and state/public institutions</li> <li>• Service, expand and sustain UBP</li> <li>• Develop library collection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings of stakeholders</li> <li>• Political capital</li> <li>• Full stream of access points for Ukrainian language learning</li> <li>• University and government lobbying through new policy of multiculturalism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ukrainian Bilingual Resource Centre</li> <li>• “Osvita” summer camps</li> <li>• Publication and video “Why Bilingual Education?”</li> <li>• Lobbying for SL promotion at the university level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demand-driven</li> <li>• Network-embedded (local, provincial levels)</li> </ul>
1980s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop learning resources (gr 1-6)</li> <li>• Develop teacher competencies</li> <li>• Sustain and grow enrollments in UBP</li> <li>• Expand bilingual education into other languages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic plan for the development of learning resource (<i>Nova</i>)</li> <li>• Financial capital from Ukrainian Professional and Business Association</li> <li>• Political capital</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Catalogue of library holdings</li> <li>• Pilot of <i>Nova</i></li> <li>• Establishment of parents organization</li> <li>• In-services for teachers across North America</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applied</li> <li>• Network-embedded (network is expanded to national level)</li> </ul>
1990s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop learning resources print and digital (gr K-12)</li> <li>• Build capacity of teachers as learning resource developers</li> <li>• Build new relationships with Ukraine</li> <li>• Study learning resources and their development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration with government, community agencies across Canada and internationally, including Ukraine</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extensive pilot of <i>Nova</i></li> <li>• Creation of Collage series (gr. 7-9)</li> <li>• Research on language learning</li> <li>• New consortium of educators ULECON</li> <li>• Early adoption of technology</li> <li>• Partnerships with Ukraine</li> <li>• Partnerships with the broader diasporas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demand-driven</li> <li>• Applied</li> <li>• Network-embedded (network is expanded to international level)</li> </ul>

Time period	Purposes	Processes	Products	Engagement
2000s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop learning resources print and digital (gr 10-12, post-secondary)</li> <li>• Develop high school credentials</li> <li>• Study learning resources and their development</li> <li>• Attend to enrolment issues</li> <li>• Coordinate parental and other groups to promote UBP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration with government, community agencies across Canada and internationally, including Ukraine</li> <li>• Collaboration with URDC on advancing multi-modal online communications between partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adoption of technology: UKIP-ca and <i>oomRoom</i></li> <li>• Textbooks for post-secondary level</li> <li>• Research on language learning, including at post-secondary level</li> <li>• Establishment of Ukrainian language consultant in Alberta Education</li> <li>• Workshops for teachers of community language schools across Canada</li> <li>• International Ukrainian language exam</li> <li>• Student exchanges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demand-driven</li> <li>• Applied (extended to post-secondary)</li> <li>• Network-embedded (local, provincial, national and international levels)</li> <li>• Not fully reciprocal</li> </ul>
Today	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secure enrollment sustainability (pre-school-20)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration with community stakeholders (local)</li> <li>• Initiation of research projects on Ukrainian language education to address enrolment issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Studies on the state of Ukrainian language education (K-university) and visioning for ULEC</li> <li>• Establishment of ULEC advisory board</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problem-centered</li> <li>• Applied</li> <li>• Network-embedded (local, provincial, national and international levels)</li> <li>• Not fully reciprocal</li> </ul>

*Purposes.* The focal reasons for engagement in the late 1970s-1980s were grounded in the university's response to provide support to the UBP by advocating and promoting bilingual education (Bilash, 1978; Lupul, 1985), creating a resource repository for teachers and language professionals, and overseeing the development and piloting of a teaching and learning resource for UBP. Whereas in the 1970s, purposes were demand-driven, towards the late 1980s, the purposes shifted toward an applied focus and included the need for professional development of teachers. In the 1990s to the first decade of the 2000s, the demand for greater communication, collaboration and connectivity with local, provincial, national and international partners emerged, widening the network of ES. In the 2000s, purposes continued to be demand-driven and applied as attention grew to the development of teaching and learning

resources, including digital, for high school and post-secondary levels, including also research work related to the development of these resources. Today the problem-centered and applied practices are at the fore of ES with its attention to the critical enrollment issues in the UBP and the university.

*Processes* in the late 1970s-1980s, especially with respect to the development of predominantly elementary learning resources, are characterized by collaborative efforts between ULEC, Alberta Education and community partners. At this stage, the cultivation of relationships of reciprocity between the stakeholders exemplifies efforts toward engagement in co-creating new knowledge for the benefit of a community. These efforts continued into the 1990s, expanding the network to include more local, national and international stakeholders. The 2000s required increased response and participation of stakeholders, resulting in the creation of new committees to address the new purposes and new projects that involved both the university and the public. In these processes, the community brought to the university's attention public concerns, and ULEC's leadership was willing to assist. Especially at a time of acute concerns (second decade of 2000s), the challenges of engagement reveal that "establishing, maintaining and sustaining genuine, mutually beneficial university-community collaboration" require considerable "time, effort and investment" from all stakeholders (Brown-Luthango, 2013, p. 323).

*Products* of engagement in the late 1970-1980s are the strengthening, piloting, approval and extension of the bilingual programs in the province and beyond, and the beginning of the production of learning resources for K-12 Ukrainian education. The collaborative efforts resulted in workshops, seminars and publications. The 1990s saw the creation of ULECON, the establishment of research partnerships on the national and international levels, as well as financial investment from Alberta Education, community educational organizations and funders in projects of benefit to learners of many languages. The production of learning resources for K-12 continued and began to include digital resources. In the 2000s, student exchanges were launched, an educational portal was created, and post-secondary teaching and learning resources entered the focus, including digital resources. Today, research projects have been designed to assess the pressing issues of Ukrainian education at all levels. These projects, still in progress, are led by university researchers, and the community is engaged as both participants and funders. It is hoped that the results will impact positively on the community and the university, and will lead to action steps to the benefit of both. In the future, we also see a potential for the community partners to become the co-creators of knowledge, which would delineate a movement towards true engagement and not a unidirectional outreach with community as subjects only, towards a reciprocal network-embedded ES. This would also increase the intellectual capital within the community.

The study of ES discussed above also reveals that the mandate of ULEC to develop Ukrainian education remained firm over the time period analyzed. The focuses of its strands of engagement varied at different points in time in response to the specific purposes and issues of the time. The discussion showed that ULEC has assisted communities by acting either as a leader, broker, mediator or negotiator (see Onyx, 2008, p. 102) in responding to emerging



purposes, initiating and creating links in relationships between the stakeholders in processes of engagement, as well as in delivering products to the community and the university.

### **Challenges of Engagement: Concluding Remarks**

Our inquiry was grounded in the history and practices of the network of Ukrainian educational stakeholders. We studied the symbolic community of the stakeholders, who are drawn together by the practice of Ukrainian language and culture education in Alberta, Canada. An entity with varying members over time, the community consistently saw its primary function as the development of Ukrainian education in the province, but also nationally and internationally. We provided a historical overview of how this network evolved. We reflected on past practices and provided an overview of current practices within the framework of ES.

Overall, we agree with Boyer (1996), that “we need not just more programs but also a larger purpose, a larger sense of mission, a larger clarity of direction in the nation’s life . . . ultimately, the scholarship of engagement means creating a special climate in which the academic and civic cultures communicate more continuously and more creatively with each other, helping to enlarge what anthropologist Clifford Geertz describes as the universe of human discourse and enriching the quality of life for all of us” (p. 32-33). Further, we underscore the challenges of aligning university-community values and vision and raise the question of who decides which human discourse gains recognition and power and who “all of us” is.

With respect to present and potential dialogues between the university and the community, we would like to note that our study shows an acute need to work *with* the community and to develop a “collaborative” knowledge-building mechanism. In the studies, as shown above, the community is the/a major funder and research subject, but not yet a full-fledged partner, which is the desired outcome of the ES practices. As Brown-Luthango (2013) points out, “[c]ommunities need to be actively involved in each step of the research process, from identifying research issues, design of the research, data collection, analysis of the research results, to writing as well as policy processes which might flow from the research” (p. 315). Therefore, we see the need to study the community partner in order to better understand the complexities, challenges and benefits of the university-community interactions.

We need to learn about the community with which we are working to be better equipped with knowledge that can transform current practices into true collaboration and partnership in addressing the pressing issues of the community, leading potentially to improved policy processes and societal changes for all. ULEC continues working within the tenets of ES, which in Boyer’s (1996) terms “is a forum in which the nation can confront its mission in a larger, more enlightened sense” (p. 33.). This paper may also provide insight into the workings of many ethnic communities, a number of which are marginalized and stunted by a non-integrated discourse in decision-making processes, and thus invite them to explore their relationship with the university and within their networks. With well over 200 “lesser used” languages spoken in Canada, the associated language communities may be interested in discovering how the university can assist them in, and how they can contribute to, researching multiple access points for language use and retention, especially among youth, in resource adaptation, and the

promotion of national and international partnerships. Finally, this mutual exploration can help the general public better understand what drives so many of the smaller ethnic groups, as well as learn some of the benefits brought by social diversity.

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# **Towards a Better Future for Canadians with Bipolar Disorder: Principles and Implementation of a Community-Based Participatory Research Model**

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**ABSTRACT** The Collaborative RESearch Team to study psychosocial factors in bipolar disorder (CREST.BD) is a multidisciplinary network dedicated to advancing science and practice around psychosocial issues associated with bipolar disorder (BD), improving the care and wellness of people living with bipolar disorder, and strengthening services and supports for these individuals. CREST.BD specializes in community-based participatory research, in which research is conducted as a partnership between researchers and community members. This article describes the evolution of the CREST.BD network and CREST.BD's commitment to community-based participatory research in bipolar disorder research. Examples of CREST.BD projects using community-based participatory research to study stigma, quality of life, psychosocial interventions, and creativity in bipolar disorder are highlighted, and opportunities and challenges of engaging in community-based participatory research in bipolar disorder specifically and the mental health field more broadly are discussed. This article demonstrates how CBPR can be used to enhance the relevance of research practices and products through community engagement, and how community-based participatory research can enrich knowledge exchange and mobilization.

**KEY WORDS** bipolar disorder, community-based participatory research, community engagement, CREST.BD

## **Introduction**

Bipolar disorder (BD), a mood disorder affecting about half a million Canadians, can be associated with profound impairments in health and quality of life (QoL) and has significant associated healthcare costs. Yet with optimal support, care and empowerment, people with bipolar disorder can flourish, leading healthy, fulfilling lives, and making creative, innovative and important contributions to society (Suto, Murray et al., 2010; Murray, Suto et al., 2011).

Research into bipolar disorder has expanded rapidly over the past decade. Much of this



*Graphic facilitation in action at a CREST.BD's Community Engagement Event to develop a new online ehealth tool. (Photo: Nusba Balram)*

research has been conducted from a biomedical perspective, examining the biological causes and consequences of the condition, and pharmacological approaches to treatment. Notwithstanding the importance of this work, living well with bipolar disorder requires more than pharmacology; psychosocial factors and interventions can have a powerful impact on how the condition manifests. Although research on psychosocial interventions for bipolar disorder is expanding rapidly (Geddes and Miklowitz, 2013), significant gaps remain in understanding the influence of psychosocial factors that do not fit a traditional biomedical model (e.g., stigma, spirituality, and social support) on outcomes for people with bipolar disorder.

Community-based participatory research (CBPR) is a partnership-based philosophy of research that has been applied successfully to other health conditions to identify optimal ways of translating research findings into real-world improvements in health and wellbeing. CBPR has been particularly successful in tackling complex issues affecting health and wellbeing that do not fit well within a biomedical model. The aim of this article is to describe the evolution of a unique Canada-based network that specializes in the application of CBPR in bipolar disorder research and knowledge exchange (KE).

### **Community-Based Participatory Research**

CBPR has been defined as research that is conducted as an equitable partnership among researchers, practitioners, and community members living with a particular health condition, disability or issue (Israel et al., 2010; Israel et al., 1998). It is characterized by substantial community engagement in all stages of the research process, from formulating study goals and hypotheses, to planning the sampling, design, measures and analyses, to disseminating results. Community encompasses patients or “users” of mental health services, people who are not receiving medical care but have lived experience of the disorder, and people within the social support network of the affected individual, including family members, caregivers, significant others, and healthcare providers. Preferred terms for those affected by bipolar disorder symptoms vary substantially (Hollander, 2011, p.456; Shaw, 2012), but we use the terms “consumer,” “user,” and “people with lived experience” interchangeably here. Regardless of terminology, the goal



*Sophia Van Norden, co-chair of the CREST.BD Community Advisory Group, 2013 Quality of Life Summit (Photo: Nusba Balram)*

of CBPR is to shape the research process to fit the perspectives of community members so as to generate knowledge that contributes more directly to social change, rather than perpetuating the notion of community members as passive objects of research (Cargo & Mercer, 2008; Michalak et al., 2012; Wallerstein & Duran, 2006). As a consequence of the focus on community engagement and the rich array of research questions raised by the diversity of participants, openness to adopting diverse methods is prized (Israel et al., 2005; Israel et al., 1998). CBPR approaches may encompass the flexible use of quantitative, qualitative, mixed-method and arts-based approaches (Minkler, 2005). In turn, the use of these diverse methods draws on the integration of stakeholders' diverse strengths and expertise, including researchers' theoretical and methodological skills, practitioners' practice knowledge and experience, and family members' and consumers' lived experience expertise (Cargo & Mercer, 2008).

A key CBPR emphasis is on "the participation and influence of non-academic researchers in the process of creating knowledge," including consumers, family members, and practitioners (Israel et al., 1998, p. 177). Some of the enduring principles identified by CBPR pioneers include: 1) recognizing the community as a unit of identity in the CBPR process; 2) building on the strengths and resources within the community; 3) facilitating collaborative partnerships in all phases of the research; 4) integrating knowledge and action for mutual benefit of all partners; 5) promoting a co-learning and empowering process that attends to social inequalities; 6) involving a cyclical and iterative process; 7) addressing health from both positive and ecological perspectives; and 8) disseminating findings and knowledge gained to all partners (Israel et al., 1998). Taken together, all eight principles underscore the importance of community throughout CBPR projects.

### **The History of CREST.BD**

The Collaborative RESearch Team to study psychosocial factors in bipolar disorder (CREST.BD) was established in 2007 with an overarching mission of advancing psychosocial research and knowledge exchange in bipolar disorder, with the aim of improving health and quality of life for people living with bipolar disorder and strengthening services and supports for these individuals. A one-year team planning grant was secured from the British Columbian Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research. With seed funding in place, a team of founding members was formed including multidisciplinary researchers with expertise in the psychosocial aspects of bipolar disorder, healthcare providers, and people with lived experience of bipolar disorder. Of course, CREST.BD team members may hold more than one stakeholder/member role: e.g., person with lived experience/family member and academic researcher, practitioner and academic researcher, etc.; as such they may be part of both CREST.BD and the bipolar community. Such a reality highlights that personal roles within groups and communities can be multiple and overlapping.

For the first several years, CREST.BD was without core infrastructure funding. Small grants, modest environmental support, and goodwill from team members enabled the team to host annual community engagement days and continuing education events for professionals, and to recruit trainees, peer-researchers and others to join its community consultation group. In 2009,



these efforts were rewarded when CREST.BD's network grant application was ranked first in the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) 'Knowledge to Action' competition. The resulting \$200,000 grant enabled the network to establish components necessary for growth, including hiring a knowledge exchange manager and establishing a community advisory group. In 2011, CREST.BD received close to \$600,000 in funding from the inaugural CIHR Network Catalyst competition to establish a national network. The retention of the knowledge exchange manager and the hiring of a network manager played a critical role in supporting the development and implementation of a strategic plan for the network.

CREST.BD aims to implement the key CBPR principles outlined above. Of greatest importance, CREST.BD values CBPR across all research stages, from identifying research priorities to disseminating research insights into real-world practice. That said, the extent to which any one or a combination of the eight principles can be implemented in research varies depending on the context, purpose and participants involved; the principles represent aspirational goals (Israel et al., 1998, p. 177-178). Indeed, as has been acknowledged elsewhere (e.g., Cargo & Mercer, 2008), "many academic researchers and their partners struggle with how to operationalize participatory research principles, steps and guidelines."

Several principles have been offered to evaluate whether teams are successfully implementing CBPR (Cargo & Mercer, 2008). Given that there is considerable variability across teams in how CBPR is applied, we consider how some of these dimensions have shaped CREST.BD.

Cargo & Mercer (2008) identified a core set of CBPR values, including translating knowledge into action (utilization), social and environmental justice, and self-determination. These values guide CREST.BD's governance structures. These values also shape the way that CREST.BD's research programs (in the target areas of stigma, quality of life (QoL), and psychosocial interventions) developed—each was nominated and then chosen as a priority through iterative community consultation and engagement activities. This strong engagement of community members enhances the relevance and importance of the research for individuals with experiences of bipolar disorder and healthcare providers (Minkler, 2005; Plumb et al., 2004). In this way, CBPR produces scientific knowledge in ways that are most meaningful and relevant to those people most affected by the issue being studied. All three research priorities contribute to social and environmental justice and self-determination for individuals who experience bipolar disorder and their families.

A second core facet of CBPR is engaging community members in the research process. To facilitate this, the Community Advisory Group for CREST.BD consists of approximately 10 members representing people living with bipolar disorder, BD healthcare providers, and partner organization representatives. This group provides feedback and guidance across CREST.BD's ongoing research and knowledge exchange activities. More specifically, the Community Advisory Group: 1) Acts as a resource to CREST.BD in terms of planning, implementation, distribution and evaluation of research studies and knowledge exchange; 2) Helps to generate solutions to barriers within the research and knowledge exchange initiatives; 3) Plays a key role in optimizing networking opportunities with the wider BD community; 4) Functions as a communications vehicle to the BD community on the work and plans of CREST.BD; and

5) Problem-solves barriers and solutions within the team's research and knowledge exchange initiatives (Michalak et al., 2012, p. 6).

A third core facet of CBPR is building capacity for community engagement through strategic partnership building. To further enhance the reach of its community engagement, CREST.BD has established effective partnerships with approximately 17 diverse community and clinical organizations (e.g., Canadian Network for Mood and Anxiety Treatments (CANMAT), Mood Disorders Association of Ontario (MDAO), and a 500+ person national community consultation group). The partnership with CANMAT, in particular, increased collaboration with senior clinicians, created a conduit for enhanced research partnerships, and allowed for use of CANMAT's well-established expertise and credibility in knowledge exchange and continuing professional development activities for healthcare providers. The partnership with MDAO, the largest Canadian community mood disorder organization, supported collaborations with people living with bipolar disorder and their family members, via the organization's 54 peer support groups and contact with 26,000 people affected by mood disorders annually. These partnerships provide access to cross-disciplinary, complementary expertise.

A fourth principle of CBPR is a thoughtful and equitable approach to defining how stakeholders participate. Rather than assume that all stakeholders provide equal contributions, the focus is on equitable engagement, reflecting thoughtful consideration of appropriate, democratic and informed decisions. As Cargo and Mercer (2008) observe, "How much and in what phases academic and non-academic partners should participate depends on where the interests, expertise, and energy of the partners reside; what is negotiated; and the extent to which partnership and project governance structures have made provisions to support the agreed on participation level" (p. 332). CREST.BD has a rich history of involving stakeholders as Community Advisory Group members, and in every step of the research process and knowledge exchange, as we will describe below.

### **Examples of Community-Based Participatory Research in CREST.BD Research**

The CREST.BD vision is "a world where people living with bipolar disorder enjoy optimized health and quality of life and minimal stigma across their lifespan as a result of tailored psychosocial and/or self-management interventions informed by effective psychosocial research and KE in BD." The vision is supported by prioritizing research on stigma, quality of life, and psychosocial interventions through five strategic priorities: research and knowledge exchange excellence, community involvement, capacity building, international engagement and recognition, and sustainability. The following sections describe how CREST.BD applies CBPR in research on stigma, quality of life, psychosocial interventions, and creativity and bipolar disorder.

#### ***Stigma***

In response to feedback from the community, CREST.BD initiated a program of research into stigma in bipolar disorder (Michalak et al., 2012). Stigma concerning mental illness is a serious concern for people with bipolar disorder and their caregivers (Hawke, Parikh & Michalak, 2013)

and leads some individuals to avoid or discontinue mental health treatment (e.g. Livingston & Boyd, 2010). First, a community engagement day and a continuing professional development event focused on stigma and bipolar disorder were held. A qualitative research study using focus groups was embedded into the community engagement day to examine definitions, experiences and subjective impact of stigma as well as to discuss possible stigma reduction interventions. People with lived experience of bipolar disorder collaborated on the design, implementation and analysis of both the community engagement day and the qualitative research project (for example, developing focus group questions and methods, conducting focus groups, analysing focus group data) and were co-authors of the resulting peer-reviewed publication (Suto, Livingston, Hole et al., 2012).

Findings from the event, together with a literature review that highlighted the potential impact of stigma among healthcare providers, were used to secure funding for a project to examine whether a purpose-built theatrical performance could help reduce stigma. Co-investigators on the grant included people from multiple fields of expertise: lived experience, psychology, psychiatry, and social work. One of the grant co-investigators (Victoria Maxwell), an actress and mental health educator with lived experience of bipolar disorder, produced and performed a one-hour, one-woman theatrical performance entitled ‘That’s Just Crazy Talk’ in which the narrator described her personal and familial mental illness, her and her family’s experiences of mental health stigma, and attempts to come to terms with a complex illness. The CREST.BD community advisory group and network partners (for example, CANMAT, MDAO) supported the development, implementation and evaluation of the performance. Findings revealed that the performance significantly reduced stigma among healthcare providers as measured quantitatively (Michalak et al., 2014), and among both people with bipolar disorder and healthcare providers as measured qualitatively (Michalak et al., 2014). A filmed version of the performance was found to diminish negative attitudes in healthcare providers (Hawke et al., 2014). The live and filmed versions of ‘That’s Just Crazy Talk’ have been disseminated widely, with its broad uptake echoing the commitment to multiple stakeholders as exemplified by the research team composition. In its live form, the performance has now been seen by over 7000 people in North America, including performances at major international medical conferences, post-secondary institutions and community organizations. The intervention is now fully integrated into on-going presentations by Victoria Maxwell. More than 500 copies of the filmed version of the performance are now in circulation, and it has been adopted into official curricula by post-secondary nursing programs (e.g. Queen’s University), professional bodies (e.g. National Society of Genetic Counselors) and the Mental Health Commission of Canada’s Opening Minds program—the largest systematic effort in Canadian history focused on reducing mental illness stigma.

### ***Quality of Life***

With a strong influence from biomedically-focused disease models, mood symptoms have long been a primary outcome measure within bipolar disorder research (Zachar & Kendler, 2007). People with lived experience, however, may weight recovery and quality of life (Jones, Mulligan, Higginson, Dunn & Morrison, 2012; Murray & Michalak, 2012; Maxwell & Michalak,

2011; Michalak et al, 2012; Tse et al, 2013) as more important than symptom relief. In bipolar disorder, symptoms account for just a proportion of the variance in quality of life outcomes.

In our second example of CBPR, people with bipolar disorder were involved in all stages of developing the first bipolar-specific quality of life scale, with content that covers subjective meaning along with traditional domains of functioning (Michalak & Murray, 2010). The Quality of Life in bipolar disorder (QoL.BD) scale has become the gold-standard for BD-specific quality of life assessments, as illustrated by its translation into more than 19 languages, and use in over 16 large-scale clinical studies. Implementation of the scale in practice was aided substantially by diverse community-engagement methods. For example, people with lived experience of bipolar disorder supported the design and delivery of in-person training workshops and online training videos for healthcare providers, in-person and online (webinar) presentations, QoL-focused outputs for the CREST.BD research blog, and social media (Facebook, Twitter) outputs. As one concrete example, the CREST.BD network lead and Victoria Maxwell provided the keynote talk, a lived-experience perspective talk, and a workshop, at the 2015 Calgary Mood Day conference, which was geared for BD healthcare providers. Network lead Michalak first presented on results from CREST.BD's program of research into quality of life, and on the philosophy of CBPR in BD research and KE; Victoria Maxwell then provided readings on lived-experience perspectives of quality of life. Then they co-presented a workshop on pragmatic tools for integrating quality of life assessments into routine clinical care, the content of which was generated by prior CREST.BD research into quality of life conducted within a CBPR framework.

To foster use of the QoL.BD in healthcare and personal health management, CREST.BD developed a web-based version of the QoL.BD – the QoL Tool. Funding for the project came in the form of a CIHR “ehealth Catalyst” grant; as in all of CREST.BD's funding, people with bipolar disorder were named co-investigators, primary decision makers or knowledge users on the funding application. The QoL Tool itself was developed hand-in-hand with the BD community. For example, for this project, a community engagement day was initially held in Vancouver to consult on the design features and appearance of the QoL Tool. Graphic facilitation was incorporated into the day, the outputs of which were used to support the development of an online presentation narrated by a person with bipolar disorder. Team members also created social media outputs and a series of research blogs. The resulting QoL Tool provides interactive results to chart quality of life over time. Live and on-line training for clinicians was offered to facilitate the scale's adoption among healthcare providers.

### ***Psychosocial Interventions***

Effective self-management strategies are important for empowering people with bipolar disorder and contribute to improved health outcomes and quality of life (Murray et al, 2011). To foster better knowledge of effective self-management strategies for bipolar disorder, CREST.BD drew on the expertise of participants who employed effective self-management strategies and identified as “living well” with bipolar disorder (Suto, Murray, Hale, Amari, & Michalak, 2010). CREST.BD then collaborated with peer researchers to conduct an extensive (academic and grey) literature search, and then a large sample of community members and healthcare practitioners

were asked to rate self-management strategies in a series of online surveys (Michalak et al, 2013).

To maximize access to the findings regarding self-management, CREST.BD has developed an interactive website (the Bipolar Wellness Centre) that incorporates the online QoL Tool to provide users with evidence-based self-management strategies tailored to their personal quality of life profile. Several approaches to optimal knowledge exchange through the Bipolar Wellness Centre



*Photo: Nusha Balram*

are currently being evaluated. For example, in the Living Library option, people with bipolar disorder or healthcare providers borrow a trained peer and engage in short training sessions (via live and secure web technology) to learn to analyze QoL assessment results, use the Centre to examine QoL strengths and deficits, and apply targeted self-management strategies. Other implementation approaches include the production of 14 QoL-domain specific webinars (produced either by academic or lived experience network members), a travelling roadshow, in which a series of workshops are delivered by both people with bipolar disorder and academic researchers, and the production of 6 videos that show concrete examples of self-management in action in a person with lived experience of bipolar disorder.

### ***Creativity***

Of the various positive features of bipolar disorder, creativity is perhaps the most frequently mentioned advantage, and CREST.BD has used CBPR to understand the elevated levels of creativity observed among people with bipolar disorder. Funding from CIHR provided support for hosting a community engagement day attended by people with bipolar disorder working as musicians, artists, authors, or other creative professions. As part of the day, focus groups explored participants' perceptions of the mechanisms linking bipolar disorder and creativity. Although the literature in this area has tended to focus on a small number of potential mechanisms, such as divergent thinking, energy, or ambition, the affected individuals suggested a much broader and more individualized range of potential mechanisms, ranging from the ability to use rich life experiences as a base for novels, the use of artistic pursuits for political or emotional expression, and the flexibility of work schedules afforded to those with creative pursuits (Johnson et al, in Press). This community input helped shape new hypotheses for research on creativity, and highlighted the importance of using the creative strengths of those with bipolar disorder for promoting treatment engagement and reducing stigma.

## **Strengths, Challenges and Opportunities of Community-Based Participatory Research in Bipolar Disorder**

### ***Strengths***

We believe that the four example projects described above demonstrate the value of CBPR

in BD research. In each project, the interpretation of research outcomes was enriched by the integration of different perspectives, as was dissemination (Cargo & Mercer, 2008).

From a process perspective, CBPR naturally facilitates KE because research is conducted within the community in which knowledge will be applied (McGrath, Lingley-Pottie, Emberly, Thurston & McLean, 2009). CBPR may also increase empathy in both directions, as healthcare providers learn to appreciate the challenges of living with bipolar disorder, and community members see the healthcare providers in a broader context, appreciating the demands on them and the constraints of the system within which they work.

It is also important to note a strength of CBPR that has emerged from research conducted at a wide range of sites: a focus on understanding positive features of bipolar disorder (Murray & Johnson, 2010; Seal, Mansell & Mannion, 2008). In surveys, those with lived experience value their heightened emotional sensitivity, alertness, productivity, social engagement, sexual enjoyment, creativity, spirituality, empathy, realism, and resilience as correlates of the disorder (Galvez, Thommi & Ghaemi, 2011). In a study in which a researcher with lived experience of bipolar disorder conducted interviews and analyzed the data, findings highlighted the value of bipolar disorder in amplifying certain cognitive abilities and promoting a sense of human connectedness (Lobban, Taylor, Murray & Jones, 2012).

### **Challenges**

As with any approach to research, there are specific challenges in conducting CBPR, especially in the mental health domain. Much of the discussion below, speaking to priorities, people and policies, has implications for informing decisions about what participation in CBPR might look like.

*Priorities.* Our experience has been that people with bipolar disorder and their family members place high value on promoting recovery and advocating for social change; researchers value the team's research activities. Whilst the two goals are not mutually exclusive, they are not always fully integrated; CREST.BD's primary funding remit is research and knowledge exchange, and at times strategic leadership has been required to ensure there is not undue drift away from this core mission. Having said, this, we have identified a number of strategies effective for meeting diverse objectives and goals in our work. For example, we rarely hold a community engagement event that does not include a formal research component (for example, focus groups, qualitative interviews, quantitative surveys). Even informal community engagement activities (for example, structured online Tweetchats around an area of interest in BD research and knowledge exchange) are viewed as an opportunity to obtain potential pilot 'data' for future funding applications or as a mechanism to support the identification of new avenues of research. At the same time, we strive to create space in each event for participants with lived experience to network, advocate, tackle stigma, become more empowered and work towards personal recovery.

*People.* As in any group of people, some individuals with lived experience are more willing and able to collaborate than others (Wallerstein & Duran, 2006). Notwithstanding the multiple roles of CREST.BD members and partners in relation to bipolar disorder, we agreed it could be

prudent to focus efforts initially on developing deep relationships with a small number of peer researchers. On the other hand, the most disadvantaged and difficult to engage members of the community may benefit the most from CBPR, and also have some of the most important contributions to make. Thoughtful engagement strategies, appropriate training, and ongoing evaluation are being applied as the network develops and expands in order to address barriers to participation from more marginalized or hard-to-reach communities.

*Policies.* CBPR can play a major role in policy changes, but this does not happen automatically. Research is most likely to influence policy if the policy makers are brought into the dialog early to shape the types of data that they will need, and then remain engaged throughout critical steps in the process. Although many researchers feel somewhat uncomfortable with the difficulties of translating research into other realms, researchers who consider policy implications as a core part of their role may be more effective over time in ensuring that their findings have meaning for the community. In other areas, CBPR has skillfully included politicians and policy makers in the research planning process (Wallerstein & Duran, 2006), which has not only allowed researchers to refine their data collection to address critical needs in public planning, but also allowed for rapid dissemination of findings into the hands of policy makers.

### ***Opportunities***

*CBPR on the Web.* Another potential area for growth in CBPR is through the use of online communities that harness modern web technologies, such as those that permit users to contribute and debate online (see Brossard & Scheufele, 2013; Stellefson et al., 2013). Thus far, CREST.BD has had considerable success in employing web technologies to build social networks and visibility and thereby enhance our CBPR and knowledge exchange activities (McBride et al., in Press). Modern web technologies that can enhance knowledge exchange and open new avenues of research are part of the emerging area of e-health in mood disorders (Parikh & Huniewicz, 2015). For example, Twitter is a public messaging and social networking platform with massive following. A tool like Twitter could be used in CBPR to explore new research avenues (e.g., Peace & Myers, 2012). For a person living with a mental illness in a remote region, being part of an online community of like-minded individuals can be an empowering source of support. Input from individuals with bipolar disorder who are unreachable by traditional research methods might reveal as yet unknown relationships between environmental and social variables and the incidence or presentation of bipolar disorder. Moreover, ongoing real-time analyses of social networks will be a rich way of yielding new insights into the needs of the BD community (see Gruzd & Haythornthwaite, 2013). In pursuing these agendas, the relationship between web technologies and CBPR should not be thought of as a one-way street. To ensure maximal community involvement, CBPR should be used as a means of supporting iterative user-centered design (Marriott et al., 2012) of new internet-based tools for the BD community (Henderson et al., 2013).

*Funding.* Some funding agencies directly support CBPR; however, traditional funding structures impose a range of challenges to achieving the CBPR ideal of involving community members throughout all research phases. Research teams must fund the grant development

process, which may limit opportunities for involvement of multiple stakeholders during hypothesis generation, discussion, and research design. Funding agencies may also not build in flexibility in adapting to periods when peer researchers with lived experience are less able to contribute due to a period of illness. In the early years of CREST.BD's evolution, small awards of alternative funding (such as CIHR meeting and dissemination grants and funding from individual members' own institutions) proved critical for supporting ongoing community engagement in the gaps between project-specific operating grants. The newly launched CIHR Foundation Scheme, designed to provide long-term programmatic support for innovative research, offers an exciting alternative funding mechanism that is ideally suited to CBPR. These changes to funding practices in the Canadian healthcare funding realm may offer significant opportunities for community-engaged scholars to successfully and authentically implement action orientated research in the future.

### **Conclusions and Future Directions**

Increasingly CBPR is being used to address complex public health and mental health issues because of its potential for bridging gaps between research and practice (Cargo & Mercer, 2008); nonetheless, it is a relatively nascent practice in BD research. Given the many strengths of CBPR—including the inherent flexibility of research methods used (e.g., quantitative, qualitative, mixed-methods), the engagement with and buy-in of stakeholders that can enhance knowledge production around issues of relevance to the community, and the positive implications for knowledge exchange and knowledge mobilization CREST.BD has found that that CBPR is a complementary and value-added approach to traditional research practices.

Although CBPR can challenge traditional research paradigms, it is clear that when research is connected to and conducted with the communities who have a stake in the issue under study, it will enhance the value of research for those communities (Hacker, 2013; Minkler 2005). Further, given the emphasis on action, CBPR can help address the gulf that often occurs in mental health research between the knowledge that research produces and its application (Israel et al., 1998). It is important to underscore the increasing funding opportunities available to researchers engaged in CBPR both in Canada and internationally. While there remains criticism of CBPR's production of localized knowledge for specific actions in a particular community, there is increasing validation from funders that CBPR produces worthwhile applied knowledge and produces action to address complex social issues.

In conclusion, using examples of CBPR in practice, this article demonstrates strengths, challenges and opportunities when employing CBPR in BD research. While there are challenges in conducting CBPR, engaging community stakeholders offers great opportunities for meaningful research. Finally, we echo the call of Roche (2008) for a critical examination and attentiveness to the practices that shape CBPR as well as improved strategies for evaluating the impact and outcomes of action resulting from CBPR.



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# The Development of Community-Engaged Scholars Through Course-Based Learning: A Student Perspective

Thomas Armitage and Leah Levac

**ABSTRACT** This manuscript chronicles the development of three graduate students as community engaged scholars, from the perspective of one of the students. With the support of the course instructor, a student (Thomas) and the instructor (Leah) discuss students' development during their enrollment in a graduate course in community-engaged scholarship (CES) at the University of Guelph, a large comprehensive university in southwestern Ontario. Drawing from students' reflection papers and progress reports, this article highlights students' thoughts on communities' perceptions of scholars; differences and similarities between community-engaged scholarship and more traditional forms of social science research; and challenges and opportunities of collaboration. Data highlighting students' experiences with power relations, understandings of the need for adaptability within their respective partnerships, and acknowledgement of differences between community and academic roles in community-engaged research projects are also presented. Finally, the effects of large groups and imbalanced stakes on projects, and the influence of class-oriented timelines are discussed. The manuscript is written by, and from the perspective of Thomas Armitage, one of the students in the graduate course, in collaboration Leah Levac, the course instructor.

**KEYWORDS** community engagement, student development; learning outcomes; course-based learning; CES reflections; community-engaged scholarship

## The Development of Community-Engaged Scholars

Community-engaged scholarship (CES) “involves the researcher in a mutually beneficial partnership with the community and results in scholarship deriving from teaching, discovery, integration, application or engagement” (Institute for Community Engaged Scholarship, University of Guelph; adapted from Jordan, 2007). It aligns with concepts such as civic engagement, in which people and communities work together to improve the quality of life in a given community through the sharing of knowledge, skills, values and motivations (Ehrlich, 2000), but focuses explicitly on applying the tenets of scholarship, such as requiring a high level of disciplinary expertise, being replicable, and having significance (Diamond & Adam, 1993), to the work of social change.

A growing body of literature presents case study examples of community-engaged scholarship and focuses on the methodological and theoretical development of CES, but limited attention has been paid to students' perspectives on their development as community-

engaged (CE) scholars. Articles that focus on student learning and development tend to approach the topic from the perspective of the institution (i.e., the university) or the instructor. For example, Hollander (2011) and Saltmarsh (1996) explored how universities approached educating students on civic engagement and service learning, and Terkla *et al.* (2007) investigated how students' perspectives on community engagement changed as a result of participating in CES initiatives. Stocking and Cutforth (2006), Rosing and Hofman (2010), and Chapdelaine and Chapman (1999) looked at instructors' approaches to CE pedagogy; and Furco (2010), Jung (2011), and Ash *et al.* (2005) assessed learning outcomes associated with CES projects. Reflections on learning outcomes and assessment through course-based community engagement also exist (Bringle & Hatcher, 2009), but these too tend to be written from the perspective of the researcher rather than the students being assessed.

In a recent article, Cutforth (2013), a tenured professor with over 18 years of experience undertaking CE research, presented an auto-ethnography of his own development as a community-engaged scholar, analyzing the motivations, influences, and experiences that have shaped his career. His article offers valuable insights into the development of CE scholars, and will be complemented by this manuscript, which focuses on the perspectives of graduate students in their initial stages of CE scholar training. To contribute to this growing field, the authors of this article ask, "What are the critical elements of training CE scholars from the perspective of students?", "What are key challenges that students face in the early stages of their training as CE scholars?", and "What are potential strategies for mitigating these challenges"?

### **Graduate Student Training in Community-Engaged Scholarship at the University of Guelph**

The University of Guelph boasts a multi-faceted and internationally recognized CES community, emanating from its long tradition of rural extension work and community outreach, and more recently, from the work of the Institute for Community Engaged Scholarship (ICES), located in the College of Social and Applied Human Sciences. One of the many initiatives of ICES was the development of a graduate-level training course, conceived and developed by the Director of ICES and an established faculty member and administrator, and more recently offered by a new faculty member, an assistant professor of community engaged scholarship and collaborating author on this manuscript.

The course is designed to expose students to principles and processes, and methodological and theoretical orientations of CES, which are then applied in the design and implementation of a community-engaged research project. The course is part of a larger strategy aimed at filling the growing need for professionals who are dedicated to navigating complex university-community partnerships for the purpose of conducting scholarship aimed at addressing complex community challenges. Knowledge mobilization and dissemination are integral components of CES, and are highlighted as part of the graduate course. The course draws on the work of several scholars, including Minkler and Wallerstein (2008), whose comprehensive edited collection highlights a range of considerations related to community-based participatory research for health, including some of its challenges and opportunities. While the emphasis of the course at the University of Guelph is not on health, Minkler and Wallerstein offer a thorough overview of the historical and theoretical development of community-based participatory research (CBPR), as well as a clear indication of the origins and purpose of

the principles that guide CE research, making sections of the book particularly useful as foundational materials for training CE scholars.

The course, which has been offered four times under the direction of three different professors and staff members, has evolved to include the following learning outcomes: explain the principles and processes of CES; apply the principles and processes of CES in the design and implementation of an actual community-engaged research project; recognize and distinguish between community and academic roles in community-engaged research projects; develop and manage an equitable relationship with a community-based research partner; and practice knowledge mobilization and reciprocity by delivering a product that is usable by a community organization or other non-academic partner.

The opportunity to meet these learning outcomes is facilitated through a series of seminars offered every second week over the course of a 12-week term, and by pairing each of the students with a community partner organization with a short-term research need. Typically, each community partner has an established relationship with ICES<sup>1</sup>, which helps to facilitate the process of identifying appropriate partners and projects with which students can engage. Once paired, students meet with their community partners to ‘scope’ the project. This includes discussing the terms of the arrangement and establishing reciprocity and responsibilities, projecting goals, the final product, and mutually agreeable timelines.

As part of the course, students were asked to complete reflection reports and progress reports that helped guide them in their development as CES scholars. In these reports, students were asked to set learning goals that complemented the course learning outcomes, and to reflect on their progress towards reaching their goals and the course learning outcomes. They were also responsible for completing an ethics application, and producing a final product of benefit to the community, as mutually agreed upon with the community partner.

### **Participants and Methods**

Approximately twenty students have completed the CES graduate course at the University of Guelph since the course’s inception. This paper draws on the reflection papers and progress reports of three of the students who were enrolled in the class in 2014, including Thomas, co-author of this paper. Students in the class came from several disciplinary backgrounds, including geography, political science, sociology, and family relations and human development, and were both masters and doctoral students. Over the years, including in 2014, more women than men have participated in the course; one man (Thomas) and two women students participated in this study.

The projects of the three students included in this study were diverse in topic and desired outcome, but in all cases, students worked with historically marginalized communities, including people living in low-income housing, and youth facing barriers to employment. Students’ projects aligned with the core purposes of community-engaged scholarship, including solving complex problems, improving public policies, and encouraging or supporting local innovation, all while valuing local knowledge (Ochocka & Janzen, 2014). For this paper, students were recruited via email after final grades were submitted, and according to a protocol approved by the Research Ethics Board at the University of Guelph. The information letter sent to

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<sup>1</sup> Another critical function of ICES is to build and hold community relationships; this approach helps to facilitate more meaningful and mutually beneficial partnerships and research outputs over the long-term.



students outlined the project and its purpose, and invited them to share the reflection reports and progress reports they submitted for grading at the end of the semester.

The findings are based on a thematic analysis of qualitative data gathered from the three participating students' reflection papers and progress reports. The important role of reflection in learning is well documented (see for example, Fink, 2003; Kolb, 1984; Zull, 2002). Students' reflection reports and progress reports (which are also necessarily reflective in nature) are thus valuable sources of data for considering students' perspectives on their own development as CE scholars. Students' reports highlighted specific experiences and examples encountered in their fieldwork and tied the experiences to aspects of the course, such as insights about CES gained through the course readings; knowledge gained about the community, organization, or research topic through seminar discussions; problems encountered or solved; and insights about CES gained through field work. For example, students reflected on Wallwork (2008) and Flicker et al.'s (2007) articles on community-based research ethics when considering how best to meaningfully engage with community participants, and how to reconcile university ethics protocols with communities' needs.

The authors read students' reflection papers and progress reports several times to search for similarities and differences in students' experiences. Following the creation of a preliminary coding scheme based both on the course learning outcomes and students' identified goals, students' writing was imported into NVivo so that codes could be applied across data. The authors examined students' experiences both in relation to their own learning goals, and in relation to the course learning outcomes. Within these categories, the authors identified sub-themes based on students' reflections.

### **Findings and Discussion**

The students reflected on their development as CE scholars in relation to the course's five learning outcomes, and in relation to their own learning outcomes. The learning outcomes are addressed categorically, each with its own subthemes based on the ideas that emerged through their reflections. Their experiences with achieving their goals are considered in relation not only to course learning outcomes, but also to precedents set in the literature.

#### ***Learning Outcome 1. Explain the Principles and Processes of Community-Engaged Scholarship***

Within student reflections related to the principles and processes of CES, they all discussed: (a) communities' perceptions of scholars and resulting methodological choices; (b) differences and similarities between CES and traditional forms of social science research; and (c) the challenges and opportunities of collaboration.

*Communities' perceptions of scholars and resulting methodological choices.* Students' experiences gave them a better understanding of historically-based tensions between academic institutions and community partners. Rubin *et al.* (2012) review the reputation of traditional research to reveal aspects that are perceived negatively: exploiting communities for personal gain; developing solutions that are not appropriate for the community leading to a waste of resources; leaving communities with the feeling that they are over-researched, coerced, or misled into participating; releasing data that the community considers sensitive; and releasing results in a format that is inaccessible to the community. It is these types of perceptions that the students felt they

needed to overcome to gain the trust of the communities with which they were working. One student experienced these negative sentiments first-hand, with distrust of academics leading to a loss of participants:

Two of my interviewees expressed a strong distrust in, and lack of patience for, researchers. One of the interviewees was adamant on clarifying that this information was only to be used by the [community partner], whereas the other was not convinced that it would be and refused to share any information she felt would be taken and used inappropriately. Their past experiences had brought about resentment towards researchers that couldn't be dissolved by clarifying our adherence to ethics.

This experience exemplifies that intent alone—even when matched with a personal commitment to mutuality and adherence to university ethics protocols—cannot always overcome a community member's negative perceptions of research or researchers. One can claim the label of CE scholar and express a genuine commitment to mutually beneficial partnerships, but community members can remain distrusting because of the scholar's university affiliation. Knowing that such distrust may exist, and being prepared for resistance, is critical within CES. Methodological decisions can help to respond to these instances of distrust. For example, one student opted to use focus groups as the method of data collection because the dynamics of a focus group can shift the power away from the lone researcher and toward the larger group of participants (Wilkinson, 1998). This student's choice was additionally appropriate because there was a considerable age gap between the researcher and the participants. Power imbalances resulting from differences in age between an adult researcher and youth participants in a focus group setting can be partially alleviated through strength of numbers on the side of participants (Wilkinson, 1998). Another student noted that reflecting on perceptions of scholars and power dynamics prior to the data collection phase resulted in successful focus groups with no resistance from the participants living in low-income, even though they had expressed feelings of survey fatigue to the community partner in the past.

*Differences and similarities between CES and traditional forms of social science research.* One key difference between CES and traditional forms of social science research relates to meeting multiple interests. The challenge of meeting multiple community interests was a key learning point for the students. Not only was their work intended for a wider audience than their academic peers, but their work was not limited to a single partnership between the university and a community partner; rather, it required collaboration with a number of stakeholders to ensure a satisfactory outcome. One student noted:

This [final product] intends to do more than just inform the public, but to gather a more diverse group of individuals and open up a space for further discussion. The [community partner] is planning to [disseminate the final product] with the intention of sparking community dialogue around the changing role of the [community partner]. Through this interactive process the [community partner] hopes to expand their understanding of community needs and desires so that they

integrate a wider range of community voices into their strategic planning.

Another student reflected on how the university is traditionally the place where knowledge is stored and accessed after projects are complete. In the case of the CES project, however, the data and results will be held by an organization affiliated with the community partner. The idea that the university must be the knowledge holder, and that the university-based researcher must be the expert, are common views that CES works to counter.

Students also noted similarities between traditional social science research approaches and CES. Perhaps more precisely, they noted instances where CES approaches are already integrated within some traditional social sciences. For example, the evolution of the partnership that grounds my (Thomas') Master's thesis research mirrors the development of my project for our CES class. In both cases, the research question evolved as a result of conversations between the community partner, my advisor, and me. Ultimately, both projects were scoped according to the time available (6 months for the course-based project and 20 months for the thesis project). The scope was determined through a series of in-person and telephone meetings. The final products to be delivered to the community partner were, in both cases, in line with the needs of the community, and included plain language documents and presentations to board members and interested community partner staff members. Both projects are in keeping with the shorter timelines Keller *et al.* (2006) indicate are often associated with CES and social-based action, as even 20 months is shorter than the time some researchers take to develop their particular bodies of scholarship. Other students in the course had similar reflections on how the CES experience differed from their expectations of traditional social science research in terms of the time allotted to the project.

*Challenges and opportunities of collaboration.* Community-engaged scholarship is called upon when a community recognizes a need for information, and approaches a university to collaborate on knowledge acquisition and mobilization (Onyx, 2008). Together, they determine the important questions to be asked, and the methods to be used to acquire and interpret data (Onyx, 2008). With this in mind, we each reflected on the value of the contributions from our community partners throughout the research process. In each case, we found the relationship to be reciprocal, with our efforts consistently being matched by the efforts of the community. One student reflected:

The relationship that grew board members [from the community partner] who became involved in the project brought with them rich skill sets, including in research, [discipline]-based facilitation, effective communication, and project management. Although they brought ample experience to the table, they were appreciative and respectful of the skills that I could contribute to the process. They immediately recognized the skills, energy and resources that I could invest.

Each of our community partners contributed resources of one kind or another through the various research phases; partners' contributions were crucial to the development of the projects. Each project also encountered hurdles and roadblocks that required adjustments. For example, one student entered her/his partnership after work on the project had started, including with the adoption of a survey tool. The survey tool initially adopted by the community

partner was not fully tailored to the goals of the project, an issue that seemed to be overlooked because of the community partner's limited experience with survey-based data collection. This presented both a challenge and an opportunity for the student, who was able to offer guidance on the development of the survey, but who wanted to do so without being seen as trying taking over the project. Through a series of careful discussions, the student was able to highlight some potential improvements to the survey, and then had an opportunity to contribute to the project by developing a more tailored survey with input from the community partner. In another instance, one of the students noted how collaboration led to the participation of a group of people facing economic hardship:

a challenge of participatory action research [is] local actors' reluctance to address experiences because of stigmatization. However, this reluctance did not appear to occur during my experience. The willingness of the [target] group members to share their perspectives and experiences is evident in the fact that the meeting was over twice as long as planned.

On further reflection, the student makes it clear that in this case, the participation of historically marginalized community members likely resulted because of their trust in the community partner organization, which had a reputation for being genuinely interested in the experiences of community members. Had the research not been conducted in collaboration with the community partner, it is likely that the members of the marginalized group would not have participated, which would have rendered the study unviable.

Because of the course readings and assignments leading up to the students' respective partnerships and fieldwork, they were anticipating these types of challenges. As a result, they were able to enhance their own trustworthiness by leveraging their relationships with their community partners. Having exposure to commonly noted challenges and benefits of CES also allowed them to be more critical of their own experiences as they were occurring, and enabled further depth in their reflection reports. For example, students' other observations were in keeping with Onyx's (2008) work, which makes note of several barriers that exist for communities trying to access university-based knowledge, including patent systems, inaccessible language, and technology.

***Learning Outcome 2. Apply the Principles and Processes of Community Engaged Scholarship in the Design and Implementation of a Community-Engaged Research Project***

To begin their projects, students received packages containing information about their community partners and the issue or issues the partners wanted to address through the research. The Manager of Community Engaged Learning from ICES accompanied each of the students to their first meetings with their community partners, during which they discussed project goals, roles, outcomes, and timelines. Given that the students were new to CES, the Manager's presence was valuable in ensuring that goals and outcomes were achievable, and that roles and timelines were clear and appropriate. The course instructor (Leah) then reviewed the resulting agreements and provided feedback. Perhaps because this process of designing a CES project was carefully managed and supervised, the students did not pay particular attention to this learning outcome in their reflections; however, the subject of flexibility during the implementation of the project was common in their reflections.

The willingness and ability to adapt to changing circumstances and new information was important in each of the projects. All three students encountered circumstances that required changes in the research approach and, as a result, amendments to project ethics protocols. In one case, the community partner, a partner organization, and the student reflected on the feasibility of reaching a particular demographic in the time available and ultimately realized that the target group needed to be changed. Two students needed to modify the recruitment process to accommodate the community partner's needs. One student summarized the project's fluidity accordingly:

We realized the need to redesign our research methodologies to account for our time and resource constraints. This required us to submit a change request to the ethics board, and make necessary adjustments to the project proposal. This awareness and response to influential factors demonstrated our strong flexibility and dedication to the research process.

Participating students also recognized the need to be flexible with their time and responsibilities. As the projects progressed, students found themselves tasked with more responsibilities than they anticipated at the outset of the project. This issue is explored within the next learning outcome.

### ***Learning Outcome 3. Recognize and Distinguish between Community and Academic Roles in Community-Engaged Research Projects***

In the early weeks of the course, the instructor (Leah), through her own experiences with CES, discussed that researchers involved in community-based projects inevitably develop some attachment and sense of responsibility, not only to the success of the project, but also to the community itself. The students' experiences aligned with this claim. They all noted that they volunteered a considerable amount of time to the project outside of their scholarship responsibilities.

Due in part to the timelines imposed by integrating the CES projects into a university-based course, each of the students volunteered some of their time to their respective projects without the course acting as an incentive. In two cases, the project's goals were not met by the time the course was over, and in both situations the students continued working on the projects in the agreed-upon capacities established early in the project's lifecycle. In addition to continuing with the project after fulfilling the course requirements, there were instances where students felt like volunteers rather than researchers. For instance, after completing a preliminary literature review for the project, I (Thomas) felt as though I had become the main "knowledge holder" for the project. In turn, I felt my responsibilities in the project increase. There were several instances when I was asked to represent the project at conferences and community events. These requests made sense because of my knowledge of the community's needs and my understanding of how the project would unfold. I was best positioned to gather pertinent information from seminars and conversations with community members, and make connections with industry leaders for the purpose of developing promotional strategies, even though neither task was directly related to the scholarship components of my work. These activities were not unwelcome, as I had developed an affinity for the project and wanted to do anything within my capacity to ensure its success. Still, it is worth noting that this level of

engagement placed additional demands on my time and responsibilities as a student. Another student reflected on having done a lot of work outside the research component:

My role in the organization took on the form of a volunteer more than of a traditional researcher. I attended the board meetings, took on the role of minute taker, attended events, and of course managed the progress of the research project. This helped me better understand the inner workings of the [community partner]. I also volunteered at various other organizations while simultaneously working with the [community partner].

The same student, in addition to noting the additional tasks undertaken, also reflected on the value of these contributions:

I felt that I contributed to the strengthening of bridges between other organizations and the [community partner]. Because the staff and funding that supported the organization was insignificant, my efforts were well received. The opportunity to be more involved provided a means to build more trust between myself and [the community partner] staff and board.

In no way did any of the students feel coerced into volunteering their time, and none of them felt that the situation resulted from inequities in their projects. Still, the integral role of their volunteerism to the success of their projects implies that it is difficult to accurately define academic researchers' roles early in the establishment of a community-engaged research project. Israel *et al.* (1998) note that finding a balance between research and action can be difficult and thus requires specific attention. In the planning stages, it is important that the university researcher and the community partner agree upon mutually beneficial terms for the project (Altman, 1995), but defining these terms appears to be acutely difficult to predict. The university researcher does not need to make a choice between doing research and participating in an action process, but must budget her or his own time accordingly (Israel *et al.*, 1998). Also, Boyer (1990) notes that the process of scholarship is more dynamic than simply acquiring knowledge and applying it. Theory can inspire application, and application can inspire theory (Boyer, 1990). By having volunteered a considerable amount of time and knowledge, each of the students had an opportunity to experience this phenomenon. Attention to these details represents a key component of developing an equitable partnership, a topic addressed in the following section.

#### ***Learning Outcome 4: Develop and Manage an Equitable Relationship with a Community-Based Research Partner***

The development of equitable partnerships occurred in our projects, but not without some struggles. In our reflections, all students noted circumstances that led to successful partnerships, and also the need to be mindful of power relations, not only in terms of how they develop and manifest, but also in terms of how they influence project outcomes.

*Circumstances leading to successful partnerships.* As noted earlier, feeling that project duties are shared equitably amongst all partners is critical to maintaining an equitable relationship. Throughout

my project, I (Thomas) felt that the results of my efforts were useful to the community. All of the products associated with my CES project have been useful to the community partner. Concurrently, my primary community contact for the project made similar or greater contributions to the project's overall success. For example, she had connections to [another community organization] that effectively eliminated barriers to my recruitment efforts, took responsibility for the financial requirements of the project, and made connections to institutions that promoted our work. Another student had similar experiences, where each step of the process included equitable contributions:

Although the main contact for [the community partner] and I did not meet during the previous visit, we managed to identify the organization's needs, map out our research methodologies, write up the interview questions, and discuss the ethics application. We were both accountable to various components of the project and we held true to our commitments. In the spring I met with the [community partner] staff that would be most active in this CES project. Not only were they very knowledgeable about the history and workings of the organization, they were also experienced as researchers and facilitators. In my experience, this transdisciplinary background helped us build a more equitable partnership because everyone brought a unique skill set to the table.

In sum, the project partners' contributions matched the students' contributions, and were integral to developing and completing the projects. Although the projects were not beset with interpersonal struggles, issues of power did present themselves as a challenge to be overcome.

*Power relations and project outcomes.* The students experienced some issues with power imbalances. For instance, for the focus group sessions I (Thomas) led, I was required to recruit students from local high schools using in-class presentations. The purpose of the focus groups was to understand young peoples' experiences with employment and belonging in their neighbourhoods. Our original ethics application indicated that I would be the sole recruiter for these focus groups. As such, only I could deliver consent forms to students by way of their teachers. This caused a minor roadblock to the community partner's recruitment efforts. While I viewed the focus groups primarily as form of data collection, the community partner viewed them as "information sessions", hoping that participating youth would subsequently be interested in participating in community-based programs. Due to the discordant views on the purpose of these sessions, and perhaps also due to a lack of understanding of the university's ethical protocols, I fielded multiple requests to modify the format of the focus groups, including, "Can we have employees present at the focus groups to develop a sense of community and familiarity?", and "Can you give me a copy of the consent form so that I can distribute it to parents?". Though I could not accommodate the first request because of privacy concerns, I did successfully amend the ethics process to include the partner organization's newly hired youth facilitator in the process. As well, realizing the appropriateness and benefit of having the community partner recruit participants, I also amended the ethics application to allow the project partner to distribute the consent forms. My goal of being accommodating without compromising the academic integrity of the project required negotiating at least three sets of power dynamics: between me and the community partner, who had to seek my

‘permission’ to make changes to the process; between me and the university’s research ethics board, who held the power to approve or deny my proposed recruitment amendments; and between me and participating youth, whose privacy was of primary concern.

Addressing power distributions within CES projects is widely discussed in the literature, and critical to establishing equitable partnerships. This need arises from the concern that one or more parties within a partnership can dominate the decision-making process (Wallerstein & Duran, 2008), which can in turn affect the outcomes and abilities of a community-based organization to affect the change they would like to see, or to acquire the data they seek. The potential imbalance of power, and perhaps the reputation of university-community relationships, has led to some community members’ skepticism of whether such a relationship can be managed equitably (Israel *et al.*, 1998). Sources of imbalance can be based on a number of factors, including education, income, race, ethnicity, and gender, all of which, if ignored or improperly addressed, can lead to unproductive partnerships (Buchanan, 1996). It is important to note that the solution to addressing power imbalances is not necessarily for partners to decide that they will split project tasks equally. As Israel *et al.* (1998) ask, “Is it most appropriate to train community members and health practitioners to analyze data, or is it more valuable to focus the use of scarce time and resources on involving them in interpreting and making sense of the data?” (p. 183). Dalal *et al.* (2009) suggest the latter is likely to be the more effective route. Delegating leadership and tasks according to strengths and interests of partners allows individuals to focus on areas where they have strengths, rather than having to spend time familiarizing themselves with new knowledge and methods. This is not to suggest that CES cannot be a place of learning and skill development, since there may be times when the project requires multiple people to handle data, conduct interviews, make presentations, and write. In some cases, the more experienced members of the project can train and support less-experienced members (Dalal *et al.*, 2009). In this way, positions of power can be reversed, where the university researcher may hold more power in the generation and collation of data, but the knowledge generated may be held and disseminated by the community partner (Wallerstein & Duran, 2008).

***Learning Outcome 5: Practice Reciprocity of Process/Outcome by Delivering a Final Product that is Usable by a Community-Based Organization***

We all, as students, intended to produce a final product of use to our community partners. We all succeeded in this to some degree. However, inefficiencies in the research process, team members with imbalanced stakes in different aspects of the project, and difficulties meeting class-oriented timelines all affected the production of useful final products.

*Inefficiencies of large groups and imbalanced stakes.* All students experienced difficulties in keeping to agreed-upon deadlines developed at the outset of the project. While having difficulties adhering to schedules is not unique to CES projects, students did note this as a challenge in completing their final products. The size of the group and the priority of each member of the partnership seemed to contribute directly to project delays. One student described this as follows:

I anticipated that the more people working on the documents, the quicker everything would progress. I began to tease apart what may have contributed



to the slow progress, and I can partially attribute the lack of adherence to the project timeline to the fact that most work requiring input from multiple project partners only took place during meetings. Various committee meetings occurred once a month for two hours and involved discussions of other projects in addition to the [CES] project. Drafts of the survey were distributed during the meeting and committee members had only a few minutes to review the survey and make comments. Perhaps in the future, progress could mirror that of the project timeline if stakeholders completed tasks outside of the meeting. However, I understand that everyone is busy and perhaps it is too much to ask stakeholders to complete work outside of the designated meeting times.

Two students noted tensions surrounding the differing value placed on certain aspects of their projects. In some instances, students found that their priorities as students were not the same as the partners' priorities. Although discussed in some detail above, one example of this is that student timelines did not always accord with the needs of the communities for quick turnaround at unpredictable times. Despite the fact that students and communities shared mutual goals associated with the successful outcome of the project, they were ultimately responding to different limitations and expectations depending on their respective institutional constraints and cultures.

As noted above, reciprocity is one key to developing and maintaining equitable relationships (CAMH, 2008). This requires the researcher and community partner to follow pre-determined steps to develop a research question, goals, timelines, responsibilities, and a communication plan (Adams et al., 2006). Following these steps and maintaining communication throughout, including setting up dates to receive feedback on work, resulted in fewer hiccups in the partnerships than might otherwise have been expected. This issue is perhaps unique to course-based CES, since outside of the bounds of the classroom, students' deadlines would have been more flexible, and the pace for feedback would have been in better keeping with the needs of the initiative and not the needs of the student.

*Class-oriented timelines.* Partly to address the aforementioned challenge, the CES graduate course is spread over two semesters to accommodate the scale and scope of the projects being undertaken. This is done with the reasonable assumption that the length of a typical term (12 weeks) is inadequate to complete a CES project. Even though this gave the students just over six months to complete their projects, two of their projects were not completed on time for various reasons, while the third was complete from the student's perspective, even though the partner's final feedback was outstanding at the termination of the course. The fact that two of the projects are ongoing has led two of the students to remain in contact with their project partners, and await final tasks. Even though their final products were not necessarily complete by the end of the course, each of the students felt that they had addressed each of the learning outcomes at least in part, and none felt that the grade received or ability to meet the learning outcomes was hindered by an incomplete final product. Still, their experiences with timeline mismatches led them to recommend that in the future, the course should be offered as a full credit course instead of a half credit course, and that even more caution should be taken when scoping projects at the outset, thereby reducing the possibility of students spending more time on their projects than is customary for a graduate level course.

## Contributions and Future Possibilities

This paper presents graduate students' perspectives on their training as CES scholars through a CES graduate course that included both theoretical and practical elements. The paper contributes to the literature by adding the perspective of trainees to their development as CE scholars, and by highlighting points of tension in students' training that can be attended to by others involved in the work of training CE scholars. The authors' analysis of students' reflections highlights instructional and practical elements that were critical to students' development of CES knowledge and skills. For instance, students described being able to anticipate and respond to challenges in CES because they had been exposed to literature on communities' perceptions of scholars, the similarities and differences between CES and traditional forms of social science research, and the challenges and opportunities of collaboration. In each case, students were exposed to these concepts in class, and then experienced these concepts within their respective community-based projects.

Students also noted that the requirement to reflect on their experiences in relation to the course learning outcomes served to enhance their development as community-engaged scholars. The complexity of students' projects was necessary to expose them to the learning outcomes established at the outset of the semester. This is somewhat paradoxical since the complexity of the projects also led to students' struggles with negotiating reasonable timelines and scoping appropriate roles for themselves within their partnerships. Thus, the five learning outcomes that serve as a framework for analysis in this paper are useful for guiding students' holistic development as CE scholars, but must be approached with caution in order not to overwhelm students. Special care should be taken to match the scope of the project to the student's time and compensation (i.e., credit allocation).

Despite the value offered by the CES course, there are some elements of CES students identified as lacking in their training. In particular, students felt unprepared to navigate the university's ethics protocols, and would have benefited from more training in this regard. Having community partners participate in this training could have mitigated some of the challenges students faced in the development of their ethics protocols. They also felt that more attention could have been paid to the possibilities of publishing their findings for academic audiences. As Israel *et al.* (1998) note, CES makes numerous contributions to society, including its production of useful and relevant data that can be used by both partners, and recognizes that the knowledge generated should be available for use by all project partners. Because the emphasis of the course was heavily on partners' needs, students did not attend to the possibility of using the data for their own/future work. If they had been encouraged to reflect more thoroughly on these points, the data gathered might have been useful beyond the confines of their class-based projects. Another element that Israel *et al.* (1998) note is that community partners are partners in, rather than subjects of, research. Students developed their research questions and approaches with their community partners; however, this development did not include much participation from the research participants themselves, running the risk of community members remaining more subject than participant. This would have been a useful tension for students to reflect on more carefully, both in terms of its implications and its resolution.

While the sample size in this research is small, the reflections from three graduate students on their development as CE scholars open the door to future research, including through highlighting the importance of considering the training of CE scholars from the perspective

of trainees. Incorporating more participants in future studies will allow more nuanced findings and consideration of how variations in partnerships (based on either the student or the partner) might impact students' training. The reciprocal contributions of students and their community partners to each other beyond the agreed-upon research relationship are another area for future research. Finally, future research could consider how students' early training as CE scholars contributes to their longer-term practices as researchers, regardless of whether or not they pursue CES.

## Conclusion

Efforts to train community-engaged scholars through graduate level course work, specifically including actual community-based research projects, are an important and effective component of a larger strategy to develop CE scholars. From the perspective of trainees, the opportunity to reflect on personal development in relation to core learning outcomes, and the opportunity to negotiate the complexities of partnerships are particularly valuable training experiences. Navigating university research ethics protocols with community partners is especially challenging, and additional training in this area would have been useful. This research raises important questions about a number of factors related to CE research, including how or if students' timelines could be better matched with community partners' timelines; whether a particular community's perceptions of scholars can be managed or improved as a result of a CE approach to scholarship; and how students could be better prepared for potential tensions surrounding power, equity, and differing priorities. This paper offers a model for exploring students' perspectives on their development and growth as CE scholars, and sets the stage for future research aimed at better understanding students' development as CE scholars, the role of CE scholar training in students' future research trajectories, and the reciprocal contributions between students and community partners beyond the specific project.

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# **Reports from the Field**





## **Engaged Scholarship: Reflections from a Multi-Talented, National Partnership Seeking to Strengthen Capacity for Sustainability**

**Maureen G. Reed, H el ene Godmaire, Marc-Andr e Guertin, Dominique Potvin, Paivi Abernethy**

**ABSTRACT** This paper describes a national partnership of academic researchers, government representatives, and sustainability practitioners who sought to strengthen the capacity of 16 biosphere reserve organizations working across Canada to promote sustainability through collective learning and networking strategies. We begin by situating our work within traditions of community-engaged scholarship and appreciative inquiry, and then ask participants to reflect directly on the questions. We then draw attention to four key themes: building and maintaining trust; setting clear and confirmed expectations; establishing structured and multi-lateral facilitation; and finding the sweet spot for our collective practice. Our reflections address common themes of community-engaged scholarship, including addressing cross-cultural challenges and finding joy in working together.

**KEY WORDS** community-engaged scholarship, research partnerships, biosphere reserves, research facilitation, collective learning

### **Introduction**

It may sound like hubris to describe the authors of this paper as “multi-talented,” but we are. Our intention is not to boast, but to describe the relative contributions and challenges when we bring together academic researchers, government representatives, and sustainability practitioners across a national partnership. We speak from our “talents” in keeping with the philosophy of appreciative inquiry. Appreciative inquiry is a participatory action research method that seeks to build understanding through a strength-based, generative approach (Nyaupane and Poudel 2012). Although not explicitly rooted in the methodology of appreciative inquiry, our partnership shared many of its characteristics including adhering to participatory action research, developing an inductive research design, adopting a mutual learning process, providing structured facilitation, searching for practical knowledge, and encouraging collective and transformative action.

In this paper, we reflect informally on a partnership composed of UNESCO Biosphere Reserve (BR) practitioners, researchers, and government representatives in Canada to work as a network to improve their capacity to meet conservation, sustainability and learning

objectives.<sup>1</sup> Designated by the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Biosphere Reserve is a name given to regions and organizations established to promote sustainability at the local-regional level. Our research was rooted in community-based or community-engaged scholarship, recognizing that the community in our case is a diverse and geographically dispersed one. But it is linked to community-engaged scholarship through our commitments to sharing, reciprocity and partnerships defined by mutual respect and multi-directional flows of ideas, labour, and benefits (Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities 2001). We brought to this exercise many years of diverse experience and knowledge, associated baggage, assumptions and interests, combined with a genuine desire to work together, and a collective commitment to the ideals of the UNESCO Man and Biosphere Programme (MAB) of which Biosphere Reserves are a part.

We chose not to write this paper in a standard academic format. First, we explain the purpose and challenges of Biosphere Reserves in Canada. To help readers understand the context of our research, we then describe the partnership arrangement and situate it within community-engaged research traditions. To further illustrate the reflexive approach coupled with diverse stakeholder perspectives, we present our reflections as responses to a series of questions we posed to ourselves. We have chosen to give direct voice to each of the authors rather than write over their contemplations.<sup>2</sup> The authors, in this case, are not disinterested observers, but rather engaged participants. They represent the principal investigator (PI) (Reed), co-investigator and former Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian Biosphere Reserves Association (Guertin), the research facilitator who was hired to provide leadership for the project from beginning to end (Godmaire),<sup>3</sup> a representative from the Canadian Commission for UNESCO – a forum of consultation-supporting UNESCO initiatives in Canada, operating at arm’s length from the government through the Canada Council for the Arts (Potvin), and a graduate student who attended all national workshops and participated in evaluating the work of the partnership by analyzing and documenting questionnaires and interviews (Abernethy). Each author reflected on the following questions:

1. How do you describe your “position” and role in the partnership?
2. As you began your involvement, what did you want to get out of it? Did these expectations change over time?
3. What challenges, expected or not, did you experience? How were these addressed?
4. What lessons have you learned by working in this partnership that inform the practice of transdisciplinary research and/or community-engaged scholarship?
5. How has your involvement in the partnership influenced your understanding of community-engaged scholarship?

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<sup>1</sup> More formal evaluation of the partnership, by which we identified specific action steps and factors contributing to success of the partnership, can be found at Reed et al. 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Some minor editing was done for accuracy, language, and consistency of presentation.

<sup>3</sup> While Ms Godmaire was hired through the University of Saskatchewan, she maintains residence in Mont St. Hilaire, QC. Her geographic location was an important element to consider in all aspects of her job as research facilitator.

By providing space for individual reflections, we demonstrate a key practice of community-engagement: that is, providing direct voice to academic and community partners alike (Koster et al. 2012). We then synthesize our reflections across four key themes: building and maintaining trust; setting clear and confirmed expectations; establishing structured and multi-lateral facilitation; and finding the sweet spot for our collective practice. Finally, we end with some observations that have inspired our work together.<sup>4</sup>

### **What are Biosphere Reserves?**

UNESCO Biosphere Reserves are geographic areas and civil society organizations composed of local residents, government representatives, and researchers who seek to learn about and take action to make transformational change to advance sustainability. Officially, Biosphere Reserves are mandated to carry out three functions: conserve biological and cultural diversity; advance sustainability; and support scientific research, learning, and public education. Designation of a region as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve does not alter any pre-existing legislation, regulation or property rights. In practical terms, management means that local committees obtain funds to undertake educational and demonstration projects and provide logistical support for scientific research. In Canada, these committees do not have regulatory authority or direct management and decision-making powers, but must operate within provincial and federal legislative frameworks and/or work in cooperation with relevant government agencies. Additionally, with the exception of Clayoquot Sound, which operates from a trust fund established by the federal government at the time of its creation, Biosphere Reserves receive no sustained official government support. The federal government entered into a funding arrangement for all Biosphere Reserves in 2009, but in its annual budget, the government cut short its funding in 2012, one year before the Contribution Agreement expired. Consequently, staff complement varies and is determined by the local success of securing grants, contracts or other fund-raising mechanisms. Some Biosphere Reserves have only one part-time manager; most operate with extensive volunteer labour.

Academics and practitioners refer to Biosphere Reserves as “living laboratories” and “sites of excellence” for their efforts to facilitate dialogue between practitioners and researchers, and encourage learning through deliberation, networking and experimentation (Batisse 1982; Ishwaran et al. 2008; Price 1996; Schultz and Lundholm 2010). Canada is home to sixteen Biosphere Reserves. Together, they form the Canadian Biosphere Reserves Association that is intended to serve as a mechanism for sharing lessons and advocating for collective action to support their mandate. However, because of uneven and limited funding, large geographic distances and socio-cultural differences between sites, lack of familiarity with other people in the network, and a lack of experience with collective learning strategies, Canadian Biosphere Reserve practitioners tended to work alone, thereby reducing their impact locally and nationally. Our project aimed to change this pattern.

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<sup>4</sup> Again, the reader is encouraged to read Reed et al. 2014 for contributions to academic literature.

In 2011, the Canadian Biosphere Reserves Association and Canadian academic researchers formed a partnership to determine if they could jointly develop a “community of practice” dedicated to improving Biosphere Reserve effectiveness through social learning and networking strategies. Funded by a three-year “partnership development grant” from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), the partnership also involved the national governing bodies of the UNESCO Man and Biosphere Programme in Canada (i.e., the Canadian UNESCO Man and Biosphere Programme Committee and the Canadian Commission for UNESCO [CCUNESCO]).

We began with a workshop in June 2011 with all practitioners to identify good practices to share. However, we found from the beginning that Biosphere Reserve practitioners wanted to proceed differently. They asked us to complete an inventory of projects and, working with our facilitator, identified 430 projects they had undertaken. We organized and winnowed this list into three thematic clusters about which they could describe “proven good practices”: sustainable tourism; land management and ecosystem services; and education for sustainable development.

In 2012, the practitioners worked with one another in these clusters to identify, assess, share, and promote their good practices on these themes. Their efforts resulted in sharing and broader adoption of pre-existing practices (e.g., tourism charters) as well as the generation of new products (e.g., curricula, videos), tools (e.g., web applications), skills (e.g., facilitation, structured evaluation) and knowledge-sharing practices (e.g., file sharing, virtual communication). In 2012, they presented their reflections to one another and to policy advisors in the Canadian Commission for UNESCO and the Canadian Man and Biosphere Programme committee. The content they produced was judged to be so valuable to a larger audience, both nationally and internationally, that the Canadian Commission for UNESCO offered to turn the best practices identified through the partnership into a bilingual publication.<sup>5</sup> In 2013, the bilingual publication was completed and the Biosphere Reserve practitioners led or co-led several workshops and post-workshop events at the meeting of European and North American delegates to the European Man and Biosphere Conference, EuroMAB. The EuroMAB conference, attended by 197 people from 27 countries, was held in Canada for the very first time.<sup>6</sup> It offered an ideal venue to showcase their collective efforts and learning.

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<sup>5</sup> The publication is now freely available on the Internet (<http://unesco.ca/en/home-accueil/biosphere>). Other outputs can be viewed on Reed's website at: <http://homepage.usask.ca/~mgr774/networking-and-social-learning.php> or at YouTube: [s://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KHxeOTJaiHI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KHxeOTJaiHI)

<sup>6</sup> There are 631 biosphere reserves around the world. UNESCO divides up the world into regions and each ‘region’ meets once every 2-3 years. A global conference is held about once every 10 years. Canada and the US are in the EuroMAB region and the conference is held once every 2-3 years. This is where all biosphere reserve practitioners and researchers (and government people interested) come together to do presentations and workshops about common issues. Although Canada is not really part of Europe, it was felt that Canada had more in common with Europe than with the Central/South American biosphere reserves. Language was also a criterion for inclusion in the EuroMAB network as the working language of the group is English.

Following EuroMAB, the national network has taken the lead on two more national projects focused on “Social Entrepreneurship” and “Engaging Indigenous Peoples.”

We tracked the progress of the partnership by making notes during meetings of the cluster groups and at annual workshops held with the broader partnership. We also conducted interviews with practitioners at the first workshop in June 2011 and near the end in August 2014. We also administered questionnaires to participants in June 2011, September 2012, and November 2013. Our evaluation is not one of neutral observers; however, we believe that by reviewing our work systematically and conferring with one another, we have addressed potential biases suggested by our involvement.

## Individual Responses of the Authors

### *1. How do you describe your “position” and role in the partnership?*

**Hélène Godmaire:** As a researcher-practitioner, my role in the partnership project has been to assist BRs, researchers and other partners in their collaborative work: create practical, conceptual and language bridges between them, keep everyone on track, and trigger communication, partnership and networking. My work with BRs consisted of stimulating their participation, their understanding of the project’s vision and concepts, their creativity and their inputs, and most of all their collaboration. Among others, my contribution lay in helping them discover their collective accomplishments and establish an identity at the beginning of the project (to help them better envision their future activities) as a key step in moving forward. The implementation of participatory action research allowed our team to adapt and co-develop strategies to transfer scientific knowledge and UNESCO MAB and MAP<sup>7</sup> goals, to understand and learn from them, and finally, to explore academic perspectives associated with sustainability partnerships. My role with the principal investigator was to be responsive to the research orientations and requests, to report and discuss the field situation, and to enrich the process with my environmental education experiences and practices.

**Dominique Potvin:** Through my position at the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, my role consisted of supporting the achievement of the MAB programme objectives in Canada in addition to enhancing visibility of Canadian BRs at the international level. It can therefore be described as functioning at the pan-Canadian and international scale. The Commission became involved at the initial stages of the partnership by providing letters of support, but also by supporting initial relationship-building between the research and practitioner community, including through the Canadian MAB committee. After a phase of active learning and listening to BR practitioners, the Commission enhanced its involvement towards the end of the project by ensuring that the identified content was communicated to and shared with

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<sup>7</sup> Hélène Godmaire refers to the Madrid Action Plan. This is the strategic plan set out by the Man and Biosphere Programme internationally and was in effect from 2008-2013. As of September 2014, a new international action plan is still being developed.

wider audiences which would also learn from, and be inspired by, the experiences of Canadian BRs. The Commission also intends to continue supporting informal learning beyond the completion of the funded partnership.

**Paivi Abernethy:** As an external Research Assistant/ Research Associate on a contract, my role has been as an arms-length ‘semi-outside’ observer yet at the same time I have been a participant observer during the workshops.

**Marc-Andr   Guertin:** After a decade or so of local action, I accepted the position as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for the Canadian Biosphere Reserve Association (CBRA). CBRA has a mandate to support Canadian BRs in the achievement of their mandate and to demonstrate their collective value nationally and internationally. Like many networks that operate in the environmental field, fundraising and financial issues often take up lots of time and frankly most of the networking efforts of the Association. As a new CEO, and convinced that the network needed to learn from its members’ knowledge and experience, I was keen to follow up on Maureen Reed’s invitation to start a transdisciplinary and community-engaged research partnership.<sup>8</sup>

**Maureen G. Reed:** I was formally the principal investigator of the partnership, responsible for grant writing, stimulating and observing activities, co-developing evaluation instruments, working with others on analysis and presenting the results at academic and public venues. Informally, and at different times, I undertook a range of roles including cheerleader, nag, beneficiary, financial manager, analyst, co-presenter, co-author, and translator.

***2. As you began your involvement, what did you want to get out of it? Did these expectations change over time?***

**H  l  ne Godmaire:** Each project is an adventure for me, an experiment, and a challenge to reach our goals. Globally, my expectation is to make a change, progress, and a transformation of practices, to co-learn and co-create knowledge. Individually, my expectations were to learn more about the UNESCO-MAB Program, BRs’ reality and achievements and to find out how they could improve their influence. I was also interested in gaining more experience in large partnership projects. I had no expectation regarding BRs’ participation, since I did not know the collaboration dynamic. Overall, I am very pleased with the results. My expectations remained the same throughout the project; however, an additional one emerged. It concerns the way the UNESCO MAB Program functions. In my view, this structure (national and international) would benefit from getting BRs’ feedback on needs, on capacities to achieve the broader mandate, and on communication, and from reporting and designing future orientations.

**Dominique Potvin:** My initial involvement was based on the strong conviction that individual BRs had much to learn from each other and that efforts in this direction should be supported. As we moved forward, it then became increasingly obvious that the learning concerned a wider

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<sup>8</sup> Marc-Andr   Guertin and Maureen Reed have a friendly disagreement about who sparked this idea.

circle (i.e., one including a wider variety of groups) than the one initially targeted. Listening to practitioners allowed me to understand their needs better, thereby allowing me to identify how the Commission might support them better. It also confirmed to me that we shared a similar vision, goals and ideals, but operated at different scales. The Commission's involvement also relied on the notion that local communities are key in shaping the future towards sustainability, and that they are often the most appropriate for conceptualizing and implementing initiatives that would be impossible at a higher level, or if led only by the public sector. The end of the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) was particularly appropriate to document these lessons. Ultimately, hearing directly from Biosphere Reserve representatives about their achievements and successes, and noting the value added and analysis by researchers and facilitators, contributed to re-energizing and motivating my own work.

**Paivi Abernethy:** I wanted to learn more about BRs as organizations and gain hands-on experience in social scientific field research, particularly in participatory action research. I became more engaged as the project evolved and became more and more fascinated both by our findings and about the BRs as organizations. I think seeing participants interact, especially the PI, facilitators and the BR representatives, and the way in which this social network has evolved throughout the process has been such an enriching experience that it has fundamentally changed my approach to research. I think a participatory component is indeed vital for successful and meaningful sustainability research—or social scientific research, in general.

**Marc-André Guertin:** As a new CEO, I became convinced that the network needed to learn from the knowledge and experience of each of its members. I felt it necessary at the time to bring the network members together to work and share more about what they did, not just on what they wanted to do or could not do because of lack of funding. Why not work together to appreciate our strengths and develop a common understanding of our mutual challenges? Why not stop and actually talk and reflect on what we do ... maybe just for a few moments throughout the year. The national partnership gave us that opportunity.

**Maureen G. Reed:** If I were to summarize what I wanted, it was “success.” I didn't have a clear idea of what this meant. I knew that whatever the outcome, I would be able to publish from the work. But I also wanted the BRs to shine. I wanted to see them succeed. I also wanted them to think well of me and wanted to ensure good relations that would continue to nurture our mutual interests in the long term. So, I was hardly a neutral observer. Practically, success also meant I wanted to do it all. At least, initially, I found it difficult to let go and let things unfold as they might. I don't think the expectation changed, but I realized almost from the outset that I was not able to do it all. I also began to realize in very practical ways the multiple talents, ideas, creativity and capacity for hard work that the partners brought to the project. Hence, I found the project fed me, professionally and personally, as we carried on. As I let go, I also took on roles as active learner and participant, rather than merely as principal investigator or leader. This made the experience truly joyful, despite the many bumps in the road we encountered.

### ***3. What challenges, expected or not, did you experience? How were these addressed?***

**Hélène Godmaire:** Our team (researchers/practitioners) challenges were shared with the BR coordinators, such as lack of time and money for BRs, staff turnover, distance and communication. Using Skype or GotoMeeting was, indeed, awkward. To overcome those challenges, we deliberately sustained collaboration, simplified and framed the tasks. To facilitate communication, the number of contacts was increased and rigorously planned. Transferring the project aims and the diverse scientific concepts behind partnership was challenging, as well as launching BRs' collaboration. Patience, perseverance, training and assistance helped the process. For most BRs, sharing their practices was natural; that helped others follow up.

**Dominique Potvin:** Identifying the appropriate and satisfactory level of collaboration concerning specific project elements was not always obvious. Indeed, team members did not always agree on the need or feasibility to seek group consensus on aspects judged to be mere detail to some. When such cases arose, team member views were sought (enhancing validity but also necessary time and facilitation resources). While a certain level of flexibility is always necessary when working with a variety of organizations, the timelines (jointly established) were not always respected, thereby resulting in considerable pressure on specific partners. Another enduring challenge concerns the effective diffusion of project content and results to other communities.

**Paivi Abernethy:** Because of my role, I personally did not experience challenges, but I learnt a lot from observing the process. For instance, the very first workshop, in which a new opportunity to collaborate with like-minded people energized the BR practitioners, generated a momentary inflated sense of collective empowerment. However, connecting the ideals with BR realities after the workshop caused some frustration among the participants that could have been detrimental for the project. The PI immediately addressed the conflict situation by listening and hearing the concerns of all stakeholders, and respectfully, reflectively, guiding the partnership to a consensus was a very strong learning experience. Similarly, seeing the ways in which the project manager has facilitated the complex process of partnership development and combined her academic and practitioner skills to promote consensus building, in often sensitive situations, has been invaluable for my own personal development as an academic researcher.

Indeed, this research has cemented my desire to keep studying community-based initiatives in a participatory manner. Furthermore, the experience has shown how the complexity of cross-sectoral, multidisciplinary collaboration and the skillful facilitation needed for the process have been significantly understudied in academic research.

**Marc-André Guertin:** Many challenges awaited us as a national network engaging in a common project. Obviously the distance that separated all participants was a challenge but the partnership funding could help bring us together more often than our annual meetings, which are held once a year. The diversity of perspectives surrounding our BR work was also perceived as a challenge. For many practitioners, the diversity of projects conducted by BRs was perceived as problem because it made it more difficult to label and explain to stakeholders what BRs are





*Marc André Guertin addresses biosphere reserve practitioners at the launch workshop of the partnership in June 2011. (Photo: Páivi Abernethy)*

all about. The diversity of interests also made the development of common projects more difficult.

These challenges were then resolved partially by completing an inventory highlighting the diversity of projects conducted within BRs and by subdividing the partnership project by groups of interest. This was not imposed in any way but eased by the appointment of a facilitator. The list of challenges could be lengthier, but I think that one of the largest challenges faced in the partnership was the

budget cut imposed by the federal government on the core funding the BRs had received since 2009. The funding was unilaterally cut a year early. We all wished the funding agreement could be renewed beyond 2013, so the cut came as a shock. This affected 15 of the 16 Canadian BRs. As in any budget cuts, staff and project development was affected. This had a direct impact on the partnership project. Two BRs were no longer able to engage in the project because they had no staff.

But these cuts did not have just negative outcomes. The partnership project definitely helped the BRs participate to support each other through these difficult times. The engaged BRs truly shared with one another their distinct realities. Some even stated that without the partnership project, they probably would not have been able to get through these difficult times. The national secretariat of our association was dissolved; these cuts obliged me leave my CEO position with CBRA. I remained involved in the partnership project as an academic researcher and a Canadian MAB Committee member with the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, even after the cuts.

Because of these cuts, the network's ability to link with one another and support one another was greatly reduced. Had it not been for the partnership, it might even have been brought to nothing. I believe the partnership truly brought the participating BRs together and offered them a chance to hold on to something they shared in common.

**Maureen G. Reed:** For me, the most difficult challenge, ironically, was maintaining participation from other academic collaborators. Because we regularly use email and Skype, I thought this level of engagement would be easier. Upon reflection, this is not too surprising as academics typically run many projects and the position of "collaborator" in a SSHRC grant is not considered a high level of commitment. Nevertheless, collaborators helped to prepare questionnaires, but few left their offices to join us for workshops or annual meetings.

Other challenges were logistical. I was not surprised when the federal government pulled its funding from the organization mid-way through the project in 2012, although the cut was heartbreaking and created an immediate set of challenges. The Community co-investigator had to take a new position, and it's only been through his stunning commitment that the original partnership remained strong. We juggled the tasks, so that this became more of a logistical

challenge (e.g., fund management fell back to me) than a death blow, and I remain grateful. In 2011, the Canadian network had agreed to host the regional meeting of North American and European BRs at a conference in October 2013. In 2012, they decided to maintain this commitment; however, the loss of core funding to the BR network meant having to spend more funds from the grant to ensure all BRs were able to send a representative to the EuroMAB event. Hence, there was less money to pay them for their time in completing the work and fostering more face-to-face collaboration. The facilitator and I applied for additional funds explicitly to support their attendance at the conference, but our application was not successful. Consequently, practitioners provided more volunteer hours than they originally envisioned. One cluster obtained external financial support and then paid for their members' attendance—a gift for which we remain grateful. Hence, the instability of the funding situation had ripple effects, positive and less positive, on the project.



*Practitioners learn about human-wildlife management at the Long Point Biosphere Reserve in Ontario, June 2011  
(Photo: Maureen Reed)*

#### ***4. What lessons have you learned by working in this partnership that inform the practice of transdisciplinary research and/or community-engaged scholarship?***

**H el ene Godmaire:** The lessons learned include, among others, the importance of human characteristics including the capacity to share and support, the value and meaning of the project for the BR practitioners, expressing confidence in each other and keeping an open mind about the work. Researchers also had to learn humility and openness to ideas of BR practitioners. We also learned that we had to use a diversity of communication channels because one system did not work for all situations. We learned about the learning dynamic. These lessons included creating the right conditions for social learning, taking time to reflect on and critically evaluate practices, learning how to share knowledge and collaborate, and finding ways to identify complementary work and encourage synergies.

**Dominique Potvin:** There is a critical need to clarify expectations and roles of the various partners, in a written form, before entering into active engagement. Even in an environment based on trust and common vision, this is desirable to ensure both the smooth and efficient undertaking of work, and the appropriate recognition of each group involved.

**Marc-Andr e Guertin:** My involvement in the partnership has greatly improved my understanding of community-engaged scholarship. Many practitioners within the network are volunteers that devote time and energy to their communities, to the cause of sustainable development, and like them, staying engaged in the project was my expression of devotion to the cause. Social change is not glamorous and easy, yet many of the practitioners are painstakingly supporting their organization and causes locally. I believe that in order to learn

from practitioners, engaged academics must open their minds and research approaches to their reality in order to truly appreciate the wealth of knowledge we can gain from their practice. It takes times, resources and effort, but the knowledge it provides is more closely associated to the challenges awaiting many organizations engaged in sustainable development. The reflections from this multi-talented, national partnership have strengthened my capacity for sustainability both as a practitioner and as an applied researcher.

**Maureen G. Reed:** A key lesson I have learned is to try to articulate roles more clearly and to seek help through all facets of such a partnership. Students, financial officers, practitioners, civil servants, volunteers of all descriptions—all play important, but different, roles in the smooth running of such a network. But the most important lesson is that of facilitation. Researchers do research, yet few of them have strong facilitation skills. Having someone skilled and dedicated to regular and open communication (with a wide range of participants), systematic assessment, and adherence to timelines is critical.

Another lesson I learned is that a solid foundation helps nurture a virtuous circle. We have been blessed by individual offerings through the course of the partnership. Taking advantage of such offerings requires careful listening, a heightened awareness to the broader landscape that the partnership offered, and an openness to thinking differently about how to achieve the objectives of the partnership.

### ***5. How has your involvement in the partnership influenced your understanding of community-engaged scholarship?***

**Hélène Godmaire:** This project fits along the continuum of a number of previous community-engaged scholarship projects in which I participated. But, going through the project and comparing it with previous ones, I consider this partnership initiative as exceptional, and this is probably due to the solid, relevant, and meaningful project orientations and the stance of the leading researcher (known and recognized), her humanness, her daring and openness to think outside of the box. The flexibility of research action and community of practice approaches, the commitment of the engaged, creative and talented participants, and a good combination of characters (people getting along well) who come with open minds were important elements of the community-engaged scholarship.

**Dominique Potvin:** It has reinforced the notion that the following elements are essential for success:

- plenty of time to develop trust and relationships;
- clear understanding of intentions and goals;
- platform for discussion and communication, that respects roles and responsibilities; and
- personal commitment and passion by all partners involved; individuals involved must believe in the process and be motivated by the collective undertaking/product.

**Paivi Abernethy:** This project was surprisingly successful considering the geographic, temporal, and financial limitations. I think we need much more explicit exploration of the

process dynamics in community-engaged scholarship—not the least because academics need to learn to share the driver’s seat and find the balance between the academic and practitioner needs. For successful community-engaged research, the right kind of people need to be engaged to facilitate the process; a facilitator or facilitators who understand the different need to be involved and have the appropriate skills to build bridges between stakeholders. In this particular research, the academic team, especially the PI, was relatively successful at loosening the reins when managing the research project, but I think we could be better at it. Indeed, the challenge of balancing the needs as well as time and performance requirements set by funders, academics, and community partners is an art in itself.

**Maureen G. Reed:** Community-engaged scholarship means inhabiting your research. If I were to divide the expression “community-engaged scholarship” into three parts, I could say I have a fresh understanding of each part. For me, BR organizations are part of a community of attachment and identity. They are a community bound by a common sense of commitment to the UNESCO ideals of “building peace in the minds of men and women”<sup>9</sup> and to the sustainability ideals embodied in the specific program (MAB) of which they are a part. I consider my work with the national network community-based research even though the organizations with whom I work are physically scattered across more than 6,000 km and five time zones.

In this context, engagement means many things. It means reading their advertisements and notices and keeping up with their daily rituals and responsibilities. It means being open to suggestion from all corners, especially if you think it takes the project on a tangent. Sometimes the best way forward is to take seeming detours into side paths. And I have learned to broaden my idea of scholarship. Through this work, I have written different kinds of articles, and have developed different skills and outputs (e.g., videos, brochures, workbooks, documentary film). Although these are not necessarily new, I have had to learn new-to-me skills in creating them. I have also learned compassion in research, mourning the losses with my companions and celebrating the rich successes we have achieved.

I’ve learned to laugh in my research. I don’t say this flippantly. I mean I’ve learned to love my research companions as the family I choose and to take joy in their successes, my successes, and our collective efforts. We work hard together to address our mutual misfortunes, flaws, and misunderstandings. We construct and bear mutual criticism in the hopes that we can improve relations amongst ourselves and our ecological community members. We don’t always agree, but we have common goals, overall. Hence, it’s really important to always listen to find ways to embrace our differences and diversity and gain strength from our collective work. And we always laugh together. For what is the point of research if its inhabitants don’t take joy in doing it together?

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<sup>9</sup> You can find the slogan on the banner of the UNESCO website at: <https://en.unesco.org/>

### **Synthesizing our Reflections**

Our formal evaluation confirmed seven factors of success: trust building; common interest and shared vision; incentives; perceived value in sharing information; willingness to engage in collaborative learning and decision-making; effective information flow; and effective leadership (Reed et al. 2014). Our reflections here reinforce the need to build and *maintain* trust and to confirm expectations explicitly. We emphasize here that structured and multi-lateral facilitation was key to meeting addressing several of these factors. Finally, we believe that finding the sweet spot helped consolidate the work of the partners, raise their profile, instill a strong sense of pride in their accomplishments and provided an opportunity to celebrate.

### ***Building and Maintaining Trust***

Although the work of the partnership revealed that time and money were both common supporting and impeding factors for sharing and communicating, other intangible factors such as trust and value were just as important. Allowing the practitioners to define the next stage and providing time (three months) and support (work time of the facilitator) to complete an inventory helped build trust among all parties and allowed BRs a means to shape the project. BR practitioners saw this as power sharing through project determination. But we also needed to maintain trust. Maintaining trust was as simple and as difficult as regular engagement or, in the words of one of our participants, “communication, communication, communication.” Despite contemporary virtual technologies, such communication remained difficult across the five times zones and the socio-cultural differences of the country. Uneven access to, and comfort with, tele-communications technology, and its rather stilted character for some without sufficient bandwidth meant that face-to-face meetings were critical for building trust over the course of the project. It was also at the face-to-face meetings that people dedicated their time solely to the project, rather than the thousand and one other projects they had on the go. In a sense, face-to-face meetings allowed for an opportunity to focus, reduced the number of tasks they were doing simultaneously, and nurtured the relationships required to maintain trust.

### ***Clear and Confirmed Expectations***

As pointed out earlier, trust, even among people of common interest and goodwill, is necessary, but not sufficient. Clear and confirmed expectations help all participants to remain on task and to meet inevitable deadlines. In our partnership, expectations were initially set out in individual “ententes” (memoranda of understanding) for some aspects of the project, but not for all. As new initiatives were established and as some practitioners’ involvement waned following the funding cuts, ententes were not revised and new ententes were not created. Hence, in some groups, the load was shouldered unevenly by participants, and the lines of communication became blurred. Confirming expectations through regular communication and through written verification can help overcome the tensions that arise when assumptions and expectations are not met.

***Establishing Structured and Multi-Lateral Facilitation***

Key to this partnership has been the role of the facilitator who played multiple roles throughout the process, including catalyst, animator, translator, and mediator across levels in the network. She maintained regular contact with each cluster group and the investigators, ensured BRs met their information/organizational needs and targets, facilitated face-to-face meetings of the clusters, contributed to the application of research principles and concepts, and helped cluster groups plan activities and projects. The facilitator helped meet other conditions for success such as ensuring the effective flow of information and providing leadership through example.

But beyond the obvious work tasks, the facilitator had other skills that are difficult, yet critical, to encapsulate. The facilitator was multi-lingual. By this, we mean she could speak and write fluently in both official languages (French and English), and she could speak and write both academic theory and plain language. She had long experience working with community-based organizations, including BRs, as well as working in an academic environment. Hence, she maintained regular communications with cluster groups, academic researchers, and, when necessary, governing organizations (CCUNESCO, Canadian-MAB committee). She helped BR practitioners stay on track by providing them with concrete tools to enhance collaboration, such as regular meeting times, templates, milestones, and consistent encouragement. She also good-naturedly reminded researchers and governing organizations of the on-going commitment to collaboration, even when deadlines loomed and these groups sought immediate decisions.

Furthermore, the facilitator helped negotiate differences in participant interests and power relations. When possible, negotiation and decision-making were done by consensus. But given time, distances, and familiarity with funding rules, sometimes decisions were simply made between the principal investigator and the facilitator. The role of the facilitator was to translate concerns and interests of groups to others to engender empathy and understanding. This was an effective way to negotiate items such as funding, project outcomes, and perceived value of the work. In doing so, the facilitator helped to navigate and flatten power relations that might have otherwise been centralized within a steeper hierarchy.

While facilitation has been considered a significant contributor to social learning processes (e.g., Reed et al. 2010), new literature is emerging that points to a heightened significance. For example, building on work by Prince (2003; 2010), Macho et al. (2013: 1057) used the term “barefoot fisheries advisors” for people who “build robust social capital by acting as knowledge collectors and translators between fishers, managers, and scientists.” Similarly, Cash et al. (2003) point to the need for knowledge translation to advance a sustainability agenda. Hence, such facilitators do not simply facilitate process, but they also facilitate knowledge exchange and build social capital among academic researchers, local practitioners or resource users, and policy-makers. Hence we agree with Wals:

Ideally facilitators of social learning become skilful in reading peoples’ comfort zones, and when needed, expanding them little by little. An important role of facilitators of social learning is to create space for alternative views that lead to the various levels of dissonance needed to trigger learning both at the individual and

the collective level. (Wals 2007: 498).

What Wals does not state, however, is that the role of facilitator is not restricted to an event or short time period. It is a critical need throughout such a project. Furthermore, given the scope of this partnership, the facilitator's role must also be structured, with multiple dimensions: multi-lingual, multi-cultural, multi-level, multi-lateral and multi-directional.

### ***Finding the Sweet Spot***

This factor is difficult to define. It refers to finding a point of resonance that will advance the partnership. For this project, the sweet spot was the EuroMAB event. This conference provided a focal point for the efforts of the BRs and an opportunity for them to showcase and celebrate their hard work. Without such a focal point, the networking may have seemed, to some, as busy work for the sake of busy work. Working on projects that span BRs is still new to many practitioners. Some also felt pressure from their board members that they were spending too much time on the networking tasks and too little time on tasks at home.

Showcasing their learning at a plenary event (with multiple workshops) helped demonstrate the value and learning of the partnership. Finding that point of resonance also allowed for other strands of activity to emerge. In our case, the establishment of a Working Group on Indigenous Peoples at the EuroMAB conference came out of the recognition that BRs were not sufficiently engaging the indigenous peoples in their respective communities. While this shortcoming had been recognized for some time, hosting the conference brought this gap forward to the international community, demonstrated that other BRs in the international network shared the same challenge, and provided an added impetus to work together to make change. Hence, there was greater enthusiasm for addressing this gap than if it had simply been a challenge for the Canadian network.

### **Closing Comments**

Our partnership offered an opportunity to weave together theory and practice in ways that were mutually reinforcing and beneficial. This is both the promise and the challenge of community-engaged scholarship. We refuse to conclude because the partnership and our learning are on-going ventures, even though the funding has run out. Instead, we close with a couple of observations from within our group.

**Hélène Godmaire:** While searching for tools and strategies, we found that UNESCO defined the field of Environmental Education as “a learning process that increases people's knowledge and awareness about the environment and associated challenges, develops the necessary skills and expertise to address the challenges, and fosters attitudes, motivations, and commitments to make informed decisions and take responsible action” (Tbilisi Declaration, 1977). This declaration inspired some members in the work we shared. Finding new ways of doing, thinking, participating, empowering, building capacity and mobilizing and linking scientific knowledge with local and experiential knowledge proved to be beneficial for project members and contributed to our achievements. The latter exercise was probably easier, but

both were very fragile depending on resources (financial, human resources). Both required careful guardianship and transparent communication.

**Marc-Andr e Guertin:** A work colleague once told me that there is nothing more practical than a good theory. I guess that there are many not-so-good theories around because scholarly knowledge is often perceived as useless by practitioners. Maybe useless is too strong an affirmation, but let's say disconnected from everyday needs and imperatives of practitioners! As a former practitioner, I recall being caught up in conservation, restoration projects and even field research. Very rarely did we take the time to evaluate and reflect on our actions beyond the simple requirements of our funders and government partners. Even though some of our projects were very innovative and produced outstanding results rarely did we stop and think to evaluate our practices and maybe even share these results with others.

### About the Authors

**Paivi Abernethy** is a transdisciplinary academic, former practitioner and private sector scientist, community activist, and a life-long learner. She is interested in community-based participatory research and studying biosphere reserves as bridging organisations that bring together stakeholders for healthy and sustainable community development. She has completed her PhD and is currently an Adjunct in the Faculty of Environment at the University of Waterloo.

Since 2010, **Marc-Andr e Guertin** has been a lecturer at the «Centre de formation universitaire en environnement» (CUFE) at the Universit e de Sherbrooke. There, he teaches interdisciplinary approaches to ecosystem conservation and management and works with a wide variety of organizations in applied research projects as a reflective practitioner.

With a research and teaching background in science and environmental education, **H el ene Godmaire** has developed a number of environmental education and communication strategies adapted for communities and schools. She is particularly interested in community-based projects and participatory approaches to research.

**Dominique Potvin** works at the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, where she is responsible for Natural Sciences and serves as the Canadian Focal Point for the Man and the Biosphere Programme. She is passionate about connecting people across geographical scales, disciplines, and cultures to jointly address complex sustainability issues.

**Maureen G. Reed** (*corresponding author*) is Professor and Assistant Director in the School of Environment and Sustainability at the University of Saskatchewan. When not working with biosphere reserves, she is studying model forests and community forests in Canada and elsewhere, or admiring other peoples' gardens and taking photos of flowers. Email: mgr774@mail.usask.ca



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## “The Whole of Human Relations”: Learning More than Art, More than Making

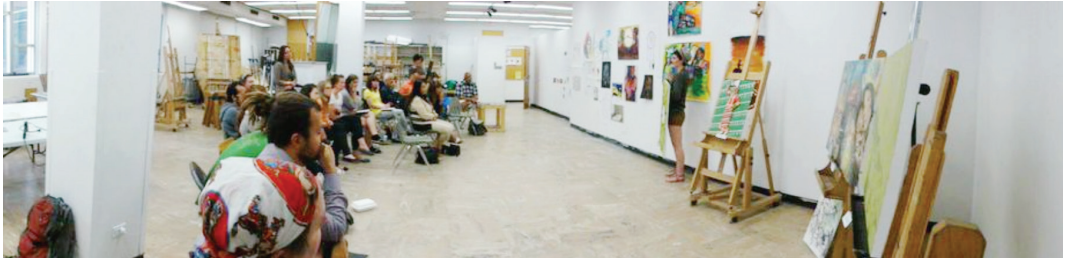
Susan Shantz

**ABSTRACT** The article discusses a six-week long experimental, inter-media art course organized at the University of Saskatchewan in partnership with Saskatoon Tribal Council. This community-engaged teaching initiative, *Project Charter: Call for Artisans, The Child Taken*, provided art students in a senior interdisciplinary studio course with an opportunity to partake in the creation of an art commission commemorating Indian Residential Schools. Focusing on various dimensions of the project the article discusses the professional and experiential learning generated in response to the partnership request from the Saskatoon Tribal Council and highlights project undertakings as “best practices” in community-engaged pedagogy.

**KEYWORDS** art, aboriginal engagement, Indian Residential Schools, undergraduate student engagement

In the spring of 2013, the Saskatoon Tribal Council (STC) approached me as Head of the Department of Art and Art History, University of Saskatchewan, with the idea of a partnership project: Would it be possible to involve students in the creation of an art commission commemorating Indian Residential Schools? The time line was tight, and the regular teaching term winding down, but it seemed like a project that might fit well in a senior interdisciplinary studio course I was teaching for the first time in May. After a series of meetings with the Saskatoon Tribal Council and university staff (the Office of Aboriginal Initiatives was closely involved in developing the details of the agreement which included a transfer of funds to support the project), Tribal Chief Felix Thomas and I signed the *Project Charter: Call for Artisans, The Child Taken* at a public event during Aboriginal Achievement Day on campus in March.

The six-week course began mid-May with nineteen senior students enrolled. Although it was initially intended to be an experimental, inter-media studio course, this special commission request provided, I felt, a strong thematic focus that students could approach according to their various media interests. The Tribal Council invited three elders as well as Saskatchewan’s Indian Residential School Survivor Committee (IRSSC) member, Eugene Arcand, to tell the students first-hand stories of attending Indian Residential Schools. I provided students with



**First row:** Studio classroom with sketches, commission proposal meeting with students, Elders, STC Chief and staff. **Second row:** Eugene Arcand, TRC Survivor and committee member, responds to students' preliminary sketches, May 21, 2013., Kayla Prive and classmates present commission proposals to Elders and STC Chief and staff, May 27, 2013. **Third row:** Tribal Chief, Elders and students present portfolio of artwork replicas in Bentwood Box ceremony, TRC gathering, Edmonton, Alberta, March 29, 2014., Corinna Wolf and classmates present commission proposals to Elders and STC Chief and staff, May 27, 2013.

Images by: Louise Barak (classroom photos), Dawn Deguire (TRC Edmonton photo)

copies of the national Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) publication, *Speaking My Truth: Reflections on Reconciliation and Residential Schools*, stories of Indian Residential School survivors, to read prior to our meeting with the elders. Dr. Jim Miller, Canada Research Chair in the Department of History, University of Saskatchewan, gave an introductory slide lecture

outlining the history and impact of the IRS and two undergraduate Aboriginal students, Rachelle McHenry and Chelsey Stonestand, from the Department of Sociology, presented images created during a research project in North Battleford where Aboriginal youth were invited to visual “resilience” from their individual perspectives. As a class, we began to compile an “image bank” of photos, words and stories that could inform a visual response to the legacy of residential schools in Canada.

Like many post-secondary universities in the 2000s, the University of Saskatchewan has articulated community engagement as central to its direction and mission. Our university in Saskatoon, located on Treaty Six land, also identifies Aboriginal engagement as one of its key mandates. Opportunity to create artwork for external communities, however, rarely happens in undergraduate Fine Art departments, and is not a central pedagogical approach to studio art instruction. Undergraduate art teaching is typically focused on skill and concept development as these relate to a student’s personal interests, which reflect implicit Modernist notions of individual style and voice. Post-modern art has extended traditional media boundaries so painting can be off-the-wall and include found and fabricated materials just as sculpture can embrace a cacophony of forms, colours and spatial arrangements (this was the initial intention of my spring term course – to bring together students in our department from painting/drawing/sculpture/extended media to explore the cross-pollination of art media and ideas). Post-modernism has cracked open the edges of art in other ways, so it no longer belongs exclusively to galleries and museums but might take place in the street and include diverse communities of participants as collaborators and/or recipients. Contemporary art practices that have been informed by the latter include those artists working as facilitators rather than makers who might “take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space.” (<http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/glossary/r/relational-aesthetics>). French theorist, Nicholas Bourriaud, articulated an art that is based on social relations as “relational aesthetics,” first described in his book by that title in 1998. Some institutions have followed suit, introducing courses and programs where students are instructed in the professional procedures and ethical parameters of working with outside communities and collaborators (the relatively new Faculty of Culture and Community, with the embedded minor in Social Practice and Community Engagement (SPACE) at Emily Carr University, Vancouver, is an example of this kind of approach to art and teaching at an institutional level).

*Call for Artisans: The Child Taken* offered students unique learning opportunities within their studio art degree programs. While a number of them were aware of post-colonial and Aboriginal perspectives on art history through course offerings in our department as well as in Native Studies, quite a few knew little about Indian Residential Schools. The *Project Charter* articulated the hope that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students would work together on this commission which proved to be the case since at least three students indicated that they had had family members in residential schools. This did not mean they necessarily knew more of that history than the “settler” students as in many cases, the very painful and tragic stories had never been told either privately or publically (something the Truth and Reconciliation

gatherings in Canada over the past five years have changed). Another goal of the *Charter* as well as of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, was to educate all Canadians about the 130-year history of residential schools and their legacy for Aboriginal people and the rest of us in Canada.

This goal was met very successfully by *The Child Taken* partnership project, with students entering into heartfelt and impassioned dialogue among themselves and, on an ongoing basis, with the elders and Tribal Council staff who attended critique sessions of the works in progress on several occasions. All nineteen students brainstormed ideas after the input of the Elders, and from their readings and research. They listened carefully to each other and in some cases, debated another student's choice of image or material if they felt it wasn't appropriate. I offered the group the collaborative possibility that they were together creating a pool of imagery, akin to how a design or architectural team might work, rather than each of them owning their ideas (which is more often the perception in fine art contexts). A number of the students were quite moved, for example, by the elders' descriptions of traditional languages as a connection to the heart and to ancestors and they picked up on each other's responses to develop images to convey this. The stories and experiences told by the elders had a powerful impact on the students who heard first-hand of the profound loss of culture and family occasioned by the residential schools. The students' capacity for imaginative empathy and their desire to respond with the highest respect to what they had been given in stories were deeply moving. This was evident in the presentations they made of their works-in-progress to the elders and Saskatoon Tribal Council staff, which involved a level of public and professional practice few of them had engaged in before. Seldom do we have a dozen keenly interested outsiders attend studio classroom critiques!

Given the emotional and cultural sensitivity of the Indian Residential School subject, the students were nervous and anxious to ensure that their artworks honoured the elders' stories and served the goals of their commissioners. In the first meeting, each student presented his or her sketches and answered any questions; the IRSSC representative, Eugene Arcand, then responded to each artwork with his own comments and interpretations pointing out what had touched him in each work and asking for clarification. His commentary, as well as that of the Tribal Chief and staff, was overwhelmingly positive, supportive and enthusiastic at even this initial brainstorming stage – so much so that ten of the students chose to continue to develop their ideas further into formal commission proposals by the following week.

The timeframe of this spring course was very condensed with three weeks devoted to this partnership commission and a public exhibition and program planned for the end of the course in our departmental gallery. One student work was to be selected by the Saskatoon Tribal Council from the nine proposals (two students chose to work on a joint proposal incorporating sketches from all nineteen class participants). That work would then need to be enlarged to mural size in the final two weeks before the exhibition. Time pressures and deadlines can function to inspire creativity, and this seemed to be the case during this intensive course. Students presented their completed artworks to the elders and Saskatoon Tribal Council staff on schedule, leaving them with the challenging task of choosing just

one piece for enlargement (this piece would be displayed at a public site in Saskatoon to educate a broader public about the history and legacy of residential schools, and would also be replicated at the original scale for each of the seven member bands in Saskatchewan). While the seven Saskatoon Tribal Council Chiefs were initially tasked with selecting the final piece, they suggested instead that the elders, who had been involved in the teaching and learning process, make the final selection. In the end, the painting by Kayla Prive, *New Child*, was chosen for enlargement to an 8' x 12' mural and was unveiled during a program in our gallery in June 2013. The exhibition included a display of the nine commission proposals as well as all the initial sketches by the nineteen class participants.

The week-long exhibition and program might have marked the end of this successful partnership project as the goal of commissioning a commemorative artwork from a group of students had been achieved and the course was completed. My role as instructor had been largely one of responding, providing structure and guidance from the artistic side, and facilitating the connections with the Saskatoon Tribal Council partners who provided the content and impetus. Although one student's work had been chosen for the mural enlargement, the elders and Saskatoon Tribal Council were enthusiastic about all of the artworks which had translated their stories into moving visual images with a remarkable depth of feeling and understanding. A strong sense of connection and community had developed between me and the students, the elders and Saskatoon Tribal Council members over the few weeks of the course; after the exhibition, the students all decided to give their artwork to the Saskatoon Tribal Council for their future use and display. As a result, rather than ending with the class completion and exhibition, the partnership project gained a new momentum in the following year with requests to show all the artwork, with all of us in attendance, at Tribal Council and band gatherings, as well as community galleries. Ultimately, we were invited to present a portfolio of reproductions of the nine commemorative artworks in the Bentwood Box ceremony in Edmonton during the final national Truth and Reconciliation gathering in March 2014. While the initial goal of this project was the commission of a commemorative artwork, the broader and more important goal of reconciliation, the "forging and maintaining of respectful relationships" (Justice Murray Sinclair, Truth and Reconciliation Commission home page) was achieved through the bringing together of two communities which might not otherwise have met.

The professional and experiential learning generated in response to the partnership request from the Saskatoon Tribal Council might serve as an example of "best practices" in community-engaged pedagogy. This occurred, I often reflect, more by happenstance than deliberate intention as I don't teach in a department with a strong focus or curricular support for this kind of work, nor have I taught studio courses previously with this kind of social and community focus. The circumstances that gave rise to this partnership and its outcomes were in many ways fortuitous. My approach, along with that of my students, was to listen and respond—to the initial request, finding a way to fit that into the limited frameworks of our current curriculum and course structures, as well as to the stories of the elders, hearing these with deep feeling and respect for the truths they expressed.

Working with "the whole of human relations and their social context" (Bourriaud) was

a new experience for those of us on the art side of this partnership, and we all learned more about this difficult but important history and the impact it has had in Canada. In addition, the students learned ways to apply their developing technical and conceptual art skills to a subject not their own but given to them with the trust that they could succeed in making a professional and public contribution to their community. While some of the students were eager to return to their own subject matter after this project was completed, their larger engagement and responsiveness was evident in their willingness to participate in the numerous related events that unfolded over the following year, long after the course was over. The words of one student, Kayla Prive, who completed the mural commission and participated in presentations of her work at the seven band offices in addition to those in Saskatoon, reflect the sentiments, I think, of all of the students involved in this partnership:

I feel privileged to have shared such a special experience of understanding with Felix Thomas, Tribal Chief of the Saskatoon Tribal Council, the staff of the STC, the elders who met with our class and entrusted us with their words and painful memories, my professor Susan Shantz, and my fellow classmates. The experience has been an honour and a gift and I hope that Canadians will continue to open their eyes to the realities that surround us and work together towards a promising future.

[For an archive of the complete project with photos of all artworks as well as related events see the website of the Saskatoon Tribal Council, <http://www.sktc.sk.ca/the-child-taken-art-project/>]

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# Exchanges



## Exchanges

In the *Exchanges*, we present conversations with scholars and practitioners of community engagement, responses to previously published material, and other reflections on various aspects of community-engaged scholarship meant to provoke further dialogue and discussion. We invite our readers to offer in this section their own thoughts and ideas on the meanings and understandings of engaged scholarship, as practiced in local or faraway communities, diverse cultural settings, and various disciplinary contexts. We especially welcome community-based scholars' views and opinions on their collaboration with university-based partners in particular and on engaged scholarship in general.

Below, **Natalia Khanenko-Friesen** talks to **Randy Stoecker** about his work and his views on engaged scholarship in Canada. Dr. Stoecker is a Professor of Community and Environmental Sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a newest member of the Journal's Editorial Board.

### Conversation with Randy Stoecker, University of Wisconsin-Madison

At the recent annual conference of the Engaged Scholarship Consortium which was held for the first time in Canada, in Edmonton in October 2014, I took part in the work of many sessions, basking in the lively atmosphere of the conference, meeting new colleagues, and familiarizing myself with new and impressive scholarship of engagement pursued in North America and the United States specifically. Engaged Scholarship Consortium is based in the United States and most of the presenters at the conference were from the US as well. One session was particularly memorable. In it, I had the privilege of listening to Dr. Randy Stoecker, University of Wisconsin-Madison, who presented "Learning, Service, Community, and Change: Challenging the Conventions of University-Community Partnership." This is what I took away from the presentation.



*Professor Randy Stoecker records ideas as a group of students and representatives from Madison-area nonprofits brainstorm topics that should be investigated in a new community-based research study (2006).  
(Photo: Michael Forster Rothbart)*

Focusing on core concepts of higher education community-engagement learning, service,

community and change, Dr. Stoecker offered his critique of the assumed meanings of these four concepts in the institutional community engagement, pointing out that all four are highly problematic. He challenged and unpacked these concepts, warning that their uncritical use often misleads and limits the scope, focus, and direction of community-engaged work. Institutional community engagement, as it was initially conceptualized, Stoecker pointed out, indeed rests on the above concepts as if on four pillars, listing them in some sort of order of priority. *Learning* is a primary and focal point in all undertakings in community-engaged scholarship in the university setting. Though it can be creative and experiential, it is first and above all student focused. *Service*, if taking the term's own meaning into consideration, usually implies charity-like work and hours of serving the needs of an off-campus group that the students are brought into. The notion of *community* is especially problematic and often bears no specific meaning as it is applied to such a variety of contexts. How often do we deal with true face-to-face interdependent communities that occupy shared and continued space and time? The concept of *change* is not a straightforward notion either. What does "change" presuppose, asked Stoecker, in what contexts and settings was it to take place as a result of engaged research, teaching and learning?

Noting that early conceptualizations of engaged scholarship frequently ignored power imbalance in the relationships between the university and the communities that were to benefit from service, Stoecker discussed more recent and more innovative approaches to community engagement, such as community-based research and critical service learning. While it is an improvement on earlier conceptualizations of engagement, these recent innovations are only partial fixes and not solutions to many existing misgivings and assumptions about engaged scholarly work. That engaged scholarly work in research, teaching, and learning needs to be mutually beneficial and based on reciprocity is now an accepted understanding of community engagement. Yet, how can one define a mutual benefit between a university (usually a multimillion dollar institution) and a small marginalized community? Also recently, a top-down approach to the community-engaged scholarship projects, administration and reporting that developed on many American campuses led to the development of various "tools" designed to "measure" engagement and to evaluate its "outputs."

In light of these developments, Stoecker proposes a new approach to community-engaged work on the university campuses which he referred to as "liberating community engagement." He first suggests that we have to reverse the order in which the four pillars of community-engaged scholarship are usually imagined in various programmatic and strategic documents and measurement tools, emphasizing the primary focus on change. Change, especially within the community but also within the university stakeholders groups, is generated and empowered by knowledge and thorough understanding of the challenges that are addressed in community-engaged projects, most rooted in the systemic nature of disparity and injustice in the social world. To achieve *change* is to have its agents empowered and equipped with knowledge as a primary tool of action. The rest of academic or institutional priorities should follow. Thus, the second priority, *community* is not a starting point in the liberating community-engagement, but rather a final destination. The true sense of community will emerge in the

course of collaboration and will be a result of such empowerment. The third priority, *service* should be based on ‘allyship’ or equal partnership and participatory action research and not on imbalanced relations and charity. All these will lead towards and result in the meaningful and transformative experience of *learning*. Learning is seen here not only as another priority or a goal but as a process and new state of mind. It is through learning and community involvement, informed by ‘allyship’-based community engagement that the new tools for the communities to address and resolve the challenges they face will be created. Such community involvement and transformative experience are ultimately what community-engaged scholars should be pursuing in their work.

Dr. Stoecker discusses his approach to community-engaged scholarship in his book that he is currently working on, titled *Liberating Service Learning (and the Rest of Higher Education Civic Engagement Too)*. We are looking forward to seeing this work published.

At the conference, we agreed with Dr. Stoecker to discuss his views on the state of the engaged scholarship in Canada in the format of a brief conversation to be presented in our inaugural issue here. Dr. Stoecker kindly agreed. In Canada, Stoecker is well known as a leading specialist in community-engagement and often participates in various seminars and symposia north of the Canada-US border. The University of Saskatchewan will be also hosting Dr. Stoecker with his keynote address at the Engaged Scholar Day on April 30, 2015. Here are the excerpts from our conversation:

**Natalia:** What in the first place motivated you to write the book you are currently working on? What does your book aim to accomplish?

**Randy:** Why am I writing it? It’s partly because I feel like I am living through the final novels in the Harry Potter series when Voldemort has risen to power. A terrifying right-wing government rose to power in Wisconsin in 2011, even worse than the Harris government in Ontario. And here we have all this rhetoric about “The Wisconsin Idea” that somehow the university can educate and lift up every person in the state, and the majority of those people elect and re-elect the Walker government to destroy everything that is good about the state, including higher education itself. If we are so good at doing outreach through all this higher education community engagement, why are people making such self-destructive decisions? So the book is trying to figure out where engaged scholarship has gone wrong. And in writing it I believe I have uncovered assumptions and theories that have led our higher education community engagement down its own self-destructive path.

**Natalia:** Currently, working through the essays that were submitted for the inaugural issue of the *Engaged Scholar Journal*, corresponding with peer reviewers and various CES communities of scholars, and thinking through future activities at the Journal, a few things struck me when it comes to the nature of community-engaged scholarship in Canada. First, the Canadian field of CES is, expectedly, very diverse and this creates its opportunities as well as perhaps challenges.

**Randy:** Compared to the U.S. context, I believe the Canadians have some important signs of hope. First, you haven't privileged the higher education side of the "partnership" to the extent to which the U.S. has. You at least had the CURA program, which allowed community-side organizations to be lead applicants. The U.S. had nothing like that. Of course, the danger now is that the old CURA has been folded into SSHRC, allowing the possibility for academics to take over. You also have the Tri-Council statement on research with First Peoples, which is basically community-based research ethics. All you need to do now is apply that to all research. We have nothing even comparable in the U.S., though some of our First Peoples nations are drafting their own policies.

**Natalia:** Secondly, there is a prominent axle in much of Canadian CES work — Indigenous/ Aboriginal one. This dimension in Canada's CES is quite pronounced and because of it, one of our next issues is devoted to engaged scholarship in the context of Indigenous research, teaching and learning.

**Randy:** Yes, it is quite pronounced. But it appears to be more about preventing the bad colonizing research practices than making visible good, alternative research practices. I am hoping to hear more stories that can show the way to knowledge mobilization that transform Euro-dominated culture.

**Natalia:** Thirdly, while there is no established, strictly speaking, Canadian framework for CES, Canadian scholars are well aware of CES scholarship outside of Canada and of the American model of CES. It is certainly a sign of some healthy cross-pollination of ideas between the neighbouring countries. At the same time, in the submissions that were sent in for peer review and editorial review, not much reflection on scholarship outside of North America was offered. In this regard, I wonder to what degree, by embracing the best practices of American scholarship, Canadian scholars might find themselves promoting not just best examples of CES elsewhere but the American model of CES?

**Randy:** Yea, the worst thing you can do is copy anything from south of the border. But, sadly, I am seeing more and more of that. I did a workshop at a major Canadian university a few years ago and I felt like I was still in the U.S. The faculty were mostly interested in knowing how to use community engagement to educate their students rather than to create a better society. On the other hand, you have some of the most progressive work happening. I am aware of the work at the University of Victoria developed under the leadership of Budd Hall, for example. And I am most impressed with the work of the Trent Community Research Centre in Peterborough, Ontario, and the U-Links Centre for Community-Based Research in Minden, Ontario. These two organizations are "science shops" in the best European tradition and perhaps even have a leg up on the European model because both of these organizations are independent non-profits that can safeguard

community interests in community-university partnership research. They are truly global leaders.

**Natalia:** 2. Reflecting on institutional achievements and accomplishments and at times occasional limitations of the American framework of CES, as you encountered those in your career as CES scholar, what might you wish for the Canadian scholars who may be exploring, in their minds and conversations, the feasibility of creating its own national framework? Should Canada have a national conceptual framework (like Carnegie) for pursuing its CES initiatives across the nation and beyond? Or should it model itself after some other national frameworks elsewhere?

**Randy:** The Carnegie classification is a hollow shell. Universities fill out a bunch of forms with superficial information devoid of any evidence of real impact in order to get the shiny medal. But there is little of real substance behind it. If you want to have a national recognition framework, build it around actual impacts, not around how many bodies are engaged in how many hours of system-maintaining charity activities.

**Natalia:** Unlike the American field of CES, with so many great scholarly publishing venues in existence, in Canada we only now turned to the production of the first national journal on CES. What might you wish for our new journal?

**Randy:** I wish your journal to be more than just a journal. So much higher education community engagement is about academic self-congratulatory rhetoric. The writing in the mainstream journals is almost devoid of any deep reflection or self-critical analysis. Someone, somewhere, needs to be brave enough to look carefully not at all the stuff we are doing, but at how little is actually being accomplished. I hope your journal can provide a space where people feel safe to engage in the deep critical reflection—just like we expect from our students—that can move the practice of CES from just another academic practice to something that helps change the world.

### **About the Contributors**

**Randy Stoecker** is a Professor of Community and Environmental Sociology at the University of Wisconsin, with a joint appointment at the University of Wisconsin Extension Center for Community and Economic Development. He is the moderator/editor of COMM-ORG: The On-Line Conference on Community Organizing and Development (<http://comm-org.wisc.edu>). His areas of expertise include community organizing and development, participatory action research/evaluation, and community information technology. He has been involved in a wide variety of community-based participatory research projects and participatory evaluations

with community development corporations, community organizing groups, and community information technology programs across North America and Australia. He also helped build and evaluate university-community collaborations through the Corella and Bertram F. Bonner Foundation's Learn and Serve America Community Research Project. Randy trains, speaks, and writes extensively on community organizing and development, community-based participatory research, service learning, and community information technology. He is author of *Defending Community* (1994) co-author of *Community-Based Research and Higher Education* (2003), and co-editor of *The Unheard Voices: Community Organizations and Service Learning* (2009).

**Natalia Khanenko-Friesen** is an Inaugural Editor of the *Engaged Scholar Journal*, a cultural anthropologist and an oral historian with extensive experience in community outreach and community-engaged scholarship. Dr. Khanenko-Friesen is an Associate Professor at St. Thomas More College and the Head of the Department of Religion and Culture. Interested in ethnicity and diasporas, post-socialist transition and labour migration, she initiated and worked on a variety of community-based projects in Western Canada, Ukraine, Italy, and Portugal. A former director of internationally recognized Prairie Centre for the Ukrainian Heritage at the U of Saskatchewan, she currently coordinates the Centre's Oral History Program. She is a founder and coordinator of the University of Saskatchewan Study Abroad Semester in Ukraine. Dr. Khanenko-Friesen has authored and co-authored five books including two monographs and published numerous other essays on various topics of her research. Email: [engaged.scholar@usask.ca](mailto:engaged.scholar@usask.ca).



# **Book Reviews**



*Journeys in Community-Based Research*. Jeffrey, B., I.M. Findlay, D. Martz, and L. Clarke (Eds.) Regina, SK: The University of Regina Press, 2014. 208 pages. Pp. \$80.00 (CAD) (paperback). ISBN 978-0-88977-306-6 (bound); ISBN 978-0-88977-339-4 (pbk.); ISBN 978-0-88977-307-3 (pdf).

Two important outcomes of engaged scholarship are the empowerment of communities and the enlightenment of scholars that extend from mutually-agreed-on engagement to collaboration on innovative strategies to address problems (Bharadwaj, 2014). This volume leads the reader through stories of empowerment and enlightenment and provides a crucial moral compass for anyone considering community-based research (CBR). The editors, experts and pioneers from prairie-based institutes and networks for community-based research, have done excellent work in compiling case-supported and practice-based chapters which contest the ‘helicopter’ approach to research.

The book’s three sections, mapped out in the introduction, explore the challenges of conducting community-based research. The substantive content begins with a comprehensive look at the ethics of CBR in three in-depth chapters. In “Working Together,” contributors share lessons about recognizing key ethical principles and levelling the playing field to encourage shared power, equal voice, and collective decision making. In “Talking to the ‘Healing Journey’ Interviewers,” researchers share a vital but seldom explored aspect in community-based research; that is, the potential for ethical concerns with researchers and their staff, and the importance of advancing methodology and ethical codes through evaluating the experiences of research staff. My favourite chapter in the text is “The Ethics of Engagement,” in which the authors reveal humbling mistakes they made in guiding their students; in their initial considerations of the ethics of place and the place of ethics; and in their complacency with the hardened culture of academia. They admit to perpetuating an ethos they did not wish to perpetuate and show wisdom in the relating of their story so that readers can learn from the account. “The Ethics of Engagement” is an outstanding piece of work that should be mandatory reading for honours and graduate-level students beginning their journey in community-based research, and other practitioners who want to strengthen their commitment to community-based research.

The second section turns to issues of advocacy and community-based research. In “Community-Based Research and Advocacy for Change,” the contributors explored the challenge of inclusion/exclusion in CBR projects, and at a meta-level, in the governance of CBR projects. The case study highlights the positive outcomes of a contentious decision to exclude academics, funders, and government representation from a CBR Steering Committee. In “A Provocative Proposition,” the contributors remind us that community is a fluid term that changes with historic, economic, geographic, and political boundaries. Clinging to those boundaries can result in missed opportunities to work with intermediaries and create bridges among organizations or even in a failure to keep a strong focus on the big picture and the

root causes of the inequality being explored. The inclusion of a journalist's perspective in this chapter sets up a dichotomy that the authors resolve in their concluding prescription for dual accountability. This chapter brings home the need for critical reflexivity in community-based research practitioners.

The third section of the book presents five chapters exploring the impacts of community-based research. Contributors explore a wide variety of partnerships and populations, and through the use of participant-grounded evaluative frameworks. Notable among these chapters are "Tripartite Collaboration and Challenges," which reflects on meaningful collaboration and communications among researchers, government agencies, and communities during community-based research, and "Standing Buffalo First Nation Youth," which examines the use of visual research products with First Nations Youth, a method gaining in popularity because of its inclusivity and culturally respectful approach. A missing part of this collection that project managers could use is an examination of the pragmatics and financing of CBR research.

The conclusion draws together all the threads from the well-written chapters and locates the work within the global struggles of community-based research as a practice. These struggles include, first of all, the discounted rigour of community-based research and its characterization as outreach or advocacy rather than real scholarship; second, the awareness that the interdisciplinary narratives used by universities and funding agencies cloak the continued focus on and support of short-term knowledge production hierarchies over CBR's long-term relationships; and third, the current acceptance that knowledge systems are still evaluated within the publication numbers game, not in the context of empowerment and real, local policy change. These are frustrations faced by community-based research practitioners around the world, exemplified in this volume through case studies and examples based in the Canadian prairies, shared as honest, very readable journeys.

This book would be complemented by methodological texts offering step-by-step guides for conducting community-based research such as Stoecker (2012), and Hacker (2013). Denzin, Lincoln and Smith's (2008) handbook would provide needed accompaniment through enlightening practitioners on the synergies among indigenous and non-indigenous pedagogy and discourse. Even though situated in Saskatchewan, the lessons contributed in this work are wide-reaching and valuable for new and continuing community-based research practitioners in Canada, and abroad. This book encourages readers to pursue collaborative projects that empower: a truly noble goal.

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*Learning and Teaching Community-Based Research: Linking Pedagogy to Practice* by Etmanski, C., Budd, L.H., and Dawson, T. (ed.) 2014. University of Toronto Press. Toronto, ON. 388pp. ISBN 978-1-4426-1257-0.

*Learning and Teaching Community-Based Research: Linking Pedagogy to Practice* (Etmanski, Hall & Dawson, 2014) is an appropriate choice as a book to review for the inaugural issue of the *Engaged Scholar Journal*; the book reflects the goal of the *Journal* to publish work on the practice and pedagogy of community-based research (CBR) that is conducted in equal partnership with the community. As the reviewer, trained in the traditional research methodologies and academic structures that the writers indicate often conflict with the practice, teaching and learning of community-based research, I hope to bring a unique perspective to this review. Having said that, I share common ground with the pedagogy of community-based research in the concepts of experiential learning (EL), the dominant pedagogy in my teaching and a subject of my own research.

Experiential learning as a process is described by Kolb and Fry (1975) as a cycle that begins with a concrete experience followed by observation and reflection, concept formation, and re-evaluation leading into the next concrete experience. In its purest form, EL is learning by doing where the line between the teaching of the skill and the practice of the skill is indistinct; “We make the road by walking” (Hall, 2014, p. 151) appropriately describes this process, one of many comments that indicate how deeply the teaching of CBR is entrenched in EL. The personal experiences and reflections appropriately related in the book show us how blurred this line between teaching and research can be and that these experiences can be both powerful and risky for student and instructor/researcher alike.

The messages of the book are communicated through the personal experiences of participants in community-based research as a set of chapters organized under themes: the principles and practice of CBR, learning by doing CBR, teaching CBR in the community and in the classroom, CBR programming, and the challenge of teaching and conducting CBR under traditional academic structures. These personal experiences provide a clear definition of community-based research. The principles behind the ethical practice of CBR are described, and the pedagogy of teaching CBR is explored. For these reasons alone, this book is a valuable resource for those who, like me, are unfamiliar with, yet interested in the practice of CBR and possible incorporation of elements of CBR into our teaching. However, the writings in this book go much further. This is not a text-book per se, but a journey through the challenges, both academic and personal, of engaging with people and communities as partners in this process. The experiences related in this book show the passion and emotion of CBR, its challenges to the academic structures that CBR springs from, and its value to our human responsibility to make all our lives better. For these reasons, this book is also a valuable resource for those already immersed in the practice and teaching of community-based research. I found it enlightening, yet daunting because it demonstrates that there are no half measures with

CBR; one is in all the way or not at all.

Learning and Teaching Community-Based Research was conceived and delivered by researchers based out of the University of Victoria conducting community outreach and research with and in local communities. It includes contributions by students, community-based workers, and academics from across the country. Several of the projects described in this book are about research and teaching in collaboration with and often led by local indigenous peoples and communities. Each project, as a case study in the practice and teaching of community-based research, is unique in its participants, issues, approaches, and outcomes. However, for each case, the principles or ethics of community-based research are implicit or clearly indicated: researchers and community members collaborate and contribute equally to the process; both researchers and community members learn through the process; the research sparks action which leads to capacity building within the community; community members have control over the process (i.e. it is participatory); there is transparency in the research process; and the research methods and outcomes are developed and disseminated collaboratively.

This process in many ways conflicts with how research is traditionally conducted at academic institutions, a difference noted more than once; for example, “it is our intentional effort to bring to the forefront ways of knowing and being that are not conventionally understood as science” (Etmanski, Dawson & Hall, 2014, p. 16). Traditional academic research is described as linear, with specific objectives and timelines, whereas CBR is non-linear, often open-ended and indeterminate. The difference, based on essentially differing ways of creating and managing knowledge, has traditionally supported also an imbalance in power. The solution described is to grant legitimacy to the knowledge and ways of knowing in communities.

The discussion on the conflict between traditional research methods and community-based research is also extended to the pedagogy of CBR versus traditional models of teaching and learning at academic institutions. The book recognizes that true teaching and learning in CBR (considering the principle of equal partnership with community) involves not only addressing the pedagogy of the academic institution, but also the pedagogy of the community. Both are legitimate. In that context, traditional experiences such as pole carving, or weaving (Williams, Tanaka, Leik & Riecken p. 233) become important learning experiences for those seeking to practice CBR because of the need to be immersed in the community to gain the understanding and trust needed to conduct research with the community as an equal partner. Hence, many of the teaching methods described in this book are a departure from traditional classroom settings. These methods find legitimacy in the pedagogy of experiential learning, but often challenge academic timetables as well as typical academic learning spaces: “knowledge exchange is organic and circular rather than linear” (Williams et al., 2014, p. 231).

Recognition of this form of scholarship of teaching and learning is perhaps hampered by the varied nature of the community-based projects. Upon reading this book, you will see that no two projects or stories or interactions are the same, and each is a product of the people and community involved. Even so, at a higher level, the various community-based projects use common approaches or methodologies because they value the same ethics.

The challenges in receiving academic recognition/credit for researcher and the student by their academic institution are discussed and serve to underscore how different the very nature of this work is from traditional academic research. The irony of this challenge is that, as pointed out by Jessica Ball, “the university is part of the community” (Ball, 2014, p. 29). Part V explores the challenge of being credited academically for one’s work teaching and learning CBR, but goes further to include the additional challenge of providing evidence of scholarly activity especially when the traditional norms of that evidence conflict with one’s personal belief structures: “so how do I put this dream catcher into my teaching dossier?” (Antone and Dawson, 2014, p. 293). The solution discovered and described here is the evolution of the teaching dossier from being a multi-component yet linear record to being a “holistic,” multi-dimensional work that is an integration of all scholarly activity and evidence of teaching. Such discussions of academic recognition are also relevant to power relations and, in the context of this work, decolonialization, a theme woven throughout the book and discussed directly in Chapter 8.

Overall, the book provides a comprehensive description of the challenge, rewards, and breadth of the practice and teaching of community-based learning. It has left me with the desire to reach out and try to capture some of this for my own teaching. Through the words of participants, it relates the pedagogy of community-based research through reflection on the nature and practice of CBR, which in itself is understood through the teaching and learning of CBR. This circular, cyclic path is like that of the true nature of learning. Yet I cannot help but think that community-based research and its teaching is an all or nothing pursuit, if it is to remain true to its principles and the communities engaged.

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*A Nation Beyond Borders: Lionel Groulx on French-Canadian Minorities* by Michel Bock. Trans. Ferdinanda Van Gennip. Ottawa, Ontario: University of Ottawa Press, 2014. 277pp. ISBN 978-0-7766-0821-1

This book is a translation of *Quand la Nation Débordait les Frontières*, winner of the Governor General's Literary Award for non-fiction ten years ago. The author, Michel Bock, is now an Associate Professor of History and Research Chair in Francophonie Canadienne at the University of Ottawa. It is not as much a biography of the leading French-Canadian clerical nationalist Lionel Groulx (1878-1967) as essentially a commentary upon and analysis of historiographical debates concerning his ideology and profuse writings (evidenced in dozens of books, even including novels, as well as innumerable articles, brochures, and lectures, not to mention personal correspondence). Indeed, Bock does a masterful job of making sense out of all of this. Simply put (and it is admittedly no easy task to simplify Groulx), Lionel Groulx became the leading advocate of a French-Canadian nationalism that long pursued, with messianic fervour, the notion of a French-Canadian nation (or even a French legacy in all of North America) based in, but not coterminous with Quebec (which he nevertheless viewed as a French state), extending historically to all French minorities on the continent.

Covering the long lifespan of Groulx from his thirties during the First World War years through his eighties during the 1960s, the book astutely reveals the theoretical or ideological dilemmas which he consistently encountered. Groulx clearly viewed Quebec as a vital French homeland, while becoming increasingly wary of the politicization of this province, indicative of the provincialization of the nationalist movement. This, in turn, led to other basic ideological problems.

Groulx was obviously more concerned with broader French-Canadian nationalism than with a narrower Québécois nationalism or more generalized Canadian patriotism; he wrote and lectured extensively on how Canadian federalism interfered with a more natural French-Canadian loyalty. The emphasis of Quebec at the expense of the far-flung French minorities in the other provinces and states became a long-lasting preoccupation of Groulx. Initially, and continually, he was very critical of Quebec's perceived failure to support this francophone diaspora more adequately, then eventually cautious about the movement to recognize Quebec as a "French state" (during the thirties), and finally the preoccupation with Quebec separatism (since the sixties). While Groulx was increasingly criticized by federalists as a supporter of Quebec separatism, on the one hand, in later years he expressed his apprehension over the development of Quebec separatism during the Quiet Revolution concomitant with a new emphasis on modernization through industrialization, educational reform, and especially an increasing anti-clericalism which undermined his prophetic view of French-Canadian destiny.

Groulx believed that francophone minorities were an important extension of French Canada. His very traditionalistic nationalism emphasized the destiny and mission of all of French Canada, not just Quebec, so he devoted much of his energy and time to visiting and

supporting francophone minorities not only across Canada but also in the United States. His form of religious ethno-nationalism was, in fact, skeptical of Quebec separatism; he consistently advocated Quebec support of francophone minorities throughout North America.

However, as Bock has thoroughly documented, Groulx's traditionalistic nationalism eventually came to be viewed within Quebec—especially by social scientists, “neo-liberals”, and separatists alike—as anachronistic and irrelevant, while francophone minorities in the western provinces, Ontario, and the Atlantic provinces tended to take a dim view of what was perceived as Québécois dominance. Yet in this regard, the book could perhaps have gone further. There is very little mention of specific struggles of francophone minorities in the west, many of whom, in fact, immigrated directly from Europe, rather than Quebec, or were Métis. Appropriately, the author does describe in ample detail Groulx's support of the interests of French-Canadians in Ontario (at least in the southwestern region and Ottawa, more than in the northern and eastern regions), particularly over the French school question during the 1910s and 20s. Moreover, the Acadian relationship to Quebec is discussed at some length. The Acadians did not always consider themselves French-Canadians (if this term would seem to imply Québécois). As for Franco-Americans, Groulx often visited New England, yet the reader finds, perhaps surprisingly, little if any mention of the strong French presence in the Cajuns of Louisiana or Acadians of northern Maine (two of the strongest Franco-American populations).

As Bock's study so clearly demonstrates, the strong engagement of Lionel Groulx, his almost messianic civilizing mission (whereby French-Canadianism in a linguistic and cultural sense was necessarily closely tied to traditional Roman Catholicism), and his profound commitment to the French-Canadian diaspora (constituting the main theme of Bock's analysis), had a lasting effect on the localized conservation of French-Canadian minorities, on their survivance. This served as a counterpoint to the later argument of Quebec social scientists emphasizing the rapid assimilation and dissolution of these minorities. Whether one agrees with such a particularistic, ethno-religious ideology or not, that Lionel Groulx was an exemplification of an “engaged scholar” seems self-evident given his strong commitment, empathy and longstanding influence.

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