



# Engaged Scholar Journal

community-engaged research, teaching, and learning

Volume 10 Issue 1 2024

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

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#### A. Authors and Submissions

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## B. Peer-Reviewers and Peer-Reviewing

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The University of Toledo, Ohio, USA	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>

# Essays





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# A Relational Approach Towards Decolonizing Curriculum Development Within The Colonial Postsecondary Institution

**Andrea Daley, Hannah Neufeld, Kelly Skinner, Trish Van Katwyk, Mary Lou Smoke, Dan Smoke, Kaluyahawi (Jocelyn) Antone**

**ABSTRACT** The Canadian academy is dominated by Western epistemologies that devalue Indigenous ways of knowing and marginalize Indigenous communities, cultures, and histories (Louie et al., 2017). This paper draws on a cross-disciplinary, interprofessional collaboration between a School of Public Health Sciences and School of Social Work to develop an online graduate course that sought to advance knowledge and practice in Indigenous wellbeing and health through a social justice lens. We explore key considerations, strategies, and challenges undertaken by an interdisciplinary group of non-Indigenous professors to create a learning experience for students that challenges colonial ways of seeing, being, knowing, and doing in the professional practice fields of public health and social work and that serves to elevate and sustain Indigenous voices, knowledges, sciences, and practices within the academy. In doing so, we centre the process of course development, including working with an Indigenous Advisory Circle and Indigenous contributors of content, guest lecture videos, and artwork. The paper describes the creation of a relational teaching and learning community, while raising concerns about the institutionalization of this approach to Indigenous-focused course development in the absence of the structural changes needed to enhance the presence of Indigenous faculty and Elders in academic institutions.

**KEYWORDS** Indigenous wellbeing, decolonizing pedagogy, Indigenizing curriculum, public health, social work

Russell feeds small pieces of kindling into the tiny flames that release dancing strands of grey and white smoke. We are at the Sacred Fire Site at the Circle of Reflection, located on a university campus where historic academic buildings loom close by: great stone structures that interrupt expanses of green lawn. There are occasional tall and wide trees whose branches sway in the wind on this sunny autumn day. The whine of a circling mowing tractor overwhelms some of our conversation, and we try not to be distracted by the groundskeepers who work close by. This sacred fire begins, Elders Dan and Mary Lou Smoke explain, with a handful of ashes that have come from sacred fire ceremonies across Turtle Island over the past 25 years. As

Dan and Mary Lou open the circle with teachings and song, we sit around the fire that is being tended with such care, and we watch as the flames grow in resilience and strength.

We are at the Sacred Fire Site to debrief a course that we have recently co-developed and co-taught. The course is entitled, *Indigenous Wellbeing, Health, and Social Justice* and was offered to a combined class of social work and public health graduate students at the University of Waterloo in Ontario, Kanata (Canada)<sup>1</sup> for the first time in Spring 2022. It is a collaboration between two social work and two public health professors and between their two academic departments, as well as with an online learning expert, and a community-based Indigenous Advisory Circle (IAC) made up of Elders, scholars, and educators.

As we sit together around the Sacred Fire, we reflect on our collective process of course development through conversation. The conversation became a reflection about academic spaces and the impact of Indigenizing these spaces:

Elder Dan: “This Sacred Fire Site is an important place. We have been here a number of times for ceremony. It is pretty new and marks a significant recognition by the university here,” waving his arm out to the buildings around us.

Elder Mary Lou, who sits knitting and occasionally flicking her long hair over her shoulder: “Our firekeeper is often part of these ceremonies, and he is also a student here!”

We exclaim and turn to Russell with questions.

Russell: “Yes, I want to learn what I need to go out into the world and make a difference. But it really needs to be based on my knowledge, my culture, the teachings that have been given to me by my ancestors.”

Hannah (public health): “This is important. There are many academic spaces that are beginning to think about decolonizing their ways of teaching and knowing, and many other academic processes are being re-examined: student support, admissions, approaches to research and funding, and grading, for example.”

Andrea (social work): “It is about making sure that these efforts are meaningful. So much was learned as we developed this course. We each held such unique spaces in this work, bringing our locations and perspectives to a process that kept disrupting institutional perspectives. Bringing the academic exercise of course development to a collaboration and inviting Indigenous community members into the collaboration had an impact that was hard for me to envision ahead of time.”

Trish (social work): “That was what was so powerful about working closely with the IAC. The academic expectations with regards to expertise, course design, and learning activities were exposed for their colonial roots. Also, white settler superiority was identified and scrutinized in our academic work. It was unsettling, that is for sure.”

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<sup>1</sup> The name, *Canada*, has its origins in the Haudenosaunee word, *Kanata*, which means village or a collection of huts (The Canadian Encyclopedia, 2015).

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Kelly (public health): “Even our meetings with the IAC were unsettling. These weren’t meetings with an agenda driven by tasks and demands for productivity. Rather, we were invited to be with one another, to listen to stories, to trust in the unfolding that was going to happen. Our check-ins took so much time, which would not have been tolerated in most of the academic meetings I attend, and yet each meeting was a depth of learning that nourished the course development work.”

We begin our paper by locating ourselves in dialogue and engaged in ceremony. Four of us are based in the same academic institution, holding roles in the social work (AD, TVK) and public health (HN, KS) programs that include researcher, educator, curriculum developer, and program director, as well as various ranks: full professor, associate professor, and research chair, and each of these positions describes a particular relationship within and to the colonial structure of the university. Four of us carry white settler identities and histories, including histories of practicing in the professions of social work and public health nutrition. Some of us have longstanding connections with Indigenous communities and community-engaged research that prioritizes relationship building and research ethics that serve to empower and enrich the communities who guide our collaborative research practices. As members of equity-deserving communities (e.g., 2SLGBTQ+), some of us are firmly grounded in community-engaged research practices and processes that prioritize relationships and lived experiences to co-produce community knowledges, through an intersectional lens, towards the overarching goal of social justice and structural transformation. The other three authors are Indigenous, from Ojibway (MLS), Seneca (DS) and Cree and Oneida (KJA) Nations. In their positions as Elders, university instructors, teachers, and artists, they prioritize Indigenous knowledges, cultural understandings, and sovereignty.

Collectively, we are committed to decolonization and, thus, to critique the many colonial systems that we find ourselves immersed in (Schiffer, 2021). As a “pillar of colonialism” (Batz, 2018, p.103), the academic institution, with its colonial research and education practices, is a structure that we aim to critique and disrupt. Included in this process, we challenge the fields of social work and health that normalize Western/Eurocentric ways of knowing, knowledge production, and practice. In their considerations of colonizing processes, Cote-Meek and Moeke-Pickering (2020) pay close attention to the academic institution. They write that, historically, within the institution:

Indigenous knowledges were effectively debased and devalued. This devaluing of Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous knowledges was an intentional act to disrupt our ways of knowing and ways of being and to sever the transmission to the next generation. There is no doubt that education institutions are still very much colonial institutions with deeply held convictions about what constitutes education, research, and pedagogy (p. xv).

In their considerations of the work of colonization, Michael Yellowbird and colleagues speak specifically to social work and social work education (Yellowbird & Chenault, 1999; Gray, et al., 2016). Yellowbird and Chenault (1999) consider the professional ethics of empowerment and social justice, suggesting that social workers and social work educators need to begin this work by acknowledging their professional accountability in painful legacies of colonial harm. When social workers and social work education begin from such a position of accountability, respect for and validation of Indigenous knowledges and experiences can occur. Social work as a profession is committed to social justice, equity, and the disruption of oppression. However, social work education continues to inadequately address the legacy of trauma that the profession carries in terms of the Doctrine of Discovery and settler colonialism (Hiller, 2016). Land is decentralized from considerations of trauma, injustice, and oppression, as the profession took over the colonizing and dispossessing work of the Indian Agents, assuming responsibilities in the lives of Indigenous Peoples related to general welfare services, child and family welfare, recreation, and adult education. To this point, Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong (2019) state:

The profession of social work has become a central player in the settler colonial policies of Canada, adapting and reformulating its role in the ongoing dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their territories through a series of strategic shifts in policy and protocols, including in the most recent shift towards a politics of liberal recognition and reconciliation (p. 442).

Fields of medicine and public health, in the forms of intervention and surveillance, have been utilized as tools of colonization within Indigenous communities (Richardson & Crawford, 2020). These procedures and practices emerged after Indigenous communities suffered waves of infectious diseases brought to Turtle Island from Europe. In this context, Indigenous knowledges and healing practices were brushed aside in favour of western approaches, which were viewed as superior by colonial authorities. Such racist and paternalistic public health approaches diminished Indigenous rights and sovereignty (Richardson & Crawford, 2020). Health disparities that continue to exist for Indigenous Peoples within Canada are a direct outcome of colonization and the complicity of healthcare systems in medical colonialism, which have disrupted Indigenous Peoples' ways of knowing and being through the imposition of Eurocentric perspectives on health (Pilarinos et al., 2023).

Practitioners and educators in social work and public health, through many calls to action and justice in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC)'s Calls to action (2015), in reclaiming power and place: The final report of the national inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (2019), and elsewhere, are called upon to rehistoricize or revisit the colonial history complicity of social work and public health's complicity in colonial violence. Doing so, serves to support the repatriation of Indigenous lands, children, culture, and sovereignty; deinstitutionalize through mutual aid, participatory practice, and a commitment to treaty responsibilities; and deprofessionalize by restructuring social work practices back into communities (Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong, 2019). Calls 1(iii) and 1(iv)

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of the TRC's Calls to Action (2015) are responses to the field of social work's complicity and complacency with respect to the violence done to Indigenous Peoples through the residential school system and 60s scoop (Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong, (2019). Collectively, these two items call for social worker education, specifically related to the child welfare system, that promotes social workers' understanding of the "history and impacts of residential schools" and that promotes Indigenous sovereignty over "solutions to family healing" (TRC, 2015, p. 1). The Calls to Action also include several items that aim to establish competencies on Indigenous health and to address anti-Indigenous racism (TRC, 2015). Calls 18 and 19 make reference to the field of public health as having both an "explicit and implicit role in recognizing and addressing the colonial roots of health inequities" (Castleden et al., 2022; p. 213). Institutional and systemic change within the post-secondary public health education system, as well as within Canada's healthcare system, is therefore required, and could be accomplished by focusing less on deficit-based narratives when it comes to Indigenous health and instead highlighting areas of strength in health, healing and wellbeing (Castleden et al., 2022).

Cote-Meek (2018) has described the wholistic transformation that needs to happen in academic institutions, so that their ways of being, doing, and working change from within. It is a transformation process that begins with community engagement, where the knowledges and experience of Indigenous people are meaningfully engaged. The transformation process also entails relationship building, whereby relationships are built with patience and respect, in such a way as to build sustainable trust. Finally, transformation must include action. In the spirit of wholistic transformation, this paper describes the process of co-developing and co-teaching a cross-disciplinary, interprofessional course about Indigenous wellbeing, health, and social justice, anchored firmly in the transformative aims described above. We share the learning that occurred for us as we immersed ourselves in an effort to Indigenize and decolonize the process of course design and content, our pedagogical approaches, and the systems that needed to be activated/de-activated throughout the development of the course. We share the major insights of our work, insights about relationship building as central to Indigenizing and decolonizing practices. This is in line with descriptions by Shawn Wilson (2008) who describes scholarship as 'self in relationship'. Wilson describes the rigorous and critical consciousness that is required for the necessary white/settler decentering to occur. Decentering is a displacement of a person from their central and dominant position or role, thus clearing space to privilege Indigenous voices. We also explore our commitment to a strong coherence between decolonizing and social justice intentions as well as the culture of the virtual teaching and learning space.

### **Building foundational relationships**

As co-developers of the course, we began our work in dialogue, building connections to one another and articulating our first disruption of the course development process: the intention to honour the process of course development rather than to focus primarily on the outcome. We found our inspiration in the resistance to the question of settler futurity: decolonization is not about settler futurity or a final destination for settlers, but rather it is about the "next now" of Indigenous sovereignty (Smith et al., 2018, p. 8). Settler futurity, settlers inserting

themselves into a linear state of permanent presence and superiority, is what occurs through structures of replacement, where the displacement of Indigenous knowledges, lands, ways of being and doing are displaced and then replaced by a “white subject whose manifest destiny is to take the place of the savage” (Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013, p. 75). A focus on process requires an ongoing attention to relationships (Tuck & Yang, 2013; Lindstrom, 2022), as well as an accompanying question: who needs to be a part of the network of relationships that we are building? The collaborative approach to writing this paper, with an insistence on the equal value of each author’s contributions, represents the relationship building that was our process.

We also began with a commitment to build connections with an Indigenous Advisory Circle (IAC). As a colonial structure, our university reflects the state of almost all universities on Turtle Island, where the employment and retention of Indigenous faculty is low (Henry et al., 2018). Even with institutional and province-wide priorities on hiring Indigenous faculty, albeit still with significant underrepresentation in social work and health programs (uWaterloo, 2020), there are no tenure-track Indigenous faculty in either program, therefore, no available Indigenous faculty who would be equitably compensated by the academic institution for the work of developing the course. We needed, instead, to build connections with Indigenous knowledge holders engaged in the work needed to Indigenize and decolonize social work and public health education and practice to guide the course development. Smith (2018) describes the significant changes that have occurred since she first wrote her critique of postsecondary education and research (1999), noting that there are now communities of Indigenous knowledge holders “who have deepened understandings of the work of decolonizing education and, importantly, created new approaches to education that theorize, revitalize, enhance, and produce Indigenous educational experiences that support Indigenous futures” (p. 6). We aimed to support the development of a course that would recognize/witness and center Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, wellbeing, and social justice, as opposed to maintaining colonial superiority accompanied by a logic of extractive engagement (Batz, 2020).

As colleagues embarking on this opportunity to develop a course centred on concepts of wellness, health, and social justice for Indigenous Peoples within Kanata, our intention from the start was to incorporate Indigenous knowledges as content throughout the course. Conceptualizing the course from the outside involved stepping away from our disciplinary roots in social work and public health to include Indigenous voices. Elders Dan and Mary Lou Smoke, activists and respected community and postsecondary educators, including as adjunct professors at the Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry in a public health program and the Department of Indigenous Studies at Western University (Canada), were initially invited to open our growing circle to Indigenous wellness and health and social work academics and practitioners primarily living and working within the Territory of the Chonnoton, Anishinaabeg, and Haudenosaunee Peoples where the university is located. Even though the course was being designed as a distance course, we made the collective decision to situate the IAC within the Territory. We connected with Indigenous community members and leaders who had been actively developing ideas and actions about change, reconciliation, and decolonization within



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academic institutions broadly, and in relation to postsecondary curricula specifically. As well, we connected with those engaged with decolonizing and Indigenous practices in community-based support, wellbeing, and health services. They included Indigenous social workers from Conestoga College (Kitchener, Ontario) and a local Indigenous agency, White Owl Native Ancestry Association (WONAA) (Kitchener, Ontario), as well as a public health administrator from Six Nations of the Grand River and a non-binary Indigenous educator at Centennial College (Toronto, Ontario). We invited these community members to provide guidance to us in the form of a Circle, after negotiating with several systems across the university to garner appropriate compensation for their contributions.

Inviting Indigenous Advisors to support our collective learning brought into being the responsibility to build and develop not only the course, but also reciprocal and meaningful relationships. Relationships, respect, and reciprocity are important values shared across Indigenous communities and environments (Miltenburg et al., 2022). Throughout this process we were committed to applying the principles of respect, reciprocity, and responsibility within and throughout this relational work to facilitate connection and exchange in shaping and interacting with the content and process of the relational context (Archibald, 2008).

### **Centring Indigenous voice, knowing, and doing in course content**

As described above, one of our first actions to centre Indigenous voice, knowing, and doing in the course was the creation of the IAC. Our formal invitation to the IAC included a plan to have six virtual engagement sessions over the first eight to ten months of the course development schedule. We note that while we would have preferred to meet with the IAC in-person, restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic required us to meet virtually throughout the course development process. The exception was the recording of the opening ceremony and the closing ceremony with Elders Dan and Mary Lou, which were completed in-person on a nearby university campus. While not ideal, virtual meetings did support the participation of IAC members who lived further away from the university and/or who were limited in time because of community commitments.

During our first virtual meeting with the IAC, we planned for introductions, with the bulk of the meeting time focused on “important” topics such as responsibilities and resources, processes for sharing knowledge, brainstorming possible course content, and authorship of course content. Ours was a very ambitious “agenda” that prioritized tasks and productivity that reflected and served (our) institutional interests over relationship building and relations. And, importantly, that reflected the colonial and neoliberal norms, logics, and power relations that structure academic institutions. That is, we inadvertently prioritized time and resource efficiencies and linear and transactional processes, for example, as characteristic of the business model adopted by neoliberal academic institutions (Brunette-Debassigne, 2022). The insidious nature of colonial and neoliberal logic within academic institutions worked to subvert our intention to honour the process of course development. During this first meeting and in response to our agenda, IAC members implicitly and respectfully guided us towards a collectivist and relational process (Brunette-Debassigne, 2022) of introducing ourselves and getting to know

each other, a process that continued in subsequent meetings. This was a critically necessary intervention of sorts: a philosophical realignment needed to begin and sustain relationship and trust building throughout the course development process. Moving forward, we abandoned the initial timeline of the IAC engagement sessions, giving way to an organic, circular, iterative, and conversational process of exploring course content and related considerations.

Outside of meeting with the IAC, we met weekly with an Online Learning Consultant from the university's Center for Extended Learning (CEL) to work through draft course content. We used this time as opportunity for collective reflection on the IAC's insights and dialogues, as well as to honour, build upon, and translate our learning from the IAC into overarching goals and learning outcomes for the course, weekly reflection questions for students, content and resources, and assignments. In each case, we endeavoured to centre Indigenous ways of knowing and doing and the presence of Indigenous knowledge keepers in the course. For example, the first overarching goal for the course emphasizes the importance of relationships and relations, drawing on the principles of the Gaswé'ndah (Two Row) Wampum Belt (i.e., friendship, peace, respect), rather than the acquisition of what is traditionally viewed as academic knowledge in colonial academic institutions:

To bring students into a relational (Two Row) teaching and learning community that is social justice-oriented to encourage and support personal transformation towards understanding by experiencing stories of determinants' impacting Indigenous health and wellbeing along with the colonial roots of social and health injustices among Indigenous communities (Daley et al., n.d.).

We replaced the common learning objective statements that are typically presented at the beginning of a week's course content with reflection questions, to invite students to be self-directed in their learning journey rather than being told what they will be learning. For example, a learning objective that conveys to students that they will develop understanding of the differences between Indigenous leadership in the fields of social work and public health in Kanata is (re)written as an invitation for them to consider: "What constitutes Indigenous leadership in the fields of public health and social work within Canada, and how are they similar or dissimilar?" (Daley et al., n.d.). While the differences in the two written statements may be nuanced, we suggest that the former reflects the legacy of the banking concept of teaching (Maylor, 2012) in colonial academic institutions, while the latter is more closely aligned with critical pedagogy (i.e., critical thinking and critical reflection) (hooks, 1994) as well as with dialogue and co-creation as principles of Indigenous pedagogy (e.g., circle pedagogy) (Barkaskas & Gladwin, 2021). Thus, students were provided with more autonomy with respect to what they learned from the course content. In short, the reflection questions guided students to engage with the course content, rather than telling them what they will learn from the course content. The emphasis of the learning objective is not as much about instructor expectations of students' learning as it is about students' meaningful engagement.



Another practice that we committed to was elevating Indigenous voices, knowledges, sciences, and practices within the academy by only including content, guest lecture videos, and artwork authored and/or co-authored by Indigenous contributors from within Kanata. The content for most weeks includes a guest lecture video by an Indigenous community leader, practitioner, or scholar. For example, in one week an Anishinaabe clinical psychologist speaks to the ways in which colonial structures and anti-Indigenous racism are implicated in Indigenous wellbeing and health, as well as the need for health systems to recognize and integrate Indigenous social determinants of health that centre the critical role of culture and language in collective wellbeing. In another week, a Métis community leader explores how the Land can show us how to be in community. Beyond these guest lecture videos, each week offers other valuable resources authored by Indigenous people to supplement and extend key concepts, ideas, and practices presented in the readings (see Table 1. for a list of weekly topics).

Working with the IAC on questions of resources, speakers, and artists to feature in the course was integral to our commitment to having Indigenous-only content. The consultation process is best characterized as a feedback loop, where we repeatedly circled back to the IAC for their input and affirmation. Through this iterative process, as course content was developed, we were also called to reflect on and rethink elements of the course including its title and description to more accurately represent the content, as well as integrating opening and closing ceremonies performed by Elders.

**Table 1.** Weekly topics

Week	Topic	Week	Topic
1	Situating Ourselves	7	Colonizing Health Frameworks
2	Locality	8	Experiences with Healthcare and Anti-Indigenous Racism
3	Social Justice and Rights	9	Trauma-Informed Pedagogy
4	Relational Teaching and Learning Community	10	Learning from Land and Community
5	Indigenous Approaches, Values, and Ethics in Health, Wellbeing, and Helping	11	Activism and Growth
6	Pathologizing Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Being	12	Sharing and Closing the Circle

Finally, our practice of creating group and dyad structured assignments that require students to work together to engage Indigenous ways of knowing and doing, with their respective social locations in mind, serves to decentre white/settler perspectives, particularly as they are relevant to the skills and practices of social work and public health.

Collectively, the assignments bring students into a shared space of reflecting on self and professional locations; determinants of wellbeing; performative decolonization and solidarity; the Indigenous concepts of ethical space<sup>2</sup> (Ermine, 2007) and two-eyed seeing<sup>3</sup> (Bartlett, et al., 2012); decolonizing approaches to storytelling (Goodchild, 2021); and contemporary Indigenous activism related to wellbeing and health. Through reflection, students are asked to deeply engage with Indigenous knowledges presented in the course readings, videos, and other resources, in order to challenge colonial ways of seeing, being, knowing, and doing in the professional practice fields of public health and social work and to understand more fully their decolonizing responsibilities. The course culminates with a final independent action-oriented project that asks students to move knowledge into community, underscoring the vital role of action in decolonization, and, as Cote-Meek (2018) states, as required for wholistic transformation.

Importantly, during some of our initial discussions in the Indigenous Advisory Circle, we were asked about our assumptions about the student group. Based on universitywide as well as community health and social work student group profiles, we assumed that most of the students would be settlers. The IAC members reminded us that our course content and learning activities must also be relevant to Indigenous students, as otherwise, we will have created an exclusively settler-centric learning environment. In collaboration with the IAC, we reconsidered the learning material and altered our assignments.

While we prioritized students of social work and community health, we also opened the course to graduate students across the university until the enrollment cap had been reached. There are few courses at the university that focus on Indigenous perspectives. The course has attracted settler students who want to learn more about settler colonialism, Indigenous/settler relations, and how to be in solidarity with Indigenous communities. There have been few Indigenous students in the course, though this is consistent with levels of Indigenous student enrollment at the university in general, as well as in each of the programs that house this course.

### **Coherence between decolonizing intentions and the culture of the virtual teaching and learning space**

As we worked in relationship with the IAC to consider course content that represented and elevated Indigenous ways of knowing and doing in academic institutions, we began to recognize the need to ensure strong coherence between the course's decolonizing and social justice intentions and the culture of the virtual teaching and learning space. By culture, we mean moving beyond the important but limited notion of a supportive and inclusive online environment (Greenan, 2021) towards a virtual learning culture that imagines, encourages, and activates methods of challenging colonial ways of being, knowing, and doing. To this end, we committed to creating a virtual teaching and learning culture that reflected Indigenous ways of

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<sup>2</sup> Ethical Space is "formed when two societies with disparate worldviews, are poised to engage each other" (Ermine, 2007, p. 193), for example, the space between Indigenous and non-Indigenous worldviews.

<sup>3</sup> Two eyed seeing is a teaching about Indigenous and non Indigenous ways of knowing coming together in positive and supportive ways, each way of knowing is mutually significant and enhancing of the other (Bartlett, et al., 2012).

being, knowing, and doing, to the best extent possible. We integrated Indigenous ceremonies and teachings into course activities and content to give shape to the virtual space; included artistic encounters with Indigenous teachings to deepen students' connections to Indigenous knowledges as well as to improve their critical thinking and reflection skills; and formulated explicit assignment-related practices to engage students in contributing to a relational teaching and learning space.

The virtual teaching and learning space of the course is shaped and anchored by Indigenous opening and closing ceremonies offered by Elders Dan and Mary Lou Smoke. During the opening ceremony, the Elders locate themselves in relation to the land as members of the Seneca Nation-Kildare Clan and Ojibway Nation-Bear Clan, respectively. They share some of the teachings and ceremonies of their Peoples, introducing students to the Dish with One Spoon and Gä-sweñta' (Two Row) Wampum Belts, as friendship and peace treaties that speak to roles and relationships in practices of co-existence between Indigenous Nations as well as among Indigenous Nations and settlers (i.e., relations). The opening ceremony ends with the Elders' drumming and singing; *Anishinaabe Kwe* is sung to honour women as our first teachers. With Elder Mary Lou holding a small copper cup of water, the closing ceremony centres the power of Indigenous women through teachings about their responsibilities to protect the wellbeing of the water and—to speak for the water, for example—raising concern about the negative health effects of water commodification. The closing ceremony ends with drumming and singing as Elder Mary Lou leads the *Water Song*, encouraging students to learn the song, to sing with her, to take the song back to their communities, and to share with them the importance of water as a lifeblood. The video-recordings of the opening and closing ceremonies feature Elders Dan and Mary Lou, along with their ceremonial eagle feathers, braided sweetgrass, bead work, the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt and Gä-sweñta' (Two Row) Wampum Belt, drums, tobacco, and a medicine pouch.



**Figure 1.** The Seed Story  
(Antone, 2021, December 26)

The 12-week course is also shaped by a Seed Story, inspired by the work of Elder Banakonda Kennedy-Kish (Bell) (2017) and adapted from a model developed by Neufeld and colleagues (2021). In keeping with the Haudenosaunee tradition of the local Territory, the four stages of the Seed Story flow in a counter clockwise direction (Porter, n.d.) guiding students through four inter-related modules: *receiving*, *connection*, *compassion*, and *sharing*. In the first stage of the Seed Story, *receiving* (Module 1), students are invited to open themselves to receiving the gift of learning. They are asked to situate themselves in deep connection to the learning that is beginning: to be positive and hopeful.

In this stage, the seed is planted. The second stage is time for *connection* (Module 2); for connecting to the learning that is occurring; a time for students and instructors to begin to learn with and from each other through relations and by bringing life experiences, course learning, and course activities together to support the emergence of new ideas and possibilities. *Compassion* (Module 3) follows, with students remaining opening to learning as they are



**Figure 2.** Compassion  
(Antone, 2021, September 1)

nurtured to engage more deeply through dialogue and critical reflection. It is a time to ask questions of self and others, to explore, and to engage in a shared community experience of learning. In the final stage, *sharing* (Module 4), students engage in praxis, bringing theories and practices of decolonization together through action. Students learn to participate in activism, using their learning to inspire the transformation of colonial structures, particularly as relevant to the white/settler logic that structures the professions of social work and public health. This last stage is not the end of the seed story, however, as the seeds (i.e., learning) themselves are a life force and in sharing them the story continues

in perpetuity: there is no end. This sentiment is animated in the course as the final independent action-oriented project circles back to the first stage of the Seed Story, *receiving*, as the project is about moving students into a place of hope through social justice and transformation.

As students work through the course, artistic encounters are used to holistically deepen their connections to Indigenous knowledges and teachings as well as their critical thinking and reflection skills with respect to decolonizing practices in their professional fields. Each of the four stages (modules) of the Seed Story are graphically depicted with a unique central image (see Figure 1) and border, by Kaluyahawi (Jocelyn) Antone, an Oneida and Cree artist from Oneida of the Thames and Saddle Lake First Nations.

Artist Kaluyahawi also provided four written stories, one to accompany each stage, to raise awareness of acts of injustices against people of colour or Indigenous people (Antone in Daley et al., n.d.). For example, the graphic depiction of *compassion* (see Figures 2 and 3) is storied by Kaluyahawi in this way:



**Figure 3.** Seed story borders – Compassion border (Antone, 2021, August 5)

Before the harvest, there is taking care or tending to the plants. When you're watering the plants, you don't want to put the water on the leaves during the day because it will burn them. So you need to take that tenderness and kindness and apply to gardening. You are then taking care of the plants instead of just watering them because it's a chore. I gotta take care of this, if I want sustenance for the new year; the plants are gonna sustain you during the winter months. You want to be able to have some good plants or good food. So that is a corn plant and those are scarlet runner beans. I guess that their English name is scarlet runners. But there is also another way: I call them Ohkwali (oh-gwa-lee) Ohsaheta (Oh-za-hey-da), or bear beans. If you look at the bean itself, you'll see it's purple and with marks that looks like the scratches or clawing of a bear. In this illustration, the sky is reminiscent of the fall sky and how it is starting

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to get colder. The weather is changing a tiny bit, where it's warm during the day, but it cools off in the in the afternoon or the evening. Of course, we get the stars again. Like I said, the stars have a lot of stories. Some of us try to follow the stars with ceremonies, because that's how a lot of our ceremonies are run. We watch the different stars in the sky and when they are in a certain position, we will do this ceremony, because it's now time to do it. So that it's an indicator of time, the stars. These hand tattoos are really cool because you can see how gradually it goes along. This is the third image. In the other two, in the cycle you do not see as many tattoos. Because as a person, you're also growing or continually adding to yourself, constantly growing or changing in different ways, and I just thought I would signify it on the hands with the hand tattoos. Those are traditional designs as well. The one on the thumb is interesting because it could either be the three sisters because of the three leaves, or it could be the three leaves on a tobacco plant, which is a sacred plant for a lot of Indigenous people. The dots represent seeds and more growth. I left the circle as it is so that the plant is growing up and out of it. Yeah, and you can kind of see that disconnect from the plant, the hands, and the background itself, where it's clear that you are still growing. The hands are in a gesture that acknowledges that you're sustaining my life, there's a real gratitude in that gesture, with the hand out, palm up. Some people say they don't have a green thumb and plants die on me all the time. Maybe it's because you got to be more thankful for them or something. I don't know. I sing to them. I talk to them. I give thanks to them. That's another thing that some of us do. My mom and I sing seed songs to our plants. It's supposed to help take care of them. It is to make them want to grow and want to be here. My mom actually made a seed song. It's really nice, I love it. It's a really good seed song. She made it herself. I was really glad that she shared it with me, because I was able to record her singing it, and I now have a recording of it (Antone in Daley et al., n.d.).

In other ways, the culture of the virtual learning space is shaped by aesthetic pedagogy (Webster & Wolfe, 2013), challenging colonial teaching and learning practices that separate mind and body, while facilitating embodied, holistic learning, and supporting different kinds of learners more fully (Sajnani et al., 2020). For example, the first assignment of the course sets the tone by asking students to use Photovoice<sup>4</sup> (photography and group dialogue), an arts-based approach to research and learning, to help them think about what contributes to personal and shared wellbeing.

Finally, explicit practices that guide students' contributions to a relational teaching and learning space are used to enhance cohesion between the course's decolonizing intentions and the

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<sup>4</sup> Photovoice involves the creation of a photo image accompanied by a reflection to describe the image as it represents the learning that is being expressed through the photo. For this activity, students posted their photo images and written or recorded reflections so that other students could respond.

culture of its virtual teaching and learning space. We accomplish this by including course policies beyond those typical in colonial postsecondary institutions (e.g., academic dishonesty policies). For example, “kindness and respect,” important Indigenous principles of peace and friendship, are included under the course outline section titled “Course and Department Policies:”

Kindness and respect, even when we disagree, are necessary to encourage diversity of thought and discussion. It is expected that you demonstrate respect and positive consideration for students and instructors, in relation to ability, beliefs, gender, language, nationality, race, or sexuality. In your interactions with others in this course, please be sure to think carefully about the words you choose (Daley et al., n.d).

In addition, module activities and course assignments ask students to draw upon Indigenous concepts of ethical space, connection, and relational collaboration (Ermine, 2007; Goodchild et al., 2021), as well as Kariwiiio (good mind/equal justice/righteousness), Kasastensera (strength in unity/respect/power), and Skenn:ne (peace) (Freeman & Van Katwyk, 2020) to bring students into cross-disciplinary, interprofessional processes of co-building relationships. As counter discourses to colonial postsecondary institutional cultures of individualism and competition in student learning these Indigenous concepts encourage a culture of relationship building, connection, and collaboration. They bring social work and public health students into dialogue for the purpose of critically reflecting on each profession’s historical and contemporary relationship with colonization as well as their roles in sustaining and/or challenging colonizing discourses on well-being and health. In this way, course content, activities, and assignments serve to prioritize building relationships as a key course outcome as indicated by the overarching goal of bringing students into a relational (Two Row) teaching and learning community.

Collectively, the decisions and actions we made to blend the course’s decolonizing and social justice intentions and the culture of the virtual teaching and learning space, in some ways, represents a transformation of “being, doing, and working” (Cote-Meek, 2018) in colonial postsecondary institutions. Our meaningful engagement with Indigenous knowledges, teachings, and art emanating from relationships created a unique virtual culture that, in turn, prioritized relationships, connection, and collaboration in the teaching and learning of decolonizing and social justice practices. For example, Smith et al., (2018) advocate for a “repositioning trend to strengthen kinds of teaching and research that is often fragmented and piecemeal and unsatisfying to teach” (p. 7). This is important because decolonizing work that has failed to be meaningful often lacks coherence.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

Within the bounds of academic institutions, balancing relationships, centring Indigenous voices, and prioritizing decolonizing and social justice intentions in the virtual teaching and learning space were not without challenges. To begin with, there were the timelines established by the respective schools along with the CEL, who were supporting the logistics of the build



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of this distance course. To work authentically with the IAC as well as Indigenous contributors, filmmakers, and artists simply required more time than is factored into standardized course development schedules and milestones. Secondly, working within these realms, we quickly realized that funding structures were not in place to support the necessary level of engagement, or to adequately compensate the aforementioned individuals. Honoraria to compensate members of the IAC for their time and contributions at the start, for example, had to be creatively sourced across both academic units as well as the research funds of the institutional instructors. We quickly realized that additional funding to sustain the development and implementation of the course was required.

In the spring of 2021, we received a grant from eCampus Ontario's Virtual Learning Strategy (VLS). These funds were essential for supporting the continued engagement with the IAC and allowed for the hiring of an Indigenous student and an additional co-op student to provide research and administrative supports. The Indigenous film maker along with the Haudenosaunee artist were also contracted, using funds from this grant, to create and illustrate course components such as individual films with Indigenous contributors as guest lecturers. These illustrations as art, songs, and stories were core to the course: "Story kindles reciprocity. Story compels responsibility. Story thrives where there is respect. Story is a gift" (Kovach, 2021, p. 156).

Moving externally beyond our institution to acquire these essential funds, however, was not without risk. In developing a proposal to acquire the provincial funding, there was a sense that we were marketing the course and content in order to fund it. There were also stipulations associated with the funding that provided significant ethical challenges that we grappled with as we sought permissions from Indigenous contributors around complex issues of copyright and how knowledge is shared virtually. For example, IAC members raised concern about institutional copyright practices that would claim ownership of the contributions of Indigenous community members, scholars, and artists. We resolved ethical concerns associated with copyright by ensuring that the works of Indigenous contributors are protected by a "no derivatives" (Ecampus Ontario, n.d.) copyright clause, thus, preventing their adaptation, remixing, transforming and/or updating. Merging university and provincial mandates and interests added to the complexities we often felt; we were torn between our collective intentions of transformative practices in course development and the reality of jurisdictional colonial structures as we navigated both provincial funding requirements and institutional expectations.

Smith, Tuck, and Yang (2018) remind us that universities and the entire field of postsecondary education, have, as their foundational component, an openness to and expectation of transformation. However, for colonial institutions entrenched among a myriad of colonial structures, transformation can be impeded in a variety of ways (Embrick & Moore, 2020). Multiple structures work together to sustain coloniality,<sup>5</sup> and these multiple structures

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<sup>5</sup> The process of colonization is one of historic and ongoing conquest. Coloniality describes the process by which the Euro Western worldview and way of knowledge is imposed and validated to become an over-riding Truth. For a detailed description of coloniality as a system of oppression, see <https://www.yorku.ca/edu/unleading/systems-of-oppression/coloniality-and-settler-colonialism/> (York University, n.d.)

must be interrogated for the ways in which they can thwart meaningful change (Smith & Webber, 2018). The state must invest in its universities, where access needs to grow, and where access to opportunities can be created (Mbembe, 2016). Decolonizing academia needs to be a shared investment. In Ontario, since 2008, the provincial government has steadily decreased the grant funding it provides to universities (OCUFA, 2022), while, at the same time, freezing university-initiated tuition fee increases. Without governmental support, universities have limited resources to support authentic decolonization efforts such as hiring more diverse faculty, developing non-Eurocentric approaches to teaching and learning, and supporting research that, as collaborative and community-based, occurs outside of the hyper-productive, individualized, and context-free standards of Eurocentric academic settings (Mbembe, 2016). Conceivably, recent progress in the university towards the creation of an Indigenous-focused graduate diploma—that will include the course this paper discusses—signals both the transformative potential of the academy as well as innovative decolonizing strategies in the absence of adequate government funding.

Our collective hope is that by sharing the story of this cross-disciplinary, interprofessional collaborative process of course development, we can reveal how it taught us ways to push back against the coloniality of academic institutions. Especially in the context of the ongoing lack of resources to support a greater Indigenous presence in these same institutions, we have reflected on accountability with respect to the responsibilities of white settler academics to interrogate academic institutions and their ongoing efforts to discipline language and thought, and to institutionalize what it has determined to be the most valid knowledge (Smith, et al., 2018). More specifically, we have deeply considered how careful and meaningful actions anchor accountability. We have learned to proceed cautiously, advising against adopting our approach to Indigenous-focused course development across the institution, while advocating for the long-awaited structural changes needed to ensure and enhance the presence of Indigenous faculty, Elders, and knowledges in academic institutions. We have learned that to prioritize collaboration, dialogue, relationship building, and centring Indigenous voices, knowing, and doing often runs counter to the colonial logic of academic institutions. However, the decolonizing practices in course development processes that we highlight can foster learning and advocacy for what is needed to manifest the “next now” (Smith et al., 2018, p. 8) of Indigenous self-determination and collective resistance in academic institutions.

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# **Reports from the Field**





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## Students as Engaged Partners in Directed Research Courses

**Jodi Benenson, Skylar Johnson**

**ABSTRACT** This report from the field reflects on the authors' experiences in a directed research course on the topic of youth civic engagement in Canada. A literature review was co-written as part of a directed research course where the instructor was a visiting professor from the United States and the student was an undergraduate student in Canada. The content of this report was gathered during various stages of the directed research course and is informed by literature focused on students as engaged partners in teaching and learning in higher education. Specifically, we reflect on the ways viewing students as engaged partners can leverage their knowledge and lived experiences when engaging in directed research courses, especially when the student and faculty member may be coming from different countries in North America. In addition, we reflect on how designing a directed research course that views students as engaged partners can provide a rich ground for the redistribution of power in higher education and strengthen the quality of research through the co-creation of new knowledge and ideas.

**KEYWORDS** collaborative research, students as engaged partners, civic engagement, directed research courses

Undergraduate research experiences such as research internships, research assistantships, research-based courses, in-class research, and directed studies courses are often considered a high-impact practice in higher education. This is because they provide opportunities for students to participate in active scholarly engagement through knowledge acquisition, empirical observation, disciplinary skill advancement, excitement in answering research questions, professional advancement and development, and personal development (Kuh, 2008; Lopatto, 2010). Directed research courses, in particular, offer one avenue for students to work with faculty members or community partners on a range of research projects, including developing a research proposal, identifying specific research questions, exploring relevant literature, or collecting and analyzing data (Reitmaier Koehler et al., 2015). While the format of directed research courses varies across academic disciplines and contexts—and may also be called independent/individual studies courses, directed readings courses, final year projects, or honors theses—they are primarily conducted for course credit and do not involve paid or volunteer research experiences like internships and assistantships (Moore et al., 2018).

While much of the literature in higher education documents the motivations, positive outcomes, challenges, and barriers associated with directed research courses (see Moore et

al., 2018; Hvengaard et al., 2013), this research rarely offers moments for reflection during the directed research course itself. In this report from the field, we offer a reflection on our experiences in a directed research course as a faculty member and undergraduate student. The content of this report was gathered during various stages of a directed research course focused on youth civic engagement, and we ground our reflection in literature focused on students as engaged partners in teaching and learning in higher education (Healey et al., 2014; Healey et al., 2016). Specifically, we reflect on how viewing students as engaged partners in directed research courses leverages their knowledge and lived experiences, especially when the student and faculty member may be coming from different countries in North America. In addition, we reflect on how designing a directed research course that views students as engaged partners can provide a rich ground for the redistribution of power in higher education, and ultimately strengthen the quality of the research through the co-creation of new knowledge and ideas.

### **Reflection Context: A Directed Research Course in Canada**

Like many directed studies courses in North America (Hvengaard et al., 2013), this directed research course was a semester-long course involving one-on-one instruction with a faculty mentor and a focus on student-led independent research. The directed reading course, entitled Directed Research in Social Sciences, took place at the University of Ottawa. The main objective of the directed research course was to provide top-performing fourth-year students with hands-on research experience in areas that connect to the Centre on Governance at the University of Ottawa. Additional objectives include increasing students' depth and breadth of knowledge, knowledge of methodologies, application of knowledge, communication skills, awareness of the limits of knowledge, and autonomy and employability (Centre on Governance, Faculty of Social Sciences, 2023). At the end of the term, students receive three course credits for their work. The research supervisors and the director are responsible for assigning an alphanumeric grade at the end of the term.

The instructor was a visiting Fulbright scholar and professor from the United States, and the student was in her fourth year at the University of Ottawa and from Canada. According to the course description, "This course allows for the application of already acquired abilities and the acquisition of new knowledge related to carrying out research" (Centre on Governance, Faculty of Social Sciences, 2023). Because the course invites students to participate in an ongoing research project, the objectives are to "enrich the quality of their student experience, increase students' autonomy and professional capacity in their area of studies, improve students' knowledge of methodologies and the research process, and understand the limits of knowledge in research within the social sciences and to become familiar with scientific communication" (Centre on Governance, Faculty of Social Sciences, 2023).

### **An Engaged Research Partnership: Documenting Our Journey**

Student engagement through partnership allows for very high levels of active student participation and views partnership as a way of doing things, rather than just an input or an outcome (Healey et al., 2016). Healey et al. (2014) provide four areas in which students can

be partners in teaching and learning: learning, teaching, and assessment; curriculum design and pedagogic consultancy; subject-based research and inquiry; and scholarship of teaching and learning.

Below, we document our collective journey navigating this directed research course: we ground our reflection by viewing the student's engagement through a partnership lens and drawing on related literature. Specifically, we reflect on the ways we led with our strengths and embraced 'learning by doing' in our research partnership. This reflection reveals how an engaged partnership approach strengthened our contribution to the field of youth civic engagement in Canada during the research process and also invited us to think differently about what a student-faculty research partnership could look like. We independently wrote reflections throughout the semester and have included excerpts from our reflections below.<sup>1</sup>

### **Central to a Partnership: Leading with Strengths**

The Higher Education Academy's (2016) framework for *Student Engagement Through Partnership* suggests nine values that underlie successful student engagement: authenticity, inclusivity, honesty, reciprocity, empowerment, trust, courage, plurality, and responsibility. These values guided our engaged research partnership. It was important to both of us that we understood each other's strengths, backgrounds, and interests, as they helped shape both the content and structure of the directed reading course:

*JB:* The first week of class, Skylar and I spent time getting to know each other to learn about each other's backgrounds, research interests, and goals for the course. I shared information about my professional background and expertise and invited Skylar to share hers. It was during this initial meeting that I learned about Skylar's majors, involvement in student groups at the university, activities outside of the university, familiarity with qualitative data analysis, and her work at the Senate of Canada.

*SJ:* The first time I met Professor Benenson, she began by asking me what my interests were and what skills I hoped to work on through the research project. Her commitment to taking an approach based on her students' strengths and desired areas of growth created a very empowering experience. Throughout the project, Professor Benenson encouraged me to share and reflect on my experiences and to strategically use my prior knowledge. In addition to being an encouraging listener, she helped me to understand the benefits of this process by sharing examples from her community engagement and past research. Combined with the flexible structure of the course, this allowed my goals and knowledge to be incorporated into the evolution of the project.

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<sup>1</sup> JB are the initials of the faculty member, and SJ are the initials of the student.

The focus of the project over the course of the semester was a literature review on youth civic engagement in Canada. While the instructor had expertise in youth civic engagement literature in the United States, she was a visiting scholar in Canada and relied on the student for support as a thought partner in this endeavor. Acknowledging the student as an expert with lived experience engaging in Canadian civic and political life as a young person influenced the direction and strengthened the quality of the literature review.

*JB:* Each week, Skylar contributed examples from her own lived experiences that shaped the direction and focus of different aspects of the literature review. For example, she provided recommendations of youth-oriented community organizations that were leaders in Canada, federal national service programs that either she or her peers had engaged in as young people, and challenges that she and her peers have faced when trying to access civic opportunities. For example, Skylar shared a challenge she and others have faced accessing volunteer opportunities in the community as college students, especially those involving a long-term commitment. We also discussed federal national service opportunities such as AmeriCorps (in the United States) and Service Corps (Canada) and the differences between national service in our respective countries. These conversations led us down different literature paths, but also paths that led me to connect with people at many of these organizations and institutions.

*SJ:* During one discussion on the different obstacles young voters encounter, we were able to establish based on each other's knowledge a rough sketch of the different voter registration processes and where they were used. Likewise, although exploring the literature allowed us to explore the terminology used in the United States as compared to Canada (such as the different usage of "civic infrastructure" and "civic health"), several distinctions and potential causes were detected faster through conversations at our check-in meetings. This also allowed for a richness in dialogue which allowed for an ongoing comparison of anecdotal experience that led to a number of insights.

According to Moore et al. (2018), directed research courses differ significantly from other courses because they "involve frequent and more personalized contact between students and instructors as well as a much stronger emphasis on mentorship practices" (p. 772). To ensure mutual understanding and reciprocity, as well as to build trust and foster an engaged partnership, we met each week in person to discuss the tasks at hand. Additionally, because the student began her first semester in university during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in fall 2020, she expressed that in-person meetings were important for her educational experience at the university:

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*SJ:* In our case, Professor Benenson provided some tentative tasks and dates to shape the work, as well as suggested a weekly check-in meeting, which became a cornerstone of collaboration and dialogue throughout the project. Though these meetings were not a standard or required part of the directed research course, they were an immensely valuable part of this project and experience for a number of reasons. For research of a comparative nature between countries, as in the case of this project, lived experience in each environment helped speed up the process of identifying differences between the contexts.

*JB:* We were able to use some of our initial meetings to brainstorm ideas, make sense of findings, or redirect aspects of the project, as needed. For example, after the first few weeks, we both recognized that the topic of youth civic engagement in Canada was very broad, and we decided to focus on three specific areas for the literature review that we felt were the most relevant and offered opportunities for comparative research between the United States and Canada. While we might have reached the same conclusions on our own, coming together each week to talk through our ideas and thought processes helped ensure that we were on the same page and that the larger aims of the literature review were not lost.

### **Challenges and Opportunities: Learning by Doing**

Healy et al. (2016) contend that “only where students are given a significant amount of autonomy, independence, and choice can this be considered a partnership” (p. 10). Both the student and instructor learned a great deal by being open, flexible, and responsive to the directed research course structure:

*SJ:* As I learned, the way a research project works in the “real world” has significant differences from the structure of the classroom. The flexibility of the course structure posed both a challenge and a unique opportunity. As an undergraduate student, the routine of regular class times, set topics, assigned weekly readings, and scheduled evaluations provides a fixed framework in which learning and academic work are conducted. While this course had a proposed outline of the research to be conducted, as written by the research partner (in this case, Professor Benenson), the scope and approach to the research topic evolved throughout the course of the project, as guided by the professor and student.

The student also learned about the limitations of what can be accomplished during a semester-long directed research course, as opposed to a longer course.

*SJ:* The combination of the course only lasting one semester and starting in late September rather than at the beginning with other classes led to a compressed

timeframe in which to complete an entire research project, especially due to the long wait times for responses from other organizations. Though this time frame may prove tight to complete an in-depth study, it was certainly sufficient for building and refining an idea and creating a relationship between the professor and the student, both of which may be leveraged in future work.

Indeed, the strengthening of the partnership between the professor and student over the course of the semester—a partnership undergirded by trust, openness, flexibility, and responsiveness—led to many learning opportunities. For example, it exposed the student to different research resources:

*SJ:* There were also a lot of resources which I was aware of but never really considered for my use which Professor Benenson invited me to explore and helped me navigate. These included university librarians, centres, and conferences—the professor made these services accessible at the undergraduate level, whereas they are often only used by faculty members or graduate students.

The course structure and engagement in subject-based research on youth civic engagement also invited opportunities for learning through inquiry in the community (Healey & Jenkins, 2009). Specifically, both the student and instructor immersed themselves within civic and research spaces in Canada while conducting research for this project:

*JB:* When discussing a course that Skylar was taking on digital journalism, we began discussing the availability of national datasets in Canada focused on youth civic engagement in nonprofit organizations and charities in Canada. This led me to contact and meet with an economist at Statistics Canada, who shared more about this specific data landscape in the country. Skylar and I also attended a nonprofit data summit at Carleton University, which led us toward a new area of the literature around youth civic engagement in Canada.

And at the end of the semester, learning by doing shaped both the instructor's and student's perceptions of what is possible in youth civic engagement. The content of the course and the partnership model of student engagement in research also helped both the student and instructor consider future career and research pathways:

*SJ:* Personally, this course has helped me to think critically about the purpose, accessibility, and value of civic engagement for youth. It has also helped me to shift my own mindset about what counts as “civic engagement”—where I had previously only considered formal civic engagement, I began to recognize the informal ways my peers and myself engage in our communities. Taking this course as a fourth-year student making decisions about what to do next

year was also very beneficial, as it helped me get a rich preview and better understanding of what pursuing a Master's degree might be like. My interest in the non-profit field (both as a field of work and research) was renewed through witnessing the innovation and partnerships occurring, and hearing Professor Benenson discuss some of her other work and projects helped me understand the variety of opportunities in the sector.

*JB:* Through this course, I was able to learn about some of the cultural differences between the United States and Canada through Skylar's experiences, specifically around issues affecting young people. For example, we discussed the uniqueness of civic networks that exist in Francophone civic engagement spaces. We acknowledged that because we were only reviewing Canadian youth civic engagement literature in the English language, we were missing a significant portion of the research on this topic. This is one example of how this partnership has reinforced my own cultural responsiveness and shaped the direction and focus of the next phase of the literature review.

### **Conclusion: Final Thoughts**

As a result of this engaged student research partnership, our literature review on youth civic engagement will make a stronger and more representative contribution to the field. While the course structure was imperfect, leading with strengths and embracing 'learning by doing' ensured that the directed research environment was ripe for inquiry, engagement, learning, and growth:

*JB:* Both a personal and professional highlight from this directed research course was the opportunity to research youth civic engagement with a young person. It is very rare to have a chance to study a topic about a new (to me) country, while a visitor in the new country, with a person from the country.

*SJ:* As a result of participating in this course, I feel more prepared to engage not only in research, but in my community. I am thankful to Professor Benenson for facilitating such an encouraging environment—this course and partnership provided a truly impactful learning opportunity that enriched my undergraduate student experience.

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## Poverty and Racism: How We Think And Talk About Poverty Reduction Matters

Jacob Albin Korem Alhassan, Colleen Christopherson-Cote

**ABSTRACT** There is a close connection between poverty and racism yet insufficient literature integrates anti-racist praxis in poverty reduction work. We draw here on the first stage of a project that brought together the Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Partnership (SPRP) and the Saskatchewan Anti-Racism Network (ARN) to explore possibilities for better alignment of the advocacy of both organizations. We conducted a media discourse analysis of 462 newspaper articles systematically extracted from grey literature site *Factiva* on how poverty reduction is framed and how media reportage links poverty and racism in Saskatchewan. We find that very few newspaper articles published on poverty reduction focus on the connections between poverty and racism. Additionally, there are four dominant ways of framing poverty reduction namely: i) the cost framing of poverty reduction ii) the shame and embarrassment framing of poverty reduction iii) the human rights framing of poverty reduction and iv) the root cause analyses of poverty reduction. The cost and shame framings of poverty reduction may further marginalize or de-center those living in poverty compared to the human rights and root cause framings. More explicit connection needs to be made between poverty reduction work and anti-racist praxis for effective advocacy.

**KEYWORDS** Poverty reduction; advocacy; anti-racism; discourse

There is little doubt that poverty and racism are closely related. Most people classified as “poor” by governments - in the Canadian context, a family of 4 living in Saskatoon in 2022 on under \$51,275 - are also racialized populations. Many racialized populations experience poverty because of socio-economic policies that have historically limited their social mobility and continue to hinder their access to resources. This historical reality is often neglected in discourses that present high income countries with Indigenous populations such as Canada Australia and the United States as purely meritocratic societies (McLean, 2018).

This short report comes from a Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC)-supported Intersectoral Action Fund project (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2021) in Saskatoon seeking to further integrate the work of the Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Partnership (SPRP) and the Anti-Racism Network (ARN). It explores the relationship between poverty and racism in Saskatchewan and examines media framings of poverty reduction and the poverty-racism nexus. It begins by describing existing statistics on the racialized nature of poverty in Canada.

Based on analysis of 462 newspaper articles, it then describes four main ways the print media frames the relationship between poverty and racism. The analysis reveals first that, although there are several newspaper articles that focus on poverty reduction, very few articles explicitly analyse the racialization of poverty or discuss how racism creates poverty. Second newspaper articles use four dominant frames to describe why poverty should be reduced, namely: i) the cost framing of poverty reduction, ii) the shame and embarrassment framing of poverty reduction, iii) the human rights framing of poverty reduction, and iv) the root cause analyses of poverty reduction. While distinct, all four discourses are not mutually exclusive. After presenting some critiques of extant ways of framing poverty reduction, the report concludes by advocating for the need to discuss the relationship of poverty to racism more explicitly. Poverty is produced by racism and histories of colonial violence and poverty reduction efforts are therefore unlikely to be successful until they explicitly focus on the racist roots of poverty.

### **Racialized poverty: By the numbers**

In Canada, data from the 2016 Census revealed that 20.8% of visible minorities were below the low income cut off (LICO) for poverty compared to 12.2% of non-racialized people (Colour of Poverty, 2019). The LICO is an income threshold below which a household devotes a much larger share of its income on basic necessities like food and shelter than other households. A 2012 report on poverty rates among First Nations communities revealed that 49% of First Nations children under age 6 living off reserve lived in poverty compared to 18% of non-Indigenous children (Best Start Resource Centre, 2012). These rates have not changed significantly over the last decade: a 2019 report showed that child poverty rates (for those aged under 18 years) in Nunavut were 34.4% and this number gets even worse (42.6%) for children under six (Campaign 2000, 2021). Rates of child poverty also vary significantly among racialized communities across the country: while poverty rates for children of Filipino (9.5%) and Japanese (13.3%) ancestry are lower than the 17% national average, the rates are much higher for other racialized communities.

Presently, an estimated 53% of Status First Nations children living on reserve are in poverty nationally, and this number rises to 65% in Saskatchewan and Manitoba (Beedie et al., 2019). These unconscionably high rates are also present among other racialized groups—Arab (43.3%), West Asian (42.7%), Korean (35.2%) and Black (30.2%) children—compared to non-racialized, non-recent immigrant, non-Indigenous children (12%) ( Beedie et al., 2019; Campaign 2000, 2021).

These statistics can be summarized simply: poverty in Canada is racialized. Unfortunately, these statistics on their own do not reveal the ways that colonialism and histories of systemic racism and injustice have produced the currently disproportionately high rates of poverty among racialized communities in Canada; nor do they explain why poverty is so racialized.

### **Discourse and framing of social problems**

Discourse refers to “any sound, word, image or object... organised with other signs into a system capable of carrying meaning” (Hall, 2009, p. 9). Discourse analysis treats language not “as a

neutral means of transmitting information” (Alhassan et al., 2021, p. 4) but as actively involved in producing realities: enabling “certain ways of thinking about reality while excluding others” (Cheek, 2004, p. 1142). In Canadian contexts in particular, for example, the construction of discourse that portrays Indigenous peoples as “lazy” has provided a powerful linguistic excuse to willfully ignoring historical patterns of colonial violence and dispossession, while also justifying government inaction on alleviating poverty among Indigenous communities (Lutz, 2009; Manuel & Derrickson, 2015). Through discourse analysis, one can critique and problematize commonly accepted ideas. It helps in diagnosing the root causes of social problems that result in scapegoating particular members of society. For example the classic representation of working-class women as “welfare queens,” a representation that invokes a picture of “a greedy conniving dole cheat raking in hundreds of thousands of dollars” to fund her lazy lifestyle at the public’s expense, elides how neoliberal capitalist social policy produces poverty in the first place (Cronin, 2012, p.31).

Drawing on critical race theory, we began by rejecting historical notions of a biological basis of race (that viewed racialized groups as poor because of laziness built into their genes), viewing poverty instead as based on histories of racism that “inhibit and disadvantage some more than others” as a means to entrenching white supremacy (Treviño et al., 2008, p. 8). We sought to explore how often poverty and racism co-occur in media publications in Saskatchewan and some of the dominant frames that are used to understand and describe this nexus.

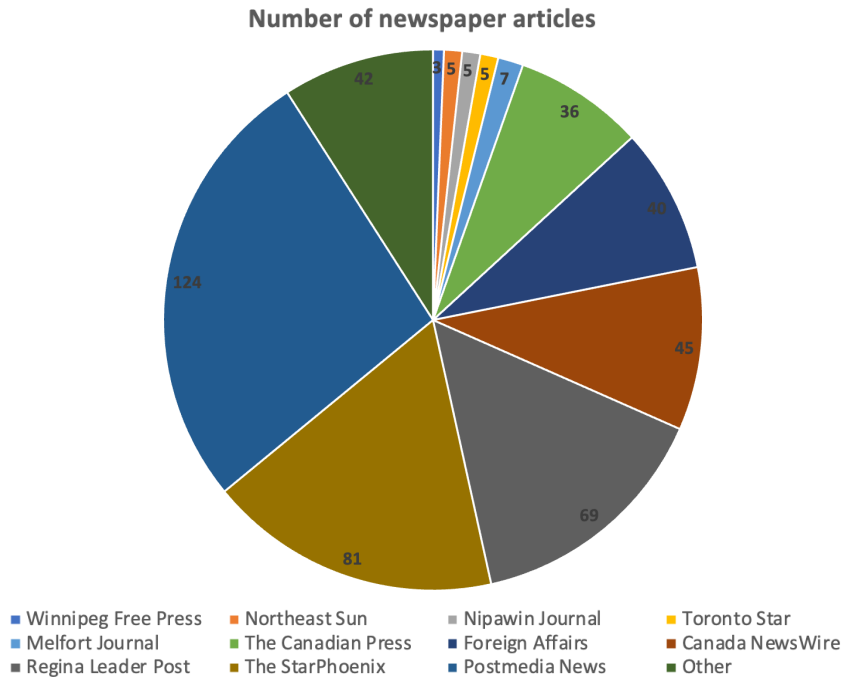
### **The Public Health Agency of Canada project**

The project emerged from a recognition that while anti-poverty work and anti-racism advocacy have occurred over the years in Saskatchewan, these efforts have occurred in silos and could be better integrated. The project brought together the Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Partnership (SPRP) and the Anti-Racism Network (ARN) to promote further engagement on how poverty and racism are correlated and together produce health inequalities. The project involved engaging community partners, people with living and lived experience of poverty and racism, and academics. The SPRP was established in 2010 and is based on a mutual commitment to multi-sectoral and sustainable poverty reduction in Saskatoon. It operates to move people out of poverty and developed the 12 Bold Ideas to Eliminate Poverty in Saskatoon (Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Partnership, 2019). The ARN is an alliance of over 30 community-based organizations across Saskatchewan, meeting monthly to support member organizations in learning and practicing anti-racism. The ARN recently created the Prairie Center for Racial Justice ([www.prairiecentreforracialjustice.ca](http://www.prairiecentreforracialjustice.ca)), a cooperative social enterprise focused on grassroots mobilizing and education. This report partly builds on the efforts of these two organizations to work together and enable greater public understanding of the intersections of poverty and racism.

### **Methodology**

Informed by key principles of engaged scholarship (Hoffman, 2021), including the commitment to connect our intellectual curiosity of the relationships between poverty and





*Figure 2.* Newspaper sources

### **Framing poverty reduction**

The media analysis revealed four main ways poverty reduction is conceptualized, justified and framed including: 1) cost framing 2) shame and embarrassment framing 3) root cause analyses and 4) human rights framing. In the cost framing, poverty reduction is seen as important because it would save the government money in the long run. The shame and embarrassment framing views poverty reduction as important because it is considered a national shame that so much poverty would exist in Canada. The root cause framing argues that poverty should be reduced because individuals cannot reduce it themselves since it is a systemic problem requiring systemic solutions. The human rights framing argues that poverty should be reduced because it violates people’s human rights. These framings are not mutually exclusive but offer a language for making sense of why poverty exists and what can be done about it.

#### **1. *The cost framing of poverty reduction:***

Several media publications relied on a cost framing to justify the urgent need for poverty reduction in Saskatchewan/Canada. In a few cases cost was also used to justify inaction regarding, or slow progress towards, poverty reduction. An article published in *The Star Phoenix*, highlighted that “when all the societal costs are tallied poverty [costs Canada] \$8.2 billion meanwhile a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy has been assessed at less than \$4 billion a year” (Cooper, 2012, para. 7 ). A similar article noted that “a growing body of evidence shows that allowing poverty to continue is far more expensive than investing to help

improve people's economic wellbeing. Currently 3.8 billion--5 per cent of GDP—is lost from the Saskatchewan economy each year due to increased health and social costs and decreased economic opportunities” (Martin & Meili, 2015, para. 11). While these framings are advocated for by academics, community leaders, and others interested in poverty reduction, the framing places a price on poverty reduction and unintentionally creates a logical loophole: poverty should be reduced because poverty reduction costs less than the cost of allowing poverty to remain. Hypothetically, this implies that if poverty reduction ever becomes more costly than the cost of inaction then it can be justifiable not to try to reduce it. Indeed, a few publications justified inaction on such cost-based grounds. One publication from *The Canadian Press* noted that “many of the ideas introduced in a poverty reduction strategy introduced this year won't be pursued until the province can afford them” (Graham, 2016, para. 9). Another publication describing investments in housing for First Nations concluded that although the province had committed to pursue housing investment as part of its poverty reduction work, this agenda would only continue “when the province's fiscal capacity allows” (Regina Leader Post, 2016, para. 10). In this sense, just as the use of a cost framing might justify advocating for poverty reduction, cost may also be summoned to justify inaction.

## ***2. The shame and embarrassment framing of poverty reduction:***

Many publications focused mainly on shaming those in authority into acting to reduce poverty. These publications revealed shocking statistics about poverty—typically among Indigenous communities in Canada—and concluded by asking policy makers to act on poverty since inaction constitutes a national embarrassment. While well-meaning, these publications often did not necessarily focus on the suffering and pain of those dealing with poverty and rarely amplified the voices of those with lived experience but rather focused on those in power. One of these publications noted that “living conditions for Canada's Native people have been a national embarrassment for many decades and there have been countless pledges to deal with the problem” (Canada & the World Backgrounder, 2006, para. 2). The publication concluded that “in fact, if the statistics for Canadian Aboriginal people were viewed separately from those of the rest of the country, Canada's Aboriginal people would slip to 78th on the UN Human Development Index—the ranking currently held by Kazakhstan” (Canada & the World Backgrounder, 2006, para. 9). Although well meaning, this framing also stigmatizes low-income countries and seems to suggest that poverty levels among Indigenous people are bad because they fall to levels similar to low-income countries, which only further normalizes experiences of poverty for those in low- and middle-income countries. Unfortunately, the shame and embarrassment framing persists. The opening lines of a 2020 article read, “[t]he face of child poverty in Saskatchewan is not the face we see on television of impoverished third world countries. It can be the face of the child who comes to school unkempt and repeatedly without a lunch, but it can also be the face of the children next door” (Baldwin, 2020, para. 1). While the shock value from this framing could engender action, this framing fails to acknowledge or recognize that poverty in low-income countries is not and should not be normal(ized), rendering it a problematic framing.



### **3. *The root cause of poverty framing of poverty reduction:***

Several articles also sought to reveal the root causes of poverty and to describe key factors that continue to entrench poverty among vulnerable communities. This discourse connected poverty to social determinants of health, argued that poverty is not a choice, and advocated for recognition of the reality that several social ills, including crime and illness, will not disappear until poverty and its root causes are effectively dealt with. In one article with such framing, an advocate noted that while politicians may think “that really poverty is about either getting a job or pulling up your bootstraps and it’s because of people’s individual choices,” such assumptions are wrong because “there are systemic factors at play” (Deibert, 2018, para. 8). Connecting poverty to food insecurity and its adverse health impacts, another media report quoted a director of a local food bank as arguing that:

people often think that those people accessing services here at the food bank have made poor choices, but poverty is not a choice. Nobody chooses to live in poverty... As a matter of fact, poverty takes away so many people’s choices. You can’t choose to eat healthy because even though you know that’s what’s best for you, you can’t afford to do it. (Hengen, 2016, para. 24)

In this framing, poverty is explicitly described in relation to broader social and economic processes, with advocates not necessarily framing poverty reduction as a way of reducing costs but focusing instead on the complexity of poverty reduction and the need to attend to economic inequality, racism, and other root causes of disadvantages as a way to respond to the problem of poverty.

### **4. *The human rights framing of poverty reduction:***

Finally, a number of media publications framed poverty reduction in human rights terms. These publications argued that poverty ought to be reduced not because the cost of inaction is higher or because it is embarrassing to have high rates of poverty, but because high levels of poverty are an infringement on the human rights of those experiencing it. This framing sometimes drew on a capabilities framework (Nussbaum, 2003, 2013; Sen, 2000) to argue that poverty leads to unrealized potential among the poor or that it prevents the poor from exercising fundamental freedoms. Turning attention to specific groups such as children, one such publication noted that:

[i]n fact, all children and youth do have rights and respecting these rights is fundamental to ensuring that we live in the kind of just, equitable and free society that Canadians value. While we have made considerable strides, as a society we are violating the rights of children and youth regularly. We see evidence of this in calls that come into our office. It is clear that children living in poverty often lack the resources to develop to their full potential—that is why we are so concerned that two-thirds of status First Nations children in Saskatchewan are living in poverty. (Pringle, 2014, para. 5)



Similarly, other advocates using this framing described resources that people living in vulnerability and poverty may lack, and argued that access to these resources should be considered human rights. In one such article, poverty reduction advocates framed digital poverty in human rights terms, stating that they would like “to see internet access deemed a basic human right, especially now that the pandemic has highlighted just how much other human rights like education and health rely on it” (Giesbrecht, 2021, para. 29). While each of these framings are susceptible to critique, the human rights framing can be quite powerful given its situatedness in international conventions.

### **The Poverty-Racism Nexus**

While poverty among racialized communities is regularly reported on, minimal efforts are made to explain how poverty and racism are related. The word “racism” appeared only nine (9) times throughout the reviewed articles which were extracted using the search term “poverty,” while “poverty reduction” appeared 2,946 times. This reveals that poverty and racism are not sufficiently analyzed simultaneously in media articles. Moreover, articles that attempt to highlight poverty among racialized communities were often descriptive and did not pay sufficient attention to explaining how and why poverty might be related to racism. A publication that describes high levels of poverty on a First Nations reserve may recognize that poverty affects Indigenous people disproportionately, but such recognition can lead to different conclusions. For example a reader drawing on extant stereotypes might interpret this to mean that Indigenous people are lazy (Lutz, 2009) and therefore experience more poverty. Other readers with more knowledge of Canada’s colonial history might conclude that poverty in that reserve is caused by racism and that specific policies that dispossessed Indigenous people of their land (Anaya & William, 2001; Mumford, 2016), perpetrated genocide (Daschuk, 2013; Jones, 2004; Talbot, 2006) or actively prevented Indigenous people from labour market participation (McLean, 2018; Tuck & Yang, 2012) are responsible for these levels of poverty.

Nonetheless, some publications (Canada & the World Backgrounder, 2006; Deibert, 2018; Radford, 2014) highlighted that poverty exists at higher rates in Indigenous communities and often concluded by remarking on the need to study structural racism. In one publication, for example, members of a task force against racism “encouraged government to engage in long-term, integrated, multi-year actions grounded in three overarching foundational understandings, which are: dignified mutual relationships; poverty reduction and the prevalence of racism; and recognizing First Nations and Métis cultures and languages” (Lloydminster Meridian Booster, 2014, para. 10). While these publications mentioned racism and explicitly recognized that racism and poverty are related, they did not necessarily analyse colonial violence and how it produces the racialized experience of poverty.

### **Conclusion**

Although available statistics show a strong correlation between poverty and racialization, media reportage on how and why poverty and racism are related is relatively low. This brief report reveals two key realities. Firstly, even though there is a recognition that racialized populations

are often more likely to live in poverty in Saskatchewan and there are several newspaper articles that focus on poverty reduction, very few articles explicitly analyse the racialization of poverty and discuss the mechanisms by which racism creates poverty. Secondly there are four ways most media reports on poverty reduction are framed, namely: i) cost framing; ii) shame and embarrassment framing; iii) human rights framing, and; iv) root cause analyses. These different modes of thinking and talking about poverty reduction, while useful, come with some pitfalls. Poverty reduction advocates ought to reflect on the different framings presented and carefully reframe how poverty reduction is discussed, with special attention to discussing racism as a fundamental cause of poverty in Canada and Saskatchewan. Partnerships such as the collaboration between the SPRP and the ARN are crucial steps in building synergies on poverty reduction and anti-racist praxis.

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# Using Literature Review to Inform an Anti-Oppressive Approach to Community Safety

**Julie Chamberlain, Stacy Cardigan Smith, Dagen Perrott**

**ABSTRACT** Literature review is a common piece of any scholarly research, but it is rare for it to be squarely at the centre of a community-based project. In this Report from the Field, the research team critically reflects upon the creation and use of a literature review on grassroots, anti-oppressive approaches to community safety in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. Writing in conversation with one another, we explore the tensions of navigating and challenging safety discourse and securitization practices in our city, from our distinct experiences and positions as an academic researcher, community partner, and student research assistant. In the process, we illuminate a collaboration that offers insights for academic and community researchers alike. We reflect on creating an accessible basis for community conversation and planning while doing justice to the sources of anti-oppressive theory and practice, particularly when initially speaking to mostly white and privileged community members. The literature review has generated discussion about what it means to approach safety as a collective resource rather than an exclusive possession, and will inform practical strategies in the neighbourhood and beyond.

**KEYWORDS** Residents association; community-based research; community safety; Winnipeg, Manitoba

In the West End of Winnipeg in 2021, a new residents association needed a neighbourhood-focused and anti-oppressive framework for community conversations and action on safety. In this report from the field, co-written by the research team, we reflect on a community-university collaboration to create a literature review as a foundation for action on safety at the neighbourhood level. From our distinct positions we reflect on the tensions of navigating safety discourse in Winnipeg in this time and place, honouring theory and practices that emerge from communities who experience oppression while pushing for anti-oppressive thinking and action in a relatively privileged neighbourhood association. Our insights offer ideas and examples for community and academic researchers.

The literature review at the centre of our reflection explores various ways of defining and talking about safety and describes approaches to community action that align with our understanding of anti-oppression principles (see Perrott & Chamberlain, 2022). We found that feelings and beliefs about safety, crime, and harm influence the conversations we can

have about community safety in ways that may or may not be connected to the full diversity of lived experiences and realities in a neighbourhood. An anti-oppressive approach defines safety as a shared resource, rather than as an exchangeable or individual good (Perrott & Chamberlain, 2022). The literature review suggests questions that community organizations can ask themselves to prompt reflection on how they think and talk about harm, vulnerability, and boundary-making in the neighbourhood. It outlines six categories of anti-oppressive strategies for creating safety: developing the community's social capital; cultivating public and green space; seeing your neighbours; responding to harm without criminalization; engaging in harm reduction; and undertaking street outreach.

The authors are Stacy Cardigan Smith, Julie Chamberlain, and Dagen Perrott. Cardigan Smith is the Chair of the South Valour Residents Association (SVRA), a professional in the philanthropic sector, and the initiator of the research. She connected the organization with the research process, centering community needs, and led the sharing of the literature review with residents. Chamberlain is an academic researcher and faculty member at the University of Winnipeg; she coordinated the project, found funding, and guided student researchers. Perrott was a student research assistant at the time, and has since graduated from the University of Winnipeg. He conducted and drafted the literature review and created infographics to accompany it. All three authors are from white settler backgrounds, with various experiences of class, disability, and other systems that interlock with safety discourse and practice. All three authors continue to be involved in the implementation of ideas from the literature review through a critical participatory action research project with the SVRA Safety Committee.

## EXPLORING CARING AND INCLUSIVE APPROACHES TO COMMUNITY SAFETY

### What is Safety?

Safety can mean more than just an absence of harm or injury. Safety is the active experience of trust, social connection, familiarity, and support. A caring and inclusive approach to safety improves everyone's sense of safety rather than enhancing the security of a select few. A focus only on security can create exclusion, surveillance, and fear, resulting in the division and isolation of people and communities. True safety requires us to address the root causes of vulnerability and actively create a positive sense of safety.

### Safety Feelings vs Safety Facts

Individual feelings of safety, such as anger, worry and fear, are valid, though they don't always mirror the reality of risk. Research shows that violent crime is generally decreasing and exclusionary approaches to security are flawed. This requires reflection on our own views of safety, fear of crime, and who we might stereotype as dangerous or criminal. Sometimes shifting beliefs about what makes us safe can be as important as taking action.

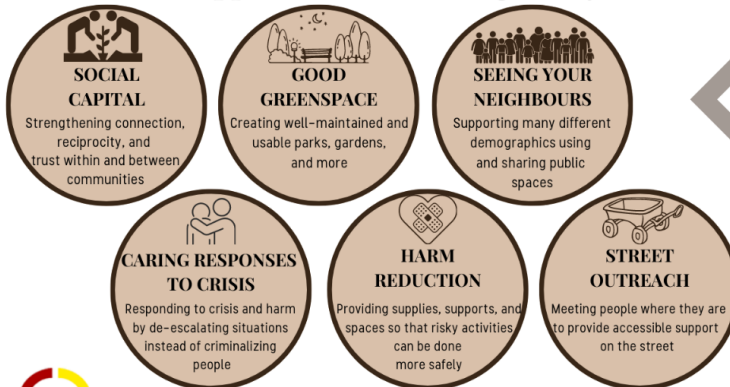
### Experiencing Safety

Safety is experienced as an active process of caring and being cared for. It comes from quality of life, knowing your neighbours, a sense of belonging, strong public services and supports, investment in the neighbourhood, accessible transportation, and accountability when harm occurs. Safety is a collective process that requires much more than just a personal sense of security from danger.

### 5 Questions to Ask Ourselves

- 1 Are we talking about safety as something that should benefit everyone?
- 2 Are we critically reflecting on the role prejudice plays in our fear and discomfort?
- 3 Are we focusing on what makes us feel safe? Or on our fear and discomfort?
- 4 If we're talking about crime, are we talking about actual rates of crime or our fear of crime?
- 5 Are we recognizing that harm and vulnerability are natural and that everyone experiences and perpetrates them?

### Six Approaches to Creating Safety



See the full 2022 report by Dagen Perrott & Julie Chamberlain, University of Winnipeg, Urban and Inner-City Studies: [mra-mb.ca/publication/grassroots-anti-oppressive-approaches-to-safety](http://mra-mb.ca/publication/grassroots-anti-oppressive-approaches-to-safety). For more info contact: [info@svrawinnipeg.org](mailto:info@svrawinnipeg.org)

Figure 1. One page summary of literature review highlights



## Safety discourse and realities in Winnipeg

*Julie Chamberlain*

I don't think I had heard the word "safety" spoken as many times in my whole life as I did during my first months in Winnipeg. When I moved here for work in 2021 it seemed to be top of mind for many of the locals I first met. From the outset I was unsure, and questioned, what they meant by "safety," and why it was such a hot topic. "Safety" can be code for difference, for fear of people perceived as "others," and for apparent danger presented by people who are marginalized or excluded from city spaces, and who are in fact more vulnerable as a result (Pain, 2001; Shirlow & Pain, 2003).

Winnipeg certainly has a reputation as a city divided by income, racialization, and the legacies of colonization (Dorries, 2019). I wondered when I arrived here how to navigate the unsolicited advice I received about "safe" and "unsafe" areas to live. Were the Winnipeggers I met concerned about my well-being as a woman living alone, or that I should choose a neighbourhood where residents tended to be white, like me? When I eventually met my new neighbours and they assured me, unbidden, that the neighbourhood was a safe one, I didn't feel reassured, I felt alarmed: safe from what, I wondered? And for whom? Winnipeggers seemed accustomed to defending against a sense of *unsafety* that I couldn't yet grasp.

This was on my mind when Stacy Cardigan Smith reached out for research support for the South Valour Residents Association (SVRA), a relatively new organization in the West End of Winnipeg. The SVRA wanted to analyze and visualize the results of a community survey they had conducted to guide their organizing, and it was already clear that safety was top of mind for some South Valour residents. At the same time, the guiding values of "inclusivity, positivity, collaboration, care, and being evidence-informed" were just being solidified in the organization (South Valour Residents Association, n.d.). They wondered how to approach safety in a manner that would draw residents into collective action, reject coded language, and avoid strategies that reproduce underlying sources of fear and unsafety, including racism, classism, misogyny, transphobia, homophobia, and the stigmatization of people who use drugs or who are experiencing mental health issues. Once we dug into the results of the community survey, the challenge was underscored, since the majority of respondents reported that they felt safe in South Valour, but they were also less likely to be racialized people than the neighbourhood average, and more likely to have higher incomes, to be homeowners, and to identify as women (Moffett Steinke, 2022).

In the two years that my students and I have been working with the SVRA, the word safety has been spoken more and more often in Winnipeg. There are reports that property theft causes "sleepless nights" in the city (CBC Radio MB, 2022) which aligns with our findings that fear of crime and feelings of safety are often mixed together (Perrott & Chamberlain, 2022). After years of public health crisis and isolation, many community members are struggling with basic survival and well-being, with fundamental needs going unmet (McCracken, 2023). The drug poisoning and overdose epidemic threatens and takes lives daily in the city (SaferSites.ca, 2022),



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and systematic societal failure to value and protect Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people puts them at particular risk of violence and death (Shebahkeget, 2022). The current Search the Landfill movement (<https://searchthelandfill.com/>) puts this in powerful relief, as families and communities push for a search of two local landfills for the bodies of Indigenous women murdered by a serial killer. In all these realms of “safety,” communities themselves come together to take action and figure out how to keep themselves safe, while the state fails to put sufficient resources into community well-being and in fact often increases vulnerability.

Our literature review showed that neighbourhoods, as diverse, place-based communities, have options to approach safety in a critical and inclusive way. These include building connections within and between communities; creating public spaces of encounter and recognition; educating themselves and each other; building capacity to respond to harm without criminalization; and taking a responsive, harm reduction approach to meeting the needs of neighbours.

### **Enabling evidence-based conversations in South Valour**

*Stacy Cardigan Smith*

The tension between safety and security is present in our South Valour community, as it is throughout our city. Safety is a shared resource that benefits everyone, while security is focused on protection of some people through the exclusion of others (Perrott & Chamberlain, 2022). The SVRA board knew there must be a better way to approach community safety, but knowing what that could mean in practice was another story. We trusted that our community is generally made up of people who care, but who may not know that some of the safety approaches historically used in our city can cause harm. We wanted a way to share information that allowed community members to learn, explore, and discuss caring safety concepts, to see how they might suit our neighbourhood, and to generate ideas for implementation. Our collaboration with Julie and Dagen has allowed for this to happen. We were intentionally building a foundation for future action.

South Valour is a central neighbourhood that is walkable and close to transit routes. The community is primarily made up of heritage homes, many of which are more than 100 years old and are being renovated. A beautiful tree canopy covers the streets in the summer, but many of the trees have died in recent years due to old age, a lack of biodiversity, and disease. During the past decade, the community has seen a transformation, welcoming new restaurants, bakeries, and breweries. We have a community centre that provides recreational programming and daycare, however the centre has struggled lately to attract enough volunteers. Our local school is the only one in the division to offer Cree and Ojibwe language programs. According to the 2016 census, about three quarters of South Valour residents own their homes. Residents tend to be younger compared to the rest of Winnipeg, and have a lower income (\$38,469) than the city average (\$44,915). 17% of residents identify as having Indigenous ancestry and 27.5% identify as another “visible minority” (City of Winnipeg & Statistics Canada, 2019).

In December 2020 we were brought together as a group of strangers to serve as the inaugural SVRA board, and from the beginning it was clear there would be tension about how we should approach community safety. The board was primarily made up of white settlers, the majority of whom do not self-identify with any equity-seeking groups. We chose to serve because we care about our community, but our interests and priorities, our awareness of our power and privilege, and our willingness to adapt, all varied. One board member was set on creating a “safer” community by developing a safety patrol. Others said that a patrol would make them feel less safe, and they worried that this would be exacerbated for community members who experience marginalization.

We knew we wanted to be intentional in our approach to community safety for all. To create space for conversation, diffuse conflict, and ensure decisions were made based on data and evidence (rather than hunches or personal desires), we conducted a survey to determine community priorities, and established a mission, vision, and values to guide our approach (South Valour Residents Association, n.d.). When the safety patrol board member learned the board wasn’t immediately in support of his preferred approach, he largely withdrew from the organization; this is a choice some people will make.

As Dagen and Julie worked on a literature review to inform our work, being able to take these academic findings and make them relevant, accessible, and useable for the community was a top priority for the SVRA. Academic approaches can be intimidating; there is a tension between the “best practices” of academics and experts, what community volunteers have capacity to undertake, and what community members have the patience and interest to engage with. Along with a short report, Dagen developed infographics that were easily digestible (see Figure 1 for an example).

We organized a community conversation to discuss the findings of the literature review, and worked with a professional conflict resolution facilitator to create a space where everyone could feel heard and connect the findings with lived experiences. Community members were invited to share their experiences and generate ideas for what we as a grassroots residents association could do to promote safety using an anti-oppressive lens. One resident arrived with footage captured from their back lane security cameras and wanted to talk mainly about the crime they had experienced. Most came to learn and discuss, and no one was made to feel like they didn’t have a place in the discussion and our community.

We came away from that meeting with 25 action items. We built trust with and within our community through taking the time to demonstrate why residents should engage with us. The community has responded by trusting us enough to share their ideas. As we now work on next steps, we know we must strive to engage neighbours who have not yet been included. A thriving South Valour community is one in which everyone feels they belong.

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## Honouring theorists of community safety in hostile conditions

*Dagen Perrott*

*As I write I am painfully aware of the security guard watching from the balcony above, one of five I passed as I entered Winnipeg's downtown library. This is in addition to the two police officers and a metal detector stationed at the entrance. These were implemented in response to the murder of a young man by a group of four boys earlier in the year.*

In my experience, Winnipeg is a city obsessed with safety but lacking in imagination. It relies obsessively on security, borders, and policing to address issues that are often rooted in poverty. The downtown library has a metal detector; a nearby food court a security checkpoint. Over a quarter of the municipal budget is spent on the police force, a budget line that is increased year-by-year while public transit, parks, community spaces, and other services get starved for resources (Dobchuk-Land, 2023). Community supports, preventative measures, and holistic approaches to safety are underfunded despite evidence showing they work (Selman et al., 2019).

I was excited and nervous when I was asked to work on a literature review on anti-oppressive and grassroots approaches to safety. I was nervous for how to navigate charged conversations around safety and security. I was excited that a neighbourhood I perceived as benefiting from the existing approaches to security could see the value or necessity of alternatives. Growing up just a dozen blocks to the east of South Valour, we lived across what felt like an invisible line. On one side I saw as a safe place, while on our side many of my neighbours were just trying to survive violence and over-policing, which didn't prevent yearly murders, break-ins, or bruises on the face of the corner store owner. I grew up relatively privileged and protected in this context, but I learned that the topic of safety requires careful reflection on vulnerability, marginalization, and the harm that comes from an overreliance on security (Okechukwu, 2021).

*A second security guard strolls along a balcony to watch from above the first. Each surveys the four floors of terraced desks along the edge of the library. Their presence is alarming and uncomfortable for me. They trigger old traumas and remind me of how often our response to a crisis is to criminalize instead of caring for people.*

The SVRA didn't just need critique, they needed a literature review to enable nuanced and well-informed conversations on safety, and to provide actionable alternatives. I wanted to honour that 'anti-oppressive' and 'grassroots' approaches to safety come from communities who are targeted by state violence or who are seen by the state as undeserving of protection (Turner, 2020). I knew that my work would draw on theory, expertise, and strategies that came from Indigenous communities and sex worker communities (Blagg & Anthony, 2019; Law, 2011). I would draw from how "Black and Brown feminist movements have organized against sexual violence; LGBTQ

groups have rallied resistance to police and transphobic violence; and immigrant women have created alternative interventions to domestic violence” (Turner, 2020, p. 293).

When highlighting practical strategies, it is important not to co-opt, decontextualize, or depoliticize ideas that stem from real needs for safety initiatives that do not reinforce social inequity and state violence. Alternative visions of community safety are deeply tied to commitments to address how “structures of capitalism, settler-colonialism, racism, patriarchy, cis-heteronormativity, and ability” create the inequity on which policing and bordering thrive (Perrott & Chamberlain, 2022, p. 4). For example, the seminal INCITE! (2001) statement called out how state-focused approaches to addressing gendered violence contributed to an expansion of state violence against marginalized women. Understanding how security for some has been built on the oppression of others requires time, trusting relationships, and spaces of dialogue. While our literature review could provide evidence, explanations, and examples of how anti-oppressive approaches are effective, SVRA knows best how to continue these difficult conversations on the ground and how to do the hard work of addressing the facts, feelings, fears, and beliefs that people have about safety.

*I take a short break from writing this and head to the library washroom. On my way I pass two additional security guards. Hidden in the back is a single office where a busy crisis support worker speaks quietly to an older man, while a few other patrons appear to wait their turn. Unable to focus under such overt surveillance I eventually decide to leave for the University library. I pass by more than a dozen private security guards from various companies and three more police officers as I walk the short distance inside the Winnipeg Skywalk. Every guard represents a societal choice to fund security over safety. Their eyes, as cold as the mid-winter air I step out into to escape, seem to follow me.*

## **Conclusion**

The power of a literature review as a meaningful community-based research method and planning tool has surprised us. Since we published the review, other communities in Winnipeg have asked us to talk about our findings, and to help them, too, to think about what they can do. As we work on implementing strategies that emerged from the review, we are continuing to reflect on the tensions and challenges of talking about and acting on neighbourhood safety in anti-oppressive ways, and this report from the field offers some insights for community and academic researchers. The proof, ultimately, is in action; we share frustration and anger about how people in our city are drastically under-supported despite so much evidence about what builds truly safe and inclusive neighbourhoods.

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## About the Authors

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## Silence: A Novel Co-Produced Experience To Build Community Awareness Of Biodiversity Loss

**Kristen Bellisario, Christie Shee**

**ABSTRACT** The current sounds of our world are under threat of disappearing. Undergraduate students and interdisciplinary university teams are at the forefront of generating collaborative research opportunities to create community awareness of biodiversity loss and conservation practices. Recent conservation research has focused on how local communities can begin to reverse the trends of biodiversity loss by using private residences and urban spaces. The inclusion of native plants in backyard gardens is an accessible way to promote ecological restoration. In this co-produced instructional exhibit, “Earth Day Celebration: Silence,” we introduce a novel experiential event that connects instructional design with community collaboration. The event was designed to explore the ways in which society can become engaged in the preservation and protection of biodiversity and our sonic world.

**KEYWORDS** biodiversity loss, co-production, community conservation, experiential sound, sonic world

The current sounds of our world are under threat of disappearing—a sonic warning announced in an earlier generation by the profound book “*Silent Spring*” by Rachel Carson. This pivotal book detailed how the application of the insecticide dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT) contributed to a trophic cascade of silence: poisoned insect equated poisoned bird. Today, scientific evidence indicates that we have or will soon enter Earth’s sixth period of mass extinction, and it is predicted that three quarters of today’s animal species will vanish within 300 years (Ceballos et al., 2015). The protection of biodiversity, as well as our sonic world, is not just a problem for scientists. Intergenerational approaches, linking the conservation efforts of our university campus and community backyards, and collaboration between undergraduate students and interdisciplinary university teams are each in their own ways at the forefront of, and critical to, community awareness of biodiversity loss and conservation practices. Integrating all of these elements in tandem is an opportunity to build community awareness and local action from multiple paths. The absence of naturally occurring sounds can be attributed to biodiversity loss (Pijanowski et al., 2011) and to increased human disturbances by noise and light pollution (Barber et al., 2015; Ditchkoff et al., 2006). Land-use change—for agriculture, forestry, and urbanization—is the primary driver of biodiversity loss (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, 2019). Urbanization is projected to expand,



increasing noise and light pollution (Sordello et al., 2020), and exacerbating biodiversity declines (Simkin et al., 2022). To reverse declines in biodiversity, there are increasing calls for conservation efforts to move beyond historical efforts that exclude humans from natural areas to grassroots efforts that enable humans to live with and conserve nature in human-altered landscapes (Wiederholt et al., 2015). Recent conservation research has focused on how local communities can begin to reverse the trends of biodiversity loss by using private residences and urban spaces to provide food, shelter, and wildlife corridors between fragmented landscapes (Delahay et al., 2023; Lerman et al., 2023).

Individuals and communities can contribute to conservation by incorporating native plants in residential landscaping and urban green spaces. Urban landscaping frequently uses non-native ornamental plants (Wania et al., 2003) that do not share a co-evolutionary history with local fauna. Because the majority of plant-feeding insects have evolved to feed on specific plants, using non-native plants subsequently contributes little or not at all to local food webs (Tallamy, 2007; Burghardt et al., 2009). Thus, incorporating native plants in backyard landscaping can increase biodiversity, particularly that of insects and birds (Tallamy, 2004; Burghardt et al., 2009) that contribute to backyard soundscapes. The inclusion of native plants in backyard gardens is an accessible way to quickly restore ecosystems (Beckwith et al., 2022). Although the uses of native plants in landscaping brings many benefits, there remain challenges with using native plants in residential landscaping, including residents' sometimes insufficient horticultural knowledge, a lack of commercial availability for many native plants, and low social acceptance of native plants in landscaping (Beckwith et al., 2022). Public education on the ecological value of native plants can increase the attractiveness and adoption of native plantings (Beckwith et al., 2022; Anderson et al., 2021), and public engagement can have broad and immediate impacts on both wildlife and society (Rudd et al., 2002; Callaghan et al., 2023). Here, we describe how we used first-year seminar courses on sound, habitat loss, and biodiversity loss to design an educational community outreach event around backyard conservation, native plants, and soundscapes to foster connections to nature and promote cultural change within our community.

### Methods and Data Collection

The John Martinson Honors College at Purdue University was the location for our "Earth Day Celebration" event. The event took place in the residential hall lobby and corridor from April 14-22, 2023 and was open to the public. Event planning, content creation, engagement, and advertising was co-developed by faculty (Nov 2022-Apr 2023, n=7), student leaders (Nov 2022-Apr 2023, n=5), and first-year students (Jan-Mar 2023, n=74). The event was designed



*Figure 1.* Electrical impulses of ephemeral plants were recorded and converted to beautiful sounds that were played in recessed alcove listening stations along the northside corridor (see Figure 2)



to explore the ways in which society can become engaged in the preservation and protection of biodiversity and our sonic world. Our primary research question was, “how does the study of silence manifest from interest to cultural change?” The event contained five educational stations: a portable biome museum with QR codes for engaged listening and videos; a station playing MIDI sounds representative of ephemeral plants; student-curated pieces from first-year experience courses; a spatial audio experience; and a call-to-action prompt.

*1) Portable biome museum with QR codes for engaged listening and videos*

The portable biome museum consisted of two standing 11x17 displays that described various ecological communities (e.g., temperate forest, desert) and provided QR codes to invite the participant to listen and learn about each through video and audio.



**Figure 2.** A community visitor sits in an alcove listening to the “silent sounds” of the Wild Geranium.

*2) MIDI sounds representative of ephemeral plants*

Faculty members took live recordings of electrical impulses from four native ephemeral plants using a magnetometer-based device. The electrical impulses were converted into MIDI representations to emulate the “life” of a silent object. Student leaders translated this data and messaging into signs and activities that contained the name and picture of each native plant, as well as information about them. Each MIDI representation was played in a separate listening alcove.

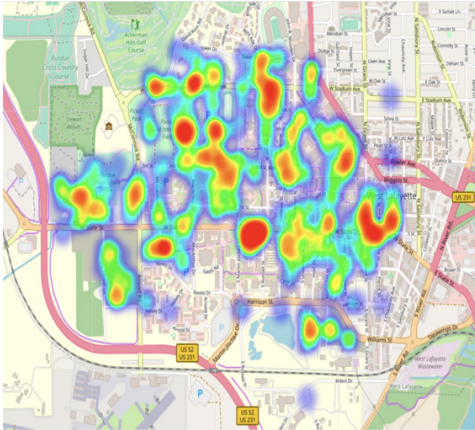
*3) Student-curated pieces from first-year experience courses*

The HONR 19901: First-year Experience is an 8-week introductory course for first-year Honors students in the John Martinson Honors College. Each faculty member chooses a theme for their course that is embedded into the overall learning objectives of the introductory seminar. The themes of the three courses involved with the Earth Day Celebration event focused on different aspects of biodiversity loss, but all focused on fostering connectedness to nature and reversing biodiversity loss trends through backyard conservation. The theme for the first course was “Habitat” (Shee, Fall 2022, 69 students), which followed the text *Nature’s Best Hope* by Doug Tallamy (2019). Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962) was used in both the second course’s theme, “Silence” (Bellisario Spring 2023, 74 students) and the third course’s theme, “Life” (Shee, Spring 2023, 71 students). Each week consisted of a lecture related to biodiversity loss followed by a student-led recitation activity that included a post-recitation reflection. For the culmination of each course was a final project generated by students that was incorporated into the Earth Day Celebration. For “Habitat,” student groups chose and researched an endangered insect species to learn about their life cycles and habitats, the causes

not only are the conseQuences far reaching  
 places of beaUty, where countless birds  
 the new environmental health problems are multiple  
 caught in its vioEnt crossfire  
 poisons in the kiTchen  
 the area a straNge blight crept over  
 whitE granular powder  
 a grim Specter  
 what has already Silenced the voices of spring...?

**Figure 3.** Acrostic poem on display at Earth Day Celebration created by group collaboration from a First-year Experience class.

of their decline, and ways to preserve their chosen species. Students then created educational posters from their research. For “Silence,” students generated creative works such as acrostic poems about silence (Figure 3). Students also measured noise pollution by collecting decibel readings at 74 locations across the Purdue University campus, from which faculty constructed a noise map based on the readings (Figure 4). For “Life,” student groups created educational materials related to biodiversity loss using a medium of their choice, such as games, posters, videos, and art (Figure 5).



**Figure 4.** Student decibel data collection points interpolated on map using Leaflet in R Studio was on display at the Earth Day Celebration.



**Figure 5.** Student designed game for Earth Day Celebration participants to demonstrate how changes in our behaviors can replenish biodiversity and support sustainable ecosystems.

#### 4) *Spatial audio experience*

We designed and constructed a spatial audio experience (Figure 6) within the John Martinson Honors College residential hall lobby. Bench seating was created from maple saplings and the overhanging branches at the back of the bench simulated a forest. Speakers were embedded

throughout the construction at varying heights to provide an immersive experience. The audio incorporated positive and calming natural sounds emanating from an approximation of their occurring locations—insect sounds played beneath the seats while bird sounds played from the canopy above the natural sitting position. While seated, participants could hear these incidental sounds while watching a 16-minute video displayed on a VisionPort system. The video contained eight moving picture scenes with simple messaging about biodiversity loss and silence in backyards.

### 5) A call-to-action prompt

Each participant was invited to participate in an informal survey to assess knowledge and perceptions of biodiversity loss before and after the event. Participants were also able to plant a tree through a student volunteer organization that restores habitats around the world. In addition, participants were given a seed packet of native plants to bring biodiversity to their backyard.



**Figure 6.** Front (left) and rear (right) views of the VisionPort 3D spatial audio experience located in the main lobby of John Martinson Honors College residential hall building.



**Figure 7.** Student visitors to the Earth Day Celebration exhibit and event stations

## Results

The Earth Day Celebration was a culmination of integrated student-designed products and faculty research contributions in a week-long self-directed experience with a one-day volunteered experience (Figure 7). We found that student engagement with the topic material led to an outreach event that resulted in positive reflections for students and visitors.

### *Student Reflections:*

Overall, 55% of student reflections in the “Silence” course had a positive tone. In reflecting on their poem (Figure 3), a student captured how readings from class were incorporated into a meaningful contribution about silence in the environment and its societal implications:

[w]e decided to build one [poem] together by taking lines from *Silent Spring* (most of the lines from this week's reading) using the word quietness. Each person picked a letter and found a line from *Silent Spring* that has that letter. Our poem ended up being pretty good even though each line was created separately. Creating art in such a way, almost a collage done out of a book instead of pictures, was cool, and we had a consistent flow even though we did not discuss each line together because we used the same source material. The poem carries a similar message as the full reading.

Other student reflections supported the learning objective of connection: “[a]s a group, we discussed the ideas of noise and silence conflicting in the world around us and how we could make a representation of this.” Another student reflection demonstrated awareness and change in their experience at a national park:

[t]he different perspectives on silence were interesting, and as someone [who will be] (soon) studying Environment and Ecological Engineering, I appreciated the connection to nature ... Speaking of nature, I visited Death Valley National Park over spring break, and it was surprisingly absent of almost all light and noise pollution. I got to see the stars and I got my family to be quiet for a minute (somehow) to record a decibel level of 28.8 [decibels]. It was one of the quietest environments I've ever been in, and I only really appreciated it because of your class.

#### *Visitor Reflections:*

Nearly 350 visitors, ages 6-70, participated in the Earth Day Celebration. An informal pre and post survey of participants (n=4) at the event indicates that the exhibits increased visitor areas awareness for each of the following statements: 1) Plants in my yard contribute to the sounds of birds and wildlife in my yard; 2) Native plants can help keep streams and waterways clean; 3) I want to find ways to reduce noise pollution where I live; 4) Silence in your backyard can be an indicator of an unhealthy ecosystem; 5) I am concerned about local habitat loss (e.g. cutting down a forest to make space for a new community); and 6) I am concerned about noise pollution. The event was well-received by university stakeholders, who considered the spatial audio experience an innovative addition to the John Martinson Honors College and asked if the display could continue past the dates of the Earth Day Celebration.

#### **Discussion**

The Earth Day Celebration team set about developing a new model of community engagement which bridged the university classroom and community engagement. Our intention was to enhance the curriculum of a first-year seminar by providing a sense of purpose and applied focus. The pilot project launched from design to implementation in six months of scaffolding. The project examined the complex global issues of habitat and biodiversity loss and connected

these issues with regional awareness of nature and backyard conservation through listening and activities (Public Purpose Institute, n.d.).

The event was a culmination of intergenerational paths converging in a single space for a critical moment where undergraduate students, interdisciplinary university teams, and community members each contributed and acquired knowledge through interacting with experiential attractions. To encourage community action to reverse biodiversity loss, we gave away over 100 packets of milkweed and native plant seeds to visitors to plant them in their own backyards. We germinated ideas from student projects to broaden the connection between generations through sound, spatial, and visual moments to hopefully generate local change through community backyards. Although we are unable to assess the long-term impact of our event and if participants planted the seed packets or produced changes in their own backyards, we feel confident that building awareness through innovative exhibits and experiential designs that incorporate sound is an effective introduction to a complicated topic. Educators must continue to develop engaging events that build upon university knowledge about societal grand challenges and provide meaningful experiences for student learning and personal change.

### About the Authors

**Kristen Bellisario** (*corresponding author*) is a Clinical Assistant Professor at John Martinson Honors College Purdue University. She is an interdisciplinary STEM researcher and educator interested in natural sounds using machine learning techniques to help with the real-world problems of biodiversity loss, noise pollution, and co-habitation of wildlife and people. Email: [kbellisa@purdue.edu](mailto:kbellisa@purdue.edu)

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# Exchanges



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## Exchanges

In 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. In this section, we invite our readers to offer their thoughts and ideas on the meanings and understandings of engaged scholarship, as practiced in local or faraway communities, diverse cultural settings, and in various disciplinary contexts. We especially welcome community-based scholars' views and opinions on their collaborations with university-based partners in particular and engaged scholarship in general.

The University of Saskatchewan's Community-University Institute for Social Research (CUISR) is celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary very soon. Engaged Scholar Journal's Penelope Sanz sat down with Isobel Findlay, University co-director of CUIISR since 2011, to revisit the vision its founders set out 25 years ago and reflect on its achievements. The institute was established to facilitate community-university partnerships to engage in relevant and collaborative social research to gain a deeper understanding of Saskatchewan's communities and to reveal opportunities to improve community quality of life.

## Lessons Learned at Community-University Institute for Social Research's (CUISR)

**Penny:** Thank you, Isobel, for sparing me some time for this exchange knowing how packed your schedule is these days. You have this upcoming conference on housing and homelessness and other events you are overseeing. So, let's jump in. Can you tell us about how CUIISR was established?

**Isobel:** It started in 1997 when both community leaders and academics from the university were working on the Quality of Life Roundtable. So, it focused on how you can enhance the quality of life of the diversity of populations in our community, how you can nourish sustainable, healthy communities. CUIISR started in and with the community. Out of that collaborative work on the Roundtable came a 1999 Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) application, a successful application that led to us being one of its first Community-University Research Alliances (CURAs).<sup>1</sup> That's what got us established and that brought credibility and legitimacy as well as dollars to do community-driven research that would make a difference in people's lives and in policy and other

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<sup>1</sup> SSHRC's CURA program was established in 1998.

decision making. It (and subsequent SSHRC grants) also brought dollars to USASK that it could leverage for Canada Research Chairs.

So, we were established as a type B, university-wide, interdisciplinary research centre in 2000, thanks to the CURA. Among CUISR's founding members were Bill Holden from the City of Saskatoon; Len Usiskin, Quint Development Corporation; Kate Waygood, Saskatoon Health Region and City councillor (1979-2003); Jim Randall, Geography; and Nazeem Muhajarine, Community Health and Epidemiology at the University (Nazeem is still on our board). He is such a distinguished researcher and a pleasure to work with. Others have moved on. Bill Holden who retired in 2021 as a senior planner at the City and long-time CUISR community co-director, was not only a leader in CUISR's Quality of Life research, but also in our housing research. Len Usiskin, retired from Quint and from our board in July 2023, but remains an active researcher with us on the housing file. So, people are loyal.

**Penny:** I think ESJ had a special issue on the quality of life.

**Isobel:** Yes, I co-edited that special issue of the journal with Nazeem Muhajarine in 2014. It was a result of the national conference that we hosted here at the University of Saskatchewan. Bill and Nazeem were the leaders of the quality of life research in Saskatoon (there were other sites elsewhere). So, before we and the City ran out of resources to fund, they had led five iterations of one of the most developed longitudinal studies of quality of life at the municipal neighbourhood level in Canada at the time. So, it was important work.

In that national conference on the Quality of Life, we launched our book *Journeys in Community-based Research*, which was a co-production of the Saskatchewan Population Health and Evaluation Research Unit (SPHERU) and CUISR. Both institutions were established around the same time by many of the same people with similar goals. And so we have continued to work on and off with SPHERU. The 2014 book, which was published by the University of Regina Press, was one of the outcomes of that relationship. And then the special issue of the Engaged Scholar Journal, and the national conference,

**Penny:** So, when did you get on board with CUISR?

**Isobel:** I first started working on quality of life in 2002 as part of the CURA and on the housing file in 2008. It was life-changing for me. I had done community-based research in the Arctic, but to do it right here in the city, that was something that I hadn't done before. So, it was pretty exciting and just learning from community expertise is amazing. I totally valued the experience. I helped execute the first CUExpo (now C2UExpo or Community-Campus-Exposition) in 2003 which was held here in Saskatoon at the Bessborough Hotel. The expo was so innovative. It drew about 500 participants from across Canada, the United

States, and elsewhere. That was very exciting. The roster of speakers was amazing. And now we have a national legacy. C2UExpo is now administered by Community-based Research Canada and different institutions, as you know, apply to host it.<sup>2</sup> And, so one of these days we will apply again.

**Penny:** I hope so. We were hoping to do that in 2019 and then the pandemic happened. We considered it late last year, but by then we had little time to pull together an application. What other alliances or initiatives has CUISR been part of?

**Isobel:** We're also members of Community-Campus Engage Canada (CCEC), which some of us at CUISR also helped establish after we completed the Community First: Impacts of Community Engagement (CFICE) SSHRC-funded research with people at Carleton (Principal Investigator Peter Andr ee) and elsewhere. Several of us, including Lisa Erickson (formerly manager of USask Outreach and Engagement at Station 20 West), Colleen Christofferson-Cote, coordinator of Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Partnership, and I worked for a year or so afterwards to help establish CCEC. So that's part of how we have invested in infrastructure to support engaged scholarship. That's been a big part of how we have operated; it's about building capacity here, but it's also about building capacity regionally and nationally.

**Penny:** That's amazing. Just like C2U Expo, CECC is another legacy of CUISR. Come to think of it, you were also there when ESJ was still being conceptualized. I remember that you and Nazeem were on the Advisory Committee, which was giving guidance and directions to Natalia Khanenko-Friesen, who later became ESJ's founding editor in 2014. I was just a student and designated to research existing journals and scholarly publications on engaged scholarship in the summer of 2013.

I am just thinking about the timeline here. CUISR was established in 2000. You came in 2002 and the first CUExpo was in 2003. The literature on community-university engagement with Ernest Boyer publishing "The scholarship of engagement" in the *Journal of Public Service and Outreach* was only in 1996. So, while community-university engagement in practice is not new, scholarship in this field is still in its early stages at that time. And there's CUISR being formed as an outcome of the engagements of community figures like Bill Holden, Len Usiskin, you and other academics around that time.

**Isobel:** It was very important that CUISR had that unique governance structure. Yes, we were and are a university research centre, but we are co-governed, so it's half faculty and half community. And that has been the case since the beginning. And the CURA allowed us to

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<sup>2</sup> C2UExpo is a national movement in Canada that brings community and campus together. It is also an international conference which provides leadership and space for both academics and community members to showcase community-campus partnerships that tackles local and global societal issues.

do community-driven research. Community groups would submit short proposals saying what they wanted us to do and we'd build on that. The same was true in 2006 when we partnered with the then Centre for the Study of Co-operatives (now the Canadian Centre for the Study of Co-operatives). We got a SSHRC partnership grant from 2006 to 2012 on the social economy (Principal Investigator Lou Hammond Ketilson), the largest such grant USask had ever received. And that was an incredible source of learning again because we at CUISR led the community-driven research. Community organizations would submit one-page proposals to us to describe the project that they wanted us to do and why. And we took it from there, working with them and sometimes contributing community stipends so that members of the organizations could work directly on the research projects.

So the social economy research at CUISR was focused on the province, the whole province, and not just the city—and in the larger project we linked with and learned from community-university researchers in Manitoba and Northern Ontario. Suddenly we needed to think in a more intentional way about urban-rural linkages, and remote communities. It was early on in the process that the Northern Saskatchewan Trappers Association Co-operative came to us and asked us to work with them on a governance project. They had just formed as a co-op in order to rethink and retell their story, what they meant. But they also wanted to understand how to integrate co-op governance and traditional trapping governance.

**Penny:** Was this in 2000?

**Isobel:** It was in 2006. We worked with them for about 10 years on multiple projects, researching, presenting, writing, and publishing together (especially with Clifford Ray, longtime president),. And it was a huge source of learning. It significantly pressed us to Indigenize and decolonize methods and practices and rethink ethical protocols. What did it mean to do research ethically in an Indigenous community? And what they taught us was the importance of three things: food, fun, and friendship. Imagine that! So far from the old “disinterested” researcher, bopping into the community, collecting data and leaving. No, it was about building long-term relationships. It was about participating in the community protocols and valuing what was important to the community and listening to their stories and understanding their priorities. The learning that came out of that was stunning. We learned about the meaning of trapping not only very importantly as a livelihood (pimácihowin) and way of life, but also as a source of land management, medicine, education, justice, understanding how to be in the world not only with other people, but with all the creatures that Creator had given. So, that was a really important learning about expanding and rethinking our notions of ethical protocols and our understanding of land-based knowledges.

**Penny:** That's so awesome. What about working with the government?

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**Isobel:** Yes, another thing that I might mention from the same time was working with what is now Inclusion Saskatchewan and their lead Judy Hannah who was a generous and creative partner and advocate. We worked together on the funding of people living with intellectual disabilities. Individualized funding had been an occasional option, but it was not by any means a program. We did four studies. It was after the third one that the Ministry of Social Services became a partner. and we actually got the policy changed. Again, it was huge learning about the community, its energies, and its advocacy. We sat, as CUISR often does, at policy tables. So, we sat at the individualized funding provincial advisory table and also at the national table. So, there was a lot of learning across the country around what we were doing and vice versa. I mean, we learned from researchers at UBC, for example.

**Penny:** If you look back at CUISR's history, what challenges did you encounter that might still be ongoing today?

**Isobel:** I would say among the biggest challenges are university culture and the investment in disciplines and the investment in departments. Despite the rhetoric about the importance of cross-unit collaborations, the way the university budgeting works, the reward system works, or did for the most part, worked to undermine interdisciplinary and cross-unit research. You really had to be committed to make the choice to do interdisciplinary cross-unit work at CUISR rather than disciplinary work within your department that your department would value.

So, most of the work I did at CUISR was for me the most important work I did along with the work at the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives. But was it valued in my college? Not at the time, when it was seen by some in leadership as "community involvement," not the community-engaged scholarship that I valued. So in terms of interdisciplinarity and cross-unit work, I valued SSHRC, and that was why we always applied to SSHRC. I also sat on SSHRC committees, and I knew it was more than rhetoric there about the importance of engaged scholarship, the importance of interdisciplinarity. I think many of us worked to build that infrastructure that gave legitimacy so that others could do what we were doing. And I'm sure, as you know yourself, that like me, you did an interdisciplinary PhD. Well, I can't tell you how often I was told, well, that wasn't very wise. You should have done interdisciplinarity much later in your career. But I could not have done what I've done without having an interdisciplinary PhD. That's what taught me how to understand these diverse fields and the linkages among and between them.

**Penny:** Yes, I agree. As an interdisciplinary person, we get to traverse the lines between disciplines and between departments. So, you have this unique perspective of seeing and understanding where they're coming from, and, at the same time, also getting frustrated because of the disciplinary and departmental boundaries. Would you mind elaborating on your experience at the university?

**Isobel:** So even the way the university budget system worked, the way it's assigned dollars earned through research, even that worked against it. So those were among the challenges. Also, in the early years, the challenge of all the reporting requirements. So how do you pay for all of that? You need staff to support the financial reporting, the midterm and other reports, the self-studies, and the external reviews, these are all massive investments that require staffing. But by doing social research, how do you build up enough annual budget to be able to support that? So that was always challenging. I would say that it is much better now because we get to keep the overhead percentage on research projects. That has made a huge difference. It has given us some discretionary money to pay for staffing to do some of the reporting and other work.

**Penny:** When did that happen? Was it only about 10 years ago or so?

**Isobel:** Maybe within the last eight years, something like that. Before that there was a different percentage, and at first the university kept the percentage, then for a time it was shared 50-50. And then the university gave up that share to the research centres.

**Penny:** Was that through negotiations and making them understand CUI SR's perspective that you were able to achieve that?

**Isobel:** I'm not entirely sure, but there was some advocacy. But I think it was more efficient and effective to do it that way.

**Penny:** The university does have its financial management system and expects all departments or organizations to conform to the system. But at least you now have some kind of an arrangement with USASK.

**Isobel:** That's still a work in progress, though I would say there has been more support in recent years. I know there's a group working on budgeting and more participatory budgeting.

**Penny:** How would you address those departmental and disciplinary boundaries so that community-university engagement would not be undermined and help others also to gain some traction in their work?

**Isobel:** Well, that's part of why we have invested at the national level in supporting Community-Based Research Canada, which has its advocacy role and also Community-Campus Engaged Canada. It's also why Nazeem and I were among those that worked to establish the *Engaged Scholar Journal*. We were not alone. We were two of the founding advisory members. So that's how you change a culture by investing in institutions and infrastructure that support others to do what you do, what you do in very real ways.



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**Penny:** So, how did you receive the news that USASK's community outreach portfolio was ended during the pandemic?

**Isobel:** Not well. I argued against it. The elimination of Outreach and Engagement at Station 20 West was tragic. It was absolutely tragic for community-engaged scholarship because I know we at CUISR worked there lots because there was little parking on campus and it was not readily accessible to community partners. So, are you really going to ask community partners to come on campus for meetings? It was way more convenient for our partners to meet at Station 20. We would have office and meeting space there, including for our community partners, so they could actually work out of those offices too. We could have research team meetings there where we were all separated from our office phones and computers and could concentrate on really productive meetings.

**Penny:** I like that space as well.

**Isobel:** At the time during the pandemic, it felt like there was a regression. And now that it seems like everything is back to normal. But, it's not quite, right? Because I mean, how would we rechart community-university engagement after what happened during the pandemic and rebuild?

It was a very difficult time. I mean, we did have major funds and major projects through that time, but was it easy to collect data? No, not at all. And especially from vulnerable populations.

**Penny:** How are you seeing community-university engagement post-pandemic? How is it shaping up locally and nationally as well?

**Isobel:** We at the university, again with community partners, I think, have done a good job of tracking the impacts of COVID. I think it has renewed our sense of urgency about growing inequality, affordability issues including housing affordability and its impacts on health, on social outcomes, social marginalization, precarious living, and what that means for people's health, their social positioning, their economic opportunities. So I think it's renewed our passion for the work we do. It's never been more important to learn from diverse knowledges in the community and diverse knowledges in the university working together, learning from one another.

**Penny:** Apart from COVID, if you look back, are there events that also renewed that sense of urgency, and to approach things differently?

**Isobel:** I did mention the social economy research. That was a decisive moment when the liberal government led by Paul Martin before Harper made that investment. The Harper government put a chill on diversity itself, defunding diverse groups, and chilling and their

ability to advocate. And so that was another decisive moment that really underlined the importance of Idle No More as a movement, saying, no, we don't have to put up with this. None of us should be idle anymore. We should be fighting back, trying to put the record straight, countering those narratives about diversity that were so popular under Harper, making sure that the diversity of voices was heard and supported in what they were doing.

And then soon after that, and we were already in 2013, I was at a conference and talked about the cultures of reconciliation at CUISR because it is about reconciling knowledges. And then the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) came in 2015. That was another incentive to research and act on the TRC's calls to action. So, our work around justice, housing, educational institutions, child welfare... so many of our projects came out of that commitment to research and act on the TRC calls. Similarly, the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Report Calls for Justice. I'm very proud that we worked with Sexual Assault Services of Saskatchewan (SASS) and the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) Women's Commission and produced the research that prompted the first provincial action plan on sexual violence.

We then followed that up just this last year with the Sexual Violence Education Initiative. Again, this was in partnership with SASS and FSIN. It has been a privilege to get to work with so many inspiring community partners, who contribute so much to our communities, to learn with them, and help change the landscape. Another investment in recent years has been to work on social return on investment (SROI) studies to better capture the impact of organizational initiatives. With Suresh Kalagnanam, who's my colleague in the Edwards School of Business, we have completed six studies now, including one on child welfare and the costs and downstream benefits of ending the movement of kids into child welfare rather than supporting them in the community, in their families and cultures, wherever possible. The most recent study was on a national basic income guarantee. Right now, it's already been cited in the Senate committee discussing a basic income guarantee in Canada. So that one was national and international in scope.

**Penny:** That's a lot of fantastic multi-level engagements which also ensure that community voices are listened to and accompanied with advocacy.

**Isobel:** Two of our most recent Partnership Grants, the SSHRC Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) ones are on housing research and they are national in scope (Principal Investigator for *People, Places, Policies, Prospects: Affordable Rental Housing for Those in Greatest Need*, Catherine Leviten-Reid, Cape Breton U; Principal Investigators for *A Safe and Affordable Place to Call Home: A Multi-disciplinary Longitudinal Outcomes Analysis of the National Housing Strategy*, Liam O'Brien and Jaqueline Kennelly, Carleton U). And again, we couldn't have done them without the community partners. And that's what I wish was recognized and rewarded more.

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**Penny:** By whom?

**Isobel:** By the University and beyond. Academic researchers get all the kudos. But we couldn't do it without the community partners who also invest resources that are not plentiful. They make choices and they support work that's going to make a difference for the community. So, the quality of life is still part of the story, right? Because safe and affordable housing for all means a better quality of life for everybody in the community.

**Penny:** Healthy individuals, healthy families. That means we're also investing in the future of the children. We're investing in the Canadian future actually.

**Isobel:** Yes. In fact, that was one of the first things that Suresh Kalagnanam and I learned doing social return on investment studies of various initiatives around poverty reduction, child welfare, basic income. Too often these sorts of initiatives are seen as costs—no, we can't afford that—rather than investments where we all feel the impact of the returns, right? It changes all our lives.

**Penny:** Why do you think that is the case when it comes to social components? It's always a cost and not as an investment. Why do you think?

**Isobel:** Neoclassical economics and its simple equations that bracket out this and that, and what social return on investment tries to do is put back in the value and track the downstream benefits as well as the costs. We don't ignore the costs; Investments do cost, but we also track what are the benefits and who's benefiting and to what extent. Then we try to make visible the value across domains. So basic income has impacts on the health sector, on employment, on justice, on homelessness, on the GDP, on education, and on food security. There are just so many ramifications.

**Penny:** The word investment alone is also loaded with economic indicators and bottom lines. I think if there's a re-conceptualization of investment that goes along the lines that include social investments, what should it entail? I'm not so sure if there's really an uptake in that kind of mindset. People should also be part of the investment and not seeing people as sort of just a machine or something that is dispensable. There's the whole worldview that goes with the conventional meaning and perception of investment.

**Isobel:** Whenever you try to change those mainstream metrics, there's always a pushback. Those mainstream metrics have had such a stranglehold on the narratives. And so even somebody like the Nobel Prize winning economist from a couple of years ago (David Card, University of California, Berkeley, whom we cite in the basic income report) faces backlash. People are still trying to prove he's wrong because what his research shows is that mainstream economics is itself wrong in its assumptions, right? And so, whenever

you challenge their logic, there's pushback and they want to prove that you're wrong. So, I cannot tell you how many peer reviews we went through on that basic income report as a result, knowing what we might be up against.

**Penny:** The image I have of you and CUISR is that you're not only engaging in the academic sphere but you're also fighting at the national level, busting myths, presenting counter-discourses to change policies. It's like you are chipping away at that big boulder of social inequality and systemic injustice from various angles to produce a kinder and more humane society.

**Isobel:** Well, I think that's what research is about. It's trying to give us reliable, rigorous evidence on which to base our decisions. And that means bringing a critical lens to the metrics that have been deployed, and developing new metrics. So, there's lots of talk about thinking outside the box, but how much of that thinking is there actually? I think that a big part of our commitment is to lead thinking with those who share our vision and to make a difference, to try to make those metrics different, and make our institutions better.

**Penny:** If you are going to look at it and assess how much of a difference CUISR was able to make in the last 25 years, I think you have made quite an impressive one.

**Isobel:** I think we're proud of our record of what we've achieved in terms of the social economy research, the housing research, the individualized funding research. So many projects that I think have made a difference.

**Penny:** How about on engaged scholarship?

**Isobel:** But on engaged scholarship, I think it's still a work in progress. There have been changes. Some colleges have taken it very seriously and have integrated it into their tenure and promotion standards, but it's not even across the institution. I think the research ethics board has kept up well with TriCouncil Policy Statement and other requirements. But has it kept up with community protocols? I'm not so sure. But I still use every opportunity I have to promote community contributions and urge that the university celebrate them more.

**Penny:** If you are going to reflect on how Isobel was 25 years ago, and the many community engagements you initiated and were part of, how did she change over the years?

**Isobel:** I guess I would say I have equal passion 25 years later. I have not lost that commitment to social justice and to cognitive justice ending the reign of cognitive imperialism, as my friend Marie Batiste would put it. We just thought that was the way the world was, right? That's what we were taught. Here's the map of the world. So decolonizing is still a work in progress, but I do have hope that we are moving much more mindfully toward cognitive justice. And I would point to Nothing about Us without Us, the first voice principles, and

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how much we're now learning finally from first voice experts, the lived and living experts. So, when I think back, what motivated me was a lot of the waste: the waste of people, the waste of knowledges, the waste of resources that was created by a dominant research agenda that was heavily invested in quantitative methods, right? We've got the numbers, but what do the numbers mean if you don't understand the stories that produce them? And so that's what keeps me going. All of the allies who are working to change things and make our world a better place.

**Penny:** How do you see the younger scholars and ensuring the gains that you have at CUISR help pave the way for them? How is CUISR nurturing the younger generation of engaged scholars?

**Isobel:** We try through supporting the national institutions and supporting the *Engaged Scholar Journal* or in the old days, the Engaged Scholar Days. Remember those?

**Penny:** Yes, I've learned a lot from listening to senior engaged scholars like you, and also to meet other students who were also engaging with communities.

**Isobel:** Currently, I co-chair Pathways to Equity, which is an initiative of the Office of the Vice President Research. I think it's important to support initiatives like that. So Sarah Buhler and I from CUISR are on that Research group and it is hosting an event in late January. We at CUISR are also hosting a community event in late February to present updates on our research. But, also we've got a keynote, an early stage scholar Grace Tidmarsh coming from the University of Birmingham who is doing exciting strength-based work with youth homelessness and sports psychology. I think that's going to be interesting.

We have research associates at CUISR. We've had them for a number of years now. And so that's another way we support the younger generation. We invite young scholars to be research associates, which allows them to participate in and lead CUISR research and funding applications. It gives them access to resources, mentorships, staff support, and to partner networks. The most recent SSHRC application we made was to build capacity among faculty and community on social return on investment. So, it's explicitly about bringing them in, mentoring and working with them. We chose the topic of school food programs, because food insecurity and the impact on education is a huge issue. We have Rachel Engler Stringer, who is an expert in that particular area, Nazeem Muhajarine for his health expertise, and then Suresh Kalagnanam and I are leading the actual training and mentorship and so on. Then the whole thing we propose if we're funded will be tracked and evaluated. The training will be for delivery in person, but also hybrid because it's not just for faculty and community here, but across the country.

**Penny:** Do you have any advice to the young scholars?

**Isobel:** Get involved in multiple ways, in multiple institutions and initiatives (regional, national, international)! You can make a difference!

### About the Authors

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# **About the Artwork**







**Embrace by Laura Wood (2023)**

Laura Wood is an Ottawa-based artist who paints with gestural strokes to create elegant abstract compositions. Her paintings are evocative and emotive as she uses paint and colour to represent, as Wood describes, “what otherwise cannot be expressed with words.”

Her process is intuitive as she is guided by the paint & chance happenings with colour mixing and form. Intentionality happens as she pauses between strokes. This dance back and forth between pure expression and thoughtful mark-making is how her works are created.

Originally from Aurora, Ontario, Woods even at a young age had a rich interior life and art gave her a place to fully express all aspects of her internal experience. Her family’s encouragement led her to pursue her passions and she went on to study and a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the Ontario College of Art and Design University in Canada. She is currently represented in Ottawa, ON at Koyman Galleries.



*Engaged Scholar Journal: Community-Engaged Research, Teaching, and Learning* is Canada's online, peer-reviewed, multi-disciplinary journal committed to profiling best practices in 'engaged scholarship' informed by community-academic partnerships in research, teaching and learning.

#### *Our Mission*

- to promote and support reciprocal and meaningful co-creation of knowledge among scholars, educators, professionals and community leaders, in Canada and worldwide
- to inspire and promote productive dialogue between practice and theory of engaged scholarship
- to critically reflect on engaged scholarship, research, and pedagogy pursued by various university and community partners, working locally, nationally and internationally, across various academic disciplines and areas of application
- to serve as a forum of constructive debate on the meanings and applications of engaged scholarship among partners and communities

The Journal invites previously unpublished original reflective essays and research articles, review articles, reports from the field, testimonies, multimedia contributions and book reviews focusing on community-engaged scholarship.

We welcome contributions from community and academic partners, educators, researchers and scholars who pursue their work in collaboration with various communities in Canada and the world. For submission guidelines visit <http://esj.usask.ca/index.php/esj/information/authors>.

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