



**Transcript of CFICE Radio Documentary:
Partnering for Change:
The Impacts of CFICE's Community-Campus Engagement (CCE)**

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In April 2012, the Community First: Impacts of Community Engagement project (commonly known as CFICE) embarked on a 7 year journey to assess and optimize community-campus partnerships.

To guide their research, the project seeks to address this question: *How can community-campus partnerships be designed and implemented to maximize the value created for non-profit, community-based organizations?*

Answering this question is a big task, especially since each participant – whether they be a community organization or an academic – enters a research partnership with their own needs and objectives. With this in mind, the CFICE project split into 2 phases.

Phase I, which ended in March 2015, focused on specific community-campus partnerships within unique sectors, known as hubs. For example, Trent University students in the Masters of Sustainability Studies worked closely with local farming organization Abbey Gardens as part of the Community Environmental Sustainability hub.

Other hubs focused on the themes of Poverty Reduction, Food Security, Violence Against Women, and Knowledge Mobilization.

In Phase II, which is currently entering its second year, CFICE participants are applying the knowledge and experience gained from Phase I. Phase II seeks to bring its lessons learned to the broader network of community-campus partnerships.

In the transition period between Phase I and Phase II, CFICE's academic and community partners gathered together at a CFICE Evaluation Symposium. Here, they had the opportunity to share their experiences and reflect on the impacts of Phase I.

Liz Weaver, Vice President of the Tamarack Institute and community partner of the Poverty Reduction Hub, describes the benefits CFICE has brought to community partners:

“I think for me, the most memorable moments are really coming to community meetings and campus-community meetings and really looking at the scope and scale of the work that's going on in community and the change that's happening and to really recognize that there are some pretty impressive partnerships that have done some pretty outstanding work. It is really kind of cool to think that with a few dollars invested we can have pretty substantial outcomes.”

Liz goes on to explain the results she has seen for the Poverty Reduction Hub's initiatives, in particular.

“I think, you know, what I've observed is that through the community projects in CFICE, and particularly in the Poverty Reduction hub, we've been able to move the issue around education and knowledge of education and aspirations that parents have for their kids. In certain communities we've been able to move the issue of living wage. We've really been able to more intentionally leverage university



resources and community resources and I think, you know, in many ways it's also raised the profile of poverty in Canada that this work is going on."

The CFICE project has also greatly influenced the approach to academic pursuits related to community-campus partnerships. From their own personal research to how they teach their students, CFICE has made a personal impact.

"CFICE has, I think, really came at that moment where I was kind of really starting to expand my own understanding of community-campus engagement." For Charles Levkoe, the academic co-lead of the Food Security hub, CFICE led to a better, more concrete understanding of campus-community partnerships.

"Being able to work with other faculty, other community groups who were actively exploring these issues, and all of the ideas, critical ideas and opportunities surrounding community-campus engagement was kind of just all right for me."

"So certainly I've always been involved in community as a faculty member. That's the only way, as far as I'm concerned, that I can teach and that students can learn is by actually starting with experience and then analyzing and learning from that experience rather than my pontificating some theory and then having students write it down and put a check mark in an exam. I don't think that's the way to learn."

Along the same lines, academic co-lead of the knowledge mobilization hub, Bessa Whitmore, explains how CFICE has kept her grounded in her research, and in the classroom:

"It has certainly kept me very engaged in many of the debates and discussions, and that's one of those discussions going on right now, about the role of universities and the role of faculty and the role of students in the community and grassroots organizing. Where do we fit, how do we do that effectively because it's very different from, depending on where your position is, so it has certainly kept me informed and engaged and thinking about these things."

"So, one of the impacts of CFICE has been on the way I teach." That's academic co-lead of the Environmental Sustainability hub in Peterborough-Haliburton, Nadine Changfoot, building on the importance of the Phase I projects for researchers.

"I bring, through the research findings of, especially during Phase I, through a project with the Stewart Street Neighbourhood in Peterborough, with Active Neighbourhoods Canada as well as in projects with Abbey Gardens and Haliburton-Highlands Land Trust, I can teach about the research methods used by students and community partners in the development of research deliverables for those projects and teach those to students in my courses and then of course transfer them to future community-based research projects. I think that students see for themselves a longer term horizon in terms of the projects that they envision for themselves, possibly in a community-based research project. For example, a student who may get turned on to community-based research in the third year might then do another community-based research project in the fourth year, for example, and there's opportunities for continuity with the same community organization so the horizon can be much longer, which is a benefit and an impact."

The extended time commitment to projects is something that community partners have echoed as a positive outcome of the CFICE project.



Heather Reid, Abbey Gardens director and community partner, mentions this ongoing commitment as something that has led to greater benefits for her organization as part of community-campus research projects:

“I think for us CFICE has created a continuum of projects, so because of the length of CFICE it made students projects a priority over time, which is great. And also created those relationships with faculty over time, so it’s given us that capacity and I’m excited to see what Phase II brings.”

U-Links board member Marie Gage, for her part, has seen a greater contribution from graduate students, who are able to dig deeper into the community’s research questions.

“CFICE has enabled us to bring graduate level students to the community to assist with bigger research question, things that couldn’t be done in the scope of an undergraduate student program.”

Joan Kuyak is chair of GottaGo!, a campaign that seeks to improve the availability and accessibility of public washrooms in Ottawa. She has partnered with a number of student researchers and explains how it has delivered for her organization.

“Well, particularly we’ve had the benefit of 2 students, one was a young woman named Rachel Canham, who did a needs study and looked at, did a random interview of 15 different people about what it meant to have no toilets. And that was very powerful. It came out as a report called *Talking Toilets* and we released it at a press conference in September 2014. At that press conference, we were able also to submit a thousand signatures to the City Hall so it was a big thing. And then after that, we had another student named Sarah Good who was a geomatics student and we were very concerned about getting an idea of where the municipally-funded toilets were because they kept saying there were lots of them and Sarah did a study for us, using GPS, of locating all the 150 toilets the city had and whether or not they were porta-potties or located in a recreation centre. The city then hired Sarah to build an app which is now called *ottpee.ca*. We had a later group of students, from another program at the university who surveyed every single one of these toilets to see when they were open and not, and we found that 49% of them were closed during ordinary working hours. So there really weren’t that many municipal toilets at all. Rachel Canham’s work particularly, really helped us push to get toilets in the LRT hub stations, the light rail transit that’s being built in the city. There weren’t any toilets planned for it, except at a few places for employees and we argued, we finally had to reduce our ask to toilets in the hub stations. We wanted them in all, and we got toilets now at Bayview, which is on the O-Train exchange and at Hurdman, which is a major bus interchange. So there will be toilets there and there’ll toilets at phase 2 hub stations when they do the second phase of the LRT. So it was, her work was very important to that, and having an app that can tell you where the nearest toilet is and whether or not it’s open is probably very useful to people. “

As we’ve heard from the academic and community partners, students played an integral role in Phase I. Stephen Hill, an academic partner of CFICE, explains:

“One of the things we’ve learned is that students are crucially important as an intermediary, or someone that works between the community and the university in the sense that they both understand some of the academic and scholarly issues and needs and they have their foot also grounded firmly on the ground floor of community needs and community interests.



For their part, students identified personal benefits from their participation in CFICE. Helen Knibb explains how her involvement with CFICE helped her academic career:

“I feel very privileged in that I was coming to the end of my coursework in the first year of my PhD and I was feeling actually very adrift in terms of not feeling connected or anchored in the institution and I was, in once sense Nadine thankfully just sort of plucked me from the ranks for whatever reason and we met and we talked and I think she just wanted to make sure we were compatible in terms of how we thought and how we saw things and you know we just sort of began this working relationship. In terms of, I mean completely distinct from the outcomes of the project, I just want to say what an incredible RA-ship it has been because you know, I feel that I was treated as a peer, I feel that I was fully engaged in the process, that I had significant autonomy in terms of the decision making and what I did and how I did it. She was always there, in terms of checking in when I needed the check in but I never felt that Nadine was controlling the process. And I think what she gave me was a learning opportunity and a growth opportunity and it gave me a community and a sense of purpose that, you know, I’m not quite at that stage with my doctoral studies where I was grappling with my thesis topic and so, this for me, this was alive. This offered me a chance to engage, to build my academic community in a way that hasn’t perhaps quite happened yet in terms of my own research, so that part was really important.”

As for Colleen Christopherson-Cote, CFICE has allowed her to balance her academic endeavours along with her role as Community Partnership Facilitator at the Saskatoon Regional Intersectional Committee.

“So I was lucky enough to have the funding to go to the C2UExpo in Ottawa and to do a presentation, which wouldn’t be something as a community partner I would necessarily have the opportunity to do and so the funding from CFICE allowed me to go and co-present with the university team. And so to have Saskatchewan, and Saskatoon-specific work showcased in Ottawa so other people can see the that impact that we’re having in our local community, but my perspective, as well as an academic perspective, was probably the highlight of my connection.”

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Looking back on Phase I, the perceived outcomes and the impacts are as varied as the partners themselves. However, as they reflect on the remainder of the project, CFICE partners express a much more cohesive outcome.

“Oh, short-term, medium-term, long-term... oh this is a terrible question. It’s a good question.” That’s Lisa Mort-Puntland, Executive Director of Volunteer Victoria, reacting to the question of what she sees are the future impacts of CFICE.

“Longitudinally, I hope that we will have a product, for lack of a better word, something that is quite pedestrian, something that strengthens the space between the university and the community that is more relational, there’s better trust, and I think that would be a great outcome. For me personally in the short-term, I think again knowing that people are interested in building a different frame of reference with community and a different context. That I think is, the work is being done and it’s always joyous to see people excited about possibility. And because we work in a volunteer centre we believe inherently in our work that engagement is important. It’s the largest piece so it’s less about funding, because we work in a context where there is very little financial exchange but it’s about building the potential of people.



And having them engage in spaces, places and ideas that are meaningful to them. And I see CFICE as this opportunity to give more opportunities for meaningful engagement.”

Jason Garlough from the Ottawa Eco-Talent Network highlights the empowerment of bringing community organizations together, working toward similar goals and learning how to leverage community-campus partnerships.

“So the work at CFICE also really benefits us by being able to see that the needs that we’re hearing from our community are not just local here to Ottawa, but they’re reflected in the communities across Canada that CFICE is working with. We’re hearing from groups from Alberta, from Saskatchewan, from St. John’s, from Victoria and they’re facing similar challenges and needs, and there are similar opportunities in their community as well, so I think there’s a real opportunity for us to convene and work together to address some of these same issues.”

Kathy Sanford, an academic partner with the Knowledge Mobilization hub, explains the potential she sees for Phase II.

“It’s been really meaningful and powerful in actually helping us connect in a more explicit way with our community partners but also, interestingly enough, it has helped us connect across campus with some of the people who are doing community-engaged work, to be able to talk to each other as we’re trying to develop strategies and approaches that we can learn from each other about. “

Throughout Phase II, which ends March 2019, CFICE partners will continue to expand and strengthen their community and campus networks, setting out to apply best practices and optimize their partnerships.

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