

The background features abstract, overlapping green geometric shapes in various shades of lime and forest green, creating a dynamic, modern look. The shapes are primarily located on the left and right sides of the slide, framing the central text area.

# Research partnerships with community groups

## Challenges and opportunities

Bessa Whitmore, Professor Emerita, Carleton University  
Presentation at Dalhousie School of Social Work  
October 3, 2016

# A bit about my background: How I got from there to here

From front line work to academia (via Sackville)



# Your background?

## My assumptions

- ▶ You have limited experience in working with (or volunteering in) a community based organization
- ▶ This is your first course that includes 'Community Service Learning'
- ▶ You are interested in getting into 'real world' experiences, but are unsure how this will work out
- ▶ Most have heavy schedules (courses, work, family)
- ▶ Other?

"I hate research"



# Two stories

## ▶ **Discovery of PAR**

- ▶ **Investigation, empowerment, and action**

- ▶ *Who owns knowledge? Who creates knowledge?*

- ▶ **Highlander Research and Education Center**

# WHAT is a research partnership?

- ▶ A “*two-way approach in which institutions and community partners collaborate to develop and apply knowledge to address societal needs*” (Weerts & Sandman, 2008)
- ▶ Key elements: trust, respect, commitment to power sharing, interest in collaboration

# CFICE project



- ▶ Community First: Impacts of Community Engagement (CFICE)
- ▶ *How can community-campus engagement, including community service learning (CSL) and community-based research (CBR), be designed and implemented in ways that maximize the value created for non-profit community-based organizations?*
- ▶ <https://carleton.ca/communityfirst/>

# WHO are partners?

- ▶ Some community based organizations and groups (CBOs) in Halifax/Nova Scotia are ??



# WHY work with community partners?

## ► Benefits to students

- Real, useful work; make a difference
- Apply theory to practice
- Exposure to real community issues
- Know what's out there (CBOs)
- Opportunity to work with practicing social workers, others
- Add to resume
- Other?



# WHY work with community partners?

## ► *Benefits to CBOs*

### ► *Students as free labour*

### ► Hard contributions (tangible products, championing)

### ► Soft contributions (external ideas, curiosity, energy;

### ► Students as co-educators; co-generators of knowledge

# GottaGo campaign

Campaign for a safe,  
accessible and available  
system of public  
toilets in Ottawa



Student contributions make a HUGE difference

[www.ottawapublictoilets.ca](http://www.ottawapublictoilets.ca)

# Challenges

## ► For CBOs

- Limited time commitment of students
- Prep and supervision time commitment (staff limitations)
- Variation in quality of student work
- Students poorly prepared
- Payoff can be limited
- Saturation

# Challenges

- ▶ **For students**
  - ▶ Scheduling
  - ▶ Unstructured environment
  - ▶ Inadequate preparation/training
  - ▶ Culture shock
  - ▶ Internal dynamics of CBO
  - ▶ Ethics

# Challenges

## Institutional issues

- ▶ Power differences
- ▶ Respect
- ▶ Ongoing communication between CBO and faculty
- ▶ Lack of CBO involvement in course design
- ▶ Beyond one off course - long term relationship needed

THANK YOU

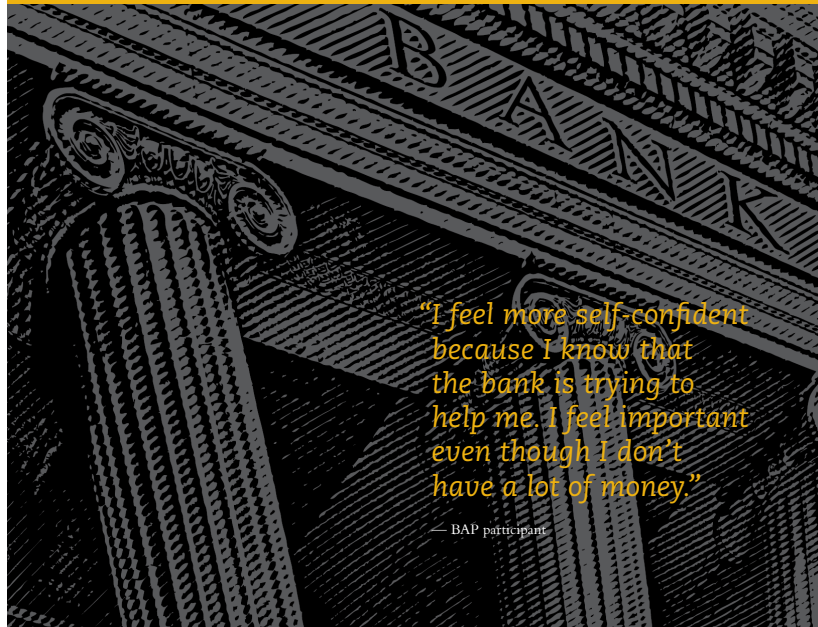
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# CMHA: Banking Accessibility Pilot Project



## Creating Change by Saving Change

The Ottawa Banking Accessibility Project for  
Low-Income Clients with Serious Mental Illness  
Brings More Than Just Financial Benefits



*"I feel more self-confident  
because I know that  
the bank is trying to  
help me. I feel important  
even though I don't  
have a lot of money."*

— BAP participant