



Newsletter of the Anti-Poverty Community Organizing and Learning Project

Learning Changes

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Getting warmed up at the APCOL/ICDI conference. Photo Courtesy of Joseph Sawan.

CONCLUSIONS ON THE CONCLUSION OF APCOL

by Sharon Simpson

It is hard to realize that we are at the end of a five year research project. In the first APCOL newsletter published in the fall of 2009 I wrote:

“The APCOL project aims to explore and strengthen:

- Grassroots community organizing work to combat poverty
- Popular education and informal learning as supports for combating poverty through activist development and campaigns
- Implementation of low-cost, accessible communication tools to disseminate what is learned.”

Now as the APCOL research project draws to a close, it seems appropriate to reflect on how well the project did in meeting the above goals. The final academic report will delve fully into the key research topics of Housing, Education, Employment, Food and Nutrition in relation to anti-poverty work. For now let's focus on the original aims.

Strengthening grassroots community organizing work to combat poverty

Often the criticism levelled at participatory research involving universities and those not from academia (the community) is that the university derives more from the relationship than the community does. The APCOL team made up of both community and university members made a conscious decision and put measures in place to avoid such an outcome.

Because of decisions taken early on it did not take long for grassroots community groups and organizations to begin referring to APCOL as an entity that they identified with and which would live on after the term of the research.

Frequently, APCOL was referred to, by community members, as either an organization or a movement that people could, and should, join. These sorts of references suggest the degree to which the work of APCOL began erasing the line between university and community gain; they also unwittingly placed APCOL in the same arena as various ongoing community efforts aimed at addressing poverty.

Effectively wrapping-up a finite (albeit large) research project that helped trigger so much positive energy would be a challenge. After all, the project had lent its support to developing things such as:

- popularizing community benefits agreement in the building of public transit (Weston Mount Dennis/Toronto York Region Labour Council);
- community theatre to highlight and seek solutions to social issues (Scarborough: Kingston Galloway/Orton Park);
- new tools for leadership development in Toronto (Food Share);
- new supports for Aboriginal-centred community education (Anishnawbe Health Toronto/George Brown

College Community Health Worker Program);

- new evidence on how at-risk youth could become community leaders (St. James Town / Yonge Street Mission) or get construction jobs (Moss Park / George Brown Community Partnership Office);
- new insights into housing improvement (Toronto/ACORN);

and the list goes on. More than 150 Toronto residents were trained in how to carry out community-based research.

Threading across all of these efforts was the completion of Canada's first ever survey of anti-poverty activism learning as well as our two conferences on anti-poverty organizing which facilitated dialogue among various community groups. With all these people having come together to produce such positive change, it was clear that the legacy of APCOL's work needed to be preserved.

A "legacy initiative" was undertaken to avoid having this enormous positive energy disappear along with the research funding. Beyond new evidence, current (and forthcoming) research reports, new program tools, guide-books, art, innovative community-based research engagement methods and technology, relationships across neighborhoods and organizations, and so on – the legacy initiative included partnering with the Toronto Community Development Institute (TCDI) with the aim of suggesting a new home for APCOL participants looking to continue with their activism. This type of linking and transitioning is intended to strengthen grassroots community organizing work to combat poverty.

Popular education and informal learning as supports for combating poverty through activist development and campaigns

True to APCOL's commitment, all training and learning opportunities were delivered using popular education as a model. Once survey data was compiled, it made logical sense to engage stakeholders from the community as well as social service delivery agencies to be involved in analyzing the data through a process of community data analysis (CDA).

Led by Ruth Wilson and Grace Edward Galabuzi training to complete the analysis employed popular education methods. The fact that representatives from community organizations have reached out to APCOL seeking use of training materials is a good indicator that the education and learning approach implemented by APCOL was time well spent.

Likewise, each APCOL conference was built on the bedrock of popular education methods. Throughout, people's everyday experiences were at the centre of the educational process providing the real curriculum of learning for positive change.

APCOL case study research also made use of popular education and paid special attention to peoples' everyday informal learning experiences both in terms of the research process and data gathering. The case study with Anishnawbe Health Toronto (AHT), in partnership with George Brown College, is a good example. Early in the project it was recognized that the approach being utilized by AHT merged informal and formal learning in a unique way. It became important to capture the approach being used with First Nations learner/researchers taking the lead. The insights gained offered

an evidence platform for both AHT and George Brown College to build on in relation to pedagogy uniquely suited to First Nations anti-poverty work.

The same can be said of other case studies whether it was popular education based on everyday learning and knowledge of community gardening activists at Food Share, housing activists in KGO, emerging youth leaders in St. James Town, or those in the Weston Mount Dennis neighborhood establishing new forms of economic development through community benefit agreements or by challenging landlords to fulfill their obligations.

Implementation of low-cost, accessible communication tools to disseminate what is learned

Knowledge mobilization was a key principle of APCOL. It involved the real-time use of knowledge as much as the distribution of results. Getting information out to those not connected to APCOL was done in several ways including through this newsletter. Printed in hard copy and available online copies of the newsletter were made available at various training events and conferences beyond APCOL. Literally thousands of stories and evidence on Toronto anti-poverty activism learning were distributed across the city, the province and the country (and beyond). Each issue of the newsletter aimed to provide updates on what was being learned as the research progressed while giving voice to anti-poverty initiatives taking place outside of APCOL circles.

The APCOL web site (www.apcol.ca), offering video, organizing tools, reports, profiles and maps focusing on anti-poverty

activism learning continues to grow in the number of hits it receives to this day.

And then there has been our attention to the use of activism art. Convinced that activism art – made by activists, for activists and action – was one of the most effective mass educational tools available for beginning new thinking, new conversations and new learning, APCOL's efforts supported spoken word, film, visual art and forum theatre.

Conclusions on the Conclusion of APCOL

Far from perfect, time-limited, and having only limited resources, it seems clear that residents, students, organizations, organizers and professors of APCOL have contributed something of lasting value. It is safe to say that over the past five years APCOL met the goals that it set for itself and in some cases exceeded them. At times it did so with enormous success; at other times it did so only by listening very carefully and learning.

Still, amidst all the inherent messiness and mania of APCOL's work – as an attempt to set the bar higher on what it means for communities and universities to collaborate on equal footing while turning out cutting-edge research and training opportunities – it seems clear that there was indeed a method that emerged from 'the APCOL approach' that is worth preserving.



Sharon Simpson is Special Projects Coordinator for Labour Community Services, and community co-leader of the APCOL project.

Photo courtesy of Labour Community Services

PUSH BACK! MOVE FORWARD!

A REPORT ON THE APCOL/TCDI OCTOBER 2013 CONFERENCE

By Katheryne Schulz & Peter H. Sawchuk

For the past five years, Anti-Poverty Community Organizing and Learning (APCOL) researchers from Toronto universities, colleges and local neighbourhoods have been talking to hundreds of people across Toronto about the nature of activism learning. We paid special attention to anti-poverty initiatives revolving around housing, education, employment and health/food security. From the start, we put “learning” at the centre of our concerns, by asking some difficult questions:

- How do some people learn to become involved in neighbourhood activism?
- How do some learn to become involved but later learn to drop-out?
- How do others learn to remain un-involved?

Everyone can offer a reason for what they do of course, but our researchers wanted to know how people actually come to these conclusions about activism. We also agreed that while this type of research on activism is important, so too is bringing activists and community workers together to consider new evidence, share best practices, and discuss collective action.

This fall, in partnership with the Toronto Community Development Institute (TCDI), APCOL helped bring together over 160 people at Metro Hall to do just that. On October 18 and 19, The Push Back! Move Forward! Learning, Organising and Building



Feedback from participants was key to the success of the conference.

Community conference focused on how collective action can be taken to address disparities of income and power that continue to widen across cities like Toronto.

Our two-day session was a rare opportunity for neighbourhood activists and educators to talk to experienced panellists, speakers and facilitators about what works, what doesn't, and how activism can be expanded.

Conference Objectives

The key objectives of the conference were:

- Return the results of the APCOL survey to the communities where it was generated and work through the meaning of the APCOL findings.
- Recognise community researchers for their contribution to the project.
- Invite experienced community organisers to exchange knowledge and build community development skills with community members and students.



Naomi Tessler introduces the forum theatre performance of "And Here We Dwell" by KGO residents

- Provide a collective space for community activists and students to come together to reflect on their work and to connect with one another.
- And finally, continue to realize the gains made in understanding, action and evidence made through APCOL initiatives with Social Planning

Toronto (SPT) and TCDI serving as a key hub for these activities to continue. Participants were invited to a follow-up meeting focused on building an ongoing network to strengthen local neighbourhood capacity and cross-neighbourhood alliances.

Conference Program

How did we go about trying to achieve these objectives? First, by bringing together a diversity of voices, experiences and perspectives.

The conference opened with a welcome from APCOL project co-lead Sharon Simpson (Toronto Labour Community Services). She was followed by Grace Edward Galabuzi, (Associate Professor, Department of Politics and Public Administration, Ryerson University) who introduced keynote speaker Uzma Shakir (Director of the Office of Equity, Diversity & Human Rights, City of Toronto). In her address, Uzma explained the City's current directions in anti-poverty policy and encouraged participants to become active advocates on City issues.

As part of APCOL's commitment to the use of insurgent art for activist learning and development Uzma's speech was followed by an interactive theatre performance on housing issues presented by long-time APCOL partners Naomi Tessler and the

KGO Spoken Forum Collective. It was a lively performance that focused on the challenges tenants face in resolving problems and working together.

The following morning our conference hosts, D'Arcy Martin (Coordinator, Centre for the Study of Education and Work, University of Toronto) and Israt Ahmed (Social Planning Toronto) welcomed participants to the morning plenary session. Richard De Gaetano, TCDI conference organizer (Social Planning Toronto), talked about the TCDI's previous conferences and plans for establishing a network to support community organisers and their work. APCOL co-leader Sharon Simpson (Labour Community Services Toronto) followed up by describing what five years of APCOL research has accomplished across Toronto.

Sharon noted, "There is lots of research available on poverty in Canada, but APCOL's focus has always been on the experience of activism around anti-poverty issues... An issue that most people and most researchers have not paid enough attention to."

A conference highlight for many was the talk given by keynote speaker Nina Wilson, one of the co-founders of Idle No More (see the spotlight on Nina's talk in this issue). Nina explained how Idle No More began and some of the challenges she has confronted as a community organizer.

She focused on the negative impact of government economic policies on the environment, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. Her message clearly resonated with every activist in the room as they rose to give her a standing ovation.



Signing up for a Morning Workshop.

Later in the day the conference's opening messages were expanded on through the panel discussion on strategies for combatting social inequality, moderated by TCDI activist and social worker Jaclyn Van Laar. Three experienced community organisers offered alternative views on strategies for combatting social inequality: Crystle Sinclair (Toronto Idle No More), Nigel Barriffe (Etobicoke educator and community organiser) and Jennifer Huang (Labour Council organiser). Crystle Sinclair addressed issues related to the mobilization of Indigenous people and their allies in taking a stand against environmental and economic policies. Nigel Barriffe emphasized the importance of learning from previous social movements as well as current social movements like the Quebec student movement. Jennifer Huang educated the audience on the successful \$10 minimum wage campaign while outlining the importance of long-term planning, membership engagement and strong alliances.

Complementing each of the plenary events were 12 workshops divided across morning

and afternoon sessions that covered a range of topics. Representatives from APCOL's most recent case studies and its survey researchers all presented. Other popular workshops included the following:



Contributing to the conference Democracy Wall

- Knowledge to action: Getting research off the shelf and into community to spark action.
- Neighbourhood backbone organisations: Taking community development to the next level.
- Exploring local economic development in a multi-stakeholder environment
- The people united: Breaking down walls and silos that divide us.
- Building towards a people's social forum
- Media basics: Effective media relations in community-based advocacy campaigns

Making the conference additionally special was the presentation of recognition awards for APCOL community researchers. Over one hundred community researchers participated in the APCOL project and were instrumental in its success.

Finally, in her closing message, Keisa Campbell (Neighbourhoods and Community Investment - United Way) reported on

major outcomes and questions raised at the conference as a whole. Noting the energetic dialogue that had been initiated, she emphasized the need for more resources and opportunities for activists to connect across neighbourhoods, in order to share their experiences and work together.

As the APCOL project concludes its five years of operation, it remains clear that conferences like these offer rare opportunities for collective social movement building and learning. As activists move forward with TCDI and in their neighbourhoods, lessons

from APCOL's research will hopefully continue to be passed on.

Post-Script

A huge thank you to the APCOL and TCDI volunteers, the Conference Planning Committee members, speakers, panelists and artists, community workshop facilitators, event hosts Martin and Ahmed, the Catalyst Centre popular educators, CUPE Local 2484 childcare providers, Metro Hall staff, and all those who came out and participated and helped make the conference meaningful and worthwhile. Many thanks also to Sue Carter (APCOL conference organizer in 2011) for providing us with a great example to follow.

All conference photographs courtesy of Joseph Sawan.

Katheryne Schulz is a long-time child care activist, a doctoral student at OISE and a graduate assistant in the APCOL project.

Peter Sawchuk is a co-leader of the APCOL project and Professor of Sociology & Equity Studies, University of Toronto.

SPOTLIGHT ON NINA WILSON

Excerpts from a keynote speech at the Push Back! Move Forward! APCOL/TCDI conference on October 19, 2013 by Nina Wilson, Nakota, Dakota, Plains Cree from the Kahkewistahaw First Nation in South Eastern Saskatchewan in the Crooked Lake Agency of Treaty 4 Territory.

Listen to the full speech at http://www.apcol.ca/Newsletter/Spotlight/Nina_Wilson.html

Transcription by Katheryne Schulz. Cree translation by Brenda Wastasecoot.

(In Cree) My name is Tornado Thunderbird Woman. I'm a pitiful person and I don't know anything, and I work for the Creator of all good things. I acknowledge the spirit world, the helpers of all nations, and the children here and unborn. All we can do is try hard.

(In English) I introduce myself to you in my languages and I just wished for a good day for all of us... I come from southeastern Saskatchewan and I'm an accidental activist. I didn't intend on becoming who I am now. I didn't dream that I would be part of something so beautiful and something so big and so amazing. I never dreamt that would happen for me or for all of us.

I thank the First People that this territory truly belongs to. I want to remind people that this land was taken... I'm asking you all to think about those people who are displaced. And not just displaced from the territories that they were put in around Toronto but about the spatial dispossession that is happening right here in Toronto.



Photo Courtesy of Joseph Sawan

Before Idle No More I was already very concerned about things because I grew up in a territory where you could walk around and you could eat the food that grew wild and natural there, you could scoop water up in your hand and drink it.

(As I grew older) I came home often and I saw signage: Beware of the water. Do not drink the water. Boil the water not once or twice but three times. When you turn the tap on, the water comes out of the tap in chunks. That was very distressing to me because I

always enjoyed that freedom to be safe. Water is a right, we all have a right to it. It doesn't matter what class we are, what colour we are, what race we belong to, we need water. Water is life. Water is the medicine. If we do not have water, we are in big trouble.

(As Idle No More activists) our first plan was to educate people on things that were detrimental to water and detrimental to land such as fracking...What we did try to do because we are treaty, there's a court case called *Sundown versus Canada*. And Sundown was a gentleman from Holbema and he was a Cree trapper and he put a cabin in the path of a pipeline and that ceased everything. Everything just stopped because he had that treaty right. We were going to start a project called the Sundown project and we were going to put cabins in the path of all these pipelines and we were going to slow it down enough to tell all the people what they were really in for until someone presented us with Bill C-45...and we found out that that what Bill C45 did was remove that right to have say over who and what comes into our territory. Bill C45 is now coming into effect. You can see its effects in places like Elsipogtog in New Brunswick.

You may be wondering what this has to do with Toronto. This is a lot about the communities out there like Elsipogtog, like my community and other First Nations communities. These bills that have been passed will affect those communities because (the communities) are being municipalised

and they can be sold. Our people can take chunks of them and they can sell them. What do poor people do when they have nothing? What's going to happen to those poor people once they sell? They are coming to Toronto because there is no more reserve.

I don't know if you are aware of what's happening in New Brunswick, but there's some big things happening there. (Yesterday) the police and the military invaded Elsipogtog at about 4:30 or 5:00 in the morning, crawling in like a sniper routine, rifles and guns ablazing. It was crazy. They were shooting rubber bullets. I don't know if you know what rubber bullets are but if I shot you with a rubber bullet you would feel it.

So I think this is why Idle No More came about. We all need water. In Elsipogtog, what the battle is about is that there is a Texas company there and they are frackers. Fracking can cause tremors and earthquakes. In Elsipogtog and the surrounding area there is a nuclear waste dump site. Nuclear waste dump sites have containers that have walls that are ten feet thick. Walls that are proven to leak. Nuclear waste will kill you. Fracking will disrupt those containers and those containers will burst and they will harm thousands of people. This is the frightening thing about fracking in that area. Not only that but our own natural gas and oil down below are flammable. They are pouring chemicals into the earth and we don't even know what they are. If they start an inferno

underground where are we going to go? All the oil and all the gas is all connected. Just like our underground waterways, they are all connected. So if the water in these communities is contaminated then where are they going to get water from? If the water in Toronto is contaminated, where are you going to get water from?

The water wars are beginning. People around the world don't have water. Fracking takes immense amounts of water. So does a lot of open pit mining.

I'm sorry to take up a lot of time to educate about a lot of the environmental issues but that's big part of what we are about, saving

and protecting the earth. We all need a home to live in. Yes, we need jobs but we need to think of new ways to get those jobs. Because the kinds of economic opportunities that the government is spouting are so great, they are not so great. There are countries that are green, they are taking the alternatives. Why are we not doing that? Why is that not happening here?

This is what Idle No More is about. It's about getting people mobilized. It's about getting people empowered and getting them moving. Moving, action is love. That's what real love is. If you are quiet that silence can literally kill you.

ORGANIZING COMMUNITY BENEFITS FROM TRANSIT INFRASTRUCTURE

By James Nugent and Steve Shallhorn

How can billions of dollars being invested into infrastructure projects by the government also be used to lift communities out of poverty? This has been the guiding question for community activists and researchers working together in the Mount Dennis and Weston neighbourhoods as part of an APCOL case study. After three decades of deindustrialization, Mount Dennis-Weston has some of the province's poorest postal codes. Cheaper rent has allowed the community to become a settlement area for recent immigrants and those on fixed incomes. But jobs, especially good-paying ones, remain scarce.

Over the past few years, Metrolinx (the provincial government's transportation agency) has invested hundreds of millions of dollars to build the Union-Pearson Express rail line that cuts through the community. Mount Dennis was also chosen as the western terminus for the four billion dollar Eglinton Crosstown Light Rail Transit (LRT) project.

APCOL joined together with the Labour Education Centre and the Mount Dennis Weston Network to organize low-income residents to demand job and training opportunities associated with these transit construction projects. It was soon realized



Sultana Jahangir (South Asian Women's Rights Organization) and Lee Caprio (IBEW Local 535) speak at first city-wide meeting of the Toronto Community Benefits Network. . Photo: Rick Ciccarelli

that winning these benefits would require a broader coalition comprising of trade unions, community organizations and social agencies servicing neighbourhoods across the entire length of the proposed Eglinton Crosstown project. Calling themselves the Toronto Community Benefits Network, the coalition began to attend and hold regular meetings and popular education workshops in the community to raise awareness around the potential of leveraging community benefits from the Crosstown LRT project. APCOL sponsored a successful Family Day workshop and a panel discussion that were specifically targeted at engaging low-income residents and single mothers in the discussion, particularly those from equity-seeking and historically disadvantaged groups.

An initial step was learning from other neighbourhoods in Toronto and other jurisdictions around the world that have tried to win employment concessions from developers. In 2006-2007, residents in Rexdale and UNITE HERE (the hotel workers' union) went far in demanding local hiring

provisions as a condition of the proposed Woodbine Live! entertainment complex, although financing for the project eventually fell through. In Regent Park, a few local residents were hired to help build the social housing redevelopment – but the absence of a formal written agreement with the contractors undermined the success of the initiative.

The Toronto Community Benefits Network hosted speakers from Vancouver, Los Angeles and Scotland

who shared their experiences negotiating formal Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs) with developers in order to achieve employment equity, local hiring and training benefits for marginalized residents. Two key messages delivered by these speakers were the importance of a formal written agreement and the need for a designated equity officer to ensure on-the-ground compliance. In Scotland, where CBAs are now routine public policy, social enterprises have been able to win sub-contracts providing services such as food catering and fence construction to large building sites. These three speakers also participated in a two-day workshop where members of the Toronto Community Benefits Network charted out their vision for an Eglinton Crosstown CBA.

The vision for the Crosstown CBA covers four different types of benefits, in addition to a clear mechanism for monitoring and enforcing compliance. The overriding goal is to provide employment opportunities and training to residents in low-income neighbourhoods, including

Priority Neighbourhoods, among urban Aboriginal populations, within racialized and newcomer communities, among people with disabilities, as well as youth and women who are disadvantaged.

The first objective is to establish pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship opportunities including wrap-around supports to address some of the social and economic barriers inhibiting marginalized residents from entering the trades. The Toronto Community Benefits Network estimates that 4-600 first year apprentices, include the full range of trades, will be needed over the next 5 to 6 years.

The second objective is to ensure that internationally-trained professionals who have recently immigrated into Toronto can access the white-collar jobs associated with the Crosstown LRT project in areas of finance, administration, design and engineering.

The third objective is to create contracting opportunities for social enterprises to deliver catering, printing, security, post-construction services, recruitment and training delivery, plus other services.

The fourth objective is to have Metrolinx engage with neighbourhoods along Eglinton to develop neighbourhood improvements such as the installation of solar panels on rooftops of maintenance buildings and the development of resource centres for jobs, training and social innovation.

After the vision for the Crosstown CBA was developed, the Toronto Community Benefits Network began to engage politicians and negotiate with Metrolinx. Community Benefits Agreements are smart public policy because they achieve multiple social policy

objectives with little additional costs. But decision-makers have been reluctant to sign a CBA since the concept is still very new in Ontario. The popular education workshops facilitated by APCOL have therefore been key mechanisms for generating political pressure in the community for a CBA. Already, community organizing in Mount Dennis-Weston led Metrolinx to financially support the Hammer Heads program so that thirteen youth could benefit from apprenticeship opportunities associated with the Union-Pearson Express rail project.

APCOL's active role helping to form the Toronto Community Benefits Network, organizing workshops and educational forums, and ensuring that marginalized residents in Mount Dennis could participate in the process, demonstrates the promise of anti-poverty organizing and the significant role of learning within social movement organizations. The next immediate step is to secure a binding CBA with Metrolinx.

Future organizing around CBAs for transit projects should address concerns that transit developments lead to gentrification



Community and labour representatives unveil banner in advance of a Metrolinx board meeting, September 2012. Photo: Sue Birge

pressures, raising land values and rent prices that, in turn, displace low-income residents. In the United States, most CBAs now contain provisions that require developers to build affordable housing in areas being redeveloped. This is a serious concern in Toronto considering that most transit expansion projects underway pass through areas of low-income housing. A challenge for the Toronto Community Benefits Network and Mount Dennis residents will be to organize affordable housing to ensure

residents can stay in neighbourhoods they have come to call home and live in neighbourhoods that are well-served by rapid transit.

For more information, please see www.communitybenefits.ca

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BUILDING SPACES FOR YOUTH LEADERSHIP AND SOCIAL CHANGE

A CASE STUDY OF THE ST. JAMES TOWN YUVA PROGRAM

By Joseph E. Sawan and Peter Sawchuk

Community efforts to overcome conditions of poverty have been demonstrated throughout the APCOL research project through in depth case studies, city-wide surveys and community conferences. One theme that often emerges is a question of how to engage youth participants as leaders in their communities and support their efforts to develop solutions to their everyday struggles.

This was precisely the focus of one of APCOL's final case studies in St. James Town with the Youth United in Visionary Action (YUVA) afterschool program. YUVA was developed by the Yonge Street Mission (YSM) to fill a gap in programming provided for youth in the community. As a result, a 5 month curriculum was developed targeting youth between 12 - 17 years old. The aims of the curriculum are to:

1. Empower the voice of young people.
2. Provide a platform to learn, value, and participate in civic life.
3. Engage their peers, adults, and government on behalf of local concerns related to youth and issues that affect their community.
4. Inspire young people to act as agents of change to transform their neighborhoods.
5. Invest in the development of young people. (YUVA Curriculum, 2011)

Considering the goals of the APCOL project, the YUVA program provides a unique insight to an important element of anti-poverty work: building leadership

capacity among youth. Furthermore, the YUVA project aimed to address gaps in afterschool programming in St. James Town that were expected to related to issues of leadership, communication, teamwork, community development, advocacy, public policy and government. Unique to YUVA styled programming was a core interest to integrate existing social networks among youth, rather than attempting to foment new ones during a limited time span. As such, there was a decision to focus work with sports teams – in recent cohorts, basketball teams of area schools – in order to further build on the trust and cohesiveness present among the teams. Notably, this involves evidence that relates to much broader work and perspectives on anti-poverty work in the context of the APCOL; a project which maintained a goal to better understand the bases and processes of social network formation as central to successful activist learning generally.

Themes addressed in the YUVA case study

Specific to the case study was an interest to explore the effectiveness of such a program, and to consider tools that may help assess such efforts. With this in mind, academic researchers and community partners developed a new approach for assessing participant change and evaluating the overall effects of YUVA and similar programs. To meet these goals, the case study created an innovative survey instrument.

With an emphasis on youth engagement and empowerment, this case study was likewise concerned with how the four thematic pillars cited in the APCOL proposal would be addressed through the YUVA program. The four themes/pillars included: a) Health/Nutrition/Food Security; b)

Safe Shelter / Housing; c) Opportunity for Adequate Education; and d) Access to a Jobs, Vocational Training and Living Wages. The survey questions were tailored to an exploration of participants' varied knowledge and curiosity about core APCOL themes/pillars with particular emphasis on how the YUVA curriculum could further build on their experiences and encourage further community engagement. Through an understanding of how youth come to understand their communities and engage as leaders, an additional goal was to provide some discussion of the relevance to future development of youth programs in the GTA in support of anti-poverty work.

Following the four themes/pillars that the APCOL research project initially proposed, the YUVA program demonstrates a unique space for youth to engage with all four themes through popular education oriented sessions that directly relate to participants' experiences and facilitate discussions to develop solutions to the challenges facing their communities. The outcomes have varied for each cohort, with one of the more recent examples being a short film ("Ride or Die" - <http://youtu.be/yF28nklz5bQ>) that presents the struggles of drug use among youth. Other topics that have been addressed include bullying, gang violence and health/nutrition. Rather than merely focusing on the problems facing youth, YUVA takes necessary steps in providing tools for collective action, ranging from lobbying at Parliament Hill to grassroots community organizing in St. James Town.

Methods and research questions

In keeping with our attempt to develop innovative ways to address youth leadership development, our case study research

sought greater depth rather than breadth of evidence. To do this, we conducted a total of 21 interviews with 12 participants over the course of 9 months. Notably, in order to explore the learning that took place through the YUVA program, we conducted ‘pre-’ and ‘post-’ YUVA surveys.

The preliminary analysis demonstrates that some of the most interesting and impressive changes that took place involved the way in which respondents perceived themselves and the challenges they face prior to and after participating in the YUVA program. By way of summary, YUVA participants typically left the program with a newly developed (or significantly improved) sense of their own role in their community (e.g. as leader, supporter, advocate, etc.). Such changes of one’s role relates closely to changes in ability/skill/knowledge necessary to contribute to

making improvements in one’s community, improved community engagement, and improved potential to help affect positive social change more broadly.

As studies on youth empowerment continue to demonstrate, there is generally a lack of spaces, resources and opportunities for youth to engage in holistic afterschool activities that are directly linked in a meaningful way to their communities, schooling and society-at-large.

In more traditional approaches to understanding youth development, there is often a missing question of the role that community activism and participation can play in engaging young participants in their neighbourhoods. As is evidenced in ‘priority neighbourhoods’ in the Toronto-area and from other APCOL case studies – there is

PRE-YUVA

[s1q4] How would you rate your current knowledge of your community?

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Excellent, (I am a St. James Town expert)		8.3%	1
Very Good, (I know a lot about St. James Town)		41.7%	5
Good, (I know where to find most things)		50.0%	6
Average, (I know how to get around)		0.0%	0
No knowledge of my community		0.0%	0
Refused		0.0%	0
Total Responses			12

POST-YUVA

[s1q4] How would you rate your current knowledge of your community?

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Excellent, (I am a St. James Town expert)		22.2%	2
Very Good, (I know a lot about St. James Town)		66.7%	6
Good, (I know where to find most things)		11.1%	1
Average, (I know how to get around)		0.0%	0
No knowledge of my community		0.0%	0
Refused		0.0%	0
Total Responses			9

How would you rate your current knowledge of your community?: Chart of Pre and Post YUVA responses

an emerging connection between levels of community activism and spaces for youth to engage in meaningful activities (e.g. sports, community gardening, political engagement, volunteerism, internship/employment opportunities). How may afterschool programs such as YUVA act as a much needed bridge across existing schooling networks towards active community participation struggling for positive social change? Can a carefully designed curriculum allow for skill-building, consciousness-raising and leadership development that can support anti-poverty community organizing? These are some of the questions that the case study

aimed to uncover and we hope to begin these necessary discussions for future research and community work.

Preliminary analysis

Several emerging themes in our analysis demonstrate how YUVA participants' sense of community, grievance construction and self-identification evolved substantially throughout the program. Although most participants entered the program with a relatively strong understanding of their neighbourhood and what the YUVA project entailed, there was a significant increase in both areas following the program.

PRE-YUVA

[s3q14] How would you define your current role in community activities?

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
I am a leader in my school		33.3%	4
I am a leader with my friends		8.3%	1
I am an active participant in afterschool programs		8.3%	1
I participate in community events often		0.0%	0
I don't participate in community events		0.0%	0
I have no role in my community		8.3%	1
I don't know what my current role is		41.7%	5
Other, please specify...		0.0%	0
Refused		0.0%	0
Total Responses			12

POST-YUVA

[s3q14] How would you define your current role in community activities?

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
I am a leader in my school		22.2%	2
I am a leader with my friends		33.3%	3
I am an active participant in afterschool programs		11.1%	1
I participate in community events often		22.2%	2
I don't participate in community events		0.0%	0
I have no role in my community		0.0%	0
I don't know what my current role is		11.1%	1
Other, please specify...		0.0%	0
Refused		0.0%	0
Total Responses			9

How would you define your current role in community activities?: Chart of Pre and Post YUVA responses

Leadership and active participation

The change in being able to assess one's ability to effect change and the roles they believed they took on was also significant. As one of the key objectives of the YUVA project is to foster leadership, this was a clear change in participants' responses. Prior to YUVA, 42% of respondents stated that they "don't know what [their] current role is" while only 11% (1 respondent) responded the same following the program. Notably, responses related to "leadership" and "active participation" increased from 49% of responses to 66%. Furthermore, no one responded that they do not have a role in their community following the YUVA program.

This shift in how participants perceived their involvement demonstrates how the YUVA curriculum manages to expose participants to the multiple layers of engagement while building capacity among youth to increase their engagement in community activities.

Based on a socio-cultural perspective on the learning process (i.e. Lave and Wenger 1991), changes in youth's self-perception of their "role" (broadly conceived and inclusive of the expansion of perceived options to play different roles as well as the abandonment of some roles for others) can be treated as a core learning accomplishment, socially established vis-à-vis the YUVA program.

Indications of changing perspectives on one's current or future roles in the community strongly suggest a new relationship to, and patterns of participation in, the community. Stemming from this core

learning accomplishment a host of other more specific skills, knowledge and ability in the area of community leadership emerge.

Grievance construction and building tools for political participation

Across the five modules of the YUVA curriculum, there is consistent engagement with concepts of community, advocacy and political participation. At the end of the program each cohort organises Community Action Projects (CAP) designed to illuminate specific community issues coupled with concrete solutions which are then presented to politicians during a trip to Ottawa.

As is evidenced from the surveys, significant transformations take place among participants as they learn new ways to engage with everyday struggles, as well as strategies to frame their issues to effect social change. Such learning processes are at the heart of the YUVA program and demonstrate how a focus on existing youth social networks coupled with a curriculum that is participatory and utilizes popular education methods can allow for significant community transformation.

When participants were asked if they had any concerns about their neighbourhood, 83% responded "yes" in the pre-survey and continued the same with the post-survey.

Concerns mostly related to gang violence, drugs and bullying, as well as concerns about homelessness and neighbourhood cleanliness also raised. Though the issues did not change significantly, the perception of tools available to engage with the issues as well as a perception of making changes

in their community did change following YUVA.

From both pre and post surveys it is evident that this group of youth are generally confident that they are familiar with community issues and at least have some knowledge of how to contribute to solutions. In part due to the low n-values as well as the existing cohesiveness of the cohort, it is difficult to cite numerical changes in their perceptions of community issues.

However, a few items stand out as significant, including a belief that “I have made positive changes in my community.” Prior to YUVA, 58% responded ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’, while 78% responded the same after YUVA. At the same time there is minimal change regarding awareness of resources, tools and knowledge of traditional politics.

It is important to mention that with such a small sample size, it is difficult to make sweeping conclusions regarding the impact of afterschool programs in St. James Town. However, the responses offer a glimpse into the dynamics of cohort programs that integrate social justice curricula that not only builds leadership capacity, but awareness of community concerns and how to address them.

Considerations for future research

From our preliminary analysis of the survey data, as well as a review of the YUVA curriculum, there are several contributions that this research can make to academic and policy literature.

First, by integrating both a socio-cultural/participatory learning lens as well as a social movement learning lens to examine the dynamics within afterschool programs, we have been able to explore how grievance construction and experiential learning practices are central for the success of youth programming. As is evidenced from the curriculum design, there is an emphasis on recognising youth experiences as key point of departure for lesson plans.

Second, the role of sports in supporting youth leadership and community engagement must not be underestimated, and though, as we saw, this is not new in the literature on youth development, it is often missed from community development and social movement literature. As we consider methods for supporting anti-poverty activities, all elements of engagement must be explored, and the role of sports offers a promising space for fomenting trust, creative spirit and well-being.

Finally, this research has demonstrated that a participatory design can offer a more holistic perspective on the dynamics of community engagement. Since the survey was co-designed with community and university partners, the language, themes covered and format was tailored specifically for the youth cohort we were working with. This approach for developing research and policy is central and must be considered when attempting to support community initiatives.

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AN APCOL iPad SURVEY APP AN EXPERIMENT IN DIGITIZING COMMUNITY-BASED SURVEYING

By Bari Samad

This past summer the APCOL project wrapped up the second and final phase of its community/university researcher co-designed and co-administered anti-poverty activism survey. While working in some of the same low-income areas, and with the same goals as the first phase, this summer's survey was much smaller in sampling and sought to provide additional depth. Seven community-based researchers from five different Toronto neighborhoods participated in executing the 2013-14 survey. A total of 142 surveys, including 13 pilot surveys were conducted.

What was new and exciting this summer however was our experimentation in using new digital community-based survey methods. Specifically, 23 of the second phase surveys were conducted using an iPad App, custom designed by programmer Andrew Kohan for the 2013-14 APCOL survey project! Kohan developed the app for community use more broadly, and the APCOL survey was its maiden voyage into the concrete realities of on-the-ground community work.

I served as one of the two survey administrators with special duties to monitor the success of the app in action. Having come to Canada and the University of Toronto with a background both in anti-poverty organizing and using digital technology for social justice efforts, I was particularly thrilled about this innovative effort. In fact, in a previous life, I had also been a programmer so it was exciting to participate in the development, refinement and execution of the APCOL iPad Survey App. And so below are some of the key aspects of the experience I would like to share: its challenges, successes and the learning that took place working with it.

Why an iPad app and how was it developed?

The first question to answer is 'Why try to develop and use an iPad Survey App at all?' The answer to this takes us back to our experiences carrying out the first phase of the APCOL survey, and

it is linked to APCOL's overall commitment to collaborate with community-based researchers and activists. At the conclusion of the first phase the question was raised as to whether or not there was some better



Starting screen of the iPad app

way of making access to data easier and faster for both (academic and community) researchers as well as community activists. Likewise, our survey researchers wanted to see if a technological solution could reduce data input and data cleaning time that is necessary for analysis. And finally, it occurred to us that perhaps some type of tool could be developed that could help not only APCOL but other community activists wishing to carry out surveys more quickly and effectively in their neighborhoods on whatever topics they thought most relevant. We wanted to, in other words, pay something forward.

Andrew Kohan proved uniquely suited to helping in this regard. Having arrived in Toronto a few years earlier, not only had Andrew already become familiar with the APCOL project, he was an expert in developing iPad apps and committed to making contributions to social justice in his newly adopted home of Toronto. Working closely with him, we began several rounds of initial development consultations creating the basic specifications of his community-based survey app. We found that, as with most projects that go from manual (paper-based) to digital, some things remain the same and other things need to be adjusted for the digital medium. Once the initial prototype was developed, it underwent its very first pilot testing with APCOL researchers and feedback for the developer quickly emerged.



A screenshot of APCOL survey question A.1

Next, when the final app was ready, it was uploaded to two iPad Mini's (the smaller devices were chosen for budget and portability reasons) and two survey administrators were trained on using it so that in turn community-based researchers working in local neighborhoods could be properly supported.

Into the field: The APCOL experiment with the new iPad app

All the hard work in developing, testing and re-developing the prototype eventually came to fruition as two community-based researchers were selected to use the app in the field. Each of the selected researchers was given an hour-long training session on both using the survey app and administrating the survey with it. Immediately it was noticed that the screens and keyboards are very small on an iPad Mini, and one of the researchers expressed concerns about this. A wireless keyboard purchase solved the problem.

Based on the experiences of the two community researchers as well as the two survey administrators now, we are in the position to answer the most fundamental question of all: How did it work? Well, without drowning in the technical details, below is my summary of the basic features and the way it works for a researcher carrying out surveys with residents on the ground.

1. When a new survey is started on the app and it automatically assigns a

sequential survey ID allow us to know the neighborhood where the survey was completed.

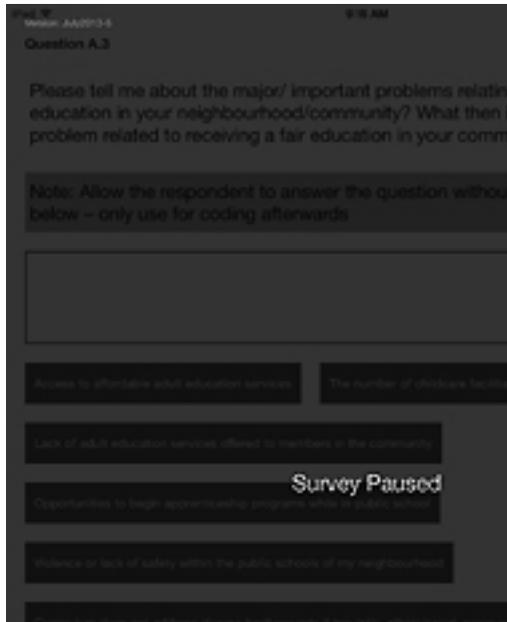
2. Importantly, the very first question that is asked is whether or not the respondent wants to be recorded. If so, each subsequent question has its own audio answer recorded, linked directly to the specific question automatically. This is one of the neatest features of the app, as the audio files are question based, and can be sorted easily and played back individually if desired in subsequent analysis work.
3. Once the survey is started, each of the questions from the paper survey are presented on separate screens in the app. Associated with this is automatic routing logic (as the paper survey) that directs the surveyor to the next relevant question for the respondent (e.g. if a person reports no activism, all questions pertaining to activism are automatically skipped).
4. Once the survey is completed, it goes to “complete” status”. The researcher then has to go back and review the survey and make any notes or corrections. They can do this at their convenience. Multiple surveys can remain in “completed” status until the researcher

is ready to review them. Once they finish reviewing and “accept” the survey, the survey goes to “reviewed” status and is locked from further edits.

5. A data file for each reviewed survey is immediately encrypted and uploaded - inclusive of the audio files - to a secure (password protected) external server storage location on the internet, whenever a wireless connection becomes available. This data is automatically coded and ready for downloading to one’s favorite statistical analysis software.

In our view, the use of this app proved enormously successful. It worked very much as it was intended. Still, as with anything, some words of wisdom based on our experience are part of the story as well. As a survey administrator supporting surveyors in the field, here are a few of the key observations I made.

1. After an initial learning curve and the first couple of surveys, the researcher became quite comfortable with the app and moved very fast through the surveys. In fact, observing and listening carefully to surveyors in the field it became clear that the primary adjustment was learning to be attentive to the respondent while holding and using the hand-held device and app.



A screenshot of a paused survey

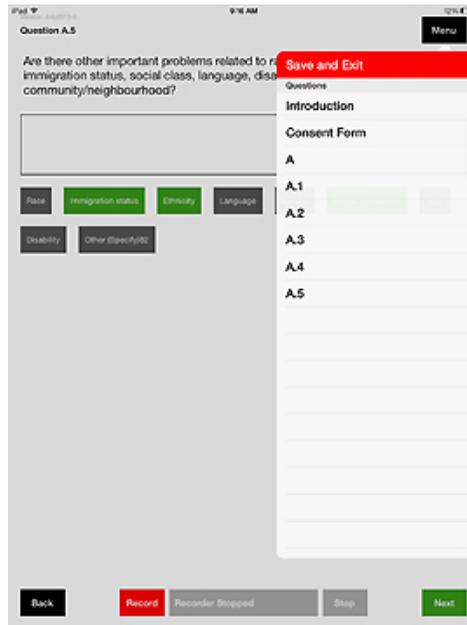
2. Of course for many people typing on the small screen of an iPad Mini can be cumbersome. This was not a problem for both researchers. But, where it was a challenge our inclusion of a wireless keyboard offered only a limited solution. In these instances, good old fashioned, hand-written notes still proved important and were a key support for completing any post-survey notes at the review stage.

3. For the vast majority the use of the iPad had no noticeable effect on the survey process. However, we noted that for some there seemed to be initial apprehension at the surveyor's use of an iPad. This seemed to raise questions about where the information was going in a way not seen with traditional paper-and-pencil surveying. And based on this we learned that additional explanation of the security and anonymity guarantees were in order.

4. Finally, there was a question of optics. Bringing an expensive (and arguably coveted) item such as an iPad into low-income communities was not without

concern. On at least one occasion, a respondent's children became quite fascinated with the device, wanting to play with it, and even asking their parents if they could have one which may have made their parents uncomfortable. While not a wide-spread issue by any means, we feel it is a lesson to be considered in community research initiatives potentially.

Overall, the experience was a positive one in my estimation, albeit not without some emergent issues to take into consideration. It is an idea the project has come to endorse for its unique contributions to community-based research work within and beyond the APCOL project.



A screenshot of APCOL survey question A.5

Bari Samad is a PhD student at OISE, University of Toronto. He served as a Survey Administrator for the 2013 APCOL survey. His research interests lie in examining the intersections of digital technology, identity, and social movements. Prior to pursuing his studies at OISE, Bari worked for over 15 years in the not-for-profit sector on issues ranging from poverty alleviation to public health.

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