



Canadian Coalition Against LGBTQ2S+ Poverty Partnership Meeting

Final report from the June 14th – June
15th Canadian Institutes of Health
Research-Funded Planning Meeting

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Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the land on which The 519 Community Centre in Toronto, Ontario is built and where the partnership meeting was held. For thousands of years it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Haudenosaunee, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous Peoples from across Turtle Island, including the Anishinabe, Haudenosuane, Métis and Inuit peoples, and is also host to Indigenous peoples from other countries. We are grateful to have had the opportunity to host this meeting on this land.

Considering the focus of our meeting was on economic disparities in Canada, it was important for us to recognize colonization as the reason for the extreme rates of poverty among Indigenous peoples in Canada. Beginning with the *Doctrine of Discovery* and *Terra Nullus* – racist ideologies that were used to justify colonization by European settlers of the land we currently call Canada- our government's policies and practices have deliberately impoverished Indigenous peoples to the benefit of non-Indigenous settlers. Colonizing practices such as displacement of Indigenous peoples from economically sustainable ways of living, the criminalization and over-incarceration of Indigenous peoples, and the intergenerational impact of the residential schooling system and apprehension of Indigenous children, continue to impact the economic realities of Indigenous peoples, including LGBTQ2S+ Indigenous peoples. At the meeting and in the work that follows, we aim to address historical and ongoing colonialism, racism, oppression, and marginalization of Indigenous peoples in Canadian society, while simultaneously honouring Indigenous peoples' resilience and resistance to this oppression.

Who We Are

The Canadian Coalition Against LGBTQ2S+ Poverty (CCALP) was formed in 2017, when academic researchers, community organizers, and service providers concerned about LGBTQ2S+ poverty came together to prepare a joint submission to the consultation on Canada's first Poverty Reduction Strategy. Anita Khanna, the national coordinator of Campaign 2000, was the catalyst for CCALP and co-founded CCALP with Dr. Lori Ross. We hope to build this coalition and continue to work together to reduce poverty among LGBTQ2S+ individuals in Canada.



Why We Met

Our meeting was supported by the Canadian Institutes for Health Research, Institute for Gender and Health through a Planning and Dissemination grant. These grants are designed to catalyze new programs of research, by bringing together new collaborators to share ideas and identify priorities. We wanted to bring together stakeholders who are differently positioned to concerns about the health impacts of poverty among LGBTQ2S+ people – an area that has received little research attention. Our hope was that the meeting would foster new partnerships and generate ideas for applied, community-engaged research that can support poverty reduction efforts and improve the health of LGBTQ2S+ Canadians living in poverty.

Meeting Objectives

- Develop principles for community engagement
- Identify applied research priorities
- Catalyze strategic partnerships

Day I

Keynote Address by Dr. Lee Badgett

Professor of Economics at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and a Williams Distinguished Scholar at UCLA's Williams Institute.

Dr. Badgett is a leading figure in research related to economic issues facing LGBT people in the United States and globally.

Dr. Badgett's keynote, *Left Out? LGBT Poverty in the US and What to Do About It*, highlighted the invisibility of LGBT poverty in academic research and mainstream discourse. Despite the lack of attention to this issue, the research that does exist demonstrates that LGBT individuals in the US are vulnerable to poverty and associated disparities. The talk concluded



by examining potential policy interventions to reduce LGBT poverty (e.g., increasing minimum wage, reducing the gender and racial wage gaps).

Principles for Community Engagement¹

During the morning, one of the breakout groups, facilitated by AJ Withers and Dakota Shelby, served as a space for individuals with lived experience of poverty to discuss how community members with lived experience could be meaningfully engaged in the Coalition and its future research initiatives. This breakout group began the work of defining CCALP's principles of community engagement, and throughout the meeting many participants discussed the desire for CCALP to work in a socially just way that centres community. These conversations collectively led to the following principles which will guide our future work.

Valuing Lived Experience and Building Trust

We acknowledge that LGBTQ2S+ individuals with lived experience of poverty are the experts on their own lives, and that community knowledge is often discounted and erased by academic “expertise.” We acknowledge that problematic historical and contemporary research practices have rightfully led LGBTQ2S+ communities and low income/poor communities to distrust researchers. As such, CCALP is dedicated to working in an accountable way that centres community knowledge, builds authentic partnerships, and uses processes, research methods, and theoretical approaches that are socially just (i.e., community-led, anti-racist, anti-oppressive, anti-colonialist approaches), and can help build trust.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality draws from Black feminist scholarship to give us a way of naming that identity is complex – we all have multiple identities and

¹ Following the breakout group on Day 1, a presentation was made by AJ Withers and Dakota Shelby to all meeting participants so that the in-progress principles could guide the meeting. In part, the content of this section is based on their presentation. These principles were further developed during Day 2.



experiences that shape our interactions in the world, and these need to be taken into account when striving to understand the oppression we experience – including poverty. These factors include gender, race, socioeconomic status, sexuality, Indigenous identity, (dis)ability, geography, religion, language, and citizenship to name a few.

CCALP recognizes the importance of representation and inclusion of diverse LGBTQ2S+ people in everything we do. We recognize it is important to specifically name and represent intersecting oppressions in our work so that intersectionality becomes more than a buzzword. We are dedicated to the meaningful representation and inclusion of newcomers, racialized individuals and communities, Indigenous peoples, seniors, youth, people with disabilities and other members of LGBTQ2S+ communities who experience discrimination and exclusion. We are committed to continually asking who is *not* at the table, so that we can continue to broaden community engagement and conversations.

It is our belief that by valuing and operationalizing intersectionality we will ask the questions needed to more fully understand and address relevant community needs. And that by using approaches that minimize the potential for harm we will maximize the potential for benefits to all LGBTQ2S+ people experiencing poverty.

Social Justice

We are committed to social justice and critical hope for a better Canada. We see research and knowledge as a tool for change. We do not conduct research to only publish academic papers that few people in the community will ever read. We conduct research that has actionable results and an applied impact. For example, we are committed to research that can build the capacity of LGBTQ2S+ community members and service providers, inform policy, identify and reduce system barriers, and support the improvement or development of sustainable programs that benefit LGBTQ2S+ people living in poverty. We are committed to research that addresses LGBTQ2S+ poverty as a social justice issue.

Community-Based Action Research

Community-Based Action Research (CBR, also sometimes called Participatory Action Research) is a methodology that aligns with our commitments to valuing lived experience and working in ways aligned with social justice values. CBR is community-driven and aims to inform concrete action to improve the lives of community members. Unlike traditional science, it is often mixed-methods (including both numerical



and non-numerical data). CBR values the stories people tell about their lives by including interviews, focus groups, or arts-based data.

CBR includes and centres people with lived experience throughout the entire process – from defining the questions we ask, to informing how data are collected, how we understand those data and what we do with them. As part of this, community members are often hired as research staff, or may be engaged as part of a community advisory committee. CCALP is committed to community consultation and using community-based methods in our future research.

Given our responsibility to poor and marginalized communities, we are dedicated to thoughtfully considering project endings – how can an ending be least disruptive and most useful to community members? Are there opportunities for funding next steps or program development? How do we maintain the relationships that have been developed?

Poverty is Complex

We recognize that poverty is not just an issue of economics. Poverty is a complex and multifaceted issue that needs to be understood and addressed from a holistic perspective. The lived experience of poverty intersects with and informs multiple aspects of people's lives including housing, health, income, employment, community and education. When researching poverty the larger context of poverty and its relationship to the uniqueness of individuals' lives must be considered.

Meaningful and Authentic Community Engagement

We are dedicated to authentic and meaningful engagement, through community consultations and by including individuals with lived experience as members of our coalition and project teams. We are committed to conducting outreach to maximize engagement with diverse community members. We are committed to reducing barriers to the involvement of people with lived experience (e.g., providing honorariums, transportation tokens). Our academic partners are dedicated to acting responsibly towards the communities they work with – by engaging community members in all stages of the research process, by sharing what they have learned with the communities they have learned from, and creating local opportunities as possible. This also includes a commitment to be upfront with communities about what is possible and what is not with regard to research projects, and to be transparent about the constraints researchers work within.



What the Breakout Groups Accomplished

Over the course of Day I, we had two breakout group sessions. Each breakout group session offered participants a choice of participating in one of six discussion group options. Participants discussed what they know and what they feel they still need to know in relation to the discussion topic. Ideas for future research were generated by each group. Following this, a World Café framework was used so that all participants were able to learn about and expand upon the discussion of each breakout group.

Interventions to Reduce Poverty - facilitated by Anita Khanna and Joyce Brown

This group discussed poverty reduction interventions (including policy and practice interventions) to identify promising options that should be evaluated for their specific impact on LGBTQ2S+ communities.

Key Activities Identified by the Interventions Group:

- Develop relationships with government stakeholders and advocate for system-level changes (e.g., advocate for the collection of more comprehensive, inclusive federal statistics; advocate for the consultation of diverse LGBTQ2S+ people in government processes; support the sustainability of the LGBTQ2 Secretariat).
- Continue to build the Coalition and develop relationships with and support the work of existing coalitions and community groups (e.g., Colour of Poverty/Colour of Change, No One is Illegal, Healthcare Providers Against Poverty, Black Lives Matter).
- Identify sources of existing data that can be leveraged for advocacy purposes (e.g., municipal, organizational).

Key Research Priorities Identified by the Interventions Group:

- Focus on experiences of accessing, and barriers to accessing, housing, employment, and education by LGBTQ2S+ people.
- Examine whether increasing access to services decreases vulnerability to poverty. For example, does increased access to mental health care reduce poverty? In other words, enhance understanding of the relationship between poverty and other life experiences.



Indigenous Communities – facilitated by Margaret Robinson

This group discussed what is known and identified knowledge gaps related to poverty among LGBTQ2S+ Indigenous peoples. This group also discussed whether research is the answer to Indigenous poverty, particularly considering Indigenous peoples' loss of trust in non-Indigenous researchers, whose work has generally *not* benefited Indigenous communities. The group also discussed the importance of a holistic definition of poverty that takes into consideration spirituality and an Indigenous worldview. The group highlighted the importance of not having two-spirit identity and issues misrepresented or tokenized under the LGBTQ2S+ umbrella, and of developing relationships with groups navigating similar issues (e.g., newcomers, people of colour, immigrants, refugees).

Key Research Priorities Identified by the Indigenous Communities Group:

- Conduct qualitative research to understand what poverty means to diverse Indigenous communities.
- Explore the relationships between poverty and colonization, land loss, loss of language, and loss of traditional communities.
- Explore the impact of systemic barriers on individual-level economics.
- Explore community and its role as a potential protective factor against the negative impacts of poverty.

Newcomer and Racialized Communities – facilitated by Ranjith Kulatilake and Sandra Godoy

This group discussed the need to consider the intersections between poverty and racism. The group also discussed data collection challenges and the importance of using diverse measures of socioeconomic status. The group recognized that rural areas can be “service deserts” as most LGBTQ newcomers and racialized folks move to urban centres due to increased sense of safety and employment opportunities. The group discussed barriers to recruiting newcomers that are no longer engaging with services or are focused on survival. The group also discussed the downward shift in socioeconomic status many newcomers experience following migration and during resettlement, and the barriers to employment (e.g., re-credentialing, need for “Canadian experience”). The group discussed further barriers to research participation for LGBTQ2S+ racialized and newcomer folks (e.g., need to disclose sexual identity, research participation can be triggering, language barriers), as well as barriers to accessing healthcare and social services. Finally, the intervention research, which would allow projects to address poverty and



benefit the community, while simultaneously generating knowledge was discussed.

Key Actions Identified by the Racialized and Newcomer Communities Group:

- Advocate that the *Immigration and Refugee Board* build capacity to improve their work with LGBTQ asylum seekers. There may be lessons learned from the *Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada*, who has improved their work with LGBTQ newcomers.
- Build relationships with relevant policy makers.
- Encourage truly intersectional program planning to better meet the needs of this community.
- Shift common misconceptions and myths about newcomers.
- Build a relationship with Black Lives Matter Toronto

Key Research Priorities Identified by the Racialized and Newcomer Communities Group:

- Further engage community members to reach consensus on community-led research priorities and approaches.
- Conduct community-led, intersectional intervention research that further develops programs that successfully serve the community.

Youth – facilitated by Alex Abramovich and Andrea Willson

This group discussed what is known, identified knowledge gaps related to poverty among LGBTQ2S+ youth, and the importance of working from an intersectional framework. The group recognized that research on LGBTQ2S+ youth and poverty generally focuses on youth who have left home and little is known about families with LGBTQ2S+ youth who are living in poverty. Similarly, the group discussed that research on families of LGBTQ2S+ youth often represents white, middle-class families and that less is known about low-income and poor families with LGBTQ2S+ children - for example, what are the barriers for low-income families accessing services and support for a queer and/or trans children?

Key Research Priorities Identified by the Youth Group:

- Examine the experience of poor and low-income families with LGBTQ2S+ youth.
- Examine barriers to accessing care for trans and gender diverse children and youth (e.g., costs of traveling to affirming care, access to blockers/hormones/surgery, costs associated with transitioning) experienced by families.
- Explore the experiences of LGBTQ2S+ youth in foster care and the child welfare system.



- Explore the experience of and issues facing youth and young adults living in poverty in rural, remote and northern communities (i.e., housing, street involvement, food insecurity).

Older Adults – facilitated by Alex Abramovich and Andrea Willson

This group discussed what is known and identified knowledge gaps related to poverty among LGBTQ2S+ older adults. We noted the dearth of research about LGBTQ2S+ older adults, relative to other stages of the life span, and talked about the ways in which poverty uniquely affects LGBTQ2S+ older adults.

Key Research Priorities Identified by the Older Adults Group:

- Understand and develop recommendations for addressing social isolation among older adults.
- Develop an understanding of how poverty in young adulthood (and across the lifespan) contributes to poverty in older adulthood.
- Investigate housing issues for low-income/poor LGBTQ2S+ older adults.
- Examining the competence of nursing and long-term care homes in serving LGBTQ2S+ folks.

Employment Issues – facilitated by John Ecker and Sean Waite

This group discussed experiences of employment, workplace discrimination, and wage disparities for LGBTQ2S+ people. The group also discussed existing data that may be leveraged by CCALP to better characterize employment experiences and earnings of LGBTQ2S+ Canadians. Additionally, the group discussed potential methodologies for research projects to address these topics.

Key Action Priorities Identified by the Employment Group:

- Advocate for sexual orientation and gender identity to be added to Canada's *Employment Equity Act*.

Key Research Priorities Identified by the Employment Group:

- Examine employment experiences and outcomes for bisexual and transgender people. These groups are at highest risk for poverty but least represented in research.
- Study LGBTQ2S+ peoples' experiences of and representation within the low-wage workforce. This is especially important considering that most studies of employment discrimination have focused on contexts within which employees have postsecondary education (e.g., discrimination in the legal profession).



- Study LGBTQ2S+ peoples' experiences of and representation within precarious employment, giving that this is a rapidly growing sector of the labour market.
- Examine claims made to the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal to better understand gender identity-based and sexual orientation-based discrimination in employment settings.
- Survey LGBTQ2S+ recipients of social assistance (e.g., Ontario Works, Ontario Disability Support Program) –What was the pathway to needing social assistance? What (if any) were the barriers to accessing social assistance?

Housing Issues – facilitated by John Ecker and Sean Waite

This group discussed experiences of housing and homelessness, including “hidden homelessness” (e.g., couch surfing). The group also discussed the differences between urban and rural housing issues, possible sources of data on LGBTQ2S+ housing and homelessness, LGBTQ2S+ individuals' experiences of and access to shelters, and the intersection of housing issues with chronic illness, barriers to healthcare, criminalization, and harm reduction for LGBTQ2S+ people.

Key Action Priorities Identified by the Housing Group:

- Advocate for and identify opportunities for quality data on LGBTQ2S+ homelessness, including “hidden homelessness.”
- Advocate for an increase in low-barrier beds.
- Advocate for additional emergency shelters, social housing and transitional housing.
- Advocate for increased access to funds for social assistance recipients so that they may afford safe housing.
- Produce public education on tenant rights targeted at LGBTQ2S+ communities.

Key Research Priorities Identified by the Housing Group:

- Examine the differences and similarities between rural and urban homelessness among LGBTQ2S+ people.
- Evaluate programs that improve housing for LGBTQ2S+ people, to support such programs in serving the community in a sustainable way.
- Study the role of oppression (e.g., homophobia, transphobia, racism) on eviction, and the barriers and facilitators to diverse LGBTQ2S+ folks exercising their housing rights.



Catalyzing Partnerships

At the meeting we had an incredible group of community advocates, people with lived experience, academics, policy makers and service providers who were concerned about LGBTQ2S+ poverty as a social justice issue with serious impacts on the health of LGBTQ2S+ people.

According to our evaluation, 69.2% of respondents stated the meeting was useful for establishing relationships and partnerships.

Here is what some folks had to say about meeting partnerships:

"I managed to interact with other participants who were once in my situation and they shared very useful information with me."

"I developed possible partnerships for projects on LGBTQ youth in rural and isolated communities, and LGBTQ youth with families living in poverty."

"I developed possible partnerships for projects on Indigenous LGBTQ people living in poverty."



Day 2

On June 15th, breakout group facilitators and the core planning team met at the University of Toronto to synthesize ideas generated over Day 1, identify priorities and discuss next steps.

Priority 1

Coalition building

Participants emphasized the value of bringing together diverse stakeholders to discuss LGBTQ2S+ poverty through an intersectional lens. We discussed the importance of coalition building with others who are advocating for poverty reduction in Canada, as well as the need for financial support to ensure meaningful engagement with LGBTQ2S+ people with lived experience of poverty. This will include defining our coalition structure (e.g., national, pan-Canadian, multi-site) and identifying and building relationships with existent groups.

Priority 2

What is poverty to LGBTQ2S+ Indigenous people?

Research and writing on poverty has typically been approached from a settler worldview that characterizes poverty as the opposite of prosperity, but Indigenous worldviews could illuminate different understandings of poverty with greater relevance to Indigenous people, including LGBTQ2S+ Indigenous people. Further, Indigenous worldviews situate poverty beyond individuals or families, to understand poverty as an experience of communities – including non-human members of communities. This research priority will engage Indigenous LGBTQ2S+ people to draw upon Indigenous traditional knowledges, post-colonialism, and other relevant frameworks to understand LGBTQ2S+ poverty from an Indigenous worldview.



Priority 3

Social Assistance

Presently, available Canadian data have not been examined to determine how LGBTQ2S+ people are represented among recipients of social assistance. Further, no studies, in Canada or internationally, have examined the experiences of LGBTQ2S+ people in accessing social assistance. Considering that barriers to accessing other types of social programs (e.g., health care) have been well documented, this is a significant research gap. For this research priority, we propose to use a mixed methods approach to understand: a) how many LGBTQ2S+ people are accessing various forms of social assistance in Canada b) what have been the pathways for LGBTQ2S+ people in coming to access social assistance c) what, if any, barriers do LGBTQ2S+ people face in accessing social assistance in Canada. This project will use an intersectional framework to gain understanding of diverse LGBTQ2S+ experiences, including those of newcomers and racialized LGBTQ2S+ individuals.

Priority 4

Precarious employment

Growing numbers of Canadians are engaged in precarious employment, or rather employment that is not secure, generally poorly paid, unprotected, may involve hazardous working conditions, and does not provide the benefits that are typically available to permanent workers. At present, we do not know how many LGBTQ2S+ people are precariously employed; however, given that people with disabilities are disproportionately represented among the precariously employed, and the high rates of disability and mental and emotional distress experienced among LGBTQ2S+ communities, LGBTQ2S+ people may be over-represented in this workforce. Given that newcomer and racialized people are also disproportionately represented among precariously employed workers, an intersectional lens that centres experiences at the intersection of immigration status, racialization, and LGBTQ2S+ identity will be important in this work. This research may also employ a mixed methods approach, in order to both understand numbers (how many LGBTQ2S+ people are precariously employed?) and stories (why are LGBTQ2S+ people working in precarious employment, and what are their experiences of it?)



Other intermediate priorities:

Our team noted that many more important research priorities were identified in our meeting than it is feasible to take up in the short term. The following research priorities were seen as important to come back to as time and resources permit, and we encourage others (within and outside of CCALP) to consider developing community-engaged research projects or community-driven initiatives to address these priorities:

- Examining the employment experiences of bisexual and transgender people
- Identifying opportunities to address barriers to housing, employment and education for low-income LGBTQ2S+ folks
- Understanding and identifying opportunities for addressing social isolation among older LGBTQ2S+ adults, as a potential mechanism for reducing poverty in this community
- Examining the experiences of geographically diverse families living in poverty who care for LGBTQ2S+ young people
- Examining LGBTQ2S+ poverty and homelessness in rural, remote and northern communities
- Understanding the differences and similarities between rural and urban homelessness for LGBTQ2S+ people
- Review employment claims submitted to the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal and identify whether individuals are submitting claims based on sexual identity and/or gender-based discrimination.
- Exploring prison justice work in relation to LGBTQ2S+ poverty.

Other Important Outcomes from Day 2

During Day 2 we also committed to:

- Investing time and resources in further community consultation to identify additional research priorities, and to further refine the research priorities determined during this meeting. This includes the engagement of racialized and newcomer communities, and other marginalized members of the LGBTQ2S+ community (e.g., those with lived experience of incarceration).
- Writing a letter to Pride Toronto, to outline our concerns about 2018's "Drink & Carry Program" and the potential negative impacts on low-income members of LGBTQ2S+ communities.
- Writing a letter to the federal government to advocate for sustainability of the LGBTQ2 Secretariat.
- Identifying various funding sources to move this work forward.



- Advocating with Statistics Canada for the collection of high quality data at the federal level.
- Using research and evaluation to support the development and/or maintenance of sustainable community-based programs.

Limitations

As the organizers, we believe that the meeting was a success in that we made a great deal of progress towards our objectives. However, one meeting is clearly insufficient to fully address the complex topic of LGBTQ2S+ poverty, and we acknowledge that there are limitations to what we have been able to produce. In particular, we recognize that some important topics were absent or incompletely addressed in our conversations (e.g., disability, drug use, sex work, violence, LGBTQ2S+ criminalization and incarceration). Additionally, had the budget permitted, our meeting could have been strengthened by the inclusion of additional stakeholders (e.g., organizations representing LGBTQ2S+ seniors, anti-poverty groups, unions, more representation from other regions of Canada, among others).

We also recognize that while research is important, it is not always the answer (or is not the most important answer) to redressing structural inequalities/social injustice. Sometimes we know enough, and immediate action is what is needed, rather than additional knowledge production. This meeting was funded with the specific objective of identifying research priorities, but for some of the topics we discussed, community needs may not be for more research. Moving forward, the Coalition will strive to work collaboratively with relevant community members, groups and organizations to strategize how research can be used most effectively towards our social justice goal, while simultaneously supporting other forms of community action, advocacy and support.

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Our volunteers Caro Castro, Amy Lee, Charles Fehr, Sydney Grainger



Our breakout group facilitators: Joyce Brown & Anita Khanna (Poverty Interventions Group), Ranjith Kulatilake & Sandra Godoy (Newcomer and Racialized Group), Alex Abramovich & Andrea Willson (Youth and Older Adults Groups), AJ Withers & Dakota Shelby (Lived Experiences of Poverty Group), John Ecker & Sean Waite (Housing and Employment Groups).

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