# 2014 CCCR

# national summit

*pursuing excellence in collaborative community-campus research*

# Background paper

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## Purpose of this backgrounder

This background paper has been prepared to help frame and focus discussion at the National Summit *on Pursuing Excellence in Collaborative Community Campus Research* (CCCR) being held in Waterloo, Ontario, November 3—4, 2014.

The National Summit has four goals:

1. To share knowledge about community-impactful research via case examples of successful community-campus collaborations conducted by National Summit participants
2. To build consensus on indicators of excellence for collaborative community-campus research that leads to tangible impact for society and academia
3. To identify an initial 5-7 hubs of excellence in collaborative community-campus research across Canada, addressing topics that build on respective partners' past research and expertise
4. To mobilize National Summit learnings through the Community Based Research Canada (CBRC) national network

The National Summit is supported by a SSHRC Connection Grant. Building on previous literature (Ochocka and Janzen, 2014), the grant application (Ochocka, 2014) identified four categories of research excellence for CCCR from the literature that serve as initial organizing criteria for developing indicators of excellence: *community relevance; research design; equitable participation;* and *action and change*. This background paper provides a synopsis of the literature for these principles in the context of the evolving field of CCCR. It also proposes a set of issues and questions arising as an initial guide for the discussions at the National Summit.

## CCCR in context

From their inception, the mandate of universities has included the translation of knowledge generated through research and education for societal benefit. In recent years, this historic commitment has seen greater emphasis and impetus both in Canada and internationally. The drivers have been both internal to the universities themselves, related to a heightened sense of social imperative and responsibility; and external, as funding agencies, especially governments, have sought tangible measures of returns on investment of public monies, and as communities have sought to partner with universities to address priority social issues.

In Canada, various mechanisms have been developed to stimulate knowledge translation and the research funding agencies have played a primary role through programs specifically designed to build and sustain relationships between universities and public and private sector partners. In this context, various terms have been used to describe the functionality—knowledge translation, knowledge exchange, knowledge mobilization, etc. In parallel, various entities and networks within and beyond universities have been created to undertake activities in support of community-university linkages.

In this context, community-based research (CBR), within the broader domain of community-university engagement initiatives (CUE), is gaining wider currency and adoption, especially as universities strengthen their commitment to public engagement. This is in part in response to the expectation of funding agencies and governments that research demonstrates the societal relevance and impact of substantial investments of public monies in university research.

A healthy development as the CBR field matures is a growing focus on the quality assessment (QA) of the projects, programs and networks that the field has spawned. This leads to the question of what criteria should be used to assess quality in terms of the rigour of the research conducted as well as the outcomes and impacts resulting from the work.

Community-Based Research Canada (CBRC) is a network of universities and community partners supporting good practice in CBR in Canada. To that end, CBRC aims to provide access through its website to literature that deals with quality assessment (QA) and to examples of projects and programs that illustrate the applications of QA.

The November 2014 SSHRC funded National Summit – *Pursuing Excellence in Collaborative Community Campus Research (CCCR)* – is a unique opportunity to convene a focused discussion on indicators of excellence in CBR, and thereby lay the foundation for developing a national network of hubs of CCCR excellence, harnessing and building on the major strengths of our Canadian university and allied partner

community that CBRC has been instrumental in supporting and enhancing.

The collective strengths in CCCR cover a broad range of societal issues of high priority on the research and policy agendas in Canada, including: Aboriginal issues; poverty reduction; economic development; environmental sustainability; and Canada's north. The National Summit will provide a forum within which this collective capacity can be shared and advanced in building a network of National Hubs of Excellence in community-campus research.

Innovation in theory, method, and practice is central to the vision, mission and goals of Community Based Research Canada (CBRC), one of the coordinating organizations for the National Summit. The initiative to create hubs of centres of excellence in CCCR in Canada is driven by CBRC's commitment to promoting and enabling best practice in CCCR such that co-created knowledge provides the evidence base to inform policies, programs and practices that address major societal challenges for Canada and Canadians. As such, CBRC seeks to support social innovation in ways identified at the national and provincial levels as priorities for the prosperity and well-being of Canadians. This commitment aligns with federal leadership under the Community-Campus Collaboration Initiative (CCCI) and emergent plans of our provinces (e.g., the BC Social Innovation Council Action Plan).

To go beyond rhetoric, however, and to eventuate in tangible positive societal impacts, these well-intended initiatives have to be grounded in strong evidence that draws on research where excellence criteria have primacy. In this regard, the strength of CCCR is also its weakness; the breadth of the research agenda, covering as it does such a wide range of cultural, economic, environmental, health and social issues, mitigates against coordination of effort and coherence around agreed upon standards of research practice.

This is where CBRC seeks to provide leadership, capitalizing on its established network of university and community partners to share and learn lessons from the multiplicity of CCCR projects already completed or in progress to identify and advance best practice. The National Summit is an important means to this end, and all the more so as it is intended to lay the ground for a subsequent Partnership Grant application to support the

creation of a network of *Hubs of Excellence* to sustain the effort accelerated by the National Summit itself.

Ultimately, the sought after impact of promoting and enabling CCCR best practice for effective knowledge translation is the prosperity of Canadians as societal challenges are conceived and addressed as CCCR opportunities that motivate and engage the best faculty and students from our universities with their colleagues from our partner organizations. CBRC is uniquely placed to convene this impressive capacity from across the country at the National Summit.

Implicit in this regard are the reasons why quality assessment in CCCR matters and therefore why it is important and timely to convene the National Summit with the goals previously listed and with the development of indicators of excellence as a primary focus. These reasons include at least the following:

• Enhancing rigour and promoting standards of best practice in CCCR

• Meeting peer review requirements for publications and grants

• Encouraging faculty and student engagement

• Enhancing funding success

• Advancing institutional commitments to CCCR

• Strengthening the evidence base for informing policy and programs

• Supporting system/network resource capacity

• Building the capacity of community partners

• Countering criticisms of "soft" research and its implications for career advancement

## Methodology

The findings presented here draw from literature identified primarily through a request sent to members of the CBRC ListServ supplemented by information on CBRC members' websites. While not a comprehensive list of quality assessment (QA), impact criteria or indicators of excellence, this paper presents a framework for the development of a robust and

high-impact research agenda for CCCR going forward with the National Summit discussions as the immediate forum.

The literature review was conducted with these questions in mind:

1. What does quality assessment (QA) mean for Collaborative Community-Campus Research?
2. Why is it important?
3. What QA approaches and results does the literature show?
4. What are the next steps for the National Summit and beyond?

# CCCR principles

There is growing literature on collaborative research between communities and post-secondary institutions intended to bridge the gap between diverse stakeholders for the common goal of addressing and resolving complex societal issues (GUNi Report, 2014; Stoecker, 2005). These challenges range from growing poverty and homelessness in urban centres (Brown et *al.*, 2008; Walsh et *al.*, 2008), to agriculture and rural decline (Rosegrant and Cline, 2003), and from climate change impacts on northern communities to declining health in First Nations communities (Cairo, 2008). The need to explore and develop alternative methods of relevant knowledge creation is an increasingly urgent task in a rapidly changing and uncertain world (Hoyt and Hollister, 2014). Conceptualizations of higher education's hegemony in the process of knowledge production are insufficient at best. Community-university research partnerships are a powerful and effective approach providing real and innovative solutions to community needs (Escrigas, 2011; Hall et *al.*, 2013).

Such research is variously termed community-based research (Travers et *al.*, 2008), community-engaged research (Snyder, 1996), community-based participatory research (i.e. Israel, Eng, Schulz, and Parker, 1998; Minkler and Wallersetin, 2008), action research (i.e. Stringer, 2007), or participatory action research (i.e. Kemmis and McTaggart, 2005). Four guiding principles for CCCR emerge from this literature and provide the theoretical underpinnings for determining indicators of excellence for community-campus research:

## Community relevance

This refers to the practical significance of the research to communities. Research is relevant when community members, especially those most affected by the issue under study, gain voice and choice through the research process (Wilson et *al.,* 2010) and when researchers draw on the ways of knowing that people agree are valuable to them (Jewkes, 1998). As such, community relevance honours the Indigenous research tradition that stresses self-determination (Kovach, 2009). It involves creating and sustaining meaningful, flexible research partnerships.

## Research design

Design refers to the practical scaffolding needed to conduct research of quality. This domain concerns itself with issues of methodological rigour, including the appropriateness of methods in achieving the stated research purpose. It also emphasizes the appropriateness of research procedures that reinforce the other three domains (Coady Institute, 2013). Meaningful research design to community may include collaboratively defining the problem, varying levels of engagement, a culturally appropriate and adaptive research approach, open communication about the roles and responsibilities of research team members, inclusion of community members on the research team and a mix of interdisciplinary methodologies.

## Equitable participation

Equitable participation emphasizes that community members and researchers share control of the research agenda through active and reciprocal involvement in the research design, implementation and dissemination (Nelson et *al. 1998,* Hall, 1978). Drawing on the 'southern' participatory research tradition, this domain acknowledges that when people are conscious of their situation and the power that oppresses them, they can collectively work towards a better future (Freire, 1970). An equitable and participatory process entails respect for local knowledge and contextual understanding, recognition of community expertise and knowledge, collaborative decision-making throughout the process and opportunities for shared learning through evaluation.

## Action and change

Action and change honours the 'northern' utilization-focused action research tradition that is frequently associated with Kurt Lewin. This domain has an emphasis on social change through successive reflective action cycles (Lewin, 1948; 1951). It stresses that the process and results of research should be useful to community members in making positive social change and to promote social equity (Nelson et *al.,* 1998). An outcomes-focused approach oriented to social change supports community capacity-building and skills transfer. It enables opportunities for shared knowledge mobilization as well as policy development internal and external to the community. Measure of success in final stages of the research process may include attracting new or additional resources to the community as well as supporting leadership within the community.

While each of the four principles represents a distinct aspect of CCCR and, therefore, deserves separate consideration, it is important to note that they are inevitably overlapping sets and this is evident in the findings from the literature review that follow. Their interconnection also has implications for developing indicators of excellence and core defining criteria for each so that the indicator set is not compromised in its application and utility by overlap and redundancy.

## Literature review findings[1]

## Community relevance

- Defining community
- Approaching community: an intersectional and interpretive approach
- Flexible partnerships
- Co-creation of knowledge

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[1] Consistent with the title of the National Summit, the term Collaborative Community Campus Research (CCCR) is used throughout this review and should be read as synonymous with Community Based Research (CBR), the term more commonly used in the literature.

### Defining community

Advancing excellence in CCCR requires that guidelines, standards, indicators and criteria must be relevant to community and co-defined by community. Equally, to establish indicators of excellence in quality assurance (QA)—to respond to the question of: "*how do we know if and when we are doing CCCR well?"*—we must focus on the rigour of research and the relevance of the outcomes to community. As such, both the *processes* and the *products* matter as we reflect upon best practices. Each is crucial for the purpose of policy intervention, program development and sustainable research practices.  So how then can we best evaluate our efforts to examine outcomes and impacts resulting from this work? To begin, we must acknowledge that communities are complicated and diverse. Communities are also the starting place for creating evidence.

CCCR is a participatory research strategy, emerging over the past few decades as an alternative research paradigm. It integrates education and social action with the aim of improving overall community well-being (Wallerstein and Duran, 2006). Grounded in community, it is it not just a method; rather, it emphasizes the importance of relationships in addition to principles of co-learning, mutual benefit and long-term commitment. Its theoretical orientation integrates community knowledge and practices in early stages of research design. As this methodology matures, researchers must recognize the challenge this approach presents in order to create truly collaborative frameworks of understanding. Acknowledging relations of power, privilege, participation, community consent, social change and ethnic discrimination are all core features of this approach and cannot be understated (Ochocka and Janzen, 2008; Wallerstein and Duran, 2006). As such, demands to be both rigorous and relevant to communities emerge (Kinglsey and Chapman, 2013). In reflecting on their research craft, scholars must consider how to cultivate dialogue about this methodology alongside communities. This dialogue includes defining the meaning of community itself.

### Approaching community: an intersectroal and interpretive approach

Creating dialogue requires transparency throughout the entire process from initial contact to dissemination of findings. Much scholarship informed by interpretive and intersectional methods of inquiry underscore the importance of a deliberative approach to research with the ultimate

aim of social justice and transformation (Dryzek, 2002; Hankivsky et *al.,* 2012; Mouffe, 2005; Yanow, 2006; Young 2000). Community-members increasingly demand involvement in defining QA and indicators of excellence. These dialogical relationships require methodological innovation, ranging from talking circles to new modes of knowledge mobilization (KMb). Such pressures require reconsideration of how knowledge is both translated and presented. Questions also emerge about how to communicate findings among collaborators throughout the process. This requires transparency about values and beliefs early in the engagement process in addition to openness throughout the process. CCCR is an inherently a relational practice and as such warrants reimagining what method exists in such 'messiness' (Holland, 2001; Kingsley and Chapman, p. 560). Accepting the less-hierarchical, democratic relational, fluid nature of these collaborations requires new definitions of context-specific standards of 'rigour', new language and guiding principles. It is imperative to begin conversations early about the value and purpose of establishing community-based QA indicators of excellence.

Moreover, the experiences of diverse communities, including Indigenous peoples within Canada, illuminate the need for diverse understandings of what 'community' means. According to Berg et *al.,* all too often efforts to 'consult' with Indigenous peoples appear within 'paradoxical spaces of participation' (2007, p. 403). When considering 'community relevance', procedural and structural factors impact how communities perceive, encounter and interact with participatory spaces. Thus, ethical principles of dignity, respect, reflexivity and reciprocity are of utmost importance in order to appreciate and respect the diversity of Indigenous knowledges, experiences and identities (Banister et *al.,* 2011; Kovach, 2009). This is crucial for the recognition of Indigenous people's agency and sovereignty. As Berg et *al.,* note: researchers must be aware of the paradoxical context of participatory spaces of engagement in order to move beyond hegemonic ideals of 'bureaucratic rationality' in pursuit of relational geographies (2009). Doing so requires being aware of Canada's historical legacy, learning from past attempts to define Indigenous identity through bureaucratic rationales, and not naively assuming that Indigenous people only live remotely on reserves. There is thus a need to both be aware of power relations in spaces of engagement and also the requirement for an openness to problematize any singular definition of 'Indigenous

community'. Such reflexivity requires a high degree of flexibility and nuance.

## Flexible partnerships

In any form of partnership, there must be opportunities for dialogue, continued discussion and the potential to reconfigure the relationship. Collaborators will be involved with communities in numerous ways, ranging from technical support to the sharing of materials and resources. Creating CCCR approaches to evaluation opens up space for renegotiation of the partnership itself (Akintobi et *al.,* 2013; CCPH, 2012; Israel et *al.,* 1998; Schwartz, 2010). Furthermore, partnership flexibility creates space to evaluate partnerships, raise questions and consider what 'partnerships' mean. Consider the following 'Partnership Principles' (CCPH, 2012):

1. Partnerships form to serve a specific purpose and may take on new goals over time
2. Partners have agreed upon mission, values, goals, measurable outcomes and accountability for the partnership
3. The relationship between partners is characterized by mutual trust, respect, genuineness, and commitment
4. The partnership builds upon identified strengths and assets, but also works to address needs and increase capacity of all partners
5. The partnership balances power among partners and enables resources among partners to be shared
6. Partners make clear and open communication an ongoing priority by striving to understand each other's need and self-interests, and developing a common language
7. Principles and processes for the partnership are established with the input and agreement of all partners especially for decision-making and conflict resolution
8. There is feedback among all stakeholders in the partnership, with the goal of continuously improving the partnership and its outcomes
9. Partners share the benefits of the partnership's accomplishments
10. Partnerships can dissolve and need to plan a process for closure

In order to create meaningful outcomes and impacts that are relevant to community, QA processes must be grounded in flexible relationships. They must also commit to social change at a systemic level (Foster-Fishman and Watson, 2010; Janzen et *al.*, 2007). Systemic change includes

thinking about potential policy impacts. This is a key feature of social justice scholarship, especially in the health care field, as much intersectionality-based policy analysis discusses at length (Hankivsky et *al.,* 2012). Creating systemic change and policy impact requires flexible relationships. Active collaboration between all parties nurtures these partnerships through dialogue in pursuit of shared goals and methodologies.

### Co-creation of knowledge

Historically, universities maintained the primary responsibility for knowledge translation. This is no longer the case as funding agencies, governments and communities demand a relational approach to knowledge generation and dissemination. This requires considerable dialogue and citizen's participation within deliberative processes in pursuit of social change (Janzen et *al.*, 2012; Vargiu, 2014). To evaluate these processes with communities, QA indicators must consider and promote practices and experiences that emphasize sharing and co-production of relevant knowledge. Furthermore, there is growing attention to the complex role of knowledge in society, and more specifically about how knowledge is created, used and for whom (Hess and Ostrom, 2007). Conceptual work linking knowledge, equity, democracy and engagement is found in the thinking of de Souza Santos (2007), Van der Velden (2004), Gaventa and Bivens (2011), Hall (2011), and Hall *et al.,* (2013) stress that knowledge can transform society by building its capacity to identify, produce, process, disseminate and use knowledge for human development. Others, such as de Sousa Santos (2007), have expressed a broader, more inclusive understanding of knowledge in society, that of an 'ecologies of knowledge', based on the idea that the diversity of the world and its knowledge is inexhaustible. He argues that social justice is based on cognitive justice, the recognition of the plurality or '*ecologies'* of knowledge and the right of the different forms to exist.  Gaventa and Cornwall (2008) have linked the use of knowledge to people's mobilization, political strategies and social movements. The work of many others, including Paulo Freire (1970) and Tandon (2008), demonstrates the necessary expression of the lived experiences of those living in poverty and exclusion, as a necessary condition for organizing and transformation.

Co-creating knowledge requires making space for communicative innovation (Ochocka and Janzen, 2008). Appreciation of diverse communication styles is imperative (Young, 2002). Specifically, effective communication will include respect for multiple opinions and perspectives (Centre for Excellence in Assisted Living-University of North Carolina (CEAL-UNC) Collaborative, 2009, p. 40). What is more, communities have unique communication styles, which require novel knowledge outputs. As Cahill and Torre suggest, this aligns with calls to go "beyond the journal article" (2009). Being sensitive to community needs requires making local voices the centerpiece for knowledge outputs. Doing so effectively involves an in-depth consideration for audience and alternative forms of representation. It also requires follow-through on calls to action in order to achieve high impact (Cahill and Torre, 2009, p. 204). In particular, sensitivity to community needs will be attuned to the diversity of experiences, voices, silences and knowledges within any community setting.

## Research design

- Building the research team, clarifying responsibilities
- Collaborative problem definition
- A dignified, culturally-relevant method of engagement
- Celebrating mixed methodologies and interdisciplinary innovation

### Building the research team, clarifying responsibilities

Successful research design occurs when those involved create flexible partnerships. This enables possibilities for the emergence of creative dynamics that accept the nuanced and subjective context of reality. An emphasis on 'situated knowledge' further builds a knowledge base that accommodates diversity and conflicting worldviews (Foster-Fishman and Watson, 2010, Haraway, 1988; Yanow, 2003). This must be done throughout the research design process, from the beginning, including problem-definition. When assembling the research team, careful attention to who is included and excluded in this process will benefit from a dialogical approach that 'promotes sharing, critique and reframing' (Foster-Fishman and Watson, 2010, p. 239). We must recall that CCCR oriented to action is less about collecting objective 'data' and more centred upon acknowledging, documenting and interpreting people's everyday lived realities.

Throughout the research process, community-university partnerships must revisit roles and responsibilities. Ongoing dialogue, frequent meetings, and open communication are critical for the success of such relationships (Akintobi et *al.,* 2013, p. 257; Holland, 2001). It is important to ask 'what is necessary' periodically to enhance mutual respect in pursuit of bridging differences, program implementation and developing rigourous methods and measures. Shared yet clearly defined responsibilities are crucial for these relationships to be successful. The measurement of 'success' will entail multiple and diverse objectives for the same activity and may range from building social responsibility, citizenship skills, education, enhanced student learning through practical experience and increased community capacity (Holland, 2001). To be clear, involved parties will identify shared goals but have distinct perspectives. Effective QA/evaluation partnerships grounded in community will consider indicators of 'success' such as available resources (i.e. human, technical and financial). QA planning should clearly assign responsibilities for design, data collection, analysis, writing and dissemination, including the development of an implementation budget. Effective research design will also consider availability of expertise, skills, training instruments, capacity of community partners and/or the research team at specific points in time depending on the life of the research relationship and the appropriateness of particular methodologies. Moreover, each of these components are dynamic and may change as relationships of trust and reciprocity mature.

## Collaborative problem definition

In order to maintain long-term significance to community, researchers must consider problems and solutions together. Defining problems appropriately entails posing critical questions about which community-members should be at the table and also acknowledge that this will likely change over time (Akintobi et *al.,* 2013). Equally important is an emphasis on the process and structure of meetings that allows for all voices to be heard and valued.

Consideration of shared problem definition requires fair mechanisms for decision-making and conflict resolution. A fair approach will build in ways for involved community-members to provide input into both the definition of the problem and discussion of solutions. It is imperative that academic and community members co-conceptualize the project, establish project

goals, develop the project plan and also play a role in data analysis and evaluation if desired. Providing opportunities for community-members to develop and/or disseminate materials with opportunities for co-authorship is also crucial for shared learning. What is more, respect for culturally sensitive protocols, practices and spaces must also be taken into consideration during research design.

## A dignified, culturally-relevant method of engagement

Nurturing mutual understanding requires respect for cultural diversity (Ochocka, Moorlag and Janzen, 2010). It also entails recognition of a plurality of knowledges and a counter-hegemonic approach to knowledge production (Cahill and Torre, 2009). Such recognition may lead to alternative institutional procedures for radical action and change in pursuit of ethical representation, accountability, social responsiveness, agency and reflexivity. This is particularly significant for racialized and other marginalized communities (Berg et *al.,* 2007; Stroink and Nelson, 2009; Wallerstein and Duran, 2006). It is noteworthy that partners involved in CBR must recognize and acknowledge each other's expertise and not claim that one's field is more significant than another's (Akintobi et *al.,* 2013). Thus, building reflexivity into working partnerships should include ongoing evaluation with established guidelines and processes that complement research rigour with cultural competency and community relevance (Ochocka and Janzen, 2014).

Cultural humility is central to reflexive and ethical partnerships. This entails an acknowledgment of silent voices and draws into focus the significance of speech, language and silence (Dryzek, 2005; Hankivsky et *al.,* 2012; Mouffe, 2005; Wallerstein and Duran, 2006; Young, 2002). Speech and silence alike transmit relations of power. As the writings of Michel Foucault make clear, power and privilege are never monolithic; power operates through webs of relations, which produce knowledges, discourses and actions (Dryzek, 2005; Hankivsky et *al.,* 2012; Wallerstein and Duran, 2006, p. 317). Power also produces actions of resistance. Cultural humility in the research process entails giving voice to people's lived-experience and critical reflection on the role of everyday culture, practices of resistance, the ability of community partners to define agendas and respect for the fluidity and multiplicity of identities. Moreover, it entails going beyond 'giving voice'; the role of the engaged scholar is to challenge our own academic framing of other peoples stories

(Wallerstein and Duran, 2006). In contrast to 'speaking for communities', as activist-scholars, we can 'create community spaces' for dialogue through avenues such as community presentations, videos, newsletters, journals, etc. In these ways, among numerous others, we can attempt to document and share voice with the lived-experiences of partners and collaborators desiring to be heard and valued.

### Celebrating mixed methodologies and interdisciplinary innovation

Accounting for a diversity of experiences requires methodological variability. It also may require unique approaches including qualitative and quantitative methods, ranging from community-mapping to participatory video (Beaulieu, 2002; Tremblay, 2013). These innovative methodologies also require evaluation innovation (Akintobi et *al.,* 2013; Cook, 2006; Diop et *al.,* 2004). In order to co-create QA indicators of excellence with communities, different theories and methodologies are crucial. These may range from logic models to purposeful program theory (Funnell and Rogers, 2011; Yin, 2003). In brief, logic model development offers a conceptual and visual depiction of a program's goals, inputs, strategies, outputs, outcomes, objectives and relations among them. It also illustrates linkages between existing conditions, activities, outcomes and impacts.

Methodological and interdisciplinary innovation entails respect for positivist and post-positivist methodologies, which include both linear and iterative components (Nelson et *al.,* 2010). Generally-speaking, scientific inquiry involves an engagement with the following factors of research design: *goals*, identifying what the project seeks to achieve; *objectives*, detailed descriptions of the indicators necessary to achieve the goals; *implementation plan,* identification of resources, tools, technologies, timelines, activities and partnerships required to carry out the research; *outputs,* identification of anticipated products, program developments, systemic or policy changes, results and societal effects. Successful CCCR projects incorporate community input into all stages of the process (Westhues et *al.,* 2008).

## Equitable participation

- Situated knowledge
- Recognizing community expertise
- Revisiting roles and responsibilities
- Participatory evaluation

### Situated knowledge

CCCR is a research methodology closely affiliated with participatory action research (PAR) (Nelson et *al.,* 1998). With an emphasis on the co-creation of knowledge, and recognition for the distinct situatedness of local community knowledges, it challenges how we think, learn and act in the world. It thus acknowledges the significance of 'situated knowledges' (Haraway, 1988). CCCR and PAR take time to build trust, which requires sensitivity to specific community needs. This involves attention to unique situations, social location, ethics and politics. As such, it draws much inspiration from an intersectionality approach to research and design (Hankivsky et *al.*, 2012). To document and visualize situated knowledge, Intersectionality Based Policy Analysis (IBPA)-informed CCCR will adopt numerous techniques and methods with the intention of scaling up impacts and outcomes from individuals, to communities and to governing bodies at multiple levels (i.e. local, regional, national, global). This emphasis on social justice oriented towards 'system change' through community collaboration at multiple scales is crucial in an era of neoliberalism (Facer, 2014; Foster-Fishman and Watson, 2010; Janzen et *al.,* 2007). Support for situated knowledges enhances the likelihood that customized solutions will emerge and that communities will be involved in problem definition and the co-creation of solutions.

Celebrating local, situated knowledges coincides with awareness that customized solutions fare better than generalized solutions developed by external 'experts'. As such, situated knowledge celebrates and supports community expertise. A core value of this approach is the democratic inclusion of stakeholders in all phases and components of the research cycle (Foster-Fishman and Watson, 2010). What is more, this action-oriented approach 'assumes that community-members, whether they are professional researchers or ordinary citizens can work together to use information from their surroundings to develop practical interventions and

address real problems' (Foster-Fishman and Watson, 2010, p. 238). It is democratic insofar as it includes multiple perspectives. This enhances the quality of work, builds capacity and supports situated voices. It also entails valuing multiple perspectives, for instance, an awareness of each person's unique lived-experience as it relates to the issue at hand. Given that different individuals hold unique experiences, knowledges and understandings, evidently each individual brings a different lens or vantage point to the research process. Including multiple perspectives within the entire inquiry process will enhance the sophistication and overall effectiveness of the process designed for action and social change.

### Recognizing community expertise

Honouring situated knowledge involves an understanding of and respect for other kinds of expertise. This requires significant philosophical and epistemological shifts in research design and various funding regimes. As Berg et *al.,* 2007 highlight with respect to research ethics protocols in Canada involving Indigenous people, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and the Canadian Institutes for Health Research  (CIHR) have developed strategic grant programs designed to fund research partnerships with Indigenous peoples that resemble CCCR and participatory approaches. Redefining the parameters for ethical research involving Indigenous people equally entails promoting avenues for situated knowledges and expertise to influence decision-making process within the research design and policy more broadly. Furthermore, creating strong and flexible partnerships with Indigenous communities through community organizations will more effectively support Indigenous systems of knowledge (Berg et *al.,* 2007). This requires respect for and reciprocal engagement with local leadership (Maiter et *al.,* 2008).

It is commonly known that CCCR seeks to remove research hierarchies, move away from extractive research towards knowledge democracy, which pertains to working 'with' and 'for', rather than 'on' communities (Cahill and Torre, 2009; Hall et *al.*, 2013; Nelson et *al.,* 1998; Ochocka, Moorlag and Janzen, 2008). Another mechanism to support community expertise is by involving them in all stages of the process from design through to evaluation (Akintobi et *al.,* 2013; Frechtling, 2007; Furco and Miller, 2009; Hart et *al.,* 2009; Jackson, 2005; Weiss, 1995). This respect and recognition of community knowledge is also imperative to the

governance structure of the research partnership (Ochocka et *al.,* 2002; Reeve et *el.,* 2002).

### Revisiting roles and responsibilities

Periodically, challenges will emerge in any research relationship. This is the case for any partnership, research and otherwise. One mechanism to mitigate potential harms is to have shared QA protocols and processes, which open up conversations about revisiting roles and responsibilities. Difficulties may arise due to lack of advance articulation of purpose, audience, resources and dissemination plan (Holland, 2001). Thus planning should realistically account for time, resources and human efforts required in all stages of the research design process. What is more, there will inevitably be a need to iteratively assess the research team's course of action in addition to roles and responsibilities to make corrections and reconfigurations as needed.

As there are numerous ways to conduct evaluations, it is of utmost importance to co-define the terms of reference with community partners. It is beneficial to have clearly defined responsibilities, a timetable and strategy for analysis and reporting through periodic check-ins, ideally at the one-quarter mark, two-thirds and at the end (Holland, 2001; Centre for Excellence in Assisted Living-University of North Carolina (CEAL-UNC) Collaborative, 2009). Involving partners in project evaluation, including conducting evaluations, analyzing results, discussing findings and determining an appropriate course of action will benefit from a collaborative approach for the sustainability of the project. It also provides learning opportunities and knowledge to share with other similar projects and supports the iterative development of QA protocols.

### Participatory evaluation

One effective mechanism for evaluation is known as 'participatory evaluation'. This is a widely celebrated approach in CCCR scholarship (Blumenthal et *al.,* 2013; Cousins and Whitmore, 1998a, 1998b; Jackson and Kassam, 1998; Jackson, 2000; Holland, 2001; Hart and Gerhardt, 2008; Nelson et *al.,* 2010; Nelson et *el.,* 2004). Participatory evaluation seeks to understand how well the research process operates along the way. It raises key questions such as: is this project of value to community? Who benefits? Are community partners being heard appropriately?  Who among the community partners is being heard and conversely

overlooked? How well is the process functioning? The purpose of evaluation is to assess the value or worth of an activity in order to achieve meaningful outcomes, in social or economic terms that benefit all research partners (Hart and Gerhardt, 2008, p. 9; Hart and Aumann, 2007). To achieve high-quality outcomes, careful design, collection, analysis and interpretation of evaluation data along the way is imperative. Some scholars recommend the REAP Matrix for participatory evaluation and engagement: *Reciprocity, Externalities, Access, Partnership* (REAP) (Hart and Aumann, 2007). Participatory evaluation is a desired approach for the purpose of equitable participation in the research process.

There are numerous examples of participatory evaluation, where local community groups and coalitions identify potential outcomes or indicators of change for such purposes as poverty reduction and community development (Alkin and Christie, 2004; Baker, 2000; Gamble, 2010; Emerson, 2009; Earl and Carden, 2002; Jackson, 2010; Janzen et *al.,* 2012; Janzen and Wiebe, 2010; Mitchell, et *al.*, 2011; Sullivan et *al.,* 2001; Stoecker, 2008; Torjman and Levitan-Reid, 2004). Instructive initiatives include:

1. WHO Healthy Cities and Communities movement
2. New Mexico Healthy Community Workbook proposed identifying structural and/or system indicators and people/population health behavioural and knowledge indicators as intermediate outcomes leading to longer term health change
3. PAHO: healthy municipality participatory evaluation resource handbook identified intermediate outcomes of the five pillars of healthy cities: participation, intersectoral collaboration, healthy public policy, sustainability and healthy structures and good governance; and potential changes in material conditions, social and/or cultural conditions, and individual conditions, which are linked to health outcomes.

Grounded in a commitment to social change, the purpose of evaluation is to learn about how a project or process is functioning and to see overall improvement in people, programs, policies and organizations. By emphasizing lessons learned, the goal is to improve program implementation and outcomes. Participatory evaluation brings a dispersed approach to the responsibilities for implementing recommendations. Furthermore, participatory evaluation will be most

successful when focusing on program needs rather than funding priorities (Blumenthal et *al.,* 2013). Much like a rudder, evaluation is a guiding mechanism that enables those working on a project to determine whether they are on course if they need to take corrective actions. Ranging in shape and form from web-based surveys to face-to-face evaluation, these techniques provide opportunities to *learn* about processes, *assess* outcomes, *document* progress, *enhance* community-led evidence rooted in local experience and *maintain* accountability to funders' expectations while *ensuring* that programs are responsive to ongoing challenges (Janzen et *al.,* 2012).

## Action and change

- Skills development and resource transfer
- Integrated knowledge mobilization
- Policy creation within and external to the community
- Local leadership and longterm planning

### Skills development and resource transfer

Desired outcomes include: changes in knowledge, skills and abilities. We also need to examine the process toward successful engagement, process of community participation and impact of program planning, implementation and outcomes. Key CCCR goals include personal, institutional, community and political transformation. As Community-Campus Partnerships for Health (CCPH) emphasize through the various databases and toolkits available, desired outcomes for CBR include: *advancement of knowledge, clinical implementation, legislation and policy change, economic and community benefit.* Given that CCCR is an action-oriented approach to research, where knowledge is generated for the purpose of social change, it requires significant collaboration between the researcher and communities where insiders and outsiders co-create knowledge and meaning in pursuit of shared goals. This knowledge 'revolution' will be successful when what academics do matters to the broader society and when 'society is so engaged with the university that our priorities are shaped by societal needs, when the work of every individual can be related purposefully and knowingly to the work of others, and when our habits of living are new habits' (Plater, 1999, p. 171, quoted in Foster-Fishman and Watson, 2010, p. 235). Systemic change will

occur with individuals define their work in terms of who is directly affected, for what purpose and consider the consequences.

Successful CCCR can also be measured by the mutual exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of reciprocity (Jacobson et *al.,* 2007). This may translate into outreach, service, technology transfer, increased social capital and community capacity, trust in the university as well as the reconfiguration of asymmetric relations of power traditionally governing CCCR partnerships (Vargiu, 2014). At its core, it entails redistributive and reciprocal engagement. Some partnerships may lead to lasting networks (Provan and Kenis, 2007). These networks take on numerous forms with various purposes and lifespans. How can we evaluate public engagement and societal impact? As Vargiu notes (2014) testing tools, criteria and methods must accompany strategic foresight and policy recommendations. Indicators may include *public access to facilities, public access to knowledge, widened public participation, economic regeneration, enterprise in social engagement, institutional relationship and partnership building, continued education and technological transfer.* To shed light on the effectiveness and quality of these indicators, measurement of success can be both quantitative (e.g., countable, presence/absence of dedicated CCCR facilities/centres/staff), or qualitative (e.g., role and relevance of community involvement within CCCR facilities represented in institutional mission statements, strategic plans, governing structure and official documents). Qualitative indicators of success may also entail perceived empowerment or spill-over into other areas of community mobilization beyond the research process. This is further fleshed out below as a way to 'enhance community capacity'.

### Integrated knowledge mobilization

Measuring the quality and success of our efforts includes indicators such as: *level of community involvement, improved research quality, enhancing community capacity* and *improving health outcomes*. It is equally imperative that community partners play a role in evaluation of findings, which may contribute to a shared sense of ownership and personal investment in program implementation emanating from formal recommendations derived from evaluation results (Akintobi et *al.,* 2013; Viswanathan et *al.,* 2004). Furthermore, being responsive to community needs entails consideration for appropriate avenues for knowledge dissemination. This involves careful thought about impacts beyond the academy (Kingsley and Chapman, 2013). Dissemination of knowledge and findings should be conducted in partnership with organization so that results reach a variety of audiences and continue to maintain community relevance (Ochocka and Janzen, 2014; Nelson et *al.,* 2005).

The effective broadcast of results can better inform policy and practice (Janzen et *al.,* 2012). Moreover, it can contribute to the knowledge of cultural norms and other important insights to inform scholarship and literature. It can also make others aware of CCCR methodologies, best practices and QA. What is more, measuring success entails a consideration of community perspectives. A successful project will generally lead to action directed by the community, meet outcomes that communities and researchers identify as important and lead to new knowledge or theory (Szala-Meneok and Lohfeld, 2005, p. 58). CCCR, as a collaborative approach, seeks to support people to create lasting change through action. Thus, when community-members take the lead in creating new knowledge, we know that the project is achieving success. Academics can work alongside relatively powerless or marginalized groups to help them better understand and change their world. We can collaborate with them based on our expertise, our community membership and a sense of professional and personal purpose.

### Policy creation within and external to the community

Another critical feature of CCCR is policy impact. Action-oriented scholarship is directed towards the production of practical knowledge, with the aim of contributing to a greater social good. This research is motivated by a commitment to foster human flourishing in order to help make societal improvements (Foster-Fishman and Watson, 2010; Nelson et *al.,* 2008). A systems orientation is crucial to this, as CCCR scholars and community partners are more likely to develop a comprehensive understanding of the problem and design actions that are more likely to lead to transformative change when there are shared responsibilities for social change. This emphasis on action promotes social justice. To move away from oppression, as is the emphasis of this research paradigm, we need to acknowledge underlying power structures and inequalities within structural settings. Moreover, partners will be equally involved and invested in designing and implementing action.

Moving forward, research partnerships built upon a team of community-members and academics is much more likely to lead to the implementation of concrete action to address the root causes of a problem. To achieve policy traction, the creation and mobilization of practical authentic knowledge for social change involves focused techniques directed towards decision-makers at multiple scales (Chevalier and Buckles, 2008; Hankivsky et *al.,* 2012). Moreover, as Cahill and Torre suggest, we must consider 'layers of transformation' from the individual to the institutional (2009, p. 207). In addition to considering what actions result on behalf of communities, we must equally direct our attention towards change within governing bodies and institutions. So how then can we translate findings into tangible policy outcomes? How can findings affect practice at multiple levels: individual, community, regional, national, global? This requires considerable effort directed towards dialogue and knowledge mobilization. CEAL-UNC (2009) highlights some notable success stories:

1. *Woburn case:* Woburn and the Harvard School of Public Health; corporations had been dumping toxic chemicals into the community's water supply, and this led to the reauthorization of federal Superfund legislation.
2. *National welfare rights groups*: partnership with Virginia Polytechnic University researcher to disseminate findings on discrimination in workforce programs. This research documented anecdotal experience, that women of colour did not receive equal access to training, placement and employment experiences. Working together, the groups leveraged their efforts and mounted an intensive media campaign to educate the public about this disparity, pressuring the federal government to respond.

These successes demonstrate a need to determine policy implications in collaboration with community partners and early on in the research process. They reveal how shared advocacy efforts towards implementation will likely be much more successful (CEAL-UNC, 2009, p. 82). It is imperative to reiterate that CCCR does not end with the research findings but will continue into several phases including translating results into policy implications and actions as well as dissemination. Partners can impact policy and practice on many fronts and levels ranging from community dialogue about an issue to influencing provincial or federal legislation. Translating findings into policy and practice implications requires an examination of the layers of information generated from the research project and early identification of policy strands.

## Local leadership and long-term planning

Long-term planning is required to translate recommendations into action. In order to do so, support for local leadership is crucial. To go beyond tokenism, this involves recognition and respect for community leadership and lived-experience. This translates into including community members as equal partners in the governance structure of the research team and for any structure that emerges from the research process. This shared governance model will better inform the development of evaluation or QA tools, translation of results to inform decision-making and policy change and subsequent research (Akintobi et *al.,* 2013). Ongoing and continuous community-directed evaluation will enhance this final phase of the process.

In the final stages of a research project, partners must take into consideration future relationships and project sustainability. The question of whether to continue the CCCR partnership beyond the life of the project will inevitably emerge. A sustained partnership provides opportunities to continue benefits leveraged through the diverse array of partner knowledge, expertise and resources. Though a continued time commitment may be a challenge, the efforts could yield numerous benefits. CCCR partners can explore the policies and practice affecting a community. One potential barrier arises for the sustainability of projects when there is limited financial support to continue efforts.

Some successful examples of continued long-term partnership planning include:

- Michigan Community Scholars Program: http://www.lsa.umich.edu/mcsp
- Community-Campus Partnerships for Health Consultancy Network: http://depts.washington.edu/ccph/mentor.html

## Concluding reflections

CCCR is a vital force for social change. It can lead to the creation of healthy, vibrant, flourishing communities (Wallerstein and Duran, 2006). Community ownership, power and control are central to the sustainability of a CCCR research project if desired and appropriate. Creating sustainable research partnerships must entail shared articulation of criteria for success as well as the ability to articulate positive and negative feedback and the creation of effective channels of communication to suggest ideas for further interaction. One advantage of continuous QA, meaning the ongoing refinement of QA indicators, is the potential for sustainable relationships and the creation of programs and outcomes, which may justify continued funding. Indicators of success during final stages of CCCR include increased capacity to fulfill mission, such as the development of new insights into organizational operations, new or leveraged funding, reduced or increased costs associated with service-learning activity and development of new networks of partners (Holland, 2011). In these ways, community participants create a shared vocabulary and thus a greater sense of common purpose in the continued research process.

Processes and outcomes can impact policy change at multiple scales to transform conditions of inequality. Such change requires community vision. Moreover, scientific and community evidence demonstrates that there is an added value to participation itself for enhancing health (Wallerstein and Duran, 2006). Satisfaction requires cultural and local sensitivity to facilitate sustainability and enhance program productivity. This requires iterative participatory feedback and QA evaluation. To develop an innovative and iterative QA framework, this paper discussed four broad themes to inform a more focused discussion of indicators of excellence: *community relevance, research design, equitable participation,* and *action and change.* Going forward, to evaluate outcomes pertaining to knowledge mobilization, we will want to consider the capacity for facilitating critical reflection with the community, which requires a considerable degree of uncertainty, shared control and being authentic and accountable to a diverse ranges of goals. This relational accountability pertains to the selection of appropriate research design, data analysis, building a shared research agenda. This entails consideration of rationale, process, roles, expectations, transparency and participation. Relational accountability also relates to enhancing and supporting competency in enabling multiple forms and aims of dissemination of findings to advance knowledge and improving as well as making concrete social change. In sum, CCCR has the potential to lead to community change (Schwartz and van de Sande, 2011; Stoecker, 2005).

## Moving forward

Much of the literature reviewed in the previous section is pitched at a fairly high level of abstraction. It speaks in compelling and convincing terms of the importance of respecting and meeting foundational principles of good practice in each of the four areas identified—*community relevance, research design, equitable partnerships*, and *action and change* – but it leaves largely undetermined the translation of those more abstract constructs to indicators that can be evaluated based on specific measures of practice and performance. Arguably, more attention has been paid to this more detailed level of resolution in the health arena, specifically in the field of community based participatory health research (CBPHR), but even here the methodology is still not fully developed.

As our Canadian funding agencies—especially, SSHRC and CIHR—institute programs to support CCCR, the importance of defining indicators for the purposes of peer review of grant applications as well as the evaluation of research outcomes increases. The focus of this National Summit is therefore both challenging and timely as the field as a whole – the agencies that support it, the researchers who practice it, and those who apply the findings –strives to advance in its rigour, best practice, and, hence, its value and impact.

A logical and quite conventional approach within social research methodology is to proceed from broad definitions of major constructs to the specification of sub-constructs for which relevant indicators can be derived. In turn, those indicators should be translatable as specific measures that are relevant, appropriate, measurable, reportable, comparable and verifiable. In so doing, there are well established methodological and measurement criteria that need to be satisfied according to established standards of quality.

Embedded in the literature review for each of the four main constructs are questions that help guide the definition of sub-constructs. These can usefully inform discussions at the National Summit without foreclosing on the issues that participants will consider of importance for the development of indicators.

| Community relevance | |
|---|---|
| Defining community | Has the community of relevance been clearly and appropriately defined? |
| | Who was involved in the definition? |
| Approaching community | When and how was the community engaged? |
| | How was the research framed and focused to be meaningful to communities? |
| Partnership principles | Were community-university partnership principles defined and respected? |
| | How were partnerships evaluated as they evolved? |
| Co-creating knowledge | Was there a shared understanding of the co-creation of knowledge by communities and university partners? |
| | Were tools for effective communication employed? |

| Research design | |
|---|---|
| Building the research team, clarifying responsibilities | Did researchers work with communities to develop a collaborative research governance structure? |
| | Was a forum created for ongoing dialogue about roles and responsibilities? |
| Collaborative problem definition | Were critical research questions developed collaboratively to address community issues? |
| | Were processes established to promote and sustain collaboration? |
| Dignified, culturally-relevant method of engagement | How were cultural appropriateness and respect incorporated into the research design? |
| | How was the engagement process and experience evaluated and how did it evolve in the course of the research? |
| Mixed methodologies and inter-disciplinary innovation | What research methodologies cultivate quality, rigour, innovation and interdisciplinarity? |
| | Did the research generate new alliances within the university and with community partners? |

| Equitable partnerships | |
| --- | --- |
| Situated knowledge | How was community knowledge valued and incorporated in the research design? |
| | How was the research process adjusted in the course of the research to better integrate community knowledge? |
| Recognizing community expertise | How was community expertise acknowledged and incorporated into the management and conduct of the research? |
| | How did community expertise impact the design of research processes? |
| Revisiting roles and responsibilities | Were roles and responsibilities monitored, evaluated and adjusted in the course of the research? |
| | How were conflicts addressed and resolved? |
| Participatory evaluation | How was participatory evaluation incorporated into the research process? |
| | How was participatory evaluation combined with other forms of evaluation? |

| Action and change | |
| --- | --- |
| Skills development and resource transfer | Did skills development and resource transfer occur through the research? |
| | What actions were taken to sustain the research and its applications beyond the project end date? |
| Integrated knowledge mobilization | How were roles and responsibilities for collaborative knowledge mobilization determined? |
| | How was knowledge mobilization for policy development understood and advanced? |
| Policy development | Were policy impacts an explicit objective of the research? |
| | What were the means of monitoring impacts on policy? |
| Longer-term planning | How did researchers promote sustainable relationships with community leaders for on-going collaboration? |
| | What means were used to share lessons learned from the research process and outcomes to advance best practice in CCCR? |

These questions are helpful to consider prior to the National Summit. Moreover, they should be considered in tandem with the case studies submitted by National participants, as those examples provide an empirical base for grounding the questions in the realities of actual CCCR practice. In short, the National Summit is an invitation and opportunity to bring the collective expertise and experience of the participants to bear on determining indicators of excellence for CCCR with the aim of advancing the theory and practice of the field.

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# Appendix: List of case studies

**CBRC community site 1**

Arctic Institute of Community Based Research: *Kluane First Nation Community Food Security Strategy*

**CBRC community site 2**

UQAM's «Service aux collectivités»: *Issues related to cyanobacteria in Bromont Lake*

**CBRC community site 3**

Office of Public Engagement, Government of NL: *Small Towns, Big Industries: Strengthening Socio-Economic Development Benefits in Rural NL through Community-based Research*

**CBRC community site 4**

Environmental Policy Institute, Grenfell Campus, Memorial University: *Community-based Research and Addressing Water Insecurity in Rural NL*

**CBRC community site 5**

UNESCO Chair in community based research and social responsibility in higher education/Institute for Studies and Innovation in Community University Engagement – University of Victoria: *Participatory Sustainable Waste Management*

**CBRC community site 6**

Carleton: *Living Wage from the Employee's View: Implementation Guidelines for Small- Medium Size Businesses*

**CBRC community site 7**

Institute for Studies and Innovation in Community University Engagement – University of Victoria: *Siem Smun'eem: The Indigenous Child Wellbeing Research Network.*

**CBRC community site 8**

UQAM: *Étude sur les besoins et les aspirations des résidents de l'îlot de l'ancienne biscuiterie Viau. Synthèse des recherches effectuées : présentation des résultats et des pistes d'actions*

**CBRC community site 9**

CCBR: *Taking Culture Seriously in Community Mental Health: A community-university research initiative that moves research into action*

**CBRC community site 10**

University of Saskatchewan: *Quality of Life in Saskatoon: 14 Years in the Life of a Community*

**CBRC community site 11**

Community-University Institute for Social Research, University of Saskatchewan: *Collaborative Community-Campus Research for Innovation and Impact: The Case of Self-Directed Funding in Saskatchewan*