SUMMARY REPORT – MITACS/CCIS PARTNERSHIP

A strategy for equity in research with newcomers

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Background

Calgary Catholic Immigration Society (CCIS) identified several key challenges vis-à-vis the relationship between research and the immigrant serving sector:

1. Research conducted about newcomers in Alberta is generally **not accessible** to agencies. In other words, there are barriers to accessing relevant data, information and research about the clients that immigrant serving agencies serve.

2. Immigrant serving agencies, such as CCIS, rarely feel they are engaged as full partners in research projects led by academic researchers. In many cases**, organizations do not feel they are equal stakeholders in research initiatives:** The questions posed by academics are often not relevant to immigrant serving agencies or their clients and the outcomes of research are rarely meaningfully returned to agency partners.

3. Immigrant serving agencies and academic researchers operate in different contexts with different accountability mechanisms and reward structures, this leads to divergent ideas about what constitutes 'ethical practice' in research. **There is a need for the sector to more proactively develop its own ethical parameters for research with newcomers.**

In order to better understand these challenges, CCIS undertook a comprehensive assessment of the research landscape in the immigrant serving sector in Calgary/Alberta. The goal of this assessment was to build an evidence base for promoting more equitable research relations in the immigrant sector.

This report proceeds in the following five parts:

1. Methods
2. Summary of research
3. Key take-aways
4. Recommendations for next steps
5. Appendices

Methods

This assessment included the following methods:

Methods	Timeline	Details
Systematic literature review	April-June 2020	Comprehensive review of literature on newcomers in Alberta 2015-2020 Key words: Immigrant, refugee, temporary foreign workers, temporary migrant workers, asylum seekers + Alberta Grey literature and academic literature 106 publications total
Stakeholder interviews	July-September 2020	Interviews with leaders in the immigrant serving sector and ethnocultural community organizations in Calgary (n: 12) Interviews with academics who work on issues related to immigration/immigrants in Alberta (n: 5)
Research on best practices (community research initiatives)	October-November 2020	Review of best practices/existing models of community-based research initiatives Interview with Scott Neufeld (Downtown East Side Research 101 Manifesto) and engagement with the Jane Finch Community Research Partnership

Summary of research

Literature review

The goal of the literature review was to identify publications related to newcomer settlement and integration in the province of Alberta over the last five years (2015-2020). The systematic review included searching for both academic/peer-reviewed and grey literature related to the subject areas. The review also sought to understand how much of this work was publicly available and how much was behind a pay wall; as well as how much scholarship identified partnering with a community-based organization to conduct the research.

The literature review identified **106** publications that met the search criteria. Of those, 73 were academic journal articles, 19 were research reports, 13 were other academic publications (book chapters and theses) and one was a policy brief. Approximately half (52%) the publications were available through open access. 31% of publications indicated they worked with a community organization or non-profit agency in Alberta to carry out their research.

Of the five years analyzed, more work was published in 2019 and 2018 than in 2015, 2016 and 2017. This could reflect the fact that grey literature from 2015-2016 may have been removed from websites and updated. It could also reflect the investment in research on Syrian refugees (SSHRC targeted funding for Syrians in 2016) – 11 publications on Syrian refugees in Alberta were published between 2017-2020. It is also possible that increasing numbers reflects an increasing interest in Alberta as a destination for newcomers.

With respect to populations studied, the top three population groups studied are **refugees** (21%); **migrants** (including Temporary Foreign Workers, (live-in) caregivers and migrants without legal status) (16%); and **immigrants as defined in the Canadian census** (14%). This last category reflects the preponderance of quantitative studies using large-scale census-driven datasets. With these categories making up approximately half the total population studied, the other categories tend to be more focused on specific identity categories such as gender, age, and/or cultural background. There are 13 studies identified as having in 'intersecting' population. This refers to studies that focus on a population with multiple intersecting identity factors – such as 'Muslim immigrant seniors' or 'first and second-generation Chinese youth.' Studies identified as 'ethnospecific' only examine the cultural background of the participants – for example, 'South Asians.'

In terms of subject area, each article was coded to reflect the primary subject areas of the article for a total of N: 130 (this means some articles had multiple codes). The most significant area of research was **health** (25%). Studies focused on **migrant workers** accounted for 12% of the literature; and 10% of studies focused on **social integration and identity/belonging**. An additional nine categories reflect the diversity of subjects covered by the literature – the next three most common categories are: Syrian refugees (8%); policy (8%) and education (8%). Other topics covered in the literature include: families and parenting, housing and cities, labour market integration, and services and supports.

See Appendix A for further details on the literature review.

Stakeholder interviews

We conducted interviews with stakeholders who work in the immigrant serving sector and with (academic) researchers who research issues related to immigrant settlement in Alberta.

Sector perspectives: Interviews with stakeholders from the immigrant serving sector and ethnocultural community organizations reveal a broad range of perspectives on research. For the most part, immigrant serving agencies find they receive a significant number of requests to participate in research. Participation varies from being what some characterize as a true partnership between the agency and a researcher (with the questions developed collaboratively and clear benefits to the organization) to far less collaborative engagements where the researcher 'drops in' and is never or seen or heard from again. In sum: Some partnerships are more beneficial than others.

Some organizations describe being overwhelmed by requests from researchers while others are never asked. On the whole, organizations describe a haphazard approach to research: Most organizations lack internal capacity to conduct research, and when capacity exists, it is generally focused on program evaluation and measuring impacts. Most organizations do not identify having clear research priorities – when priorities do exist, they tend to be funder-driven.

When asked to describe the relationship between the work their organization does and academic research produced about immigration in Alberta one participant described the relationship between academics and immigrant serving agencies as one of "mutual disconnect" – both groups have distinct agendas, priorities and are responding to different incentives/funding structures (IRCC v. SSHRC). It is rare to find true common ground. In general, questions posed by academics are generally not meaningful to frontline workers who have a different perspective

Sector stakeholders agree that data stewardship and accessing timely, relevant data is a challenge for their organizations. Organizations agree there is an important role for the sector to take in identifying shared research priorities and answering specific questions. Interviewees also identified the need for more opportunities to access existing data/research. There was a general consensus that this effort could or should be led by existing collaborative organizations already in place to facilitate shared goals in the sector (such as CLIP or AAISA)

See Appendix B for a summary of interviews with service provider organizations.

Academic perspectives: We reached out to 11 academics for this project, of which five responded favorably, one turned us down, and five did not respond to the request for participation. In itself, this reveals the challenge that community and service provider organizations experience in trying to re-balance the relationship between academic research and the community. It should also be noted that those who participated in interviews tend to be very explicit in their identification as researchers who actively partner and work with community organizations/groups.

Academic researchers identified several factors that inform the decisions they make around their research agendas:

- Community-informed (for example, on the Board of community organization and identify gaps in services/programs and the need for research on a specific topic)
- Identified gap in literature
- Funder driven
- Combination of all of the above

Most identified long term relationships with specific partners and a long-term collaboration with these organizations/groups which structure how they engage in the community. Some identified institutional barriers to working with the formal settlement sector (i.e. organizational culture, gatekeeping, reluctance to allow for research independence)**.** Researchers identified that trust and long term engagement are key factors in success in working with community – they echoed

critiques from the sector stakeholders about extractive research processes. They also emphasized the need to recognize different ways of working/different priorities and the need for academics to produce tangible/accessible data for partner organizations. Academics believe that relationships with community tend to work best when questions are generated by both partners (academics and community)

When asked to describe the relationship between Alberta's immigrant serving sector and academic research about newcomers in Alberta one interviewee used the metaphor of a burning building: Community organizations are the firefighters tasked with putting out the fire and academics come in to watch the fires burn and understand how/why the fires started. Understandably, this causes frustration on the part of community organizations

Academics identified very different time scales between sector and academics (sector generally needs quick results, accessible program-specific data whereas academics need to produce academic publications/contribute to scholarship). At the same time, there are very few rewards in academia for being community-focused – rewards come from publishing and funding. Community work takes a long of time and to do it well it takes patience and hard work, this is not rewarded in the university

Like sector stakeholders, academics believe that there are opportunities for greater engagement between their research agendas and those of the sector. They believe there is a need for greater institutional frameworks for supporting this kind of collaboration. This includes umbrella organizations taking a lead in bringing diverse stakeholders to the table. Engagements like Metropolis and P2P were also identified as valuable. Academics also recognize they need to take a more holistic approach to knowledge mobilization/engagement (things like infographics, one-page summaries, conversation cafes, etc.)

See Appendix C for a summary of interviews with academics.

Case studies

The effort to understand promising practices related to ethical research practice with vulnerable populations led to a closer investigation of two existing models, detailed below:

Research 101 - A Manifesto for Ethical Research in the Downtown Eastside: *Research 101* is described as a research 'manifesto' that lays out core principles around ethical research from the perspective of residents and members of the over-researched Downtown Eastside (DTES) community in Vancouver. *Research 101* was the product of six workshops with individuals who had been involved in research from the DTES, facilitated by a graduate student from Simon Fraser University and in close collaboration with a number of organizations in the DTES. The goal of *Research 101* was to support community empowerment to push back against extractive/problematic research practices and to seek to re-balance the relationship between academic researchers and members of the community. The outcome of these workshops was a collaborative document called *Research 101 – A Manifesto for Ethical Research in the Downtown Eastside.* Since its inception, the work has been widely shared and 'endorsed' by other

organizations in the DTES. The authors of the Manifesto have also engaged stakeholders from the University of British Columbia and Simon Fraser University to support broader engagement with academic partners and potential researchers. There is currently an effort underway to develop a Community Research Ethics Workshop (CREW) similar to an Community Ethics Board but with a more organic, community-focus.

Jane Finch Community Research Partnership (JFCRP): The JFCRP is a collaborative initiative between York University and the community of Jane Finch in Toronto. Like the DTES, the Jane Finch community has been a site of active interest by researchers for several decades – the JFCRP seeks to rebalance the relationship between researchers from York University and members of the Jane Finch community. The partnership has the following three goals:

1. Establishing a community ethics process: Convene a community-based advisory group that overseas and supports research proposals from those looking to conduct research in the community. This includes the development of a Principles for Conducting Research in the Jane Finch Community document to support ethical research.
2. Developing resources for researchers: Develop an eight-module online course for researchers interested in conducting research in the Jane Finch community.
3. Creating the Jane Finch Research Collection: Building an accessible open-access portal with research about Jane Finch. The collection will be 'co-developed' with members of the community to ensure their needs and perspectives are prioritized.

See Appendix D for a table describing best practices related to community ethics boards.

Key take-aways

Taken together, the literature review and interviews with key stakeholders lead to the following five key take-aways:

1. There is a need for data stewardship in the immigrant serving sector in Alberta: Every year, there are a significant number of articles published about immigration and immigrants in Alberta. Only a small percentage of these are accessible to people working in the immigrant serving sector. Similarly, academic researchers often rely on immigrant serving agencies for support and recruitment for their research projects – yet rarely are the outcomes of this research meaningfully returned to the sector. These gaps reveal the need for greater data stewardship to overcome the challenges around data access by service providers. This could include a centralized information hub where service providers could easily access plain-language research summaries and where researchers could share their findings with a public audience.

2. Because research is not a priority for the immigrant serving sector, there is currently not a coordinated approach to how research is conducted: Service provider organizations generally agree that they lack a coordinated approach to how they engage with researchers. This is in large part due to the fact that their primary responsibility is delivering services. Research, if it is an organizational priority, is generally aligned with goals related to service provision or funder requests. This lack of coordinated agenda leads to a haphazard approach to research. This creates an opportunity for a more coordinated approach to how the immigrant serving sector engages with researchers; as well as considerations for what a collaborative research strategy might look like.

3. There are significant (organizational) cultural differences between academia and the non-profit/community sector: Academia and the non-profit sector are two distinct worlds, with distinct accountability mechanisms and reward structures. Academics are rewarded for publishing in peer-reviewed journals, time spent in community is rarely rewarded or viewed as valuable. Similarly, non-profit organizations are accountable to funders for delivering cost-effective, high-impact programs and services. Academics often have significantly more time to reflect on research results, while service provider organizations often need results more quickly. These differences in organizational cultural, accountability structures and reward mechanisms need to be acknowledged if research partnerships between academics and service provider organizations are to be successful and mutually beneficial.

4. Leadership in this area would benefit form a third party/umbrella organization that could serve as a convener: Both academic and service provider stakeholders agree that there is an important opportunity to be proactive about research with newcomers in Alberta. There are variety of forms this could take: more conferences (such as Metropolis and P2P), roundtables, community conversations, a website or online hub and so on. Most stakeholders agree that this work should be led (or actively supported) by one of the existing umbrella organizations/conveners currently charged with supporting collaboration in the immigrant

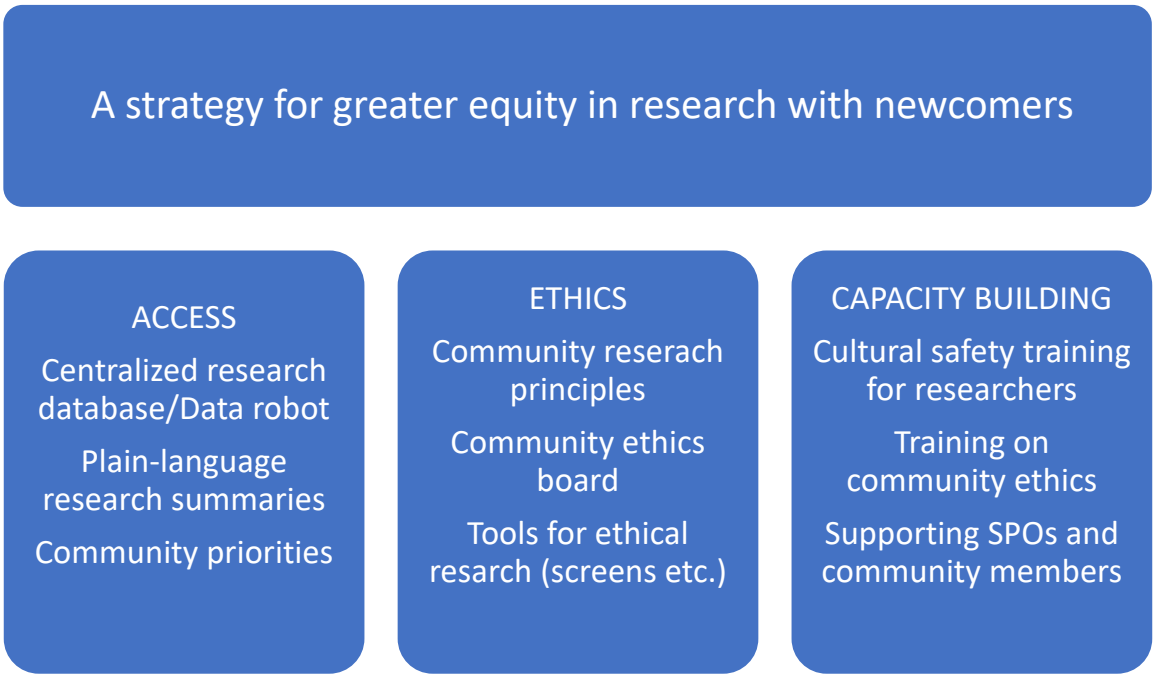
sector, such as the Calgary Local Immigration Partnership (CLIP) or the Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (AAISA).

5. There are useful models to build on in the community such as the Jane Finch Community Research Partnership and the Downtown Eastside Research 101 Manifesto:

As this initiative moves forward there are useful models to draw on to inform the development of a newcomer research agenda. These include the Jane Finch Community Research Partnership and the Downtown Eastside Research 101 Manifesto. Both offer helpful best practices for how to move forward building consensus around a research agenda and supporting community members/research participants to be more assertive in negotiating the terms of their participation. These initiatives can offer important insights to this strategy moving forward.

Developing a strategy for enhancing equity in research with newcomers

To move forward, it will be important to take a holistic approach to the addressing the systemic inequities surrounding research with newcomers in Alberta. As such, we have identified three central themes: access, ethics, and capacity building.



ACCESS: Access refers the need for greater data stewardship within the immigrant serving sector. It seeks to address the central challenge around accessing relevant research findings and data to support service delivery and program development. This includes removing barriers to accessing relevant data and research; as well as centralizing research findings in one space to enhance access and remove barriers.

ETHICS: This strategy aims to develop a set of community-informed research principles to guide research with newcomer communities. These priorities will be developed through conversations and workshops with people who have previous experience participating in research. In addition to a List of Principles, this work will lay the groundwork for developing a Community Ethics Board in partnership with other key stakeholders.

CAPACITY BUILDING: In addition to access and ethics, this strategy incorporates the development of three inter-related training modules aimed at addressing inequity in research practice. The first is training for researchers interested in conducting research with newcomers. This training will focus on cultural safety. Part 2 of this training will explore research ethics using the Research Principle identified above. Training 3 will be for service providers and community partners to support advocacy around research 'partnerships' and working with academic researchers.

Recommendations for next steps			
A strategy for greater equity in research with newcomers	**Strategy**	**Activities**	**Next Steps**
	Access	• Centralized research database • Plain-language research summaries • Driven by community priorities	• Develop online database to share literature review • Identify community/sector priorities for data • Create plain-language summaries of research for community stakeholders
	Ethics	• Community Research Principles • Community Ethics Board (or similar) • Tools for ethical research	• Convene community conversations with past participants of research with the aim of developing research principles • Engage partners and key stakeholders to discuss CB Ethics Board (university, CLIP, other SPOs, etc.)
	Capacity Building	• Cultural safety training for researchers • Training on community ethics • Supporting SPOs to say “no”	• Develop cultural safety training for researchers • Once Community Research Principles are developed, create training for researchers • Develop training on research for SPOs including how to say “no” to researchers

Appendix A: Literature review methods

Search criteria
Key words: Immigrant, refugee, temporary foreign workers, temporary migrant workers, asylum seekers + Alberta
Timeframe: 2015-2020

Grey literature:

1. I undertook a comprehensive key word search using Google. Used the following key words: Immigrant, refugee, temporary foreign workers, temporary migrant workers, and asylum seekers one by one along with 'settlement in Alberta' and 'integration in Alberta' each time.
2. I reviewed AAISA's research library (http://legacy.aaisa.ca/research-library/). I did a search by year (2015 through 2020) to see if any reports met the criteria.
3. Searched "Alberta" in Pathways to Prosperity reference list (http://p2pcanada.ca/library/category/reports-publications/)
4. Searched three levels of government –Local Immigration Partnerships (Edmonton & Calgary) https://lipdata.ca/pnt/; Provincial: https://www.alberta.ca/immigration.aspx Federal: https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/reports-statistics/research.html
5. A total of **31** non-academic articles were found using the search criteria above. This includes 19 research reports, one policy note, and 11 student theses (doctoral and masters)

Academic literature:

1. I used the UBC library database system to undertake a comprehensive literature review, using the databases, Web of Science, Elsevier and Pub Med. I used the same key words and time period as above. This search identified 98 references. I reviewed each article to make sure it fit our criteria and discarded those that didn't match. This left a remaining **75 academic references** which are included in the spreadsheet.

Appendix B: Summary notes of interviews with service providers

Research agendas:

- On the whole, organizations describe a haphazard approach to research
- Lack internal capacity to conduct research
- When capacity exists, it is generally focused on program evaluation/measuring impacts
- Often there are no clear research priorities – when priorities do exist, they tend to be funder-driven

Working with external researchers:

- Mixed bag when it comes to working with external researchers; ranging from: We are never approached, we are approached all the time, we have a very collaborative engagement with researchers, we rarely have true collaborative research engagements.
- Helps to have people with PhDs working within the organization – they speak the language of academics
- Clients are typically compensated for participation in research
- Research is rarely (though not never) returned to the organization – results are rarely seen or communicated back to the organization
- Some partnerships are more beneficial than others

How would you describe the relationship between the work your organization does and academic research produced about immigration in Alberta?

- One participant described the relationship between academics and immigrant serving agencies as one of "mutual disconnect" – both groups have distinct agendas, priorities and are responding to different incentives/funding structures (IRCC v. SSHRC). It is rare to find true common ground.
- Questions posed by academics are generally not meaningful to frontline workers who have a different perspective

Are you able to access the data/research you need to do your work? When and why?

- Some internal capacity for research but generally it is very hard to access data/information beyond demographic information
- Generally big gaps around data stewardship

If we were to summarize the existing research that has been produced in Alberta into a brief or briefs, what topics would you be most interested in learning about?

- Longitudinal studies about immigrant outcomes
- Big picture information
- Program-specific information → best practices related to specific programs/goals

How do you think the sector can take a more proactive/active role in building a research agenda?

- This should be done by an existing umbrella organization – CLIP or AAISA with the goal of identifying research priorities and answering specific questions
- Also sharing resources about how to make better use of the research that is out there/accessing existing research

Appendix C: Interview summary – interviews with academics

Comments on participation: We reached out to 11 academics for this project, of which five responded favorably, one turned us down, and five did not respond to the request for participation. In itself, this reveals the challenge that community and service provider organizations experience in trying to re-balance the relationship between academic research and the community. It should also be noted that those who participated in interviews tend to be very explicit in their identification as researchers who actively partner and work with community organizations/groups. As such, these results cannot be said to represent the full range of perspectives of those who engage community organizations in their research…instead they reflect the perspectives of those willing to take time to talk to us and who see the value of this kind of engagement.

What department do you teach/work in? The five academics we spoke to come from a range of departments (planning, nursing, women's studies etc.) but all self-identify as interdisciplinary scholars/researchers.

How much of your research agenda addresses issues to do with immigration/immigrant settlement? Ranges from 30 percent to 100 percent; with most in the 90-100 percent range.

How do you make decisions about what kind of research questions to pursue?

- Community-informed (for example, on the Board of CB organization and identify gaps in services/programs and the need for research on a specific topic)
- Identified gap in literature
- Funding driven
- Combination of all of the above

Can you talk a little about how you collaborate with immigrant serving/community-based organizations? What kind of relationships do you have with these organizations?

- Many identify long-term relationships with specific partners (i.e. Africa Centre in Edmonton, Sudanese community in Calgary etc.) and a long-term collaboration with these organizations/groups
- Most speak in positive terms about their relationships in the community
- Some identify institutional barriers to working with the formal settlement sector (i.e. organizational culture, gatekeeping, reluctance to allow for research independence)
- Trust and long-term engagement identified as key to success (critiques of extractive research processes – show up, take data, leave etc.)
- Emphasis on the need to recognized different ways of working/different priorities and the need for academics to produce tangible/accessible data for partner organizations
- Relationship works best when questions are generated by both partners (academics and community)

How would you describe the relationship between Alberta's immigrant serving sector/organizations within the sector and academic research about newcomers in Alberta?

- Metaphor of community organizations as firefighters and academics coming in to watch the fires burn and understand how/why the fires started – understandably, this causes frustration on the part of community organizations
- Very different time scales between sector and academics (sector generally needs quick results, accessible program-specific data whereas academics need to produce academic publications/contribute to scholarship)
- Very few rewards in academia for being community-focused – rewards come from publishing and funding
- Community work takes a long of time and to do it well it takes patience and hard work, this is not rewarded in the university

What do you think might strengthen the relationship between academic and community research in Alberta?

- Some promising examples of effective collaboration – it tends to work best when there are champions within organizations who see the value or research
- Need for more infrastructure/opportunities to share ideas (like Metropolis, leadership from AAISA or CLIP could help here)
- Academics need to take a more holistic approach to knowledge mobilization/engagement (things like infographics, one-page summaries, conversation cafes, etc.)

What kind of knowledge mobilization activities do you typically engage in?

- Some academics take a more comprehensive approach to "knowledge mobilization" seeing research as an opportunity to engage community leaders in the data – for example, hiring immigrant youth to collect data and training them on research methods and critical analysis. They see this as part of knowledge translation – beyond just producing a report at the end of the project
- Newcomer Research Network (see previous notes on this) identified as a way to build stronger relationships between community and university
- Creating short and accessible community reports
- Going back to organization to do a presentation/share results/collect feedback
- Presenting at conferences like Metropolis or P2P which connect with SPOs not just academics
- Volunteering in the community through faith community or with SPOs

Appendix D: Considerations for Community-based Research Ethics Review Processes (CRPs)

Motivations for establishing a CRP	A review of nine Community Research Boards in the US (Shore et al. 2015) identified the following motivations behind the establishment of CRPs: • Educating academic researchers to engage diverse communities ethically and respectfully • Addressing shortcomings of IRB protocols • Protecting the community from too many research requests and from bad research experiences • Building capacity of community to shape and conduct research
Where are CRPs housed?	Usually hosted by a community organization that has strong connection to the community and expertise in the issues being studied CRPs should be hosted in spaces that are accessible/widely used by those who will participate in the research (*not* in a university)
What research is reviewed and how?	All research that involve a host organization and/or the communities they serve are reviewed by CRBs. CRBs are often geographically bounded. CRBs engage the researcher in a consultative process – sometimes researchers attend the review meetings where their research is discussed, they may present the project and/or seek input and engagement at that time: "This consultative approach promotes mutual understanding and respect; reduces stress and anxiety…and encourages a stronger relationship…this approach

	ultimately helps to ensure that the proposed research critically addresses community oriented concerns." (1295)
Review considerations	CRBs consider traditional IRB criteria including informed consent etc. but also include community level and cultural considerations. For example: community engagement in research design and implementation; research team qualifications to conduct community-engaged research and dissemination of research findings in community friendly formats and venues.
Reviewer considerations	Community members often make up 50% of CRPs. Number of reviewers range from 7-20. Stipend or payment for reviewers. Food included. Training and capacity for reviewers is important. Criteria for reviewers include: Experience with CBPR; place of residence; demonstrated commitment to community; and reflecting the diversity within the community. Everyone involved! Including the research team/researcher; community members; peer researchers. Community review boards are often composed of a mix of community members and service providers or advocates who work closely with the community. There should be training for members of the review boards. Offering rotating positions may assist in providing capacity building for community members and inviting in different perspectives, values and ideas.
When does the process begin?	Whenever researchers approach the community for participation in research. The community ethics process should take place *before* application to an IRB and ideally before the research questions are fully formed so that community members might have input into the development of the research.
Questions to consider when establishing CRB	What are the purposes of the review process?

	How is the host institution regarded? What infrastructure is available?
Critical issues for CRPs	Authority – ensuring that researchers follow CRPs is a challenge Capacity and skill building – Need to build up capacity Sustainability and funding