

Notice is hereby given of the following meeting:

MULTICULTURALISM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, September 18, 2019 at 5:30 p.m.
Committee Room #2, City Hall

AGENDA

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MULTICULTURALISM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**Tuesday, June 11, 2019 at 5:30 p.m.
Committee Room #2, City Hall**

MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Councillor Chinu Das	- Chair, City Council Member
Harbir Batra	- Community Member
Mary Campbell	- Community Member
Mike Coca	- Community Member
Halim Habibi	- Community Member, Alternate Chair
Karen Klein	- SD40 Representative
Jessica Roca-Muncaster	- Community Member
Elaine Su	- Community Member

MEMBERS REGRETS:

Kelsi Wall	- Community Member
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GUESTS

Alexandra Kenyon	- HCMA Architecture + Design
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STAFF PRESENT:

Claudia Freire	- Housing / Social Planner
Paul Hyland	- New Westminster Police Department
Heather Corbett	- Committee Clerk

The meeting was called to order at 5:33 p.m.

1.0 ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA

There were no additions.

2.0 ADOPTION OF MINUTES

2.1 Adoption of the Minutes of April 17, 2019

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the Minutes of the April 17, 2019 Multiculturalism Advisory Committee meeting be adopted with following amendments:

- *Page 5, first bullet: Change the wording to indicate that the School District's policy was developed over a three school year period; and,*
- *Page 5, third bullet: Change the word difficult to confusing.*

CARRIED.

All Committee members present voted in favour of the motion.

3.0 PRESENTATIONS

3.1 New Westminster Aquatic and Community Centre

Alexandra Kenyon, HCMA, provided a PowerPoint presentation outlining the process and changes that had been made to the design of the New Westminster Aquatic and Community Centre (NWACC) in response to the most recent round of community engagement, which focused on the issue of privacy swims, including the following information:

- Several City committees had been consulted, and a Privacy Swim Advisory Panel had been established, which included members of the LGBTQ community and the Muslim Women's group;
- Feedback heard from the advisory panel included:
 - The leisure pool would be preferable for privacy swims because of temperature;
 - Amenities such as the hot tub, sauna and fitness would be desirable;
- There would be several considerations and constraints to privacy swims given that the leisure pool is proposed to be connected to outdoor spaces;
- Outcomes developed by the Privacy Swim Advisory Panel and supported by NWACC advisory panel and Tri-City Muslim committee were as follows:
 - Use of the leisure pool facility for privacy swims would be preferable as long as the privacy created was secure and the time was during operational hours;
 - Design changes would be made to screening and glazing to accommodate privacy swims; and,
- Proposed screening requirements in response to the privacy swim considerations.

In response to questions from the Committee, Ms. Kenyon provided the following information:

- Budget considerations of the accommodation of privacy swims would become clearer once the new design drawings are available;
- The inclusion of children within the women-only swim was part of the conversation, but an age limit was not discussed;
- The privacy mechanism is still being considered; however, two options are under consideration:
 - Glazing on the outside doors, which would be electro-chromic glass, and shut out all visibility;
 - Rolling blinds on the doors, with protection on the sides to prevent manipulation;
- The leisure pool is to contain three 25 metre lanes which would be appropriate for laps and provide space for therapeutic uses; and,
- The issue of providing separate times for each privacy-seeking community is still to be resolved.

The Committee noted appreciation for the City's consideration of privacy swims and noted that it is important to be inclusive and provide all residents with an equal opportunity to swim, or learn to swim.

MOVED and SECONDED

That the Multiculturalism Advisory Committee recommend that Council endorse the design principles, as presented at the June 11, 2019 meeting, regarding privacy swims for the New West Aquatics & Community Centre.

CARRIED.

All Committee members present voted in favour of the motion.

4.0 UNFINISHED BUSINESS

4.1 Christchurch, New Zealand, Terrorist Attack

Claudia Freire, Housing and Social Planner, informed Multiculturalism Advisory Committee (MAC) members that the recommendation made at the April 17, 2019, committee meeting on the subject of the Christchurch, New Zealand terrorist attacks had been approved by Council on May 27, 2019, and the letters were sent out on June 11, 2019.

4.2 Sanctuary City Designation

Claudia Freire, Housing and Social Planner, provided a PowerPoint presentation reviewing the Sanctuary City Policy, including the following information:

- A review of the staff work plan, which is currently at the policy development stage, incorporating input from MAC and WINS;
- Next steps to target the end of this year/early next year for endorsement from Council;

- A review of the emerging threads from case study research of six Canadian municipalities, including the key policies, actions and collaborations with Police.

In response to questions from the Committee, Ms. Freire and Councillor Das provided the following information:

- In reference to the case studies, where it says non-alignment with the City policy, this likely means that there may have been a request for cooperation; however, Police have endorsed a separate policy;
- The Police force would look to formalize guidelines rather than policy as they allow for more flexibility; and,
- It is unlikely that current Police behaviour would change, in that Police would not be asking victims of crime about their immigration status; however, if an arrest is made and an immigration warrant exists, then the police have a duty to act.

The Committee noted that the biggest challenge would likely be in carefully managing the messaging and public communication on this policy, and ensuring that those who are undocumented continue to feel safe to access City services and call the Police without fear.

Ms. Freire asked the Committee for feedback on directives for policy and implementation of the Sanctuary City Policy, and conducted a brainstorming session with the Committee members, resulting in the following ideas:

Policy Directives: What should the policy say?

- It makes sense to develop the policy, and its terminology, from the angle of “access to City services”;
- Be clear that this is a City policy, and if residents are requesting similar services from other levels of government, the same policy may not be in place;
- Be clear in the language and definition of “Sanctuary”, as there are different connotations of the term, which may be misconstrued and confusing;
- It would be important for the City to communicate the policy to the businesses and institutions within the City;
- There may be a need for advocacy between the City and other local and Provincial services and organizations, i.e. Fraser Health, Food Bank, ICBC, WorkSafe BC, etc.;
- The policy should demonstrate the City’s values and objectives of being a compassionate City;

Implementation: How should the policy be communicated?

- Accessible, understandable, and translated into multiple languages;

- Distributed widely through public education and communications;
- Provide clarity about what resources would be available and which jurisdictions take care of services, i.e. City versus Provincial;
- Update of all resources, including the Newcomer’s Guide, and any other applicable City literature;
- Staff and Volunteer training to include:
 - Guidelines and policy;
 - What to do if immigration status is disclosed?
 - What are staff’s responsibilities?
 - HR training: needs to be ongoing and part of onboarding, and be part of the culture of the City; and,
 - Training aspects to include: anti-racism, harassment, trauma-informed; Cultural sensitivity.

Ms. Freire noted that next steps include policy development and community engagement, including with people with lived and living experience.

5.0 NEW BUSINESS

5.1 Topics of Interest to the MAC

Councillor Das asked the Committee members to provide their thoughts on topics of interest for the committee to explore, resulting in the following feedback:

- The impacts of a single-use plastic ban on the Chinese community;
- Climate crisis-related policies and the impacts on immigrant, racialized and marginalized communities;
- Community input on green initiatives and environmental adaptations;
- Welcome Centre and Sanctuary City Policy; and,
- Discussion about the new grant process.

5.2 New Westminster Multicultural Festival

Councillor Das discussed the Multicultural Festival which takes place on Canada Day, at Pier Park. She noted that it would be appropriate for the MAC to provide input into the festival, along with other groups, such as the Arts Council, and WINS group.

Councillor Das suggested that the Committee members could attend this year’s festival and be prepared to discuss it at a future meeting.

In response to a question from the Committee, Councillor Das noted that cultural groups in the City often put on their own festivals; however, this is the only City-run festival, which runs in conjunction with the Canada Day festivities at Queen’s Park, and the fireworks put on by the Hyack Festival Association.

Committee members noted the following comments:

- It would be important to review the purpose and definition of the festival, as multicultural can mean different things, i.e. religion, country, or language;
- Ensuring representation from many communities would be important, as some communities can often be over-represented; however, this can also be because of lack of personnel, finances, organization, or communication reach;
- It may be important to have a conversation about the optics and principles of the City asking various groups to provide hours of free entertainment;
- Issues to discuss with the relevant groups who are currently involved, or wish to be involved, with the festival could include:
 - Timing and duration;
 - Entertainment and schedule;
 - Budget;
 - Location;
 - Logistics; and,
 - Separation of Canada Day and Multiculturalism Festival.

6.0 REPORTS AND INFORMATION

7.0 CORRESPONDENCE

8.0 NEXT MEETING

Wednesday, September 18, 2019 at 5:30 p.m. in Committee Room #2

9.0 ADJOURNMENT

ON MOTION, the meeting was adjourned at 7:22 p.m.

Certified correct,

COUNCILLOR CHINU DAS
CHAIR

HEATHER CORBETT
COMMITTEE CLERK



REPORT

Development Services

To: Mayor Côté and Members of Council **Date:** 9/9/2019

From: Emilie K Adin, MCIP **File:** 13.2630.09
 Director of Development Services

Item #: 313/2019

Subject: **Engaging People with Lived and Living Experience in City Engagement and Decision-Making Processes**

RECOMMENDATION

***THAT** Council direct staff to enter into a partnership with the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition to engage up to 15 residents with lived and living experience of poverty in the Community Action Network Leadership Program; to develop principles and resources to more effectively involve people with lived and living experience in City engagement and decision-making processes; and to train key City staff in their use and implementation.*

***THAT** Council endorse an amount of \$10,000 in support of this partnership and that it provide in-kind and staffing support, including covering costs associated with City catering services and venue rental.*

***THAT** Council direct staff to explore the City's participation in the Ethics in Engagement Project, which could inform and evaluate City engagement resources, strategies and training materials related to involving people with lived and living experience, and report back on the potential benefits and any related cost and staffing implications.*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

New Westminster, similar to other municipalities in Metro Vancouver, is grappling with how to meaningfully and respectfully engage under-represented groups in City processes,

including the development of plans, policies, programs, services, facilities and infrastructure. Increasingly, people with lived and living experience are acknowledged as context experts with invaluable first-hand knowledge who need to be included as equal partners in the development, implementation and evaluation of initiatives that affect their lives.

The *Council Strategic Plan: 2019-2022* (July 8, 2019) includes the following key direction: *Ensure that the organization's engagement practices and processes are representative of the entire community.* In support of the key direction, there is an opportunity to partner with the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition. To this end, City staff is proposing a partnership which would include the following two components.

The first component would be to train up to 15 residents with lived and living experience to better enable them to participate in City engagement and decision-making processes and to develop the knowledge and skills to be more effective self-advocates. This would be accomplished through a six or seven part training program offered under the Community Action Network Leadership Program.

The second component would be to develop principles and resources to more effectively involve people with lived and living experience in City engagement and decision-making processes and to train key City staff in their use and implementation. Regarding the former, resources could include an engagement guide or toolkit. Regarding the latter, the training could be informed or offered by CAN participants. This would not only make the training more practical and relevant but would build relationships and trust.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is threefold: (1) to inform Council of a recent presentation by the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition's Community Action Network (CAN) on the benefits and challenges of engaging people with lived and living experience; (2) to seek Council endorsement to enter into a partnership with the Coalition; and (3) to seek Council direction to explore the City's participation in an Ethics in Engagement Project.

POLICY CONTEXT

Council Strategic Plan: 2019-2022

The *Council Strategic Plan: 2019-2022* (July 8, 2019) includes the following key direction:

- *Ensure that the organization's engagement practices and processes are representative of the entire organization.*

Official Community Plan

The *Our City Official Community Plan* (2017) includes the following policy under ‘Community and Individual Wellbeing:’

Policy 1.5: Facilitate and support civic engagement, including with at-risk, marginalized and vulnerable populations.

Public Engagement Strategy

The Mayor’s Task Force on Public Engagement (2015/16) was established to review the City’s engagement practices; gather input from community members; and create a vision for the future of public engagement in New Westminster. On December 5, 2016, Council endorsed a *Public Engagement Strategy*, which included the following principles:

- *Involves community members who reflect the diversity of interests and opinions in the community.*
- *Achieves accessibility for all community members, recognizes their right to participate and values the knowledge and experience they contribute.*

The *Public Engagement Strategy* also includes the following actions:

- *Identify constituents that are most under-represented in public engagement and create a centralized list of known relationships, communications vehicles and methods to better reach these constituents.*
- *Identify or develop community engagement champions who can encourage and/or facilitate participation within under represented communities.*

Community Poverty Reduction Strategy

The *Community Poverty Reduction Strategy* (2016) identifies the following actions related to people with lived and living experience under the pillar of ‘Public Awareness, Empowerment and Mobilization:’

- *That the Community Poverty Reduction Committee continue to involve people living in poverty and with low incomes in the development and implementation of poverty reduction actions. Additionally, that those sharing their lived experiences be recognized for their contributions and, where possible, compensated for their time.*

- *That the Community Poverty Reduction Committee, in conjunction with the Arts Council of New Westminster and the New Westminster Museum and Archives, hold an arts or media exhibit related to the lived experiences of people living in poverty and with low incomes.*

BACKGROUND

At its meeting of April 11, 2019, the New Westminster Community Poverty Reduction Committee hosted a Lunch and Learn in which representatives from the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition's Community Action Network (CAN) made a presentation on the benefits and challenges of engaging people with lived and living experience of poverty.

This presentation introduced the CAN's Leadership and Capacity Building Initiative, which is focused on people with lived and living experience of poverty. The aim of CAN is to increase the involvement of people with lived and living experience of poverty in planning and policy development and advocacy efforts at both the provincial and civic levels.

The presentation was very well received and committee members highlighted the benefits to the City of continuing to dialogue with CAN, including exploring a potential partnership to more effectively and meaningfully engage people with lived and living experience in City engagement and decision-making processes.

ANALYSIS

Importance of Engaging People with Lived and Living Experience

Increasingly, people with lived and living experience are acknowledged as context experts with invaluable first-hand knowledge who need to be included as equal partners in the development, implementation and evaluation of initiatives that affect their lives. As with any social issues, people with lived and living experience usually have the best understanding about what the problem is and what needs to be done to address it.

While many organizations, including municipal governments, are learning to value lived and living experience, there is work to be done to ensure that people with lived and living experience are valued, respected and supported in the engagement process and that their contributions are reflected in decision-making and initiative development.

Examples of City Engagement Practices Involving People with Lived and Living Experience

The City is developing a new aquatic and community centre and is reaching out to and involving typically under-represented groups who may have unique needs. For example,

Muslim women are interested in privacy swim times and LGBTQ2S persons are interested in design decisions related to change rooms and washrooms, as well as programming options.

The City, in association with the New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society, is developing a new *Homelessness Needs Assessment and Action Strategy*. Both documents will be informed by people with lived and living experience. For example, Women in Need Gaining Strength has documented needs based on engagement with 10 women who have experienced violence. This engagement involved service providers who had a relationship and trust with the women and the interviews were conducted in a convenient and safe setting.

The City is also working on a *Sanctuary City* designation and a Social Equity Policy; both of which will be informed by people with lived and living experience. The City will also be applying for a provincial grant in the amount of \$50,000 to undertake a *Housing Needs Assessment*. As part of the application requirements and evaluation criteria, it states: *demonstrate community consultation and public engagement, including collaboration with vulnerable populations.*

Community Action Network Leadership Training Program

The Community Action Network (CAN) is a leadership and capacity building initiative focused on people with lived and living experience of poverty. The aim of CAN is to increase the involvement of people with lived and living experience of poverty in planning and policy development and advocacy efforts at both the provincial and civic levels.

One of CAN's flagship programs is their Leadership Training Program, which includes learning about the root causes of poverty, the role of government in addressing poverty, and the importance of community organizing training. It also builds personal capacity skills, including linking lived and living experience to impactful advocacy for change.

DISCUSSION

Current Capacity to Engage People with Lived and Living Experience

The City has limited experience and no principles or resources related to involving people with lived and living experience in engagement and decision-making processes. As such, efforts to date have been ad hoc and often superficial. This has meant that the City has not fully capitalized on the many benefits to be derived from engaging people with lived and living experience. It has also meant that those who have been engaged may feel that they are not being recognized for their experience and knowledge; valued for their contributions; and compensated for their expertise and time. Additionally, they may feel disconnected from the decision-making and initiative development process, which may contribute to feelings of marginalization and a sense that their engagement was tokenism.

Potential Partnership with the Community Action Network

The City has an opportunity to partner with the Community Action Network (CAN) Leadership Program to significantly enhance the City's ability to engage people with lived and living experience.

This partnership could include the following two components.

The first component would be to train up to 15 residents with lived and living experience to better enable them to participate in City engagement and decision-making processes and to develop the knowledge and skills to be more effective self-advocates. This would be accomplished through a six or seven part training program offered under the CAN Leadership Program (please see example schedule in attachment #1). Based on an evaluation of the program, participant experiences were very positive and included skill and content based learning, transformative personal growth, and a community that helped combat isolation. They also felt empowered and were motivated to act. For more information on the evaluation findings, please refer to attachment #2.

The second component would be to develop principles and resources to more effectively involve people with lived and living experience in City engagement and decision-making processes and to train key City staff in their use and implementation. Regarding the former, resources could include an engagement guide or toolkit. Regarding the latter, the training could be informed or offered by CAN participants. This would not only make the training more practical and relevant but would build relationships and trust. Staff, as a result of these interactions, would be more receptive to engaging people with lived and living experience, including on advisory committees and task forces.

Ethics of Engagement Project

The Ethics of Engagement Project, is a systems change project, which is managed by the Giving Change Group/Single Mothers' Alliance BC; housed at the Vancity Community Foundation; and funded by the Vancouver Foundation. Its aim is to develop strategies that will add value to the process of including those with direct lived experience of poverty in the development of poverty reduction policy in British Columbia.

There is an opportunity for the City to participate in this project, which would inform and evaluate City engagement resources, strategies and training methods for the purposes of increasing inclusion and engagement of people with lived and living experience of poverty in community engagement and decision-making processes.

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL LIAISON

The Development Services Department will work closely with the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition and the new Manager of Public Engagement on the development of principles, resources and strategies to involve people with lived and living experience in City engagement and decision-making processes and to train key City staff in their use and implementation.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The budget to undertake a six to seven part training program under the Community Action Network Leadership Program, to develop principles and resources, and to train key City staff in their use and implementation is estimated at \$10,000, not including in-kind and staff support. This amount would be included in the 2020 Operating Budget for Council's consideration under the priority area of 'Reconciliation, Inclusion and Engagement' as part of the budgeting for the *Council Strategic Plan: 2019-2022*. A smaller budget would be required in subsequent years to facilitate ongoing training and development.

OPTIONS

The following options are presented for Council's consideration:

1. That Council direct staff to enter into a partnership with the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition to engage up to 15 residents with lived and living experience of poverty in the Community Action Network Leadership Program; to develop principles and resources to more effectively involve people with lived and living experience in City engagement and decision-making processes; and to train key City staff in their use and implementation.
2. That Council endorse an amount of \$10,000 in support of this partnership and that it provide in-kind and staffing support, including covering costs associated with City catering services and venue rental.
3. That Council direct staff to explore the City's participation in the Ethics in Engagement Project, which could inform and evaluate City engagement resources, strategies and training materials related to involving people with lived and living experience, and report back on the potential benefits and any related cost and staffing implications.
4. That Council provide staff with other direction.

Staff recommends options 1, 2 and 3.

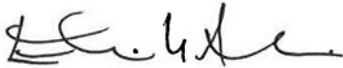
ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: CAN Leadership Program

Attachment 2: CAN Program Evaluation Report

This report has been prepared by:
John Stark, Supervisory of Community Planning

Approved for Presentation to Council



Emilie K Adin, MCIP
Director of Development Services



Lisa Spitale
Chief Administrative Officer



Attachment 1

CAN Leadership Program

**CAN SUMMARY SYLLABUS & SCHEDULE:
7 Workshops**

EVENT	DATE/TIME	NEEDS	CONTENT
Workshop 1	10:30am-2pm Doors open at 10am for breakfast.	Coffee, snacks, lunch.	BCPRC Foundations Part 1: Listening Circles, Poverty is a Violation of Human Rights, Root Causes
Workshop 2	10:30am-2pm. Doors open at 10am for breakfast.	Coffee, snacks lunch.	BCPRC Foundations Part 2: Upstream VS Downstream, Systemic Realities, Linking Our Experience
Workshop 3	10:30am-2pm. Doors open at 10am for breakfast.	Coffee, snacks, lunch.	Voices for Change: Public Speaking Part 1
Workshop 4	10:30am-2pm. Doors open at 10am for breakfast.	Coffee, snacks, lunch.	Voices for Change: Public Speaking Part 2
Workshop 5	10:30am-2pm Doors open at 10am for breakfast.	Coffee, snacks, lunch	Storytelling to Build Solidarity: Story of Me, Story of Us, Story of Now
Workshop 6	10:30am-2pm Doors open at 10am for breakfast.	Coffee, snacks, lunch.	Community Organizing Part 1: Spectrum of Allies, Theories of Change
Workshop 7	10:30am-2pm Doors open at 10am for breakfast.	Coffee, snacks, lunch.	Community Organizing Part 2: Tactics and Strategy, Campaigns 101, Relational Community Organizing

Attachment 2

CAN Program Evaluation Report

**Community Action Network (CAN)
Leadership Program
Evaluation Report**

May 15, 2018

Tania Kajner

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1. Introduction

The Community Action Network (CAN) Leadership Program is a pilot program supported by the Poverty Reduction Coalition. The program aims to support people with lived experience of poverty and poverty impacts in linking their experience to the “big picture” in terms of policies and systems, and in developing skills to be effective self-advocates. The first offering of the Program ran from October 7th November 18th and included six workshops covering a variety of topics relevant to community leadership. Workshops varied in terms of length and time when they were offered. Most workshops included a guest facilitator and / or guest speakers. All workshops included healthy food.

In order to understand the effectiveness of the Program, a consultant was hired to develop a focussed pragmatic program evaluation. The evaluation included two focus groups and a short survey. The purpose of the evaluation was to document participants’ self-perceived learning and experiences, document program outputs, and gather information to inform program design for future CAN offerings.

2. Methodology and Data Collection

The CAN Leadership program evaluation included a review of background information provided by BCPRC, a short survey and qualitative data collection through two focus group sessions.

The first focus group took place on Dec. 2, 2017 and lasted just under two hours. A total of 11 people, all of whom completed the CAN leadership program, participated in the evaluation. All participants provided verbal consent to participate in the focus group and for audio recording of the focus group.

The second focus group took place on May 10th, 2018 and lasted two hours. A total of 7 people, all of whom completed the CAN leadership program and participated in the first focus group, took part in the evaluation.

Audio data and researcher notes from the focus groups were analyzed through a thematic analysis. Themes were identified using memoing, and open and axial coding with an eye to three criteria: frequency (something that participants are shared repeatedly and often), intensity (something participants explicitly or implicitly emphasized), and consistency (where meaning appeared consistent across participants or across terms).

3. Findings: Focus Group One

The majority of participants came to the program as a result of seeing a poster or receiving a recommendation from a friend or community contact. The opportunity to become a “poverty advocate” resonated with participants. Participants’ experience of the program was positive and included skill and content-based learning, transformative personal growth, and the development of a community that helped combat isolation. The program had a number of positive impacts on participants: they felt empowered, were motivated to act, and had more knowledge. In anticipation of becoming more outspoken, participants also identified an increased fear of retaliation and sought skill development to address this issue.

The program excelled at creating a positive environment, valuing experiential knowledge and linking participants to well known guest speakers. The program might be further strengthened through the inclusion of additional workshops focussed on protecting oneself from retaliation, staying safe in

encounters with police, making change in systems, and self-care. Providing written materials for each workshop and including more time to practice public speaking skills were also seen as areas that could be strengthened.

3.1 Experience of the Program

The participants' experience of the program was very positive and included skill and content-based learning, transformative personal growth, and the development of a community that helped combat isolation.

Participants experienced growth in their abilities to develop and deliver a clear message about their experiences and about poverty. As one participant noted, “when I first came into this course I remember my tongue kept getting twisted up the first time I was talking, but now I can talk with clarity...” Participants also noted that they learned new content in the program, including a better understanding of poverty issues, how poverty relates to other issues, and the ways that different organizations are working to end poverty. Personal growth and transformation were also experienced in the program. One participant exclaimed, “It’s transformative, there is no looking back after you’ve taken the program!” and another commented, “I learned as much about myself as I did about everything that was being taught.”

The “welcoming”, “accepting” and “no judgement” environment was cited as a contributor to the experience of community for participants. One participant shared, “A big thing that I took from this was the solidarity.” Another added, “the people in this room have given me validation to my story” while a third noted, “There is overlap in all of our stories... being able to exchange our experiences has been really key.” The development of a community helped to combat the isolation that many participants identified as part of their ongoing experience: “hearing other people talk about the same things, you don’t feel like you’re so much in isolation” said one participant, and another added “This whole process pulled me out of isolation...it was a really safe space.”

3.2 Impact of the Program

The program had a number of positive impacts on participants: they felt empowered, were motivated to act, and had more knowledge. Participants also identified increased fear of retaliation for speaking out as an impact; they now felt some fear that speaking out about poverty would lead to retaliation by the systems and structures they might critique.

The program created a sense of empowerment for participants by linking them to action. For example, one participant shared, “I now feel like I am helping with change.” The validation of their stories was key to this empowerment: “I know now my story is worth telling and it’s worth other people to hear.” Participants spoke of increased confidence, purpose, and strength: “each time your voice gets validated it seems to strengthen your words...it makes you believe in you...it empowers you.” This empowerment was linked to a motivation to become more active in making change. Participants described moving from the position of “spectator to actual participator” and “from throwing up my hands saying ‘forget it’ to feeling more empowered.” As a result of the program, there is interest in becoming more involved in social action: “I want to fight against poverty, you know?” Participants expressed having new ideas and new knowledge about poverty as a result of their participation in the program. For example, one participant shared, “I can rattle off the actions. I actually learned there are things you can do” while another noted, “We have a little knowledge to back up what we say.”

In addition to the positive impacts of The CAN Leadership Program, participants also identified increased fear of retaliation for speaking out as an impact. Participants shared stories of experiencing retaliation from

individuals and systems in the past, noting that since they are now more empowered to speak they may be more at risk. One participant asked, “If we stir the bubble, what are they going to take away from me?” Another asserted, “I should have had some way to be protected if I spoke out.”

3.3 Program Strengths

The CAN Leadership Program excelled at creating a positive environment, valuing experiential knowledge and linking participants to well known guest speakers. Participants spoke about the tone and feel of the program as accepting, validating, non-judgemental and a space where they could just be themselves: “As soon as you walk in the door it feels like a big hug.” Participants noted that valuing experiential knowledge was one of the key strengths of the program: “experience is so important and is valued in this program.” One participant explained “It’s not just experts or academics telling us what to do ... we are the experts. We are the lived experience people of the downtown east side.” Participants also viewed the guest speakers as a strength of the program because they had extensive knowledge of the issues and the efforts underway to make change, and because they were “recognizable names” in the community.

3.4 Areas for Improvement

Participants commented that the program might be further strengthened through the inclusion of additional workshops focussed on protecting oneself from retaliation, staying safe in encounters with police, making change in systems, and self-care. They also recognized that these topics could also form a second set of workshops for future learning. Given the sense of empowerment and motivation to take action against poverty, participants anticipated speaking out on issues and worried that they may face retaliation as a result. They noted that a workshop or program to prepare them to deal with this fear would be useful. They also shared many stories of encounters with officers of the Vancouver Police Department and would like to learn more about how to interact with Police in a safe way. Making changes in housing and social service systems was identified as an area that participants would like to better understand. Finally, learning about self-care was identified as an important part of working for change and participants indicated that this content could strengthen the program content.

Providing written materials for each workshop and including more time to practice public speaking skills were also seen as areas that could be strengthened. Participants saw having access to program materials in order to revisit the information and learning as valuable and they would like to receive handouts or summary notes from the workshops. They would also like more opportunity to practice public speaking, including in front of a camera or in a mock engagement session.

4. Findings: Focus Group Two

Since the completion of the CAN Leadership Program, participants have taken part in a number of engagement activities. For example one or more Program participants attended dialogues as a person with lived experience, facilitated dialogues, attended learning workshops, made presentations, and gave media interviews.

4.1 Experience of Engagement Activities

Participants were excited to engage with community in a variety of ways and spoke in mostly positively about their engagement experiences. While there were different levels of engagement, the participants

described participating in a way that worked for their life circumstances. Participants noted that they want to engage because they value the work of improving peoples' lives. They also noted that receiving an honorarium was very important, even if it was not the main motivating factor.

Participants described feeling that for the most part their lived experience was honoured, and sharing their lived experience was useful, even if they were a little nervous at first. One participant noted the vulnerability in sharing their story, but indicated they would do it anyway because they see it is important. Another participant noted a tension between speaking out about their lived experience and being seen as complaining. A number of participants felt that while the people and organizations involved in the events where they spoke out were interested in what they said, they did not feel heard by politicians attending these events. Overall, participants saw their voices as mattering and having an effect on others. There was optimism about the ability to make change on poverty and poverty related issues and desire to continue to be involved in this work.

Those participants who engaged in events as facilitators described facilitation as valuable and enjoyable. They felt respected by others at the table and felt they played an important role in supporting others to talk about their own lived experiences. One participant noted that on hearing other people's lived experiences they realized how impactful this kind of sharing can be. The facilitation ground rules were seen as an important support for facilitators and made the role less scary. All participants noted a desire to continue to engage in different ways and be active in a variety of social issues.

4.2 Reflections on Program Learning and Impact

Reflecting back, participants noted that the CAN Program motivated them to become involved and get more involved: it gave "momentum" and offered an "opportunity to connect to the issues and community". Participants found it inspiring to encounter the organizations working on poverty related issues in each of the workshops. For one participant the CAN Leadership Program provided a pathway for involvement: "I knew I wanted to help but had no way to get involved or how to do it. Then this came along and gave me a framework to give my input." Another participant noted that as a result of the CAN program they felt like they now had a more clear idea of what to do and a way to organize their energy to make change on a variety of issues affecting their life. For another participant, the CAN program helped them to feel more confident in their life overall, regardless of engagement activities.

Looking back, participants could see how they are now putting into action some of what they learned in the CAN workshops. The workshops on linking experience, organizing for social change, and public speaking were specifically mentioned. The facilitation training offered after the first CAN Program was also noted. Participants did not identify any additional CAN Program improvements beyond what was contributed in the first focus group.

4.3 Next Steps for CAN

Participants expressed a desire to continue to receive event information and invitations for things they can participate in. Receiving invitations, via Facebook or other means, was seen as important to staying involved and they want to continue to be responsive to issues in this way. They also like having workshops and coming together for that reason. Workshop topics for continued learning are noted below.

Participants would also like CAN members to get together and identify things they want to work on. Work currently underway on the transit pass was cited as one example of a more pro-active approach and an opportunity to mobilize others to get involved with CAN. One participant noted that because they

did not have a clear sense of what CAN's priorities are, they were not acting on their ideas. They would like a better sense of CAN's focus. Participants were aware and excited that a new group of CAN graduates will soon be involved and they expressed a desire to move CAN to a more organized structure. This includes developing a focus and mission for the group in a way that supports the issues important to individual members but also allows for collective or shared goals, securing a meeting space and an office space with a computer, getting a CAN business card, and applying for grant funding to support their work. Securing a regular meeting place, in particular, was seen as important to support the relationships that have developed.

Some learning topics were identified as helpful to support future CAN work. These included media training so participants are better prepared to do media interviews; more public speaking workshops and practice; additional in-depth training on staying safe as an advocate, engaging systems and structures (such as income support systems, child welfare, etc.), and legal rights; and grant writing skill development so that participants can secure funding for CAN activities and infrastructure.

Participants noted that the workshops they've attended since the CAN program have been helpful, though they were introductory and participants would like to also gain more in-depth knowledge. Participants expressed a desire to learn more about how to organize effectively, both in terms of social change and in terms of organizing CAN's work administratively. They are interested in looking at learning more about how CAN as a group can be heard and can learn more about how to organize collectively.

5. Conclusion

Participants' self-reported data indicates that the CAN Leadership Program has had an important impact on their confidence and sense of agency. The participants felt heard and accepted while in the program. They developed relationships with one another and were inspired to become more active in their community. Participants felt that they gained skills and knowledge, and talked about becoming aware that their story mattered and was worth sharing.

Participants who participated in the second focus group are actively engaging in a variety of issues, feel mostly heard when they share, enjoy taking a facilitator role, and see how their learning in the CAN Leadership Program is now being applied.

It is clear that many members of the CAN group want to take the group the next level of development. They would like to meet regularly, continue learning, continue engaging and sharing their stories, and develop an organizational infrastructure for CAN.