

C2UExpo 2023 Pre-Conference Workshop: Fundamentals of Community-Based Research

CBRCanada facilitators and guest speakers held a pre-conference workshop at C2UExpo 2023 on June 5th in Thunder Bay, Ontario. The purpose of this workshop was to demonstrate how research that embodies the three hallmarks: community-driven, participatory, and action-oriented can contribute to transformative social change. CBRCanada facilitators introduced basic concepts in preparing, planning and conducting community-based research and guest speakers demonstrated what each guiding hallmark of community-based research looks like in practice.

CBRCanada facilitators:
Joanna Ochocka and Amanda Demmer

Guest speakers:

Community-Driven: Dr. Richard Oster and Mosom Rick Lightning from the University of Alberta

Participatory: Hsain Al-Shihabi from the Canadian Mental Health Association, Toronto

Action-Oriented: Dr. Angela Hovey from Lakehead University and Marlene Ham (OAITH)

Here is a summary of each guest talk:



Community-Driven

MASKWACIS MATERNAL CHILD AND FAMILY
WELLBEING RESEARCH GROUP

Mosom Rick Lightning & Dr. Richard Oster
(University of Alberta)



A participant in the Elders Mentoring Program, photo taken by Indigenous photographer, Bert Crowfoot.

Mosom Rick and Richard embed within the Maskwacis Maternal Child and Family Wellbeing Research Group the principle of being 'community-driven'. They emphasize the value of researchers giving priority to understanding--at their core--the communities they work with, which requires time and effort to build reciprocal and responsive relationships within research partnerships. Their research group in Wahnkotoiwon nurtures authentic, genuine, and collaborative partnerships through relationality; though they acknowledge the importance of science and technology in research, they simultaneously recognize that they are able to do the work they do as a result of their relationships to one another and through staying fundamentally ground in their values the belief that no one individual is worth more than another. To do community-driven research, they share that researchers must "leave your mind at the front door because communities need your heart."



Participatory

SYRIAN AND NEWCOMER YOUTH
MENTORSHIP INITIATIVE

Hsain Al-Shihabi
Canadian Mental Health Association, Toronto



Photo of Hsain Al-Shihabi with the boys soccer team of the SNYMI program. Photo provided by Hsain.

The Syrian Newcomer Youth and Mentorship Initiative of the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) - Toronto was developed and lead by Hsain Al-Shihabi in 2016. Four years into program implementation, CMHA undertook an evaluation of this program in collaboration with the Centre for Community-Based Research. To effectively evaluate this program, it was important that the evaluation was done in a participatory way where the evaluation was owned by, shaped by, and done in collaboration with stakeholders of the program including youth. Two key participatory elements were incorporated into this program: a steering committee and youth community researchers. The steering committee included youth who participated in the program, youth mentors, a manager, and a senior executive from CMHA. Youth involved as researchers and as steering committee members provided valuable insights leading to the success of this evaluation, and proving the importance of participatory aspects in research and evaluation.



Action-Oriented

BARRIER TO SERVICES FOR WOMEN WITH COMPLEX
SUBSTANCE USE & TRAUMA NEEDS

Dr. Angela Hovey (Lakehead University) & Marlene Ham
(Ontario Association of Interval & Transition Houses)



Photo by Paul McKinnon. Source: <https://bit.ly/3puUX0p>

Angela and Marlene have been part of a project investigating barriers to shelter service for women with complex substance use and trauma needs that has culminated in the development of a Harm Reduction Framework and Continuum of Practices, as well as a variety of action-oriented outcomes. Their work has led to increased interest from shelters to partake in further research towards solutions, and to an increased institutional focus on harm reduction within Lakehead University. Additionally, tangible changes such as clean & safe injection sites have been implemented and funding from Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services (MCCSS) were secured to support women and shelters to implement further changes. Shelter services continue to move towards real change for their communities through the research with Angele and Marlene - showing the strength of action-oriented research that facilitate positive changes.

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The CBRCanada secretariat is located at Wilfrid Laurier University.

