



New Society
Institute

Institut Société
Nouvelle

CASAE X NSI Note Consolidation

Hosted at the Ontario Institute for Studies in
Education (OISE)

November 25, 2025



Event date:
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AGENDA

1. Networking
2. Two rounds of Table Discussions
3. Open Plenary Summary
4. Final Discussion

EVENT INTRODUCTION

In Fall 2025, the Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education (CASAE) in collaboration with the New Society Institute (NSI) hosted the event, “Adult Education Community Research Networking: Sharing Ideas and Resources for Change”. This roundtable-style gathering was designed to spark conversation about how community members and researchers can collaborate more effectively and meaningfully to address pressing social issues. Together, we explored the barriers that community organizers, adult-education practitioners and researchers face when trying to work collaboratively, and explored ways around these challenges. A key objective was to identify opportunities for collaboration related to adult education, including funding realities and needs. Co-creating knowledge to advance collective understanding was, therefore, an important aspect of this event, which welcomed presenters from CASAE, NSI, OISE, and Toronto Drop-In Network (TDN).

TABLE THEMES

Table #	Theme	Presenters
1	Addressing Poverty & Violence for Systemically Marginalized Peoples	Dr. Doris Rajan, Kelly Johnson, Bianca
2	Food Pedagogy and Food Programs	Mel Joy, Dr. Jennifer Sumner
3	Adult Literacy	Dr. Annie Luk, Dr. Paula Elias
4	Including Community in Conferences and Publications	Dr. Bill Fallis, Susan Heximer

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Researchers could access research funding and support to help with programming, but this must be done in collaboration with practitioners, being mindful about not giving practitioners extra work.
- Project aims must be about more than satisfying funders.
- Organizations can employ people to do research.
- Relationships must be authentic and affirming to support the aims of the research, which should include benefits to community members; shared goals and expectations must be established at the outset.
- Making research results accessible to the community is crucial.

Addressing Poverty & Violence for Systemically Marginalized Peoples

Presenters: Dr. Doris Rajan,
Kelly Johnson & Bianca Okine

On Funding

- “Try to piece together money.” We don’t usually pursue government funding that is specific to a program until we have engaged the community to define what we want to do.
- That way, our activities are not dictated by funding objectives and parameters.
- When the money is secondary, people show up and have the ability to speak their truth.
- The motivation to show up and share stories arises because community members - systemically marginalized, low income people - see so many commonalities in their experiences.
- They develop a sense of ownership of the project.
- Projects [should] not just [be] about delivering results to the funder.

On Partnership

- Trust. This takes time and you develop it by ‘doing’ not ‘saying’.
- That is, show them by not dominating discussions or setting too many parameters like agendas, etc. Let people get to know one another as researchers or community developers. We are privileged so we need to listen and talk less.
- Create a space for people to strategize.
- Bring together diverse voices to find common ground on issues, which can strengthen the project, the information, and the results.

Community Organizations

- See the evidence and the issues.
- Personal experience brings the work to another level.

Researchers

- Don’t frame conversations/collaboration in a particular way to control it. Just listen.
- You invite people into a space – what’s in it for them? This notion that they come because they want to make change or for the greater good, kind of falls off when you are talking about people for whom every day is about survival.
- Always offer food and honoraria so that people can come, have a good time, make some money and begin to think about ways that they can collectively make their lives better.
- Honoraria – you don’t have to claim honoraria because it is not a job. That is extra money they can keep. It’s significant to endorse someone for their time.
- ***Remember: Many people are on social assistance, which is clawed back if they make a certain amount per month***
- Many larger organizations have quota and rules that are tied to funding; e.g. they can’t serve non-status migrants because they are funded by Immigration Canada.
- Go to the grassroots not mainstream organizations or larger identity-specific organizations like large settlement centres
- We have all probably been in those spaces. What are we going to get from it?
- We don’t go in and ‘mine’ or take information from them.
- They own what they share and how we use that information.
- Cultivate the relationships at the community level.
- Find out what community wants to do.

Food Pedagogy and Food Programs

On Funding

- Capacity building and advocacy is around funding: 80% of drops receive municipal funding.
- A report was done by the Public Good Initiative that demonstrated worker burn-out.
 - TDN was able to share this research at conferences and to apply for funding.

On Partnership

Organizations employ people to do research for the program. There is no capacity to do this research on their own (food banks are run largely by volunteers). It is a sustainability issue when considering ongoing research and/or sustainability of programming, which could be better funded if research were completed.

Community Organizations

- You need to prove there is a need, and research gives this data in a way that is unique to your organization's actions and services (Non-profits don't have the capacity to do this on their own). It comes down to funding.
- There is a detachment between the government and the communities; the government needs research to prove what they need.
- It's hard to meet funding requirements for data collection because of a lack of resources.
- Students from OISE's Adult Education and Community Development program could be a resource. They could give 36 to 48 hours during their practicum in the Winter semester (they don't get paid but they receive a course credit). Opportunity to create links between AECD and organizations with research needs.

Adult Literacy

Presenters: Dr. Annie Luk &
Dr. Paula Elias

On Partnership

Partnership could initiate conversation between frontline professionals and research professionals to better capture people's adult literacy experiences. By increasing the quality of the scales, it may benefit translating grassroots experiences to language that higher ups can use to approve and justify the provision of funding.

Researchers

- Use the privilege and institutional access to support community leaders and build sustainable adult learning momentum.
- Understand frontline work through collaboration with community leaders rather than merely on theoretical premises.

Community Organizations

Attend events such as those organized by CASAE to broadcast experiences.

On Funding

- Defunding increases precarity for learning.
- Even if researchers come with good intentions to help non-profits access funding, fulfilling funding requirements tends to be a burden that stretches the non-profits and researchers may make it worse in terms of workload.
- Funding is tied to skills and training, and funding for adult learning in Ontario is very limited. It is important to note that adult literacy across Canada includes a broad range of arrangements depending on the province and local community. This lack of clear boundaries in the definition of adult learning makes it more difficult to find funding as opportunities are scattered across various realms.
- Provincial funding may complicate and hinder the promotion of literacy programs.
- Lack of funding makes it challenging for professionals with frontline experience (community leaders) to gain institutional recognition or credentials.
- Current outcomes measurements do not accurately reflect adult learning experience. Milestones only reflect performance.

Including Community in Conferences and Publications

Presenters: Dr. Bill Fallis
& Susan Heximer

On Funding

- Even before being approved for funding, consider pre-assessment to gauge interest and need; form relationships and connections with community members.
- Sometimes the grant applications do not get approved (as per an example that Bill shared) but taking the time to be known and to know that potential community and its participants is recommended.

On Partnership

Five factors/conditions make community research valuable and engaging for the community partner and participants:

1. Collective creation of expectations and goals.
2. Design and implementation involves participants.
3. Relationships need to be authentic and affirming to support the aims of the research.
4. As a result of the research, community participants will be able to say that they have a better understanding of the topic and can apply it to their own work.
5. As a result of the research/project, community participants gain a better understanding of their own learning processes and change their understanding of learning. Consider how they can gain from the experience(s) and bring it forward.

Questions/ concerns/ considerations regarding collaboration:

- How can a researcher establish initial contact?
- How do you navigate the establishment of relationships that take time? Is there a natural way to do it?

Researchers

- Organizations do not have time to engage in reflective practice; researchers could help by getting involved in strategic planning, listening (to learn) carefully, and helping to formulate potential areas of enquiry.
- Know that you're always making an impression as a researcher in both academia and the community. Community agencies talk to one another and to professors, too.
- Ensure accessibility of shared materials (i.e. not just text-based but also videos/audio materials).
- Consider making a connection with an agency or community to build rapport to support credibility and interest e.g. attend their AGM and/or community events.
- Cultural sensitivity and reciprocity are important to partnerships.
- Reciprocity is critical - to share personal information and build rapport.

Community Organizations

- Organizations might be more interested in getting the funding for the research and run with it on their own.
- It can be very helpful if a community is already looking for someone to conduct research.

Plenary Discussion

- Remember that as a researcher, you represent the institution and you may encounter leftover/residual feelings held toward that institution.
- How will the findings reach the daily lives of those in the community so that they do not remain on a shelf?
- Researchers represent the institution, and how you behave with that community will have ripple effects for future researchers.
- Acknowledge what you don't know. Put your methodology in a box. Elevate the research by making the participants your co-researchers.
- Have someone from the community as your touch point. Trust the network that is established. We are part of these communities. Have proof that you are doing the work.

Questions that came up

How does the research reach the communities?

A: The research should be translated and actionable for the communities, not just stored on a shelf. Think about the impact that your research should have.

What are the challenges of connecting with communities?

- A possible problem is a hierarchy that is averse to communities, preferring to do research about communities, not with them.
- There is an elitism about academic institutions and/or researchers (publish or perish mindset); they don't actually want to know the problems.
- People are resistant to non-formal channels of understanding and learning.
- Communities can be intimidating. People are afraid to ask questions and say the wrong things. Is this true about academics? Are they afraid of approaching the organizations?
- You may be carrying the baggage of previous researchers, and you will be creating new relationships that will be carried forward.

Possible next steps

- What about a speed dating event with agencies and potential researchers?
- What about an app to match agencies with potential researchers?
- United Way - approach them to see if they have any projects that need research support.

Resources

Books

- INCITE! (2017). *The revolution will not be funded: Beyond the non-profit industrial complex*. Duke University Press.

Journal Articles

Budd Hall's Work On Participatory Research

- Hall, B.L. and Tandon, R. (2017). Participatory research: Where have we been, where are we going? – A dialogue. *Research for All*, 1(2): 365–74. DOI <https://doi.org/10.18546/RFA.01.2.12>

Researcher Positionality:

- Holmes, A. G. D. (2020). Researcher positionality – A consideration of its influence and place in qualitative research – A New Researcher Guide. *Shanlax International Journal of Education*, 8(4), 1.

Ethics in community-based research:

- Banks, S., Armstrong, A., Carter, K., Graham, H., Hayward, P., Henry, A., Holland, T., Holmes, C., Lee, A., McNulty, A., Moore, N., Nayling, N., Stokoe, A., & Strachan, A. (2013). Everyday ethics in community-based participatory research. *Contemporary Social Science*, 8(3), 263–277. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21582041.2013.769618>

Desire-based research:

- Tuck, E. (2009). Suspending damage: A letter to communities. *Harvard Educational Review*, 79(3), 409–428. <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.79.3.n0016675661t3n15>

Other

- **The Public Good Initiative:** Created research report about drop-ins for Toronto Drop-in Network, does other research and policy work for community organizations. <https://www.publicgoodinitiative.ca/> -
- **Community Research Projects: A Guide:** https://community.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/2024/02/CER-Ethical-Principles_SFUCERi.pdf

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