Engaging Individuals Experiencing Poverty in Poverty Initiatives

by

Emma-Lynn Wallace

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
Community Engagement

Faculty of Extension
University of Alberta

Abstract

Despite increasing awareness of poverty in Canada, the number of individuals living in poverty is still rising. In response, all three levels of government and in particular, municipalities, are directly taking on responsibilities for reducing poverty. Across these municipal initiatives is a remarkable commitment: engaging those experiencing poverty in their efforts. Specifically, EndPovertyEdmonton—recognizing that community engagement is seen as crucial in addressing complex social issues and nurturing sustainable communities—is paying a lot of attention to how those experiencing poverty can be engaged in their governance structure. However, they are struggling with how to proceed in ways that are not tokenistic and there is a lack of literature to guide this process. However, there are many other initiatives in Canada that are attempting to engage those living in poverty in their efforts and learning from would be advantageous. Therefore, this thesis describes how community engagement is understood by people working in poverty-related initiatives. Using focused ethnography, I conducted interviews, participant observation, and document review to present peoples' understanding of community engagement, along with their experiences of success, struggle, and hope. In the discussion and conclusion (Chapters 5 & 6), I go into detail on why and how these results are relevant, not only to initiatives looking to engaging people experiencing poverty in their work, but also to the community engagement literature.

Preface

For this thesis, I obtained research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research

Ethics Board 1, No. 00085073, October 1, 2018.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the 15 people who took time out of their busy lives and volunteered their time, energy, and expertise to support my research – thank you, not only for your support in my research, but also for all of your dedication towards addressing poverty; it is appreciated and recognized.

Acknowledgements

I would like to extend a special thanks to:

Dr. Maria Mayan, thank you for your continued and ongoing support throughout this process. Your mentorship is something I am so grateful for, and I will continue to implement your learnings into practice as I move onto the next stage in my life. And maybe most of all, thank you for your patience, understanding, and flexibility as I made my way through the program, and through this study.

Dr. Kevin Jones, thank you for your ongoing questions and your ability to push me to reflect and think more critically about certain aspects of my research and about the research process itself. Your questions will continue to influence my future involvement in research and practice.

Dr. Carla Hilario, thank you for your thoughtful input in my thesis and for agreeing to some fairly tight timelines on my part. Your flexibility and dedication to my work is much appreciated.

EndPovertyEdmonton Secretariat, thank you for welcoming me into your team (and in some cases, your family), supporting and encouraging my research, and for the many wonderful introductions.

My friends and classmates, thank you for your constant presence, encouragement, support; it means the world to me.

Mom and Dad, thank you for always prioritizing my learning. Thank you for instilling in me an uncompromising work ethic. Thank you for sharing with me the ability to understand and empathize. And most of all, thank you for your never-ending support and encouragement as I continue to travel further and further away from home to pursue my interests.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

Poverty has become increasingly prevalent in Canada. Not only has the number of people living in poverty increased over the last decade, but governments are also beginning to acknowledge their social responsibility to address this issue. As a result, the Canadian federal government, as well as provinces and municipalities, are recognizing what non-profits have been tackling for decades. In an effort to solve this problem, has recently released its new poverty reduction strategy, Opportunity for All - Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy, with the aim of "reducing poverty and improving the economic well-being of all Canadian families so that they can have a real and fair chance to succeed" (Employment & Social Development Canada, 2018, para. 1). Even with federal and provincial efforts to address poverty, municipal governments have recently taken leading roles in developing local poverty-related initiatives. Alongside, or in partnership with non-profits, municipalities such as Calgary, Guelph and Wellington, Toronto, Surrey, and Edmonton are stepping forward to take serious leadership roles in addressing poverty.

End Poverty Edmonton is an initiative based on past work done in Edmonton and in Alberta focused on finding innovative solutions to end poverty. EPE is a collective impact initiative with partners including the City of Edmonton, the United Way of the Alberta Capital Region, the Edmonton Community Foundation, and several other small and large non-profits throughout the city. One challenge facing EPE is how to engage people experiencing poverty into their governance structure in a meaningful way.

Community engagement is a complex term understood in a variety of ways. Broadly, community engagement is considered a reciprocal process in which communities/groups/organizations work collaboratively to address issues that affect community

members' wellbeing (Aslin & Brown, 2004; Bacon, 2009; CTSA, 2011; MCMPR, 2006). Engaging community members in the issues that affect them directly is crucial in addressing complex social issues. This is because engagement generates greater public support, helps to develop a more informed and knowledgeable public, helps to create more efficient uses of financial resources, reduces the risk of social conflict, creates a sense of involvement in and ownership of projects for community, better project and policy outcomes, and acknowledges the experience community has in working to address an issue (Aslin & Brown, 2004; Bacon, 2009; CTSA, 2011; Elton Consulting, 2003; MCMPR, 2006). There are, however, a variety of barriers and risks associated with community engagement that make it very difficult.

The purpose of my thesis is to understand peoples' perceptions of community engagement as they pertain to poverty-related initiatives. The overall research question is as follows: How is community engagement understood by people working in poverty-related initiatives? Focused ethnography was used to answer this question. Data collection included interviews with people from across Canada working in the social sector, in roles that work to address poverty-related issues (i.e., municipal governments, non-profits, and/or lived experience of poverty), participant observation, and document review, all of which were analyzed using qualitative content analysis and managed with the help of NVivo, a qualitative analysis software. By exploring the issues and challenges regarding community engagement, this research supports EPE as they attempt to engage people experiencing poverty in their efforts to end poverty and advances both community engagement literature and practice.

Research Context

My thesis research was conducted as a community-engaged research project, or more often stated, as a community-based participatory research project. Reflecting on context is important for reflexivity in participatory research.

I grew up in a community just outside of Ottawa, Ontario. It was not until I was in high school that I really spent any time in the city and began to notice the significant poverty in the city. Upon recognizing this, I knew I wanted to go to university to understand the complexities underlying poverty. I moved to Nova Scotia to pursue a Bachelor of Community Development (Honours) from Acadia University and wrote an Honours thesis focused on community engagement but for tidal energy development. So, while I learned about community engagement during my undergraduate degree, I still wanted to understand engagement within the context of my main research interest: poverty. In 2017, I began the Master of Arts in Community Engagement program at the University of Alberta, and started working with Dr. Maria Mayan, and EndPovertyEdmonton. This was an ideal fit to explore the concept of community engagement as it relates to poverty.

I came to this research with an interest in using community engagement as a method of community development to address poverty in cities. After finishing my first year in the Master's program, where I had to take six courses related to community engagement, I began the summer of 2018 completing my Community-Service Learning (CSL) credit. With funding from the Summer Temporary Employment Program, I worked for 130 hours with EndPovertyEdmonton. The focus of my role was to develop a business case for engaging people experiencing poverty in our collective EPE work. I spent the majority of the summer interviewing people, conducting literature reviews, and attending conferences to better understand how to engage people

experiencing poverty in the initiative. By the end of the summer, I had developed a business case that included an evidence-based model for engaging people experiencing poverty in the initiative as well as a timeline and budget. After the summer, I continued working with EPE in a student capacity, conducting an independent study with the Research and Evaluation Specialist prior to receiving a Mitacs grant (September-December 2018). My Mitacs grant—match-funded by EPE—came with the understanding that I would dedicate 70-80% of my efforts on my thesis research and the remaining 20-30% as an employee at EPE in supporting research, evaluation, and communication efforts. As EPE had yet to implement the model I suggested for engagement in 2018, there was also an understanding that my thesis research may support them in developing a mechanism to begin engaging people experiencing poverty in the initiative efforts. I continued to work at EPE part-time from January to August of 2019.

It is important to note my experience at EPE as an employee, as I developed relationships and connections that supported my research while also gaining unique insight into the struggles of community engagement related to poverty reduction that I may not have had otherwise, further exciting my interest and passion for community engagement in poverty-related initiatives.

Definitions

Below is a list of terms that will be discussed throughout this thesis. Though not all key terms are illustrated in this section, the more prominent terms have been included. While most terms will be explained as they come up, this table can be referenced as a reminder of definitions.

Table 1

List of Definitions

Term	Definition
Canadian measures of low-income	Canada measures low-income with three measures: low-income cut-off, market basket measure, and low-income measure. The low-income cut-off measures the income threshold which determines how much of a family's income is spent on basic necessities; those under the threshold are considered low-income. The market basket measure is based on the goods and services that represent a standard of living; a family who cannot purchase the goods and services in the "basket" is considered low-income. The low-income measure is a fixed percentage of income, with those below that percentage considered low-income. (Government of Canada, 2017)
Community engagement	Community engagement is understood differently by many. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines community engagement as a "process by which people are enabled to become actively and genuinely involved in defining the issues of concern to them, in making decisions about factors that affect their lives, in formulating and implementing policies, in planning, developing, and delivering services, and in taking action to active change" (1992, p. 1). Others have defined engagement as the process of communicating with those impacted by an issue. Engagement is considered a process in which communities/groups/organizations work collaboratively to address issues that affect community members' wellbeing and is intended to be reciprocal, with partnerships beneficial to everyone involved (Aslin & Brown, 2004; Bacon, 2009; CTSA, 2011; MCMPR, 2006).
Collective impact	Collective impact is a form of collaboration that brings together multiple sectors to solve large, complex problems. The collective impact model is grounded in five conditions: agenda, shared measurement, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and backbone support (Kania & Kramer, 2011).
Governance	Governance informs who has influence, who makes decisions, and who is held accountable for what within an organization, program, partnership, or initiative. Governance is all about defining formality, duration, focus, institutional diversity, networks, stability, and drive within an organization or initiative (Donahue, 2004; Gibson, 2011).
Poverty	Poverty is defined as "lack[ing] or [being] denied economic, social, and cultural resources to have a quality life that sustains and facilitates full and meaningful participation in the community" (EndPovertyEdmonton, 2016, p. 20).

Poverty alleviation, reduction, and elimination	Alleviation: organizational efforts focused on developing and implementing strategies to temporarily lift people out of poverty. Reduction: Organizational efforts aimed at developing and implementing transitional or targeted programs to increase peoples' independence. Elimination: Organizational efforts attempting to eliminate poverty completely through the development and implementation of universal programs that can increase resiliency and capacity in citizens (Cabaj, 2011).
Poverty-related initiative	Poverty-related initiatives are those organizations and initiatives who work with clients, advocate for policy, or do research around issues of poverty. Examples might include immigrant- and refugee-serving agencies, health coalitions, or those working with people affected by drug-use or homelessness. While they may not be directly working as poverty reduction organizations and initiatives, they are addressing some of the root causes of poverty, such as racism, mental health, and lack of housing.
Social sector	The social sector encompasses government, non-profits, and community. In the context of this study, the term "social sector" is used specifically to describe those in government, non-profits, and community (i.e., lived experience of poverty) that are working to address poverty.

Overview

Following this introduction, Chapter Two provides a review of the literature addressing key issues of the study, including poverty, EPE, and community engagement. Chapter Three outlines the methodology used in this study; also noted are the ethics approval and ethical considerations for this study. Chapter Four provides the study results divided into six major categories: the meaning of community engagement, motivations for engaging, the struggles associated with community engagement, the systems in which we work, facilitators and methods of meaningful engagement, and defining success. Chapters Five and Six discuss how and why the results from this study are important—not only to EPE but to community-engagement practice and literature as a whole.

Chapter 2: Background and Literature Review

Impacts of Poverty

In recent years, poverty has become increasingly prevalent in Canada and internationally, both in terms of the number of people living in poverty and of governments' acknowledgment of social responsibility. As a result, the Canadian federal government, as well as provinces and municipalities, has begun to recognize what not-for-profits have been tackling for decades. Poverty is a complex issue with significant health and wellbeing implications for citizens as well as economic implications for governments.

The Sustainable Development Goals. There is a strong social/human rights argument associated with reducing poverty in Canada. Recently, poverty elimination has been identified as a Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) by the United Nations (UN) (United Nations, 2015a). According to the UN, Sustainable Development Goals are "the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. They address the global challenges we face, including those related to poverty, inequality, climate, environmental degradation, prosperity, and peace and justice" (2015b, para. 1). The highest-priority SDG identified by the UN is "No Poverty". They recognize that people experiencing poverty are significantly less resilient than those who have not or are not experiencing poverty; violence and conflicts are experienced more regularly, disasters, such as natural disasters have more negative effects, and health is at greater risk (United Nations, 2015b). Nine of the other SDGs are directly related to poverty: zero hunger, good health and wellbeing, quality education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, decent work and economic growth, reduction of inequalities, sustainable cities and communities, and peace, justice, and strong institutions (United Nations, 2015b). Eight of these nine SDGs address human-rights issues across the world and are directly related to the social implications of

poverty. The SDGs were developed to encourage countries to begin addressing areas of inequality around the world.

Alongside the social and human rights implications associated with poverty, there is also a strong economic argument to be made regarding reducing poverty. The province of Alberta estimates that poverty costs between $7.1–$9.5 billion per year in healthcare, attributed crime, intergenerational costs (costs that are incurred when children grow up in poverty, i.e., nutritional deficiencies, learning difficulties, lack of opportunity to pursue post-secondary education, etc.), and opportunity costs (costs associated with the loss of private revenue as well as lost tax revenue when people are un- or under-employed) (EndPovertyEdmonton, 2017; Briggs & Lee, 2012). EPE (2017) estimates that the annual cost of poverty in Edmonton is $7 billion, about $2,700 per taxpayer per year.

Both the human rights and the economic implications associated with poverty—internationally and domestically—suggest that governments, as national governing bodies, need to begin addressing poverty. In Canada, specifically, governments are implicated in addressing poverty; they have a role to play as drivers in an attempt to reduce or eliminate poverty.

Addressing and Defining Poverty in Canada

While it is clear that poverty has negative social and economic outcomes, how governments have chosen to address and even define poverty differs.

Alleviation, reduction, elimination. Overall, initiatives to address poverty in Canada have changed both in terminology and associated efforts. Early on, initiatives spoke to poverty alleviation and efforts focused on developing and implementing strategies to temporarily lift people out of poverty (Cabaj, 2011). Second, and most present still, are efforts aimed at poverty reduction or the development and implementation of transitional or targeted programs to increase

peoples' independence (Cabaj, 2011). Most recently, yet still widely unused, are the efforts

focused on poverty elimination through the development and implementation of universal

programs that can increase peoples' resiliency and capacity (Cabaj, 2011). Poverty elimination is

considered to be more likely to have positive outcomes in comparison to poverty alleviation and

poverty reduction as it encourages resiliency and capacity building, which in turn, suggests

greater community and citizen sustainability (Cabaj, 2011).

Though there are differences in terminology and associated efforts, the common term

tying these differences together is poverty. In each of these types of initiatives, it is recognized

that the goal is to address poverty rather than low income. Whereas low income is simply that

(an individual's or family's low income or economic deprivation) poverty is a more all-

encompassing term (Employment & Social Development Canada, 2018). Poverty is used to

describe the deprivation of not only economic resources but also the deprivation of social

relations, culture, and participation in society (Cabaj, 2011; Lammam & MacIntyre, 2016).

These initiatives recognize that simply addressing low income is not enough; poverty as a whole

must be addressed in Canada.

Poverty Initiatives Across Governments in Canada

Federal government. The Government of Canada has recently released their new

poverty reduction strategy: Opportunity for All - Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy,

with the aim of "reducing poverty and improving the economic well-being of all Canadian

families so that they can have a real and fair chance to succeed" (Employment & Social

Development Canada, 2018, para. 1). Canada, recognizing that poverty is a complex issue that

affects more than three million Canadians, undertook the process of engaging with citizens

across the country around poverty reduction in an attempt to develop the new national poverty

reduction strategy (Employment & Social Development Canada, 2017). Canada's First Poverty

Reduction Strategy is based on three main pillars: dignity, opportunity and inclusion, and

resilience and security (Employment & Social Development Canada, 2018). It also states some

rather significant targets it will attempt to hit as part of the strategy, which include a 20%

reduction of poverty by 2020 and a 50% poverty reduction rate by 2030, a 50% reduction in

chronic homelessness, an end to all drinking water advisories on public systems on reserves by

2021, and the reduction or elimination of housing need for 530,000 households.

Currently, in the Opportunity for All, the federal government narrowly defines poverty

according to income and uses three types of low-income measures that identify people as low-

income (i.e., living in poverty): the low income cut-off, the market basket measure, and the low-

income measure (Employment & Social Development Canada, 2017).

In 2014, single people aged 45-65, single parents, recent immigrants, people with

disabilities, and Indigenous people were identified as more likely be considered low income than

others (Employment & Social Development Canada, 2017).

Provincial governments. Provincial governments are also attempting to address poverty

through the development of provincial poverty strategies. Every Canadian province, with the

exception of British Columbia, has made some sort of commitment to addressing poverty (BC

Poverty Reduction Coalition, 2017). Some provincial governments, such as Saskatchewan, have

developed long-term poverty initiatives (10-year plans), whereas others, like Ontario, are

developing shorter-term poverty initiatives (5-year plans) (Ontario Ministry of Housing, 2015;

Waldner, 2016).

Alberta created a poverty-reduction strategy in 2013 with both short- and long-term

goals; it identified the need to develop such a strategy and dedicated two years doing so with the

understanding that their goals were to eliminate child poverty in 5 years and reduce overall

poverty in 10 years (Alberta Government, 2013). This being said, the province of Alberta does

not have a specific poverty-reduction strategy document; instead, they have dedicated space on

their provincial website to state their actions towards reducing poverty. They focus on current

issues and actions related to poverty, investing $5.1 billion in 2017–18 in programs and

initiatives that will prevent and reduce poverty by "making life more affordable", supporting

wellness and social inclusion, supporting affordable housing and homelessness initiatives, and

enhancing skills, education, and employment opportunities (Alberta Government, 2017). There

have been calls for an official strategy, though, as poverty is still a prominent issue in the

province (Edmonton Social Planning Council, 2018).

Municipal governments. Municipal governments are where the crux of poverty-related

initiatives are occurring, as they are stepping forward to take serious leadership roles in

addressing poverty. Municipalities are doing this for several reasons. As the level of government

closest to their residents, they are most affected by seeing the firsthand effects of poverty (AMO

& OMSSA, 2009). They are also the major funder of cost-share programs that attempt to address

poverty through income support, housing, mental health, and skills training (AMO & OMSSA,

2009; Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2017). Municipalities are also in a unique position

that allows them to build connections with local actors and leaders while still playing a major

role in guiding and shaping other orders of government (i.e., by offering recommendations for

transformational policy) (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2017). Furthermore, addressing

poverty supports significant positive social and economic development in cities (AMO &

OMSSA, 2009; Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2017). As such, municipalities are a

driving force in navigating cross-sectoral issues such as poverty and poverty initiatives

(Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2017); a key to these poverty-related initiatives is their governance structures.

  Governance at the municipal level. Governance helps to answer questions such as "Who has influence?", "Who makes decisions?", and "Who is held accountable for what within an organization, program, partnership, or initiative?" (Gibson, 2011). Therefore, governance concentrates on defining formality, duration, focus, institutional diversity, networks, stability, and drive within an organization or initiative (Donahue, 2004). Most research assumes that governance should be a collaborative process in which collective decision-making—and collective accountability—guides norms and rules associated with the coordinating activities of the organization or initiative (Ansell & Gash, 2007; Blomgren Bingham et al., 2005; Emerson, Nabatchi, & Balogh, 2011; Turnhout & Van der Zouwen, 2010). One definition of governance that is all-encompassing and explanatory of what governance truly does is as follows: "the processes and structures of public policy decision-making and management that engage people constructively across the boundaries of public agencies, levels of government, and/or the public, private, and civic spheres in order to carry out a public purpose that could not otherwise be accomplished" (Emerson et al., 2011, p. 2).

  Governance is also a term used to describe the relationship between power and knowledge (Blomgren Bingham et al., 2005; Eversole, 2011; Masuda et al., 2008; Turnhout & Van der Zouwen, 2010). More specifically, governance describes a "transition from formal, hierarchical authority emanating from bureaucratic centers to informal, negotiated authorities" (Eversole, 2011, p. 55). Therefore, rather than traditional hierarchies of authority and power, governance emphasizes the need to create more horizontal networks to support decision-making. These horizontal networks are often spoken in terms of publics, organizations, businesses, and

governments working together in an attempt to solve complex issues (Blomgren Bingham et al.,

2005; Eversole, 2011; Masuda et al., 2008; Turnhout & Van der Zouwen, 2010). Important to

recognize here is that governance refers to the creation and implementation of engagement

activities that are supported by these horizontal networks (Blomgren Bingham et al., 2005;

Gaventa, 2006; Turnhout & Van der Zouwen, 2010).

EndPovertyEdmonton

EPE is an initiative based on past work done in Edmonton to find innovative solutions to

end poverty and has defined poverty in a way that goes beyond measures of income. Poverty is

defined as when Edmontonians "lack or are denied economic, social, and cultural resources to

have a quality life that sustains and facilitates full and meaningful participation in the

community" (EndPovertyEdmonton, 2016, p. 20). This definition, adapted from the WHO,

acknowledges that poverty is intertwined with social inclusion and the elimination of oppressive

practices that block individuals' abilities to participate (e.g., economically, socially, and

culturally) in society with purpose. In Edmonton, it is estimated that more than 100,000 people

are currently living in poverty, 40,000 of which are children (EndPovertyEdmonton, 2017).

EPE is founded on the work of the 2012-2013 City of Edmonton Steering Committee to

Eliminate Poverty, the Poverty Reduction Strategy of the Alberta Government, and the work of

the United Way Capital Region (EndPovertyEdmonton, 2017). Based on this work, the Mayor's

Task Force to Eliminate Poverty was established in 2014, co-chaired by Mayor Don Iveson and

Bishop Jane Alexander (EndPovertyEdmonton, 2017). This task force included seven working

groups that were each in charge of addressing a key priority around poverty. The task force spent

two years consulting and engaging with Edmontonians to come up with a list of 400

recommendations to end poverty, all informed by evidence (provided by the University of Alberta) and lived experiences of poverty (EndPovertyEdmonton, 2017).

In December of 2016, Edmonton City Council voted to invest in EPE and the creation of a progressive Road Map which evolved into a community action plan to end poverty in Edmonton. Based on the 400 recommendations compiled by the 2014 task force, EPE's Road Map identified 35 priority actions organized under 6 "Game Changers": eliminate racism, livable incomes, increase affordable housing opportunities, accessible and affordable transit, affordable and quality childcare, and improve access to mental health services (EndPovertyEdmonton, 2017). When the Road Map was created, it was decided that the City would take the lead on some of the actions, the EPE secretariat on some, and partnering organizations on others. In 2017, 14 of the Road Map actions were initiated, including establishing EPE as a community entity and the creation of a Community Development Corporation (EndPovertyEdmonton, 2017).

Collective impact. EPE is founded on six guiding principles, rooted in collective impact theory: authenticity, adaptability, sustainability, innovation, shared accountability, and distributed leadership.

Collective impact is a form of collaboration that brings together multiple sectors to solve large, complex problems (Kania & Kramer, 2011). The collective impact model is grounded in five conditions; agenda (everyone is on the same page and follows a shared vision), shared measurement (a shared understanding of how the process will be evaluated), mutually reinforcing activities (an assurance that everyone's actions are supporting the shared vision), continuous communication (open and consistent communication through all channels with all stakeholders), and backbone support (a neutral/independent organization or body of staff that facilitates and drives the project forward) (Kania & Kramer, 2011). Kania and Kramer (2011)

also suggest that collective impact initiatives must have three preconditions for success: influential champions to drive change, an urgency to address complex issues and create change, and resources to support such an effort.

Within the context of collective impact, EPE's governance structure is comprised of five community tables and a Secretariat (paid staff); each table is meant to have representation of a variety of perspectives to eliminate poverty, including those with lived experience. This is based on the collective impact model of collaboration between government, business, non-profits, and other types of organizations (EndPovertyEdmonton, 2017). The five community tables include the following: the Investment Collective, the Indigenous Circle, the Count-Me-In Network, the Stakeholder Forum, and the Stewardship Round Table (SRT) (See Appendix A). The SRT is comprised of 15 members, with representation from partners as well as each of the other community tables (EndPovertyEdmonton, 2017). EPE, following the path of shared governance, intends for the initiative to be collaborative. For that reason, EPE developed a governance structure that included representatives from partners and all other tables at the main leadership table: the SRT. This ensures that decision-making is collective, and a variety of voices, including those experiencing poverty, help to guide norms and rules within EPE. EPE's long-term vision is to eliminate poverty in Edmonton within a generation, and, in the short-term, it hopes to lift 10,000 people out of poverty in 5 years. Their mission— "to convene, coordinate, and broker innovative partnerships, advocate for policy changes, and build the capacity of Edmontonians to take action to end poverty"—is how they plan to accomplish this (EndPovertyEdmonton, 2017).

EPE is currently struggling with how to implement the Stakeholder Forum, which is intended to involve people experiencing poverty in Edmonton in initiative decision-making, into their current governance structure in a meaningful way. Early conceptualizations of the table

suggest it should be comprised of 15-20 Edmontonians either experiencing poverty or working with people experiencing poverty. Engaging with people experiencing poverty, though, can be quite difficult.

Engaging People Experiencing Poverty in Poverty-Related Work

Community engagement is often used to describe involvement in policies, programs, and decision-making processes (Aslin & Brown, 2004; MCMPR, 2006; Seymour, 2001; Wolstenhome, 1995). Community engagement is understood differently by many. The World Health Organization defines community engagement as a "process by which people are enabled to become actively and genuinely involved in defining the issues of concern to them, in making decisions about factors that affect their lives, in formulating and implementing policies, in planning, developing, and delivering services, and in taking action to active change" (1992, p. 1). Others have defined engagement as "communicating with people who affect and are affected by an [organization's] activities" (MCMPR, 2006). Engagement is considered a process in which communities/groups/organizations work collaboratively to address issues that affect community members' wellbeing and is intended to be reciprocal, with partnerships beneficial to everyone involved (Aslin & Brown, 2004; Bacon, 2009; CTSA, 2011; MCMPR, 2006).

Many people view community engagement as a spectrum of involvement. The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) has developed a spectrum of engagement that includes informing, consulting, involving, collaboration, and empowerment. The spectrum suggests informing and empowerment as the lowest and highest levels of engagement, respectively (IAP2, 2007).

Meaningful engagement is understood to be crucial in addressing complex social issues and nurturing sustainable communities (Aslin & Brown, 2004; Bacon, 2009; CTSA, 2011;

MCMPR, 2006; WHO, 1992). It is also important to note that community engagement cannot be

seen as one single event or method; community engagement should have several stages and may

involve iterative and long-term processes (Aslin & Brown, 2004; Bacon, 2009; CTSA, 2011;

MCMPR, 2006; Seymour, 2001; WHO, 1992; Wolstenholme, 1995).

There are many methods to engage community, with some more participatory than

others; therefore, methods are often categorized based on the IAP2 spectrum of engagement.

Most literature focusing on methods of community engagement are practitioner-focused and are

therefore published in grey literature as opposed to academic literature. That being said, some

examples of methods for engaging with community include public notices (inform), community

information and feedback sessions (consult), facilitated discussions and strategy sessions

(involve), advisory tables (collaborate), and citizens juries (empower) (CTSA, 2011; Elton

Consulting, 2003; IAP2, 2007; Tamarack Institute, 2017).

There are many reasons as to why governments/organizations/initiatives may want to

engage with community. Motivations may include professional or project gain; community

engagement can bring credibility to a project, provide an opportunity to satisfy community

expectations, encourage more timely project deadlines, and produce better project outcomes

(Elton Consulting, 2003). Engagement that would satisfy these motivations is often considered

low-end engagement on the spectrum of participation. Such methods of engagement to satisfy

these types of motivations are often considered lower-end levels on the spectrum of participation,

typically informing or consulting (CTSA, 2011; Elton Consulting, 2003; IAP2, 2007). Another

motivation for engaging community is to satisfy moral or ethical concerns. The Clinical and

Transitional Science Awards (2011) states that the rationale for community engagement is

"largely rooted in the recognition that lifestyles, behaviours, and the incidence of illness are all

shaped by social and physical environments…if [for example] health is socially determined, then health issues are best addressed by engaging community partners who can bring their own perspectives and understandings of community life and health issues to a project." (p. 3-4). Further, principles underlying community engagement often include fairness, justice, empowerment, participation, self-determination, collaboration, integrity, mutual respect, communication, and inclusivity and diversity—all of which support the ethical or moral motivations for engaging with communities (Cavaye, 2004; Committee on Community Engagement, 1997; Connor, 2009; CTSA, 2011; Elton Consulting, 2003, Great Lakes Wind Collaborative, 2011; Hindmarsh & Matthews, 2008; MCMPR, 2006; Shalowitz et al., 2009; Wolstenholme, 1995).

Facilitators of meaningful engagement include principles and practices that support and encourage successful engagement activities. These include relationship-building, building trust, collaboration, transparency, and building knowledge of the community (CTSA, 2011; Homer, 2019). Each of these facilitators is crucial to the engagement process and are highly researched. Relationship-building and building trust are crucial to engagement activities as they highlight community support. A lack of trust or relationship can serve as a significant barrier to engagement. They are the foundations of collaborative work, and without taking the time to develop trust and build relationships, collaborative work is not possible (CTSA, 2011; Homer, 2019). Collaboration is important as it streamlines efforts; it minimizes duplication of work among initiatives. Collaboration also suggests a meaningful partnership between initiatives and community; this is critical to addressing social justice issues, such as poverty (CTSA, 2011; Homer, 2019). Transparency is the act of being clear and open about project goals, timelines, expectations, successes, and struggles and is key in not only developing trust but also in

maintaining trust (CTSA, 2011; Homer, 2019). Lastly, building knowledge of the community

which is being engaged is critical to successful engagement. Understanding the community helps

organizations to make decisions around who to engage, what barriers may exist in achieving

engagement (i.e., time, transit, lack of trust, language, etc.), and the time required to develop

relationships (CTSA, 2011; Homer, 2019). Other facilitators noted in the literature as important

include hosting accessible engagement activities, eliminating financial barriers to participation,

sharing power, and supporting capacity building (Homer, 2019).

      Engaging community can be difficult, however, and, if done poorly, can result in a

tokenistic partnership. According to the Cambridge Dictionary (2018), tokenism is defined as

"actions that are the result of pretending to give advantage to those groups in society who are

often treated unfairly, in order to give the appearance of fairness" (para. 1). Being tokenistic or

perpetuating tokenism in community-based partnerships can result in being seen as the

following: stifling or belittling to participants; re-traumatizing for participants; a destruction of

trust among participants, community, and public; a waste of time and resources; and ultimately

results in a significant lack of input into solutions by people who are experiencing the issue in

the first place (Flicker et al., 2007; Ocloo & Matthews, 2016; Quaghebeur, Masschelein &

Nguyen, 2004; Supple et al., 2015).

      The risk of tokenism is not the only concern with community engagement, however.

Some scholars critique engagement as legitimatory and increasingly professionalized (Lee, 2017;

Masuda et al., 2008). In the last decade, governments have turned to public, or community,

engagement as a means of including citizens in public policy and decision-making. Though the

intent is to meaningfully engage citizens, often what emerges is a type of "fake" engagement, in

which the processes and meaning behind engagement are lacking; engagement has become

increasingly "fuzzy" (Lee, 2017, p. 67; Masuda et al., 2008). This is the result of engagement that is oriented towards government policy objectives and institutional behaviours and cultures. Rather than meaningfully engagement citizens and community, what happens is that governments involve them in a process that legitimizes institutional and political processes within governments (Lee, 2017; Masuda et al., 2008). At the same time, engagement is becoming increasingly professionalized. As engagement emerged in the social sector, organizations and institutions began offering training and degree programs, graduating engagement practitioners (Lee, 2017). This too legitimizes engagement as a homogenous process that must occur, rather than a meaningful process, in which the motivations for engaging are to encourage human rights rather than satisfy timelines and receive community approval (Elton Consulting, 2003; Lee, 2017). Of course, this is also somewhat problematic as those who become professionals of public engagement tend to be white, older, highly educated, and female; suggesting a lack of diversity in the professionals engaging diverse groups of people (Lee, 2017).

Though there are struggles and resource implications attached to community engagement, such as cost of supplies (i.e., printing flyers, sending mailouts, printing meeting agendas), cost (and time) associated with hiring a staff person to handle all engagement activities, and potentially the cost of getting community to engage (i.e., bus tickets for travel, childcare, honorarium, etc.), meaningful engagement can be achieved and has significant benefits to an initiative (Aslin & Brown, 2004; Bacon, 2009; CTSA, 2011; MCMPR, 2006). The literature suggests that meaningful engagement generates greater public support, helps to develop a more informed and knowledgeable public, helps to create more efficient uses of financial resources, reduces the risk of social conflict, creates a sense of involvement in and ownership of projects for community, better project and policy outcomes, and acknowledges the experience

community has in working to address an issue, such as poverty or homelessness (Aslin & Brown, 2004; Bacon, 2009; CTSA, 2011; Elton Consulting, 2003; MCMPR, 2006).

Complicating this understanding of community engagement even further is the scholarship of engagement, which, similar to community engagement, is engaged research, typically performed by large institutions such as universities, in or with community (Boyer, 1996; Dempsey, 2010). The earliest and most cited introduction to community-engaged scholarship came in the 1990s by Ernest Boyer and was driven mainly by a decline in public confidence in American universities. Engaged scholarship is often referred to as community-based research (CBR) or community-based participatory research (CBPR) (Boyer, 1996; Holland, Powell, Eng & Drew, 2010). Engaged scholarship usually presents itself as a partnership between communities and universities as they work together to address a problem, such as poverty. Similar to community engagement, the scholarship of engagement should be seen as a process rather than a one-time event and should work to address complex problems. While community engagement is a process in which community is involved to varying degrees, in decision-making, the scholarship of engagement intends to work with community to address areas of research interest, often using methods of co-creation and collaboration (Boyer, 1996; Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995; Dempsey, 2010; Holland, Powell, Eng & Drew, 2010). This is important to note in the context of this study, as I am conducting engaged scholarship on the topic of community engagement, as will be described in further depth in Chapter 3: Methodology.

Though the notion community engagement is becoming more frequent among poverty-related initiatives, there exists a lack of understanding or clarity in what community engagement means within the literature and what it looks like in practice. While there are many community

engagement "guidebooks" and several institutions dedicated to the practice of community

engagement, the professionalization of the practice has led to a tendency to treat community

engagement as homogenous process, meaning they do not always recognize the struggles

practitioners and researchers face related to engaging people experiencing poverty-related

initiatives. Therefore—to clarify the meaning of community engagement in poverty-related

initiatives and to better understand the successes, struggles, and hopes associated with

community engagement—I am conducting engaged scholarship to answer the following

question: "How is community engagement understood by people working in poverty-related

initiatives?".

Chapter 3: Methodology

Description of Methodology

This research used focused ethnography to answer the research question "How is community engagement understood by people working in poverty-related initiatives?" Focused ethnography is a "targeted form of ethnography" that "is led by specific research questions, conducted within a particular context or organization among a small group of people to inform decision-making regarding a distinct problem" (Mayan, 2009, p. 39). Essentially, focused ethnography enables the investigation of specific beliefs and practices of a particular phenomenon as held by people who have experienced it (Magilvy et al., 1987; Morse, 1987). The purpose of focused ethnography is to discover how people from various cultures and experiences integrate discipline-specific beliefs and practices into their lives, to understand the meaning that members of a subculture or group assign to their experiences, and to study the practice of a topic or discipline as a cultural phenomenon (Roper and Shapira, 2000). Data collection strategies typically used in focused ethnography include semi-structured and informal interviews, participant observation, document review, and reflective journals (Higginbottom, Pillay, and Boadu, 2013; Knoblauch, 2005; Mayan, 2009). Along with focused ethnography, this research was conducted based on principles of community engaged scholarship. I began this research by working with EPE on an issue that was of interest to them; in this case, engaging people experiencing poverty in their governance. Community engaged scholarship is engaged research, performed by researchers at large institutions, such as universities, in or with community (Boyer, 1996; Dempsey, 2010). Engaged scholarship is often referred to as CBR or CBPR; it is based on principles of equity, co-creation, collaboration, and reciprocity (Boyer, 1996; Dempsey, 2010; Holland, Powell, Eng & Drew, 2010). EPE, and those involved

(specifically those at the Secretariat, SRT, and Research & Evaluation Advisory group) are very critical, reflective groups. They are among those who are most critical of the process EPE has undertaken to eliminate poverty, and to meaningfully engagement with those experiencing poverty. This, along with the critical reflection from my participants, some of whom had lived/living experience of poverty, helped to ensure my project stayed grounded in the principles of CBPR.

Setting

This research was conducted with poverty-related initiatives across Canada. My supervisor, Dr. Mayan, is deeply involved in poverty reduction research with the City of Edmonton (i.e., EndPovertyEdmonton), and included me in several initial meetings. I also worked closely with EPE secretariat staff and spent the summer of 2018 working with them as a Summer Temporary Employment Program student, as well as much of the 2019 school year on a Mitacs grant. Because of EPE's emphasis on the engagement of individuals with lived experience of poverty, the staff articulated that my research would benefit them significantly. Through EPE and its links with the Tamarack Institute, a learning centre that works to empower changemakers by hosting conferences, communities of practice, and online and in-person training sessions, I was able to connect with several poverty-related initiatives across Canada.

This study had institutional ethical review board approval; I obtained approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board One to conduct this research.

Recruitment, Data Collection and Sampling

With help from EPE Secretariat staff, the Tamarack Institute and Dr. Mayan, I identified people involved in poverty-related initiatives in Edmonton and across Canada. Data collection

for this study involved three strategies: semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document review.

        Semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are conversations between two individuals that follow a loose script but may deviate depending on the situation. They are typically recorded and transcribed for the purpose of data analysis (Berg, 2001). I conducted semi-structured interviews with purposefully sampled participants working in poverty-related initiatives across Canada. Participants recruited in this study were all working in the social sector; they worked in municipal government, non-profits, and/or had lived experience of poverty. They held position such as manager, coordinator, facilitator, or executive directly (i.e., middle management). No more demographic information is provided in this study due to participants' concerns of being identified and in turn, having their initiatives considered unfavourably.

        Participants were recruited through email (see Appendix B for recruitment email). Recruitment emails were sent out to 62 potential participants. Of those 62, 15 people responded and agreed to participate in my study. Therefore, 15 interviews were conducted as part of this study. This was an adequate and appropriate sample; in qualitative research, we seek out individuals that have the most knowledge about the phenomenon. In focused ethnography, data saturation typically dictates the sample size, so the number of participants in a study is not usually predetermined (Higginbottom et al., 2013). This being said, the literature states that focused ethnography uses a smaller sample size than does ethnography, which typically recruits between 25 and 35 participants (Higginbottom et al., 2013; Knoblauch, 2005; Mayan, 2009). The interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes and were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. During the interviews, participants were asked questions such as:

- How did you get involved with this initiative?

- What are the reasons for inclusion or exclusion of people experiencing poverty in poverty-related initiatives?

- How have you involved people living in poverty in your initiative?

- What are the benefits of engaging people experiencing poverty in poverty-related initiatives? (See Appendix C for Interview Guide).

Snowball sampling was also used when participants suggested that I interview other people with experience engaging those living in poverty, in poverty-related initiatives. Conducting purposeful and snowball sampling of stakeholders involved in poverty-related initiatives across Canada allowed for data saturation to be reached.

After participants were recruited by email invitation, they were asked to participate in an hour-long, semi-structured interview, with the potential for a follow-up interview. Before the interview began, participants were asked to read an information sheet about, and sign an informed consent form. This information sheet outlined the topic and purpose of research, the data collection strategies, the concepts of voluntary participation and confidentiality, the manner in which the information would be analyzed and used, the benefits and/or risks involved in participating, and the participant's ability to withdraw from the study should there be any concerns. After participants read the information sheet, they were asked to sign the consent form. For this research, I conducted all of the interviews with participants, and therefore I was the one explaining the study and asking for consent from participants. My supervisor, Dr. Mayan, was also listed on the information sheet and consent form with her contact information available should participants have concerns.

Participant observation. Participant observation is the process by which the researcher participates in a research setting. While doing participant observation, I was an "observer as participant"; "the observer as participant will primarily watch the situation but will also be involved in the activity on a secondary basis" (Mayan, 2009, p. 79). In this case, I did participant observation as I attended associated poverty-related initiative meetings, which were open to the public. The purpose of participant observation is to gain insight into the 'everyday life' of a phenomenon that a researcher may not have access to through other strategies of data collection (Mayan, 2009).

In observing associated meetings, I took field notes that described my "reflections, feelings, ideas, moments of confusion, hunches, [and] interpretations about what is observed" (Mayan, 2009, p. 77). Research suggests that six guiding questions be used to inform a researcher's field notes: "Who is in the group/scene?", "What is happening?", "Where is the group/scene located?", "When does the group meet and interact?", "How is everything connected or interrelated (from the researcher's point of view)?", and "Why does the group operate the way it does?" (Mayan, 2009). I used these questions as a loose guide to help inform my field notes at each meeting.

Document review. Document review is the process of gathering and analyzing documents related to the topic of study (Creswell, 2014; Mayan, 2009). These documents, purposefully sampled by the researcher, can include textbooks, frameworks, reports, products from the media, and program evaluations (Creswell, 2014; Mayan, 2009). My focus for this study was on documents (reports, meeting minutes, etc.) generated by Canadian poverty-related initiatives that relate to the research question, "How is community engagement understood by people working in poverty-related initiatives?" Six documents were reviewed for this study. Of

these six documents, only two are publicly available (Homer, 2019; SPRP, 2017). The other four

documents remain uncited as they are either in draft form or are not for public consumption.

An important note to make here, is that I intentionally did not seek out Indigenous

perspectives in this study. This was very difficult decision to make and took significant thought

and consideration, given that Indigenous people are significantly more likely to experience

poverty than non-Indigenous people (EndPovertyEdmonton, 2017). My biggest concern was that

as a non-Indigenous settler, and without training in Indigenous research methodologies, I would

unintentionally cause harm, not follow protocol, and possibly perpetuate a history of colonialism.

For these reasons, I decided not to purposefully seek out Indigenous perspectives.

Data Analysis

All data collected during this study was analyzed using qualitative content analysis with

the intention of understanding peoples' perceptions of community engagement in poverty-related

initiatives. A qualitative content analysis is the process of identifying, coding, and categorizing

patterns within the data (Creswell, 2014; Mayan, 2009). In this case, I examined sections in the

data and determined and assigned appropriate codes and categories to that data.

More specifically, in a qualitative content analysis, coding can be defined as "the process

of identifying persistent images, words, phrases, concepts, or sounds within the data" (Mayan,

2009, p. 94). When I began analyzing my data, I first read and reread all of it while highlighting

and making notes on the relevant sections of text. Then, I reread the text once again, this time

grouping the highlighted and noted sections into 12 or fewer categories in order to ensure the

data was meaningful, yet manageable (Creswell, 2014; Mayan, 2009). Once the data was

grouped into categories, I looked through each category several times to ensure the data within

each category fit. Finally, I summarized each category and any sub-categories and, with support from my supervisor, judged each category to ensure internal and external homogeneity.

It is important to note that performing a qualitative content analysis is a cyclical, or iterative, process. I changed codes, and categories several times in order to properly reflect the data. I used NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software, to help in this process of analyzing the data.

Knowledge Mobilization

Conducting a CBPR study means that it is very important to consider how I will mobilize the knowledge gained in this study with the many people invested in the research. This includes research participants, EPE, the general public, and those in academia. Therefore, I have been very intentional about how I have, and will continue to share the results of this research. One of the first things I did to share my research with the public while conducting this study was to create and present a "3-minute thesis" elevator pitch. This presentation was three minutes long, in plain language, and explained the essence of my thesis research. It was presented in front of a public crowd of 300 people and was filmed and shared on the University of Alberta website and on YouTube. I have also attended three conferences in which I have discussed my research with those in academia. Along with this thesis document, I have created research briefs; one for my participants and one for EPE that summarize my research, the results, and my conclusions. And lastly, I plan to write two academic articles to be published as a result of this study, each focusing on a different aspect of the results.

Rigour

I ensured this research was rigorous by using criteria formulated by Lincoln and Guba (1985): credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These criteria are used to evaluate the trustworthiness, or rigour, of qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility implies that the results make sense, and that both the data and the participants have been accurately represented within the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In order to ensure my research was credible, I used the strategies of member-checking and prolonged engagement in the research setting (i.e. within EPE). Member-checking is the process of ensuring participants' voices and opinions are reflected accurately, and as their own, rather than as those of the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Transferability is an aspect of trustworthiness that enables the findings of this study to be applied to other settings and situations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As cities begin to recognize the importance of community and civic engagement for understanding and intervening in complex issues and inequities, it is important to understand how this research might prove useful in other settings. This study was conducted on a Canada-wide basis, with people from poverty-related initiatives, and this ensures that the results are applicable to other, similar settings.

Dependability ensures that the study's findings are repeatable, and consistent in conclusions when repeated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In order to ensure dependability, the research process must be 'trackable' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A strategy I used in order to ensure dependability was to provide an "audit trail," which is a method of tracking the researcher's decisions (Mayan, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The audit trail tracks and documents "why, when, and how decisions were made during the research process" (Mayan, 2009, p. 112).

Confirmability addresses the concern of objectivity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Confirmability is used during the data collection and analysis processes to ensure that the findings are logical (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As with dependability, I provided an audit trail.

Finally, in order to ensure rigour in this research, it was important to consider my role as a researcher, and the concept of reflexivity. Reflexivity involves making sure that the research process itself, rather than only the data, is subject to inquiry (Anderson, 2011; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It was crucial that I, as a researcher, was, and am, aware of my role in the research as a learner and co-constructer of the data. For example, because I spent the summer of 2018 and much of 2019 working for EPE and developing relationships with several potential participants in the poverty reduction field across Canada, it was necessary for me to reflect on my role as a researcher-participant, or as an insider-outsider. It was important not only to ensure that my role as a researcher (in addition to my roles as a colleague/co-worker/friend) was recognized, but also to ensure that there was no undue pressure on potential participants to participate in this study. In response to this concern, I made sure potential participants understood my role as the researcher as well as their role as participants within this study. It was therefore critical that I interrogated my biases and continuously questioned how my position affected the data analysis. In order to ensure reflexivity, I kept a reflexive journal, and performed research debriefs with my supervisor.

Chapter 4: Results

This study yielded very interesting results, and they have been categorized to tell a story of how community engagement is currently understood in the context of poverty-related initiatives. The major results from this study have been divided into six categories. Table 2 outlines the major categories and sub-categories, which will be explained in this section.

Table 2

Results Summary: Major Categories and Sub-Categories

Categories	Sub-Categories
What is Engagement?	• Definitions of community engagement • Types of community engagement
Motivations for Engaging	
The Struggles Associated with Community Engagement	• Engaging with diverse groups of people • Risk • Confusion and contradictions
The Systems in Which We Work	• Systems and institutional barriers • Leadership • Tensions around policy and timelines
Facilitators of Meaningful Community Engagement	
Defining Success	• Impacts of community engagement done well • Hopes for the future

What is Engagement?

An understanding of community engagement is dependent on how it is defined, and what types of methods are associated with it. When asked about what community engagement means and looks like to participants, they gave both definitions of engagement and different types of engagement.

Definitions of community engagement. When asked to define community engagement, participants shared a variety of descriptions and definitions of the term. Some participants gave examples of what community engagement looks like to them, while others described its meaning. Interestingly, there were some differing opinions on what engagement means. One participant stated:

> Engagement to me means giving people in a community that can recognize a similar goal or a similar idea, many different avenues to use their strengths and their ambitions, their motivations to contribute to a larger project. So, engagement to me is about finding ways that meet people where they're at and how they want to be involved in whatever somebody happens to be with.

Similarly, another participant described engagement as a two-way street:

> So, it's not them engaging with me, or me engaging with them. It's a partnership in engagement. So that means you have to come to it as a partnership with equals. You have to meet people where they're at. And a lot of engagement has to be around the client's specific needs, first. And what's critical to them right now, and then what's the potential for them sort of mid-to-long term.

Other participants had very different ideas of what engagement means. They believed it is far more one-sided, and more about information gathering rather than about meaningful conversation and participation. This description was offered by one participant: "So, people often think that engagement is about generating information, right, and its true and information it's important information and insight is important. And often we call this here. They're providing us with, they're sharing their wisdom with us." Many participants spoke about the difference between engagement and consultation, and about engagement and information gathering and sharing. It seems that these terms are often used interchangeably, to a point where we now use similar terms to define engagement, consultation and information sharing. Most participants, though, believed that engagement cannot and should not be used in the same context as those different concepts.

One participant discussed their[1] understanding of community engagement as passive versus active engagement:

> I spend a lot of time thinking about passive engagement before there's an active engagement. So active engagement I think is things that we all are pretty clear about. It's a project. It's a strategy. It's events that we want to organize. Whereas passive engagement means a lot of sitting around, a lot of what looks like seemingly doing nothing, drinking coffee with people. It's a lot of discussing everything else that doesn't have to do with what you're supposed to be there doing. And it is not being necessarily accepted into a community. It's getting to a place where they're comfortable enough to slightly change the community dynamics to involve you as a member.

Others described "passive engagement" as the relationship-building that must occur before community engagement begins. In fact, every participant noted the importance of building both relationships and trust before beginning to engage with community.

Interestingly, one participant voiced their opinion that we tend to engage with systems rather than people. By this, they meant that we engage with people within systems, rather than with the people themselves. For example, people experiencing poverty who are often engaged in poverty efforts are clients at organizations (i.e. within systems and institutions). Similarly, people are most often engaged on issues of importance within larger systems and within larger institutions, rather than on issues that are important to the people experiencing poverty. Also noteworthy was that every participant discussed capacity-building as an inherent part of community engagement, that community engagement was seen as a process rather than a one-time event, and that while community engagement often looks like information sharing, this should not be its sole purpose.

---

[1] Participants from this study will be listed as gender-neutral; the pronouns "they/them" will be used in place of "he/him" and "she/her."

Types of community engagement. In talking about what community engagement means and looks like, participants also began describing different levels of engagement and specific methods of engagement. Many participants referenced the International Association for Public Participant (IAP2) spectrum of engagement (Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, Empower) as well as other scales and ladders to explain the levels of engagement. One participant referred to a scale they use, from least engaged to most engaged: "Community relations, community engagement, and then community development."

Several methods of engagement were listed as well, including action labs, community and/or "lived experience" advisory tables, community organizing, community animators, and cultural brokering.

An interesting finding here is that my document review produced no concrete definitions of what community engagement means or looks like, and only two documents referenced some sort of engagement spectrum, both modified versions of the IAP2 spectrum of engagement.

Motivations for Engaging

This section brings together all the participants' comments around why community engagement does and should occur; it is focused on reasons and motivations for engaging.

While discussing the motivations for engaging people in poverty-related initiatives, many participants spoke about the importance of peoples' and organizations' motivations. The general consensus around this was that engagement will look different depending on the various motivations to engage. Participants spoke about how engagement will be different if a person is looking for validation of something already created within the organization, in comparison to an organization engaging community and people experiencing poverty for the purposes of co-creation. One participant explained why it is important to understand motivations for engaging

community when they shared a comment made by a client that they were trying to engage: "Very curious. I've lived in the [location] for years now and I'm very unclear whether I'm here to study or you're inviting me, so I am studied. Am I the object of study?"

Interestingly, one participant also touched on their motivations for doing this work:

The more that I've done this, these types of work, and sometimes it feels like most of my life, the more I'm asked why do you do it? And it becomes a more difficult question to answer. I actually don't know anymore where my motivations come from. I don't know why. I don't know exactly what I get. And that becomes, in some ways, less clear every day and every year. Oddly enough, I'm kind of okay with that because other parts coming to clear focus, like it becomes very clear why we ought to-- there's many fronts to work on. The one that I find I'm always drawn on is [topic related to poverty] and engagement. And I don't know why that speaks to me, but it has and people need-- whether they recognize it or not, they need support from communities.

Participants also discussed at length the importance of clearly stating the motivations for engagement up front, for those with whom they engaged:

I think part of it is motivations, which is important. A lot of people I've spoken to have talked about that, the idea of, yeah, what are your motivations? What are your reasons for engaging? And those have to be crystal clear to you as well as your audience, for sure.

Another participant shared their initiative's motivations for engagement with people experiencing poverty:

We work with the [lived experience] committee to really provide the advocacy and advice from those who were living it [poverty] day-to-day on how to enhance those programs and projects to make them better suited for those who were living it and coming to our doors to access those services.

As participants continued to discuss motivations, it became evident that there are two distinct motivations for community engagement. The first, as discussed above, focuses on how engagement is helpful for projects (i.e. in a professional capacity), while the second concerns the moral or human rights argument.

The moral, or human rights argument about individuals' right to be involved in the decisions that impact their lives, is expressed in the following quote: "It's also called participatory democracy, right. Where it is one of the kinds of the fundamental principles of equity that people who are impacted by issues should be part of the solution seeking process." They went on to express that one of the fundamental human rights in Canada is their democratic right; they, and other participants, believe it is a moral imperative that those experiencing poverty are involved in the actions to address poverty. Participants spoke about the saying "nothing about us without us," and talked about striving for equity and equal representation in conversations and engagement efforts around poverty reduction. They also spoke about the quality of work and effort that comes from meaningful engagement, like the rich history and stories gained, the quality of advice given, and the relationships built. One participant stated:

> Listen. How can we work better with you to make sure the projects we are doing, and you want to be part of are things that connect to your passion and to your strengths? And what we realized is if we start with people's passions and strengths instead of trying to perhaps start with a project and fit people into it, we're going to have a much better result on the outcome. We're going to have a lot more engagement and working alongside those who are living with the challenges of poverty.

Only half of the documents from my document review process discussed motivations for engaging people experiencing poverty in poverty reduction efforts. Of these documents, one focused solely on the ethical argument, stating the importance of allowing people to be engaged in decisions that could affect their lives, while the others focused on both the importance of engaging community to benefit the organizations' work and on the ethical argument.

The Struggles Associated with Community Engagement

Participants identified several struggles associated with engaging people in poverty-related initiatives. These struggles have been broken up into sub-categories and will be discussed below.

Engaging with diverse groups of people. One question I asked participants was about how they are able to meaningfully engage such diverse groups of people in discussions around poverty reduction. This question came out of comments made by a couple of the first participants I interviewed:

> People tend to think that because they are oppressed or a victim, they tend not to victimize, but that's completely untrue. Just because you're a victim does not mean you don't victimize, so because you're in poverty it does not mean you are not a racist or discriminatory, you're prejudiced or sexist, it does, or it doesn't. And so even when you consider the people in poverty, they are not equal. And so that discomfort still carries to the table. Poverty does not make us all equal. So, it becomes hard to engage that many diverse people with diverse backgrounds and experiences.

Another participant mentioned the need to "humanize" poverty: "We need to start humanizing poverty...who are people in poverty? We need to make them relatable. By humanizing poverty, hopefully we can encourage decision-makers to involve people that will be affected by their decisions, in the process." Based on these comments, I asked participants for their thoughts and experiences on engaging diverse groups of people experiencing poverty.

Most participants reflected on this comment and agreed that it can be very difficult to meaningfully engage diverse groups of people around an issue as complex as poverty. But most participants highlighted the importance of building relationships and building trust. One participant noted that empathy and understanding can go a long way in supporting relationship-building.

Participants also discussed the importance of allowing people to self-identify areas of interest on which to work:

I think it's very important, especially for those who are living or have lived experience of poverty who want to support that voice to be heard by the right people, especially decision-makers and leaders in our community, to have those projects that are open and inclusive and that don't pigeonhole people and say, "Well, if you're in poverty you must fit this mold." I think because you're very right in that there's such a range and many times poverty is painted-- everyone who's living in poverty is painted with the same brush, as in, "Well, you must care about this. You must care about this. You must care about this." Well, not necessarily. There's a range of ethnicities, a range of gender, and a range of different people and experiences that come forth. And so, to have inclusive projects that people from all walks of life can get behind, that is extremely important.

Similarly, the document review also revealed that allowing people to self-select areas of interest is important to engage diverse groups of people. One document emphasized the need to "create conversations that matter to people."

Recognizing that some participants were discussing people with "lived" experience of poverty while others used "living" experience and a third group used "lived/living," I also asked participants if, why, and how they distinguished between engaging people currently experiencing poverty and those who had previous experiences of poverty. One participant stated:

I think some people use lived experience of poverty because it's kind of inclusive because lived experience can mean you had an experience and you're out of it now. And you can still share your experience, or a lived experience can mean you're actually living. Sometimes I mean, if I want to reflect current existing conditions, I would just say people struggling with low income or people struggling with poverty because they are struggling right now. Who knows they might not be tomorrow. Right. So, I prefer to use to use this. But if it's someone who wants to share his or her experience of poverty from way back. So, I would say lived experience of poverty.

Another participant brought up an interesting point:

One thing, from my perspective, is that one of the things that I've come across over the years, and certainly in my concentration, in my role now, is that people that are housed are in a far better situation to be able to address the multiple other issues that they have in

their complex challenges. So, conversations with people that are housed are much different than conversations with people that are not housed. And you can just see it markedly. Their ability to deal with the other one, two, three, 30 things that are complex needs that they have, they're in a far better, healthier position to actually address those, if they're in a housed situation. That has become abundantly clear to me. So, that's got to be a priority around getting people into an engagement mode where they have safety and security around housing, and then, okay, we got that.

Another struggle associated with engaging diverse groups of people that many participants touched on is recruiting people to engage in efforts to reduce poverty. Participants generally agreed that how people are recruited for engagement activities can be problematic. One participant highlighted this struggle eloquently:

I don't think it (exclusion) is intentional... I think it's just that the way in which individuals are recruited and the comfort level. So, it's not like it's done in malice…not in a negative way but it's privilege...so what happens is that I think by design maybe just by being like you know "we're going to make this open call and you know whoever shows up we're going to pick our recruits and we're going to do it." But the open call is unattractive to certain members of our society, right? Who would read it and think, "that doesn't represent me?"

Another participant discussed the importance of language when recruiting people:

We've got to be really, really mindful about language, right? And so even when we're not trying to be exclusive, sometimes language gets in the way. So, you got to really be mindful of the communication, your communication style, what you're saying, and how is it being -- it's one thing to say it, it's another thing to how it's received. So, there's a saying around, in the [our] space, is that there's nothing for us without us, right? So, the reality is, is doing all these things for us, you think you're being inclusive. But if you're not speaking to me about what the needs are and how they impact me and what my thoughts are, then you're actually not inclusive at all. You're being exclusive because you haven't engaged me. That's an important piece, but I would say language can create exclusion, even without intent. Now, there's no perfect way to get to that, though, because it's about conversations.

Several participants also listed representation, the design of an engagement activity, leadership, and selection criteria as issues related to recruitment and community engagement.

Document review results suggested that recruitment strategies must be diverse in order to appeal to and be accessible for a wide variety of people. One document also emphasized the importance of ensuring recruitment processes are accessible. For example, if interviews are part of the process to participate on a lived experience advisory table, then the people holding those interviews need to reflect the experience that applicants have, and to recognize that the interview process can be intimidating. Several documents emphasized the need to have a wide variety of representation in any engagement effort.

One issue I have been grappling with as I attempt to better understand community engagement and how to engage diverse groups of people meaningfully, is who is responsible for ensuring that people experiencing poverty are engaged in actions targeted to reduce poverty. Accordingly, I asked each participant who they felt is, or should be, responsible for ensuring that community engagement occurs. There were a wide variety of answers, including municipal government, policy makers (at all levels of government), the non-profit sector, individual organizations, general citizens (civic duty), systems and institutions (like governments, universities, the health sector, etc.), community leaders, non-profit leaders, government leaders, poverty reduction initiatives, community residents, front line workers, and front line service providing agencies.

It is interesting to note that of those who responded to the question (three participants were unsure of where responsibility should lie), everyone said it was a joint responsibility, and each participant listed at least two of the above as responsible for ensuring that engagement occurs and is done well.

Risk. The idea of risk was one of the biggest concerns that participants associated with

community engagement. Participants felt that there can be significant risk in the time and money

invested in community engagement efforts, even assuming that they will be successful. A related

point is that it can sometimes be a risk to seek funding for community engagement activities.

One participant provided a great example:

> So, a classic example that I use in health promotion is you pull people together and you
> say, "Okay, we have this money for diabetes prevention. Do you want to learn about a
> diet? Do you want to learn about exercise?" But actually, it's like, "Actually, we want to
> clean it up. It's so dirty around here. There's so much garbage. There's needles." And then
> you're like, "Oh well, we don't fund that. Can we just talk about diabetes, please?"

Several participants also spoke of the risks of exploitation. There were several concerns

around exploiting people experiencing poverty, rather than meaningfully engaging them in

poverty reduction efforts. One participant shared their main concern:

> Honestly what we most worried about that was each time we invite a community member
> to share the story is actually tapping into their pain and that after they shared a story, we
> might be the only one still with them to still keep them going. And there's no real
> solutions to their lives so they are offering their story for the sake of other change not to
> themselves. So, you can imagine, there's a bit of ethical dilemma and a moral dilemma.

Another participant shared their concern around contribution versus exploitation: "I

always say "If I can't pay you then I don't want to hear your idea"…if we expect people to

contribute to the same extent we contribute without recognizing their time, effort, and expertise,

then isn't it just exploitation?" Similarly, participants raised concerns around the burden of

participation. One participant explained the struggle for people experiencing poverty to engage

with organizations and initiations:

> From the perspective of those who are vulnerable and marginalized people living in
> poverty…the first one is just, its capacity in terms of time and effort. Right. So, for the
> working poor they have two to three jobs and they're just managing their day to day. I
> mean who would like to have to go to an engagement event on top of that, right? On top

of everything for those who don't speak English very well. So, there are a lot of barriers that that's there for them not to participate.

Participants noted that it can be a risk to overburden people experiencing poverty by not respecting their lack of capacity, their limited time, their income realities, and their day-to-day obligations.

The other major concern raised by all participants was the risk of tokenism. There was a general consensus among participants that tokenism is rarely, if ever, intentional. Participants felt that tokenism typically happens because of institutional and systemic barriers, and because of a general lack of understanding of community engagement. One participant shared their experience with tokenism:

> And where tokenism can fall into-- and again, personally, I don't believe that tokenism is people's intent. Maybe on the rare occasion. But from my experience it's always been when people are invited, especially the people with lived experience, are invited to committee tables, to advisory committees, it's always with the best of intents. Where it turns into tokenism is when, yes, they've been invited, but it's not a mutual relationship. It's still pretty much, "I'm the professional. I will ultimately make the decisions. I will ultimately say what needs to be said and you're just here to sort of have your voice. I'm going to placate you and make you feel like your voice has kind of been heard." And so, yeah. So, there's that difference between tokenism and placation. But, for me, again, it's not about the intent. Everyone has the right intent when people with lived experience are invited to committees and tables. And I think how to combat that is to better understand how we, as professionals, have to change our behaviors to better engage and interact with those who are living with some of the challenges of poverty.

It is important to note that though all participants discussed the risk of tokenism, everyone emphasized that it is better to try and meaningfully engage community and fail, than to not try at all. Participants felt that trying to engage with community, whether it is perfect or not, shows intent and shows meaning; it suggests a desire to, and a recognition of the importance of including those experiencing poverty in poverty-related initiatives.

Confusions and contradictions. While interviewing participants, there seemed to be a general lack of clarity regarding community engagement. Participants felt that there was no clear path or guide showing them how to achieve engagement and how to make sure it is done well. What was clear however, is that community engagement is not a one-size-fits-all process; it is very context-dependent. This confusion, or lack of clarity, was reflected in my participant observations. I observed a lot of confusion around what community engagement should look like in the context of poverty reduction; there were many questions, including: "Should it be an advisory table?", "A few one-off engagement sessions?", "Should it focus on capacity building or advocacy?" Poverty initiatives across Canada are all trying to engage community meaningfully, but they are all doing it differently. This diversity of approach makes it difficult to know where to start and which model, if any, to follow.

The documents I reviewed also showed signs of confusion. All documents recognized the general lack of clarity surrounding the concept of community engagement. One document even stated: "No doubt you are aware of the difficulties and frustrations that can arise [when discussing engagement]."

The Systems in Which We Work (Current Context)

A recurring category in the data was the state of our current context, specifically the systems and institutions within which we work. Digging deeper, three main sub-categories were identified from this larger category: systems and institutional barriers, leadership, and tensions around policy and timelines.

Systems and institutional barriers. Throughout their interviews, participants often spoke about how meaningful engagement cannot occur within our current systems and institutions. One participant articulated this well:

> From the system and institutions perspective, it's really…I would say the limited capacity to engage people with lived experience. And when I say capacity, it starts from policy. Engagement policy itself, doesn't lend itself to the participation of vulnerable and marginalized groups…The system already kind of excludes that.

Participants felt that systems are designed for information-sharing and information-gathering, but not for community engagement. The ways in which engagement can occur within our current systems are often very traditional and Western, meaning it doesn't work for most people experiencing poverty. A participant reflected on this when they said:

> I think most of us in the sector of looking at ending poverty are addressing social issues in which we tend to create structures and processes that perpetuate old ways. And even when we tweaked it a little bit because, we tweaked it, it is not guided by the people. We're still perpetuating elements of the conventional ways. And so, it's such an old concept to have people come join us to represent their community. Why can't those of us or those who live in poverty be supported to animate their ideas and problem solve together and let them directly take control over the solutions rather than them coming to be on a committee or at a special consultation process to represent their community?

Participants also spoke significantly about how the non-profit sector is set up in a way that encourages competition and duplication of effort, rather than collaboration. Non-profit organizations are continuously competing for the same pot of funding to do their work; meanwhile, funding is designed to support only the "in" projects, which often excludes large populations of people. There can also be quite strict expectations around funding and grant money. Often, community engagement is too removed from the regular funding models and expectations so that it is actively discouraged. One participant was concerned about the non-profit sectors' willingness to receive funding and begin projects on a reactive basis, without taking the time to ensure the practice is evidence informed. They stated:

> I think part of the problem right now is just that it's kind of an aim, ready, fire, right? Well, fire, ready, aim, actually. Where they say, "We've got this money. Let's go and get this work done." So, the agencies apply for the funds through a grant, then they start to do the work, and they start to report outcomes, and off you go. … But I think the sector has

to say, "You know what…we feel that the following work needs to be done to assess what really is the priority for this population." And so, the sector has a responsibility to say, "We're not going to accept money and continue to do the same thing that ten of us are doing with the same outcomes which we really don't understand are linked to the population or not." So, we've got to stop that and engage with the funder.

Other participants also discussed how turnover rates are often high in many institutions, including government and large universities, as people move into different positions within their institution. With high turnover, there is no opportunity to build and maintain trust and relationships with people through an engagement process. Another issue brought up by several participants was how lived experience of poverty is often not valued in the same way as professional and educational experience. It is not yet common practice to pay people with lived experience of poverty for their participation and expertise. Some organizations provide honorariums, but even then, it is often a gift card and is not at a living wage level. The current system expects people experiencing poverty to volunteer their participation in efforts to reduce poverty, while everyone else is paid for their work.

Current systems also rely on organizations who lack the capacity to engage people experiencing poverty in their work. This is a significant struggle for many organizations. One participant stated: "I mean, obviously, organizationally it's like, A, do you have the resources? B, do you have the capacity to even design a process that's inclusive?" Participants listed funding, time, and effort as the three biggest barriers for organizations trying to engage people experiencing poverty in their work; all three barriers are influenced by the systems in which we work.

Another participant raised the fact that our current systems are designed in a way that does not allow for people and community to engage with organizations and institutions; it only allows for organizations and institutions to engage with people and communities. This means

that people in poverty are often powerless, and are required to wait for someone to engage them

in order for their perspectives to be heard. And once people are engaged, their ways of sharing

knowledge, often through storytelling and sharing experiences, are neither valued nor

understood. Quantifiable data is valued much more highly, a fact which is problematic for those

who want and need to share their stories.

Sometimes, even the smallest of institutional barriers can affect community engagement,

as described by this participant:

> I spent months working with our clients to create a community space charter, a set of
> space agreements. Once we agreed upon and finalized the charter, clients took time to
> design, write out, and decorate the charter on large paper to display on the walls. That
> charter still isn't on our walls. It has been more than six months. We ran into institutional
> barriers – we can't have things hung on the wall. And then we talked about a different
> method of hanging on the wall, like a plaque to adhere by the walls, but how do we pay
> for that?

One participant in particular speculated about why our current systems are problematic,

and came up with this thought:

> My theory of systems is that systems are not inclusive; they keep people from them.
> Engagement doesn't work, but systems end up in that state because they were historically
> designed by people who didn't experience the challenges, we don't even have talk about
> marginalized people, we can just talk about people who are living today. You know they
> tend to have this historical sense to them. They tend to be reactionary and conservative
> just in general. And systems are self-replicating and self-reinforcing. … But I think
> actually it's just these systems…were designed in a time and a place that didn't anticipate
> a lot of the things that we're dealing with now and of course didn't anticipate or consider
> vulnerable people because vulnerable people were considered a problem.

This participant was the only one to reflect on how and why the system was created in a

way that is not the best to encourage meaningful engagement. While discussing this, they

touched on a few concepts, specifically inclusivity and power dynamics; both of which were

brought up by participants as they shared facilitators of meaningful engagement.

Leadership. Participants all reflected on the importance of leadership in poverty-related work, and specifically, its impact on community engagement. Participants spoke about the importance of organizational leadership not only in supporting community engagement efforts, but also in actively seeking out opportunities for community engagement:

> Really, it's important for non-profit leaders, be it high level executives, executive directors, or managers to seek out and provide an opportunity for that voice to be heard. Because there is an option for that voice to be heard in every realm of the non-profit world. It doesn't necessarily have to be about poverty.

In the context of leadership, there was also a lot of conversation about risk, and leaders being willing to take risks. Often, community engagement comes with risk aversion, but it is critical that leadership be ready to try new things. One participant shared their thoughts:

> Organizational leadership is crucial…leaders must be willing to support engagement and follow through, they must be willing to support and accept failure, struggles, and trying new things. True innovation comes with risk…without risk, where does change come from? Leaders have to understand the importance of shifting ownership from the organization or agency to the clients and community.

Many participants also shared their experiences, both positive and negative, with leadership and its impact on engagement efforts. The value of a good leader who recognizes the importance of community engagement was specifically noted. Participants spoke of being given dedicated time to focus on engagement efforts, and of being given resources and funds to support those efforts. One participant stated that at this point in their life and career, they are specifically seeking out positions in organizations with supportive leaders who share their values. In contrast, some participants shared issues with leaders who neither support, nor value community engagement. In some cases, no funds or staff time are dedicated to community engagement, meaning it is done on the employee's own time, and in other cases, community engagement just isn't done at all.

This lack of leadership support was a major category that came out of my observations. My observations have shown how leadership is crucial to meaningful community engagement. When leadership does not value engagement, it is not done; resources and staff time aren't dedicated to engagement efforts, and unfortunately, trust is lost in the community. My observations indicated that internal initiative leadership did not understand or value the need for including people experiencing poverty. Because of that, even as staff attempted to do their work, anything involving community engagement was held up by leadership, and shelved for months at a time. The few people engaged who have experienced poverty are overburdened, and unfortunately, work on poverty reduction has gone forward without validation from the community.

The other piece of leadership and its impact on community engagement came out both in my observations and in my interviews. The ethical dilemma is significant for staff working in an organization that does not value or partake in community engagement activities. One participant stated: "Leadership is so important because let me tell you, not being allowed to engage the community is so awful…it's making me totally question my ethics and my morals…it's eroding my confidence." When values among staff members and leadership do not align, and staff are not allowed to do work that, in their minds, is ethical, problems arise. Many participants spoke of the ethical dilemma of working for an organization that does not fit with their ethics, beliefs, and values. I observed decreases in morale, increases in workplace tensions, and significant crises as staff attempted to juggle their work with their personal beliefs.

It is clear that leadership has major implications when it comes to community engagement, but one participant brought up a really interesting point about our expectations of leadership:

> So, what I see is that a lot of organizations are funding grants and grant like money. And so that money is operationally focused. So, it's not about building your management capacity or your leadership capacity. It's about getting on the street and getting results. … So, leadership at this level is grossly underfunded and significantly not supported in terms of professional development. … a lot of the leadership is focused on day-to-day management rather than creating overarching strategic plans to really look at the services that you're providing. … There's just no bandwidth for those people to engage the kind of people that could help them do some critical thinking in that area. And so, they're busy putting out little fires and reporting and getting budgets together and applying for yet another grant and this kind of money because that's their world. … And so, when you're in that survival mode all the time, I could understand how employees are saying, "Well there's just no real…the leadership is so focused on trying to feed families that there's no moral thinking. There's no challenging the status quo. If anything, I see in this sector, the leadership is really overwhelmed.

This participant was the only one to bring up the idea that perhaps people in leadership positions require development and training in order to support community engagement practices.

Tensions around policy and timelines. Timelines were a significant tension revealed when participants discussed systemic and institutional barriers. Specifically, participants struggled with engaging community in efforts to reduce poverty that may never help them. Because it takes so long for policy change to occur, many people experiencing poverty who are engaged in and support efforts to reduce poverty will never be impacted by those changes. One participant outlined this tension:

> Now the risk of engaging people with experience is of course because poverty and the issues relating to poverty often requires long term solutions. So, the issues and the problems that they share with you will not have immediate solutions. Right. So, and so it runs it runs the risk of people feeling manipulated to a certain extent or used. And so, that's a risk.

With the recognition that this tension is a major concern, participants reflected on the need to address the tension fully and clearly, from the beginning of engagement. This can help minimize any misunderstandings or loss of trust. Participants also highlighted the need to

celebrate the small wins along the way, in order to keep momentum going and to help everyone

recognize that change is happening, even if it is incremental. One participant explained this well

by saying:

> I think maybe some of them [people experiencing poverty on our poverty advisory table] do feel that if we just advocate loud enough, if we just advocate strong enough, everything will be changed, and tomorrow will be a better day. I think that's a perspective that is not necessarily going to change anytime soon. Because for, I mean, anybody who's living it, the experience, it can be quite traumatizing. Especially if there's been other traumas from different pieces of your life, especially from childhood. Living on such a meager income, especially in the depths of poverty or struggling every single day financially is such a stressful burden. And to put any more amount of energy or time into advocating for something that you're not going to see the results of can be very demoralizing if you're already at the end of your rope. To even think about having to put any more effort and time into something that might not necessarily have results can be very demoralizing unless there is success built into the process. And so, you also have to build in, and of course, with the caveat of having trusting relationships, you have to build in that expectation that if we're taking this road, what is the first step that I know tomorrow I can succeed and achieve? The small successes matter.

Facilitators and Methods of Meaningful Community Engagement

It is important to recognize that even with all of the struggles associated with engagement

and systemic and institutional barriers to engagement, good work is still happening. This

category highlights participants' descriptions of facilitators of meaningful community

engagement and methods of engagement that work well.

There are several facilitators of meaningful community engagement. These facilitators

include principles and practices that facilitate successful engagement. Several of these principles

and practices that were reiterated throughout the interviews include collaboration, relationships,

trust, communication, capacity (human, financial, and time), and empathy. One participant

stated: "It's so important to have trusting relationships because you can speak openly about

issues and challenges that come up." Another reflected on the capacity needed to engage people

meaningfully; significant time and money must be dedicated to engagement efforts to see

success. Community ownership and reciprocity are two other principles that came up often

during interviews.

Document review provided several principles of meaningful engagement as well. Some,

like trust, empathy, and understanding, overlapped with participants' beliefs. Others, such as

willingness to learn, recognition that everyone's knowledge, skills, and experiences are valuable,

and conflict resolution are principles that were not addressed in interviews.

Along with sharing several principles that participants followed, they also shared several

practices that encourage meaningful engagement. Multiple participants suggested that

environment, specifically a comfortable environment, was critical in facilitating meaningful

community engagement. A comfortable environment can be created by sharing food, using a

location that is safe and accessible for everyone, and preparing or training people to better

understand how to engage in poverty reduction efforts. Capacity building and training

opportunities are crucial in building trust, comfort, and a sense of safety among people being

engaged. One participant shared their thoughts on what this looked like: "Have interpreters, food,

facilitators – ones that look like the population you are engaging – make any events or activities

family friendly, and have welcoming events…like the saying, 'break bread to make peace'."

Another participant stated: "Key things to consider when doing engagement are reciprocity,

honorariums, language, access through informal leaders, trust, food, and respect." Honorariums

were a major topic of conversation among participants. Many felt it was unethical and frankly,

unacceptable to expect people experiencing poverty to volunteer their time to support efforts to

reduce poverty while no one else is expected to volunteer. Another practice many participants

brought up was that of providing childcare for engagement activities that are not family friendly. Document review confirmed all of the practices participants listed.

The other practice many participants discussed as critical to meaningful engagement was that of evaluation. Evaluation is very important and helps to determine if community engagement is meaningful or if it is becoming tokenistic. Several participants highlighted the importance of participatory evaluation, to ensure transparency and understanding within the organization and in the community. One participant shared their experience with evaluation related to community engagement:

> One thing we didn't talk about was evaluation. So, the [lived experience advisory table] did a one-year evaluation of themselves, and they actually created themselves. They used an evaluation process called empowerment evaluation, which effectively articulates that members have the power of identifying but also determining what their areas that they want to focus on are. So, we went through both a self-evaluation and a group evaluation with that framework in mind. I think what the group learned about that empowerment evaluation is there are some issues within our group, but it's within our power to address those issues, which is great, right? So, it's not sort of like, "Well, the setting is to change how we have to do this" kind of stuff. It was like, "No. We're the cause as well as the result of these issues. And how are we going to think about things and how can the way that we do things take these challenges into consideration as we move forward.

Throughout the interviews, evaluation seemed to be discussed on two levels: whether or not community engagement was helping the organizations' efforts to reduce poverty, and whether or not community engagement was allowing people experiencing poverty to build capacity, share their experience, and feel heard. Another participant shared the importance of evaluation in their work; "I do think you always have to build in a mechanism to evaluate, "Does that person who's representing people at the table feel heard? Because if people don't hear it themselves then sometimes that knowledge kind of gets moved away."

In my observations, I also noted the importance of evaluation. It is very important to be not only formally evaluating community engagement processes, but also to be constantly

critically reflecting on your process and experience to ensure that engagement is meaningful rather than tokenistic. Reflective questions include: "Are we missing any voices?", "What are our motivations for engaging this group of people?", "Are there different ways to engage this group more meaningfully?", "Are the comments/reflections/suggestions/criticisms made by people we are engaging with being heard?", and "Are their comments/reflections/suggestions /criticisms being acted upon?" My observations led me to believe that it is very easy to either forget or undervalue the practice of evaluation related to community engagement efforts.

Document review revealed that evaluation is critical to the development, implementation, and sustainability of community engagement efforts. Evaluation should be participatory in nature, and should be transparent in its purpose, methods, results, and recommendations.

Along with sharing principles and practices that encourage meaningful engagement, participants also shared some methods of engagement that have worked for them. These include methods such as cultural brokering, self-organizing, ethnographic research and data collection, community animators, social media videos, letter writing campaigns, face to face conversations, and intercept interviews. These are all methods with which participants have had success in the past. One participant also suggested that methods should always follow the rule "go where the people are." Generally, participants believed that the most effective methods of community engagement were those that are strength-based, trauma-informed, and focused on capacity-building. My document review process shared similar results to results from interviews in terms of methods of engagement, though one document also suggested the peer leaders' approach as a successful method of meaningful engagement.

The overall consensus was that community engagement efforts related to poverty reduction must be participatory in nature, from the design process through implementation, and all the way to the reporting and recommendation phase.

Defining Success

This category focuses on the impacts of meaningful community engagement, and outlines what participants hope to see in the future.

Impacts of community engagement done well. Participants spent some time sharing how successful community engagement impacts community, people, and poverty reduction efforts throughout their interviews. Some participants shared stories and examples of how community engagement has had an impact, whereas others described specific feelings and outcomes. One participant shared their take on the impact of community engagement:

> So really when you engage people so of course you have you know their wisdom is shared with you. But it also builds their capacity. People feel good when they're able to express-- to articulate their views and someone who is actually listening to them. I mean that's a natural human yearning, isn't it, when you feel that you're being listened to. I mean you feel good after that. But the more important thing is that it actually develops trust. Someone listens to me. I was treated really well. They understand where I'm coming from. And I felt really supported when I was out there in a conversation. And so, and especially if that conversation is not a one-shot conversation that there's more coming or there's some kind of follow up people really felt. Trusting and trusted. And isn't that the most wonderful outcome for being engaged?

Other participants used words such as "pride," "reciprocity," "advocacy," "policy change," "resilience," "co-creation," "trust," and "relationships." And on an even larger scale, community engagement can build capacity, foster a sense of empowerment, improve lives, and in some cases, create systems-change. Another participant shared an example to showcase the impact of community engagement:

> I think in terms of the group themselves…what's been really valuable as I see it three years later is the group is able to work with each other in ways that they weren't able to

work together three years ago. There is an interconnectedness there now that, I think, will be a part of their lives and maybe even ours for a long time to come, and I think that there's power and value in that. We're creating relationships that bring people together rather than-- and in a positive way. We're bringing people together to talk about their experience to help inform better policy decisions moving forward. So, I think, there's power in that. And people have now had experience with what that feels like in the context of success which can also be a driver when they go back into the community and they're no longer a part of the [advisory table]. … And there's also pride. Every time I see the [advisory table] they're so excited to say like, "I totally became a part of this group." I speak at these events. There's one older gentleman…[he] wasn't exposed to people, like [he] kept to himself. He uses the word recluse; "I just stay home and was very isolated. Then I had a random opportunity to apply to the [advisory table]. And here I am, and I see myself as an advocate now." So, I think people had a really transformational experience as well, which is also amazing in terms of the positive impact that the group has on individual members as well outside of the context of the work that we're doing.

This participant highlighted the fact that one of the people experiencing poverty they engaged in their poverty reduction work felt pride, developed a sense of community ownership, and built long-lasting relationships. They suggested this was the best possible outcome of engaging someone experiencing poverty in their work.

Similarly, another participant shared their opinion on the impacts of community engagement, highlighting both impacts to poverty reduction efforts and to community:

So, I mean, I just do think it does lead to better programming. My background's in [a poverty related field], so it's basically a philosophy or value that participation leads to better programs. So yeah, do I think that there's benefits to it? Absolutely. It should it be done, yeah. Lived experience is so valuable. And there is an empowerment process when you do get people to speak to their own issues and speak to their benefits and speak to their strengths. I mean, not only do we learn something for better programs, but then at the same time, the community's capacity is built to voice their thoughts, to voice their opinion, which then translates to other social action, right?

Participants were very clear on the impacts of community engagement. Interestingly, only two participants mentioned community and organizational buy-in as an impact of community engagement.

Hopes for the future. While discussing the impact engagement can and does have on community/organizations/systems/etc., many participants also shared their hopes for the future. For example, one participant hoped that organizations will "be brave and not be afraid to go a step further" when it comes to community engagement. Many participants shared their desire for community engagement efforts to become more creative and to engage larger groups of diverse people. Another participant wanted to see a "community that can unify the just." Another shared their dream:

> It goes back to our dream. Why can't those of us who live in poverty be supported to animate our ideas and problem solve together and directly take control over the solutions rather than coming to be on a committee or at a consultation process to represent the community.

Other participants discussed their visions of a complete systems-change. One participant shared their thoughts:

> I think for us we want to flip the framework because so far when we hear people say engagement, it is those who aren't living [in poverty] trying to get a hold of those of us living [in poverty]. And so, there's already some problem in terms of power, right? And so, what we want to say is, well, let us who live in it tell you what it's like. Let us figure out the solutions and you can join us if you have an interest. So, we would like to flip the engagement paradigm thinking into that. So, yeah, then it will be a very different conversation around strategy and systems.

Similarly, other participants believed that we need to do "the same work, just do it differently." There needs to be a paradigm shift in terms of how we think of community engagement, but even more so, in how we think about the non-profit sector. In a related comment, one participant stated:

> So, what I'm really advocating for is saying, instead of looking to the government, for example, really the responsibility lies with each community to really have its leaders come better together, work better together with those who are experiencing living and lived experience. And listen to them, and actually open your ears and listen, not just hear.

So, listen to what they're going through and incorporate them into any decision-making process.

Another participant wanted to see policymakers committing to incorporating roles and opportunities for people experiencing poverty to inform both policy and operational agendas. They also shared their hope that community engagement would become more client centered. Ultimately, participants hoped that community engagement will support their efforts to work themselves out of a job.

To conclude, the six major categories and their sub-categories of this study include the meaning of community engagement, the rationale for engagement, the struggles associated with it, the systems in which we work (current context), making progress, and defining success. Considered as the major topics within the data, these categories and sub-categories were identified from the results of 15 in-depth interviews, participant observations, and document reviews.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this research was to determine how community engagement is understood by people working in poverty-related initiatives. Following the analysis of 15 semi-structured interviews, participant observations, and document reviews, 6 categories and 10 sub-categories emerged, shown below in Table 2.

Table 2

Results Summary: Major Categories and Sub-Categories

Categories	Sub-Categories
What is Community Engagement?	• Definitions of community engagement • Types of community engagement
Motivations for Engaging	
The Struggles Associated with Community Engagement	• Engaging with diverse groups of people • Risk • Confusions and contradictions
The Systems in Which We Work	• Systems and institutional barriers • Leadership • Tensions around policy and timelines
Facilitators of Meaningful Community Engagement	
Defining Success	• Impacts of community engagement done well • Hopes for the future

While several categories yielded anticipated results that are supported in the literature, including the meaning community engagement, motivations for engaging, and facilitators of meaningful community engagement, other categories presented unexpected and interesting results; specifically, the struggles associated with community engagement, the systems in which we work, and defining success are three key categories that require further discussion.

What is Community Engagement?

The first step in understanding community engagement is defining it. Participants provided several definitions of community engagement, with not one definition the same as another. This is understandable, as definitions of community engagement in the literature are also very similar (Aslin & Brown, 2004; Bacon, 2009; CTSA, 2011; Elton Consulting, 2003; IAP2, 2007; MCMPR, 2006; Seymour, 2001; WHO, 1992; Wolstenhome, 1995). What is consistent between participants' definitions and definitions in the literature, however, is the understanding that community engagement involves working with community, or citizens, on issues of importance. It is also widely understood that there are varying levels of engagement and that engagement is a process rather than a single event.

Motivations for Engaging

Results from this study related to the motivations for engaging with people experiencing poverty were as expected and are fairly aligned with the literature. Motivations for engaging people experiencing poverty in poverty-related initiatives can be broken into two clear arguments: engagement to improve poverty reduction efforts and engagement for moral or ethical purposes. Participants spoke of both motivations, though they put more emphasis on the moral or ethical argument as opposed to the improving poverty reduction efforts argument. The opposite seems to be true in the literature; though there is significant research on how engaging people experiencing poverty can support poverty-related work, more research is required to understand or find the moral argument. That being said, participants and documents both seem to capture the same key points around motivations for engaging with people experiencing poverty, including to produce better project outcomes, to satisfy community expectations, to satisfy

human rights, and to encourage citizens to be involved in the decisions that have an impact on their lives (Homer, 2019; SPRP, 2017).

One noted difference—or additional result—in this study compared to the literature around motivations for engaging was that of a participant who spoke at length about their personal motivations for working in the social sector and for engaging with people experiencing poverty. As I could not find any literature mentioning personal motivations for working in the sector, it is interesting to consider the possibility that a person's motivations for doing so may affect or influence their motivations for engaging (or not engaging) with people experiencing poverty in their work.

Facilitators of Meaningful Community Engagement

A significant category that emerged from the data is that of the facilitators of meaningful community engagement. Based on the literature, I identified nine frequently discussed key facilitators of meaningful engagement; in comparison, results from this study suggest 10 key facilitators of successful community engagement. Table 3 summarizes the facilitators from the literature and this study, highlighting nine overlapping—albeit worded slightly differently in some cases—facilitators of meaningful community engagement but also highlights one major difference. The literature does not identify evaluation as a key facilitator of meaningful engagement.

Table 3

Summary of Facilitators of Meaningful Community Engagement: Literature versus Results

Facilitators of Meaningful Community Engagement Identified in the Literature	Facilitators of Meaningful Community Engagement Identified in the Study
Relationship-building	Relationship-building
Trust & mutual respect	Trust & respect
Collaboration	Collaboration
Knowledge & understanding	Understanding & willingness to learn
Accessible meetings & events	Environment, language considerations
Eliminate financial barriers	Honorariums, childcare, transportation, food
Capacity-building	Recognizing community and citizen strengths
Transparency	Open and clear communication
Sharing power	Sharing power & reciprocity
	Evaluation of community engagement activities

The lack of evaluation mentioned in the literature could mean several things. It could reflect a general lack of value placed on evaluation and evaluation practices, though this is doubtful. More likely, it is a combination of several factors. First, it could suggest that engaging people experiencing poverty in poverty-reduction efforts is still very new, and therefore evaluations have yet to be conducted in many cases. In contrast, evaluations may be conducted regularly among initiatives engaging people experiencing poverty in their work, yet results from these evaluations remain unpublished. It is possible that initiatives are unwilling to share their evaluation data publicly due to concerns around data that portrays negative experiences or due to the lack of capacity (human, financial, and time) to do so.

Most likely, however, this lack of emphasis on evaluation in the literature may be due to an overall lack of evaluation capacity in the social sector. Across Canada, evaluation is used to

measure the effectiveness of practices, programs, and policies, yet, within the social sector, community-based organizations face an overwhelming pressure to generate evidence demonstrating accountability and impact; however, they more often than not lack the capacity to produce this information (Cousins et al., 2014; Nielsen et al., 2018). Furthering this problem, universities are failing to equip students with practical and contextual evaluation knowledge and skills (Gokiert et al., 2017), creating a generation of emerging professionals who are unable to respond to society's evaluative needs.

Evaluation was a fairly substantial sub-category that emerged from my data, from participants, in document reviews, and in my participant observations. Results suggest that evaluation is a significant facilitator of community engagement, as it helps to determine the success or meaning of engagement activities. Without evaluation, it can be difficult to understand if engagement efforts are including people experiencing poverty in meaningful ways and if they are truly supporting better programming. Given this disconnect between the literature and the results of this study, evaluation of community-engagement activities is a facilitator of engagement that should be given more consideration moving forward, not just in poverty-related initiatives but also in the social sector as a whole.

The Struggles Associated with Community Engagement

Data from this study in relation to the struggles associated with community engagement— specifically, the struggles with engaging diverse groups of people and exploring who is responsible for community engagement—yielded interesting results where further discussion is necessary.

Engaging with diverse groups of people. It is important to recognize that people experiencing poverty are diverse; oftentimes, poverty is the only thing people being engaged in poverty-related efforts have in common. Research around poverty and those experiencing it categorizes them based on age, sex, race, culture, ability, and marital and housing statuses (Employment & Social Development Canada, 2017; EndPovertyEdmonton, 2017). Based on my participant observations and interviews, it was clear that while it is important to have diversity among those being engaged in poverty efforts, we do not always think a step further in terms of what is next. It is very easy in theory to remember that poverty is experienced differently by everyone and that those experiencing poverty might not get along or have the same interests, but, in practice, this understanding is often lost. Often, the community engagement methods employed assume that all participants have the same experiences and the same interests or opinions. This is obviously not the case, however. The consequence in doing that, then, is most likely a loss of trust, a high turnover rate among those interested in being engaged in poverty reduction efforts, or a lack of support in decision-making for initiatives; all three of which can amount to tokenism (Flicker et al., 2007; Ocloo & Matthews, 2016; Quaghebeur, Masschelein & Nguyen, 2004; Supple et al., 2015). Participants did share several techniques they have had success with, in regard to meaningfully engaging diverse groups of people, including focusing on trust, empathy, and relationship-building, humanizing poverty, and allowing people to self-select areas or projects of interest to them.

The grey literature and the documents I reviewed regarding engaging people experiencing poverty do not suggest these techniques. They tend to read as "how-to" guidebooks and are fairly prescriptive in their methods, adopting a "one-size-fits-all" mentality. It is fair to assume that most initiatives engaging people experiencing poverty will be reading these types of

documents and articles rather than academic literature that is difficult to access without a university connection. This is problematic, as there is a clear disconnect between participants' experiences with how to meaningfully engage diverse groups of people and the "one-size-fits-all" method the grey literature suggests.

Responsibility for engagement. In the same way these guidebooks can be prescriptive in their methods of engagement, they also tend to be presumptuous in who their target audience is. Most grey literature around community engagement is geared towards non-profit initiatives. There are some that also focus on government, but those are few in comparison. It is an interesting assumption to make that non-profit initiatives will be the ones to engage people experiencing poverty in their work. While it is often true, one might question whether they have the capacity to be considered the driver of community engagement and whether they are appropriate representatives or stewards of the communities affected by issues they are working to address (i.e., those experiencing poverty). This begs the question, should non-profits be considered responsible for community engagement?

This assumption is also problematic because the practice of engaging people experiencing poverty in poverty-reduction efforts is not required. This means that it is the prerogative of these initiatives to engage those experiencing poverty in their work; there is no mechanism to ensure that engagement occurs and is performed in a meaningful way, nor are there any incentives to encourage meaningful engagement. With no clear understanding of who is, or should be, responsible for meaningful engagement, no one can be held to account if it does not occur. If we take a look at the tidal energy industry in Canada—particularly in Nova Scotia—as a comparison, legislation has been created to promote, and sometimes even mandate, community engagement (Colton, 2013; Department of Energy, 2016; Head, 2007; Nova Scotia

Department of Energy, 2012). Governments decided what is crucial for energy-development

proponents to engage the communities located in and around the development area to support

better understanding, community acceptance, and community ownership over such projects

(Acadia Tidal Energy Institute, 2013; Head, 2007; Nova Scotia Department of Energy, 2012).

The downside of such legislation is, of course. language. In the case of Nova Scotia,

legislation is vague, which has caused confusion and varying opinions among organizations,

citizens, and the government, on what meaningful community engagement looks like (Colton,

2013). The regulatory process states that, in some cases, organizations must provide evidence of

community engagement (Nova Scotia Department of Energy, 2012). Examples of evidence given

in the regulatory process include written evidence of support and/or a municipal council

resolution, neither of which should be considered good measures of community engagement

(Colton, 2013; Nova Scotia Department of Energy, 2012).

While there are some risks involved with legislating community engagement, it is an

interesting consideration. Participants in this study struggled to identify who should be

responsible for ensuring community engagement occurs. Though some participants did not have

an answer, most suggested a combination of stakeholders, including municipal government,

policymakers (at all levels of government), the non-profit sector, individual organizations,

general citizens (civic duty), systems and institutions (like governments, universities, the health

sector, etc.), community leaders, non-profit leaders, government leaders, poverty reduction

initiatives, community residents, and front-line workers and service-providing agencies.

With most responses focused on higher-level leaders and systems and institutions, it is

possible that engagement could be incentivized and not mandated or legislated. This may look

like funding pools dedicated to engagement work or government or sector support (both financial

and educational) for engagement. It seems as though either way, legislation or incentivization would come from, and target the social sector. Both were mentioned by participants as having a role to play in the responsibility for ensuring engagement occurs, and both have an overall role to support such engagement. The general role, or mandate, of the social sector is to support citizens and communities facing social justice issues, such as poverty. Similarly, Head (2007) states that a government's role, or mandate, within the social sector is as the "formal representative of public interest and fairness" (p. 450).

Though participants and documents stated that there exists little capacity among non-profits to engage with people experiencing poverty, the role of the social sector as a whole suggests that resources should be dedicated to capacity for engagement and the responsibility of ensuring engagement is prioritized within the sector. Though I nor my participants are suggesting that engagement be legislated, it may support more meaningful engagement if there was a clear understanding of whose responsibility is to ensure community engagement occurs, whether that be a sole responsibility or a shared one. Alternatively, the sector may feel like there is no need to hold initiatives to account for community engagement.

A final consideration to make in discussing responsibility for community engagement is that different people or groups will have different motivations for engaging community, meaning whoever is engaging with or enforcing others to engage with people experiencing poverty may have certain motivations for doing so compared to others. For example, a common motivation by non-profits or larger institutions for engagement is better program outcomes. Such motivations would suggest that engagement is geared towards involving and collaborating. Similarly, governments are traditionally known for engaging communities in information-gathering and consulting, both lower-end types of participation on the spectrum of participation (Elton

Consulting, 2003; Head, 2007; IAP2, 2007). If their motivations for engagement are to gather information and/or consult with those experiencing poverty, then engagement will be dictated by that. In the context of this research, however, it is important to note that the City of Edmonton—though historically known for engagement with the intention to gather information and consult with communities—have begun moving in the direction of meaningful engagement with community. Specifically, in 2017 the City of Edmonton released a Council Initiative of Public Engagement that describes their intentions and methods for meaningful engagement with citizens and community (City of Edmonton, 2017). In this case, their motivations would suggest involvement and collaboration rather than information-gathering and consultation.

It would seem, based on my results, that only when the motivation for engaging people experiencing poverty is human rights-based—as in the driver for engagement is the belief that people deserve to be included in decisions that will have an impact on their future—is engagement truly meaningful.

Confusions and contradictions. An interesting result from this study came in the form of confusions and contradictions regarding community engagement. Documents reviewed in the study noted that community engagement is confusing, difficult, and frustrating; this was echoed by participants in many ways. There were several instances where some participants could not answer the question asked during interviews; responses varied between "I don't know" and "That is so hard…I am not sure" to "I have no idea, to be honest".

At the same time, I found many participants were continuously contradicting themselves. Several times, participants would state that engagement is not working or that it wasn't enough yet would then go on to share what they considered examples of engagement done well, success stories, later in their interviews. Other participants discussed the reality that engagement cannot

be done well within our current systems and circumstances yet still believed we should be

engaging community. Many participants felt that it is better to try and conduct engagement in a

system that does not allow for meaningful engagement than to not do it at all. Participants felt

that trying to engage with community, whether it done perfectly or not, shows intent and

meaning; it suggests a desire to, and a recognition of the importance of including those

experiencing poverty in poverty-related initiatives.

It is important to note that a few participants were quite clear in their perceptions of

community engagement. One participant, in particular, was very clear in their belief that

community engagement was not an effective way to work with a community on poverty issues;

instead, community development is the mechanism that should be used to include people

experiencing poverty in poverty-related initiatives.

Community engagement versus community development. A significant result from this

study that requires further discussion is that of the comparison between community engagement

and community development. While some participants explicitly discussed community

development rather than community engagement throughout their interviews, it seemed as

though others unintentionally conflated the two terms. For example, one participant spoke of

community engagement as one step on a scale of participation; the scale begins with little

participation (community relations) and moves to more participation (community engagement)

before reaching full participation (community development). In some instances, other

participants also spoke of community development directly, as opposed to community

engagement.

In comparison, some participants spoke of community engagement, yet the principles and

practices they discussed reflect community development literature. For example, when

participants spoke of using community animators, community organizing practices, cultural brokering, or of principles like community ownership, capacity building, and building resiliency, it wrung familiar to community development practices and principles. With this in mind, I began to dig into the literature, looking to compare community development and community engagement.

Community engagement, while understood and defined in many ways, is generally the process of communicating with and involving people in issues that affect them and/or are of interest to them (Aslin & Brown, 2004; MCMPR, 2006; Seymour, 2001; WHO, 1992; Wolstenhome, 1995). Defined by the World Health Organization as the "process by which people are enabled to become actively and genuinely involved in defining the issues of concern to them, in making decisions about factors that affect their lives, in formulating and implementing policies, in planning, developing, and delivering services, and in taking action to active change" (WHO, 1992, p. 1), community engagement generally refers to processes and practices that encourage people to work together in an attempt to reach a shared goal. These definitions reflect the results of this study. Participants spoke of community engagement in similar ways; touching on the fact that it is a process rather than a single event or activity, that its purpose is to communicate with community, and how it is meant to include people experiencing poverty in the actions targeted to end poverty.

In comparison, however, community development can be defined as a long-term process in which members of a particular community take collective action and generate potential solutions to varying problems (Smith & Frank, 1999). Similar to community engagement, community development has many definitions, all of which are dependent on the organization, area, or person presenting it (Bhattacharyya, 2004; Roberts, 1979). The UN defines community

development as the process in which citizens work closely with government authorities to better social, economic, and cultural issues in communities and ensure that communities are integrated into the nation effectively (Roberts, 1979). Focusing that to the Canadian context, it is defined as an educational process in which community members create conditions to enable social and economic change (Roberts, 1979). It is also considered a process to encourage full participation among communities who have traditionally been excluded from and lack the resources to partake in creating conditions for change (Bhattacharyya, 2004; Roberts, 1979; Robinson & Green, 2011; Smith & Frank, 1999).

Results from this study also lend themselves to aspects of community development— discussing engagement as a process, its purpose as to communicate with community, and how it is meant to include people experiencing poverty in the actions targeted to end poverty. Where community development goes one step further than community engagement, it seems, is in the idea that community (however it is constructed) comes together in collective action. This was reflected in the data when participants spoke of community organizing (the process of bringing community together to act on social issues), community-driven projects, and cultural brokering (the process of bridging the relational gap between those experiencing poverty and, often, racism/cultural differences and those in positions of power). In their interview, one participant shared their opinion that for ethical reasons, people experiencing poverty should be leading poverty initiatives; this belief seems to fit well under the community development definitions, as it assumes action.

When looking at the principles of both community engagement and community development, again, there is significant overlap. Relationship-building, trust, communication, capacity-building, power-sharing, and collaboration are principles of both community

engagement and community development (Aslin & Brown, 2004; Bhattacharyya, 2004; MCMPR, 2006; Roberts, 1979; Robinson & Green, 2011; Seymour, 2001; Smith & Frank, 1999; WHO, 1992; Wolstenhome, 1995). These were all principles that participants touched on in this study. Where community development differs from community engagement, here, is that community development focuses heavily on sustainability and resiliency (Bhattacharyya, 2004; Roberts, 1979; Robinson & Green, 2011; Smith & Frank, 1999). Only two participants spoke of building resiliency; one of which was speaking about community development when they stated the importance of resiliency. Sustainability was not a principle that came up in the data.

Digging deeper, there exists some grey literature directly comparing community engagement and community development. The Tamarack Institute (2017), for example, endorses both practices yet has an adapted visual of the IAP2 spectrum of engagement which provides a detailed index of engagement techniques under each step on the continuum—inform, consult, involve, collaborate, empower. Upon reaching "empower", Tamarack (2017) suggests that community development is a technique to use to reach the empowerment phase. A blog focusing on community engagement states that community engagement is the process of getting people better connected into and actively participating in community events and building relationships within the community, suggesting that engagement is a method of community development that supports socially sustainable communities (Butteriss, 2016). Similarly, Graeme Stuart (2017), who hosts a blog focused on community development, states that "community engagement is at the heart of community development". He suggests that community engagement involves community, whereas community development is led by community. Drawing on scholars Smart (2017) and McKnight (1993), he suggests the main difference between the two is that, in the case of community engagement, decision-making power rests with systems and institutions, whereas,

in community development, power relations between systems and institutions and community are constantly being negotiated (Stuart, 2017). Interestingly, the International Association for Community Development (IACD, 2019) does not mention the term community engagement anywhere in their explanation of community development.

If the only significant difference between community engagement and community development is collective action, then is it important to distinguish the two? One participant believes it is; in their mind, collective action is very important. This particular participant put a great deal of emphasis on the fact that collective action creates collective impact and that community engagement is not a strong enough process to achieve collective action or impact. While most other participants agreed that community engagement is not enough to produce collective action and impact, they still shared community engagement success stories that suggest otherwise; once again, highlighting the many contradictions throughout the data. It is important to note that the participant who was advocating for community development over community engagement is the only participant with a direct community development educational background (that I am aware of).

With such confusion, or overlap, between community engagement and community development, where does this leave us? On one hand, one may argue that conflating community engagement and community development is a non-issue. If the only differences between community engagement and community development are the focus on resiliency, sustainability, and action in community development practices, then practitioners, researchers, and poverty-related initiatives will continue to engage with community as they see fit whether it is defined as community engagement or community development. On the other hand, however, these results seem to be a fairly obvious call for more clarity between the two practices. With conflating

understandings and definitions, it is possible that one may assume they are employing

community development while actually only engaging community in their efforts. This could,

and may have already, unintentionally led to tokenistic practices, resulting in lack of trust,

frustrations in community, tensions between community and initiatives, and a significant lack of

input into solutions by people who are experiencing the issue in the first place (Flicker et al.,

2007; Ocloo & Matthews, 2016; Quaghebeur, Masschelein & Nguyen, 2004; Supple et al.,

2015). Either way, some exploration into the differences between community engagement and

community development or a direct case study comparison of both practices would be a valuable

addition to the literature.

   Hopes for the future. Though this section is sub-categorized under *Defining Success*, for

the purposes of this discussion, I will be speaking about hopes for the future—specifically, as it

relates to the confusions and contradictions found in my results.

   Many participants shared their hopes for the future of community engagement, both as

imagined states of what community engagement should look like in the future and as principles

or practices they would like to see incorporated in engagement practices in the future. This is

important to highlight because it recognizes that there is still progress to be made and that

participants want to continue pushing forward towards a "future state". While interviewing

participants and analyzing the data, it almost felt like there was a sense of momentum—that

people were ready to start pushing the boundaries on community engagement and to see change.

What better way to start working towards a goal of a re-imagined sense of community

engagement than with an envisioned state of what that might look like? Interestingly, however,

this re-imagined sense of community engagement looks a lot like community development.

Regardless, with a reimagined state of community engagement that is more participatory,

involves policymakers and community leaders, sees organizations and initiatives taking risks, sees people experiencing poverty reaching out to engage with initiatives rather than the other way around, and focuses on action, there is a great deal to work towards.

The Systems in Which We Work

It became apparent upon a review of the results that further discussion was required to better understand not only the systems and institutional barriers to community engagement but also how leadership influences community engagement.

Systems and institutional barriers. Results from this study suggest that systems and institutional barriers to community engagement are significant. Barriers include engagement practices, often traditional and Western, discouraging participation, non-profit sectors being set up in a way that encourages rather than discourages competition and the duplication of efforts, and funding systems that encourage certain types of engagement and engagement with certain groups of people over others. Also noted in the results as barriers to engagement are high turnover rates in institutions which makes building sustainable, trusting relationships nearly impossible, a general lack of value placed on lived experience contributions to poverty reduction efforts, limited organizational capacity, operational rules and regulations, and, lastly, systems that, overall, are not designed to be inclusive.

These system and institutional barriers were discussed heavily by participants during their interviews. In comparison, the literature seems to focus only on one major barrier—that of limited organizational capacity, in terms of both human and financial resources. With so many barriers to engagement, it is a wonder that initiatives are able to meaningfully engage people experiencing poverty at all. Interesting to note is that even with all of the criticism to our current system and to institutional barriers, not one participant offered a suggestion on how to move

forward in our current context, and only one participant offered a suggestion on how to change the system, though people did share their hopes for how future systems might look.

Systems change is not something that comes easy—or quickly, for that matter. Systems are largely understood as an interconnected set of "things"—people, organizations, policies, etc.—in which decisions and actions in one area affect others; essentially, systems are overlapping, networked, and nested "things" that produce their own patterns of behaviour and operate within and beside other systems (Abercrombie, Harries, & Wharton, 2015; Birney, 2016; Child and Family Research Partnership, 2018). Systems change, then, is the emergence of a new pattern of behaviour; "the intentional process designed to alter the status quo by shifting the function or structure of an identified system with purposeful interventions" (Abercrombie et al., p. 9). It is possible that participants did not have suggestions for how to move forward in our current context because they recognize systems change is required, though participants were not very forthcoming with suggestions for systems change either, which is understandable, considering the complexity and time required to change systems. Social issues, like poverty, are a function of how institutions behave—of policy decisions and of public attitudes and cultural norms. As a result, literature suggests that systems change can take eight or more years to occur, as it requires shifts in policies, routines, relationships, resources, power structures, values, and people's attitudes (Abercrombie et al., 2015; Birney, 2016; Child and Family Research Partnership, 2018).

A concern or struggle often associated with systems change is that of determining who should initiate and lead systems change. There seems to be a debate in the literature; some believe systems change should come from those working within the systems, while others believe it is only possible to see systems change from those outside the system who have a more

neutral position (Abercrombie et al., 2015). Results from this study suggest that participants

working within the system have a very clear understanding of the system and its barriers, leading

me to believe they could initiate, or support systems change. Systems change requires dedication

and commitment as well as a strong will. A recent study evaluating the model of collective

impact in the United States shared examples of how poverty-related initiatives there were able to

achieve systems change. Examples included adoptions of new policy in one organization that

spread to others, organizational best practices being taken up by others, a funder changing their

assessment tool for selecting who they fund (creating a ripple effect across sector on who gets

funding), and significant policy change combined with adopting legislation (ORS Impact &

Spark Policy Institute, 2018).

Though there is no right way to change systems, there are a few important considerations

to be made. First, systems change is an iterative process and cannot always be fully predicted,

meaning there is potential for unintended consequences as a result of the change (Abercrombie et

al., 2015; Birney, 2016; Child and Family Research Partnership, 2018; ORS Impact & Spark

Policy Institute, 2018). Second, systems change should be undertaken by a collective rather than

by one person or initiative (Abercrombie et al., 2015; Birney, 2016; Child and Family Research

Partnership, 2018; ORS Impact & Spark Policy Institute, 2018).

Leadership. Though the subject of leadership is virtually non-existent in the community

engagement literature (Mayan, Oleschuk, Pauchulo & Lang, 2016), results from this study

suggest it is a significant opportunity for further exploration. Participants spoke often about the

importance of leadership and its ability to influence community engagement efforts. Not only

that, but participants also discussed the importance of leaders actively seeking out opportunities

to engage with people experiencing poverty. Not surprisingly, business literature is heavily

focused on leadership. It is quite clear in the literature that leadership shapes individual, team, and organizational outcomes and that organizational effectiveness hinges on coordinated leadership. In all aspects of business, including human resources, management, and industry, effective leadership is seen as central to organizational success (DeChurch, Hillar, Murase, Doty & Salas, 2010; Hernez-Broome & Hughes, 2004). Results from this study do not suggest, by any means, that participants feel like their leaders are ineffective; they do, however, suggest that leadership plays a significant role in the success of meaningful community engagement and that, in some cases, leadership is not prepared to support such activities. A lack of preparedness comes in the form of risk aversion, a lack of understanding, and, in some cases, a lack of appreciation.

One participant brought up an interesting point when they suggested that leadership cannot be expected to be able to support engagement, as they have no support or development training to do so. Pulling, again, from business literature, leadership development has heavily dominated academic research in the sector. Leadership development is considered critical to a leader's ability to function in their position and focuses on performance support and the real-world application of skills (Hernez-Broome & Hughes, 2004; Lawson, 2008). There is a particular focus on application in leadership development with the understanding that leaders are to learn from their work rather than be taken away from their work to learn (Hernez-Broome & Hughes, 2004; Lawson, 2008). Perhaps, this is an indicator that the social sector should start putting more emphasis on leadership development in order to better support not only community engagement but poverty outcomes, in general.

Literature addressing collective impact, a model of governance that suggests bringing multiple organizations and sectors together in collaboration to solve complex problems, also

indicates the need for leadership development (Collective Impact Forum, 2019; Kania & Kramer, 2011; Kania & Kramer, 2013; Wolff, 2016). While traditional governance models suggest hierarchical structures with a single leader at the top of the structure, collective impact adopts a shared approach to governance with a flatter hierarchy (Blomgren Bingham et al., 2005; Eversole, 2011; Masuda et al., 2008; Turnhout & Van der Zouwen, 2010). Collective impact highlights the need to cultivate leaders with unique systems skills relevant to their sector. While emphasized in the literature, it does not seem to have translated into practice, at least not for the participants of this study. It seems that the only explanation for these results is that the sector, as a whole, needs to begin investing in leadership development specific to their environments, where complex and uncertain opportunities such as community engagement arise frequently.

Defining Success

  Impacts of community engagement done well. The impacts of meaningful engagement for people experiencing poverty in poverty-related efforts are not well reflected in the literature. In comparison, participants in my study shared rich stories explaining the positive impacts of meaningful community engagement. Not only does the literature tend to focus impacts of engagement on project outcomes, but the words used to describe these impacts are not powerful nor are they particularly thought-provoking. One reason this might be the case is that effective language available to convey the true impact of meaningful engagement does not exist; words like "pride", "community", "advocate", and "interconnectedness" simply don't convey the true impact. While analyzing the data, I realized that when asked about the impacts of successful community engagement, participants either shared stories of how community engagement has had an impact or described specific feelings evoked as a result of engagement. According to Sandercock (2003), storytelling "conveys a range of meanings, from anecdote, to exemplar, to

something that is invented rather than 'true'" (p. 13). More broadly, the literature states that storytelling is the act of telling stories and sharing information (Horsley, 2007; Fernandez-Llamazares & Cabeza, 2017; Sandercock, 2003; Yuksel, Robin & McNeil, 2011). Storytelling is a valuable form of human expression that has been around as long as humankind, is a traditional method of building community among Indigenous Peoples, and can be used for a number of purposes, including entertainment, knowledge and information sharing, passing down cultural traditions, maintaining a sense of community, and instilling moral values (Fernandez-Llamazares & Cabeza, 2017). Storytelling is also used in Western cultures, typically for sharing experiences and feelings; it is a common therapeutic tool used in psychology (Horsley, 2007). Most importantly, storytelling "succeeds as a method because of the emotions that it can call forth" (Horsley, 2007, p. 266).

It is interesting, yet somehow unsurprising, to consider that storytelling has more potential to effectively describe the true impacts of meaningful community engagement. Knowing this, those engaging people experiencing poverty in their work might consider using storytelling as a method of sharing impact with community, funders, and partners. Of course, it is important to consider that initiatives may already be doing this, as I did not review community or annual reports on all poverty-related initiatives in Canada. That being said, based on these results, I would encourage those publishing academic literature on community engagement to broaden the focus on impacts to include the impact engagement has on people experiencing poverty and to consider storytelling as a mechanism to do so.

Moving Forward

In light on these results, it seems that social sectors across Canada need to adopt a culture of community engagement. Such systems change includes focusing on leadership development, incorporating evaluation practices in community engagement efforts, changing systemic and institutional barriers to meaningful engagement, and shifting mindsets towards the future state participants aspire towards. In particular, we need to take a hard look at the seeming lack of emphasis on and capacity to conduct evaluations of the process of community engagement, the often-conflated community engagement and community development practices, and the lack of leadership development within the sector. Many questions have arisen as a result of this study, specifically around evaluation capacity, leadership development, and the confusion between community engagement and community development.

Thinking about the lack of emphasis on and capacity for evaluation, how can we encourage evaluation capacity within the sector, and ensure that it encompasses participatory principles? What role do systems and institutions play in supporting and encouraging evaluation capacity within the sector? Is it okay to assume that it is the role of educational institutions to build evaluation capacity or should the sector as a whole begin focusing on evaluation capacity building? Similarly, how can we encourage leadership development within the sector? Or is it even possible to focus on leadership development in a system that encourages organizations to be reactionary rather than proactive, encourages competition rather than cooperation? Is there a role for large institutions, such as universities or bodies like the Tamarack Institute, to play in encouraging leadership development?

Thinking about the results of this study, which suggest a conflation or confusion between the practice of community engagement and community development, I am left with more

questions. If the main difference between community engagement and community development is collective action, then an obvious question is whether or not we should always strive for community development rather than community engagement? Can we assume that community development is the more effective way to meaningfully involve those experiencing poverty in poverty-related initiatives? It begs the question, what does it mean for either practice if community engagement and community development are used interchangeably? And more broadly, can we expect systems change to occur without evaluation capacity, leadership development, and clarity between community engagement and community development? These are all questions that should be addressed both in the literature and in practice moving forward, if we want to ensure that people experiencing poverty are meaningfully engaged in poverty-related initiatives.

In the meantime, however, people leading poverty-related initiatives should not give up; we need to continue engaging people experiencing poverty in actions targeted to end poverty. This looks like:

- Engaging diverse groups of people in the work around poverty that interests them
- Being transparent when addressing timeline tensions and focusing on the small wins rather than only looking at the big picture goal of ending poverty
- Making space for people experiencing poverty to be heard and making sure people are listening
- Shifting power into the hands of those experiencing poverty to address poverty-related issues
- Challenging Western/traditional systems to be more inclusive and flexible in their engagement approaches

- Pushing the sector to support leadership development and, in turn, pushing leadership to support and prioritize community engagement

- Pushing forward with the mindset that those experiencing poverty deserve the right to be involved in the decisions that impact their lives

By addressing some of these questions, and, adopting a culture of community engagement, the sector can foster relationships, trust, and respect with those experiencing poverty, leading to better poverty reduction outcomes.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

As the prevalence of poverty continues to rise in Canada, the importance of community engagement cannot be overemphasized. It becomes increasingly important that poverty-related initiatives understand community engagement. The purpose of this research was to understand peoples' perceptions of community engagement as they relate to poverty-related initiatives, and the overall research question was "How is community engagement understood by people working in poverty-related initiatives?". Following a series of in-depth, semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document review, the results of this study were categorized as follows: the meaning of community engagement, motivations for engaging, the struggles associated with community engagement, the systems in which we work, facilitators and methods of meaningful community engagement, and defining success. These categories, identified through qualitative content analysis, let to several areas of discussion.

Key areas of discussion that emerged from the results of this study include the following:

- The recognition of evaluation practices as being critical to community engagement is missing from the literature, though it came up often in the results of this study

- The importance of recognizing the diversity among those experiencing poverty and engaging with them accordingly (i.e., approaching people with empathy and understanding, taking the time to earn trust and develop relationships, and allowing people to self-select areas of poverty-reduction efforts that interest them)

- The lack of accountability around who is responsible for ensuring poverty-related initiatives are engaging those experiencing poverty in their initiative efforts

- The confusion and conflation between the practice of community engagement and the practice of community development

- The systems and institutional barriers in place that discourage community engagement in the social sector

- The importance of leadership in influencing the outcome of initiative community engagement efforts and of leadership development resulting in leaders feeling comfortable and knowledgeable in supporting community engagement efforts

- How storytelling may be the most effective way to discuss the successful and meaningful impacts of community engagement

These results, significant to the community engagement and community development literature and practice, should not be understated. However, I recognize three limitations of my study. First, while this study was guided by principles of CBPR, the data collection methods I used did not fully embody CBPR. In order to understand the phenomenon I set out to examine when I started this research, it made sense to interview people working in the sector, on poverty-related issues, rather than specifically and exclusively interviewing those experiencing poverty, as a true CBPR project might. That being said, the results of this study display the voices of participants who have worked in poverty-related initiatives for their entire careers and have experience in engaging people experiencing poverty in their work, and four participants from this study had lived/living experience of poverty. Conducting research in partnership with EPE was also helpful in ensuring that this study adhered to principles of CBPR, as those working in, and connected to EPE are some of the most critical of their engagement process. Second, while I worked as an employee for EPE for the better part of a year before and during my research, I did not receive ethics approval to conduct participant observation in the office with the Secretariat. Though I conducted participant observation at public meetings related to engaging lived experience, some of which were attached to EPE, I did not include my experiences working in a

poverty-related initiative in my results. Third, few of the participants interviewed took part in reviewing their transcripts and the preliminary results categories as a method of member checking. However, the results resonated strongly with those participants who did agree to member checking, suggesting that the phenomena of engaging people experiencing poverty in poverty-related initiatives had been accurately represented and is therefore still relevant.

While three limitations are noted, my results also provide interesting opportunities for further research, which may explore who is/should, if anyone, be responsible for ensuring that poverty-related initiatives engaging those experiencing poverty in their efforts to address poverty. Further research may also explore people's perceptions of community engagement versus community development and the consequences of conflation between the two practices, if any. Finally, exploring leadership and leadership development as critical factors for meaningful community engagement will provide much-needed context into understanding community engagement for poverty-related initiatives in the future.

Based on the results of this study and the subsequent areas of discussion, I have come to the conclusion that for true, meaningful community engagement to occur, the sector as a whole must undergo a systems change. Results clearly state that meaningful community engagement is not possible within the current system; there are too many systems and institutional barriers within the sector. The entire sector must adopt a culture of engagement, which looks like: building evaluation capacity to evaluate community engagement processes and activities, focusing on leadership development that supports leaders in understanding and navigating community engagement within their organizations, and a system that supports and encourages meaningful engagement with those experiencing poverty rather than preventing it . Recognizing that systems change does not occur overnight, initiatives must keep pushing forward and

attempting to engage those experiencing poverty in their work. My recommendation—albeit

challenging—is necessary in order to engage people experiencing poverty in the solutions to end

poverty if the ultimate goal is poverty elimination in Canada.

References

Abercrombie, R., Harries, E., & Wharton, R. (2015). Systems change: A guide to what it is and how to do it. Retrieved from https://www.thinknpc.org/resource-hub/systems-change-a-guide-to-what-it-is-and-how-to-do-it/

Alberta Government. (2017). Action on poverty. Retrieved, from https://www.alberta.ca/action-on-poverty.aspx

Alberta Government. (2013). *Together we raise tomorrow: Alberta's poverty reduction strategy.* Retrieved from http://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/documents/spf-summing-up-poverty-reduction.pdf

Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) & Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA). (2019). *Government makes a difference: Working together towards poverty reduction* (pp. 1-12). Toronto, ON: AMO & OMSSA. Retrieved form http://www.msdsb.net/images/ADMIN/docs/program_issues/OMSSA-re-Government-Makes-A-Difference.pdf

Anderson, L. (2011). Reflexivity. In R. Thorpe & R. Holt (Eds.), *The SAGE Dictionary of Qualitative Management Research* (184-185). doi:10.4135/9780857020109

Ansell, C., & Gash, A. (2007). Collaborative governance in theory and practice. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 18*, 543-571. doi:10.1093/jopart/mum032

Aslin, H., & Brown, V. (2004). Towards whole of community engagement: A practical toolkit. Tech. rep., Murray-Darling Basin Commission. Retrieved from http://publications.mdbc.gov.au/view details.php?id=309

Bacon, J. (2012). The art of community: Building the new age of participation. Sebastopol, California: "O'Reilly Media, Inc.".

BC Poverty Reduction Coalition. (2017, January 03). Province profiles. Retrieved from

      http://bcpovertyreduction.ca/learn-more/poverty-reduction-in-canada/

Berg, B. L. (2001). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences*. Boston: Allyn and

      Bacon.

Bhattacharyya, J. (2004). Theorizing community development. *Community Development*, *34*(2),

      5-34.

Birney, A. (2017). What is systems change? . Retrieved from https://medium.com/school-of-

      system-change/what-is-systems-change-an-outcome-and-process-f86126c8cb65

Blomgren Bingham, L., Nabatchi, T., & O'Leary, R. (2005). The new governance: Practices and

      processes for stakeholder and citizen participation in the work of government. *Public*

      Administration Review, 65(5), 547-558.

Boyer, E. (1996). The scholarship of engagement. *Journal of Public Service and Outreach, 1*(1),

      11-20.

Briggs, A. & Lee, C.R. (2012). Poverty Costs, An Economic Case for a Preventative Poverty

      Reduction Strategy in Alberta. Calgary: Vibrant Communities Calgary and Action to End

      Poverty in Alberta.

Butteriss, C. (2019, August 16). What is Community Engagement, Exactly? Retrieved from

      https://www.bangthetable.com/blog/what-is-community-engagement/#2

Cabaj, M. (Ed.). (2011). Cities reducing poverty. Waterloo, ON: Tamarack.

Cambridge Dictionary. (2018). Tokenism. Retrieved from

      https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/tokenism?q=tokenism

Cavaye, J. (2004). Governance and Community Engagement – The Australian Experience...in

Participatory Governance: Planning, Conflict Mediation and Public Decision Making in

Civil Society. Lovan, W.R., Murray, M., & Shaffer, R. (Eds.) Ashgate Publishing UK.

CDC/ATSDR Committee on Community Engagement. (1997). Principles of community

engagement. *Center for Disease Control and Prevention*. Public Health Practice Program

Office, Atlanta, GA.

Child and Family Research Partnership. (2018). A framework for evidence-based systems-level

change. Retrieved from https://childandfamilyresearch.utexas.edu/framework-evidence-

based-systems-level-change

City of Edmonton. (2017). *The Council Initiative on Public Engagement: Phases 1 and 2 Final

Report*. *The Council Initiative on Public Engagement: Phases 1 and 2 Final Report* (pp.

1–32). Edmonton, AB: City of Edmonton.

City of Ottawa. (n.d.). Ottawa's Poverty Reduction Strategy: Poverty Affects Us All – A

Community Approach to Poverty Reduction. Retrieved from

http://vibrantcanada.ca/files/04_-_poverty_reduction_strategy-eng2.pdf

City of Toronto. (2018). Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy. Retrieved from

https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/accountability-operations-customer-

service/long-term-vision-plans-and-strategies/poverty-reduction-strategy/

Collective Impact Forum. (2019). What is Collective Impact? Retrieved from

https://www.collectiveimpactforum.org/what-collective-impact

Colton, J. (2013). Stakeholder consultation...in Stakeholder and Community Engagement.

MacDougall, S., Colton, J., & Howell, A. (Eds.) *Business and Community Toolkit for

Tidal Energy Development.* Acadia Tidal Energy Institute, Acadia University.

Cousins, J. B., Goh, S. C., Elliott, C., Aubry, T., & Gilbert, N. (2014). Government and
 voluntary sector differences in organizational capacity to do and use evaluation.
 Evaluation and Program Planning, 44, 1-13.

Connor A. (2009). *18 rules of community engagement: A guide for building relationships and
 connecting with customers online.* Silicon Valley (CA): Happy About.

Cornwall, A. & Jewkes, R. (1995). What is participatory research? *Social Science & Medicine,
 41*(12), 1667-1676. doi: https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-9536(95)00127-S

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods
 Approaches (4th Edition).* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

CTSA. (2011). Principles of community engagement: Second *edition* (11-7782). Department of
 Health & Human Services USA.

DeChurch, L. A., Hiller, N. J., Murase, T., Doty, D., & Salas, E. (2010). Leadership across
 levels: Levels of leaders and their levels of impact. *The Leadership Quarterly, 21*(6),
 1069-1085. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2010.10.009

Dempsey, S. (2010). Critiquing community engagement. *Management Communication
 Quarterly, 24*(3), 359-390. doi: 10.1177/0893318909352247

Department of Energy. (2016). Marine renewable energy legislation. Retrieved from
 http://energy.novascotia.ca/renewables/marine-renewable-energy/marine- renewable-
 energy-legislation

Donahue, J. (2004). On collaborative governance. *Corporate Social Responsibility Initiative
 Working Paper No. 2.* Cambridge, MA: John F. Kennedy School of Government,
 Harvard University.

Edmonton Social Planning Council. (2018). *One in six is too many* (pp. 1–15). Edmonton, AB.

Elton Consulting. (2003). *Community Engagement in the NSW Planning System* (pp. 1-160, Rep. No. 03-034A). Sydney, AUS.

Emerson, K., Nabatchi, T., & Balogh, S. (2011). An integrative framework for collaborative governance. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 22*, 1-29. doi:10.1093/jopart/mur011

Employment & Social Development Canada. (2018, August 29). Opportunity for All – Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy. Retrieved from https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/poverty-reduction/reports/strategy.html

Employment & Social Development Canada. (2017, February 27). Towards a poverty reduction strategy – A backgrounder on poverty in Canada. Retrieved from https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/poverty-reduction/backgrounder.html

EndPovertyEdmonton. (2016). *End poverty in a generation: A road map to guide our journey.* Edmonton, AB: EndPovertyEdmonton.

EndPovertyEdmonton. (2017). Who we are. Retrieved from https://www.endpovertyedmonton.ca/who-we-are

Eversole, R. (2011). Community agency and community engagement: re-theorising participation in governance. *Journal of Public Policy*, *31*(1), 51-71. doi:10.1017/S0143814X10000206

Federation of Canadian Municipalities. (2017). *Ending poverty starts locally* (pp. 1-17). Winnipeg, MB: Federation for Canadian Municipalities. Retrieved from https://fcm.ca/Documents/issues/Poverty_Reduction_EN.pdf

Fernandez- Llamazares, A. & Cabeza, M. (2017). Rediscovering the potential of Indigenous

     storytelling for conservation practice. Conservation Letters: A Journal of the Society for

     Conservation Biology, 11(3), 1-12. doi: 10.1111/conl.12398

Flicker, S., Savan, B., McGrath, M., Kolenda, B., & Mildenberger, M. (2007). If you could

     change one thing... What community-based researchers wish they could have done

     differently. *Community Development Journal, 43*(2), 239-253.

Gaventa, J. (2006). *Triumph, deficit or contestation? Deepening the 'deepening democracy'*

     debate (pp. 1-34, Publication No. 1-85864-617-0). Brighton, UK: IDS.

Gibson, R. (2011). *A primer on collaborative multi-level governance.* Retrieved from Canadian

     Regional Development: A Critical Review of Theory, Practice, and Potentials:

     http://cdnregdev.ruralresilience.ca/wp-

     content/uploads/2013/03/primercollaborativemultilevelgovernance-gibson.pdf

Gokiert, R.J., Kingsley, B.C., Poth, C., Edwards, K., El Hassar, B., Tink, L. N., Tremblay, M.,

     Cor, K., Springett, J., & Hopkins, S. (2017). Developing an evaluation capacity building

     network in the field of early childhood development. *Engaged Scholar Journal:*

     Community-Engaged Research, Teaching, and Learning, 3(2), 59-79.

Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction. (2018). About Us. Retrieved from

     https://hamiltonpoverty.ca/hamilton-has-a-history-of-pulling-together/

Head, B. W. (2007). Community engagement: participation on whose terms? *Australian Journal*

     of Political Science, *42*(3), 441-454. doi: 10.1080/10361140701513570

Hernez-Broome, G. & Hughes, R. J. (2004). Leadership Development: Past, Present, and Future.

     Human Resource Planning, 27(1), 24-32. Retrieved from

     file:///Users/emmawallace/Downloads/6000.pdf

Higginbottom, GMA., Pillay, J., Boadu, N.Y. (2013). Guidance on performing focused

ethnographies with an emphasis on healthcare research. *The Qualitative Report, 18*(9).

Retrieved from http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR18/higginbottom17.pdf

Hindmarsh, R. & Matthews, C. (2008). Deliberative speak at the turbine face: Community

engagement, wind farms, and renewable energy transitions in Australia. *Journal of

Environmental Policy and Planning 10*(3), 217-232.

Holland, D., Powell, D., Eng, E. & Drew, G. (2010). Models of engaged scholarship: An

interdisciplinary discussion. *Collaborative Anthropologies, 3*, 1-36. doi:

10.1353/cla.2010.0011

Holmgren, M. (2017, October 18). About Collective Impact: Types of Problems, Degrees of

Change, Learning Loops, and Methods of Thinking [Web blog post]. Retrieved from

http://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/latest/about-collective-impact-types-of-problems-

degrees-of-change-learning-loops-and-methods-of-thinking

Homer, A. (2019). *10: Engaging people with lived/living experience* (10 Guide, pp. 1-48, Rep.).

Waterloo, ON: Tamarack Institute. Retrieved from

https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/hubfs/Resources/Publications/10-

Engaging%20People%20With%20LivedLiving%20Experience%20of%20Poverty.pdf

Horsley, K. (2007). Storytelling, conflict and diversity. *Community Development Journal, 42*(2),

265-269. doi: 10.1093/cdj/bsm002

International Association for Community Development (IACD). (2019). The International

Association for Community Development. Retrieved from http://www.iacdglobal.org/

International Association for Public Participation. (2007). IAP2 spectrum of public participation.

[Chart]. Retrieved from https://www.iap2.org.au/resources/iap2s- public- participation-

spectrumhttp://

Kania, J., & Kramer, M. (2011). *Collective impact.* Retrieved from

https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact

Kania, J., & Kramer, M. (2013). Embracing Emergence: How Collective Impact Addresses

Complexity. Retrieved from

https://ssir.org/articles/entry/social_progress_through_collective_impact

Knoblauch, H. (2005). Focused Ethnography. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum:*

Qualitative Social Research, 6(3). doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.17169/fqs-6.3.20

Kretzmann, J. P., & McKnight, J. L. (1993). *Building communities from the inside out: A path*

*toward finding and mobilizing a community's asset*s. Evanston, Ill.: Center for Urban

Affairs and Policy Research, Northwestern University.

Lamman, C., & MacIntyre, H. (2016). *An introduction to the state of poverty in Canada* (Rep.).

Fraser Institute.

Lawson, K. (2008). *Leadership development basics.* Alexandria, Va.: ASTD Press.

Lee, C. (2017). Public Participation Professionals in the US: Confronting Challenges of Equity

and Empowerment, pp. 65-86 in L. Bherer et al. (eds) *The Professionalization of Public*

Participation. London: Routledge.

Lincoln, YS., & Guba, EG. (1985). Naturalistic Inquiry. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Magilvy, J., McMahon, M., Bachman, M., Roark, S., & Evenson, C. (1987). The health of

teenagers: A focused ethnographic study. *Public Health Nursing, 4*, 35-42.

Mayan, M. (2009). *Essentials of Qualitative Inquiry.* Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Mayan, M.**,** Lo, S., Oleschuk, M., Pauchulo, A L., & Laing, D. (2016). Leadership in

community-based participatory research: Individual to collective. *Engaged*

Scholar Journal: Community-Engaged Research, Teaching, and Learning, 2(2), 11-24.

Mayan, M., Pauchulo, A.L., Gillespie, D., Masita, D., & Mejia, T. (Unsubmitted Manuscript).

The Promise of Collective Impact Partnerships.

Masuda, J.R., McGee, T.K., & Garvin, T.D. (2008). Power, knowledge, and public engagement:

constructing 'citizenship' in Alberta's industrial heartland. *Journal of environmental*

policy & planning, *10*(4), 359-380. doi:10.1080/15239080802332026

MCMPR. (2006). *Principles for engagement with communities and stakeholders.* Canberra:

Ministerial Council on Mineral and Petroleum Resources*.*

Mikkonen, J., & Raphael, D. (2010). Social Determinants of Health: e Canadian Facts. Toronto:

York University School of Health Policy and Management.

Morse, J. M. (1987). Qualitative nursing research: A free for all? In J. M. Morse (Ed.),

Qualitative nursing research: A contemporary dialogue (pp. 14-22). Newbury Park, CA:

Sage Publications.

Nielsen, S. B., Lemire, L., & Christie, C. A. (2018). The evaluation marketplace and its industry.

New Directions for Evaluation, 2018(160), 13-28.

Nova Scotia Department of Energy. (2012). *Nova scotia marine renewable energy strategy.*

Halifax, Canada: Province of Nova Scotia.

Ocloo, J., & Matthews, R. (2016). From tokenism to empowerment: Progressing patient and

public involvement in healthcare improvement. *BMJ Quality & Safety,25*(8), 626-632.

doi:10.1136/bmjqs-2015-004839

ORS Impact, & Spark Policy Institute. (2018). *When Collective Impact has an impact: A cross-site study of 25 Collective Impact initiatives*. *When Collective Impact has an impact: A cross-site study of 25 Collective Impact initiatives*. Denver, CO. Retrieved from http://sparkpolicy.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/CI-Study-Report_February-2018.pdf

Ontario Ministry of Housing. (2015). Poverty reduction in Ontario. Retrieved from https://www.ontario.ca/page/realizing-our-potential-ontarios-poverty-reduction-strategy-2014-2019

Poverty Taskforce (PTF). (2018). Who We Are. Retrieved from https://www.gwpoverty.ca/about-us/whoweare/

Quaghebeur, K., Masschelein, J., & Nguyen, H.H. (2004). Paradox of participation: Giving or taking part? *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 14(3), p154-165. DOI: 1 0.1 002/casp.776

Roberts, H. (1979). *Community development: learning and action*. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press.

Robinson, J. W., & Green, G. P. (2011). *Introduction to community development: Theory, practice, and service-learning*. London, United Kingdom: Sage Publications, Inc.

Roper, J.M. & Shapira. J. (2000). *Ethnography in nursing.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Partnership (SPRP). (2018). Partners in Action. Retrieved from http://www.saskatoonpoverty2possibility.ca/partners.html

Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Partnership (SPRP). (2017). Creating a Culture of Inclusion. *Creating a Culture of Inclusion*. Saskatoon, SK: SPRP.

Sandercock, L. (2003). Out of the closet: The importance of stories and storytelling in planning practice. *Planning Theory & Practice, 4*(1), 11-28. doi: 10.1080/1464935032000057209

Seymour. N-K. (2001). Empowerment and public participation. *Constructive Citizen*

> *Participation 29*(2), 1-6. http://www.connor.bc.ca/connor/empowerment.html

Shalowitz, M. U., Isacco, A., Barquin, N., Clark-Kauffman, E., Delger, P., Nelson, D., ... &

> Wagenaar, K. A. (2009). Community-based participatory research: a review of the

> literature with strategies for community engagement. *Journal of Developmental &*

> *Behavioral Pediatrics*, *30*(4), 350-361.

Smart, J. (2017). What is community development? *Child Family Community Australia*

> *Resource Sheet*.

Smith, A., & Frank, F. (1999). *The community development facilitator's guide*. Edmonton,

> Canada: Human Resources Development Canada.

Spark Policy & ORS Impact. (2018). *When collective impact has impact: A cross-site study of 25*

> *collective impact initiatives.* Retrieved from http://www.orsimpact.com/blog/When-

> Collective-Impact-Has-Impact-A-Cross-Site-Study-of-25-Collective-Impact-

> Initiatives.htm

Stuart, G. (2019, March 24). The relationship between community engagement and community

> development. Retrieved from

> https://sustainingcommunity.wordpress.com/2017/07/12/community-engagement-

> community-development/

Supple, D., Roberts, A., Hudson, V., Masefield, S., Fitch, N., Rahmen, M., . . . Wagers, S.

> (2015). From tokenism to meaningful engagement: Best practices in patient involvement

> in an EU project. *Research Involvement and Engagement,1*(1). doi:10.1186/s40900-015-

> 0004-9

Surrey Poverty Reduction Coalition (SPRC). (2014). About Who We Are. Retrieved from

http://surreyprc.ca/about/

Tamarack Institute. (2017). Index of community engagement techniques. Retrieved from

https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/hubfs/.Resources/Index of Engagement

Techniques.pdf?t=1499732120923

Turnhout, E., & Van der Zouwen, M. (2010). 'Governance without governance': how nature

policy was democratized in the Netherlands. *Critical Policy Studies, (4)*4, 344-361.

doi:10.1080/19460171.2010.525899

United Nations. (2015a). SDGs: Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform. Retrieved from

https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs

United Nations. (2015b). Goal 1: Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform. Retrieved from

https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg1

Vibrant Community Calgary (VCC). (2018). About Us. Retrieved from http://enoughforall.ca

Waldner, G. (2016, February 24). Saskatchewan unveils plan to reduce poverty, including more

housing, health care. *Saskatoon Star Phoenix*. Retrieved from

http://thestarphoenix.com/news/local-news/saskatchewan-unveils-plan-to-reduce-

poverty-including-more-housing-health-care

Wolff, T. (2016). Ten Places Where Collective Impact Gets It Wrong. *Global Journal of*

Community Psychology Practice, 7(1), pages 1-11. Retrieved from

http://www.gjcpp.org/.

Wolstenholme, R. (1995). *Understanding Small Rural Communities and the Consultation*

Process. Rural Development Centre, University of New England.

World Health Organization (1992). Twenty steps for developing a healthy cities project. Quoted

in Fraser Health (2009). Community engagement framework. Fraser Health Authority,

Surrey B.C.

Yuksel, P., Robin, B. & McNeil, S. (2011). Educational uses of digital storytelling all around the

world. In M. Koehler & P. Mishra (Eds.). *Proceedings of SITE 2011--Society for*

Information Technology & Teacher Education International Conference, 1264-1271.

Nashville, Tennessee, USA: Association for the Advancement of Computing in

Education (AACE).

Appendices

Appendix A: EndPovertyEdmonton Governance Structure
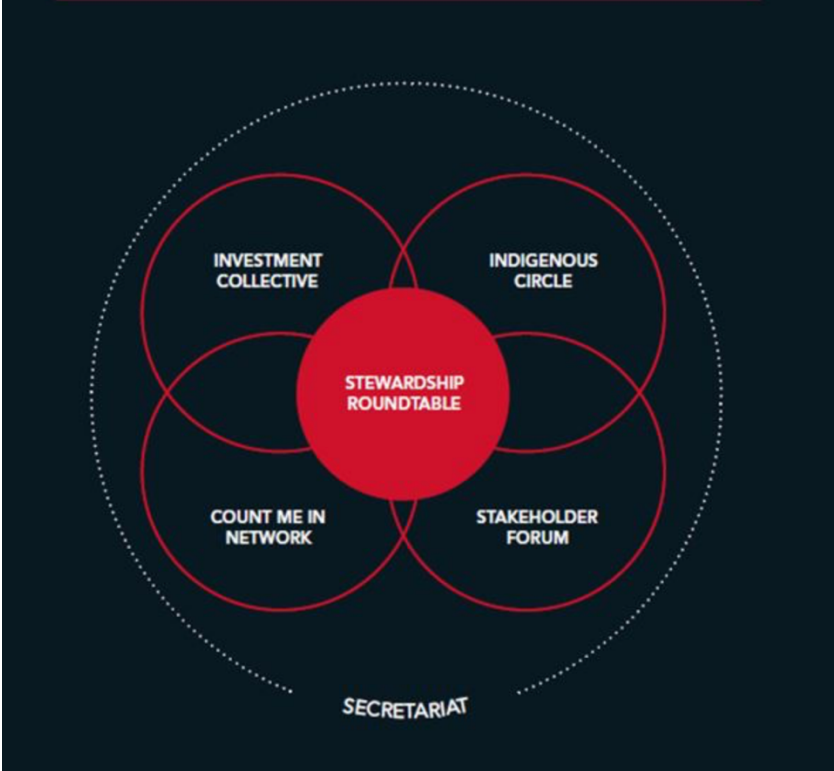
Appendix B: Participant Recruitment Email

Hello,

My name is Emma Wallace and I am Masters student at the University of Alberta, pursuing a degree in Community Engagement. As a part of my Masters degree, I am required to conduct a thesis research project. With a keen interest poverty, I decided to focus my thesis on the engagement of people experiencing poverty in poverty-related initiatives.

I have identified you as a stakeholder involved in a poverty-related initiative, with significant insight into my research question: How is community engagement understood by people working in poverty-related initiatives? Based on this, I would like to ask you if you would be interested in participating in my research through an in-depth 60-minute interview session, with possibility of a follow-up interview.

The interview(s) will be conducted at a time and location of your convenience, between September 2018 and April 2019. Interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim, and confidentiality will be maintained throughout the research process. You will be asked to sign an Informed Consent Form that explains the research project and what your participation will entail. It also notes that any results from the study will be treated confidentially.

If you, or another stakeholder involved in poverty-related initiatives are interested in participating in this research, please contact me at the email address or phone number listed below. If you have any questions about the interview process, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Thank you for your consideration,

Emma Wallace
Masters Student, Master of Arts in Community Engagement
University of Alberta
Tel: 613-229-1144
Email: emma.wallace@hotmail.ca

Appendix C: Interview Guide

Interview Guide

Overview: The individual interviews will last approximately 60 minutes and be audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. All information gathered will remain confidential, and pseudynoms will be assigned.

Introduction:
- Introductions and thanks for participation
- Explain the study's purpose
- Ensure the participant understands that their identity will remain confidential throughout the entire research process
- Walk through information sheet, sign informed consent form
- Explain to the participant that while the interview is guided by questions, it is meant to be an open conversation

Interview Questions:
1. Tell me about your experience in this field. How did you get involved with this initiative?
2. Could you tell me a little bit about the initiative history and its make-up? Who is involved (what types of positions – i.e. government, university, non-profit, etc.) and what role each group/person/position plays within the initiative?
3. In your opinion, what are the reasons for inclusion or exclusion of people experiencing poverty in poverty reduction initiatives?
4. Describe to me how you have involved people living in poverty in your initiative.
   a. What methods worked best? Which don't work?
   b. What have been your successes and lessons learned?
5. How does the engagement of people experiencing poverty vary or differ based on the group (i.e. homeless populations vs. youth vs. Indigenous populations, etc.), or does it? Are there certain groups of people experiencing poverty that are easier to include/engage than others? Why do you think this might this be the case?
6. Who (what position/group) within the initiative is responsible of ensuring people experiencing poverty are engaged in the initiative? Based on your experience, who (position/group) should be responsible for ensuring people experiencing poverty are engaged?
7. What affect does engaging people experiencing poverty in your initiative have on people within the initiative, on the community, on the people experiencing poverty, and on the initiative itself?
8. What ae the benefits of engaging people experiencing poverty in poverty reduction initiatives?