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**Tools & Challenges to
Community-University Research**

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The three panelists were asked to consider the following questions:

- *What are some of the causes of, and, more importantly, some of the methods or strategies to resolve conflicts between community and university groups?*
- *In terms of resolving these conflicts, how do we start to begin to develop such skills and capacities within the research group and/or within the community in general?*
- *What are some examples of effective approaches, skills, or tools that would aid in creating and sustaining community-university partnerships?*

Tom Carter: Good morning ladies and gentlemen. I agreed to speak at this plenary on very short notice—just yesterday as a matter of fact. I have been told that when one finds oneself in this situation, one has two options—tell jokes or try to say something relevant about the topic. As no one ever laughs at my jokes, I will try the second approach. However, I would caution you not to expect a scholarly presentation. My comments will be based very much on our experience with our CURA grant in Winnipeg and my own work with communities throughout my career.

We were given three questions to address in this presentation and I will take them in turn.

- 1) What are some of the causes and, more importantly, some of the methods or strategies to resolve conflict between community and university groups?

I would suggest that we cannot always resolve conflict. Assuming that we can will leave us disappointed and feeling as though we have failed. Perhaps a better question is how can we work to avoid or manage conflict? I am reminded here of an experience from earlier in my career when I worked as a planner in Canberra, Australia. The Commissioner of Planning, a very British gentleman named Sir John Overall, had a solution for resolving conflict. Build more pubs—particularly neighbourhood pubs. Like many planners, Sir John had an indicator or threshold of so many households per pub—something like one pub for every 500 households. It may have been higher. How was this related to resolving conflicts? Sir John was very keen on citizen engagement. He felt that people needed a place to come together, not as representatives of their professions but as residents of the neighbourhood, the city, etc. The pub, he felt, was such a place. It was visited by academics, planners, lawyers, plumbers, electricians, labourers, professionals, etc. Standing at the bar, they took off their professional/occupational/social roles and baggage. They related as equals, discussed issues of community, and generally became engaged as residents. They discuss and air local issues and concerns, problems get addressed, and engagement leads to resolution. They come together and discuss as equals. Having, in recent years, become reasonably familiar

with the pub culture in London, England, I realize that many aspects of his scenario are spot on. I am not suggesting that we go out and build more pubs, but, thinking back, one can draw lessons from his idea.

If we hope to resolve, or avoid, conflict we have to take off our “academic hats” or set aside our academic role. We have to get out of the ivory tower, meet people on common ground (a community centre, church, maybe even a pub). We have to relate to people as equals, as residents of neighbourhoods with common goals and objectives. We have to build that comfort zone, that degree of familiarity, if we hope to move forward on community-based research agendas and, at the same time, avoid or resolve conflicts.

Drawing on our Community University Research Alliance (CURA) experience in Winnipeg, we also find that to avoid conflict where possible, and manage it when it occurs, it is important to establish clear objectives up front and have a clearly defined mandate. Community-based research under CURA cannot resolve the large systemic problems such as poverty, racism, and unemployment. The time frame of CURA is too short, the funding too little. CURA can make a difference in community, but it is not a cure for all problems, it cannot be “all things to all people.” Do not bill it as such. When working with community partners, define reasonable objectives within research themes that communities identify as important. You should not promise what you cannot deliver. The suit has to be cut to fit the cloth (that is, the funding). Doing this up front helps avoid both thwarted expectations and conflict.

Another key component of resolving, avoiding, and managing conflict is consultation. Although time consuming, you have to take time to listen. Consultation, however, is more than listening. It is involvement in all stages of the research process. It is not enough to consult. Identify the research themes important to the community, then go away and structure research projects focusing on those themes. Consultation has to continue through design, delivery, and completion of a project. It has to be consultation within a partnership arrangement.

Given our experience in Winnipeg, we also feel that organizational structure and the role of third parties within that structure is important in managing conflict. In our CURA, an Executive Steering Committee (ESC) establishes the overall direction and handles project adjudication. The ESC is a fifteen member body with twelve community members, two academics, and an academic chair. Under the ESC we have a Community Liaison Director (Anita Friesen) and a Research Liaison Director (myself). We both work as a resource to the ESC. We don’t make decisions, but we do make recommendations and advise. We also work with community and academic partners, respectively. We help structure and encourage research partnerships, we facilitate discussion, we arbitrate and mediate, and where there are difficulties we try to keep the partners at the table and talking. We do not always resolve conflicts, but we certainly

help manage and reduce conflict. We are not directly involved in the decision making process. We are an arm's length from that process and we can meet with partners without that baggage. Therefore, in our opinion, structure is important in avoiding and resolving conflict. Having said this, skills in conflict resolution, which neither of us have, would certainly be useful.

My final point on this question is the simple observation that one "should never close the door." Once you do this, the battle is lost. Naturally, there are situations where resolution is not possible and closure is required. However, avoiding closure as long as possible often results in eventual resolution.

2) How do we develop skills or capacity within the research groups and/or within the community in general?

Again, I will draw on our CURA experience in Winnipeg. We contend that participatory research develops skills and capacity for both community and academic partners. When our ESC adjudicates projects, it allocates points for the participatory nature of the research, asking such questions as:

- are there community partners and co-sponsors?
- are the objects (homeless youth, for example) of the research involved in a participatory way?
- are community residents involved in an active manner in the research?
- are students involved?
- is there an advisory group/committee involving all interested stakeholders?

It is our opinion that the higher the level of participation, the more knowledge and understanding it builds and the better the capacity building exercise.

Second, if you want to build skills and develop capacity, you do not collect and control knowledge, you disseminate it. You disseminate it in a simple, understandable form. Make it meaningful and easy to understand. Do not be too concerned about including abstracts and bibliographies. Short, concise papers or research highlights are often more meaningful to the community.

An important part of this dissemination process includes presentations to the community, making sure that you give back what you receive. We have found in several studies that presentations to residents, press releases, neighbourhood flyers, presentations to the various levels of government, forums for politicians, workshops for neighbourhood organizations and distribution through web sites and newsletters are both effective dissemination tools and help build capacity in the community. Knowledge and awareness are key components of capacity building.

In dissemination of material, it is also important to apply your results to their (the community) problems, the policies that they wish to change, and the programs that they hope to evaluate. This does not mean that research results have to always support community positions, but to be relevant there has to be this connection or there is little capacity building involved.

We find that our application process itself can be a capacity building and skills development exercise. We require a partnership approach even at this stage. The partnership (community and academic) is involved from the beginning in establishing project objectives, designing projects, then moving on to the actual research work itself. Preparation of applications for research funding is a skill development in itself, and community involvement leaves this capacity in the community on a long term basis.

In combination with the above involvement, we encourage research ideas to percolate up from the community. We do this through broad community consultations, meetings with specific sectoral groups such as housing organizations, and face-to-face meetings with individual organizations to discuss their research needs. If research ideas percolate up from the community, there is a greater buy-in by community groups and you get greater involvement. When you have this involvement, you have learning and capacity building.

It is also important to stress inter-disciplinary partnerships on both the academic and community sides. Encouraging inter-disciplinary and inter-agency partnerships

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builds knowledge, adds expertise, helps develop networks, and enhances understanding of other disciplines' and agencies' positions. In a project we are currently developing that will be examining single room occupancy units in Winnipeg's old hotels, twelve to fifteen community agencies and government departments and four academic disciplines have already come together at a series of meetings to structure the

project objectives and develop an application. Networking has already occurred and leaning is underway.

Finally, encouraging student internships and working relationships with community agencies is a capacity building situation for both sides. With modest cost, and often on a volunteer basis, community agencies are able to undertake research and organizational work that would not otherwise get done. Students develop expertise, experience that counts when they apply for full time jobs, and gain a better understanding of community issues. Capacity building and development of expertise are outcomes for both students and communities.

3) What are some examples of effective approaches, skills, or tools that would aid in creating and sustaining community-university partnerships?

Creating effective partnerships is not easy and sustaining them is even more difficult. There seems to be no magic solution, no failsafe model. Although it seems redundant to mention money, few partnerships are effective without it. The Winnipeg Inner City Research Alliance existed as a partnership before it had funds, but one could hardly say that it was an effective research-based partnership until it received funding. This is not meant to suggest that a partnership cannot be constructive without funds. Networking and pooling expertise and time mean partnerships that can make a difference. However, it would be hard to argue that money does not make a difference. A concern shared by all in the Winnipeg Inner City Research Alliance is the knowledge that funding from SSHRC and CMHC will not always be available. In an attempt to improve sustainability, we are working to broaden the funding base—provincial funds, funds from other federal departments, funds from the municipality, and in-kind contributions from all stakeholders involved. Broadening the range and number of stakeholders is an important part of broadening the funding base. If the partnership can prove its relevance to a broad enough range of stakeholders, it can certainly strengthen its potential for long term sustainability.

I am also convinced that to ensure long term sustainability, attitudes have to change at universities. There has to be less separation of Town and Gown. The University of Winnipeg is more community-based than many. It is an inner city university and many disciplines have a strong community focus. Having said this, it is still true that the academics get less credit for involvement in community-based research and reports with a practical, policy, community focus than they do for articles published in well known and recognized academic journals. Until community-based research competes on a more level playing field, it will be difficult to sustain academic/community partnerships on a long term basis. On the flip-side, however, there has to be greater recognition by the community that academics can play an effective role in addressing community needs. Academics can, and do, come out of their ivory tower and work effectively in the community. However, until university attitudes towards community based research change and community/university partnerships are institutionalized within universities, long term sustainability of these partnerships will be difficult. Some universities have institutionalized such partnerships already—the University of Toronto with the Centre for Urban and Community Studies, Saskatoon with its Community-University Institute for Social Research, the University of Winnipeg with the Institute of Urban Studies, to name a few. The movement towards institutionalizing such partnerships is growing and the trend will improve the sustainability of community/academic partnerships.

Perhaps the most effective way of sustaining partnerships is to undertake credible research and educational initiatives from both the community and academic perspectives.

If research is credible to the point of effecting positive change at the community level, as well as providing academics with profile and credit toward academic award (promotion and tenure), then there will be a strong reason on both sides to support such partnerships and a strong rationale for both sides to partner in funding applications. Education and capacity building also have to be effective for both sides. The Summer Institute, sponsored by the Winnipeg Inner City Research Alliance, may be an example of a sustainable educational initiative. With a focus on community development, the Institute is a week-long intensive course for university students and community-based workers. The practical as well as academic relevance of this course and its capacity building strength probably ensure the sustainability of this initiative even after SSHRC and CMHC funding disappear. Support from the province has already been obtained.

Finally, another method of strengthening these partnerships is by opening up the university to community initiatives and building them in to the university academic programs through such initiatives as incorporation of community-based research into student assignments, student internships with community based organizations, workshops on community issues, academics serving on the boards of community based agencies, academics incorporating more local community issues and examples in their teaching programs, and universities working in general to serve the needs of the communities of which they are a part. Universities have to look beyond the bounds of academia to embrace communities and, likewise, communities have to view universities as a legitimate part of the community and a resource like any other agency in the neighbourhood. Only then can effective and sustainable partnerships be structured and sustained.

As I indicated at the outset, they are based very much on our experience with our CURA grant in Winnipeg and my own work with communities throughout my career, as opposed to a scholarly presentation on the subject. I hope you have found them useful. Thank you.

Victor Rubin: Thank you very much. I am delighted to be here and have been extremely pleased with the discussion that I have heard. I'm also delighted to add another province to my life list because, although Jim Randall didn't know this when he invited me, I am actually Canadian. I was born in Montreal to parents who, at the time, crossed one of those great cultural divides that was the Canadian mosaic in the 1950's, my father being Jewish and from Toronto, and my mother being Jewish and from Montreal. Perhaps because of the social pressures of making that great leap, they moved to New Jersey when I was just a year old. Which is why my visits to Canada are mainly to see relatives. My father, being a good Canadian, did move back to Toronto in the late 60's. So you're in the slightly odd position of listening to a recent U.S. federal government official, most of whose relatives live in Toronto. But that's why this is very special to me, too—it is a chance to learn what's going on here as well, and, perhaps, to share a few lessons.

This is my first time in Saskatchewan and most of the family lore about the province relates to the fact that my father was in the Dominion Weather Service during World War II, and spent the better part of six or seven months—a good share of the winter as I understand it—as a weatherman in Prince Albert. So I am happy to both be here and to be here in May.

I was asked here because of a variety of unforeseen events. I have both direct and compared experience with the university partnership business. The first was managing a complex and long-term partnership between the University of California at Berkeley and Oakland community. Oakland is a city of four hundred thousand immediately adjacent to the University. Thankfully, the community is not where the University itself is located, that being the city of Berkeley. Second, as Karen mentioned, I headed the U.S. federal office that gives grants for this support. At this point, that grant work amounts to more than thirty million [US] dollars every year. So it has grown from a relatively small fellowship program of two million dollars a year ten years ago to something fifteen times that size. That's a type of progress in its own right that I will talk about. And third, for the last three years I have been the research director of a national nonprofit organization that seeks to build capacity for community groups to effect policy. Therefore, I have become a consumer of hopefully useful activity within universities, rather than an instigator of it. So, from sitting on different sides of that fence and that equation, I'll try to share a few lessons that pertain to the questions that were so thoughtfully posed. But, unlike Tom, I will not take them in order. You will have to deduce which remarks answer which questions.

Bring in the best comparative ideas and education from around the country. Use the faculty to work with local folks.

I have rewritten this speech several times since I got here because of the high level of discourse, the explicit discussions of power relations in university partnerships, and the extreme sophistication that I've heard in every conversation about issues of power and equity. So, some of the earlier remarks already hammer that home.

Let's start by introducing four archetypes of university characters who work in the business of partnership. You may recognize some of these people. They are hypothetical, but they represent real experience. You might be one of these people. Keep them in mind because we'll come back to them at the end.

The first we'll call the lone community activist. This is the professor with a very committed sense to involve him or herself in local politics and local community organizations, to social change, and to make a difference in the local community. He or she probably has been in the area for a number of years and built up solid relationships and is held in high regard by many community organizations, perhaps by City Hall. There are sort of two variants of this—one that works well with City Hall, and the other

that works mainly with oppositional, often quite angry, neighborhood groups. The key here is that the person acts on their vision, does useful local work, inspires students, and brings credibility to the idea that academics have something useful to offer.

Let's call the second person our CBPR pioneer—a person who is advancing community-based participatory research, breaking new ground in methodology, and following through for the engagement of community members, whatever that community may be. It may not be a local neighborhood by any means. It may be a community interest, involving research from start to finish—problem, definition, instrument design, data collection, analysis, dissemination, and policy implementation. Now, those folks are also doing ground-breaking work. Hence, the word “pioneer.” But they might not be connected to their local community where the university is located. That community of interest may be on the other side of the country or on another continent. They have the values of community engagement and participation, but their contribution is distinctly different from the first.

Let's call our third character the broker or entrepreneur of campus resources. This is a person who is not necessarily a faculty member—that's an important point to keep in mind—who knows where all the tools are located and has the keys to the closet. He or she is the person who can engage the faculty member or the dean or the program chair to get courses designed that are useful to the community, to get faculty members to do applied work that will have a local audience, who knows the local funders and can get at least the small grants that grease the wheels and keep the machine going. He or she has often lived in the community for many years and has very strong relations with community organizations, with the school district, with City Hall, and the community partners. As I said, that person is not necessarily a regular faculty member who has a whole other song to march to and a whole set of other responsibilities.

Let's call the fourth character the administrator, the chancellor, or president committed to the full-scale transformation of his or her campus in the image of community engagement. I have to say that in my experience, seeing more than one hundred universities, when the head person of the campus is a woman, this is far more likely to be the case. The ascent of women to the leadership of many U.S. universities has gone along with a much more serious focus on community engagement. It could be just pure chance, but perhaps not. Anyway, think of this person as saying, “None of the previous three efforts will be sufficient. We have to turn the campus around entirely. The image and identity of our university will be based on community engagement. We will redesign research, promotion, and reward. We will redesign teaching and how teaching becomes service, learning that is of genuine use to the community, as well as a good experience for our students. We will change the definition of service and the rewards for service. We will turn around our business practices so that we are serious about local contracting and local hiring. We will keep our real-estate acquisition team on a leash so that their interest in expanding in the neighborhood will not be contrary to our local issues.”

Let's keep those four people in mind. The question that we are going to come back to is where are they five years from now, what worked, and what of their work can we see. In 1986, I was finishing a PhD in City Planning at Berkeley. I was about to be a good new post-doctoral student and hit the road because, after all, if the student stays where they get their doctorate, the entire geography of the would-be labour market becomes quite screwed up. But just before I was about to start looking (and I had in my back pocket the dual citizenship that might have gotten me a job up here, by the way, but didn't come to pass), the chair of the Institute of Urban and Regional Development said, "Can you stay around for a few months? The University is going to start a brand new and much more practical kind of partnership with the City of Oakland than we've done before and we would like you to help out the Department Chair, who is coming back from sabbatical, and will be running it." I said, "Sure. I have three to six months, after all. I have been living in this town for twelve years now and I wrote my dissertation on local politics and policy and I really don't like to move. I am very happy to stay. Who knows what will happen?" So I decided to give it three months, then six months, and it turned into thirteen years and a life-defining experience.

So let's take a couple minutes to see how that experience pertains to the questions that have been posed. The University-Oakland Metropolitan Forum began in 1986 as a small, locally-funded effort to support economic development, community and neighborhood revitalization, and programs to improve the circumstances of youth, both in the schools and out. And it was extremely creative, energetic, and disorderly. It is only in retrospect that I realize that there was something to be gained by writing academic articles about the experience. I can now see four clear phases that we went through. It is clear as a bell afterwards, but was completely opaque while we were in the midst of the hurly burly of doing this. But now, with the virtue of hindsight, we can say that the first three years were spent in what I will call a developmental phase, which involved building trust, learning to share power, explaining how the university works to the community and how the community works to the university, doing small jobs of applied research, and training to prove yourself useful. It was nothing more ambitious than that. We had three years of local funding, but by that time the Department Chair, myself, a few students, and a couple other faculty had, I think, proved ourselves somewhat useful and willing to sit in meetings for as long as it took, and willing to exhibit a certain humility that folks hadn't seen from the University. But at the same time, and this is in contrast to something Tom said, we were willing to say, "Yes, we can try that," to almost anything that was proposed.

After about three years, the political environment in Oakland changed. The school district was in terrible shape and the city's neighborhood revitalization program was at a dead stall. We were invited to undertake a very large, systematic citywide initiative with the school district and City Hall. Reform the school district from top to bottom—that was the agenda. Bring in the best comparative ideas and education from around the country. Use the faculty—not just Berkeley's, but from four local universities—to work

with local folks. Neighborhood meetings were held in six languages to find a way of adding value to the planning process and a similar, only slightly less ambitious, effort in the area of housing and community development. We did that for about three or four years, with only short-term results. But as is often the case, the school superintendent kicked out the school board and most of the big ideas were put aside.

Then a third phase began (about three years) involving a variety of technical assistance in consultant jobs and creating a new style of doing program evaluation that the local folks could use. This was a very decentralized period of getting dozens of faculty and research associates involved in a somewhat scattered manner, no big city initiatives, but also making ourselves very useful in advancing the craft of doing this kind of applied research.

By this time, we had almost fifty or sixty students who worked and passed through as graduate students in city planning or architecture or public policing or policy health or education, and many of them were now in staff positions in local government. We could call on them in the future and they could mentor the next round of students.

Around 1994, when this technical assistance phase was running out of steam, we fortunately saw that the federal government was not going to support university partnerships at urban universities for the first time. We got one of these community outreach centre grants to complement the foundation grants that were running thin at the time, and began the next six years of tying the university's work to efforts at comprehensive neighborhood change created by the city and by federal and foundation programs.

We don't have time to go into all the details of those, but they were, basically, various ways of following our comprehensive community-building model. A neighborhood strategy was developed that involved not only housing, not only small business, but also various social programs and reforms of the schools in the neighborhood and support for grassroots community organizing. We all petitioned the federal government to contribute to the capital improvement of youth programs, of housing projects, of community-based organizations. And we spread out from city and regional planning to involve ten or twelve different parts of the campus.

Throughout all of this, we asked faculty not to make their research the centre of their work with us, but to recognize that it must be put in the background, that they will get a good experience, they will get some things that they can possibly use later. Our face to the community was about the most useful local research, and we'll come back to that question a little later. A brief story illustrates that effect. In 1988 or 1989, when I was just getting this underway, the head of my department, who had been my thesis advisor, said, "Now, we just hired your friend, John"—he had gotten a PhD in the department—"Leave him alone. Don't tempt him with any of this crazy community stuff. He's got to spend his time on other things. He'll get tenure seven years from now

and then you can bother him.” Now, flash forward fourteen years. We left John alone for the most part, even though he lived in Oakland and cared a lot about the city. He helped a little bit, but we always made sure that he got an article out of that. He is now Chair of the Department. He comes to me and talks about Robert, the new assistant professor. His message is a little different. He says, “We hired Robert in order to turn his teaching into community engagement, so let’s see how much we can help. But, also, he’s got to do as much personal research as anybody else even though he’s got all these community responsibilities in teaching and mentoring. So I hope you can help him out.” That’s life in Berkeley.

In 1999, when this was running its course, I was invited to be the director of this office of the university partnership, which was growing at the time. This wasn’t just the community outreach partnership program, but programs for Hispanics serving institutions, historically black colleges, Native American tribal colleges, and expanded support for graduate students’ community development. There are more than one hundred universities that have this support. It is seed money and lasts for three, maybe four years, and then it is over. It is the direct opposite of the agricultural extension model, where once a university is a land-grant college it is in for a century or two, whether they do a good job or a bad job. Keep that point in mind as we go ahead.

I want to make three quick points from that experience. First is the institutionalization of community engagement with the holder of the university office. If you were only providing seed money and no university is going to get it for more than three or four years, you put motivational energy into making permanent the change within the college. You structure the grant competitions to get people to tell you how they are going to institutionalize community engagement, or least get through the why in a very creative way. How are you going to do that? You get commitments from the community so that they understand how the university works. You get commitments of shared responsibility. You get commitments from high level administrators on all aspects of this enterprise, far beyond the research one. Everything that the office did was designed to make itself unnecessary for it to continue in the long run. That may not be fair. Certainly we would have a different model if we had the kind of money that the agriculture department has had over the last century where you could support an institution. But it may be a blessing in disguise. It pushes the responsibility for institutionalization to the local level.

Second, I had a good experience—two good experiences—pulling the funders together. We pulled the philanthropies that were interested in university-community partnerships together to see where they thought the field was going. And they had a lot of good ideas, plus a great deal of skepticism about the willingness of universities to share power. But if we’re willing to believe that it could change, I quickly realized that all the funders in the U.S., both government and private, could be divided into two types, and that there was nobody in the middle bringing both of them together. One type

is interested in making serious community change. They will fund comprehensive programs, they will fund grass roots organizers, community development, leadership programs, but their interest in the university is only instrumental. If the university can help advance a social change agenda in city X or twenty cities, they are all for it. But if they go off and do their own business, they really don't care. The other foundations are interested in change in the university. They are the ones who care about promotion and tenure review. They're the ones that care about service learning, but they don't particularly care about neighborhood change. They don't particularly care about the consequences in the community. Now, I don't know if that environment is going to change very quickly. I kind of doubt it. I hope that structural development in Canada recreates a focus on both community and neighborhood change.

Let's close by going back to our four archetypes. Where are they going to be in five years? Given that the environment is as I described, my prediction is as follows. The change will be seen at the level of disciplines of research and the issues that they study, rather than the specific local community.

The campus entrepreneur will probably be burnt out from the disorderly work that they used to do (you might have been able to tell that this was me). Then they need to change jobs every once in a while to keep fresh. But that treadmill of fundraising and negotiation needs new people to get on the treadmill and they shouldn't be fulltime faculty.

And the university president who is an agent of change? That is a trick question because the average university president only lasts for three and a half years. But let's say that it is too early to evaluate the University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee, which has just been written up about the effect of transformative change. But I'll show to anyone who wants to come up the other schools where such ambitions have been attempted. Regardless of whether its changes stick, I would submit to you that that is absolutely necessary, because no matter how hard we work on that first front or that second front or that third front by itself, it will not be sufficient. So, even if our taste doesn't run into institutionalized change, I hope that all of you will support it as well as your particular endeavour. Thank you for your time, and I hope this was useful.

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Mary Ellen Turpel Lafond: Thank you very much for that kind introduction and good morning to everyone. I appreciate very much Kate Waygood and Jim Randall for inviting me. I have to admit to you, especially after hearing the last two speakers, that I certainly feel the wear and tear of the week. I spent this week in youth court, so I would have dealt, by today, with five or six hundred young people in Saskatoon, mostly Aboriginal people, of course, from inner city Saskatoon. And I was delighted not to have to go to court today and instead be able to come here. I was, however, still my usual frantic get-up-and-run-out-the-door. My husband, George Lafond, and I have three children—a

girl who is seven, and twins who are a year old. So I have two twins who I nurse, I am involved in community activities, etcetera. So, as you can well imagine, by Friday morning, life begins to kind of unravel, especially this morning because our childcare worker called to say that she couldn't make it today. So I had to be here at eight, but I very happily said to George, "Now, listen, I'm sure you can handle getting the kids out of their sleepers, getting their diapers changed, feeding them, dressing them, getting the seven year old to school. Right, honey?" He looked with absolute fear and laid down on the couch. As I was leaving, one of the twins was in the pantry overturning huge tins of puffed wheat cakes and the other one was stuck behind the couch screaming. I think she bumped her head. And the seven year old was just waking up. So I have no idea what happened in the house, but I am so delighted to be here and I am prepared to talk to you about anything.

My background, obviously, is as an academic, lawyer, and judge. I'm First Nations. In fact, my dad's Cree and my mom is Scottish, which is quite a precursor. I am a product of the Hudson's Bay Company, so I am very grateful to the Company for everything they did for the country, especially creating my home community and creating people like me. People often comment on the fact that I am one of the most highly educated judges in Canada. I have a PhD from Harvard University, which really means nothing much to me as a practical matter. I have spent a lot of time at other people's expense reading, which I love to do, and studying. But I find it very interesting that, for minority women especially, in order to gain admission into such professions we often have to reach a standard above and beyond what anybody else can achieve.

I recently went to a reunion—fifty years of graduates from Harvard Law School—last weekend. I dumped the kids with the husband and went because I just had to have a break. And, of course, it further radicalized me, so I came back uncontrollable to my husband. I have been railing against him all week, so it's been wonderful. But so many of the women at Harvard, who you would hardly think of as being oppressed—the women graduates of Harvard Law School, for heaven's sake—but so many of them talked about the fact that, as women, to gain admission to the large male dominant professions and institutions, they had to achieve beyond anyone else. Many of the women at this reunion talked about when we can, in fact, receive appointment and recognition for mediocrity, which seems, generally, the standard anyway, then we will have achieved true equality.

Well, having said that, I can tell you that with respect to universities, I do strongly feel that they should lead and not follow. I think there are so many areas for leadership and community work. It has been tough to be introduced to gender studies, critical theory, post colonial theory, and, generally, recognition in a university of environment of what I call the difference that difference makes. When you have people who are different, who come into the university environment, it makes a difference. And it is very important to acknowledge the difference that difference makes. I am aware only

too well of the difficulty that women have faced in establishing their credibility and capacity. The devaluation of women, the influence of gender stereotypes, is very likely in organizations, including community-based organizations with few women in leadership positions. This is one of the challenges that we face as we look at community-based research.

Even though we have experimental situations in which male and female performances are measured, you will see that women are consistently related to as less competent. We have a famous study that was done of women auditioning for a symphony behind a screen. Twenty-five percent more women were hired when they auditioned behind the screen than when the screen was removed. They weren't hired, and that is supposed to be a very sophisticated, sensitive, and culturally aware field. I think auditioning behind the screen is what we need to think about in all the disciplines. And I come back to this and the issue of gender, and the issue of the barrier that women have faced and continue to face, because it has opened a door of analysis and perspective in terms of women from minority backgrounds or different cultural backgrounds.

So we look at this experience that Aboriginal people have had, especially Aboriginal women. We can see not only the gender stereotypes, but many of the cultural and racial stereotype that also confront us, which are very challenging. And they speak volumes about power relations, respect, and research ethics. So I've confronted, certainly in my career, just about every stereotype imaginable. I won't go through them all. They're mostly humorous, and I've treated them as largely humorous. However, I would say that there is definitely a barrier to women and Aboriginal people in assuming real conditions of leadership and important institutions in our society.

Certainly, as an Aboriginal woman, I experience widespread lack of respect in this system. No one ever refers to me as "Judge." I will be in a room with all kinds of colleagues and the conversation will sound like "Judge so-and-so" and "Honorable Judge

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so-and-so," and then "Mary Ellen." I actually kind of like it because I don't really buy into title, so I think I am actually progressive, because people see me as a person first. So I think that is very positive. However, I have seen how it operates. When I am walking down the street in Saskatoon with my colleagues to go have lunch, the lawyers and prosecutors will pass by and say, "Oh, hello Judge so-and-so." But, of course, if you're a

woman and an Aboriginal woman, you're a newcomer, new to the institutions, and you're seen largely as an outsider.

As well, I have also faced the stereotype, which is very common and is very relevant for community-university research, that as an Aboriginal person I am biased and can't judge matters neutrally, that I cannot judge matters impartially, that I'll pick favorites, which is quite surprising. But it is a real stereotype that I face. I also continue to encounter many stereotypical attitudes relating to my reproductive habits. Like I said, I have these twins. Now, it is kind of freakish for a judge to go out and have babies to begin with, because most of them are too old, including me—I'm far too old to be doing this. When you do have a baby, as most feminists have encountered over the years, you have to remind your colleagues that you have had a baby, not a lobotomy. I have faced so many times, including up to this moment, the attitude that "she had such a promising year, such a promising career, until she went and had all these children." It is as though women cannot have children, maintain their faculties, and continue on. But it is widespread, and certainly in my relationships with colleagues. It has become much more obvious once I became reproductive. They commented extensively on the enormous capacity of my body to expand in this huge manner. In my own case, the experience of childbirth, especially carrying and delivering these twins, was an enormously empowering experience, and unlike the perception that it is a lobotomy, it in fact emboldened me all the more to address stereotypes, discrimination, and injustice in the workplace and the system. Because anytime we have responsibility for our own children, it drives us to reflect and think about research. Just on that point, you know, there is recent research that has found that insanity is hereditary—you get it from your kids.

It is very delightful to come to an event where you can share an internal dialogue with people who may actually think that there are significant and important causes. But when I think about research in communities, I think about identity—identity issues and group identities, in particular. I think about how individuals receive certain identities, receive certain membership in groups, how they relate to other groups in society, and inter-group conflict and intra-group hostility, inter-group cooperation. These are very important issues, and I reflect on them quite a bit.

But in terms of identity, we know only too well that identities are not fixed and natural, they are socially constructed. They're not simple biological categories or natural facts; they're influenced very much by understanding. They are certain to be imposed by negotiation—that was the point of society. Furthermore, our identities can be projected back and forward in time, and they float on many variables. Some are quite impressive. Research needs to be sensitive to this, with extreme preoccupation in the Aboriginal community, with a very limited definition of identity because of the Indian Act. There are aggressive barriers that have been created around identity in the Aboriginal community. Barriers have been created between First Nations, Metis, and Inuit people, and there is a significant amount of inter-group conflict, a significant negative dynamic around the construction of these identities, and these barriers need to be integrated.

What triggered me to think about this in a new light, if you like, was when we had to decide whether to register our children as Indians under the Indian Act or simply as members of Muskeg Lake Cree Nation, which is our community. Well, I ended up doing it but it caused me a great deal of anxiety, because I had to reflect on how my children's identity would be legally maintained, how being assigned to a community at birth could significantly shape their life prospects. I'm not saying it's a negative thing to be associated with our community, but the legal definition of their group identity had been defined elsewhere, so, for instance, membership rules in the Indian Act draw specific boundaries between groups and individuals that are legally constructed. What if these definitions are not open to change in the political system? What if those communities in which individuals gain birthright memberships have structures in place that mean that some members, especially women, will be asked to shoulder a disproportionate burden in preserving the community ethics and structures? And in that same community, what if the women will not be placed in visible positions of leadership, and, in fact, women will be invisible and devalued in terms of leadership? Is it fair to the children who don't make the choice that, by birth, the law, in fact, inscribes on the members of this group? When we allow that to happen, are we being complacent in sanctioning those burdens?

So, does membership expose girls to a doubly punitive effect of internal discrimination? The reason why we don't live on the reserve, I would say very clearly, is because if my marriage, god forgiving, was to end, I would not be able to sue for equal interest on the matrimonial property because I would have no right of action. That continues to be the case, so I will not live on the reserve and invest in the community under that circumstance. My husband says, "Why are you always putting out probation?" "Well," I say to him, "it is like Angelina Jolie and Billy Bob Thornton. I am not getting your tattoo on my arm because I'm not paying to get it removed."

The key is that even a system of personal laws can be seen as quite positive when you think of research and community engagement laws that are apparently geared to preserve culture and can impose an unacceptable burden on others, particularly on women, and can reinforce the notion that women are meant to follow, not lead. This was introduced during the colonial period in terms of the First Nations community, but it has been welcomed with open arms and become a mainstay of the culture, regrettably.

Now, granted, there are many positive aspects to group memberships. These include kinship, language, spirituality, and other values, but they need to be critically interrogated along with the more negative aspects of group membership. And research, I believe, has to understand the dynamics and critics of group membership and identity, and when people are working with partners to do research, think very carefully about the partners that you select. The impact on the group, and the extent to which the group may or may not have had an articulated dialogue about this very issue of membership and identity and types of burdens that are hoisted on certain members of the community—we've not really had a very developed dialogue on this in our First Nations community, or in many First Nations communities. Luckily, some of that has happened in the universities.

Obviously, in terms of discipline—justice and law is my field—I would say to you that material about the causes of crime, the relationship between poverty and crime, what works to reduce racism, and other issues require research and support. Resources can be scattered, their disputed potential for resources, for research, is enormous and untracked. It can be very meaningful because I pretty much work in the trenches of a busy trial court doing almost all criminal law. This research can make a difference, for instance, for our society. Incarceration has been questioned very much throughout society because of criminological and other research.

However, one of the things that I find is that I am often in touch with people inside the justice system who say such things to me as they have never encountered racism; they have never seen an example of it; they've never encountered people with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome in the criminal justice system. This is an area that I have become quite interested in during my five years on the bench and I will probably be involved in it for the rest of my life. Although I had some understanding of it from a community perspective, I have a different understanding of it as a judge. Again, it is often a matter of perspective. What minority judges or Aboriginal judges will see will be different than what other judges see. Together, we need to broaden the perspective, we need to broaden the judicial perspective, we need to broaden the university perspective, we need to broaden the research perspective. A new perspective can challenge the old guard and cause people to rethink their positions. However, to anyone who takes this up, this is my cautionary note. Anyone who takes on a position of leadership in regard to the task of broadening everybody else's perspective should be prepared for the isolation, to constantly explain oneself, and the hostility to those who challenge established conventions. People do learn and are interested in each other, and you learn from others as well, but it takes a great deal of time and it takes a toll.

Something like the diversity of the judiciary is important because certain things are not seen unless you have new people in those institutions. So, for me, as an Aboriginal woman judge looking at a stream of young people constantly committing nonsensical crimes, coming from seriously traumatized homes with alcoholic parents, it is only normal that I would ask the mothers or the parents or social workers, "Is there a history of maternal consumption of alcohol?" Then we would find out and seek to understand the neurological impairments, not to mention other traumas, experienced as a result. Then, in turn, the question becomes about the capacity of these individuals to be helped to the same level as anyone else in society. Given the trauma that they come from, if a new person comes into the system, they might see it differently. It doesn't mean it'll be rejected or argued against or whatever, but the fact of the matter is that Aboriginal people inside the system are valuable because I think that they reveal new perspectives. This is not to suggest that non-Aboriginal people don't see them and haven't done so as well, but maybe they interpret them in different ways.

So, I agree very much with Professor Carter about the idea of the tool. The challenge we have is to listen to the traumatized people, in particular the Aboriginal people, who have largely fallen down in the criminal justice system. We really need to listen to their stories to see what we can learn from them. But, as you know probably only too well from the research and your own education, there is an inclination in our society to close our eyes in the area of justice and, in general, for anyone who persists in reminding us of the wrongs of the past or the injustices that they have suffered. Most people who tend to remind us of the wrongs and injustices are considered disturbers of the peace. Many would want them taken away to a church or psychotherapist or cemetery or somewhere else, to return our discipline, like justice, to a neat category, which it occupies in our modern society. But justice in the courts, and society more generally, is not a neat compartment. It requires us not to avert our eyes, but, in fact, to look at it and listen and learn. So, the stories that we hear, the relationships that we record are extremely important.

I will close on one point, and that is on understanding injustice. It is a whole other topic I could talk about, but I know my time is limited. Understanding injustice requires an understanding that injustice is often not confined to an immediate injury to the person or their victims that you encounter. Harms of the past can impair future opportunities for victims and their families. It constricts life changes for their children and grandchildren. There are many examples I could give, but I won't. Yet decisions and approaches are often made on the immediate intergenerational effects of trauma and injustice, and are particularly difficult to specify, especially when you are identifying research projects or conclusions. There are so many variables to confound the cost or link between an original injustice and the deprivation of living individuals. So I have a strong sense that the experience of residential schools is very closely linked to what I see now as Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, but there are a lot of links that would have to be drawn.

I would simply say, in conclusion, that we should start by not limiting any stories of what is a social or political good. We should start broadening the analysis and opening the field, consider new ideas, consider doing new research. What works, what does not work in my field, what really are the roots of violence? Is the theory correct? That is, do those who are surrounded by violence tend to engage in violence and pass it on? We really need to question these assumptions and conduct research, because the conclusion of research can help support the voice and perspective of people who are largely pushed aside in society. So, I agree very much with the other panelists that we can begin by listening, but especially by taking into account the difference that difference makes. Thank you.

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Q: I have a question for Mr. Rubin. You made the comment that extension was not a proper model for community-university interrelationships. At the same time, you said

that the type of relationship university-university engagement should be institutionalized. I wonder if you could elaborate about the differences between the two models.

VR: Thank you very much for giving mention to that. I was hoping someone might bring that up. I recall one of the early community outreach partnership grant meetings where one of the folks from Northeastern University in Boston got up and said, “You know, we’re not dealing with potato farmers here.” What he meant by that was that most of the extension had knowledge, dissemination, and transfer model technical expertise originally in agriculture, but now it was transferred from those who did the research to people specializing in disseminating it. The partnership model common in the urban universities is much more of a shared governance definition of wicked social problems, not technical problems. I realize that a distinction can be argued, but it’s partially about who decides what the agenda is, and partially that the nature of the problem does not lend itself to technical fixes. Although it is still in research, I would have loved to have the kind of money and long term commitment to the universities that the extension model has in that respect. That’s the envy of every other part of the federal government. But these are different times, different circumstances, and you can’t have the discussion of power and the analysis of those problems with that model.

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