TRANSFORMATIONS THROUGH 'COMMUNITY-FIRST' ENGAGEMENT

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

Canadian — Multidisciplinary — Peer-Reviewed — Open Access

ENGAGED SCHOLAR JOURNAL: COMMUNITY-ENGAGED RESEARCH, TEACHING, AND LEARNING

Transformations through "Community-First" Engagement

Volume 4, Issue 2, Fall 2018

Guest editors: Peter Andrée, Isobel Findlay, and David Peacock

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Transformations through "Community-First" Engagement

Peter Andrée, Isobel Findlay, David Peacock

What happens when community-campus partnerships involving diverse communities, community-based organizations, postsecondary institutions, researchers, students, and foundations seek to put communities first in their engagement practices? This is the question that is addressed through a range of perspectives in this issue of *Engaged Scholar Journal.* Across the contributions, we find a common theme: None of our authors would say they have fully realized the community-first ethos, but striving towards this goal has resulted in personal, social, institutional, and epistemological transformations. Just as the process of throwing, glazing, and firing can transform clay into a beautiful mug like the one featured on the cover of this issue— created by our colleague Cathleen Kneen (1944-2016) —so too does striving to put community first reshape the way we work. This ethos challenges us and it *is* changing us, but in many ways, the journey to adopt community-first ways of working together has only just begun.

Peter Andrée

The content in this special issue was created in the context of the Community First: Impacts of Community Engagement (CFICE, pronounced "suffice") partnership research project, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada beginning in 2012. As you will see in this short video, our project seeks to develop strong community-campus partnerships "by putting community first". Over the course of two project phases, CFICE's overarching goal has been to enhance the partnership policies and practices of community-based organizations, postsecondary institutions, governments and funders to create more effective and valuable community-campus engagement. We define community-campus engagement to include community-engaged research, community service learning, and other ways that postsecondary institutions can have an impact in their communities, such as their potential as anchor institutions for local economies (Dragicevic, 2015).

Isobel Findlay

David Peacock

CFICE was created in the midst of a wave of interest in building stronger relationships between universities, colleges, and the multiple communities within which these postsecondary institutions are embedded. Whether framed in terms of the calls for more "public engagement" in science, deeper "community engagement" by university advancement and government relations offices, or even a supposed need for greater "career readiness" on the part of

students, the discourses associated with community-campus engagement surround us. But whose interests are being served?

CFICE was a response to the recognition that a great deal of community-campus engagement still tends to privilege postsecondary institutions by paying insufficient attention to the needs, priorities, and expertise of the communities and community-based organizations involved (Bortolin 2011; Cronley, Madden, & Davis, 2015; Stoecker & Tryon, 2009; Ward & Wolf-Wendel 2000). Responding to these critiques, CFICE began by investigating how community-campus partnerships could be designed and implemented in ways that maximize the value created for non-profit, community-based organizations participating in this work. In the second phase of CFICE, beginning in 2015, we shifted to focus on the tools, processes, and networks necessary for embedding a community-first ethos in institutions across Canada.

While intended to challenge exploitative or purely transactional approaches to community-campus engagement, the notion of a community-first approach was never considered radically new or distinct from other critical approaches to community-campus engagement. For CFICE, "community-first" is shorthand for valuing multiple forms of knowledge, committing to the principles of equity and reciprocity, and addressing power imbalances (as best we can) as we do collaborative research and take action on issues identified as priorities by our community partners.[1] This approach aligns with what the National Association of Friendship Centres, through its Urban Aboriginal Knowledge Network, calls "community-driven" research, which "begins with Aboriginal communities and ends with an improved quality of life for urban Aboriginal peoples" (UAKN 2014, p. 4). Similar again is what community-based researcher Zusman (2004) refers to as "horizontal" relationships between academics and community-based organization representatives. And in epistemological terms, a community-first approach is one response to the growing chorus of calls for "cognitive" justice (e.g. De Sousa Santos 2007; Davies, 2016; Findlay et al., 2015).

Grounded in the critiques of poor community-campus engagement, as well as a growing community of practice that seeks to do this work more carefully and respectfully, CFICE was intended to "walk the talk," as the Goemans et al. essay in this special issue puts it. To do so, CFICE's community-first approach has built on what Community Campus Partnerships for Health (CCPH) define as "principles of partnership." The CCPH argues that authentic partnerships emerge best in a space that includes four specific elements:

1) Guiding Principles of Partnership;
2) Quality Processes (that are focused; open, honest, respectful and ethical; trust building; acknowledging of history; and committed to mutual learning as well as sharing credit);
3) Meaningful Outcomes (tangible and relevant to communities); and
4) Transformative Experiences (at the personal, institutional, community, knowledge production, and political levels).

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[1] For more on the practicalities of what we have learned about the community-first approach within CFICE, see its <u>website</u>.

While the pieces in this issue of *Engaged Scholar Journal* demonstrate the ways in which CFICE has implemented and been transformed through community-first "principles of practice", they also share how far we still need to go.

This Issue

In this issue's peer reviewed essay section, we have four articles that emerge from CFICE. The first and third come out of the experience of CFICE's food sovereignty hub. In "Community-Academic Peer Review: Prospects for Strengthening Community-Campus Engagement and Enriching Scholarship," Levkoe, Wilson, and Schembri begin by exploring what the academic peer-review process can look like when community-based knowledge production is taken seriously. They then highlight the dangers of blindly relying on peer review processes to guide and guarantee research quality and rigour, and caution against using evaluation processes that privilege academic approaches to conducting research and sharing results. In efforts to revitalize higher education and critical research in the interests of "a democratic public sphere that is open, inclusive, and relevant," they review practices that engage community perspectives in assessing what knowledge does or should count. Drawing on a community peer review pilot project run through CFICE, they reflect on the value, opportunities, and challenges of engaging community-based practitioners in assessment. They also recommend ways to be more democratic and equitable when producing knowledge.

The next article by Przednowek, Goemans, and Wilson, adds a student perspective. There is already an extensive body of literature on student experiences in community service learning (see, for example, Volume 4, No. 1 (2018) of *Engaged Scholar Journal*), but this article offers a fresh perspective by focusing on undergraduate and graduate students working *as research assistants* in community-campus engagement. Grounded in exit interviews with CFICE research assistants, the article explores what student researchers are learning about community-campus engagement, and especially about "community-first" practices. The article reflects critically on how meaningful, long-standing engagements with community partners shifted students' perspectives as they navigated the complexities of relationships, obligations, and identities, as well as the power dynamics and competing priorities of both academic and community worlds. It offers recommendations useful for both future student researchers and community-campus engagement program developers.

In the third essay, Kepkiewicz, Levkoe, and Brynne share what the leadership and partners of CFICE's Community Food Sovereignty hub learned through its evaluation processes. Their article is a detailed reflection on the need for community-campus engagement practitioners to both champion and critically reflect on the "community first" approach. Entitled, "Community First for Whom? Reflections on the Possibilities and Challenges of Community-Campus Engagement from the Community Food Sovereignty Hub", the authors highlight a number of ways they feel the community-first ethos was not realized in how they worked, arguing that "our limitations were rooted both in our own mistakes as well as restrictions imposed within academic structures and systems". One important lesson we take from their article is that we in the CFICE project should have shifted how we framed (and named) our work as we learned

whether (and how) our research was able to meet the aspirations of putting "community first".

The final article in the peer reviewed essay section is about transformations in evaluation practices and processes related to community-campus engagement. Entitled, "Learning to "walk the talk": Reflexive Evaluation in Community-First Engaged Research," Goemans, Levkoe, Andrée, and Changfoot argue that academic reflexivity in community-campus engagement evaluation is important if the work is intended to break with traditional academic norms and be "community-first". This article offers as an example CFICE's project-wide evaluation processes at the end of our first phase of work together, and asks whether or not the academics involved in these processes (including these authors themselves) took the necessary steps to advance specific community-first principles. Specifically, they examine whether and how their participation in CFICE evaluation adhered to the principles of "project co-governance", "institutionalizing respect", and "nourishing relationships". This piece concludes with a response to the article written by Colleen Christopherson-Cote. As a community practitioner in CFICE, she argues that the three principles should be reorganized so relationships, and the need to nourish them, are foregrounded as "an ongoing and never-ending practice in community-first community-campus engagement".

In our field reports section, we have two contributions: Both reflect on changes in the practices and policies of community-based organizations and their postsecondary partners as they engage in community-campus engagement, and what bringing the community-first approach to the local level means.

In "Breaking Barriers: Using Open Data to Strengthen Pathways in Community-Campus Engagement for Community Action on Environmental Sustainability," McCarroll, O'Connor, and Garlough share lessons they have learned in the process of co-creating a relationship-brokering tool to strengthen connections among local environmental non-profits and six postsecondary institutions in the National Capital Region (Ottawa/Gatineau). The tool was designed to reduce barriers while improving access to community-campus opportunities in the environmental sustainability field. Building on existing frameworks, the authors share ways to standardize, organize, and sort information to strengthen pathways of communication and connection for user-friendly outcomes. This type of community-based tool, which could be replicated in other contexts and at other scales, offers a practical example of how community priorities can drive future community-campus engagement activity.

In "Rooting out Poverty: People, Passion, and Place at Station 20 West," Erickson, Findlay, and Christopherson-Cote discuss the impact of community-campus engagement practiced within a community enterprise centre focused on poverty reduction efforts in Saskatoon's inner city. The authors begin by explaining their investment in community-identified principles ("a city that bridges," "we are all treaty people," and "nothing about us, without us") and participatory action research in a place where colonization has left deep scars yet reconciliation efforts are strong. The report then identifies lessons learned about community-campus collaborations at the heart of community activism, learning, and organizing. It emphasizes the role of people, place, and passion; the importance of space and place to cultivating belonging and diverse ways of knowing; the centrality of reconciliation to poverty reduction in their

context; and the critical role of those with lived experience.

The Exchanges section discusses transformations within funding organizations as they learn to better support community-first partnerships for social innovation. In this section, co-editor of this issue David Peacock interviews Stephen Huddart (President and CEO) and Chad Lubelsky (Program Director) of the McConnell Foundation, a historic supporter of postsecondary education across Canada. McConnell's investments in community service-learning, social entrepreneurial, and innovation activities, as well as social infrastructure programs and dialogues, have made them a significant partner for many Canadian postsecondary institutions. Yet not all community-campus engagement scholars and practitioners, nor *Engaged Scholar Journal* readers, may have heard McConnell articulate for itself its aims and goals for Canadian higher education and society. This interview outlines the scope of McConnell's work and interests in community-campus engagement, and sheds light on the actions of an influential private actor in the postsecondary sector.

Finally, in the book review section PhD student and CFICE research assistant Katalin Koller reviews *Trickster Chases the Tale of Education* by Sylvia Moore. In this review, Koller shares Moore's concept of the Idea (i.e. decolonization), and reflects on her use of autobiographical narrative to demonstrate the process of decolonizing one's mind and research practice through vulnerability, the willingness to make mistakes and question our beliefs, and the need to become comfortable with uncertainty about the truth. Koller concludes that Moore's book offers valuable teachings and gives readers comfort knowing that the struggle to decolonize is shared by others. As Koller notes, "it is within those allied spaces of struggle that the Idea of decolonization becomes the reality of Treaty reconciliation."

Next Steps and Questions

One of CFICE's outcomes is the launch of a new national network and community of practice called Community Campus Engage Canada. This network seeks to strengthen Canadian communities by increasing the capacity, infrastructure, and impact of equitable community-campus partnerships of all types, including student experiential learning, community-engaged research, and social innovation.[2]

In 2018, the network hosted eight regional and three national roundtables that brought together a diverse range of community-campus engagement stakeholders. Out of these consultations came a focus on building a sustainable national organization meant to build capacity in the sector, advocate for stronger "community-first" community-campus engagement funding policies and practices, and develop a graduate internship program for Canada's non-profit sector co-funded by Mitacs through Industry Canada. Given this step forward, it is important to reflect on what we still need to do to live up to the community-first ethos.

We agree with where Kepkiewicz, Levkoe, and Brynne (this issue) are leading us, and encourage more research down this path, specifically looking into questions such as:

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[2] To find out more about Community Campus Engage Canada, go to <u>all about CFICE</u>

1) What are the distinctions (ontological, epistemological and otherwise) between 'community' and academic knowledge production processes? How can we work across, and through, these different approaches in a way that enables true dialogue and collaboration?

2) Whither community-campus engagement and reconciliation? This is a critical conversation in Canada today, and we've only begun to touch on it in various CFICE projects (e.g. Dawn Morrison's podcast on decolonizing research and relationships[3]). To address some of the fears of getting things wrong and the feelings of illegitimacy that keep some from the reconciliation journey, questions we might explore together include:

   • How do we avoid the (neo)colonial strategy of erasing differences and instead do justice to the diversity of Indigenous languages, cultures, and worldviews?
   • How do we eliminate (neo)colonial binaries (Indigenous—non-Indigenous; history—story; modern— traditional) that serve to divide rather than bring people together in respectful partnerships for sustainable futures?
   • How do we nourish ethical spaces where we can all learn, grow, and act on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action[4]?

3) How does the institutionalization of community-campus engagement happen within the field of higher education in Canada? The CFICE project has made progress, but we clearly have many more steps to take. CFICE participants are now contributing to the development of Community Campus Engage Canada. This is bringing us into close conversation with a wide array of organizations, some of which are strategically positioning themselves as "engaged institutions." Is it possible to develop a distinctly "Canadian" engagement framework that is sensitive to the linguistic and cultural diversity intrinsic to our provincially anchored postsecondary education system? And if so, would this serve the interests of communities and their socioeconomic and cultural development, or would this instead function simply as another scale to measure postsecondary institutions against one other? One can be skeptical here, of course, yet a community-first ethic requires that community-campus engagement impact our institutions and their ordinary "business," as well as our partnered communities.

4) How do we account for the impacts of community-campus engagement from a community-first point of view? This issue of *Engaged Scholar Journal* has emphasized the *process* of community engagement over specific, place-based research impacts, yet our experiences lead us to believe that the process of

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[3] For Dawn Morrison's podcast, see https://carleton.ca/communityfirst/2017/podcast-decolonizing-research-relationships/

[4] http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf

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engagement cannot be disentangled from the impacts of our collaborations[5]. Renewed relations between postsecondary institutions and communities are social outcomes that are desirable and often a necessary, if insufficient, condition to achieving sustainable outcomes in our communities. This question of impact thus deserves more detailed exploration—both in terms of how to measure and how to report on community impact within our partnerships, and to governments and other funders.

We would like to thank the hundreds of people and organizations who have been involved with the CFICE partnership project over the last six years, whether as students, representatives of non-profit organizations, academics, partnership brokers, professional staff, consultants, or others. In particular, we thank Nicole Bedford (CFICE project manager and communications coordinator) and Genevieve Harrison (CFICE project administrator) for their work as the backbones of the CFICE project since 2015. We also extend our gratitude to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for funding this project. We hope you enjoy this special issue of *Engaged Scholar Journal*. For CFICE participants, the transformative journey continues…

About the Authors

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[5] For a webinar in which CFICE participants begin to explore these issues, see https://carleton.ca/communityfirst/cu-events/webinar-evaluating-impact-in-community-campus-engagement-towards-a-community-first-approach/

university engagement and 'first generation' university students' participation in experiential learning programs. David is active in developing Canadian networks for community-engaged learning and research, most recently as an Academic Co-Lead with the Community First: Impacts of Community Engagement project. Email: peacock1@ualberta.ca

Dedication

The life of Cathleen (née Rosenberg) Kneen (1944 to 2016), to whom we dedicate this issue, offers an example of how a deep commitment to community development, and later to community-campus engagement, involves a transformative journey that can bear rich fruit. Cathleen created the mug we see on the cover of this issue of *Engaged Scholar Journal* while gazing across the commercial sheep farm she and her husband Brewster owned in Nova Scotia in the 1970s. While tending sheep in rural Nova Scotia, Cathleen was confronted by the reality of violence against Indigenous and non-Indigenous women, and began organizing with her neighbours to create the first rural women's shelters in that province. Cathleen also worked with Brewster and others to start an annual sheep fair, a marketing co-op, and the 'Rams' Horn,' a newsletter of food system analysis. Cathleen continued with her works on violence against women and food system analysis in subsequent moves to Toronto in the 1980s, and then to British Columbia in the 1990s.

In British Columbia, she founded and was the first coordinator of a provincial network for food system issues, called the BC Food Systems Network. The experience of building that provincial network led Cathleen to take on the challenge of leading an emergent national network (Food Secure Canada), dedicated to achieving zero hunger, healthy and safe food, and sustainable food systems. When the CFICE partnership project began to take shape in 2011, Food Secure Canada was still an underfunded national organization based out of Cathleen's home, with her as its voluntary chair. Through Cathleen, Food Secure Canada became a core partner in the Community Food Security (later renamed Food Sovereignty) Hub of CFICE, grounded in the idea that the Hub would create initiatives that would strengthen the ability of Food Secure Canada to build its national network and engage in policy conversations at the federal level in Canada. This goal has been more than achieved over the last six years, as revealed in a number of CFICE publications (e.g. Andrée et al, 2014; Levkoe et al., 2017, Levkoe et al., this issue; Kepkeiwicz et al., this issue). This has also been demonstrated in the recent special issue (vol. 5. no. 3) of *Canadian Food Studies* on Building an integrated Food Policy for Canada, which emerged out of the CFICE/Food Secure Canada partnership.

Through CFICE, Cathleen channeled her passion for community organizing into the growing field of community-campus engagement. For Cathleen, a "community-first" ethos meant "build community first". From her perspective, we must begin by building relationships among the non-profit organizations, researchers, students, and others involved in community-campus engagement partnerships *before* discussing what we can all do together. Cathleen also

became a staunch advocate within CFICE for working in community-first ways with Indigenous communities. In one of her presentations on CFICE, Cathleen stated the following:

> We have learned about the absolute necessity of genuine respect in partnerships with Indigenous people, recognizing the history and current reality of colonialism. Such elements as research methodologies, data ownership and outcomes must be negotiated from the outset with open minds, and revisited regularly to ensure they continue to be acceptable to the Indigenous partners.

Cathleen's journey of community development and community-campus engagement reveals a lifetime of commitment, respect, learning, and transformation enriching us all. We dedicate this special issue to Cathleen's memory.

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Acknowledgements

The quality of our Journal depends on scholarly collaboration between two groups of scholars, the authors and the anonymous peer-reviewers of their work. We thank both groups for their interest in and support of our Journal. We are especially grateful to the peer-reviewers listed below, who reviewed submissions to the current issue (Volume 4 Issue 2), for their time and commitment to excellent scholarship.

Special Thanks to Our Reviewers

David Aday	Rebecca Gokiert	Sean Markey
Mary Beckie	Jana Grekul	Franziska Satzinger
Alan Anderson	Glen Iceton	Michelle Schmidt
Mirika Flegg	Cathy Jordan	Jim Silver

Issue Statistics

A. Authors and Submissions

Authors and Co-Authors	
University-based	14
Community partners	5
Total	**19**

Article Submissions	
Original proposals for peer and editor review	15
Articles submitted for editor review	3
Articles submitted for peer review	7
Peer-reviewed articles accepted for publication	4
Editor-reviewed articles accepted for publication	2
Book reviews submitted for editor review	1
Book reviews accepted for publication	1

Geographic Distribution (Corresponding Authors Only)	
Eastern Canada	
Carleton University	5
Lakehead University	2
St. Paul University	1

Trent University	1
University of Ottawa	1
University of Toronto	1
Non-University Based	4
Western Canada	
University of Alberta	1
University of Saskatchewan	2
Non-University Based	1
Total	**19**

B. Peer-Reviewers and Peer-Reviewing

Peer Reviewers	
Total invitations to peer review	21
Number of peer reviewers who accepted invitations	12

Geographic Distribution (Peer Reviewers)	
Western Canada	
Simon Fraser University	1
University of Alberta	3
University of Saskatchewan	2
University of Toronto	1
University of Winnipeg	1
International	
Moravian College (USA)	1
University of Brighton (UK)	1
University of William & Mary (USA)	1
University of Minnesota (USA)	1

Essays

Community-Academic Peer Review: Prospects for Strengthening Community-Campus Engagement and Enriching Scholarship

Charles Z. Levkoe, Amanda Wilson, Victoria Schembri

ABSTRACT   Scholarly peer review is hailed as an indispensable process to maintain quality and rigour in research publications. However, there is growing recognition of the limitations of peer review and concerns about the unexamined assumptions surrounding the processes that favour academic ways of knowing. In this paper, we build on these debates by exploring the possibilities for engaging communities in shaping and assessing the value of knowledge. Drawing on insights of a community-academic peer review pilot project through a pan-Canadian research partnership, we reflect on the value of incorporating community perspectives into research review processes and challenges of scaling-up these efforts. We argue that the perspectives of community-based practitioners are a necessary part of peer review—especially for Community-Based Research—to increase validity and accountability. This process gives academics and practitioners the power to collectively assess and evaluate knowledge products. Fundamentally, these efforts are about reviving higher education and critical research as part of a democratic public sphere that is open, inclusive, and relevant. We conclude by reflecting on the value of incorporating community perspectives into the peer review process. We also offer recommendations on how to recognize and incorporate community knowledge and experiences into assessment structures.

KEYWORDS   community-based research; community-campus engagement; democracy; national food policy; peer review

Scholarly peer review can be broadly described as the evaluation and assessment of research by qualified members of a particular academic field for the purposes of publication in academic journals, books, or conference proceedings. Originally used in the 1700s, it was not until the mid-twentieth century that it became commonplace in academic work (Benos et al., 2007). Today, peer review is generally understood to be an essential and indispensable process to maintain quality and rigour in scholarly research (Benos, et al., 2007; Spier, 2002a; Ware, 2008). Further, accumulating publications in top-tier peer-reviewed journals has become a key indicator of a researcher's credibility and is essentially "the currency of career advancement" (Vosshall, 2012, p. 3590). However, some have questioned the value of scholarly peer review, arguing that it can be inconsistent, overly conservative, subjective, and biased (Ware, 2008). Further,

critics suggest that unexamined assumptions surrounding the process result in a (re)centring of the university's power by favouring academic ways of knowing over and above other kinds of knowledges (Barreno, Elliott, Madueke, & Sarny, 2013; Cashman et al., 2008; Gelmon, Jordan, & Seifer, 2013). This paper builds on these debates by exploring the possibilities for engaging communities in shaping and assessing the value of knowledge. Specifically, we reflect on a community-academic peer review pilot project that sought to address some of these limitations by engaging communities impacted by research throughout a review process.

Our study is part of Community First: Impact of Community Engagement (CFICE), a seven-year action research project that aims to strengthen the ability of non-profit organizations, universities, and funding agencies to build more successful, innovative, resilient, and prosperous communities. Launched in 2012, CFICE explores ways that community-campus engagement can be designed and implemented to increase the value for non-profit community-based organizations. Through CFICE, a range of academic and community partners worked closely with Food Secure Canada (FSC)[1] to strengthen new and existing relationships around social, economic, and ecological justice in relation to food systems. Between 2016 and 2017, CFICE collaborated with FSC and the Food: Locally Embedded, Globally Engaged (FLEdGE) action research network[2] to develop a series of discussion papers presenting a scan of food policies across Canada. As co-leads on the CFICE project along with members of FSC and FLEdGE, Charles Levkoe and Amanda Wilson were part of a team of community practitioners and academics that initiated the research for the discussion papers and their assessment.

Drawing on our collective experiences and reflections from the community-academic peer review pilot project, we argue that the perspectives of community-based practitioners are a necessary part of peer review—especially for Community-Based Research (CBR)—to increase validity and accountability. This process goes beyond member checking or simply sharing results with participants; it gives academics and practitioners the power to collectively assess and evaluate CBR knowledge products. Fundamentally, these efforts are about reviving higher education and critical research as part of a democratic public sphere that is open, inclusive, and relevant.

In the next section we provide a general discussion of intentions versus results of the peer review process. We then provide a more focused discussion on some limitations of using peer review for assessing CBR; and in turn, how CBR can be limited by the demands of this process. We also highlight attempts to establish alternative peer review models. We then present an overview of the community-academic peer review pilot, followed by a discussion of key learnings. In the conclusions, we reflect on the opportunities and challenges of incorporating community perspectives into the peer review processes and offer recommendations on how to recognize and incorporate community knowledge and experiences into the assessment structures of research quality.

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[1] Food Secure Canada is a pan-Canadian social movement organization. see https://foodsecurecanada.org

[2] FLEdGE is a multi-year partnership project funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. It is a CBR and knowledge sharing partnership committed to fostering food systems that are socially just, ecologically regenerative, economically localized and that engage citizens. See https://fledgeresearch.ca/

Intentions and Limitations of Scholarly Peer Review

Within an academic context, peer review is the primary means through which particular research, arguments, and by extension their authors, are validated (Burnham, 1990; Vosshall, 2012). Through this process editors and reviewers aim to assess the soundness, significance, and originality of the research (Benos et al., 2007). One of the key features of peer review is that the evaluation is undertaken by scholars with familiarity of, or expertise in, the specific topic area. In a typical peer review process for an academic journal, an editor pre-screens manuscripts and selects reviewers to conduct the evaluation. The reviewers then provide feedback and either recommend the manuscript for publication, reject it, or propose a series of revisions for the author to undertake. Considering the reviewers' feedback, the editor makes a final decision whether the manuscript is ready for publication. Peer review is intended to act as quality control with the intention to "ensure that the valid article is accepted, the messy article improved, and the invalid article rejected" (Gelmon et al., 2013, p. 1). This process also gives authors an opportunity to correct errors or flaws in their logic before their work reaches the public domain (Benos et al., 2007). In a study exploring the experiences and perceptions of senior authors, reviewers, and editors, the vast majority of respondents supported the peer review process and reported they felt that it improved the quality of published papers (Ware, 2008).

While peer review has been touted as indispensable (Kassirer & Campion, 1994), and reviewers described as "sentinels on the road of scientific discovery and publication" (Benos et al., 2007, p. 145), some have argued that it is sustained on the *belief* that it works, rather than on evidence (D'Andrea & O'Dwyer, 2017; Smith, 2006a). Assuming it is done well, Lock (1994) writes, "all that peer review can reasonably do is detect major defects of originality and scientific credibility, together with commenting on important omissions, the rigor of arguments, and defects in the writing style" (p. 60). Many critics point to the subjective nature of peer review and the inevitability of bias and inconsistencies (Gannon, 2001; Kassirer & Campion, 1994; Souder, 2011). For example, the personal opinions of editors and reviewers (along with undisclosed conflicts of interest) have been shown to support specific kinds of arguments and journals (Benos et al., 2007; Smith, 2006a; 2006b). While editors and reviewers can decide whether a manuscript is a good fit for their specialized discipline and audience, there is no single objective measure nor agreed-upon definition of what constitutes a "good" paper (Figueredo, 2006; Smith, 2006a). Others have questioned the normative, epistemological assumptions that are reinforced by scholarly peer review processes (Jefferson, Alderson, Wager, & Davidoff, 2002). For example, peer review has been described as a tool of scientific conservatism, lacking tolerance for alternative perspectives, and new or unconventional ideas (Atkinson, 2001; Shimp, 2004; Souder, 2011; Spier, 2002b).

Critics have also expressed frustrations with the process of scholarly peer review. Long turnaround times can significantly delay publication and the dissemination of valuable information and ideas. Claims that the peer review process lacks transparency also raise concern about reviewer accountability (D'Andrea & O'Dwyer, 2017; Derrick & Pavone, 2013; Kassirer & Campion, 1994). Further, finding willing reviewers that have no conflicts of interest and

are experts in the required field in a timely manner can be extremely difficult (Elden, 2008). The number of scientific journals and published articles increases by about 3.5% each year, and the need for reviews grows exponentially (Kovanis et al., 2016). In many cases, reviewers are able to determine the identities of authors based on their knowledge of the field, thus raising questions about the anonymity of blind peer review. According to Kovanis, Porcher, Ravaud, & Trinquart (2016), while the supply of available reviewers may be sufficient to meet the rising demands, the burden is actually assumed by a small, disproportionate few (i.e. 20%) that complete that vast amount of reviews (i.e. 69% to 94%). The pressure to complete thorough reviews that adhere to publishing timelines is demanding, and reviewer burnout may be a factor in peer review inadequacies (Benos et al., 2007). While journal publications have become currency in the knowledge market, the incentive to provide reviews—especially robust and thorough reviews—is much weaker (Katwyk & Case, 2016).

Peer Review and Community-Based Research

Stemming from these general critiques, there are particular challenges that arise when CBR comes up against the scholarly peer review process. Derrick and Pavone (2013) claim that there is a "disjunction between the research that society needs and the research being promoted as 'excellent' by peer review committees" (p. 566).[3] Where the scholarly peer-review process defines the relevancy of research as it applies to the journal's specialized discipline and audience, CBR typically defines research relevance in response to a particular community's needs; that is, the discipline of study is fluid and dynamic. Furthermore, what constitutes "good research" in CBR may differ from other academic perspectives. For example, markers of high quality CBR (e.g., relationships built, addressing a community's ethical concerns, meeting community needs) are often overlooked in favour of academic debates or more objective or easily quantified measures (Gelmon et al., 2013). In addition, sharing findings that emerge from CBR does not always fit the typical structure of a scholarly research article. Researchers under pressure to publish their work in peer reviewed journals are often forced to make a range of compromises such as using disciplinary jargon, decontextualizing the findings, and sharing their research in proprietary journals owned and controlled by large publishing corporations (Gelmon et al., 2013).

The need to consistently defend CBR methods and knowledge products and duplicate findings in peer review friendly formats can disincentivize scholars from doing this type of research (Foster, 2010). This is particularly the case for untenured faculty who see CBR as "too professionally risky" (Calleson, Jordan, & Seifer, 2005; also see, Katwyk & Case, 2016). Even among academic institutions that have embedded community-engagement into their mission statements and strategic research plans, the growing expectations have not been matched by

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[3] CBR that undergoes ethics review through academic institutions also raises similar concerns. For example, confidentiality is traditionally valued, but may be unnecessary or unattainable in a CBR context. Meanwhile, ethics boards may not even consider reviewing the relationship-building process (despite it being a crucial element of CBR), or may ask for a detailed research plan when timelines, research questions, and methodologies should be flexible and responsive to the community's needs (for example, see Shore, 2007; Shore, Drew, Brazauskas, & Seifer, 2011).

necessary institutional supports for this type of scholarship (Barreno et al., 2013). In general, academics face increased institutional pressure to focus on research and publishing, often at the expense of teaching and service to the community (Calleson et al., 2005). By extension, the pressure to preserve one's career through the publication of peer review articles (re)centres the academic institution at the expense of the community (Katwyk & Case, 2016).

Subjecting CBR knowledge products to the scholarly peer review process also awards a level of power and authority to academic reviewers who may not have prior experience with CBR. Further, enabling anonymous reviewers to evaluate and assess CBR often contradicts the values and intentions of CBR processes (Castleden, Sylvestre, Martin, & McNally, 2015; Wright, Lemmen, Block, & von Unger, 2008). The assumed expertise of academic researchers privileges the status of the university as being "more true, more real, more rational" while marginalizing other experiences and ways of knowing (Biesta, 2007, p. 471). Situating academics as experts above those directly involved in and impacted by the research reinforces inequitable power relations and runs counter to the core values of CBR, which includes mutual learning and the co-production of knowledge (Castleden et al., 2015). In this way, the scholarly peer review process fails to recognize and account for the expertise of individuals directly involved in the research.

New Trends in Peer Review

In the section above, we have pointed to a series of limitations of the peer review process in respect to its reliability as a regulatory system for quality control, as well as more specific issues that arise when peer review is applied to CBR. These critiques have also spurred a conversation on the need to reimagine the process and principles of peer review. Across academic disciplines, new models of peer review are being explored and employed. Two prominent examples include open peer review and selective community-review models. In this section, we review some examples of these trends, highlighting both opportunities and limitations.

Open Peer Review

Responding to critiques of scholarly peer review—namely a need for transparency and reviewer accountability—a number of academic journals have experimented with open peer review. Open peer review is a term used to refer to a number of different features: disclosing the author's identity to reviewers (single-blind), vice versa (unmasking), or both; documenting the pre-publication history alongside articles; and/or, inviting experts beyond those conducting the initial review to provide feedback (Ross-Hellauer, 2017).

Atmospheric Chemistry and Physics is an open access journal that uses a form of open peer review.[4] Submitted manuscripts are first reviewed by the editor, then posted for eight weeks in an open discussion forum. This "interactive public peer review process" allows for designated reviewers (anonymous or identified) and other members of the scientific

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[4] See https://www.atmospheric-chemistry-and-physics.net/peer_review/interactive_review_process.html

community (identified) to provide feedback. When a revised manuscript is submitted, a co-editor makes the final decision whether it will be accepted or rejected. Accepted papers are published with their review histories, and rejected discussion papers are also archived online. In another example, the *Hybrid Pedagogy Journal* uses an interactive peer review process between authors and reviewers for each of its manuscripts.[5] This process allows anyone in the journal's "community" to comment, build, and revise manuscripts together. In addition, comments can be made on the manuscript after publication. These examples of open peer review demonstrate efforts to increase transparency and accountability, albeit within the confines of scholarly peer review.

Despite the success, open peer review models have faced some distinct challenges. For example, some report that producing reviews that will be public and open to scrutiny can be "demanding, delicate, and difficult" (Perakasis et al., 2017, p. 5). There are also concerns about reviewers feeling censored if their identities are known (Mandernach, Holbeck, & Cross, 2015). More specifically, knowing the identity of the reviewer and/or the author can broaden power dynamics that may bias the quality and conclusions of the review (Armstrong, 1982; Spier, 2002a). In addition, it can be demanding to keep up with the task of assessing and reassessing a manuscript. Studies report that it can take much longer to complete open review processes, and they have higher rates of declination of requests for reviews (Van Rooyen, Godlee, Evans, Black, & Smith, 1999; Walsh, Rooney, Appleby, & Wilkinson, 2000).

Models of Non-Academic Review

Some academic journals and research forums have attempted to include the perspectives of non-academics to influence the evaluation of knowledge products; that is, to extend the concept of "peer" in scholarly peer review. One example is *Research Involvement and Engagement*, established as a "co-produced journal" reviewed by both academics and healthcare patients.[6] The open access journal is described as "an interdisciplinary, health and social care journal focus[ed] on patient and wider involvement and engagement in research, at all stages" (Research Involvement and Engagement, n.d.). One of the editors-in-chief describes the value of this kind of joint peer review: "We wanted to send a signal to the community that active collaboration [between academics and patients] is a vital part of high-quality research" (quoted in Chawla, 2014). All submitted manuscripts must also include a plain language summary to ensure it is accessible and useful to the general public.

The *British Medical Journal* (*BMJ*) has also created a role for patient reviewers with specific guidelines for the process.[7] In 2014, the journal launched a patient partnership strategy, establishing a "commitment to improving the relevance and patient centredness of its research" (The BMJ, n.d.). Patient editors were added to the editorial staff and patient peer reviewers could register online and have articles electronically sent to them for review. Notably, BMJ's

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[5] See http://www.digitalpedagogylab.com/hybridped/submissions/

[6] See https://researchinvolvement.biomedcentral.com/

[7] See http://www.bmj.com/about-bmj/resources-reviewers/guidance-patient-reviewers

patient reviewers are not expected to provide an evaluation of a paper's scientific reliability or originality but are invited to provide feedback on issues within their experience or specific interest. The journal also allows for public comments to be made on articles post-publication.

Another example of community peer review is the Community-Engaged Scholarship for Health website (http://CES4Health.org) that was established as a platform for health-related CBR products other than journal articles (ex. videos, toolkits, and policy briefs)—which are usually excluded from academic peer review processes—to be collaboratively peer-reviewed and disseminated by academics and community practitioners. In this model, individuals apply to become reviewers and are trained to evaluate knowledge products using a predesigned set of review criteria. A study of the model found that it added significant value to CBR products, supported academics in promotion and tenure processes, and provided useful resources to address community health concerns (Jordan, Gelmon, Ryan, & Seifer, 2012).

In relation to food systems-themed journals, the double-blind peer review processes of the *Journal of Agricultural, Food Systems and Community Development* draws on a range of food systems professionals in addition to academics and researchers for peer review. Established in 2014, *Canadian Food Studies/La Revue canadienne des études sur l'alimentation* (CFS/RCÉA) hosts a section on its website that allows for authors to submit articles for community peer review. The website states, "In an open access journal such as CFS/RCÉA, for which the audience spans academics and practitioners, a peer review process that facilitates constructive feedback from all engaged parties may break new ground for academic publications on policy and community relevance frontiers" (CFS/RCÉA, n.d.). Despite the initial enthusiasm of this section, to date, only one article has been submitted and no feedback has been posted.

Despite some creative attempts, there is little research or reflection on the benefits and limitations of non-academic peer review and whether or not these process have generated higher quality research and/or more community engagement. To fill this gap, we describe a specific case of piloting a community-academic peer review process working with academic and community partners in Canada's food movements, followed by a reflection on the lessons learned from our approach.

Piloting the Community-Academic Peer Review Process

In the context of this ongoing discussion in the literature and experimentation in peer review practice, the community-academic peer review pilot was established in 2016 to develop a process that would evaluate a series of discussion papers jointly produced by Food Secure Canada, Community First: Impact of Community Engagement, and Food: Locally Embedded, Globally Engaged. FSC has a long history of collaborating with academics. The organization itself evolved from relationships among scholars, practitioners, and community-based researchers who recognized the need for a national level organization to mobilize and give voice to Canada's growing food movement networks (Levkoe, 2014). The objective of the discussion papers was to report on an environmental scan of existing food policies in Canada organized around six critical themes: Sustainable Agriculture, School Food, Local and Sustainable Food Systems, New Farmers, Indigenous and Northern Food Sovereignty, and

Food Security. The themes were identified through in-depth consultation with community practitioners and academics in anticipation of the Federal Government's commitment to develop a national food policy. First announced in 2015 through a mandate letter to the new Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, official consultations to develop a Food Policy for Canada eventually began in May 2017, with an expected release in 2019. The discussion papers aimed to mobilize knowledge and experience through collaboration among researchers, civil society and policy makers. The scan involved a review of existing policy documents, relevant scholarly and grey literature, and interviews with key food movement practitioners. Research was primarily conducted by a Master's student, in collaboration with an academic and CBR team during the summer of 2016. From this research, six themed discussion papers were developed and were accompanied by policy maps and summary tables.[8] Together, these knowledge products were intended to encourage conversation on building a national food policy able to address the inter-related issues of hunger, health and sustainability; and to build capacity for FSC and the food movement it represents to be meaningfully engaged in its development.

After the discussion papers were drafted, the research team agreed they would benefit from a more thorough assessment and evaluation before being shared more broadly. A scholarly peer review process was not possible since the discussion papers were not being submitted to an academic journal, nor were they structured in a traditional scholarly format. Further, since the research was informed by the priorities and experiences of community-based food organizations, the research team had little interest in the cumbersome process of academic peer review (and many predicted it would be unhelpful). However, they wanted to ensure the discussion papers were accurate and rigorous as well as speaking directly to the experiences of both researchers and practitioners involved in food systems policy work. In response, the research team developed and piloted a community-academic peer review process to generate critical feedback from multiple different perspectives, integrating elements of both emerging peer review trends discussed earlier in this paper: open peer review and community-based reviewers.

To find community and academic peer reviewers, the research team reached out to key individuals through the FSC, CFICE, and FLEdGE networks. As described in the literature, successfully identifying and confirming peer reviewers can be a major challenge, especially when attempting to recruit non-academics. Most of those agreeing to participate in the community-academic peer review pilot noted their support for the work of FSC and the other action research networks. When reached, potential reviewers were informed not only about the discussion papers to be evaluated, but also about the broader collaboration and efforts that aimed to contribute to the development of a national food policy. This provided a justification of the need for the community-academic peer review and context to conduct the evaluation of the discussion papers. Reviewers also received an explanation of the open peer review

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[8] The papers are available at https://foodsecurecanada.org/resources-news/news-media/mapping-food-policy-landscape-canada

process, which was reported as especially helpful to community practitioners unfamiliar with the process and purpose of peer review (*see Appendix A*).

In total, eleven individuals were contacted and eight agreed to participate in the community-academic peer review pilot. Some reviewers were not identified strictly as academic or community participants but instead embodied a hybrid position. For example, in one case an academic reviewer had worked for many years with a community-based organization and only recently returned to complete post-graduate work. In another case a community-based reviewer from the non-profit sector held a PhD and frequently collaborated on academic research projects. Beyond the binary of community-academic, there was also considerable diversity in the backgrounds of community reviewers. Within the broad category of community practitioner, individuals had different levels of familiarity with academic research and peer review processes. This shaped how each individual approached the peer review process, influencing the kinds of comments they made as well as how they evaluated the utility and impact of the work. Of the three categories of reviews (academic, hybrid, and community), hybrid reviewers had the highest response rate (*see Table 1*). In addition to the list of reviewers that were invited to participate, many others were rejected as a result of pre-existing commitments or conflict of interest.

Table 1. Community-Academic Reviewers Response Rates

	Contacted	Accepted
Community	4	2
Hybrid	4	4
Academic	3	2

Each reviewer was provided with a review template containing a series of questions to consider in their assessment and space to provide both qualitative and quantitative assessments (*see Appendix B*). Given that reviewers came from diverse contexts and perspectives, it was important to provide a standardized set of questions to encourage a level of consistency and comparability among the individual reviews. In responding to the questions, reviewers were prompted to evaluate the research and analysis not only in an abstract sense, but grounded in the realities and context of their own knowledge and experience—whether in research, policy, or front-line community work. This was particularly important for the discussion papers because their contributions went well beyond academic literature on each topic and they were intended to be useful to policy and program work in the broader community.

Despite attempts to standardize feedback, there was significant diversity in the responses from reviewers. Most were extremely supportive and generative in their comments. Several individuals outlined substantive revisions or additional issues and questions to consider, but most included supportive comments speaking to the importance and value of the research undertaken. In particular, the community and hybrid reviewers brought suggestions on how

the research would play out in a more practical sense. For example, one reviewer questioned the use of the word "capital" in the New Farmers discussion paper to refer to the financial resources required by farmers to establish a farm. They asserted that this was a value-laden term connected to debt financing, something they believed was quite harmful to farm viability. Another community-based reviewer suggested upcoming policy openings that the author might want to reference in the discussion paper on Community Food Security. One of the reviewers for the Northern and Indigenous Food Sovereignty Paper commented that it was important to keep the paper brief, knowing that its intended audience was not strictly academics.

Discussion
Successes and Limitations of the Community-Academic Peer Review Pilot
Overall, the community-academic peer review pilot project contributed significantly to the final discussion papers. It provided an important platform to engage both academics and community-based practitioners in the co-creation of the knowledge products. In this section, we identify some of the primary factors that made this pilot successful and some of the challenges that arose. First, the research team realized early on that if non-academics were to be involved as peer reviewers, the process needed to be as straightforward and relevant as possible. While conducting peer reviews is seen as part of regular work for most academics, community practitioners are not generally included in these types of activities. To participate, they are required to negotiate the allocation of work hours, and in most cases take on these kinds of additional responsibilities in a volunteer capacity. The research team considered paying community peer reviewers, although there were insufficient funds and the literature suggested there may be limited benefits (see, for example, Ware, 2008). The research team also recognized that the review process needed to be authentic if community peer reviewers were to be engaged. In other words, the feedback needed to be taken seriously and applied to the further drafts of the discussion papers as a way to demonstrate the value of community perspectives. Further, inviting a community practitioner to contribute to peer review required that they understood the value of the processes of generating and evaluating new knowledge as well as the outcomes. Beyond simply a recognition of these realities, the research team made significant efforts to accommodate and support all reviewers throughout the process.

A second enabling factor was that the community-academic peer review pilot was not a stand-alone initiative. Rather, it was embedded within a broader context of community-academic collaboration. In this case, the pilot was an integral part of Food Secure Canada, Community First: Impact of Community Engagement, and Food: Locally Embedded, Globally Engaged work, which also provided access to an existing network of potential community and academic peer reviewers. Engaging with these networks also brought a sense of legitimacy to the process and provided reassurance that the discussion papers were more than just an academic endeavour. Third, working with FSC and the broader community-academic collaboration, the pilot project benefited from adequate capacity to broker the community-academic peer review process. Specifically, the research team was able to support staff time directed at coordinating the peer review process and ensuring there was a point person throughout the course of the

project to assist reviewers and to help ensure that feedback could be adequately interpreted and addressed.

Despite the overall success of the community-academic peer review pilot, there were several challenges encountered. The first major challenge was the time required to oversee and coordinate the peer review process, a point also discussed in the literature above. While individuals had the capacity to participate during the pilot, we question the replicability and long-term sustainability of this type of engaged process. As with a scholarly peer review process, sufficient time and resources need to be dedicated to identifying potential reviewers, following-up with reminders and then working with the author to incorporate the feedback. This administrative burden is perhaps even more pronounced with community-academic peer review, because the reviewers come to the process with a diverse set of experiences and circumstances that need to be supported, authenticated, and incorporated. As long turn-around times is one of the oft-cited limitations of academic peer review, the fact that our pilot reproduced this element only further emphasizes the importance of administrative support and capacity to ensure knowledge outputs are disseminated in a timely fashion. The model of the Community-Engaged Scholarship for Health, discussed above, where community reviewers are provided with training on peer review processes may be an instructive model to replicate, provided there are sufficient resources.

Another challenge, which is not unique to the community-academic peer review process, was encouraging invited peer reviewers to respond to the requests. In some cases the provision of feedback was not particularly relevant or helpful in revising the discussion papers. This was true most often with reviewers that were unfamiliar with research-oriented peer review processes. This challenge points to the value of working with hybrid reviewers with some background in both community and academic environments. Finally, in designing the community-academic peer review process, there were few existing models and little experience to help develop the pilot. Drawing on the existing literature and models, the research team was forced to improvise and adapt as the review process took shape, learning as they went.

Lessons from the Community-Academic Peer Review Pilot
Including the perspectives of community-based practitioners in peer review is an essential part of bringing increased validity and accountability to this process. As demonstrated through the community-academic peer review pilot project, the process gives academics and practitioners the power to collectively assess and evaluate CBR knowledge products. This power is especially important for those committed to movement building, as it brings increased relevance, validation, and accountability to the efforts of community-based researchers, practitioners, and academics. Lessons from the literature review show that strong relationships, essential to CBR, are typically underappreciated by the traditional academic peer review process. The pilot highlighted the importance of building and maintaining ongoing relationships of mutual benefit between community and academic partners. Agreeing to participate in this review process was not strictly a one-off request; it was contextualized within a broader ongoing relationship between FSC and a range of community and academic allies. Having FSC as a key

partner in the research and subsequent peer review process provided a level of credibility and relevance to community practitioners that an academic journal seeking community input may lack. Likewise, involving academic research networks signaled that the discussion papers and the feedback would be held to a high standard. In many ways, it was the strong relationships and collaborative nature of the research that enabled the success of the community-academic peer review process. It is important to note that these relationships were built over many years with significant cross-over between academia and community participants.

Reflections on the community-academic pilot suggest that there was particular value in working with hybrid reviewers. As noted above, it was the hybrid reviewer category that had the stronger response rate in terms of securing reviewers. These individuals are perhaps also best placed to meaningfully contribute to these types of community-academic peer review processes. There is great value and insight in their ability to straddle the boundary of community and academic epistemologies, and to appreciate the needs and priorities of both community and academic voices in the peer review process. The idea of hybrid reviewers further contributes to this diversity, as they represent a blurring of lines and challenging of silos between the community and the academic. Even those reviewers who we categorized as academic might actually identify as hybrid, as many of them are deeply involved in food systems work outside of the university. However, hybrid reviewers should not replace community voices altogether. Front line food systems workers, for instance, and those with lived experience of food insecurity have particular perspectives that should also have the opportunity to evaluate and assess research knowledge products. However, given that there are concerns with reviewer burnout within academic peer review, and that much of the labour of reviewing is completed by a relatively small group, it is likely that these hybrid reviewers would receive an unsustainable number of review requests, should community-academic peer review models be widely adopted.

There is not (and should not be) a universal standard to what makes a good community-academic peer review, as community practitioners have different research needs. Providing a platform to express these differences is an important way to recognize and value different ways of knowing. For some, a theoretically dense article has great value; and for others, anything more than a plain-language summary and set of policy recommendations has little use. Like many of the reviewers participating in the community-academic peer review pilot, the documents under review were also hybrid knowledge products: not strictly academic, but still a product of rigorous inquiry, research, and analysis. By the same token, there is a diversity of knowledge products, such as videos and other creative media, and policy briefs (for examples, see http://CES4Health.org, as mentioned in the literature review), to disseminate CBR research beyond traditional academic articles. Although these can be well-researched and created with rigour, they are largely excluded from academic peer review processes and thus are generally seen as less valuable forms of knowledge or analysis. They may be very valuable and relevant to the community affected by the research, but inadmissible as scholarly products because they do not take the form of a conventional journal article. A peer review process that embraces flexibility and subjectivity, whether strictly academic or community-based, can be an added

strength to the peer review process in general. While scholarly peer review has been shown to reinforce conservative ideas and privilege academic knowledge, community-academic peer review challenges assumptions and singular ways of knowing and presenting knowledge. CBR knowledge products can be enhanced by incorporating different and sometimes contrary perspectives and welcoming unconventional formats. Participants in the pilot helped improve the final discussion papers but also contributed to strengthening community-campus engagement and enriching scholarship within the Canadian food movement.

Reflecting on the community academic peer review pilot raises concerns regarding the exclusion of community input into the evaluation of knowledge production products, especially those that involve CBR. As highlighted in previous sections of this paper, this is often a disjuncture between the evaluation criteria for CBR and traditional academic research more broadly. Incorporating community perspectives into peer review processes is an important means through which to address these issues; however, important questions remain around the ultimate intention behind postsecondary education and research. If research is publicly funded, how do we ensure the public is the beneficiary? In Canada, most faculty and their institutions are funded, in part, by public monies distributed through government contributions to public institutions and government research grants through the Tri-Councils. It is extremely problematic that academic research is often conducted about or with community, yet the ultimate assessment and evaluation of the resulting knowledge products exclude these same groups. Finding ways to ensure that research is part of a democratic public sphere and that it is open, inclusive, and relevant should be of fundamental importance, especially for community-academic partnerships. Community-academic peer review is one way that research could be more accountable to the public.

One way to encourage these practices at an institutional level would be for academic promotion and tenure committees to recognize the value of community-academic peer review. Peer review validates research, but it also validates researchers. CBR scholars are doing work that is founded on principles of mutual contributions and the co-creation of knowledge with communities. The academic promotion and tenure system is based on rewarding individuals for their contributions in the form of peer review articles, at times creating a conflict of interests for researchers. Individuals involved in the research and the affected communities that have a refined and relevant set of real-world expertise, should be recognized as, and considered peers in this research quality assurance process.

Researchers conducting CBR and publishing their work are subject to the peer review process. If this process determines one's ability to secure funding and tenured positions, and in turn impacts their ability to sustain relationships with their community partners, then antagonistic characteristics of the process need to be revised and alternate merit assessment tools should also be introduced. By the same token, the contributions of community reviewers should also be recognized and compensated—though, not necessarily monetarily. Without providing some sort of incentive or compensation for community practitioners to engage in these processes, it is important to remain modest in one's expectations for community involvement. Furthermore, the tension of publishing for the sake of benefiting one's career

versus for the sake of impact could be reduced if the peer review process included non-academic peers. This could also ease tensions for academics as it would simultaneously balance the requirements of their academic careers by recognizing CBR as a collaborative process and moving towards more collaborative models of evaluating and reviewing research knowledge products.

Conclusion

The issues raised in this paper elucidate the need for postsecondary institutions not just to respond to public interests and societal ills, but also, more importantly, to listen and work towards collaborative solutions. Peer review is a major part of the research dissemination process, determining what gets published and what does not. That is, it mediates the conversations academics have with each other, with communities under study, and with the public. As such, there are elements that can be changed in the knowledge validation process to make it more receptive to voices and perspectives that come from outside the academy. Fundamentally, this approach demands a two-way conversation in place of a knowledge-deficit model. In other words, it means not just studying and educating community, but engaging community as full participants and co-creators.

Clearly, these issues go well beyond peer review, and are part of ensuring democracy and equity in knowledge production. Scholarly peer review is a process embedded in a Eurocentric, positivist epistemology that values certain kinds of knowledge over others. The value of community-academic peer review processes is not just about bringing community perspectives into the academic context, but about challenging relationships of power in knowledge construction and validation more broadly. This process goes beyond member checking or simply sharing results with participants; it gives academics and practitioners the power to collectively assess and evaluate each other's research. Even beyond peer review, community members should have the opportunity to be involved in the process of formulating research design from the outset to ensure questions are relevant and methodologies are sound and ethical.

However, action can also be taken within existing structures of academic peer review to bring immediate improvements alongside longer-term efforts to re-shape and re-imagine public institutions of higher education. As a first step, we encourage academic journals to involve relevant community-based researchers and practitioners in their governance structures and pool of potential reviewers. In the case of peer review processes that rely on suggested reviewers from authors, this could be accomplished by adding a prompt for authors to provide suggested reviewers from both academic and community contexts. Given that one of the existing challenges with academic peer review is attracting sufficient and suitable reviewers, this practice may help address multiple issues at once. Journals could also ask reviewers to evaluate the level, if any, of engagement with the communities under study in manuscripts under review. These changes would not radically alter the power dynamics in academic knowledge production and dissemination, but they could encourage community-academic collaboration and acknowledge the indispensable role community can play in knowledge co-creation.

Fundamentally, these efforts are about reviving higher education and critical research as part of a democratic public sphere that is open, accessible, and relevant. As indicated above, one of the core challenges of developing the community-academic peer review pilot was that there were few models and examples to draw from. Thus, we offer these learnings to others interested in experimenting with collaborative assessment and evaluation processes. We also encourage others to share their experiences in an effort to develop new and better ways of doing community-campus engagement. Ideally, this will also help produce new tools and mechanisms to further encourage and support these processes, particularly in the social sciences.

Community-academic peer review is not the only means of incorporating community perspectives into academic research, nor should it be. Indeed, a host of mechanisms should be explored to further democratize the practice of research and the processes through which particular conclusions and perspectives are deemed valid. The community-academic peer review process should not be seen as a stand-alone mechanism to bring community voices into the production, validation, and dissemination of research. Rather, it is one tool of many that is best utilized alongside other means of valuing and prioritizing the active participation and empowerment of community perspectives.

About the Authors

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Appendix A

Explanation of the Community-Academic Peer Review Process for Potential Reviewers

Overview

Peer review has long been established as a tool to ensure rigour and critical reflection within the academic community. Processes of review by multiple parties are also common within community organizations seeking to strengthen policy recommendations and articulate shared goals and priorities. Building on these two traditions, Food Secure Canada , in partnership with CFICE (Community First: Impacts of Community Engagement) and Food: Locally Embedded, Globally Engaged (FLEdGE) is initiating a joint community-academic peer review process as part of the creation of strong research and policy positions in support of a national food policy grounded in food sovereignty.

Food Secure Canada is in the midst of a multi-year citizen consultation and policy-making process project around the development of a National Food Policy. The federal government has recently committed to the creation of such a policy, thus the focus of Food Secure Canada's work over the next two years will be on mobilizing civil society to participate in this process and develop key priorities and recommendations. Bringing community and academic actors into conversation through multiple processes and mechanisms, such as this peer review process, is a key component of ensuring the national food policy that is adopted by the federal government is one that prioritizes food sovereignty and the needs of diverse communities across Canada to access affordable, healthy and sustainable food.

This peer review process in particular is meant as a sort of 'check-in' with a community of practice (both academic and community-based), to ascertain whether the arguments and analysis of a particular author or group of authors resonates with, and is reflective of, the shared experiences and realities of that broader community. Our approach to peer review is one of collaboration and mutual support. It is an opportunity to gain additional insights, identify critical points of reflection and highlight potential areas of continued debate and discussion.

Process

This is an open review process, meaning that both the author and reviewer know the names of one another. When a reviewer's assessment is forwarded to an author, it normally includes the reviewer's name. Please let us know if you prefer to remain anonymous.

Recognizing that community organizations (as well as academics) often have limited time and resources to devote to these kinds of activities, we have developed a template with guiding questions, in an effort to streamline the process. Reviewers can also arrange to provide feedback through a phone interview.

Timeline: Should you accept the peer review invitation, we ask that you complete your assessment within one month of receiving the document.

Instructions For Reviewers

In-text Comments

Reviewers can suggest edits, comments or feedback within the text of the document. This is not meant to be a copy-edit (though you are welcome to highlight any typos or grammatical errors), but rather to highlight passages that are unclear, or specific questions that arise from a particular point of analysis or piece of information. We also welcome additions and suggestions that will help strengthen the analysis.

Overall Recommendations and Feedback

Through the accompanying Reviewer Template you will be asked to respond to a series of questions to evaluate the content, style and structure of the document.

Appendix B

Community-Academic Peer Reviewer Template

Document Under Review:
Reviewer Name:

Evaluation Questions	Response and Comments	Numerical Scale (1-5)
Is the topic or issue being discussed clearly identified and articulated?		
Does this document demonstrate a strong understanding of the current community and/or academic knowledge in this area?		
(How) does the analysis presented relate to, or resonate with, your own experiences with this topic?		
Does the paper demonstrate adequate use of evidence and data in support of its analysis?		
Are there any outstanding key questions that need to be addressed? Suggestions for further analysis or research?		
Is the information accurate, and properly cited? Is there more recent or relevant literature (data, research) that should be included?		
Are the policy or practical research implications clearly articulated?		
Does the author use plain language, and/or define any key terms or acronyms?		
Do you have any overall feedback to provide the author on content or structure?		

Overall Recommendation:
Ready for Publication [   ]
Ready for Publication pending minor edits [   ]
Substantial edits required [   ]

"I had a big revelation": Student Experiences in Community-First Community-Campus Engagement

Anna Przednowek, Magdalene Goemans, Amanda Wilson

ABSTRACT   While there is a wealth of literature on community-campus engagement (CCE) that incorporates student perspectives from course-based community service learning settings, the stories of students involved in longer-term CCE projects remain underexplored. This paper addresses this gap by examining the experiences of students working as research assistants (RAs) within a multi-year Canadian CCE project, "Community First: Impacts of Community Engagement" (CFICE). Drawing on interviews with RAs, student insights from a general evaluation of the CFICE project, and the authors' own reflections, we consider the ways in which meaningful, long-standing engagements with community partners as part of community-first CCE projects provide students with both enhanced opportunities and challenges as they navigate the complexities of intersecting academic and community worlds. Further, this paper identifies promising practices to improve student experiences and the overall impact of longer-term community-campus partnerships and program management structures.

KEYWORDS   students, engaged scholars, community-campus engagement, research assistants, higher education

Over the last decade, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) has shifted its funding priorities to encourage research projects in which "researchers and research trainees more readily [share and promote] research knowledge with non-academic sectors" (Niemczyk, 2013, p. 14; SSHRC, 2016). The SSHRC mandate includes calls for "methodologies that engage communities as active partners in the research enterprise" (Niemczyk, 2013, p. 55). These projects must include student research assistantships (RAships) that emphasize training, with the goal to develop "innovative leaders and outstanding scholars" who can make strong contributions nationally and globally (Niemczyk, 2013, p. 53; Niemczyk, 2016).

Despite the often significant roles played by research assistants in community-campus partnerships, accounts of their experiences remain underexplored in the CCE[1] literature (Nelson & Dodd, 2017). Most examinations of student perspectives within CCE work have been drawn from broad survey data rather than from personal narratives and focused on

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[1] We use the term CCE rather than focusing more narrowly on community-based research (Franz, 2013) or community engaged scholarship (Nelson & Dodd, 2017) in order to highlight the diversity of students' engagements in community-campus partnerships.

the shorter-term experiences of undergraduate students within community-service learning (CSL) contexts (Pope-Ruark, Ransbury, Brady, & Fishman, 2014; Willis, Peresie, Waldref, & Stockmann, 2003) or graduate classes (Armitage & Levac, 2015; Levkoe, Brail, & Daniere, 2014). There has also been limited exploration of power dynamics within community-campus partnerships and the related impacts on students (Nelson & Dodd, 2017; Schwartz, 2010).

Addressing this gap, this paper explores student RA perspectives from the first phase (2012-2016) of a multi-year SSHRC-funded CCE project called *Community First: Impacts of Community Engagement* (CFICE). Drawing on interviews with CFICE RAs, student insights from a general evaluation of CFICE, and the authors' own reflections, we consider how meaningful, long-standing engagements with community partners as part of community-first projects shifted students' perspectives as they navigated academic and community worlds within CCE. We argue that an enhanced learning environment emerged from the tensions and complexities of having to negotiate the multiple relationships, obligations, and identities characteristic of research involving both community and academic partners. Students recounted moments of revelation, which often grew out of difficult, uncomfortable, and challenging experiences. While students identify numerous benefits to participating in a CCE research project such as CFICE, particularly one that seeks to build meaningful, mutually beneficially relationships with community partners, they also highlighted a possible tension between the desire to be community-first and the challenges they faced in managing and negotiating power dynamics and conflicting priorities in their role as RAs. Students described experiences of being devalued or excluded within the context of the project, raising questions about how to offer a more inclusive experience for students involved with community-first initiatives while also holding space to experience tensions and learning how to negotiate them.

Our analysis offers a unique student-led perspective on how to strengthen student engagement within the context of commitments to a community-first ethic. In the context of this paper, as in the CFICE project, a community-first ethic refers to a commitment to advancing and prioritizing the needs, perspectives, and contributions of community-based partners. Beyond simply sharing student insights on personal and professional development, this paper offers meaningful glimpses of: a) how student participation within this project contributed toward community goals; and b) the enhanced learning opportunities for students that shifted student perspectives toward a more enriched community-first ethic. Building on this examination of student experiences and associated learnings, we conclude with suggested practices for both students and the structure of CCE programs and practices that can enhance the CCE experience for student RAs involved with longer-term community-campus partnerships.

Student Experiences in RAships and Community-Campus Engagement

RAships are paid work experiences for graduate (and in some cases, undergraduate) students to participate in research and knowledge mobilization activities. They provide students with "direct involvement with [a] profession's activities, colleagues, and personal meanings" (Laursen, Thiry, & Liston, 2012, p. 74), as well as exposure to "shared informal expectations

and norms" (Laursen et al., 2012, p. 50). Within CCE contexts, active participation in community research offers additional benefits and challenges for student RAs. It can provide students with opportunities to refine research skills, engage with academic and community partners, and cultivate employment prospects, through involvement in real-world research situations (Laursen, et al., 2012; Rossouw & Niemczyk, 2013). Students may also gain valuable research knowledge, receive feedback from community partners, and have opportunities to experience the day-to-day workings of CCE research practice (Stack-Cutler & Dorow, 2012; UBC, 2014).

Research that takes place outside of the physical space of the campus often inspires ways of knowing and understanding that are not available within classroom environments (Pope-Ruark et al., 2014; Ramaley, 2011). Within collaborative research settings, students acquire refined social skills as well as greater confidence and pride in contributing to community efforts. These learnings can lead students to an expanded awareness of and interest in addressing wider social justice issues through CCE work (Ballamingie, Goemans, & Martin, 2018; Brody & Wright, 2004; Levkoe, et al., 2014). Within longer-term, individual engagements in community-campus partnerships, students apply their academic knowledge to address community issues, refine practical skills, network with community members, and improve access to post-graduation employment (Pei, Feltham, Ford, & Schwartz, 2015; Schwartz, 2010).

However, these RAships can also offer unanticipated challenges. Students within a diversity of CCE contexts (e.g. as CSL students participating in group efforts or as individual graduate RAs) have encountered challenges with regard to communication and complex power relations within community engagements (Armitage & Levac, 2015; Schwartz, 2010). In addition, research assistants in any setting are vulnerable to power relationships with academic supervisors (McGinn, Niemczyk & Saudelli, 2013; Skorobohacz, 2013). A common challenge faced by students in RA roles is negotiating a sense of obligation to prioritize their RA assignments over other personal or academic commitments in order to secure financial gains or a favourable reputation among colleagues (Benton, 2004; Murphy & Hall, 2002; Skorobohacz, 2013). RAs may also feel compelled to work additional hours, outside the boundaries of research assignments and without compensation (Rossouw & Niemczyk, 2013; Skorobohacz, 2013; Tweed & Boast, 2011). The addition of community partners within a CCE environment adds the tensions and complexities of navigating community-academic spheres and cultures (Diver & Higgins, 2014; Levkoe et al., 2016; Schwartz, Weaver, Pei, & Miller, 2016) and can further complexify, obfuscate, and/or intensify power relations between students and their academic supervisors.

These politics are complicated by students' intersecting identities and positions as students, assistants, knowledge workers, employees, and community members (Niemczyk, 2016; Skorobohacz, 2013). Insensitivities to cultural difference, as well as changing project conditions or community partner needs may also contribute toward disrupting communication between students and community partners (Grossman, Sherard, Prohn, Bradley, Goodwll, & Andrew, 2012; Kronick & Cunningham, 2013). Students may be required to work within community schedules that do not match academic timelines (Pope-Ruark et al., 2014). A "lowered sense

of power" (Miller, 1997, p. 16) may result for students from these experiences, but there is also a potential for student perspectives to shift towards increased compassion and sensitivity to community issues (Bernacki & Jaeger, 2008). Existing literature suggests that CCE research paradoxically offers the opportunity for both greater benefit and struggle for students engaged in RAships.

The CFICE RAs

CFICE is a multi-year SSHRC-funded CCE project which aims to deepen our understanding of how partnerships and collaborations between community and campus actors can more effectively advance and prioritize the needs, perspectives, and contributions of community-based partners (Aujla & Hamm, 2018; CFICE, 2018). This desire to articulate a community-first approach emerged in response to critiques that, in some cases, CCE leads to inequitable partnerships between community and academic participants and fails to adequately address power imbalances and lop-sided priority setting that values academic needs and voices over those of community. Levkoe and colleagues (2016) argue that despite meaningful progress towards more equitable forms of CCE, concerns remain that CCE continues to privilege academics and students and fails to adequately address the needs of the community partners.

Taking these concerns as a starting point, Phase I of CFICE was organized around a diverse set of multi-year community-scale demonstration projects that sought to experiment, model, and evaluate various community-first approaches to CCE. Each hub focused on a different substantive theme—community food security/sovereignty, poverty reduction, community environmental sustainability, violence against women (VAW), and knowledge mobilization—and was co-led by an academic and a community partner.[2] Through each of these hubs, academic and community partners asked, "How can community-campus partnerships be designed and implemented to maximize the value created for non-profit organizations?" Students featured prominently in this work, and a large proportion of students were embedded in projects as RAs on a longer-term basis. Indeed, a key objective of CFICE has been to train and mentor students through active involvement in community-based research projects that centre community priorities and work towards meaningful social change. Students contributed in many ways, including working on technical and practical outputs and developing and implementing communication and knowledge mobilization strategies.

The student RAs involved in CFICE efforts came from diverse academic disciplines, including social work, social policy, geography, communications, sociology, and law, and brought a range of expertise to CFICE projects. They were recruited through multiple means including job postings, and through academic supervisors and community partners. Some had experience working with projects in university settings, while others had worked or volunteered in the non-profit sector with NGOs or community-based organizations. Some students came with unique technical skills in areas such as geomatics and computer-based mapping. Others had activist histories, experience in managing projects, or knowledge of action research

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[2] Examples of student engagement in specific hub-based projects have been described in a number of publications including Andree et al. (2014), Ballamingie et al. (2018), Nelson & Dodd (2017), Pei et al. (2015), and Schwartz et al. (2016).

methods and data collection in group settings. As many CFICE students were involved in multi-year projects and provided research assistance over longer-term periods, the roles they held within CFICE were often dynamic, evolving, and multi-faceted. Many students engaged directly with community partners on a daily basis to enrich community research initiatives (through research, administrative, or communication activities), while others were focused on furthering broader hub-level goals.

Participants and Methods

Building on existing literature, we ask how CFICE's emphasis on community-first approaches to CCE has influenced the experiences and outcomes for student RAs. To answer this question, we draw on qualitative data relating to the experiences of student RAs who were directly embedded in community-based demonstration projects, in roles supporting collaborative work within each broader hub, or at the secretariat level during Phase I of the CFICE project. This includes exit interviews conducted with RAs at the completion of their work with CFICE, reflections from a cross-hub evaluation of Phase I, and the personal reflections from two of the authors who have worked as long-term RAs within CFICE projects.[3] Exit interviews with RAs were conducted either by the academic co-lead of the knowledge mobilization (KM) hub or the KM RA trained to do these interviews.[4] A total of 21 students participated in RA exit interviews; within this group, 19 students were engaged with the project on a longer-term basis spanning between seven and 42 months; two participants were undergraduate students and 19 were graduate students. Any identifying information has been removed from direct quotes and replaced with a pseudonym or number (in the case of individuals, e.g. RA01) or a letter (in the case of organizations, e.g. CBO-A). In addition to the primary data gathered through these interviews, Phase I evaluation data provided a valuable secondary source of data for this paper. The evaluation data were compiled through multiple evaluation methods across the various community-campus engagements during years 1-4 of the CFICE project. Data were collected through focus groups, individual interviews with students, community and academic partners, personal reflections by individual partners, a review of demonstration projects, and a review of research work and presentations submitted by graduate RAs and students in CSL classes.

We employ a practical iterative framework to guide qualitative data analysis (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009). Data from the exit interviews and CFICE evaluation activities related to students' engagement were compiled and loosely coded into broad categories of student

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[3] The first author has been working as the hub-based RA with the Violence Against Women (VAW) hub since 2015, helping to coordinate the logistical efforts for multiple community-based demonstration projects that were themselves each equipped with an embedded RA. She was also involved in data collection on community-academic perspectives on CCE in VAW work. The second author was an RA with the Community Environmental Sustainability-Ottawa hub for three years. She provided research and organizational/logistical support to the neighbourhood organization Sustainable Living Ottawa East. The first two authors were also members of the Evaluation and Analysis Working Group. The third author was involved with CFICE as a Post-Doctoral Fellow and co-lead of one of the Working Groups during Phase II.

[4] Ethics clearance for the individual student exit interviews was received as part of larger ethics clearance for Phase I of the CFICE project evaluation from Carleton University Research Ethics Board.

experiences. Major themes and patterns were then identified where student perspectives converged, and attention was also paid to divergences in student experiences. Thus, the authors' approach to data analysis hinges on iteration "not as a repetitive mechanical task but as a deeply reflexive process" that is "key to sparking insight and developing meaning" (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009, p.77). In the case of the evaluation data, the data were compiled, coded, and analyzed by the academic partners within each hub, with the support of RAs. The first two authors participated in data collection and analysis for the year 4 evaluation within their respective hub work. The second author was involved in cross-hub data coding and analysis based on all of the Phase I evaluation data. Further, the first two authors were part of the Phase II Evaluation Working Group within CFICE and are very familiar with the cross-hub evaluation findings.

Just as reflexivity has been identified as a key component of effective community-campus engagement, as Goemans and colleagues (this issue) highlight, there is also a need for ongoing evaluation vis-à-vis more reflexive approaches in CCE that actively encourage critical reflection on the positionality of participants in relation to the processes in which they are engaged. As two of the authors are long-time RAs involved in various levels of data collection and analysis within CFICE, their positions align with what Mauthner and Doucet (2003) describe as "the 'embodied' situated researcher carrying out the analysis" (p. 414). The first author contributed (along with her supervisor) toward the analysis and synthesis of the evaluation data collected within the VAW hub. The second author first synthesized evaluation data as an RA within the CES-Ottawa hub, and then analyzed data more broadly across hubs as an RA in the Evaluation and Analysis Working Group. Throughout these activities, the authors employed a reflexive approach and maintained notes on their own longer-term RA experiences. The process of writing this paper required the authors to take a retrospective view on how they themselves had engaged with community partners and how they might engage more meaningfully in future work.

An Examination of CFICE Student Experiences

In this section we analyze the experiences of the CFICE RAs that emerge from the data. We highlight the benefits and challenges of CCE that centres community-first approaches in order to better understand how CCE work can be adapted to both strengthen community-first approaches to CCE work and enhance student experience. Our data affirms certain elements identified in the literature, but also offers insight that expands on these elements. A community-first approach to CCE enhances student capacity beyond instrumental 'job readiness' skills, requiring the development of critical reflexivity and conflict- and self-management skills. At the same time, our data highlights areas where the tensions inherent in a community-first approach to CCE offer challenges and barriers for student researchers.

Beyond Skills and Career Development Opportunities: Cultivating Reflexivity and Personal Growth

A common observation in the literature is that involvement in CCE provides students

with meaningful job readiness skills (Levkoe et al., 2014; Mitchell, 2008), a fact that was also observed with students involved in CFICE. Students were interested in developing more concrete and practical outputs for the community partners, in contrast to their largely theoretical and abstract academic work. Participating in the community-scale (demonstration or micro) projects enabled students to co-develop a range of outputs such as research, reports, information pamphlets, or events with their community partners. These outputs often fed directly into community action and sometimes larger policy work central to the efforts of the community partners. For instance, activities carried out within the Food Security Hub helped to lay the groundwork for a substantial national-level policy engagement process around the development of a national food policy for Canada (see Levkoe and Wilson 2019 *forthcoming*).

Students also gained experience with a range of communication methods as they mobilized CCE knowledge through varied academic and plain-language means directed at the greater community via reports, blogs, podcasts, and webinars (CFICE Phase I). The majority of these knowledge mobilization tools were shared publicly on the CFICE website and via social media to reach a greater audience. The contributions students made toward community efforts greatly aligned with CFICE's mandate to strengthen public polices and programs in critical areas central to the four sector-specific hubs (poverty reduction, community food security, violence against women and community environmental sustainability). Several students expressed pride in their engagement with diverse members across faculty, community, and policy partners, and in bringing forward their own expertise to help communicate and advance initiatives within CFICE projects.

Our examination of CFICE student experiences further suggests that when students have opportunities to engage with community partners for longer periods of time, they can utilize the unique or novel skills they already possess or skills they are currently honing and put them to use effectively such that communities also significantly benefit. One student recounted how they[5] utilized their GIS mapping skills to create a visual map that aided in the community's discussion with municipal representatives around a city-scale project (Exit Interviews, RA18). Students in longer term CCE benefit by learning from the community partners, but they can also expose community partners to new and innovative methods. This offers greater potential for what Diver and Higgins (2014) call a "dynamic reciprocity" within engagements (p. 10), where each collaborator benefits from these partnerships in different ways over time, rather than one-way relationships that most often benefit academic rather than community partners.

Weidman (2010) writes that student involvement in CCE contexts offers research experience far beyond that found within typical academic RAships. Our data echoes Weidman's conclusions, as the student RAships with CFICE helped to build competence and confidence, and furthered student commitment to community-first research practices and CCE. The longer-term engagements made available within CFICE, including the informal and formal mentorship they received from both community and academic partners, were especially beneficial for graduate students aiming to pursue academic careers, particularly those with

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[5] The third person plural pronouns (they/them/their) are used in this paper to refer to both individual and group experiences.

an interest in future CCE-based work. Most CFICE RAs were able to apply a range of qualitative and quantitative research methods and embraced opportunities to publish learnings from CCE-based research, which they considered key advantages in terms of future academic careers. One Master's-level student noted that their CCE experience led them to feel more confident in potentially pursuing a CCE-inspired doctoral dissertation (Exit Interviews, RA12).

At the same time, students in RA positions were interested in translating their academic experiences into "hands-on" practice. One student described how their academic work directly fed into their interactions with the community partner (CFICE Phase I); another student noted that CCE work offered the opportunity to contribute broader academic knowledge to a local, tangible project, and to become more actively involved within the community they had been living in for many years and to learn from community expertise (Exit Interviews, RA16).

Beyond skills related to future employment and career development, the in-depth nature of these projects provided the time and space critical for self-reflection and personal growth. As many CFICE students were new to the CCE environment, their involvement in community projects offered opportunities for education and "socialization" into service work and community-based research (similar to observations found in Pei et al., 2015; Savan, 2004; Schwartz, 2010; Ward, 2010). We saw numerous examples of what O'Meara (2008) describes as an ongoing process of socialization during which the RA took "on new characteristics, values and attitudes as well as knowledge and skills that contribute to a new professional self" (p. 29). One student reflected on the invaluable skills that they gained as a result of their work with CFICE community partners, and their shifting disposition toward future work with community partners: "This project has given me exposure to what it's like to work with community members, their goals (vs. just my own thoughts). Those skills are translatable – especially the methods, that interaction between people. That was a valuable skill" (Exit Interviews, RA16).

While many CFICE students found the learning curve associated with new projects to be quite steep, they also recognized that they were being challenged in novel and satisfying ways that differed from previous professional engagements. Students were also exposed to the complexities of decision-making processes within CCE projects, with several noting that these experiences had taught them that meaningful research within community-first environments may sometimes require patience. As one student reflected, "My tendency was to rush into things, but I learned from the people around how I need to take a step back sometimes" (Exit Interviews, RA03).

Building and Navigating Relationships in CCE Work

A significant outcome of the CFICE RAships was that students often built meaningful, constructive, and often lasting relationships with community partners. Working with multiple partners—who often held varied connections to other community stakeholders—allowed students to hone skills in navigating the not-for-profit sector and build meaningful relationships with a range of CCE practitioners. One student shared how their work with one community partner facilitated an opportunity to get to know a whole network of diverse community

partners:

> I got a broader understanding of CBO A in terms of how they are perceived by the community. I learned more about their work; it was an opportunity to hear all of that in a focused way. CBO A is made up of different organizations, each with its own mandate, constituencies, etc. (Exit Interviews, RA11)

CFICE students often noted that they appreciated both the motivation they garnered from being 'up-close' witnesses to community activism and the opportunities to learn from the expertise of the community partner. They frequently commented on the meaningful relationships they developed with community partners, connections that were reinforced through processes of iterative and collaborative learning. One student recounted a very positive experience with a community supervisor who had grounded the student in community-based research methods, noting that the non-hierarchical dynamics within this learning engagement seemed very different from typical experiences with academic supervisors (Exit Interviews, RA09). Students also frequently noted that they felt their views were greatly valued as they took part in informing and bridging inter-generational and urban-rural perspectives within CCE work. Community partners positioned students as the next generation that would be taking over efforts that community partners had been involved with for decades, or as key contributors to CBO efforts within their home communities.

Along with the many positive aspects noted by students within CFICE engagements, some students reported experiencing uncomfortable dynamics within relationships with community partners. Several students noted their confusion and unease around how much active leadership over project tasks was expected from RAs, particularly because, as one student commented, "some RAs seemed overworked, and unable to take on extra responsibilities" (Exit Interviews, RA02). In contrast, some students experienced a devaluing of their contributions by community partners. One CFICE student recounted that they felt diminished when their community partner consulted with the academic supervisor rather than relying on the student's assessment of research results (Exit Interviews, RA09). Other students encountered communication issues within projects and commented that their emails were sometimes ignored by community partners. That being said, while ignoring emails may be interpreted as a power issue, it can also be a sign of community partners being overworked and under-resourced and having to prioritize. One student recalled having to wait to hear back from a community partner, which delayed project progress: "I learned patience. I wasn't expecting to have to be so patient" (Exit Interviews, RA16).

With regard to relationships between students and academic supervisors in CCE work, students often made note of the positive feedback and encouragement they received from academic mentors. One student reported that the guidance they received was key to understanding the macro structure of the larger CFICE project:

> I was very lucky to have such an amazing mentor relationship with Mark who really

> let me in on the macro view of the project... helping to develop a knowledge of the entire project structure. I was tasked early on with developing some visuals of the project Log Frame. Mark devoted a lot of time to helping me understand all aspects of the project from a manager's perspective, for which I am eternally grateful. (Exit Interviews, RA02)

Other students appreciated the faculty support they received in writing and presenting at conferences about their CCE experiences. Students also noted some tensions in working with faculty who were dealing with numerous other commitments (including supervision of multiple graduate students), which resulted in less time to engage with individual RAs on CFICE projects. In one case, the RA became the main contact between the CBO and the university, which led to some project delays. In addition, despite fostering strong connections with community partners, students commonly reported feeling isolated as they lacked meaningful interaction with RAs working within other CFICE community-level projects.

Several students also commented that they lacked sufficient opportunities to contribute to wider discussions that took place among CFICE hub partners (e.g. during CFICE Program Committee meetings held several times each year). While project-wide gatherings explicitly emphasized the perspectives and involvement of community partners, students working with CFICE did not have the same level of explicit integration. Some suggested that hierarchical relations between faculty/community partners and students, as well as gender dynamics (e.g. males dominating discussions in meetings), may have been factors in this dynamic (Exit Interviews, RA12). These students commented on the irony of lost opportunities for input from RAs in these contexts, given that joint CFICE learnings were intended in part to inform student involvement within future CCE initiatives. As the embedded RA roles in CFICE were situated within the larger structures of both community and academic worlds, it is not surprising that the students' experiences involved navigating complex power relations with both academic and community partners, even within a community-first setting. These observations underscore the importance of attending to inclusivity and incorporating an analysis of power dynamics on multiple fronts, not solely between community and academic partners, but also between different academic roles.

Negotiating Multiple Obligations, Identities and the Community-Campus Divide

Many students became involved in CFICE projects because of existing familiarity with related community projects and initiatives, to have opportunities to engage with community partners and academics whose advocacy efforts closely aligned with their own core values, and to better understand relevant community efforts at local and national levels. While these motivations helped to create dedicated RAs, they also left students more vulnerable to burn-out and overcommitment. Trying to balance their academic requirements as graduate students with other teaching or familial commitments and with their desire to be deeply engaged in the project and its community often left students feeling overwhelmed. For the second author, the first few months of CFICE work involved a stressful process of learning how to effectively

engage with her community partner while dealing with the substantial demands of her own busy schedule as a PhD student and parent. Other students expressed concerns about the scope of work involved in the CCE projects and worrying whether they would be able to meet project deadlines or adequately fulfill the community's research objectives.

Consistent with the research of Armitage and Levac (2015), CFICE students "inevitably develop[ed] some attachment and sense of responsibility, not only to the success of the project, but also the community itself" (p. 15). For instance, one student talked about the challenge of presenting their thesis research, which related to personal CCE experiences, in ways that would not violate the trust of the community with whom they had become so deeply involved (CFICE Phase I). In their desire to see community objectives through to fruition, students found themselves volunteering their time beyond the scope of their research contract. While this type of arrangement may be appropriate if it suits the interests and availability of the student (as was the case for several CFICE RAs), it should not be an expectation, either explicit or implicit. Students need to be given the space to speak up about their needs and limits, and they themselves need to take or make the opportunity to do so.

The added commitment to a community-first approach can exacerbate common challenges faced by students working as RAs. Collaboration between community and academic partners hinges on building relationships that are respectful and mutually beneficial, which may require negotiation and sharing of resources and time (Altman, 1995; Warren, Park, & Ticken, 2016). Many CFICE RAs felt that they had to make significant efforts within the initial stages of the project to orient themselves to established community partner processes of research and advocacy, as well as the position of community partners within the broader political landscape.

Students also noted a number of challenges related to the practical aspects of working within the overall structure of CFICE, where smaller community-based demonstration projects were embedded within a broader pan-Canadian CCE initiative. Within their unique positions at the intersections of community and academic perspectives, CFICE students were often witness to community-academic tensions. One of the most commonly cited issues by students was their concern with the sometimes significant delays experienced by partner CBOs—whose members often lived at modest income levels—in receiving reimbursement for CCE project expenses from the host institution for CFICE, in comparison to quick funding turnarounds for students (CFICE Phase I). Students also noted discomfort in situations where graduate RAs were paid at rates higher than average CBO staff wages. They perceived this discrepancy to be contrary to the values of a community-first CCE model.

Some CFICE students noted hurdles in aligning research objectives and priorities between community and academic partners, which in some cases were never adequately resolved over the longer-term of the project. Students noted that community partners did not appear to regard academic foci within CFICE—such as longer-term efforts toward influencing wider policy change on community issues—as relevant to more urgent community needs and opportunities for action (Exit Interview, RA15). Rather than experiencing their needs as privileged, CFICE students felt caught in the dissonance between the differing needs and goals of community and academic partners.

Students were not always fully able to grasp the roles they were expected to take on within demonstration projects or within the wider CFICE initiative (Exit Interviews RA02, RA09, RA16; CFICE Phase I). This sometimes led to concerns about duplicated efforts or wasted time, particularly during periods of project orientation or transition (for example, when a new supervisor joined a community project). Students reported that academic and community partners sometimes held differing perspectives regarding student involvement in CCE work. As one student reported, "Am I expected to be in Ottawa? (a long drive…). This was unclear. I got conflicting answers – yes from some; no from others (wanting us to participate)" (RA Exit Interview Summary).

These issues align with similar concerns raised by other CCE scholars who suggest that unfamiliar research methods, working independently for extended periods of time, or taking control over portions of projects can compound the uncertainty and discomfort that students experience in trying to embrace their roles in CCE projects (Levkoe et al., 2014; Pei et al., 2015; Stack-Cutler & Dorow, 2012; Tweed & Boast, 2011). However, over the course of the project, most CFICE students shifted into a better understanding of the CCE environments and community needs, resulting in greater commitment and effort on their part.

Shifted Perspectives toward an Enriched Community-First Ethic

Within some CFICE projects, and for students who came to CFICE with previous community experience, deep engagements with community partners resulted in more extended and nuanced learning. One student noted that their approach to critical analysis was significantly sharpened while working within a project that took a critical approach to the issues facing the communities they were representing at a multi-scalar level: "My feminist analysis has really sharpened. Also, I know more about VAW movement across Canada, the issues, struggles concerns…It was great to learn more about all this" (Exit Interviews, RA04).

One student reported how engagement in community-campus partnerships allowed them access to the rich stories of community members working toward a common cause:

> It was so good to revisit how rich the stories were in creating the network where people worked and making them feasible. It helped me understand – their lives. It gave me the longer-term timeline that made these organizations. Same with types of projects they do. It helped me understand how things happen – something starts small (a student project) and then two years later, someone gets interested and it goes to a new place. It was really interesting to learn about the ways that community research fully involves community development. The process in communities that allow the research, the organization to be created and to thrive. (Exit Interviews, RA21)

Exposure to new learnings and community perspectives within CFICE translated into transformative growth for many students. For the first author of this paper, attending a conference on CCE and hearing the perspectives of community partners representing the voices of diverse communities across Canada 'up-close' were significant to enhancing her

understanding of critical service learning and critical CCE approaches using a social justice lens. This experience deeply magnified the author's learnings from her engagement with the community partners at the VAW hub level and her understanding of how certain issues—such as the current scarcity of resources experienced by community partners working to address critical social issues—transcend sectors and require comprehensive and multi-scalar solutions (with CCE being one of them).

Other students commented that they appreciated discovering new methods of more intentional and meaningful interaction within communities. One student noted, "I learned… how to proactively work in collaboration. More than before—with intention, including everyone, making space for all contributions. Always thinking about diversity, who is included, who is not around the table" (Exit Interviews, RA04). Another student recounted how over time they had learned that centring community needs, and priorities was essential to their involvement in CCE work:

> In my head, as a researcher, I was going to tell the community what they should do (e.g.: tactics to use to lobby government). Then [I had a] big revelation—the community does know what they want, they have this information, they know what they should do, what is effective. (Exit Interviews, RA16)

Yet another student commented that witnessing the efforts of community members, who showed deep levels of integrity and commitment to their activist work—spanning over decades and often within constricting institutions—led them to significantly reconsider their own personal and professional values and question the costly compromises we sometimes tend to accept in the fight for sustainable social change (Exit Interviews, RA04).

Our findings are consistent with the CCE literature in illustrating how community-campus projects facilitate opportunities for students to begin to learn role expectations and associated CCE process-focused competencies. However, the CFICE student reflections and Phase I evaluation data point to a deeper transformation in student values, resulting in greater tuning-in to community-first approaches and practices. Their exposure to and engagement with community-first practices led some students to embrace these in their own work. CFICE RAs understood their positions within CCE projects as (modest but impactful) contributions to larger community agendas.

Suggested Practices to Enhance Student Involvement in Community-First CCE

In this final section, we build on the themes above and propose a series of practices for future community-first community-campus partnerships to help enhance student experiences. Current literature offers several suggested practices to increase the likelihood of positive and effective RAships including these: establishing clear expectations between students and community partners at the beginning of student involvement and maintaining ongoing conversations to ensure that the expectations set out by both are being met (Savan, 2004; Stack-Cutler & Dorow, 2012; Levkoe et al., 2014). Stack-Cutler and Dorow (2012) also suggest

that university and community partners need to provide feedback and share what they have learned about making student engagement work. Our analysis builds on these contributions by outlining a number of suggestions directed at students and those who coordinate or structure CCE projects to enhance student involvement in longer-term CCE RAships and maximize student learning through practice and reflection while centering community progress.

Ensure adequate orientation prior to active RA involvement

Student learnings in RAships within CFICE were typically advanced through informal instruction, observing, reflection, and mentoring. Students had limited opportunities to engage in formal learning through undergraduate/graduate courses about operational structures or research paradigms typically associated with community-campus partnership work. This sometimes resulted in a steep learning curve associated with entry into community projects/ environments, and delays in students grasping their roles and understanding the processes associated with the project.

Consistent with suggested practices in the CCE literature (Armitage & Levac, 2015; Levkoe et al., 2014), CFICE students would have appreciated having a better understanding, early on in their involvement in the project, of the issues that CBOs address and of how to engage with community partners (Exit Interviews, RA09; CFICE Phase I). They suggested that some of their concerns could be addressed at the outset through an information or orientation package that could explain the larger CCE environment and students' roles in it. A number of students further suggested that having an actual orientation in addition to an orientation package ahead of active involvement in the project could help reduce students feeling overwhelmed.[6] For instance, in the transition to her RA position, the first author greatly benefitted from reading a CCE literature review prepared by the outgoing RA in her CFICE hub (VAW); this review included a history of CCE in VAW movements, and examined common barriers to successful CCE work including the impact of power differentials between funders, university administration, university partners, community partners, and the communities served by the community partners.

Map out project details, timelines, and specific RA roles

Our findings suggest that discussing student issues around work-school-life balance during the first weeks of a project, as well as providing some flexibility in weekly hours spent on RA work, may help to address challenges for students in balancing commitments. For example, the second author found that developing a workable schedule for all community partners involved identifying and respecting periods of intensity related to student academic commitments and/ or CBO project goals. While this degree of awareness often comes with experience and is not always available to students new to CCE work, supervisors can assist students from the outset to anticipate and address the ebb and flow of projects and student priorities.

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[6] The CFICE project did develop an RA Orientation Package in 2016; however, it is not something that was referred to in the data. Some of the student RAs included in this research began their RAships prior to its development. It is unclear whether all RAs in fact received this Orientation Package from their supervisor(s).

Students also suggested that project supervisors be clearer about the expectations of how students should participate in the project and what they should be involved in. One student stated, "If RAs are brought into the conversation, it should be clear why" (RA Exit Interview Summary). As much as possible, student role and student engagement should be part of initial project planning. The first author found that attending an initial meeting with all of the academic and community partners offered opportunities for discussion about how their student role corresponded with community partners' priorities and expectations; in particular, how students' research interests, history of activism, or specific organizational skills could be employed in furthering the objectives of the CBO. We encourage students to discuss with their academic and community supervisors what they would like to learn or achieve from their involvement in CCE work; for example, gaining specific research experience, expanding professional networks, or furthering specific environmental or social advocacy efforts. We also encourage supervisors to make space for these issues in their work with students and to prompt students into these reflections.

Maintain frequent communication and recognize opportunities for reflection and learning
Ongoing relationships with community partners within longer-term CCE projects are strengthened when students make time to consider community partner expectations and norms, reflect on how academic and community partner languages may differ, and foster sensitivity to cultural difference within communities. One CFICE RA noted that they kept a reflective journal to help them consider how their daily work connected to broader community objectives (Phase 1 Evaluation). They shared the journal with their supervisor on a weekly basis as a way of recognizing positionality, engaging with and embracing a community-first ethic, and maintaining common understandings with the community partner regarding the purpose of their RA efforts as well as larger community goals.

In general, we recommend that continued and open dialogue take place within CCE projects to ensure that students (in addition to community partners) are getting what they need from these engagements (McGinn et al., 2013; Skorobohacz, 2013). Our findings reinforce those from the CCE literature that students have a responsibility to "seek out assistance, advice and training as needed to fulfill [their] multiple roles and responsibilities" within both academic and community settings (Skorobohacz, 2013, p. 213). While we acknowledge that navigating power relations within the community-campus divide can bring a lot of discomfort to students, and may place limits on what they feel able to do, we encourage students to voice their concerns to supervisors in cases such as where students are required to work beyond an RA contract or if interactions between community partners and students lack respect.

Reflect on, document, apply, and share knowledge and skills gained
The completion of students' involvement in CCE projects offers opportunities to take stock of what students have gained from their experiences, which is often much more than was originally anticipated (Levkoe et al., 2014). As demonstrated in the student perspectives explored in this paper, and consistent with the CCE literature (O'Meara, 2008; Levkoe et al.,

2014), reflection is central to enhancing student learning within CCE engagements. Students had opportunities to reflect on their CCE experiences as part of the CFICE RA exit interviews or through the evaluation of Phase I of CFICE. Within these reflections, they recognized how their community-based efforts also augmented other academic pursuits (e.g. graduate thesis research) and stimulated personal growth. As O'Meara (2008) notes, more effective learning takes place when students integrate reflection and action.

Several CFICE students noted a desire for established and regular venues for knowledge transfer between CFICE RAs, and/or better communication of experiences among students participating in other CCE projects (e.g. through project reports or wider online forums). These could have helped students better navigate challenges within community projects, particularly during periods of transition such as staff/supervisor transfers or the introduction of new projects. These suggestions align with the CCE literature that encourages students to share their insights with others regarding the realities of participating in CCE initiatives (Stack-Cutler & Dorow, 2012). CCE learnings can also be effectively disseminated by students through academic venues such as journal articles and conference presentations. Beyond the obvious benefits of adding to student authorship of academic publications, this approach establishes points of connection to other students' perspectives in the wider literature on engaged scholarship, helping to advance understandings of how students can meaningfully participate in and strengthen community-centred partnerships.

Conclusion

Embedded RAships in CFICE projects placed students in dynamic positions as they negotiated complex power relations with and among community and academic partners. Students dealt with concurrent academic and personal obligations, intersecting identities, and the larger community-campus divide as they sought to fully embrace a community-first approach to CCE work. The student experiences described in this paper are neither exhaustive nor generalizable to all students' experiences in long-term CCE; rather, they offer a glimpse into the possibilities, impacts, and complexities that students experience in CCE work. The "reflexive iteration" (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009, p. 77) used for the data analysis revealed that the benefits and impacts experienced by the students did not come without associated uncertainties and feelings of "discomfort." For some of the students, working within and through these tensions and discomforts was transformative, leading to enhanced learning opportunities and an enriched community-first ethic.

CFICE student perspectives extend the insights gained from the broader literature on the experiences of research assistants and other students involved in longer-term CCE work (Levkoe et al, 2014; Niemczyk, 2013; Pei, et al., 2015; Savan, 2004; Schwartz, 2010), and further inform practical suggestions for enhancing student engagement in community-first CCE projects. A community-first approach provides student researchers with expanded opportunities for critical reflection, capacity building, and relationship development, while at the same time forcing students to contend with challenging power imbalances and conflicts borne out of navigating complex political and interpersonal terrains. We encourage students

and community/academic partners to work towards open and honest dialogue about the role of students in CCE projects and how it may be maximized to benefit student learning and community partner progress alike.

The student perspectives explored in this paper help build a more nuanced awareness of the many ways that CCE can contribute toward meaningful student learning and socialization. This paper focused on students' perspectives in long-term CCE RAships, as the CCE literature had not yet explored the student experience from this vantage point. However, it is important to add that it is not the sole responsibility of the students to make CCE projects work. Our suggestions for practice should be considered in conjunction with other recommendations in the literature on how to strengthen community/academic partnerships and students' roles within them. Additionally, future studies should put students' experiences in dialogue with the reflections and experiences of the community and academic partners in order to provide a dialogical perspective on long-term students' engagement in CCE. With better understanding, community and academic partners in CCE projects centring the needs of CBOs can build pathways toward improved options for student learning and future careers, and through purposeful supervision build on the vast experiences and expertise that students bring to CCE efforts.

Acknowledgements

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"Community First" for Whom? Reflections on the Possibilities and Challenges of Community-Campus Engagement from the Community Food Sovereignty Hub

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ABSTRACT   While community-campus engagement (CCE) has gained prominence in postsecondary institutions, critics have called for a more direct focus on community goals and objectives. In this paper, we explore the possibilities and limitations of community-centred research through our collective experiences with the Community First: Impacts of Community Engagement (CFICE) and the Community Food Sovereignty (CFS) Hub. Drawing on a four-year research project with twelve community-campus partnership projects across Canada, we outline three key areas for reflection. First, we examine the meanings of community-centred research—called "community first"—in our work. Second, we explore key tensions that resulted from putting "community first" research into practice. Third, we discuss possibilities that emerged from attempts to engage in "community first" CCE. We suggest that while putting "community first" presents an opportunity to challenge hierarchical relationships between academia, western ways of knowing, and community, it does not do so inherently. Rather, the CCE process is complex and contested, and in practice it often fails to meaningfully dismantle hierarchies and structures that limit grassroots community leadership and impact. Overall, we argue for the need to both champion and problematize "community first" approaches to CCE and through these critical, and sometimes difficult conversations, we aim to promote more respectful and reciprocal CCE that works towards putting "community first."

KEYWORDS   community-campus engagement; community first; food sovereignty; food systems; Canada; community-based research

Community-Campus Engagement (CCE) has gained popularity amongst academics across North America. CCE is a concept that includes a broad range of research and teaching activities such as community-based research, community service-learning, and other forms of engagement between community-based organizations and postsecondary institutions (Cronley, Madden, & Davis, 2015; Israel, Schulz, Parker, & Becker, 1998; Schwartz, 2010). While CCE practices are diverse, here we use the term to describe partnerships between community-based organizations and university faculty, students, and staff that aim to create mutually beneficial relationships (Andrée et al., 2014; Levkoe et al., 2016; Strand, Cutforth, Stoecker, Marullo, & Donohue, 2003).

Despite its many successes, critics have argued that CCE tends to privilege postsecondary

institutions instead of community goals and objectives (Bortolin, 2011; Dempsey, 2010). Despite these sentiments, there is little documentation and study of what it means to put "community first" in CCE. Even among attempts to articulate and implement these efforts (for example, Cronley et al., 2015; Levkoe et al., 2016; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000), few studies have discussed what the concept of "community-centred" or "community first" means to community and academic participants as well as the resulting opportunities and challenges arising from participants' different goals and objectives within this framework.

In this article, we focus on "community first" CCE used by the Community First: Impacts of Community Engagement (CFICE), Community Food Sovereignty (CFS)[1] Hub to frame our research. In doing so, we do not suggest that "community first" CCE is necessarily the ideal way to structure community-campus partnerships in all contexts; rather, we use it as a way to examine our own aspirations and to understand how our research practices measured up to our theoretical framings within CFICE. As members of the CFS Hub management team, we examine what "community first" has meant in theory and practice within our research. While we draw general conclusions that might be helpful to others working on community-centred research, we offer the following as reflections that are specific to our own research experiences with the CFS Hub.

CFICE is a Pan-Canadian action research project that works with academics and community groups to better understand how community-campus partnerships can be designed and implemented to maximize value for community-based organizations. Established in 2012, the first phase of the project was structured to work through interconnected hubs focusing on social, economic, and environmental issues, each with community and academic co-leads. The CFS Hub was established to advance food sovereignty, "the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems" (Nyéléni, 2007). Between 2012 and 2016, the CFS Hub worked closely with Food Secure Canada (FSC), the Canadian Association of Food Studies (CAFS), and about 30 community and academic partners to explore different models of CCE and, in doing so, to share approaches and practices that support food sovereignty in Canada.[2]

As part of the CFS Hub management team, the three authors of this paper[3] shared the

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[1] When established, the CFS Hub was originally named the Community Food Security Hub. In the second year of the project, the name was changed to the Community Food Sovereignty Hub to reflect the participants' values and the direction of the research.

[2] The CFS Hub supported twelve demonstration projects across Canada including: The Regina Food Assessment, A Developmental Evaluation to Explore a Budding Community/Academic Collaboration, Creating a Food Hub through University-Community Partnership, Edible Campus: From Showcase to Living Classroom, Planning for Change: Community Development in Practice, Local Food Multipliers and Accessibility in Northern Ontario, Models of Community University Collaboration in the Waterloo Region Food System, Cross-Cultural Food Networks: Building and Maintaining Inclusive Food Security Networks to Support Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Communities, Campus Food Initiative Study, Paying for Nutrition: Income and Food Costs Across Canada, Sharing the Table Manitoba: Sustainable-Local Food Systems, Regulation and Policy-Making in Manitoba, Responsibility and Relationships: Decolonizing the British Columbia Food Systems Network/Indigenizing our Praxis.

[3] Cathleen Kneen was the fourth management team member.

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goal of creating sustainable, equitable food systems through grassroots food sovereignty movements. Through the CFS Hub and its focus on "community first" research, we saw an opportunity to address community needs and advance food sovereignty in Canada. However, we each came from different perspectives and played different roles within the CFS Hub. Abra Brynne worked as a staff member with FSC as well as a demonstration project partner with the British Columbia Food Systems Network. Charles Levkoe began as the academic lead on the Planning for Change demonstration projects before assuming the role of the CFS Hub's academic co-lead. Lauren Kepkiewicz was employed as the CFS Hub's research assistant while completing a PhD. All three authors had worked within the Canadian food movement and had experience doing food systems research. Taking these different positionalities into consideration, we use this paper as an opportunity to collaboratively reflect on key challenges and possibilities in doing "community first" research within the CFS Hub.

In the following section, we begin by describing CCE in relation to a history of inequity that has valued academic ways of knowing above community-based epistemologies and privileged dominant western approaches to knowledge.[4] This section provides context for understanding some of the structural constraints on our attempts to do "community first" research within the CFS Hub. Next, drawing on our collective experiences within the CFS Hub, we reflect on three key areas. First, we explore the meaning of "community first" CCE within the CFS Hub and how our understandings of this approach developed. Second, we address key tensions in putting "community first" research into practice within the CFS Hub, including timelines and funding structures that re-centred academic control over the research process. Third, we outline possibilities that emerged from our attempts to put "community first" in CCE.

We conclude that "community first" has been an important aspiration; however, the process for doing this type of CCE work has been complex and contested. Despite our best efforts, we fell short of our aim to engage in research that benefitted communities first and foremost. While emphasizing the importance of working towards "community first" CCE, we are cautious of our ability to do so meaningfully in the present political and economic context where academic institutions privilege western and academic knowledge and expertise. We emphasize the structural limitations of "community first" CCE, acknowledging that "community first" CCE is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to achieve within current academic structures. Furthermore, community first approaches do not inherently challenge western epistemologies, as this depends not only on a project's orientation but also on the particular individuals and communities involved. Additionally, we suggest that "community first" research can reproduce dominant western ways of knowing, depending on the communities one works with. In this context we encourage CCE practitioners to problematize

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[4] Western knowledge refers to a system that privileges particular forms of knowledge and practice. It is premised on an epistemology that privileges the scientific method, positivism, individuality, objectivity, and the separation and quantification of time, space, and relationships with the natural world (Tuhiwai Smith 2008). Following Said, Foucault, and Hall, Tuhiwai Smith explains that western knowledge is based in systems of classification and representation "which are coded in such ways as to 'recognize' each other and either mesh together, or create a cultural 'force field' which can screen out competing and oppositional discourses" (p. 47). This is done in order to define certain people as humans and others as not-humans, with the purpose of ensuring ongoing Western dominance.

framings of "community first" that assume a homogeneous definition of community. Rather, it is necessary to be clear about which communities—and whose communities—research prioritizes, recognizing that the principles and mechanisms for engagement may be distinct (e.g. for small businesses, municipal governments, non-profit organizations, and/or social movements).

Because academics and community members face a complex array of challenges in conducting "community first" research, the label should be used with caution. However, this should not dampen the aspiration to achieve more community-focused collaborations. Overall, we argue for the need to both champion and problematize "community first" CCE methodologies in ways that challenge academic institutions that uphold western and academic ways of knowing. Through these critical, and sometimes difficult conversations, our aim is to engage in more respectful, reciprocal, and equitable research relationships that benefit "communities first".

"Community First" Community-Campus Engagement?

CCE can be broadly described as partnerships between campus-based actors (including postsecondary students, postdoctoral fellows, instructors, faculty, and their institutions) and community-based practitioners and activists (including private, public, and non-profit sectors). CCE partnerships include research and teaching intended to support community-based organizations to meet their goals while making campuses more relevant and accountable to their communities. While CCE includes a range of approaches (e.g. community-based research, participatory action research, or service-learning), each shares a commitment to building respectful and mutually beneficial partnerships. Central to these relationships is the assumption that partnerships are based on the reciprocal and meaningful exchange of knowledge and resources (Carnegie Elective Community Engagement Classification, 2015; Flicker, 2008).

Despite positive intentions (for the most part), critics have argued that unreflexive approaches to community-based research can reproduce hierarchical relationships that privilege campuses and fail to adequately address community needs and knowledge (Bortolin, 2011; Flicker, 2008). For many community-based practitioners, and particularly for non-profit organizations, priorities tend to focus on program delivery with limited capacity and resources to take on research-related projects. As the network Incite! Women of Colour Against Violence (2007) argues, this is due, in part, to funding obligations and the immediacy of social needs that would otherwise go unmet, particularly within the current context of neoliberalization.[5] For example, the Incite network argues that neoliberal policies have placed increasing responsibility for delivering direct services on non-profit organizations rather than the state while at the same time demanding that non-profits increasingly structure themselves like businesses, often limiting their abilities to push for radical social-justice programing and advocacy. Further,

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[5] Neoliberalism has been described as a series of political and economic practices giving primacy to entrepreneurial freedom, strong private property rights, individual liberty, free markets and free trade as a way to advance human wellbeing (Harvey, 2005). The term 'neoliberalization' denotes that this is a dynamic system and not fixed in time.

critics have also noted that many community-campus partnerships perpetuate dominant social relations with no intention to challenge systems of inequality or to change underlying causes (Butcher, Bazzina, & Moran, 2011; Butin 2010; McBride, Brav. Menon, & Sherraden, 2006). For example, while community-based knowledge and experiences are an essential part of research, the academy often fails to recognize these as credible or legitimate (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999).

Although different forms of CCE have attempted to address these critiques, they remain embedded in broader contexts of exploitation and inequity. In many cases, community members, and particularly marginalized communities, have experienced the academy as an elitist institution with rules and regulations that work to legitimize certain types of knowledge and knowers, positioning western (e.g., predominantly white, male, settler, upper class) epistemologies above community-based experiences and knowledges, particularly those originating within Indigenous communities and other marginalized groups (Battiste, 2008; Kovach, 2009; Simpson, 2011; Tuck 2009; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). For example, Tuhiwai Smith (1999) argues that academic institutional rules, regulations, and expectations have created a context in which, "Western ideas about the most fundamental things are the only ideas possible to hold, certainly the only rational ideas, and the only ideas which can make sense of the world, of reality, of social life, and of human beings" (p. 56). These assumptions centre western knowledge production that prioritizes presumed rationality and objectivity over heart-, experiential- and emotion-based ways of knowing (Hart, Straka, & Rowe, 2017). They also assume academic ownership over all data, and position academia as the only space in which 'legitimate' knowledge production occurs (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999).

Although we believe that "community first" CCE in its ideal form must challenge both western and academic epistemologies, we also recognize that as white, non-Indigenous researchers we operate within and benefit from institutional structures predicated on extractive relationships and the legitimization of specific ways of knowing over others. Thus we have a particular responsibility as "community first" CCE practitioners to challenge and change "the histories, social relations and conditions that structure groups unequally" (Verjee, 2012, p. 66), and "create new structures of engagement" (Sheridan & Jacobi, 2014, p. 13). Without these actions for change, we do not believe it is possible to engage in CCE that puts "community first" and decentres western knowledge production.

Methodologies

Our collective reflection for this article began with a roundtable session organized at the 2015 CAFS Assembly entitled, *Power Dynamics in Community Campus Partnerships for Food Sovereignty.* The session brought together academic and community partners involved in the CFS Hub to share perspectives of the power dynamics within attempts to put "community first" in the demonstration projects and the CFS Hub more broadly. The session was recorded, transcribed, and analyzed as a starting point for developing this paper. In presenting our reflections, we also draw from evaluations conducted by the CFS Hub and final reports from demonstration project partners. As part of our collective reflection, we kept notes of discussions and

reflections throughout our work with the CFS Hub.

While we have worked collaboratively as the CFS Hub management team, it is important to highlight our different roles, positionalities, and perspectives. As a community co-lead and staff with FSC from 2012 to 2015, Abra is a community-based researcher and seasoned activist with extensive knowledge of food systems as well as experience working with social movements and CCE projects. When the opportunity arose to take on the role of academic co-lead of the CFS Hub, Charles was eager to work more closely with community and academic leaders within Canadian food movements. Mobilizing his experience in the non-profit and agricultural sectors, Charles was responsible for ensuring the broad visions and objectives of CFICE were implemented through the research partnerships. As the research assistant for the CFS Hub, Lauren provided research and logistical support to the demonstration projects as well as the CFS Hub management team, while being greatly influenced by grassroots activist work within Indigenous and settler food movements. In the following three sections, we present key reflections on what "community first" has meant within CFICE as well as how it has worked in practice within the CFS Hub.

Reflection #1: What does "community first" mean within CFICE and the CFS Hub?

As discussed above, CFICE was established in response to critiques that many CCE projects fail to adequately engage in research and teaching that puts "community first." In this context, CFICE aimed to establish "healthier, more democratic and longer-lasting community-campus relationships" (CFICE, n.d.). According to the website for the overarching project, "**being community first means** engaging in *equitable* partnerships to *co-create* knowledge and action plans for addressing pressing community issues" (CFICE, n.d., emphasis in original).[6] These efforts are rooted in a belief that collaborative and mutually-beneficial community-academic partnerships (including knowledge co-creation and mobilization) are essential to more sustainable futures. During the first phase of CFICE, (from 2012-2015), this belief manifested through the establishment of five independent-operating thematic hubs that were co-developed and led by academic and community partners.[7]

To examine the question of how to do "community first" CCE research, CFICE worked with academic and community partners to co-develop project goals, objectives, methods, and underlying concepts. These partners came together within each hub as well as through quarterly program committee meetings to reflect on the progress and to make decisions about the overall project direction. While there was some turnover of participants, community organizations were actively involved throughout the project.

Within the CFS Hub, our understanding of "community first" built on the larger project's definition of the phrase, while at the same time adapting it to address the specific goals and needs of our academic and community partners. In addition to core partners Food Secure

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[6] Although the CFS Hub is one of the thematic hubs under CFICE, the authors were not involved in developing the initial "community-first" vision, definitions, and methodologies of the project.

[7] The five thematic hubs included: The Community Food Sovereignty Hub, the Poverty Reduction Hub, the Community Environmental Sustainability Hub, the Violence Against Women Hub, and the Knowledge Mobilization Hub.

Canada and Canadian Association of Food Studies, the CFS Hub had over 30 community and academic participants engaged in the demonstration projects over the first four years of the project. For the CFS Hub, building a "community first" approach meant that CCE work must take direction from its core community partner, FSC, who is a key convener of Canadian food movements. As a result, one of the main goals of the CFS Hub was to provide core support for a network of community-campus partnerships that intersected with FSC's key program areas: zero hunger, healthy and safe food and sustainable food systems (Food Secure Canada [FSC], n.d.).[8]

The CFS Hub was originally composed of one community co-lead and one academic co-lead; as relationships and trust developed over time, the management team evolved to include the research assistant as well as an FSC staff liaison. Through this evolution the CFS Hub developed a horizontal governance structure based on developing consensus among all members (Kepkiewicz, Srivastava, Levkoe, Brynne, & Kneen, 2017). The ongoing participation of a FSC staff liaison enabled continuity within the CFS Hub, ensuring that a representative from FSC would be part of decision-making processes. This involvement and collaborative decision making structure was a key aspect of the CFS Hub's attempt to engage in "community first" CCE.

Another attempt to engage in "community first" CCE included supporting Canadian food movement networks by providing small pots of funding to twelve CCE demonstration projects. Each of the projects was based on existing collaborations between community-based practitioners and academic researchers working to transform food systems in Canada. The CFS Hub funds sought to enable the extension and evaluation of these projects' relationships, with the intention to better understand how non-profit community organizations can effectively share control of and benefit from community-campus partnerships. Each demonstration project received funds to participate for one year, with additional communication and evaluation over the duration of the project. Some participants contributed to CFS Hub presentations to share their work and experiences at FSC's biannual assemblies and annual CAFS conferences.

The relationship between demonstration project partners and the CFS Hub was guided by collaborative partnership agreements co-created and negotiated with each demonstration project to ensure that all those involved had an opportunity to contribute to the vision, objectives, and practical details of the partnership. While the demonstration project partners retained ultimate control in determining the direction of their CCE project partnerships, the collaborative agreement provided a platform to articulate how they would work with the CFS Hub to expand and evaluate these partnerships.

While the original intention was to have a representative from each demonstration project involved in the CFS Hub's decision making, this proved difficult. Many community practitioners had neither time nor resources to participate in work that was not directly connected to organizational projects. Recognizing these limitations, the CFS Hub management

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[8] Of note, not one of the management team members (including this article's authors) was directly involved in the initial process due to personnel changes in the project over time. This situation is not uncommon in long-term projects due to staff changes, personal leaves, and unexpected illness.

team attempted to maintain communication with each demonstration project, for example, by providing news and updates through the CFICE website and CFS Hub newsletters. Demonstration project partners and the CFS Hub also came together to co-author several reports and academic articles and share their experiences through a series of conference presentations, workshops, and webinars. These initiatives helped to articulate learnings and reflect on what it means to engage in research and teaching that attempt to put "community first."

By describing the ways that CFICE and the CFS Hub understood and attempted to put "community first" CCE into practice, our intention is to reflect on how we engaged in collaborative research and decision-making processes. These attempts included working closely with FSC staff and supporting a network of community organizations building food movements in Canada. However, we also recognize that we were not always effective in engaging in CCE that puts "community first." In the next section, we identify the limitations of our work, including our own mistakes as well as broader institutional constraints.

Reflection #2: What have been the key tensions in putting ideals of "community first" into practice?
Reflecting on the ways that "community first" was put into practice within the CFS Hub, we highlight several key challenges. In particular, we outline how our own project design and methodology decisions did not always support our "community first" vision but instead entrenched research practices that centre academic power over funding, timelines, and definitions of community. Further, we recognize that these practices are rooted in institutional structures that prioritize academic ways of knowing and, in doing so, perpetuate power inequities between different actors. Taking both these personal and structural factors into consideration, our intention is to critically reflect on the limitations of our attempts to disrupt conventional approaches to CCE and academic research more generally. We see this reflection process (and the actions that follow) as a key part of moving towards "community first" CCE.

In CFS Hub work, we found that timelines were often dictated by academic needs and research practices that took precedence over those of the community. For example, pre-determined academic funding structures and University ethics applications required clear start and end dates, a linear timeline that begins with background research, proceeds to data collection and analysis, and concludes with disseminating research findings rather than a timeline designed to facilitate community partner projects and build relationships (as key method and outcome of knowledge production). While in some cases this was not a problem, in others, community partners expressed concern that the project was moving too quickly without adequate time to build trust and create and revisit mutual understandings and guidelines for relationships and research (although the development of collaborative agreements discussed above were helpful). As such, academic ways of conducting research and producing knowledge were often prioritized with timelines focused on the collection and dissemination of "data" rather than continually nurturing and renegotiating relationships.

Academic funding structures also set timeframes that often did not match community-based timelines that centred on ongoing work and relationship-building. Although we had

hoped to continue relationships beyond the one-year duration of the demonstration project partnerships, once the project funding was spent, many community partners felt unable to continue to engage without additional supports for staff time and resources. This was significant because a year was often just enough time to begin building relationships. For example, one community-based practitioner told the CFS Hub management team that they had just begun to develop trust for building meaningful research relationships when the first phase of the project was ending and the CFS Hub was set to dissolve. As a result, the individuals who had developed the partnership were no longer funded, nor were there further funds available to support the emerging relationship. While this did not prevent the partners from continuing relationships on an individual basis, we/they were not supported in doing so at the CFS Hub level or as part of the larger project, which continued onto a different research phase.

In Figure 1, Abra illustrates how community-based participants experienced academic engagement within the demonstration projects as well as between the demonstration projects and the CFS Hub. The sentiment is that academic engagement with community is typically broken into several phases based on availability in contrast to community timelines, which often stretch over long periods of time in order to accomplish their goals. Within our project, university structures often demanded that community-campus partnerships work in relation to the ebb and flow of students and faculty, rather than building long-term relationships, while community-based organizations' work is generally shaped by ongoing community needs and pressures.
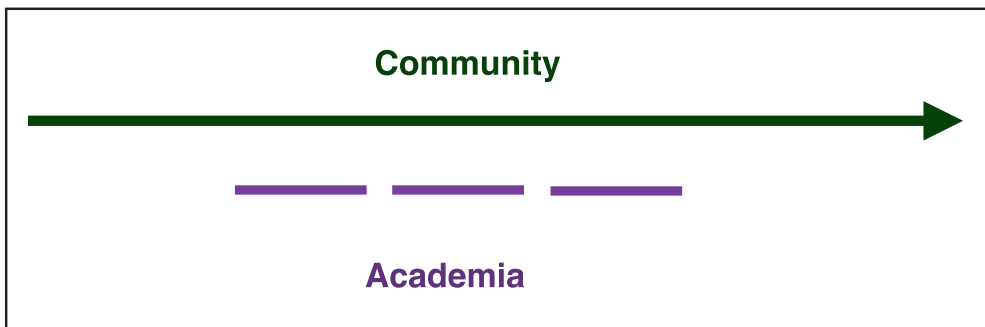
Figure 1. **Brynne's visual depiction of academic engagement in community initiatives**

A second major tension in our attempts to put "community first" occurred around funding. While academics in Canada do not typically raise money for their own salaries, they rely on funding to purchase equipment, hire researchers, support students, conduct research, and advance their careers. In contrast, most community organizations involved in the CFS Hub were dependent on raising funds for day-to-day activities, staff salaries, and general operations. Within the CFS Hub, each demonstration project received approximately $5,000 to support and evaluate a pre-existing CCE project working towards food sovereignty. Some projects received additional funding for travel to conferences and meetings (e.g. FSC and

CAFS Assemblies) as well as supports to share research findings, including webinars, public reports, and podcasts. The collaborative agreements outlined mutually agreed responsibilities and outputs, yet the demonstration projects had significant flexibility for how they used the funding. For example, one project used the money to hire a consultant to conduct a formal project evaluation followed by a workshop to discuss evaluation themes. Another project directed funds towards staff time to increase organizational capacity to reflect on the project and improve communications.

While demonstration projects had primary authority to spend the funds, and most used the money to suit their needs, multiple demonstration projects reflected that the funds were more work to administer than they were worth. For example, partners pointed to the significant time it took to receive the funding and to comply with bureaucratic requirements. Additionally, demonstration project partners underlined the need for Community-Campus Engagement partnerships to come with more substantial and sustained funding. While tenured academic researchers have a secure income that pays their salaries to engage in CCE, community-based practitioners operate in contexts where their positions can be extremely precarious, often tied to specific projects and with excessive work expectations for limited compensation.

Another major challenge faced was that the fundamental terms of the partnership were predetermined and controlled by the CFS Hub, the CFICE mandate, the administering university, and the funder. Although the activities of CFICE were designed to benefit CCE partnerships, for many community partners these benefits were either overly abstract, a mismatch with programs and obligations tied to funding sources, or too aspirational to be able to commit staff time and organizational resources.

Additionally, the CFS Hub was responsible for making decisions regarding which projects received funding as well as how to allocate other funds (e.g., for conference travel, research assistant salaries, and knowledge dissemination). Because funds originated from a federal research funding agency, monies needed to be administered by an academic institution. Further, the academic co-lead was ultimately responsible and accountable for all funding decisions. Although funding decisions were made collaboratively by the CFS Hub's management team, the primary authority over allocation of funds remained within the academy.

Another tension around funding arose when community partners did not fulfill the terms of the collaborative agreements. For example, some demonstration projects did not submit a final report, or declined to participate in ongoing CFS Hub activities. In this context, the management team felt more like a funder that had provided resources for evaluation, rather than a collaborative partner. Whereas the CFS Hub envisioned a collaborative relationship spanning the seven years of the larger project, there was only a small amount of direct funding for demonstration projects. In this context, we came to understand that many of the community-based organizations needed a funder rather than a research partner, especially smaller organizations that were over-worked and under-funded. In other words, organizations had limited capacity for building partnerships and instead often needed to focus on funding for their ongoing survival.

Reflecting on these tensions, we believe demonstration project partners may have viewed

CFICE as a more valuable and genuine partner if the CFS Hub had the resources and mandate to more actively participate in and contribute to their project beyond the evaluation. This needed to be project-specific, which would have required additional resources and different kinds of experiences, beyond the capacity of the CFS Hub management team. In some cases, individuals from the CFS Hub management team used their personal expertise to support a demonstration project, but at the CFS Hub level, we were not particularly purposeful nor explicit about the value of these relationships. This contribution depended on a good match between the individuals involved. For example, Abra's experience with community-based activism and policy work related to meat production enabled her to contribute, in concrete ways, to a demonstration project focused on similar issues.

A third tension we encountered while attempting to put "community first" into practice was the way CCE tends to favour particular community members who are often part of formal organizations, rather than informal groups and social movements. Academic research structures are often more conducive to developing partnerships with community organizations that have well-established institutionalized structures. At the same time, formal organizations tend to be better positioned to work with academics. For example, despite an intention to support food sovereignty movements, the CFS Hub partnered primarily with registered non-profit organizations. These kinds of community organizations are often perceived by academic institutions and funders to be more accountable and responsible due to their legal requirements as non-profits. They also tend to have more capacity, including the time needed for negotiating and building community-campus relationships, the ability to handle the administrative work accompanying these partnerships, and the ability to work with the research itself, with staff members who can be seconded or assigned to different projects.

However, while non-profit organizations play an important role in social and ecological justice efforts, they should not be construed as *the* movement. Most of the non-profit organizations we worked with had a specific mandate and a small number of professional staff and/or volunteers. These organizations and staff/volunteers certainly contributed to larger movements, but they were not necessarily representative of the broader grassroots communities who are integral to movements and movement-building.

While there are advantages to doing "community first" research with practitioners who are not involved in formal organizations, working with informal groups brings a different set of challenges. A lack of financial resources is often compounded among informal community actors, as funding bodies are often uncomfortable and/or unwilling to support individual activists and grassroots groups. While these groups typically have accountability mechanisms in place—based, for example, on interpersonal relationships and community networks— academic funding structures rarely value these as highly as formal mechanisms.

Understanding the different ways that our project's "community first" CCE research attempted to engage community actors is necessary within a context ripe with assumptions about *who* community includes and *whose* communities are prioritized. This understanding emerged during the first year of the CFS Hub, when the management team observed that organizations claiming to speak for community members may privilege particular perspectives

and "represent a level of bureaucracy that can get in the way of understanding what community members really think, feel and need" (Andrée et al., 2014, p. 43). It is important to articulate the specifics of the community actors involved in "community first" CCE as well as engaging with the ways that communities include hierarchies and power imbalances. For example, a community-based activist expressed disappointment at the fact that CFICE had chosen to work with well-established community organizations in the area in which she lived. Furthermore, she expressed disappointment that such large academic projects were not doing more to support grassroots activists working to address structural issues and inequities within the community.

Our project's engagement with non-profit organizations meant that certain community members were more likely than others to participate in our research. Academic funding and administrative structures made non-profit organizations more attractive CCE partners, often resulting in partnerships with non-profit leaders who tended to be (but were certainly not always) white, middle-class, non-Indigenous, and generally unrepresentative of the entire communities they served. In this way, academic structures had a major influence on which community members—many rooted in western ways of knowing—were able to participate in our research. This, in turn, influenced the way the CFS Hub worked. For example, one partner suggested the linear depiction of time outlined in Figure 1 is rooted in a western perspective that fails to take into account understandings of time as circular.

While most of the demonstration projects aimed to transform food systems, we observed that non-profit organizations with formalized structures were generally less inclined than grassroots networks and activists to take on controversial projects in order to secure funding and appeal to the general public. In this context, it is important to understand which communities are more likely to be approached by academics as well as how the structures of research institutions better enable (as well as constrain) certain kinds of CCE.

Reflection #3: What are the Possibilities for Putting "Community First" in CCE?

Despite the challenges in putting "community first" within CCE, our collective experiences suggest some key steps that academics and community-based practitioners can take to build more respectful and reciprocal relationships. While we believe "community first" research is an important goal, it is extremely difficult to achieve within academic institutions that continue to centre western methodologies, prioritize university "experts" over community knowledge-holders, and allocate funding to academics rather than community members. Still, we believe we must continue to work towards "community first" CCE by clearly articulating intentions and goals; recognizing and embracing differences as well as commonalities; ensuring research design and questions are determined by communities in collaboration with academic partners; and creating research that centres anti-colonial and social justice theories and practices.

First, we suggest that those involved in "community first" CCE clearly articulate intentions and goals from the outset, including being upfront regarding our capacity to meaningfully engage in "community first" research. Academics might ask: *What limitations do I face in working toward a "community first" approach and are they surmountable within my current institutional context? For*

what and whose purpose am I asking to partner with community actors? Whose time am I taking and for whose benefit? Often, academics uncritically assume that their research is valuable, even if no tangible benefits exist for community partners. Likewise, community-based participants might ask: *Is this partnership worthwhile to our organizational mandate? What are the key elements that we are not willing to compromise?*

The Community Food Sovereignty Hub attempted to encourage these conversations through collaborative agreements between the demonstration projects and the management team. These agreements provided space to articulate goals and expectations, including expected outputs and potential benefits of the collaboration. Based on our experiences, taking time to develop the terms of CCE partnerships before beginning research (as well as revisiting these terms throughout the research) is a key part of ensuring that different partners' desires and goals are met. Additionally, we believe it is important to be upfront about whether and how our research is/was able to meet "community first" aspirations. In our case, it would have been helpful to use language that indicated we were working towards building "community first" CCE rather than assuming our CCE approach would inherently produce equitable research relationships.

Part of articulating and reflecting on research intentions and goals also leads to our second suggestion, which is for those involved in CCE research to understand and embrace differences and commonalities. For example, academics and community practitioners might ask: What do I have in common with the person/organization/university I am partnering with, and how are our goals and needs different? By asking these questions we underline the importance of partners critically reflecting on the ways in which we are positioned differently within our work. Our experiences have demonstrated that academics in particular (but community partners as well) need to approach "community first" CCE work with an understanding of the ways in which we are implicated in and benefit from institutional structures that privilege western and/or academic knowledge production. Even though academics working on "community first" CCE may not agree with this privileging, we/they often benefit from these structures, particularly white, settler, upper class, male academics. Similarly, partners may also be dominantly positioned within their communities and can benefit from additional critical reflection on their power and privilege. As a result, we believe that it is important to approach "community first" CCE relationships with humility, an ability to engage with positionalities, a commitment to building trust, and, finally, concrete actions to change institutional structures privileging certain bodies over others. Academics in particular need to avoid expectations of and entitlement to CCE partnerships.

Third, our experiences highlight the necessity of ensuring that communities, and particularly those most marginalized, have control over research design, purpose, and findings. Those involved in the research process might ask: How are decisions made relating to research questions, data, and dissemination of results? Who makes these decisions and who retains control over research data? Who is involved in the research process, and who is not? During the first year of the CFS Hub, a collaborative agreement with the British Columbia Food Systems Network, one of the demonstration projects, stated: "The individuals interviewed

for this project, as well as members of the BC Food Systems Network, retain a high level of control over the research process, interpretation of results, and the sharing of results" (Chapman & Martin, 2013, p. 2). Additionally, demonstration project evaluations suggested community research dissemination should include corresponding community-focused outputs, in conjunction with the publication of academic articles. Community outputs might include policy briefs or public forums, where findings are accessible, in both language and format, to a wide audience.

Fourth, we suggest the importance of adopting anti-colonial and social-justice research frameworks, especially when working with social movement organizations. While the content of anti-colonial and social-justice frameworks may be different depending on the context and partners, these frameworks provide necessary insight and actions to dismantle power hierarchies between academics and communities as well as within communities themselves. We suggest that those involved in the research might ask: *How does this research challenge extractive research practices? How does it support marginalized community members while challenging power structures based on racial, gendered, colonial, and other hierarchies? How does this research partnership support movements for social justice and decolonization?*

In general, we have found that, when academic and community partners approach partnerships with the aim of challenging social inequities through system-level change, these relationships establish a context in which all those involved can meaningfully begin to move towards "community first" CCE.

While these recommendations support more equitable and respectful "community first" CCE, we remain uncertain whether it is possible to create research that meaningfully puts "community first" within the confines of current structures that privilege academics and western ways of knowing. As we have outlined above, research funding is often structured to place significant power and decision-making in the hands of academics in CCE partnerships. Similarly, linear timelines tended to prioritize data collection and academic outputs rather than centring community epistemologies, which are often iterative, embedded in cultural and social practices, and relationship-based. Additionally, non-profit organizations are often chosen as CCE partners because funders and academics tend to see them as more accountable and better equipped to deal with the administrative work of CCE partnerships. However, these groups are often constrained by funding and organizational mandates in their ability to radically challenge social inequities in comparison to grassroots networks and activists. Additionally, our engagement with non-profit organizations and the particular bodies that tend to make up these organizations encouraged continued work within western knowledge production paradigms.

While we personally remain committed to "community first" CCE, we highlight the importance of embracing the complexities and specificities of doing so, recognizing that current funding structures as well as academic timelines and assumptions greatly inhibit "community first" approaches, demanding that our work challenge academic institutions and structures in order to better serve both the academic and non-academic communities with which we work.

Concluding Thoughts

Reflecting on our collective experiences doing "community first" CCE, we highlighted CFICE's understanding of "community first" as the creation of equitable partnerships and the co-creation of knowledge. Building on this definition, the CFS Hub attempted to engage in "community first" CCE research by taking cues from FSC (our core community partner), and in doing so supported CCE partnerships aimed at building healthy, sustainable, and equitable food systems. However, while we believed these efforts were oriented towards "community first" CCE, we also underlined the ways that we fell short of meeting our goals. Our limitations were rooted both in our own mistakes as well as restrictions within academic systems, especially timelines and funding structures that facilitated academic control over CCE partnerships.

We also discussed the ways in which homogenous understandings of community led to CCE work that does not necessarily address power inequities either within or beyond communities. In particular, we highlighted the ways academic structures tend to privilege partnering with particular kinds of communities. For example, many non-profit organizations can be dominated by staff who benefit from dominant structures, and whose background is often (though certainly not always) rooted in western epistemologies.

While underlining the limitations of our research decisions, as well as broader institutional structures privileging western ways of knowing, we reflected on the possibilities of moving towards CCE that puts "community first" rather than simply assuming we were successful in doing this kind of work. We suggest that these possibilities might include:

- ensuring those involved in "community first" CCE partnerships can articulate intentions and goals;
- critically reflecting on and engaging with commonalities and differences amongst and between partners;
- ensuring communities have control over the research design and process; and
- employing anti-colonial and social justice frameworks demanding structural change and challenging inequities between and within universities and communities.

Although the reflections and suggestions presented above are not completely novel (see, for example, Bortolin, 2011; Cronley et al., 2015; McBride et al., 2006; Stoecker, Tryon, & Hilgendorf, 2009; Ward &Wolf-Wendel, 2000), by reflecting on our attempts to do "community first" CCE, we underline the need to unpack the complexities of doing this kind of research. Even when we know about and design research in attempts to avoid the reproduction of inequitable power relations and western ways of knowing, why do we continue to face the same kinds of challenges? In unpacking our own attempts to put "community first" in CCE, we call attention to the potential to reproduce dominant hierarchies and ways of knowing, even while aware and attempting to be subversive.

As such, this paper is part of our own process of recognizing mistakes as well as identifying the structural limitations we faced along with broader practices and assumptions that need to change. In doing so, we conclude that engaging in "community first" CCE, is an ongoing aspiration rather than a set of fixed methodologies that will inherently develop non-

hierarchical relationships that challenge community-academic dichotomies. For us, this means that although the research frameworks and methods were incredibly important, we must work beyond these projects to challenge and change broader behaviours and structures that promote academic forms of knowledge over community-based knowledges, academic control of research over community-based research, and western ways of knowing over diverse forms of knowledge. In this way we echo the need for "community first" CCE practitioners to ensure that "educational institutions recognize the ideologies and practices of domination that structure how we relate to one another daily in maintaining subordination of others, and commit to institutional transformation" (Verjee, 2012, p. 66). We suggest that such institutional transformation must be considered part of "community first" practice even though it may go beyond specific "community first" CCE projects.

This process involves ongoing critical reflections on research and teaching by both community and academic participants, understanding the limitations within current research paradigms, and placing community goals and needs first while working together within anti-colonial and social justice frameworks. In other words, academic needs, at times, may be forced to take a back seat to communities' needs. This rather literal translation of putting "community first" is a potential avenue for challenging academic research priorities and values. At the same time, we recognize that communities themselves involve tensions and hierarchies and may also privilege western epistemologies and ways of knowing. In this complex environment, we recognize that our work with the CFS Hub did not always achieve our aim to put communities first. We believe it is essential to engage with our limitations and be upfront about what we were and are able to achieve as this creates space for acknowledging the work still to be done to create a context in which meaningful "community first" CCE can happen. Despite these challenges, we maintain that it is important to work towards "community first" research by challenging academic and western ways of doing and knowing in research and teaching while critically reflecting on our own research choices and the communities with whom we work.

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Learning to "Walk the Talk": Reflexive Evaluation in Community-First Engaged Research

Magdalene Goemans, Charles Z. Levkoe, Peter Andrée, Nadine Changfoot, and Colleen Christopherson-Cote

ABSTRACT   While a considerable body of literature advocates for participatory evaluation methodologies within community-centred community-campus engagement (CCE) projects, there has been limited study to date on how a "community-first", or community-driven approach to CCE may be informed and strengthened by reflexive evaluation practices. Reflexive evaluation involves a critical reflection on the positionality of participants in relation to the processes they are engaged in and attempting to influence. In response to this gap, this article develops a reflexive account of our activities and influence, as academics, within an evaluation of the first phase of the multi-year pan-Canadian CCE project known as Community First: Impacts of Community Engagement (CFICE). Building on the experiences of community and academic partners across a collective reflective evaluation of over forty demonstration projects within Phase I of CFICE, we reflexively examine our own efforts to incorporate common community-first CCE working practices into the evaluation processes to which we contributed. This examination reinforces scholarly assertions about the crucial position of community voices in co-governance of CCE projects, the need to reduce institutional constraints to community participation, and the value of nourishing relationships within CCE work. The approach explored in this article complements more general evaluation methods for practitioners seeking to ensure accountability to community-first values in their work. The article also explores how reflexive evaluation can inform practitioners about deeper personal and collective introspection and transformations related to relationships and processes associated with employing community-first CCE working practices.

KEYWORDS   co-governance; community-campus engagement; evaluation; reflexive evaluation; community-academic co-creation

The call to prioritize community goals in community-campus research and teaching partnerships is well-articulated in the academic literature (Bortolin, 2011; Dempsey, 2010); however, it is clear that responding to this call in practice can be challenging (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Cronley, Madden, & Davis, 2015; McIlrath, 2012; Rice, Lamarre, Changfoot, & Douglas, 2018). There is also considerable discussion in the scholarly literature of how to evaluate community-campus engagement (CCE) projects, with many scholars advocating for participatory evaluation methodologies that incorporate both community and academic perspectives (Greenhalgh,

Jackson, Shaw, & Janamian, 2016; Hart, Northmore, & Gerhardt, 2009; Weerts & Sandman, 2008). Within the evaluation literature there is a growing emphasis on reflexive approaches that actively encourage critical reflection on the positionality of participants in relation to the processes they are engaged in and attempting to influence (D'Cruz, Gillingham, & Melendez, 2007; Mitev & Venters, 2009; van Draanen, 2017). Despite this growing interest in reflexivity in evaluation, however, we have found no studies that consider how the theory and practice of community-centred CCE can be informed and strengthened by reflexive evaluation processes.

In response, we present a case study located at the intersection between the theory and practice of "community-first" CCE and a reflexive evaluation methodology, with a focus on the positionality of academics. This article revisits the collaborative evaluation of the first phase of Community First: Impacts of Community Engagement (CFICE), a seven-year pan-Canadian action research project (2012-2019). CFICE aims to better understand and support communities and campuses working together effectively for a healthier, more sustainable, and just society. Through a "retrospective reappraisal" (Mitev & Venters, 2009, p. 736) of our activities and influence as academics within the collective evaluation activities of Phase I of CFICE (which takes place, in part, within the process of writing this article), we ask: How does a reflexive evaluation *process* enrich our understanding about what a community-first approach to CCE means in both theory and practice?

CFICE partners understand "community-first" CCE as synonymous with community-driven or community-centred CCE. In Canada, growing interest in building mutually beneficial relationships between community and campus actors has led to a proliferation of research and teaching partnerships across the country. However, critiques regarding the tendency for CCE practices to privilege postsecondary institutions by paying insufficient attention to the needs, priorities, and expertise of the community partners involved are equally relevant in Canada (Levkoe et al., 2016). Responding to these critiques, CFICE is employing a community-first approach by investigating ways to ensure that CCE partnerships maximize the value created for non-profit, community-based organizations (CBOs). CFICE involves collaboration among over thirty Canadian universities and colleges (with an institutional home base at Carleton University, situated on unceded Algonquin Territory in Ottawa) and over sixty CBOs (for more details about CFICE, including its organizational structure, see the introduction to this special issue of *Engaged Scholar Journal*).

This paper revisits the comprehensive evaluation of Phase I of CFICE that took place in 2016 and early 2017, and is organized around three community-first working practices, synthesized from the scholarly literature on CCE, which were reinforced and elaborated upon through the collective evaluation among community and academic partners of over forty community-level demonstration projects. We describe these working practices as follows:

1) Establishing project co-governance by community and academic partners that is suited to their respective goals and capacities
2) Ensuring postsecondary institutional policies and practices enable respectful and impactful partnerships for communities

3) Nourishing the relationships that serve as the cornerstones of successful CCE projects.

In writing this article, we reflexively examine our efforts as academics to incorporate each of these practices into the Phase I evaluation process. Our assessment draws on personal reflections and review of our involvement in evaluation processes such as focus group data collection and analysis, with a particular focus on our activities related to the preparation and execution of a research and evaluation symposium organized by community and academic project partners in January 2017.

The four authors of this article are academic members of the CFICE Evaluation and Analysis Working Group, who played active roles in the collection of evaluation data and analysis as well as symposium planning. Community-based practitioners have also played extensive roles in CFICE, whether in co-leadership of CFICE, in the co-leadership of our working group, on the Community Advisory Committee (discussed below), and in CFICE's hubs and projects (including in the evaluation of those activities, particularly towards the end of phase I[1]). This article, however, does not presume to speak for them and their experiences in CFICE. Community members have co-authored CFICE-related academic articles (e.g. Andrée et al. 2014; Levkoe et al., 2016), but they don't always choose to express themselves through this medium, nor should they be expected to. Community participants have other means of sharing their reflections and experiences with academics and with one another. This journal article is thus written by academics for a mixed academic and community audience.[2] As co-authors of this account of the Phase I evaluation process, we committed to a critical and reflexive analysis with the intention of improving our own practices as academics, sharing lessons learned with other engaged scholars, and enhancing the value of CCE for community partners and for progressive social change. We write as individuals examining our own positionality within postsecondary institutions within CCE processes. As Mitev and Venters (2009) point out, such an analysis must also acknowledge our limitations and failures.

The narrative we present in this paper is one step in an ongoing and iterative process of reflexivity in our practice. It is also a critical reflection on our collective approach to evaluation within CFICE in order to present an account of attempting to "walk the talk" as academics in a community-first partnership project. In this paper we describe a case study of the evaluation of Phase I of CFICE, specifically, the collective dimension of the evaluation whereby community and academic partners participated in evaluation activities at the project level, as well as a two-day CFICE Community Impact Symposium where further critical reflection took place to advance learnings from the evaluation process. This symposium helped to chart

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[1] For an example of an evaluation report from one of CFICE's phase I hubs, see: https://carleton.ca/communityfirst/2016/report-community-environmental-sustainability-hub-evaluation-synthesis/

[2] For a community partner perspective on the activities described herein, please see the addendum to this article written by Colleen Christopherson-Cote of the Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Partnership. Colleen is community co-chair of the CFICE Evaluation and Analysis Working Group. This addendum was included in response to a reviewer's query about the community viewpoint. It is simply meant to offer one additional perspective, and does not presume to speak for all community participants within CFICE, just as we cannot speak for all academics involved.

the course and directions for the second phase of the project (2016-2019), and deepened participant appreciation of the impact of the work as well as the limitations of what was achieved. Through our reflexive examination of this case study, we reveal avenues through which a reflexive approach may enhance more general forms of participatory evaluation for CCE practitioners seeking to ensure accountability to community-first values and principles in their work.

Community-First CCE, Reflective Evaluation, and Reflexivity

At the heart of community-first approaches to CCE are activities that allow community and academic partners to define collaborative goals, share expertise, and carry out projects of mutual benefit, thereby building productive and meaningful relationships that are grounded in trust (Ochocka & Janzen, 2014; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000; Weerts & Sandmann, 2008). Practicing community-first CCE, especially within academic institutions where epistemic injustice towards traditional, Indigenous, and community knowledges remains widespread, demands a respectful, collaborative approach to engagement at all stages of research design, data analysis, and knowledge mobilization (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; Zusman, 2004). Community-first CCE may also require changing institutional structures and practices to be more respectful of community partners and their needs (Levkoe et al., 2016).

Community-first CCE working practices

In this section, we identify three key working practices for fostering community-centred environments in CCE work by synthesizing the scholarly literature. The first working practice involves establishing equitable co-governance by community and academic partners that is suited to their respective goals and capacities. Co-governance may be described as multiple actors working together to meet shared decision-making goals (Kooiman, 2003). More than simply involving co-ordination among partners, co-governance implies that participants are co-producers of outcomes and share equitably in the development of different paths and processes (Paquet & Wilson, 2011). In practice, co-governance schemes are typically designed to be flexible, reflexive, and adaptive to enable social learning to take place (Vos, Bauknecht, & Kemp, 2006).

Within a CCE context, rather than conceiving of CCE relationships as academic-led empirical investigations, Zusman (2004) argues that relationships between academics and community groups/social movements should evolve from a shared commitment to social justice and the production of knowledge as a collaborative and mutually beneficial process. CCE scholars highlight the value of community advisory groups in reinforcing this approach by broadening the diversity of perspectives among CCE practitioners, facilitating communication and learning between community and academic partners, and offering a designated space for reflection among peers (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Broad, 2011).

A second key working practice focuses on ensuring postsecondary institutional policies and practices enable respectful and impactful CCE partnerships for communities. Scholars contend that community and academic partners may be unprepared to navigate the realities

of conflicting schedules and inadequate funding within CCE projects, and that the time and effort required to participate may be significantly more than anticipated (McIlrath, 2012; Mitchell, 2008; Sandy & Holland, 2006; Worrall, 2007). Holland (2001) and Gelmon (2003) also note that evaluation of CCE requires significant resources and effort for community partners, for which they are often not adequately compensated. These realities highlight an institutionalized lack of respect for community knowledge and time that often exists within academic structures.

A third working practice is that personal relationships lie at the heart of meaningful and effective CCE. It is important for partnerships to nourish the relationships that serve as the cornerstones of successful CCE projects. In practice, however, relationships may be more transactional than transformative between partners, and academics may prioritize their own research advancement over achieving meaningful outcomes at the community level (Clayton, Bringle, Senor, Huq, & Morrison, 2010). There may also be continuing tensions around differences in the understanding of what constitutes research by community and academic partners. For example, while some of CFICE's community partners were interested in shorter-term, practical outcomes, the academics involved often focused on critical and contextual approaches to research that fit within their discipline's expectations. Continuity and momentum may also be stifled as projects and relationships change over time (Ochocka & Janzen, 2014; Sullivan et al., 2001; Weerts & Sandmann, 2008; Worrall, 2007). These challenges reiterate the importance of partners maintaining open communication about their varied needs and concerns, and of adopting context-specific approaches to CCE (Littlepage, Gazley, & Bennett, 2012; Sandy, 2007; Stewart & Alrutz, 2012; Weerts & Sandmann, 2008).

Community-first evaluation practices in CCE

Proponents of community-centred CCE suggest that a community-first approach can also be applied to the evaluation of CCE projects, particularly in reflection on and dissemination of project learnings (Greenhalgh et al., 2016; Hart et al., 2009). Such an approach is a response to previous assessment efforts that had predominantly served the interests of academic participants, or had placed priority on measurable results over processes relevant to communities (Gelmon, 2003; Holland, 2001; Rubin, 2000). To meet the needs of all partners involved, evaluation in CCE is envisioned as an ongoing learning process that is best established when a partnership is in its initial stages (Gelmon, 2003; Rubin, 2000).

Reflective evaluation practice has gained prominence over the last several decades in resistance to top-down managerial approaches that emphasize reductionist performance-based measures. Reflective evaluation highlights appreciative inquiry and value for participants (Cooper, 2014; Marchi, 2011). When a collective reflective approach to evaluation is effectively applied within CCE projects, community participation is valued for widening perspectives regarding the naming and assessment of positive, detrimental, or sustainable outcomes (Greenhalgh et al., 2016; Pillard Reynolds, 2014). Learnings are communicated in ways that take into account diverse narratives, interpretations, and languages among community and academic partners, allowing assumptions and standards to emerge which become points for

potential change (Allard et al., 2007; McCormack & Kennelly, 2011). Participants understand the complexity and changing nature of community-campus partnerships, and build in opportunities to alter course if required. Viewed in this context, evaluation findings are not simply prescriptive but also aspirational (Hart et al., 2009; Holland, 2001; Martin, Smith, & Phillips, 2005; Rubin, 2000).

A reflexive approach to evaluation further builds on reflective practice to "challenge systemic stability and support processes of learning and institutional change" (Arkesteijn, van Mierlo, & Leeuwis, 2015, p. 99). Drawing on aspects of collective reflective practice, this approach applies varied critical and appreciative methods of inquiry, examines process over results, and values lived experience and narratives in building deeper understandings and new paths (Allard et al., 2007; Cooper, 2014; Marchi, 2011; McCormack & Kennelly, 2011).

In our view, a reflexive approach can be distinguished from reflective evaluation in two key ways. First, it assumes that evaluation, at its best, should be willing to challenge the "path dependency" or "deep structures" of relationships and processes in complex systems in order to redefine those structures where necessary (Arkesteijn et al., 2015, pp. 101-102). Second, reflexive evaluation requires that participants consider their own positions in relation to the evaluation, as well as the potential of these positions to influence evaluation processes and outcomes in multiple ways. Reflexivity is thus understood as "reflection with an understanding of positionality" (van Draanen, 2017, p. 373). Participants challenge personal assumptions and biases involved in the production of knowledge, and consider how relations of power and wider structural contexts may influence this process (Arkesteijn et al., 2015; D'Cruz et al., 2007; Mitev & Venters, 2009).

This paper seeks to demonstrate how a reflexive evaluation *process* can enrich our understanding about what a community-first approach to CCE means in both theory and practice. Drawing on the scholarly literature presented in this section, we reflect on experiences within the CFICE Phase I evaluation process through the following key questions: How were community partners involved in designing and executing CFICE evaluation processes and in defining ongoing knowledge mobilization processes? What efforts were made to ensure community needs and priorities were foregrounded? Were institutional constraints to respectful community engagement recognized and addressed? Did evaluation processes nourish the relationships at the heart of CCE partnerships, or did they introduce unresolved tensions? Following a presentation of the CFICE Phase I evaluation process, we respond to these questions focusing on the three working practices for community-first CCE.

Evaluating Phase I of CFICE through a Collective Reflective Approach

During Phase I of CFICE, our partnership focused on supporting CCE that advanced sectoral policy priorities determined by our community partners, while critically examining the obstacles to, and strategies for, optimizing the community impacts of the partnerships in four sectors. The structure of the project team during this phase consisted of five hubs, with each

led by a community and an academic co-lead[3]:

- *Community Food Security/Sovereignty*, co-led by Food Secure Canada in cooperation with the Canadian Association of Food Studies
- *Poverty Reduction*, co-led by the Vibrant Communities network (coordinated by Tamarack Institute for Community Engagement)
- *Community Environmental Sustainability*, co-led by the Trent Community Research Centre
- *Violence Against Women*, co-led by the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies
- *Knowledge Mobilization*, co-led by the Canadian Alliance for Community-Service Learning.

Most of the hub work involved developing, implementing, evaluating, and sharing the results of a series of community-driven demonstration projects. The Knowledge Mobilization Hub managed its own demonstration projects while also providing knowledge mobilization support for CFICE as a whole. Each of the hubs adopted a context-specific approach informed by the partners involved and the history, culture, and structure of the sector in which they were working. Across the project, CFICE community and academic partners contributed to a diverse set of forty-one demonstration projects that ranged from locally-focused and modestly-scaled activities to broader national-scale initiatives. While the demonstration projects were spread across the country, the co-leads held regular meetings and came together regularly through program committee meetings by teleconference or in-person in Ottawa.

The collective evaluation of Phase I of CFICE that was initiated in 2016, involving community and academic participation, was intended to further CFICE research about how to maximize the value for CBOs in CCE, as well as to enrich an ongoing developmental evaluation process that had been established within CFICE to refine its own practices in community-first CCE. The process was initiated by the CFICE Evaluation and Analysis (EA) Working Group, an informal group established three years into the project at a time when we realized that our decentralized approach had led each hub to adopt its own evaluation processes. At that time, it was unclear whether we could generalize—for the purposes of developing robust answers to our research questions—from the data being collected within each hub. In response, the EA Working Group decided to build on the existing evaluation tools used by the various hubs, develop a set of standardized questions, and coordinate a comparable process of evaluation data collection across all Phase I community and academic partners. Table 1 summarizes main elements of the evaluation process.

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[3] For more details on the CFICE Hubs and specific demonstration projects see https://carleton.ca/communityfirst/sector-specific-work/

Table 1. CFICE Phase I evaluation timeline

Evaluation Data Collection: Completion of evaluation question template Focus groups and interviews with CFICE partners (CBOs, faculty, students) Review of reports generated within hubs during Phase I	April-June 2016
Evaluation Data Analysis: Individual evaluation summary reports generated within the five CFICE hubs Analysis across broader CFICE project summarized within evaluation symposium background documents	July-August 2016
Evaluation Symposium Planning: Symposium agenda planning Establishment of Community Advisory Committee (CAC)	September-December 2016
CFICE Community Impact Symposium	January 2017

Evaluation data collection and analysis

Our primary method of gathering evaluation data involved focus group sessions and one-on-one interviews with community and academic partners within each of the five hubs. In most cases these sessions were led by academic hub co-leads with help from student research assistants, working with standardized questions developed by the EA Working Group. Questions were designed to be broad and promote discussion about CCE in general, including experiences gleaned by partners beyond their CFICE-supported projects. Some hubs chose to add, remove, or modify the common questions—in some cases significantly—to suit the unique needs, priorities, and contexts of hub projects, to respect the time constraints of participants, and to identify an appropriate language for discussion among community and academic partners. Within some hubs, focus group sessions were held over multiple days and included participants from across Canada. In some cases, demonstration projects were underrepresented in focus group/interview sessions. Other evaluation data were drawn from written personal reflections by individual partners, reviews of demonstration project reports (which in several cases also included project-specific evaluations), as well as reviews of research presentations/documents submitted by CFICE community service-learning (CSL) students and graduate research assistants.

Following the initial gathering of data, each hub prepared an evaluation summary report. Report writing was typically led by academic partners, with coding of data often undertaken by student research assistants through a process of in-depth readings of discussion notes/transcriptions and hub documents. A graduate research assistant from the EA Working Group assembled cross-hub evaluation summaries from individual hub summary reports. Upon completion, the individual hub and cross-hub summaries were shared with all CFICE partners

and became part of a briefing package that was used as the basis for the Community Impact Symposium discussions.

Evaluation symposium planning

The CFICE Community Impact Symposium was conceived as a forum to celebrate the achievements of hub partners over the first phase of the project and continue work on the next stages of research, including defining policy change goals and strategies for improving CCE in Canada. The symposium was also designed to bring together knowledge and experiences from hub partners across Canada, to discuss key themes emerging from the evaluation, and to determine potential directions for further partnership in knowledge dissemination and mobilization of evaluation learnings. Efforts were made to ensure a balance of community and academic perspectives, which meant the organizing team had to turn away (alongside careful explanations of our intention to keep participation balanced) some of the faculty member researchers and research assistants who had hoped to attend. To ensure strong participation and offset the costs of symposium attendance for community partners, CFICE provided honoraria and made available travel bursaries to two community partners from each hub.

Though most of the logistical elements of symposium planning were undertaken by academic partners largely based at Carleton University, we aimed to adopt a participatory approach to planning, recognizing early on a fundamental requirement to ensure that the symposium framework, themes, and agenda aligned with community priorities. In keeping with our community-first approach, the EA Working Group animated a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) to ensure community partners were co-creating the symposium agenda, and invited community partners that had participated in the CFICE hub demonstration projects to join. While all community partners were invited to participate in the CAC, participation was not as geographically and thematically representative as originally anticipated. Still, participants from Ontario and British Columbia contributed significantly to the final agenda and symposium format. In the months leading up to the symposium, the CAC met monthly by teleconference with two members of the EA Working Group to discuss priorities for the symposium agenda and post-symposium knowledge mobilization outputs. The CAC was clear that community partners would not accept a traditional format where academics simply present findings to an audience. Community partners wanted to be in dialogue with academics and play an active role in furthering understandings of community-first CCE during the event. They also sought spaces where community partners could participate in discussions beyond their own respective hubs and independently from academics.

With regard to specific symposium agenda planning, the CAC recommended that community voices open the symposium to align with its intended community-first approach. The group also supported having an individual lead the symposium that could ensure balance and representation of both community and academic needs, experiences, and interests. Dr. Randy Stoecker, who has written extensively about the importance of community voice in defining CCE processes (for example, see Stoecker & Tryon, 2009), was invited to facilitate the event. Stoecker was well regarded by both academic and community participants in CFICE,

and had previously worked with some core CFICE partners. In developing the agenda, Stoecker and the symposium planning team worked together over three months, informed by monthly input from the CAC, as well as input from the program committee during two of its meetings that occurred during the symposium planning stage. During agenda planning Stoecker regularly pressed symposium organizers for greater transparency, for prioritizing of space for community needs to be discussed, and for clarifying and meaningfully accommodating the different objectives of community and academic attendees—some of which were coincident and some independent. Through negotiation, the agenda evolved to include a mixture of small group activities and larger group discussions. These included spaces that were community-led (e.g. a discussion on decolonizing CCE and meaningfully enacting reconciliation practices in CCE), spaces that were academic-led (e.g. discussion groups led by Phase II working groups to solicit needed input to move forward), and spaces that were both community and academic facilitated (e.g. developing recommendations for CCE institutions). Evening social events were also planned to encourage further informal exchange among community and academic partners.

CFICE Community Impact Symposium

The Community Impact Symposium was held at Carleton University over two days in January 2017. While hub co-leads had met on a regular basis over Phase I of CFICE, the symposium was the first event in which a larger group of academic and community representatives beyond co-leads from all hubs were brought together in one space to participate in a collective evaluation. Highlights from the first day of the event included a welcome from Paul Skanks of Kahnawake (a Mohawk Nation in Québec), interactive activities intended to familiarize participants with one another, opening stories from Community Advisory Committee representatives reflecting their achievements and challenges within the project, and activities intended to identify common lessons among partners. The second day focused on identifying recommendations for specific audiences (discussed below) that were grounded in partners' collective experiences. Each day also included unplanned open space sessions and considerable networking time, as both were identified as priorities by the CAC.

A large part of the symposium was focused on assembling key recommendations directed at governments, funders, community-based organizations, postsecondary institutions, faculty and students to better support community-first CCE practices. Example recommendations for governments are found in Table 2 below. Following the symposium, a survey was administered to garner participant feedback, and a symposium summary report[4] was then prepared by the CFICE secretariat and reviewed by CAC members. Special attention was given to featuring quotes and perspectives from community participants, and to including feedback received through the survey.

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[4] See https://carleton.ca/communityfirst/2017/5985/ for the report, including a full recommendations document.

Table 2. Sample recommendations for different audiences developed at the CFICE Community Impact Symposium

Audience	Recommendation
Governments (provincial, federal, local)	Provide greater institutional and funding supports for strong CCE partnerships between postsecondary institutions and the non-profit sector.
Funders	Join collaborative networks as equal partners (not simply the holders of purse-strings) committed to expanding CCE in Canada and beyond.
Postsecondary Institutions	Provide resources for community partners that work with postsecondary institutions (e.g. on-line library access, space for in-person meetings).
Faculty	Develop a strong set of CCE working practices (e.g. recognize and value community knowledge/expertise epistemologically, and where possible with honoraria).
Students	Actively seek out opportunities to enhance and co-create CCE skills and capacity (for example, by drawing on their own previous involvement in community contexts), and mentor other students based on those experiences. Respect student experience in and knowledge of community.
Community-Based Organizations	Develop peer-to-peer opportunities for information exchange and collaboration among CBOs about how to engage with postsecondary institutions.

Regarding Phase I evaluation outcomes, community and academic partners expressed preferences for a diversity of approaches to sharing CFICE findings moving forward. They requested a range of outputs that would include more conventional formats (such as policy reports, academic papers, and newspaper articles) as well as other contemporary means of communicating findings (videos, email updates, webinars, blogs, and other social media outlets such as Facebook Live events). One community participant noted:

> I do not think the medium is as important as a commitment to ensuring that the output is as meaningful, accessible, and potentially useful to community members as it is to academic participants. The next step is surely how to co-create some of these outputs.

As Phase II of CFICE progresses, community and academic partners have been creating outputs through a variety of media to disseminate specific hub learnings and impacts. The general recommendations gathered at the symposium have also been translated into briefs

and other formats for specific audiences, including funders, provincial government agencies, community organizations, and more.

Discussion: Looking Back through the Lenses of Three Community-First Working Practices

While the scholarly literature documents many positive experiences and tangible outcomes for community practitioners from projects based in a collaborative ethos, in practice, community-first goals are often constrained by a range of systemic barriers (for example, see McIlrath, 2012; Sandy, 2007; Stewart & Alrutz, 2012). The exploration of community-first approaches that we employed within our own projects has allowed us to consider the micro-practices that have made a difference in furthering community-first goals, those that have not, and resulting tensions within CCE projects. In this section we present our reflection on the CFICE evaluation process through the lens of three key working practices that were part of our learnings across hubs from Phase I, and which correspond with scholarly observations presented earlier in this article: establishing co-governance, institutionalizing respect, and nourishing relationships. In the subsections below, we relate each working practice to the CFICE Phase I evaluation process, reflexively focusing on how each element of the evaluation did or did not align with these practices.

Establishing co-governance

Our evaluation across CFICE hubs revealed there were many instances where power imbalances manifested between academic and community partners with regard to governance within Phase I projects. Project progress and communication were constrained in these cases, stemming from such issues as misaligned timelines, priorities, and objectives. For example, the deadlines required by academic institutions and funding agencies did not always align with those of community organizations. Further, the practical needs and intended outcomes of community projects differed from those of faculty researchers and students. We learned from these experiences that a collaborative governance structure that explicitly creates space for honest (and sometimes difficult) conversations can support a shared decision-making process; foster open discussion of project goals, expectations, roles, and challenges; and support discussion around fair standards regarding ownership of research knowledge and outcomes. Our evaluation also revealed that difficult conversations within hubs were not always resolved, and that hubs sometimes approached co-governance in different ways.[5]

In reflecting on how we conducted the evaluation of Phase I, we have identified many points at which CFICE partners employed sincere efforts towards co-governance of the direction and outcomes of the evaluation process. For example, when common questions were being developed at the outset of the evaluation, we recognized that there were additional evaluation

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[5] For details on how different CFICE hubs approached the challenge of co-governance, see: Nash, C. (2018). The ABCs of CCE: Sharing Power. (https://carleton.ca/communityfirst/2018/the-abcs-of-cce-sharing-power/); Nash, C. (2018). The ABCs of CCE: Sharing Resources. (https://carleton.ca/communityfirst/2018/7355/); and Nash, C. (2018). The ABCs of CCE: Sharing Responsibilities. (https://carleton.ca/communityfirst/2018/7344/)

methods already underway within individual hubs that could complement our broader efforts. These included an annual evaluation process undertaken by Poverty Reduction Hub partners at a community summit, as well as interviews taking place within the Violence Against Women Hub that involved questions on partnership-based work similar to those planned for the larger CFICE evaluation project. The Community Food Security/Sovereignty Hub conducted an end-of-project evaluation that involved a workshop at a national conference, one-on-one interviews and an email survey that was compiled into a major report. The only hub to significantly modify the original CFICE evaluation questions was the Community Environmental Sustainability Hub-Peterborough-Haliburton, which did so orienting to the over 20-year long history and culture of CCE in Peterborough and Haliburton and future direction to the partnerships within the hub. These hub-specific calibrations also included discussion and negotiation among academic and community partners of evaluation deliverables for CFICE overall as a SSHRC funded partnership to ensure that partners' needs were addressed.

We also noted that while both academic and community partners recognize the value of evaluation work, hubs differed in their evaluation focus. For example, within some hubs there was less of a focus from community partners on evaluation (which was based on the original deliverables of the research project) and instead a greater interest in employing project funds toward what they considered more impactful efforts associated with furthering their mandates as organizations. In these cases, they often deferred to academics (or in a few cases to outside consultants) to define the initial terms of evaluation, with community partners then providing input on subsequent evaluation details. In other hubs, community partners did focus on the evaluation for process and impact of hub specific projects, and used the evaluation results to start new projects and secure funding, building upon co-governance established during Phase I. We also found that despite our best efforts, there was an imbalance in representation within some of the hubs in evaluation focus groups, which was often due to a lack of resources to support participation from community partners. In addition, analysis of individual hub data and writing of evaluation summary reports were undertaken primarily by faculty and student research assistants; while many community partners were consulted during this process, we acknowledge that a distinct imbalance occurred in this work, which we discuss below.[6]

We became aware that the goal of maintaining an equitable distribution of control over evaluation efforts among community and academic partners would not always be realistic or desirable. A division of labour may occur within CCE work, with academics taking on a larger proportion of reflective tasks related to data analysis and writing, while community partners devote limited resources to more immediate project co-ordination and engagement with research participants (though we recognize that within some projects, and even within some parts of the CFICE process, community partners take the lead in organizing and executing

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[6] It is important to distinguish here between community participant involvement in the overall Phase I evaluation of CFICE (which was significant, but uneven, as described in this section), and the question of community participation in the reflexive process of preparing and writing this article. In the case of the latter, all CFICE participants were invited to contribute to this reflexive process (through an invitation distributed in the CFICE newsletter), but it was only the academics who had actively played a role in the evaluation working group who chose to carry this particular reflexive project forward; hence the positionality associated with this piece.

data analysis and writing activities). We are aware that it is important to reflect on what this means in terms of the power to define the results, but we also recognize that such a division of labour may suit the availability and preferences of partners. Recognizing these limitations, we made deliberate efforts to ensure that the Community Impact Symposium included equitable representation from academic and community partners, to provide opportunities for community participants to consider and assertively respond to the evaluation data that academic partners had assembled within hub and cross-hub evaluation reports. This decision meant we had to inform some of our academic colleagues (including students) that they could not participate in the symposium, despite their interest in doing so. As we had hoped, we received validation at the symposium from community partners that our evaluation results reflected the shared experiences, in general terms, of those who participated.

The aspiration for co-governance was an important part of the rationale for establishing the CAC. It was intended to strengthen the participatory approach to the event, to build upon community-campus relationships set in place during Phase I of CFICE, and to base the symposium framework on themes that aligned with community priorities and voices. This approach set the foundation for a very rich process of symposium planning that involved continuously decentring the academic position, considering how academic and community perspectives differ, maintaining sensitivity to power relations, and working towards a common language.

During their meetings associated with symposium preparation, CAC members made it clear that power and the influence of CFICE as a largely university-influenced project should be made explicit in symposium discussions. They drew attention to the influence of the university in terms of academic language (and how academic-informed meaning largely prevails or takes over when academics are present) and research agendas (over community research agendas and goals). As one example, CAC members advocated for a more collaborative approach to prioritizing research 'outputs' (i.e. the means by which learnings would be shared) coming out of the CFICE Phase I evaluation effort up to and including the symposium. CAC members maintained that community and academic partners understand outputs in different ways, with one member suggesting that processes in service of a community vision, such as conversations between stakeholders, were considered valid outputs for communities (in contrast to what may be considered by academics to be typical outputs such as journal publications, conference presentations, or reports).

Symposium planning also greatly benefitted from Randy Stoecker's commitment to ensuring that participatory-based processes were a core component of the agenda. Throughout the planning process, he asked clarifying questions that forced greater reflection within the planning committee on the intended purpose of the symposium (i.e. on its community-first goals). In discussions with Stoecker, the planning committee came to imagine how to provide different kinds of spaces to address the needs of both community partners and academics as noted above. At times these conversations were difficult, such as when, for example, specific project participants (usually academics) wished to use the symposium to further specific working group goals or to generate specific outputs. It was challenging to plan a time-finite

symposium that allowed for the multiple and complex range of needs and reasons associated with individual community and academic attendance. Stoecker's moderating—employing an iterative approach to the symposium agenda, and altering course when required in response to participant feedback over the two-day event—maintained the focus on community perspectives and priorities within symposium discussions. Following the event, many symposium participants commented that the gathering met key community goals (by, for example, ensuring lots of time for sharing community partner stories and networking), fostered a collaborative environment for the development of community-first recommendations for CCE, and formed a critical step in co-governance of the evaluation process between community and academic partners.

Institutionalizing respect

This working principle identifies a need to change institutional structures to ensure that beyond simply treating people well, participation by all partners is valued throughout a CCE project. We discovered through our own CFICE evaluation across hubs that in practice, even small efforts toward community-first CCE (with regard to showing respect or acknowledging power differentials) can make a big difference. Still, we need to more clearly discuss both capacity and compensation of community partner participation going forward, and the reciprocity associated with this.

Our evaluation revealed that community partners often had difficulty navigating administrative hurdles within Phase I as members of the overarching CFICE project, which involved complex reporting requirements as well as slow bureaucratic timelines. The general model of providing modest grants to CBOs within individual hub projects, while appreciated, sometimes became burdensome for community participants. We learned that best practices for institutions and funders employing a community-first approach involve acknowledging and compensating for the significant time and resources required of community partners to participate in CCE projects, as well as supporting community partners in negotiating administrative bureaucracy. A community-first approach also incorporates first-voice perspectives from community participants and broadens understanding of the value of 'non-traditional' research beyond typical academic-centred outcomes.

Within our evaluation process, access to funding and other resources became a prominent constraint for many community organizations to meaningfully participate in CFICE evaluation activities. Community partners noted that it took significant resources, time, and energy to participate in evaluation focus groups, as for example focus group sessions required significant travel for some partners. As a result, demonstration projects were underrepresented within hub evaluation reports in some cases. To address funding concerns for communities during the next stage of the evaluation, we incorporated various forms of resource support to facilitate community partner attendance at the Community Impact Symposium, including honoraria and travel bursaries for community participants upon request.

Despite our best efforts to access meaningful funding for communities, we repeatedly came up against barriers originating from within the academic institution, including the limited amount of funds earmarked for community partners in CCE work, top-down directives from

the research funder and Carleton's research office about how we should spend these modest amounts, and lagging timelines for receipt of funds by community participants. As the CFICE project is primarily funded by SSHRC, academics are required to take responsibility for the research funds, which gives them ultimate accountability for signing off on all expenditures. In this respect, while we had attempted to equitably share control of project decision-making with community partners, institutional structures limited our ability to do so. Moving forward, CFICE administration is working to influence change in SSHRC funding relationships with community partners to reflect this need for greater power-sharing between partners regarding access to and distribution of research funds.

Nourishing relationships

Within the first phase of our CFICE work, we learned that meaningful relationship-building emerged out of long-term and continued collaboration among CCE participants. CFICE partners valued opportunities to expand their networks and build deep connections and trust with other participants, made possible through multi-year commitments and funding that were part of the CFICE model. We also learned that a community-first approach prioritizes in-person communication where feasible, fosters a common and accessible language among participants, and recognizes that allowing for 'messy' conversations, especially those involving transparency of funding and related issues regarding the power of the university, can aid in strengthening understanding across diverse perspectives. Over the course of Phase I of CFICE, academic and community co-leads from each hub came together three times a year for in-person program committee meetings in Ottawa as part of an ongoing reflexive evaluation process. While these events took up significant resources and time, responses to our evaluation identified that time put aside to share successes and challenges at these meetings was extremely worthwhile. Community participants noted that they valued these spaces for celebrating successes in CCE work, but also for fostering opportunities for difficult conversations about thorny issues that sometimes came up within hubs and across the larger CFICE project.

Within our evaluation process, we highlight the Community Impact Symposium as a notable effort in reinforcing the value of in-person communication in nourishing CCE relationships. Community participants commented that the symposium format offered many moments for meaningful relationship-building and the development of common understandings among partners. These opportunities unfolded as symposium participants shared stories and informal conversation during daytime meeting periods, and as they participated in evening dinner events designed to strengthen social bonds, network, explore areas of tension, celebrate our successes as a group, and informally plan next steps together.

Our commitment to honouring relationships with CCE partners continued following the symposium, through the distribution of a survey to solicit feedback and reflections from symposium participants about their impressions of the event and actions moving forward. Respondents noted they appreciated the connections they made with other symposium participants, and the understanding gained of how different CFICE hubs, working groups, and committees were working together to advance CCE work. Participants also valued

opportunities to work together and learn from each other, to meet other participants from across the country, and to engage with others in informal settings during evening social events. They also appreciated the responsive approach to symposium facilitation that allowed for flexibility in the agenda and opportunities to change course in symposium discussions over the course of the two-day event.

Moving forward, we are increasingly oriented and attentive to the range of transactional and transformative facets of our relationships with community partners, mindful that key to our relationships is reciprocity. In our positionalities as academics, we are learning that part of nourishing relationships is to listen to community partners' expectations and needs, as well as to share our own needs as academics ready for ongoing adaptation and recalibration.

Conclusions: Lessons from an Exercise in Reflexive Evaluation

Reflexive evaluation has allowed us as academics to attune and productively question more deeply our own positionality through personal and collective introspection, and transformations related to the relationships and processes available within the praxis of community-first CCE. Partnerships are never straightforward, and taking a community-first approach to CCE is a complex endeavour. We contend that reflexive evaluation is critical for academics in CCE to anticipate the frictions arising from our institutional structures over recognition or validation of this work (Sandmann, Saltmarsh, & O'Meara, 2016)[7], the centring of the academic perspective because of systemic power differentials between community and the academy (even when we ourselves as academics are highly committed to centring community and maximizing community impact), and the distance these structures can create between academia and community. Reflexive evaluation also offers us opportunities to reflect on how we as individuals working within these structures support or set barriers to community-first CCE, whether consciously or unconsciously.

In writing this article, we have reinforced the importance of really listening to community partners within evaluation activities, and of supporting the development of academic structures that make room for diverse needs among CCE practitioners (while not assuming that CCE can do everything for everyone). Reflexive evaluation anticipates and *welcomes* tensions between partners anew with each project, not because partners are not committed to working with one another, but because of the high degree of specificity of reasons and needs for participation among partners, and as part of the co-creation of processes and developing relationships in partnerships. These tensions can be exciting and productive for creating new contexts for the development, recalibration, and strengthening of relationships. Meaningful co-governance of evaluation projects among community and academic partners may be both difficult and messy, but it is a worthwhile aspiration.

Among the many occasions where we endeavoured to "walk the talk" as we undertook the

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[7] In 2018, Kira Locken provided an introductory analysis within our project, highlighting the differences in meaning and value of research, teaching, and service between current university criteria for tenure and promotion, and the experiences of faculty involved in community-engaged scholarship. Change is anticipated and underway to value CCE. See https://carleton.ca/communityfirst/?p=6676

multiple steps in our evaluation process, some aspects of the process did not turn out exactly as we had planned. With regard to a participatory process, we are aware that community partners were at times placed in positions of providing feedback on pre-established ideas and structures set by academics within the evaluation, though this awareness also highlights an ongoing concern among academics about balancing inclusion with respecting the time and resource constraints of community partners. We also discovered there may be unintentional effects associated with institutional support for CCE projects; for example, our decision to hold the symposium at Carleton University (an academic institutional space) was part of a well-intentioned effort to cover event costs, but we could also ask what might have been gained by meeting in a community space for these discussions, and what resources a community partner would require to host such an event? Lastly, we learned that nourishing CCE relationships also requires that we recognize moments where community partners may prefer to communicate with each other to advance CCE work without an academic presence.

The symposium planning, including the format and roles of community and academics in the event, is an example within CFICE of how community and academics learned to work together in a new way, distinct from the demonstration projects at the hub levels which largely took a sectoral approach. The collaborative approach experienced, particularly within symposium planning, offers the experience of a co-created community-academic space that is structural, cultural, and attentive to power relations, comprising awareness and acknowledgement of community and academic needs that are at times the same, similar, different and/or in tension with one another. Actors within this new co-created knowledge space acknowledge power differentials and tensions between community and academy while also sharing enthusiasm and desire for continued collaboration, and importantly, share a vision for maximizing the value of community-first CCE work.

The CAC continues to be an important structure for community involvement within CFICE, and has been assigned additional resources for meetings and for the incorporation of priorities from this committee into the Evaluation and Analysis Working Group. Though the group has experienced some obstacles to maintaining its momentum—reflecting underlying time and resource constraints for community partners within CCE projects—they are actively developing several ongoing peer-to-peer engagement activities to learn from each other, share successes, and explore other opportunities to participate in community-campus partnerships.

As in van Draanen's (2017) experience, our continued reflexive approach in writing this article has led us to pay attention to where we as academics may have maintained control over the shared ideas coming out of the evaluation process, where we distortedly employed academic terms that excluded some, and how we made decisions about what was important to know within the evaluation learnings that we disseminated. We also remained aware of cautions associated with a reflexive approach—that it may be employed to pre-empt criticism or serve as "self-indulgence" that "may serve to reinforce [the authority of the researcher] rather than challenge it" (D'Cruz et al., 2007, p. 78; van Draanen, 2017). Well-intentioned efforts we undertook throughout the evaluation process—including soliciting community input during the interview/focus group process and in symposium planning through the CAC, engaging

a symposium moderator well respected by community and academics, and participating in challenging discussions within the symposium organizing committee around the multiple and complex needs associated with community and academic symposium involvement—led to new imagined ways of organizing symposium spaces, and supported an approach that we believe was more attentive to hearing and centring community voices. Still, there were limits within that process that warrant consideration in the development of future projects, including how to involve community partners even more deeply in the undertaking of evaluation and examining assumptions that evaluation events be held in the academy, for example.

Moving forward from this evaluation project, we believe we are only scratching the surface of what is possible in truly "walking the talk" in community-first CCE. Evaluation has become a fundamental part of our CFICE work, well-suited to a long-term project. We recognize that reflexivity involves constant practice (D'Cruz et al., 2007), just as evaluation in general within CCE offers continued and incremental opportunities for learning (Gelmon, 2003; Rubin, 2000). As the process of synthesizing and mobilizing CFICE learnings coming out of the evaluation of our first phase continues, we look to ongoing institutional support and resources to ensure that dissemination of evaluation findings employs a community-first perspective. We also continue to nourish the relationships that have brought such meaning and progress to our community-first CCE efforts thus far.

Addendum
A response to 'Learning to "Walk the Talk": Reflexive Evaluation in Community-First Engaged Research'
Colleen Christopherson-Cote, Community Co-Lead Evaluation and Analysis Working Group and Phase I Poverty Hub partner (Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Partnership Coordinator)

As an active member of the Phase I: Poverty Reduction Hub of CFICE, I was honoured to be part of the symposium outlined in this article. My role as Community Co-lead in the Evaluation and Analysis working group was established after this meeting. I was eager to participate as a community voice on this project in order to help balance perspectives and work in a collaborative community-first manner.

In keeping with the practice of community-first CCE, I was asked by the authors of this article to reflect from my community perspective. It is important to note that the work I do in community is situated in Saskatoon, SK, in Treaty 6 Territory and the traditional homeland of the Métis, and is reflective of the circumstances, practices, polices, and perspectives associated with social determinants of health-based community development.

In reading the article I was excited to see that the three core priorities (co-governance, policies and practices, and relationships) were identified as the critical elements of community-first CCE. Upon finishing the article and reading through the best practices, recommendations, barriers, and key learnings, I was struck that from a community perspective, I would re-organize

the three priorities as (1) relationships, (2) policy and practice, and (3) co-governance. While you, as the reader, may be thinking that this is the semantics of language and presentation, I would caution you to reflect about the impact and power of academic language and presentation in the relationship of community-first CCE.

As a community practitioner who predominantly works in systems-level policy and practice, relationships are the key to accomplishing any of the work we set out to do. Without trust, reciprocity, and identification of the power imbalances that infiltrate the colonial systems we exist in, community development would be extremely difficult. For this reason, I am suggesting that the partners who set out to work in a community-first CCE approach be mindful of the role language, organization, hierarchy, power, and practice play in the day-to-day operations of a CCE project.

Building relationships is an ongoing and never-ending practice in community-first CCE, and in community development in general. Without these solid relationships, moving forward on policy, practice, and eventual co-governance of projects would be next to impossible. Over the course of the six years that I have been working on projects in Saskatoon rooted in community-first CCE, I have been to more coffee meetings than strategic planning sessions or policy/governance meetings. One of the key commentaries in the article speaks to the value and resourcing of community relationship-building. Often outcomes and skills associated with building relationships, community capacity building, and/or community investment are ineligible for funding, looked at as "fluffy", and/or assigned to "side of desk" despite everyone in the process stating the importance of nurturing these relationships.

In the article the authors speak of the reflective evaluation process, and offer some of the barriers associated with this process from an academic perspective. It is important to note that the barriers, particularly associated with resourcing, language, and evaluation are not disrupted without relationships that are built on the grounds of equity, safety, reciprocity, and trust. Working alongside the many partners of CFICE, I have witnessed tremendous growth around inclusive practices and policies, including the creation of the Community Advisory Committee (CAC), community-based outputs, and inclusion of community voice in academic outputs and funding associated with inclusion at meetings. The processes and policies that intersect between academy and community, specifically about funding, are often fraught with complexity and practices that discourage inclusivity. Speaking specifically about the funding relationships between the academy and community, it is interesting to reflect that in theory we all articulate the importance of community-first reflective evaluation-based practices, yet when push comes to shove and funding is being awarded, the three priority areas (relationships, policy and practice, co-governance) are the first things to be flagged as non-compliant within the expectations, accountabilities, and limitations of funding agreements.

Part of the commitment from CFICE partners has been to call out these imperfect practices and policies and work within our internal structures to question efficacy, relevance, and appropriateness of these policies. My first experience navigating the academic–based expectations for travel was an eye-opening one, and left me almost nine months without repayment of expenses. It was inappropriate that the system expected me, as a community

partner working in poverty reduction, to carry a large expense for that time period. It created a situation where I believed that my participation was of lower value and made me question additional connections to the project. After months of negotiations and numerous internal conversations within the academic partners' networks, policies about community partner travel were changed. This is a small but extremely important example of how working with CFICE and within a mindset of community-first CCE has collectively improved relationships, policy, and practice, and ultimately co-governance within CCE projects.

My final thought is about the intricacies of language, communication, and outputs. Everyone knows that every sector, agency, area of study, and community has its own set of language. Acronyms, histories, interconnections, and context increase the complexity of this work. Working alongside the CAC and CFICE academic partners, I have seen the appreciation and understanding for each other's complex systems evolve. Community partners often complain that academic outputs are "less than useful" while academic partners often counter with "community outputs lack the rigour of academic research". Working in a community-first manner recognizes the two perspectives and meets in the middle, creating outputs that are unique, understandable, and useful for all partners.

As the Community Co-lead of the Evaluation and Analysis working group of CFICE, I have watched the transformation of community-first CCE ebb and flow. The complexity of the work is eloquently captured by the authors and their call for self-reflection and system-reflection to make changes truly focuses on building a community-first approach. This work cannot, and should not, be done without both system and self-reflections. Each player in the process, policies, practices, co-governance structures, and networks has a role to play in the creation of space that is ethical, safe, rooted in reciprocity, honours relationships, challenges policy and practice, and leads to co-governance of CCE that is community-first.

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Reports from the Field

Breaking Barriers: Using Open Data to Strengthen Pathways in Community-Campus Engagement for Community Action on Environmental Sustainability

Leigha McCarroll, Eileen O'Connor, Jason Garlough

Abstract   The goal of this field report is to share learnings on productive dialogue between, and among, communities and campuses. Specifically, we will reflect on practical applications of co-creating a brokering tool to strengthen connections between local environmental non-profit organizations and the six postsecondary institutions in the National Capital Region (Ottawa/Gatineau). The report outlines a process of standardizing and visually depicting data on university and college engagement opportunities, created with an aim of making it easier for potential community partners, students, faculty, and even the general public to search, filter, and discover new programs, researchers, and services that match their interests.

Keywords   brokering tool; open data; environmental sustainability

The National Capital Region is comprised of Ottawa and Gatineau, neighbouring cities and communities along the Ontario/Quebec border. This bilingual, multicultural region supports the growth of rich community-campus engagement (CCE) opportunities. For the environmental sustainability sector in particular, many professors, researchers, community-based organizations, and students demonstrate interest in working together for solutions to community-identified needs. While collaboration among these diverse actors is occurring, there are barriers that hinder the creation of more sustainable and purposeful partnerships. While there are a wide variety of CCE opportunities available, it is often difficult for community-based organizations to navigate the multiple systems postsecondary institutions use to advertise opportunities. This field report will discuss the process of co-creating a community-based project to inventory the breadth of CCE opportunities at the six local postsecondary institutions. Our goal is to respond to community-identified needs to break barriers around missed opportunities in community-campus engagement, gaps in communication, and setting realistic expectations. We will explore ways to standardize, organize, and sort the information using feedback from the community partners; leveraging existing frameworks, tools, and open data standards. In sum, this paper will share learnings and insight from a local brokering project to develop an open data inventory, made publicly available to other sectors to support ongoing co-creation of knowledge and engagement.

The Issue

While there have been numerous examples of successful CCE partnerships in the National Capital Region, this project emerged as a response to observations from various stakeholders that some form of brokerage could facilitate new partnerships in the environmental sustainability sector. During the 2017-2018 academic year, our Ottawa Brokering Group, within the CFICE project, undertook a needs assessment of potential stakeholders. Efforts were made to speak to representatives from all postsecondary institutions located in the National Capital Region and a range of community-based organizations to identify key challenges faced by each stakeholder and collect their feedback on how to respond to the need to create more effective pathways of communication and connection.

Participants in the needs assessment pointed to the various factors in effective CCE: reciprocity, enthusiasm, and communication. Strong communication is arguably the most important factor; however, many participants identified multiple barriers to establishing lines of communication. In colleges and universities, many faculty are part time or on contract with often competing responsibilities. Similarly, many staff of community-based organizations are overworked and have limited capacity to take on the first hurdle of initiating communication about CCE opportunities with local colleges and universities. Determining who to contact, either from a complex institutional directory or searching for the most relevant community-based organization, can be a stumbling block to initiating partnerships. Sometimes emails or phone calls go unanswered, which can be highly discouraging in pursuing an opportunity. Furthermore, once a partnership is agreed upon, the crucial process of maintaining open and consistent communication to manage expectations and operations is often time-consuming for both parties.

Many respondents also indicated that the complexity and multiple programs at most postsecondary institutions is a major barrier to communication. One participant gave the example of a local community-based organization operating shelters and residences for the homeless in Ottawa. This organization may be receiving calls about opportunities for culinary students, business students, and social work students from one college alone on any given day. Another participant noted that postsecondary institutions seem generally segregated, with insufficient communication between or among departments. For community-based organizations, this may require fielding multiple calls from the same institution, a time-consuming and often frustrating process.

In addition to challenges with communication, participants in the needs assessment identified several other barriers to building successful CCE relationships. These include staff turnover, scoping, and accountability. The complexity of administration within postsecondary institutions leads many organizations to seek out informal, personal relationships with individuals to streamline communications. Unfortunately, this preference may be problematic when it comes to staff turnover. Without concrete agreements, partnerships will disintegrate when one party moves on to a new position or leaves the organization. When this happens, it can be very difficult for others to pick up the pieces and continue the work if no records remain.

Second, scoping CCE initiatives was another challenge identified by participants. Students have diverse capacities, and their work ethic and motivation can vary considerably. As one participant noted, the nature of the placement influences how a student comes to be placed with an organization. Their level of commitment and motivation will likely be different if they seek out the placement, as opposed to fulfilling a requirement for a course. It is up to the community-based organization and the postsecondary institution to define what can be done given the time and resources, and this is far from an exact science. This scoping process is a major undertaking, but it is essential for a successful partnership. Without due consideration for the resources available to the community-based organization, and the students in the case of placements, projects can often be far too ambitious. Similarly, for organizations that work with college and university researchers, funding timelines can be an obstacle. Funding to support student placements was also a notable concern, since a great deal of additional human resources is often required for supervision throughout the course of the project.

Third, the resources required to manage and keep students accountable can be an obstacle. Students may require regular check-ups to ensure they are on track, and for an organization with limited staff this can be a considerable drain on their time and energy. Unfortunately, if there are no effective monitoring processes in place, the results of the CCE initiative may not be what the community-based organization expected.

In addition to these challenges, participants observed a major lack of communication and collaboration between institutions in the realm of CCE. Competing priorities and varying student profiles and programs are key reasons for the lack of communication, and some participants noted that meetings around joint degree programs are often the only opportunity for faculty from different institutions to meet and collaborate. Besides these partnerships, postsecondary institutions mostly interact through national or regional networks. These include the Canadian College and University Environmental Network (CCUEN) and, up until recently, the Canadian Alliance for Community Service Learning (CACSL). All the college and university participants agreed there was more to be done to promote collaboration between postsecondary institutions in the National Capital Region. One participant noted that it is useful simply knowing that there are people at different institutions working on similar initiatives. Beyond this, collaboration between postsecondary institutions holds very real implications for CCE, from streamlining communication to developing new and innovative partnerships among multiple stakeholders.

Most participants agreed that there was no definitive example of a brokering organization in the National Capital Region's environmental sector that could bring together colleges, universities, and community-based organizations. For the organizations that do play a brokering role, limited staff and resources means they are unable to meet all the needs of a CCE broker in Ottawa. In relation to this, support in scoping and framing engagement opportunities is a significant gap. Many organizations without experience in CCE may not know the capacity and constraints of students, while from an institutional perspective, there may be an inadequate understanding of the resources available to community-based organizations.

Upon completion of the community needs assessment, we presented the findings back to

the community and co-developed a plan of action, as described in the following section.

Figure 1. **Jason Garlough, Eileen O'Connor, and Julie Johnson from the CFICE team, discussing the community needs assessment with local community-based organizations.**
Photo credit: Kathryn Norman, Sustainable Eastern Ontario

The Solution

When it comes to the creation of a brokering tool, community organizations and postsecondary institutions expressed the need to incorporate various components to ensure that the tool would support creating partnerships, not add an additional administrative layer. The table below outlines the challenges expressed by community partners around CCE, and offers solutions presented by the development of a brokering tool.

Table 1. CCE Challenges and Brokering Solutions

Challenges	Brokering Solutions
Lack of time	This brokering tool consolidates all relevant information related to each opportunity, eliminating the step of organizations taking time to conduct further research into the details of CCE opportunities.
Lack of resources	Where applicable, this tool provides detailed information about the financial commitment required by the community partner, also listing opportunities that do not require financial commitment so organizations are fully aware of options.
Confusion around appropriate contact	This tool lists the most appropriate contact person(s) for the CCE opportunity.

College and University websites too difficult to navigate	The tool consolidates all relevant information from college and university websites, eliminating the need to navigate these to find information.
Lack of response from contacts	The tool lists alternate contacts where applicable in case of lack of response from the lead contact.
Wide variety of procedures, guidelines, institutional programming	The tool provides a one-stop-shop for CCE opportunities and lists all relevant procedural details for each opportunity.
Lack of clear theme/direction	The tool's specific thematic focus on the environmental sector will make for a highly relevant and well-defined tool for community partners in this sector.

The guiding objective of this brokering project is to respond to community-identified needs to break barriers around missed opportunities in community-campus engagement, gaps in communication, and setting realistic expectations. As such, members of the CFICE Brokering Working Group endeavoured to create a brokering tool: the Opportunities Database. In creating the Database, standardizing the data was a major priority. As the Database incorporates Open Data and is public and free to use, standardizing data structures was critical for maximizing the use of the information related to CCE opportunities.

The Process
In order to build a robust Opportunities Database, the first step was to establish the data structures and fields that would guide which information to collect. In the needs assessment, organizations reported that they required specific information on various fields such as the type and nature of the CCE opportunity, the academic level of the student, the number of student hours required, the amount of postsecondary resources required (both human and financial), timelines and deadlines, and contact information. For each of these categories, we established standards in order to provide the fullest picture of the opportunity, while also standardizing the type of information collected across all postsecondary institutions. For example, for the field "Type of CCE," we relied on the Work-Integrated Learning typology conceptualized by the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario to classify the opportunities as Systematic Training, Structured Work Experience, or Institutional Partnerships.

Once the data standards were established, we began to meet with community partners, professors, and staff at postsecondary institutions to identify various types of opportunities for CCE. These meetings allowed us to build personal connections with partners while raising awareness of the tool and receiving useful information on CCE opportunities at each local college and university. An example of this is a meeting that took place in June 2018 with Simon Tremblay-Pepin, assistant professor and director of the Élisabeth-Bruyère School of Social Innovation at the University of St. Paul. During this meeting, the CFICE team discovered a promising opportunity for CCE in Ottawa, as Dr. Tremblay-Pepin briefed us on the upcoming launch of an Honours Bachelor of Arts in Social Innovation, in addition to the

school's existing certificate in Social Innovation and Graduate Diploma in Social Organization Development. As of Fall 2018, the School will be offering the programs, which aim to offer theoretical and practical training in collective action and social innovation, are grounded in a local context, with various courses offering practicum opportunities in the Ottawa community. This meeting reinforced the importance of connecting with postsecondary institutions to ask them about upcoming initiatives related to CCE.

Figure 2. **The CFICE Team visiting the Mauril-Bélanger Social Innovation Workshop at St. Paul University (Ottawa), June 2018**

In terms of logistics, we used a publicly-accessible Google Sheet to build a database to showcase these opportunities offered by postsecondary institutions in the National Capital Region in the environmental and sustainability sector. We also combed institutional websites for additional information on available opportunities and timelines. For users, we created a Kumu visualization that links to the Google Sheet, making the information visually-appealing, easy to navigate, and downloadable. This allows the community to filter, sort, and publish the thousands of community-campus engagement opportunities available in their region in any format they prefer or find useful. We also created a User Guide with step-by-step instructions and a glossary to help users as they navigate the Opportunities Database. Figure 3 depicts a snapshot from Kumu of the CCE opportunities we gathered for the University of Ottawa.
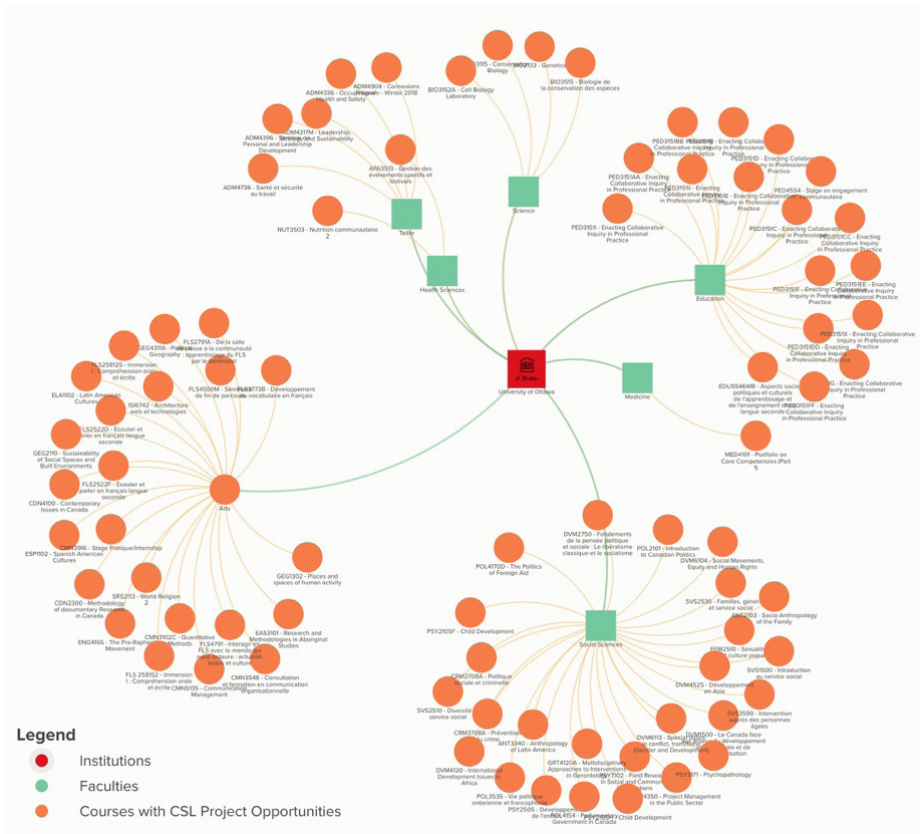
Figure 3. **Kumu Visualization Snapshot: CCE at the University of Ottawa**

Next Steps

Now that we have amassed a significant amount of information on CCE opportunities in the Ottawa environmental sustainability sector, we continue to refine the data standards and categories to ensure the Opportunities Database is as user-friendly as possible. Members of the project team recently attended an Ottawa Civic Tech meetup, where we had an opportunity to share our project and data structure with volunteers for feedback and advice on best practices in Open Data.

We will host a meeting with community partners in Fall 2018 to present the Opportunities Database and invite community partners to test it out as a pilot. We will incorporate feedback from this meeting to further improve the tool. In the coming months, we will launch the Opportunities Database publicly via CFICE's networks and channels.

In summary, this project is an enriching undertaking, that needs consistent and meaningful interactions with the various stakeholders to ensure it corresponds to community and postsecondary institution needs to the greatest extent possible. It demonstrates the importance of co-creation and of data standardization as a means to reduce barriers and pave the way for

lasting connections between community-based organizations and postsecondary institutions.

About the Authors

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Rooting out Poverty: People, Passion, and Place at Station 20 West

Lisa Erickson, Isobel Findlay, Colleen Christopherson-Cote

ABSTRACT   This case study summarizes and discusses our project exploring the impact of co-location, connectedness, and community-campus collaboration in addressing the root causes of poverty and our efforts to build capacities in Saskatoon. The site of this study is Station 20 West, a community enterprise centre in the heart of Saskatoon's inner city that opened in the fall of 2012 as a result of community knowledge, participation, and determination to act for the common good. We share our findings, lessons learned, and project team reflections which underscore the connectedness of poverty reduction and reconciliation, the importance of including those with lived and diverse experience in community-campus engagement (CCE), and the hallmarks of good CCE.

KEYWORDS   poverty; community-campus engagement; decolonizing; co-location; reconciliation

What We Set Out to Learn

The authors, as part of a research team that also included co-managers of Station 20 West, two graduate students, and a second academic researcher, investigated the complex community-based collaboration among partners at Station 20 West Community Enterprise Centre (S20W) in Saskatoon's inner city. Specifically, we were interested in the impact of co-location, connectedness, and community-campus collaboration on efforts to address the root causes of poverty and build capacities in Saskatoon. Our study, part of the larger study Community First: Impacts of Community Engagement (CFICE) funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, aimed to understand how community-campus partnerships "can be designed and implemented to maximize the value created for non-profit, community-based organizations?" We endeavoured to answer these questions:

- How well does community-campus engagement (CCE) support innovative capacity building that can make Saskatoon more inclusive, strong, and sustainable? And how does this impact poverty reduction initiatives?
- How does co-location (sharing the same place) of partner organizations affect service, how do their different mandates affect outcomes, and how do synergies (where organizations cooperate to achieve more than they can do alone) develop among them or not?
- How does a university presence impact the Station 20 West community enterprise

model, committed to social and economic equity through community economic development where people develop their own solutions to systemic barriers?

This case study summarizes and discusses our findings captured in our full project report.[1] We first explain our approach to this community-based project which merges community-identified principles and participatory action research methodology. We then describe the context including the city and the specific neighbourhoods surrounding our research focus: the community hub, Station 20 West. We proceed to discuss our findings and key learnings related to the three research questions. We close with team reflections about the role of people, place, and passion; the centrality of reconciliation to poverty reduction in our context; the role of those with lived experience with poverty in this work; and thoughts on disrupting linear notions of knowledge mobilization.

Our Approach

We used participatory action research in this project—aligning our decolonizing methodology with the vision and guiding principles of the Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Partnership (SPRP): "a city that bridges", "we are all treaty people", and "nothing about us, without us".[2] Recognizing both how we differ and what we share—different experiences and knowledges and shared histories—from the summer of 2015 to the summer of 2016 (phase one of the project), we gathered information and input, built and shared capacity through surveys engaging people with lived experience of poverty, conducted focus groups and interviews (with S20W service users, co-locating partners, university faculty, staff, and students, and community partners), and completed a literature review. In total, this study involved 107 individuals: 70 who completed surveys, 29 who participated in focus groups, and 8 who provided interviews. The rigour of our data analysis was strengthened by the diversity of our project partners. These partners invested in an iterative process over several months that engaged students, faculty, and partners: the SPRP, S20W, and two University of Saskatchewan entities—the Community-University Institute for Social Research, which led the project, and the Office of Community Engagement and Outreach, located at S20W—as well as community members in a public forum on September 11, 2017, to share findings.

Context

Saskatoon is a city of approximately 278,500 and is the largest city in the province of Saskatchewan in Canada. The city is situated in Treaty 6 territory and the Homeland of the Métis, and a place in which colonization, including stealing land, starving communities, and

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[1] Findlay, I.M., Sunny, S. R., del Canto, S., Christopherson-Côté, C., & Erickson, L. *Impacting community strength and sustainability: Community-campus engagement and poverty reduction at Station 20 West Community Enterprise Centre.* Saskatoon: Community-University Institute for Social Research. Study participant voices reported throughout this case study are cited from that report.

[2] From poverty to possibility…and prosperity: A 5 year review of the Saskatoon Community Action Plan to Reduce Poverty, Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Partnership (SPRP), February 2017. Retrieved from www.communityview.ca

sabotaging families, has left indelible scars and a legacy of trauma. Despite this painful colonial legacy and ongoing reality, Saskatoon is also the site of considerable strengths and is on the front line of reconciliation efforts with 98 organizations, businesses, faith communities, and partners aligned in their commitment to truth and responding to the 94 Calls to Action identified in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC)'s report.[3] The project partners identified in this case study are among the community groups committed to truth and reconciliation.

The focus of this case study is the inner city of Saskatoon, also commonly referred to as Saskatoon's Westside Core Neighbourhoods—a vibrant, gritty, and tenacious cluster of neighbourhoods plagued by staggering economic, social, educational, and health inequities.

S20W is a community enterprise centre in the heart of these neighbourhoods which opened in the fall of 2012 as a result of community knowledge, participation, and determination to act for the common good. Those actions built on community-campus collaborations that had been at the heart of grassroots community activism on quality of life and other issues since the 1990s. In addition, key institutional partners, the Saskatoon Health Region and the University of Saskatchewan, contributed to the collaborative journey that incubated Station 20 West.

When a new provincial government withdrew committed funding for the community enterprise centre in 2008, the community learned "if we come together as a group, we can make it happen." Realizing "they could be the change," they mobilized across their differences (age, gender, ethnicity, religion, for example) to raise the money to make S20W a reality. One co-locator confirmed that things might have been different:

> If those thousands of people didn't come for that march, or if those kids hadn't put those pennies to those unions donating. . . . I feel like we're a symbol for a social cause, social issues and social justice. . . That's why there are so many of those events located here . . . because they think of what S20W means to the community.

As a result of such community initiative, S20W is home to seven diverse organizations/ tenants, and serves as a hub for meetings and gatherings for several additional partner organizations that invigorate and benefit from S20W. It is for many a vital "knowledge hub" and "place of healing." Together, these community-based organizations and programs incubate collaborative, action-oriented work with partners throughout the city dedicated to improving community health and well-being.

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[3] For over 100 years, Canada's residential school system served to undermine Aboriginal families, cultures and communities while assimilating children into settler society. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada traveled Canada to hear the stories of over 6000 people, most of whom were residential school survivors. Survivors shared experiences of being forcibly taken from their homes and experiencing physical and sexual abuse and the lasting life-, family-, and community-wide impacts of Canada's residential school system. The TRC report (2015) and related materials can be retrieved from the commission website: http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=3

Findings

What did we learn about CCE and its impact in this community and on poverty reduction?

Research Question: How well does community-campus engagement (CCE) support innovative capacity building that can make Saskatoon more inclusive, strong, and sustainable? And how does this impact poverty reduction initiatives?

Our project affirmed the centrality of relationships built on trust and reciprocity to collective community change initiatives (facilitated by organizational co-location and CCE at Station 20 West). From the perspective of participants, at the heart of effective collaboration and partnership are highly connected and integrated stakeholders who care deeply about social justice, the community, and each other. As one partner put it, they represent "a really diverse assemblage of co-locating partners" with "a thread that ties us all together, and that's social justice." Effective collaboration requires thoughtful relationship stewards, with a shared vision for positive community change and commitment to accountability to the community. "Purposively wanting to collaborate and pool some of their resources towards shared initiatives and projects," the co-locating partners aim to root out the underlying causes of poverty, including the systemic socio-economic exclusion whereby the privilege of some comes at the expense of others' impoverishment.

Our findings also directly challenge the traditional scholarly paradigm that equates research rigour with distance and disinterest. Community-campus engagement at S20W had particular "decolonizing responsibilities" in a place that one participant called "a centre of learning and reconciling." Disinterest in this context would be a denial of that responsibility and of the critical rethinking of the paradigms and practices that made research so destructive of Indigenous peoples and communities feeling "studied to death." One academic researcher insisted that supporting S20W which "is itself an intervention . . . is a responsibility of researchers," while a community partner was clear that "academic research isn't worth anything unless it has a social utility or community impact." Another academic researcher challenged colleagues to reconsider the value of their research:

> We've got too many university researchers who feel that the most that they need to do is do their research and, if a little tidbit of it gets out to a practitioner or somebody who would be able to apply it, good. But they don't have any obligation to try to share information, or even work as a peer with researchers in the community to move the organization or project, or address the social issues.

The CCE activity based at Station 20 West was viewed as valuing different knowledges which serve to animate Station 20 West as a site of formal and informal learning and community organizing.

Community partners and engaged scholars are charting new, nuanced, complex, and long-term relationships that centre relevance and shift the priority to community impact rather than scholarly output, while recognizing that university-based scholars must publish to sustain their publicly funded capacity to engage with the community and connect those communities with

globally relevant research and important conversations. Effective knowledge mobilization remains at the heart of impact and innovation notwithstanding this shift in priorities. This shift requires a commitment to learning, unlearning, and relearning, to learning from and with those with diverse experience and to recognizing the community assets and potential that can be obscured by stereotypical views. It also elevates the role and responsibility of anchor institutions[4] such as the university to the prosperity of people and place.

We learned that place and space play a critical role in bringing people together to cultivate belonging and many ways of knowing, to support social and economic justice, and to facilitate perseverance while addressing the complex systemic issues underlying poverty. S20W is located in a community where many people feel rooted and connected to one another, and yet social isolation is pervasive. S20W claims and holds space for community building grounded in community assets and is aimed at building equity. Participants reflected on the role and design of physical space and the importance of an inviting, inclusive space that mirrors the diversity within the community. Equally important is a "safe space" where "those difficult questions" especially those related to intersectional power, privilege, and resources in programmatic and systemic contexts, can be asked and diverse knowledges and not only "book smarts" are valued. Working together in CCE, community and campus participants alike reported feeling mutual validation when they otherwise often feel isolated and alone in their work.

Our team deliberately held space for the voices of those with lived experience of poverty—Professors of Poverty—throughout this project, and we sincerely heed the expertise and guidance of Vanessa Charles, long-time Inclusion Advocate with the SPRP:

> Professors, in general, are people who have extensive knowledge and are learned in a specific field. That knowledge has generally been gained through formal education. These professors are extremely gifted in their expertise. Professors of Poverty are equally gifted and knowledgeable, though this education is delivered through their lived experiences. They have knowledge of the complexity of poverty as it relates to their lives. This knowledge is a unique gift and cannot be replicated or taught through the use of textbooks, lectures, or even research.

A Professor of Poverty once said, "You cannot learn what my life is like by reading or taking classes, you can learn my life by crawling into my skin and living my life." Many of the Professors of Poverty had extensive knowledge of what it is like living with unsafe housing, lacking food, living with the physical and mental health limitations, the experience of family violence, and the general feeling of isolation and the inability to "fit in" with community.

It is critical in poverty reduction work to include the voices and experience of Professors of Poverty so that policies, practices, and projects reflect the actual circumstances and not the perceptions of those with no experience.

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[4] "**Anchor institutions** are enterprises such as universities and hospitals that are rooted in their local communities by mission, invested capital, or relationships to customers, employees, and vendors." See https://democracycollaborative.org/democracycollaborative/anchorinstitutions/Anchor%20Institutions

Lessons learned related to CCE and poverty reduction work

- Creating space for people with lived experience of poverty is critical in CCE focused on reducing poverty.
- Perceptions of poverty are often rooted in stereotypes and a lack of experience with people living in poverty.
- Community members in Saskatoon's core neighbourhoods feel over-researched and disempowered by the burdens of tokenism.
- Research/project outputs must genuinely consider and incorporate community knowledges and meet community identified needs to ensure rigour and relevance.

What did we learn about organizational co-location at Station 20 West?

Research Question: How does co-location (sharing the same place) of partner organizations affect service, how do their different mandates affect outcomes, and how do synergies (where organizations cooperate to achieve more than they can do alone) develop among them or not?

The co-location model offers community members access to various organizations, strengthens involvement, and facilitates informal and formal partnership, collaboration, relationship building, and resource sharing. Our findings suggest that it is important to deliberately and intentionally nurture engagement and collaboration among co-locating partners while being explicit about roles, responsibilities, and expectations. Also, this project grew our appreciation for the complex entanglement of the parts and the whole in a co-location context, and the importance of acknowledging and planning for conflict.

Through surveys, community residents indicated that they were generally familiar with S20W and underlined its success in imparting a sense of security and belonging within the community as well as bridging the realms of community and university. One community member commented, "I feel safe here," while another concluded, "A new building the community supported and paid for. . . . It matters that it belongs to the community."

Participants recommended expanding the range of services, especially for youth and people with disabilities, and promoting the remarkable story of S20W more broadly to the public. Participants also underscored the importance of thoughtful design and how a physical space impacts accessibility and community.

Lessons learned related to organizational partnership and co-location

- Synergies develop in planned and less planned, formal and informal, direct and indirect ways.
- Relationships, respect, and reciprocity are key resources to building fairness.
- Community ownership and engagement are critical to S20W success. Cultural inclusion and ceremony are critical in this community.
- Social justice is the thread that ties people together. People, Passion, and Place create a recipe for success.
- Education and learning that respects different knowledges and worldviews is the foundation to socio-economic justice.

- The university's presence strengthens the work of community-based organizations, facilitating access to resources, education, and employment opportunities.
- The University Office and CCE is at the heart of a "culture of learning," deep listening, critical thinking, inclusive knowledge, and social innovation.

What did we learn about the presence and impact of a university at Station 20 West?

Research Question: How does a university presence impact the Station 20 West community enterprise model, committed to social and economic equity through community economic development where people develop their own solutions to systemic barriers?

The University of Saskatchewan's Office of Community Engagement and Outreach at Station 20 West (the Office) opened in 2012 when the building in which it is co-located, Station 20 West, opened. Aligned with the vision for Station 20 West, the Office focuses on building and stewarding community-campus relationships in Saskatoon's core neighbourhoods aimed at supporting social, educational, economic, and health equity through teaching, learning, research, and artistic work. The Office's staff, including a manager and administrative support (2FTE), function in a host of roles including buffer, bridge, broker, as well as guest, host, and ambassador. The Office's institutional home within the University and its reporting lines have changed multiple times since opening, and it has resided within Advancement and Community Engagement, the Office of the Vice-President Research. and currently University Relations.

In reflecting on the role of the university, people found it difficult to speak only about the Office. Indeed, some people argued that evaluating the Office meant evaluating how well the University resourced, supported, and promoted the Office.

Our findings encourage reflection on several ongoing institutional and cultural challenges to CCE. Participants mused about the university's inconsistent support and long-term commitment to CCE. They frequently mentioned that university policies and procedures are not structured to enable and recognize CCE, resulting in time-consuming and distracting "work-arounds" for collaborators. These "work-arounds" sometimes relate to the allocation and distribution of project resources including the difficulty in resourcing non-campus partners and doing so equitably and expeditiously. This is frustrating for community partners and a test of their patience amidst their work on pressing community issues. We suggest such policies may impede CCE work and penalize scholars and partners who engage in CCE.

CCE stakeholders also observed collisions between the lived experience of people in the Core Neighbourhoods, with the privilege that often accompanies traditional academic success (especially when unexamined and undeclared). These collisions are both avoidable and navigable with the support and stewardship of specialized units like the Office. Similarly, dedicated CCE units serve to navigate and translate, helping to ensure that research is relevant, and that engagement and knowledge mobilization is relevant to and accessible for communities. At its best, community members attested to the CCE activities of the Office and its campus partners that helped "[them] think more deeply about [their] work," changed their thinking about the theory-practice binary, and foregrounded "a caring kind of profile to the University." Having diverse stakeholders be heard confirmed people's sense that "research is

an important part of changing community."

Lessons learned related to a university's place in community engagement, equity, and growth

- Managing effectively the multiple roles—buffer, bridge, guest, host, and ambassador—of the Office is key to CCE success.
- Resourcing, supporting, and promoting the Office and community-based research is a critical responsibility of the university.
- There is a foundation of trust, relationship building, and capacity building at the heart of this innovation to build strong, sustainable communities.
- CCE often shines a light on what shapes people's lives in the Core neighbourhood, helps attract investment in the community (eg. institutional procurement and leveraging institutional reputation to access funding for community initiatives), and highlights educational, employment, and other community development possibilities.
- CCE helps people understand the Core and creates opportunities for the Core to learn about itself.
- CCE makes the university easier to understand and seem more accessible.
- The Office pushes boundaries in overt, covert, and creative ways that sustain critical thinking, expand educational opportunities, and design new strategies to meet social needs.
- The Office mentors for "solidarity-making or ally work" were at the heart of good CCE at S20W.
- The Office helps people navigate university bureaucracy, ethical issues, power imbalances, and a culture that undervalues the rigour of community-based research.

Team Reflections on our Project Learning Journey

People, passion and place are at the centre of collaboration that positively impacts community.

As a team, we felt compelled to articulate and reflect back to participants three themes that emerged as we listened and digested the data in this study. We heard clearly that prioritizing people and relationships is at the centre of effective CCE and collaborative co-location aimed at building equity and poverty reduction. Similarly, we heard that effective CCE aimed at reducing poverty must involve passion, rigour, and commitment—that it's critical to engage minds and hearts and that one without the other affects impact. Last, from the traditional lands upon which we work, to how spaces are designed and animated, place and space is inextricably connected to and shapes collaborative work.

People

Relationships make this work possible.

Passion

To have impact we must engage the mind and the heart.

Place

Location and space matter.

Without reconciliation, there can be no end to poverty.

During the course of this project, the TRC released the Calls to Action. This intensified our decolonizing methods and guided thinking about systemic factors that need to be addressed in poverty reduction and elimination work. The Calls to Action made clear that ending poverty is about ending discrimination, and addressing the systemic barriers that reproduce inequality and poverty that disproportionally affect Indigenous peoples.

We continue to depend on the expertise of those with lived and diverse experience, but institutions make it hard to recognize and support them adequately or appropriately.

As project partners, we continue to struggle with the inequitable value placed on knowledge acquired outside of formal education; however, this project amplified our commitment to institutional changes to better recognize and support the knowledge keepers and expertise that is vital to meaningful and relevant community inquiry.

Impactful CCE aligns with community identified needs and opportunities, authentically engages communities, accurately reflects community input, and crafts outputs that hold meaning for and relevance to communities.

Project outputs valued in postsecondary contexts, constrained by disciplines disconnected from the larger social context, are seldom as useful in the broader community. Our experience throughout this project reminded us that community-based projects are devoid of impact if focused energy is not dedicated to bi-directional knowledge mobilization throughout the lifecycle of the project—challenging typical unidirectional notions of knowledge mobilization (research disseminated to community).

Community-campus engagement at Station 20 West is part of the reconciliation journey.

As partners of Reconciliation Saskatchewan, we are committed to the shared vision of creating an interdependent and fair society based on truth, justice for past wrongs, space for learning, representation, fairness and sovereignty.

About the Authors

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Exchanges

Exchanges

In the *Exchanges*, we present conversations with scholars and practitioners of community engagement, responses to previously published material, and other reflections on various aspects of community-engaged scholarship meant to provoke further dialogue and discussion. We invite our readers to offer in this section their own thoughts and ideas on the meanings and understandings of engaged scholarship, as practiced in local or faraway communities, diverse cultural settings, and various disciplinary contexts. We especially welcome community-based scholars' views and opinions on their collaboration with university-based partners in particular and on engaged scholarship in general.

In this section, co-editor of this issue **David Peacock** interviews **Stephen Huddart** (President and CEO) and **Chad Lubelsky** (Program Director) of the McConnell Foundation, a historic supporter of postsecondary education across Canada. McConnell's investments in community service-learning, social entrepreneurial and innovation activities and social infrastructure programs and dialogues have made them a significant partner for many Canadian higher education institutions. Yet not all community-campus engagement scholars and practitioners, and *Engaged Scholar* readers, may have heard McConnell articulate for itself its aims and goals for Canadian higher education and society. This interview canvasses the scope of McConnell's work and interests in community-campus engagement, and sheds light on the actions of an influential private actor in the postsecondary sector.

Funding Social Innovation in Canada: A Conversation with Stephen Huddart and Chad Lubelsky of the McConnell Foundation

David Peacock: So what is the McConnell Foundation? What kind of foundation is it?

Stephen Huddart: The McConnell Foundation is the second oldest private foundation in Canada. We were established in 1937, and have a long history of supporting the postsecondary sector in Canada, beginning with a long relationship with McGill University. In the mid-90s, the Foundation began to professionalize. It has evolved since then to focus on both national initiatives and increasingly multi-sector partnerships designed to accelerate systemic change in Canadian society.

Our work is focused on Canada, working with the postsecondary sector, governments,

charitable organizations of varying kinds, other foundations, and the private sector. We integrate our grant making activities with our investments, which has become an important part of our work. We've just concluded a decade of support for something called Social Innovation Generation, which sought to introduce the tools, mindsets, and approaches that social innovation, social finance, and social enterprise offer to solving complex problems. We've placed considerable emphasis on engaging the postsecondary sector in this work as well.

David: What goals or impacts are you seeking to produce through those investments?

Stephen: The foundation's mission statement is to engage Canadians in building a society that is inclusive, sustainable, resilient, and innovative. We are, in light of that, working to increase the adaptive capacity of Canadian institutions in the face of overarching challenges, like the need to transition to a low carbon economy, to support inclusive growth, to create opportunities for this and coming generations to be meaningfully employed and engaged in building a society that we all want. Working on economic reconciliation with Indigenous peoples is an important part of this.

Stephen Huddart, President and CEO of the McConnell Foundation.

We see the postsecondary sector as our natural partner, where we have deep relationships in many cases spanning decades, and where we continue to be engaged in enabling institutions to expand their 'civic footprints', to enable us all to be well-equipped to contend with current challenges and opportunities.

Chad Lubelsky: I would add that we would see the postsecondary sector as fundamental to equity in Canada, in terms of a key institution through which society helps to create a level playing field. Colleges, for example, are active in 3,000 communities, and universities of course are also situated in every region of the country. It's one of the key levers of progressive social change in our country.

David: Let's talk specifically about the relatively new social infrastructure project then with some of Canada's university presidents, and then also most recently, I understand, with Universities Canada (the peak advocacy body for Canada's universities). Could you talk about that project and what you hope to accomplish?

Chad: We view the social infrastructure project as an opportunity for postsecondary institutions to leverage all of the assets at their disposal for community well-being. In addition to the traditional research and teaching functions, the physical aspects at their disposal—

the financial assets, hiring practices, and other components, which can be better used to support community well-being. With procurement, some colleges and universities work under laws where they have to always buy the cheapest possible option. Right?

David: Often.

Chad Lubelsky , program director, McConnell Foundation.

Chad: So that might preclude buying local. As a postsecondary institution, if you buy local, you're increasing jobs and you're being a better community player? So it's one example of what we're talking about. What we're trying to do with this work is one, put into place shared resources and tools, so that institutions across the country don't always have to be reinventing the wheel as they take up this approach. Second, we're trying to enhance the narrative around the role of postsecondary education and its purposes, so that in addition to research and teaching, they become being more community-minded. And third, our social infrastructure agenda aims to support the individuals and the departments within institutions with the know-how to better do this kind of work.

David: So the postsecondary institution becomes further embedded in their local economies, the local culture; is that what you're saying?

Chad: Yes. And this would apply to finance, it would apply to research, it could apply to things like hiring practices and things like access programs. It really does run the gamut, and our expectation is that it's going to look different in different places.

David: In the 2000s, McConnell invested in community service-learning, and then as you have said, in the last decade, it invested in social innovation programming, funding targeting the research and teaching missions of universities. But this now is something a little different again. Perhaps it includes those, but it's now more than that?

Stephen: Yes, you could say that this is about expanding the institution's civic footprint. And so if we look at the needs of students today, coming into postsecondary education, that are facing some very complicated and complex challenges around career choice and a rapidly changing technology sphere, a number of overarching challenges to society, and so on, and so the university, by being more closely aligned with, present in, listening to, and engaging of community, I think provides a healthier, more robust, and productive place for formation, training, research, and so on, as Chad was saying, as a community-

engaged partner. So, in addition to any work McConnell may have been doing, universities themselves have been engaged in community-based research for some time. The CFICE program at Carleton [Community First Impacts of Community Engagement] is a good example of an initiative designed to structure partnerships with community players in order to advance issues of priority community interest.

We're talking about the application of social innovation tools, social finance and social enterprise tools, and creating with our postsecondary institutions, robust, engaged, and productive partners for community in co-creating the futures that we all want. And we can't leave out the private sector here either. This is not just about civil society's goals. This is also about creating the companies; incubating the new corporations and the new social enterprises that will employ people in building an inclusive economy.

That's a pretty thick agenda, but it's one that I think is at a scale that is commensurate with the capacities of the institutions we're talking about, and the investments, frankly, that we make in them—to build more productive and prosperous futures.

David: And so Universities Canada—as the peak body and major partner—how would they assist you with that work in a different way than if you worked with individual institutions?

Chad: In a couple of ways. And I just want to go back to something that Stephen said. I would also bring it back to students by saying that our expectation is that the schools and students, in adopting all the tools that Stephen mentioned, have the opportunity to have an education that is more geared toward 21th century. So that's part of the theory of change. For Universities Canada, what we've seen in other projects that we've done, when

David Peacock, Executive Director, University of Alberta Faculty of Arts Community Service-Learning

we've issued a request for proposals, is that almost all of them did extremely effective work within the parameters of the grant. But what we saw less of was a network-wide effect. So for us, it was only logical to work with the associations—with Universities Canada, and with Colleges and Institutes Canada—on pan-Canadian initiatives, where those are the membership bodies.

We started off by seeing if there was interest among a group of presidents. Then they went to Universities Canada, who brought this opportunity to their members, who expressed interest in this kind of work. And there are specific things that a university president's office can do: Embedding ideas in the institutional plan, raising the profile, contributing institutional credibility. So with Universities Canada, the purpose is to socialize such approaches among presidents and others, and also to co-create pan-institution tools. This

includes looking at common metrics. How do we measure this? How do we know whether we are doing this well? A platform and repositories so that the schools that are doing this kind of work have a place where other people are able to quickly and easily find and understand it. Potentially, we might have guides and toolkits. We're at a very early stage with the establishment of the partnership with Universities Canada, but those are things that we're thinking about, and we'd do in a sequenced approach, depending on what schools say back to us.

Stephen: We've been really gratified by the level of interest from the participating institutions, beginning with the roughly twenty presidents who came together in Vancouver in response to Andrew Petter's [President of Simon Fraser University] and my invitation. Nearly everyone that we invited came and spent half a day with us, followed by meetings with vice presidents and deans. There's an appetite for and openness to this kind of collaborative learning and re-engagement around new approaches to social innovation. It's really very exciting for us.

I also wanted just to mention a couple of the very specific ways that this is manifesting, just to make this a bit more real for your readers. One would be that we had an experiment that we ran last year called LabWise.

LabWise was tested with a number of academic institutions and community partners, including United Ways and others. This involved the co-hosting of a social lab over the course of a year that was focused on a complex issue and where social lab processes engaged students, faculty, and community partners in coming up with deeper, shared understanding of a complex issue, and developing prototypes or testable hypotheses for addressing it.

At the University of Victoria, for example, they worked together with stakeholders around the upcoming renegotiation of the Columbia River Treaty with the US, to bring into what was formerly a commercial treaty only, a new vision that is inclusive of Indigenous and environmental values, perspectives, and priorities.

Edmonton Shift Lab and the University of Alberta was one of the teams at the table, and their lab engaged in exploring the intersecting issues of race, poverty, and access to affordable housing. These processes exemplify a deeper type of engagement for an institution like a university or city hall. Vancouver is the home of another great example of this approach to engaged learning. There, City Studio engages seven postsecondary institutions—their students, their courses, and their professors in a long-term commitment to explore options for making Vancouver the world's greenest city.

These didn't originate with McConnell, but many of the schools with whom we are working operate social enterprise incubators—from the DMZ [Ryerson's Venture incubator], to Radius SFU [social innovation lab and venture incubator] on the West Coast, to the D3 [Concordia's District 3 Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship].

Chad: Almost every city will have one now.

Stephen: We're seeing a real mushrooming of these spaces—in or within close proximity to academic institutions where students can have the institutional supports, and where community partners are often invited to co-create enterprise solutions to complex, interesting opportunities. They often involve technology, but not always. In the early stages of this work, we were struck by how rich a collaborative space emerges around an incubator. Now we're seeing a whole ecosystem emerging.

David: So I want to take a step back for a moment. Many have noticed the shifting roles of philanthropy and the roles that foundations play, where they no longer simply want to support charitable activity, but rather to actually achieve social impacts and social outcomes themselves, almost as policy actors in achieving those outcomes. So is that the way that McConnell would view itself vis-à-vis Canadian higher education, then? Do you advocate for certain positions that universities should hold or issues they should address? And is this example, this social infrastructure agenda, an example of how you're advocating for a particular vision of higher education?

Stephen: Well, it's a great question. I think I would say first of all that we can't advocate for anybody else changing the way they work if we're not prepared to do the same, and so as I think your question suggests, philanthropy itself is going through an evolutionary phase as we speak. It's not just McConnell by any means. Our partners in Canadian private foundations, partner foundations, community foundations, and indeed in foundations around the world are increasingly recognizing that we have first of all a responsibility to share what we're learning with others, to put our resources to work alongside those of other philanthropic players, and also public sector players—governments at varying levels of scale—and private sector partners.

    If we really want to move the issues that we're facing, we have to develop cross-sectoral capacity and apply these new tools and mindsets to ourselves first and foremost. A good example of that would be the impact investing agenda. We're looking at our own endowments now and asking, "Well, how is it that we're just spending 3.5% on granting and leaving the endowment unexamined and unapplied if our goal is to achieve social change? Why aren't we using that?" And indeed now we are, this is one of those questions that we would pose to the postsecondary sector, namely, *how are you using your own resources to create the greatest possible impact at a time when it's critical that we do that?*

David: So, you would call upon universities, then, to consider their pension funds, for instance, or other financial assets like endowments to invest in social impact bonds or something like that?

Stephen: Well, social impact bonds are just one of a plethora of instruments available. The field of ethical investing is maturing quickly and we believe that it's possible to responsibly invest endowment assets in products, companies, and programs that do not entail the

acquisition of increased financial risk, and that can in fact, while providing assurance of being a very safe investment, achieve greater levels of social and environmental impact. There are certainly lots of riskier social investments, but it is possible these days to be a responsible trustee of a university endowment or pension fund and invest prudently in ways that have much higher levels of social and environmental impact.

Indeed, this is not just McConnell saying this. Larry Fink, the CEO of Blackrock [a globally significant asset manager and investment firm] recently made a statement to the effect that companies have a duty to generate and report on their efforts to achieve greater positive social impact. Impact investing is a rapidly growing field, and we do have examples in Canada of schools that are beginning to not only invest this way, but to develop courses and programs that enable alumni, for example, to contribute to funds that invest in social enterprises, so we're excited for the sector and look forward to getting to work with leading practitioners and social investors.

Chad: Within that light, our focus is yes, schools have endowments, but for most Canadian institutions, the financial assets that they use for their operating costs are more important than their endowments. Most Canadian schools don't have endowments the way they might have in the United States. So the focus of our conversations has been working, for example, with the Canadian Association of Business Officers to look at more everyday practices than at endowments.

Stephen: A couple of the ways where I think we're seeing real progress... we mentioned the social enterprise incubators and activities going on around those. At Concordia, there's a program called the Art Hive initiative, which locates part of the university's fine arts department in a low-income community setting with students taking courses on community-engaged art and which invite community members in to explore community-determined priorities with the university as the host, students as the facilitators, and faculty as the overall guides and enablers.

We've been thrilled to watch art hives spread to over 100 locations around the world. And so there's clearly an appetite in community for some of the convening, hosting, learning, teaching, exploration, research capabilities of the university. I think there's a very rich area here for innovation and further work.

Chad: We see it with journalism. We see it with business; to some degree with engineering. So, thinking aloud here, I wonder if it's easier to do this when there's an opportunity to apply a skill. When there's the application, independent from the skill of research, of gathering knowledge.

David: So, I want to get back to that wider question, then, on McConnell's role. Stephen, at the very beginning you mentioned the practice of integrating the two arms of McConnell's work, grants-making activities and investment activities. In that vein, that's another one

of these changes that people have noticed around traditional roles of philanthropy. Traditionally, philanthropy sought to correct for the imperfections of market-based systems producing inequitable outcomes. So philanthropy would try and ameliorate that in some sense, whereas today, foundations often operate to connect the social sector to the market. Is that McConnell's role then? Is McConnell's role trying to achieve social change by bringing the social sector and the community sector to the market?

Stephen: Right. I think that what you're pointing to is that there's a tectonic shift underway across the horizons or frontiers that separate the private, public, and civil society or philanthropic sectors. There's currently a federal steering committee on social innovation and social finance.

David: Are you engaged in that, by the way —in that particular federal policy initiative [on social innovation and social finance]?

Stephen: Yes, I am one of the seventeen public members of that committee. We're in the midst of that work right now with the expectation that we'll have something to share with Canadians by June 2018.

But that idea of the changing relationship among the sectors…we can look at the private sector. Increasingly, their priority has to be the renewal of social license. Not to mention talent attraction and retention. Not to mention tapping into the wellsprings of innovation that exist within civil society. So, the private sector has a renewed mandate, to find itself in the current situation. I mentioned Larry Fink's letter to corporate CEOs a couple of weeks ago—calling on them to consciously and explicitly commit to social and environmental outcomes, to the good that they do. That is a good example of the change in the landscape.

And I think in this context, universities and colleges have a critical role to play in enabling of these cross-sectoral, cross-disciplinary conversations, and so that's a key capability, or asset—that universities are well-positioned to convene organizations across sectors. But it does depend on making a conscious commitment to engage, listen, and convene. And I think students are doing this. They seem to be agnostic these days about whether they're working for a not for profit, a for-profit, or a public sector organization. They are motivated to be engaged in making change.

I think if we look at where they're going and their needs, we're really at the service of the next generation here, and so I think together, philanthropy and the postsecondary sector, if we have a role at all, it's not to set public policy, it's to catalyze change that wants to happen anyway. We provide capital that's risk capital. We can make mistakes. We can support exploration. But we're not running the university. We're not running the government. We are a complement, an add-on, a place to do safe experimentation, rapid prototyping, and development of testable hypotheses.

In that sense, we've got, I think, a role that extends back into history, but right now

seems important and certainly the partnerships that we're developing with multiple universities and colleges suggests that it's a needed one at this time.

David: So, Stephen, just to explore further that advocacy role. McConnell clearly states on its website that it does have an advocacy role, in a nonpartisan way, and does advocate for certain positions on behalf of your partners. And clearly you do have an influence. You are a major influencer of higher education activity in the country, so maybe if you could add a little about that advocacy role in higher education?

Stephen: I just want to sort of step back from the word advocacy.

David: Okay.

Stephen: Advocacy has some political connotations. We had a decade in Canada when foundations and civil society organizations were—how should we put this—under some pressure not to speak up on certain public issues, so a number of political audits were carried out on charities. Those were painful and prolonged, and ultimately set aside in most or almost every case. But the role of advocacy and civil society deserves to be unpacked here. First of all, I think foundations have a responsibility to speak up with and on behalf of the charities they support, because they're often more vulnerable than we are. We have assets. We're not afraid of losing our government funding and so on. So, we do have that role as an advocate for the public good.

I think we have common cause with the postsecondary system at a governance level, and at a level of the overall social project and the goods that we can bring to it. If you say, 'Are we advocating to the postsecondary sector,' I would say it's more of a case of advocating with. I mean, we are responding to the leadership in the sector that's saying, as many of these institutions are, we want to shift and expand our civic footprint. We have a community-based research agenda. We have a need to contribute to society's efforts to improve equitable access to the job market or to reducing racism, or to increasing our ability to transition to a low carbon economy.

We're at the service of that. Are we advocating that universities do something? Only in the sense that we advocate that our own sector shifts its lens and aligns its efforts to the greater purpose and current challenges that we currently face. Would we advocate against? I'm struggling with this a little bit, because I think we assume that we are engaged in a common effort to improve outcomes and to increase resilience, sustainability, social inclusion, and so on. At least, that's where we start from, and we are finding that in the postsecondary sector, we have many allies and a lot of opportunity to address this work together.

David: Thank you, Stephen and Chad!

About the Contributors

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Book Reviews

Trickster Chases the Tale of Education. Sylvia Moore. Montreal, QC: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017. 184 pp. ISBN 978-0-7735-4907-4.

In *Trickster Chases the Tale of Education,* teacher and scholar Sylvia Moore explores "the intersection, the confluence, and the common ground" among diverse epistemologies and worldviews, reflecting on how this space is to be harnessed in research, learning, and teaching (p. 112). She eloquently demonstrates how decolonization, or the *Idea*, is anything but a moment in time to be captured or missed. Instead, Ideas require the time and space to propagate and grow before they will blossom and flourish. The reconciling or 'rebalancing' of Indigenous knowledge in a Eurocentric academy will require prolonged struggle, the site of which is not only the classroom, or the research location, but also our minds. Through her own experiences as a community-engaged teacher and an academic, Moore offers valuable teachings for engaged scholars and invites us to join her in challenging our biases and decolonizing our relationships.

For the mother and grandmother of Mi'kmaw children, Moore's personal struggle to counter the colonial by balancing the Indigenous is the backdrop for this iterative, critical, self-reflection on community-engaged pedagogies and research approaches. Her use of autobiographical narrative demonstrates how researchers can balance academic protocols with Indigenous storytelling and establishes her "not as the object of, but rather as the site of, the inquiry" (p. 10). Now assistant professor of Aboriginal community-based education at the Labrador Institute at Memorial University in Newfoundland, Moore centres her own experience of the encounters between, and her efforts to reconcile, Mi'kmaw knowledge and Western logic. By sharing with us her own vulnerabilities as an anti-colonial, anti-racist researcher, she includes us in a re-enactment of her own research process and the many 'self-interrogations' therein. Moore recognizes the importance of mistakes, of allowing ourselves to question our beliefs and feel uncertainty about the truth. It is this challenge to our ego that enables us to dismantle our pre-conceived notions and learn to embrace multiple truths.

Moore shows how decolonial methodologies can be harnessed to privilege Indigenous voices in scholarship and unveil the location from which the scholar speaks. A multitude of Indigenous scholars are referenced in *Trickster,* but Moore takes the crucial step of naming and *locating* the thinkers *within* the text. This style ensures the reader knows who is speaking and from what positionality. Importantly, Moore also identifies listening and silence as decolonial method. Engaged scholarship in particular is a journey of relationships, where academics must listen more than talk, respect the validity and relevancy of multiple truths, and have patience in the process. As different stories are told, a variety of truths arise, and it is through collaboration and partnership that these perspectives are reconciled as many parts of one whole. Moore reflects, "I now think of collaboration as intentionally and diligently weaving together our stories by repairing and strengthening the fabric of our lives" (p. 144). For her, some of the most important work takes place during the process of building and sustaining relationships with the 'other,' of excavating biases and denying the distance between 'others'. She writes: "After I recognized the narrow limits of my understanding, I could listen with humility. In opening myself to the truths of those other voices, I learned from their teachings"

(p. 134). Collaboration, therefore, is about respect, reciprocity, relationship, and reconciliation.

As important as listening is respecting the silent, which, for Moore, enables the sacred to emerge. Blank pages are inserted in *Trickster* at crucial junctures in the story, representing the silence and time required for critical self-reflection and cognitive decolonization. For Moore, "silence took form through a quieting of the self, an absence of voice, and the place of the sacred" (p. 131). Her insights offer important lessons for engaged scholars:

> When we collaborate, we are responsible for quieting ourselves and respectfully listening to others so that we hear their words and honour their truths. I think back to Charlie Labrador's teaching on speaking our truth. I realize that it is my place to offer what I know, not to push as if I have 'the truth' but simply to speak my truth while knowing that some will hear it, some will challenge it, and some will negate it (p. 132).

Opening and holding space for multiple truths to be equally represented, and for power to be shared, is a necessity for authentic community-campus collaborations and community-engaged teaching.

Trickster also serves as an example of how to meaningfully include the non-human, the mythological, and the cosmological in research and as method. Throughout the book Moore engages in an ongoing dialogue with the Mi'kmaw trickster character *Crow,* who plays a sort of devil's advocate to her process of iterative self-reflection. For the reader, *Crow* comes to represent her critical consciousness, pushing her at every turn to disrupt and decolonize her way of thinking about teaching, learning, and research. Moore writes, "Trickster, in all the forms, convinced me that knowledge can come through many means, challenged me to embrace opposites, contradictions, and ambiguities as catalysts for thinking in new ways" (p. 140). Excerpts from her dream journal also bring questions from the non-human cosmos to the fore, as the Salmon People visit Moore while she is sleeping and challenge her to confront her taken-for-granted relationship with the non-human realm. Moore's encounters with the non-human highlight the need for engaged scholars to reflect on their individual process of decolonization within the broader context of decolonizing knowledge production.

As a Hungarian-Acadian woman working in the Wabanaki education system in New Brunswick, I was especially drawn to Moore's efforts to use Indigenous-inspired pedagogy in the community and the provincial school context in Nova Scotia. Navigating the process of decolonizing elementary and secondary education is extremely complex, often frustrating, yet always rewarding. In *Trickster*, I found a comfort that can only come from knowing that others are engaged in the struggle too. For me, it is within those allied spaces of struggle that the Idea of decolonization becomes the reality of Treaty reconciliation.

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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.

Essays

Community-Academic Peer Review: Prospects for Strengthening Community-Campus Engagement and Enriching Scholarship

Charles Z. Levkoe, Amanda Wilson, Victoria Schembri

"I had a big revelation": Student Experiences in Community-First Community-Campus Engagement

Anna Przednowek, Magdalene Goemans, Amanda Wilson

Community First for Whom? Reflections on the Possibilities and Challenges of Community-Campus Engagement from the Community Food Sovereignty Hub

Lauren Kepkiewicz, Charles Z. Levkoe, Abra Brynne

Learning to "walk the talk": Reflexive Evaluation in Community-First Engaged Research

Magdalene Goemans, Charles Z. Levkoe, Peter Andrée, Nadine Changfoot, Colleen Christopherson-Cote

Reports from the Field

Breaking Barriers: Using Open Data to Strengthen Pathways in Community-Campus Engagement for Community Action on Environmental Sustainability

Leigha McCarroll, Eileen O'Connor, Jason Garlough

Rooting out Poverty: People, Passion, and Place at Station 20 West

Lisa Erickson, Isobel Findlay, and Colleen Christopherson-Cote

Exchange

Funding Social Innovation in Canada: A Conversation with Stephen Huddart and Chad Lubelsky of the McConnell Foundation

David Peacock, Stephen Huddart, Chad Lubelsky