



Newsletter of the Anti-Poverty Community Organizing and Learning Project

Learning Changes

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Community researchers Irvin Japa and Kaleem Ishaque map out their communities while Muhammad Kaleem Ishaque, Ashleigh Dalton and Julie Chamberlain look on. Photo Courtesy of Joseph Sawan

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

GOOD JOBS FOR ALL

by Sharon Simpson

The Anti-Poverty Community Organizing and Learning (APCOL) project is now in its third year. As always this page of the newsletter is intended to offer you a brief insight into some of the other anti-poverty work taking place in and around the city. In the past three issues the focus has been on local neighbourhood based organizing activities. This time the aim is to offer you some information on a city-wide effort.



Formed in 2008, Good Jobs for All, a community-labour coalition, hosted a city wide conference in November of the same year. With over one thousand in attendance participants shared experiences and engaged in dialogue on what policies are needed to ensure good jobs for both the present and future generation. A year later, this was followed by the Good Green Jobs for All conference.

While the group has twice proven they are capable of hosting successful conferences the question as to how sustainable such a broad base coalition, representing community, labour, social justice, youth and environmental organizations in Toronto is often posed. The answer may rest in the coalition's ability to focus on a common goal, in this case, good jobs, as a path to lifting many out of poverty.

To achieve this goal the coalition's work has focused on three key areas: investing in social infrastructure, a green economy for all and empowering workers. To this end they have

worked with grassroots community groups, residents and community social agencies to develop neighbourhood campaigns on equitable and accessible public services such as transit, library and recreation.

For example, in the Jane-Finch community they have worked with area residents and groups on greening the neighbourhood as well as putting forward progressive options to the municipal government on how committing to green manufacturing can create good jobs.

In order to empower workers the coalition has worked on giving voice to the unemployed and the under-employed through initiatives such as the minimum wage and the FIX E.I. campaigns. It is these efforts that have sustained the coalition.

As a group they have found the key to sustainability by working locally while thinking city-wide. This was apparent when they lent their support to the April 9, 2011 "Respect Rally". Attended by some 10,000 people, residents called on the municipal government to support, not cut, public services, to invest in good jobs and to support workers by not contracting jobs out to the lowest bidder. There were banners from neighbourhoods all across Toronto proudly displayed during the rally.

Given their success so far the question now may be, is this a useful model for others to adopt in anti-poverty organizing?

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

IN FROM THE COLD: SURVEY OUTREACH IN THORNCLIFFE PARK AND FLEMINGDON PARK

by Shabnam Meraj and Julie Chamberlain

Thorncliffe Park and Flemingdon Park are neighbouring communities in the central-east part of Toronto in Ward 26 Don Valley West. Connected to each other by the main thoroughfare Overlea Boulevard, a walk across the bridge brings you from one to the other - a cold and windy walk in the middle of winter. Thorncliffe Park and Flemingdon Park were paired together as one site for the APCOL survey to reflect how the neighbouring communities are interconnected.

SHABNAM'S VIEW

During the survey process, researchers learned a lot about the Thorncliffe Park and Flemingdon Park communities. They got a glimpse of the real issues with on the ground realities and learned to deal with different kinds of personalities and people.

Thorncliffe Park and surrounding communities are continuously attracting immigrants from many parts of the world. While the majority of newcomers are South Asian, significant numbers of Middle Eastern and Spanish-speaking newcomers are also settling in the neighbourhood. The physical layout of the neighbourhood is conducive to

social integration; it has accessible housing, schools, social and settlement services, all necessary facilities and public places.



Sharon Simpson from Labour Community Services listens to community researcher Shabnam Meraj. Photo Courtesy of Joseph Sawan

Yet in this community people don't know each other. Some people were reluctant to answer survey questions, and some people were ready because they were thinking that the researcher will just pass on to them some questionnaire they'll take and fill it up and give it back. Some people were friendly and welcomed the researchers warmly. Some of them were really short of time but they showed the great sense of citizenship and contributed in the survey, keeping in mind the interest of their community and neighbourhood.

Different strategies were used by the researchers for taking the surveys. Community members recommended responsible and interested community individuals for the task, and once researchers got some respondents they referred to other ones.

Sometimes directly asking people if they want to take the survey didn't work whereas an indirect approach, such as telling them that you are working on a survey and asking if they knew anyone who was interested or willing to do the survey worked effectively. Because this is a big survey, and took 30 to 60 minute, researchers took it as a challenge, and approached personal connections to take the survey. Researchers interviewed men and women from Russia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Colombia, Turkey, India, Iraq, Philippines, Mexico and more. After they filled out the surveys, researchers gave each respondent a gift card as a compliment.

Shabnam Meraj conducted 20 APCOL surveys in English and Urdu in Thorncliffe and Flemingdon Park. She is an active leader and organizer in her community. Currently a part-time settlement worker, Shabnam's background is in Library Sciences.

JULIE'S VIEW

Community researchers in Thorncliffe Park and Flemingdon Park worked quickly. With the help of community partner organization Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office, they were recruited, trained, and on their way to beginning interviews in early December. Five

weeks later they had conducted 60 interviews with friends and neighbours.

For some it was a snap to find ten people to interview. For others it was harder going - meeting friends of friends, getting to know people in the community, and figuring out how to not scare people away:

"I think it was challenging for me because I am new here. That could be one of the reasons that they were reluctant to talk to me," said Kaleem Ishaque, who immigrated to Canada with his family in 2010. He quickly realized an indirect way of recruiting was more effective: "Tell them that you're doing this thing, and if they know someone that can help in this process, let you know."

If recruitment was hard, the outcomes were positive - researchers got to visit with people they have often passed in the hall but rarely talked to, and to discover just how widespread some issues are in Thorncliffe and Flemingdon Park.

Already well aware of the resources in their neighbourhoods, community researchers mainly learned about the problems and concerns shared by community members. One researcher had worked on research in the neighbourhood last year too: "Last year I found that the major issue was unemployment among women. But this year it was different: unemployment among both of them. Some of them even said 'even we cannot find a volunteer job, which is free, unpaid!' I learned a lot of different things that I didn't see. Like 'oh my goodness, you

How do you recruit people to participate in a survey in the dead of winter? Use your networks.



Community researchers Irvin Japa and Kaleem Ishaque. Photo Courtesy of Joesph

feel this problem in the area?’ and they say ‘yes, we feel.’”

Community researchers had a clear sense that some systemic issues need to be addressed for things to improve in the neighbourhood. Employers and all levels of government need to make a real effort to solve problems like underemployment; many people in Thorncliffe and Flemingdon have the experience of getting stuck in low wage, precarious jobs that don’t match their skills and education. One respondent suggested APCOL add a question to the end of the survey: “What do you think the government should do to decrease these problems of poverty?”

Another community researcher noted how the immigration system keeps some people from participating in their neighbourhood as much as they’d like – struggling to make ends meet and having refugee status recognized can be a family’s main concern for years.

DO YOU SPEAK ANTI-POVERTY?

One of the challenges for APCOL community researchers is the ‘translator’ role they have to play. They have to communicate the purpose and goals of APCOL to

community members and get across the ‘anti-poverty’ language. What is an anti-poverty activity? How does housing fit in, or education, or health? And then you’ve got to translate it all back to fit into the APCOL language.

“It was a little bit like a mix up,” said community researcher Shabnam Meraj, “My interviewees were a little bit confused, like what is the connection of the anti-poverty with housing, with shelter, and with this... so this took a little bit more time to explain.”

There was also rich observation and reflection happening during the survey process that doesn’t really get captured. A debrief meeting for the research team was a great way to share what community researchers learned, and in the future it will be important for APCOL to find other ways to capture their observations and analysis.

We heard that in Thorncliffe Park and Flemingdon Park people often get a chance to give their input through research or focus groups, but they don’t always see any effect on their neighbourhood. “People are tired,” said one community worker, and some researchers agreed: “They sit together, there are meetings, and they discuss the issues, but they sit and they write and it stays the same.” After such a successful data collection process with a strong, cohesive community research team, it remains to be seen how APCOL will buck that trend.

Julie Chamberlain is a graduate student in Adult Education at OISE, University of Toronto. She coordinated the APCOL survey team in Thorncliffe and Flemingdon Park, and would like to acknowledge the invaluable support of Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office, especially Esel Panlaqui and Ravi Subramaniam.. ☘

COLLEGE/COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS: THE POTENTIAL FOR COMBATING POVERTY AND DEVELOPING COMMUNITY LEADERS

by Kizzy Bedeau and Peter Sawchuk

If there is one thing that is clear from even a quick scan of anti-poverty activity in the Greater Toronto area, it is that there are almost as many ways to go about it as there are groups doing it. There are people and groups of all types doing some form of anti-poverty activity. They may include action coalition builders, change agents, community-builders, advocacy groups, and/or grass-roots organizations and, among such groups, there is often a diversity of individuals of all social classes, ethnicities, socio-economic statuses, sexual orientations, ages, and genders.

The complexity of people and groups involved in such work brings with it a multiplicity of areas of focus, be it education, employment, drug/substance abuse, food security, mental health, health and nutrition, housing, harm reduction or policing. At any social intersection, anti-poverty work can be organized.

Following the FoodShare and Kingston-Galloway Orton Park case studies APCOL partnered with the Community Partnership Office (CPO) at George Brown College to conduct a case study of its Construction Craft Worker (CCW) pre-apprenticeship program.

The Construction Craft Worker pre-apprenticeship program is a unique community capacity building program that aims to provide access and opportunity to education for underserved populations. The

case study followed participants through the pre-apprenticeship program and also carried out interviews with program participants, both current and past, to develop a clear profile of how such programs could contribute to participant's lives and potential for community engagement/activism afterward.

Participants in the pre-apprenticeship program are connected to a wide network of organizations across the Toronto downtown core. Many of the participants have close ties to the Regent Park, Moss Park and St. James Town communities. Based on the nature of the program and these more extended linkages, the case study sought to contribute directly to the residents and their communities in the downtown east area. It addressed not only their experiences within the program, but also the potential contribution the program made to the lives of participants beyond the immediate goals of the program.

This case study relates to the APCOL project theme of "Good Jobs" by examining how at-risk youth transition to quality employment, and the direct and indirect affects education and employment have on individuals and their surrounding communities. This basic theme of employment is among the four basic needs cited in the APCOL proposal; a) Health/Nutrition/Food Security; b) Safe Shelter/Housing; c) Opportunity for Adequate Education; and d) Access to Employment, Vocational Training and Living Wages.

In addition to this direct connection to the four basic needs, this case study also emphasized the importance of learning, in the context of employment transitions, of individuals and how they may be developing into potential activists and community leaders. In this way the case study offered an opportunity to explore the transition of non-activists toward various forms of community participation and activism.

SOME KEY FINDINGS FOR ANTI-POVERTY ACTIVATION AND COMMUNITY

The case study revealed important answers to many questions. These included the barriers and supports in work placement, the distinct types of pedagogy and classroom-based learning in the program, prior school experiences, beliefs about education and employment before and after the program, and so on. However, the focus of our attention in this article is the matter of community contributions of this type of initiative and specifically how the still too often hidden process of emerging community activists may take place. The key question for us is: What sets the stage for young adults – and

coin particular young black males who have experienced an enormous range of barriers – to build not only better lives for themselves but for others in their neighbourhoods through a pre-apprenticeship program community partnership initiative?

Our research has noted two key issues in this regard. First, there is the issue of how life circumstances – and the processes of thinking about these experiences in particular contexts – can create openings for new life directions beyond unemployment, underemployment or under-ground/illegal employment. We understand this as a type of lifelong learning process. But, it is a process that is inseparable from environments where barriers and injustices of race and social class are common.

Emmet*: *I have a Grade 8 education. I come from a broken home. It was really crazy. I have been on my own since I was 11 years old, and so I had to go to work early and everything I had to leave those school years behind, and then it wasn't until I met my girlfriend and I found this program. It taught me the basics and I worked really hard.*

I attended just about every day and I studied at home after school, until at least 9–10 o'clock at night and I pulled my math up to over Grade 12, and my English I came in at a 9, and I pulled it up over the Grade 12 level.

Interviewer: *What at this point when you came to George Brown caused this sort of shift?*



Karmel Haj Amor, Michael Hutson, Danny Beltran, and Sacha Bradley share their experiences in the Construction Craft Worker pre-apprenticeship program at George Brown College. Photo courtesy of Joseph Sawan

It's an obligation for you to help another guy, but at the same time it's boosting you, right?

Emmet: Well it actually started two years prior to the program. I guess I could put this on the table. I was into the cocaine and everything very heavy for most of my life all the ups and downs, the booze and drugs and everything, and I had just started to put that behind me and this program popped up at the right time.

Randal: Yeah, you know it came at the right time for me too because I had just gotten let go from one of those Tim Horton's jobs... The timing was everything for me.

Second, there is the issue of how young adults can be supported in order to capitalize on and make use of these initial openings and opportunities. Our exploration of this second issue focused on why, how, and what potentially lies within the creation of mutual trust/commitment within new social networks amongst these young adults ~ networks that can bridge community and employment.

Interviewer: O.K. what pre-apprenticeship program experiences do you feel were most valuable to you now that you have completed the program?

Nigel: For me it would be the network that I built.

Francis: Networks that we built. Yeah, in the Trades there are a couple lads, and you know, for the future I guess, we are keeping in contact with each other, in case I get fired from the other job. Oh yes, network, that is most valuable thing.

Interviewer: Is that within the program or networks with people on the job site, network with people outside?

Francis: Both. We built both and that's the secret I think...

Jamil: Yes, I want to emphasize on the networking because the networking was very important to me because sometimes when you are at the job, like pressure and stuff you need somebody to boost you and my network here was these other guys.

Interviewer: So how did these networks support you?

Jamil: Mentally. It's because through all the trades training and working, you need good people around you. If you don't have that then I don't know what to say.

Robert: You know that everybody here [amongst other students] is still working towards the same goals, and also at the same time they help push you in the right direction as opposed to giving up, especially if you have somebody on the work site with you. It's an obligation for you to help another guy, but at the same time it's boosting you, right? The connection between us helps you last...

Between both of these key themes one thing emerged with great clarity: youth that had been deeply marginalized in their schooling and in relation to the labour market quickly developed a personal interest in helping other youth in their home neighbourhoods. This may be indicative of the potential for college/community partnerships to contribute their expertise beyond simply personal and/or career development.

Interviewer: O.K. now that you have completed the pre-apprenticeship program do you feel you are more likely or unlikely, to make a positive contribution to your community? Through your experience you have had here with these networks, do you feel that you can have that conversation with people, and that you feel confident to do it and are proud?

Simon: *Oh yeah for sure now.*

Interviewer: *Are you likely to make a contribution to the community now more than you would before?*

Simon: *I think a lot more because the neighbourhood I grew up in, with people my age or even the young bucks it would be an important thing to do. Growing up in my area there was nothing but shooting and drugs and the weed and all that nonsense so I would want to, maybe not alone, but I would like to see my neighbourhood mentor the younger kids.*

Mark: *For me, I live in a co-op building and now I feel I have the chance to talk to them about this program. Like I've been telling them I finished everything and that's a surprise for them but because there are so many families there, I want to talk to them and their kids. I know some young people right now, they're not in school. They can go to this program. It's like there is cooking and there is construction, you know... I told them how this changed my life.*

MOVING FORWARD WITH A CONTRIBUTION TO ANTI-POVERTY WORK IN TORONTO

The research literature on how social networks are created, how they operate, and the power of these networks to create change is rich and well developed. At the same time, research on community development shows that partnerships with educational institutions can produce both individual and collective gains. However, much less is known about how these networks can work across community and employment. Even less is known about how it is people learn to create and sustain their own networks of trust and commitment.

Among the many ways to do anti-poverty work lies the challenge of activating people. What we call “activation” is part motivation,

part inspiration, but also depends on collective learning relationships through which people undergo change. The barriers are enormous, but this college/community partnership program sheds light on one way in which new activists and potentially new community leaders are created in terms of this process of activation. In environments which disproportionately keep young black men from succeeding, it seems like both timing and the creation of networks across communities and workplaces is everything. What's more, this success can build on itself as men building a new future for themselves seem to naturally turn attention to how they can contribute to others.

What would be the best ways to facilitate these changes? Pre-apprenticeship programs like the one at George Brown College's Community Partnership Office are a start. However, sustained recruitment through college/community organization links are likely just as essential, alongside creative new efforts to sustain and extend the networks young adults create for themselves across their neighbourhoods, labour markets, and workplaces.

* All names of research participants in this article are pseudonyms. Other identifying information has also been removed

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

WESTON - MOUNT DENNIS: A RESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

by Zannalyn Robest

I first heard about the APCOL research project through my involvement with the Action for Neighbourhood Change (ANC) as a resident representative. The research was an opportunity to see how people of the area felt about issues in the neighbourhood. I was also hopeful about the possibility of the research findings serving as a quantitative document with which to organize and seek change.

Not all residents were willing to be recorded but all that I spoke with discussed with me their personal histories, what brought them to Weston - Mount Dennis and the problems that need addressing. Here are some of the issues residents spoke of during the interviews I conducted:

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION: Taking a walk down Weston Road you are struck by how many people seemingly suffer from mental health and/or addiction issues. We are lacking a body, venue or mandate in the area to help families deal with the issue from a recovery perspective.

HEALTHCARE: Access to quality health-care is also a major issue. There is an over-reliance on clinics for primary health-care and the private doctors' offices in the area are often satellite locations that serve the area on select days.

UNEMPLOYMENT/UNDEREMPLOYMENT: According to City of Toronto statistics the population of Weston - Mount Dennis is not significantly unemployed. Indeed Weston

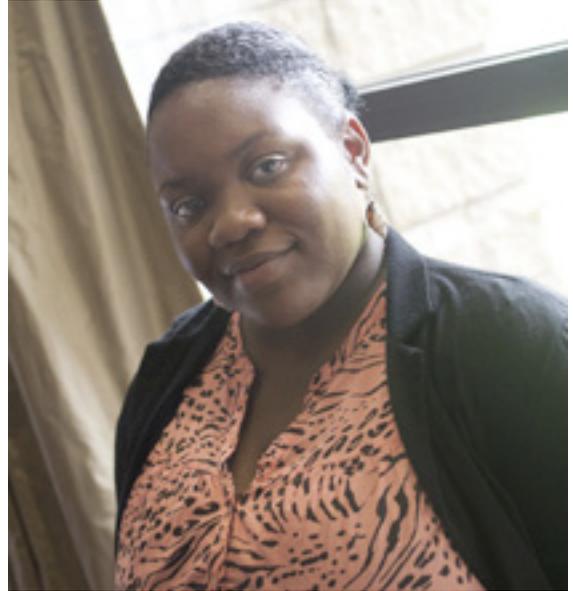


Photo of Zannalyn Robest Courtesy of Nabil Shash

- Mount Dennis goes to work but looking strictly at employment rates misses the point; underemployment, precarious labour and exploitation are issues related to employment in the area. Part-time work with no benefits or full-time hours at rates that fall below the minimum wage are the realities for many people who I spoke with, myself included.

COMMUNITY DIVISIONS: The homeowners of Weston - Mount Dennis are well-organized; they have numerous organizations that ensure that they have a strong voice and input in any changes that are happening in the area. The problem is tenants are not always included and little space for their participation is created. Tenants need to be

engaged in order to make these organizations truly reflective of the diversity in the area.

FEELS LIKE HOME

That said I feel at home in Weston ~ Mount Dennis. I have even listed my Weston address as my official address with the government of Canada as opposed to my mother's Ottawa home, which served as my permanent address while I attended York University. In the seven years since I moved to Toronto to study I have held five addresses never really feeling like any one neighborhood was where I could see myself living for any extended period of time.

The APCOL research gave me an opportunity to learn about this neighborhood whose quirks I have come to appreciate. In fact many of the people I interviewed agreed. Even as they acknowledge the problems, they cited their desire to stay in this neighborhood. Although the survey questions were not directed at uncovering the Weston ~ Mount Dennis charm it is important to acknowledge the good things so people understand why they should be concerned and mobilizing to better their neighborhoods rather than to move elsewhere.

Whatever the area lacks, it makes up in the architectural beauty of its old buildings like the libraries and churches and the charm of its tree-lined streets. There is something appealing about the lively hustle and bustle of people running errands; the entrepreneurial spirit visible from the pervasiveness of the 'mom and pop' stores in the neighborhood; the old men who get together in the summer at the corner of Weston and Lawrence to

play board games. Lastly what I consider the perfect slice of heaven, the bike and footpaths that run along the Humber River, are right at my doorstep.

SMALL BUSINESSES

Weston - Mount Dennis has numerous nationalities who call the area home. Many of the small businesses are owned and operated by immigrants who serve the particular tastes and demands of specific nationalities. One of the survey questions focuses on the presence of big box stores, I wondered at whether they are considered an asset due to their abilities to provide work to a large number of residents or a problem. Small businesses that operate with a small employee pool mean fewer jobs are available. I see the negative implications for employment but feel that a healthy balance between large chains and small businesses is what is needed as they are a distinct feature of the area.



The intersection of Weston Road and Lawrence Ave. West Photo Courtesy of G. de Montmollin

WESTON LIONS PARK

The area lacks a community centre where all residents can come together to organize. The result is a fissure between immigrant Canadians and native Canadians and the homeowners and tenants. While the Weston Lions Club is a great resource it is not a community centre and some of the divisions seen in the neighbourhood are duplicated by how the facilities are used. At the end of summer 2010 one of the three baseball diamonds was converted to a soccer field. I am excited to see the kinds of diversity this will bring to that section of the park.

HUMBER RIVER PATHS

The bike and foot paths are wonderful to explore and a nice reprieve from the concrete and hustle and bustle of cars on the main roads of the area. People picnic and barbecue, have birthday parties and interact in a different way in that area. Men can be seen fishing, and families spend quality time without having to commute or pay a fee. The paths also serve as the exercise regimen for old and young.

INGREDIENTS FOR INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY

You can always find people at a local restaurant, coffee shop or bar. In that sense I feel the community is well positioned to unite and make changes for the better. There is a sense of community rooted in the knowledge that my struggle may be your struggle. There are already many organizations that have a strong voice in the area, however, they need to

be more inclusive. The issues of the most vulnerable residents should not be ignored but addressed.

We need a community centre; we need a substance abuse and mental health strategy. Opportunities need to be created for the success of the people who face barriers to education, employment and safe housing. One of the survey respondents pointed out that the cut-off age for programs geared toward youth in the community needs to be raised. I agree and feel that funding needs to be diversified to not only support youth but also to support the parents that they live with, and address their living situations.

The residents of the area need to come together to mobilize around these issues. We must recognize that it is in all of our own individual interests to ensure that our neighbour is okay. I am hopeful that the APCOL research will serve as a tool with which to do this work. ☘



Weston Lions Park. Photo Courtesy of G. de Montmollin

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON *EKTA* PARISHAD, A NON-VIOLENT SOCIAL MOVEMENT

by Ravi Badri

As part of my graduate program in Adult Education and Community Development at the University of Toronto I travelled to India to spend 6 months with a Gandhian non-violent people's movement. My situation as a person of Indian origin with a western education allows me to traverse different contexts. At the same time, my middle class upbringing and the context of my engagement with the movement limits my ability to become an insider of the movement and the communities I have had the privilege to observe. Hence my reflections are to be seen as my construction of a reality based on my background rather than definite statements that explain a movement. This understanding is bound to deepen and change as I spend more time with the movement.

Ekta Parishad is a people's movement that works on Gandhian principles of truth and non-violence with marginalized sections of the Indian population on the issues of rights over livelihood resources such as land, water and forest, strengthening local self-governance, and advocating for pro-poor equitable policies. The movement is currently in the process of organizing a historic non-violent action called *Jansatyagraha* in which 100,000



Camp leaders are responsible for mobilizing 5000 people. Photo Courtesy of Ravi Badri

people will walk from Gwalior to New Delhi, a distance of about 350 kilometers over a one month period starting October 2, 2012.

To organize a people's movement of such a scale, a four level leadership structure has been developed. At the top of this leadership structure are the camp leaders or *shivir nayaks* who are responsible for mobilizing 5000 people. They do this by supporting, training and managing 10 second level leaders called group leaders or *dal nayaks*. The *dal nayaks* are responsible for training, supporting and managing 10 third level leaders called section leaders or *jatta nayaks*. The *jatta nayaks* take responsibility for training, supporting and managing 5 fourth level leaders called village leaders or *dasta nayaks*. The *dasta nayaks* are responsible for mobilizing and managing 10 *satyagrahis* from their villages.

Ekta Parishad is organized as a federation of organizations and individuals governed by a national council at the national level. It is structured similarly at the provincial and district level. The leader of the movement is Shri P.V. Rajgopal. He is a long-term Gandhian activist, trainer and leader. Many of the organizations that are part of the federations were started by Rajaji or his protégés.

The first key lesson for students of social movements is the grounding of the movement in people's material lives and problems. The basis for organizing and mobilizing is the strong relationship of trust built over several years by *Ekta Parishad* workers carrying out community education, and community leadership development activities and delivering services that directly impact on people's lives. Some of the services they deliver include: educating the communities about bureaucratic processes for different government services, helping out the community in accessing these services, advocating on their behalf with government officials.

Community education also includes making the connection between the poverty communities experience and the systemic inequality due to poor implementation of government welfare schemes and lack of control over livelihood resources. Their activities in the villages include forming village level community based organizations, identification of issues, planning and carrying out non-violent social actions for the resolution of people's issues and organizing communities for development related initiatives.

I am differentiating between the services workers deliver and the activities they carry

out to point out the trust they earn by working for the community's welfare. People realize that the worker's translate their words into action and begin to trust them.

The second lesson from *Ekta Parishad* comes from considering the movement's analysis and framing of core issues. In India, like in Canada, there are structural determinants that are based on birth. Structural determinants of poverty like race, gender, class and sexual orientation can be comparable to the caste system in India. The commonality in both these structural determinants is that they are determined by the family in which one is born.

But *Ekta Parishad* does not restrict itself to identity. Instead, the analysis places the responsibility of poverty squarely on the State's shoulder. According to *Ekta Parishad's* analysis, poverty in India, in which majority of the population live in villages and forests, is linked to lack of control over livelihood resources like land, water and forest. It is the responsibility of the government to ensure people's control over their livelihood resources.

The issues are framed in such a way that government is held accountable for poverty and for delivering sustainable interventions that serve not just to increase welfare and social security related programs but to create an enabling environment that promotes self-reliance among the poor in the villages of India.

This solution will also address urban poverty by addressing it at its root-cause level. *Ekta Parishad* leaders see urban poverty in India as being primarily due to migration of rural poor into urban areas, and their inability to adapt to a structure and environment that is alien to them.



Ekta Parishad leaders see urban poverty in India as being primarily due to migration of rural poor into urban areas. Photo Courtesy of Ravi Badri

maintained and workers are free to determine where they will work, when they will work, how they want to work and are supported in taking on greater responsibility. For the community, rather than carrying out education in a workshop setting, it is carried out through non-violent actions, community education as described above, and community leadership development.

Ekta Parishad provides us with a historic opportunity to observe a large scale Gandhian non-violent action as it is happening and

Addressing rural poverty will stem migration of rural poor into urban areas and solve the problem at a fundamental level. The key lesson for social movement students is the framing of issues that makes government accountable for a sustainable solution to poverty that promotes greater self-reliance.

The third lesson for us to reflect on is the nature of leadership training. Leadership training is based on praxis. Abstract discussion on leadership, conflict resolution, and facilitation skills (which I have seen quite often in leadership development programs in Canada) is kept to a bare minimum, instead the focus is mainly on material problems and developing strategies for addressing them.

Leadership at different levels of the organization is developed gradually by mentoring and by assigning responsibility commensurate with capacity. An environment of freedom, trust and respect is

to explore several themes connected with social movement theory, adult education, and organizational culture and development.

Specifically, we can explore more about the benefits and pitfalls of adopting a resource-struggle approach for organizing a people's movement, the connection between social movement learning with other forms of learning and the impact of organizational culture and structure on learning.

Ravi Badri is a graduate student in Adult Education and Community Development at OISE, University of Toronto. He is passionate about the relevance and use of popular education in community development, organizing, and social movements contexts. He is also interested in the areas of cooperatives, and organizational change work within the social service sector. ☘

APCOL is online at www.apcol.ca

COMMUNITY RESEARCHERS LEARN ABOUT THE APCOL SURVEY IN ST. JAMES TOWN

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOSEPH SAWAN



The most recent APCOL survey training led by student researchers took place on May 3rd when three youth and four women from St. James Town were trained to do the survey in their neighborhood. Pictured on this page are Bindu John, Sun Zhu, Agnes Thomas, Amna Shah, Nivethan Amrithulingam, Adwoa Onuora, and Aisha Javed.



FILLING HOLES: PUTTING NUMBERS TO WORK IN ANTI-POVERTY ORGANIZING

by Joseph E. Sawan and Ashleigh Dalton

The APCOL survey is a quantitative research tool to understand how people become and stay active in their communities. Survey results provide numbers around people's participation, how they became involved, what motivates them to continue, and what types of things support activism. Using survey data to complement personal stories can provide unique perspective to people's everyday experiences. Numbers can be used to show that "it's not just me!" but rather, the patterns and trends happening across different households, communities, neighbourhoods and cities.

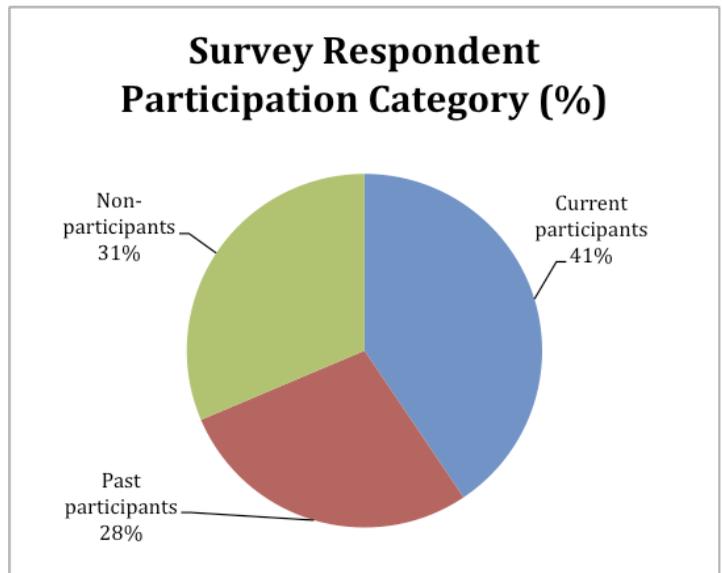
With over 200 surveys completed (as of May 20), we have begun some basic analysis to look at what trends are emerging in the neighbourhoods surveyed. So far, we have completed surveys in Kingston Galloway / Orton Park, Weston - Mount Dennis, Thorncliffe Park / Flemingdon Park and South Etobicoke. We are wrapping up surveys in Steeles - L'Amoreaux, St. James Town, Lawrence Heights and Black Creek. With 50-60 surveys in each neighbourhood, we have managed to create a snapshot of the forms of community organizing and learning around issues of poverty in each neighbourhood.

The formal research of the APCOL survey provides detailed

and systematic analysis that can be used to support campaigns, organizational and policy advocacy. By putting the numbers to work - that is, by counting responses, tracking patterns and computing statistics - we can provide important information that contributes to and enhances our anti-poverty organizing efforts.

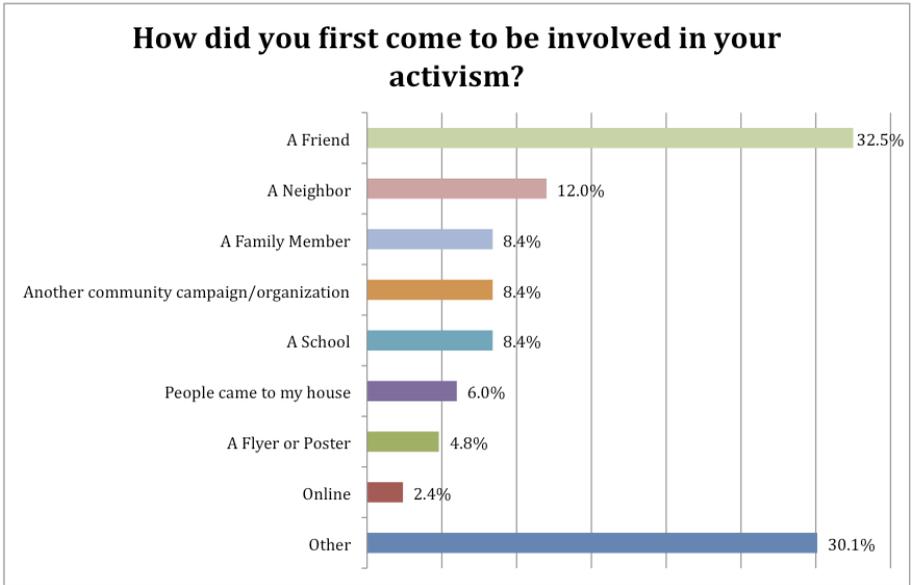
PARTICIPATION

The APCOL survey interviewed people who are currently involved in activism in their community, as well as those who were involved in activism in the past, and those who have never been involved. The survey results show a good mix within the participation categories.



RECRUITMENT

Often times community organizing emphasizes the need for resources to drive recruitment. While there is evidence that people respond positively to having space and time for getting involved, most people cite their friendships as the primary way they first became involved in activism.



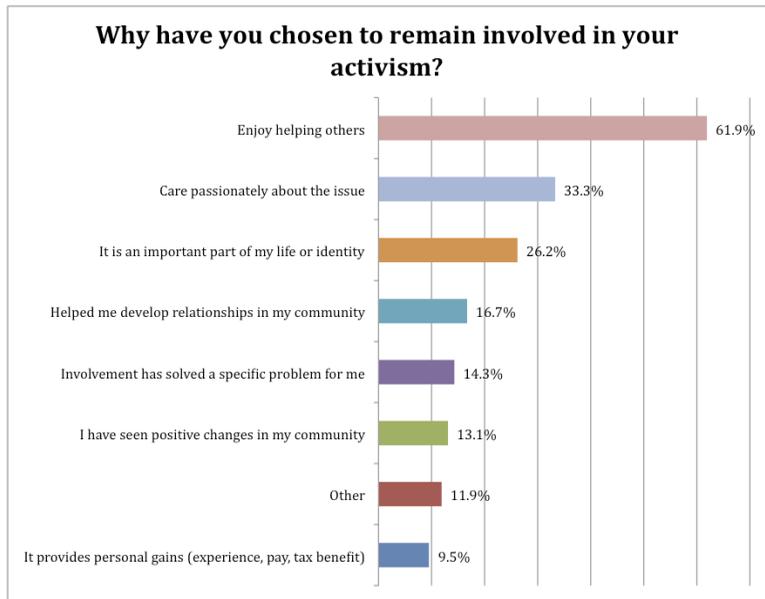
MOTIVATION

Understanding motives for involvement can potentially help us sustain involvement in a healthy and positive manner. If someone no longer sees their involvement as relevant to their motives, they will likely disengage. Feelings of hope and aspirations for social change are often what drive community involvement. In what ways can we encourage involvement?



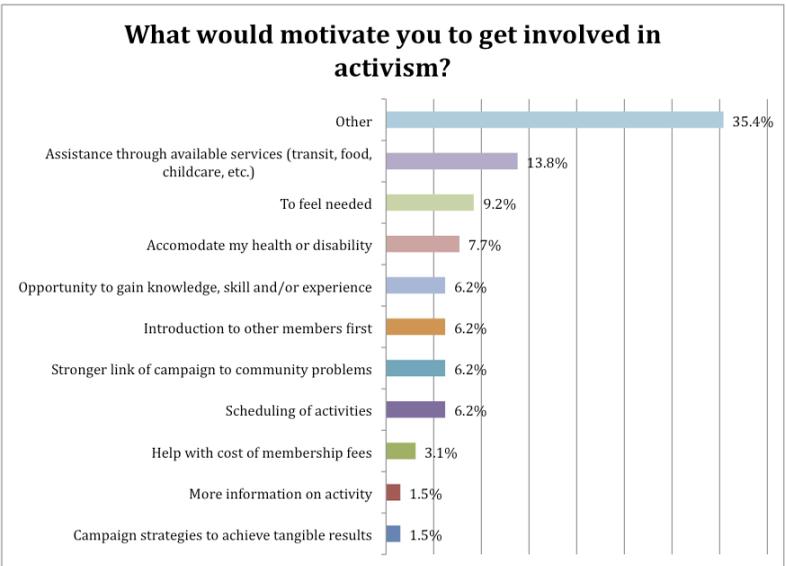
SUSTAINING ACTIVISM

If we have good space, excellent organizations and plenty of time, will people remain involved in activism? Well, we must consider all aspects of involvement, and here we can see that the drive to be involved with the issue and other people, and being able to impact one's community are the most important components in sustaining activism. When anti-poverty activity becomes a part of one's everyday life, contributing to one's basic human needs, then we may be more likely to continue our involvement over time.



RECRUITMENT

Community outreach is probably one of the most challenging aspects of community organizing activities. We often find ourselves tired and frustrated when people continue to ignore our calls to action. As we begin to talk to more 'non-participants' it is becoming clear that among many reasons, some factors that motivate activism require minimal resources and emphasize the importance of relationship building.



Could it be that one of the key motivating factors is the desire 'to feel needed'? How can we develop organizing strategies that are inclusive and informative?



LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER

an APCOL Community Research Conference

June 7 & 8, 2011

WHY DO SOME PEOPLE GET INVOLVED IN NEIGHBOURHOOD GROUPS WORKING FOR CHANGE, AND OTHERS DON'T?

For the past two years we've asked these questions to hundreds of people involved in community organizing in Toronto.

WHAT DO PEOPLE LEARN THROUGH THEIR INVOLVEMENT?

Now we can start looking at what we have learned so far. For two days on June 7 and 8 a cross section of academic and community researchers, community volunteers, and representatives from community organizations will gather together to consider the implications of the early findings from our survey and case studies.

WHY DO SOME DECIDE TO STAY AND OTHERS LEAVE?

This conference will be hands on. We'll work directly with data from our survey and case studies. We'll talk about how we can make good use of this research in our recruiting, organizing and capacity-building work.

And then we'll keep talking. This will be a great opportunity to connect and build links with other community members from across the city.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

Members of the APCOL project are committed to communicating with groups and individuals interested in issues and campaigns involving Nutrition and Food Security, Housing, School Completion, and Jobs/Living Wages. If you would like to be part of this exchange of information please email us at info@apcol.ca and we will add you to our electronic listserv.

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