

- **No.32**
- **Collaborative structures: Reimagining community-university research partnerships in a democratic society**

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- **Abstract:**

- Complex research projects that involve many people with different histories, cultures and relative power require organized yet flexible structures. The heart of the structure is the opportunity for meaningful and equitable collaboration among partners. When this collaboration is successful contribution to society is maximized. This presentation will engage the audience in reimagining research relationships that enhance a larger purpose of co-creating knowledge in a democratic society. It will feature the structure of a research project designed to engage a multi-sectorial partnership. The “Enhancing community-based research in Canada: A partnership to better engage communities in co-creating knowledge” is a partnership development vision that have both research and knowledge mobilization components. Specific objectives are: 1) to increase the involvement and leadership among academic, non-profit, government, and Indigenous sectors in better engaging community partners in community-based research; 2) to investigate how best to build the capacity of community partners so they are more likely to be engaged in community-based research; 3) to develop principles and standards of community-based research that seek to meaningfully engage community partners; 4) to strengthen and formalize the operations of Community-Based Research Canada, and 5) to incorporate youth perspectives into the future vision and direction of community-based research. The research partnerships involve community members, government officials and academics. Each partner brings their own sometimes conflicting set of assumptions, agendas and expectations into the research partnership. Yet if such partnerships are successfully carried out, the synergy they create holds promise in stimulating social innovation and enhancing social justice. But how is this successfully done? Who is driving the process and who needs to follow? How academics can successfully fit into the larger community agenda? How to work with communities to not be perceived as “arrogant intellectuals”? How to nurture a spirit of collaboration that is so important for a partnership to be successful? The presentation will identify key principles of “foundation building” to successfully work together and will discuss the concrete mechanisms of collaboration that are set in place to maximize the meaningful and equitable involvement of all study partners. The emphasis will be on partnership governance, partnership structure and on strong coordination and facilitation strategies. These mechanisms draw on the principles and values of a participatory action research approach.