

INSIDE SPERO...

Break the Bias

Evaluating for Individual
and System Support

Fostering Multi-Sector
Collaboration



Newsletter of the
Canadian Poverty Institute
at Ambrose University
Winter 2022 Vol. 6, No. 2

Poverty, Racism and the Gathering Darkness of Hate

Every year across the world, March 21 is recognized as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. In 2022, this date seems to carry extra poignancy. Over the past year we have witnessed the rise of an emboldened white nationalist movement in Canada. The presence of organized groups like the Proud Boys and Canada First along with Confederate Flags and Swastikas at rallies in our nation's capital and cities across the country should give us cause for concern. Leaders prominent in the recent "Freedom Convoy" are unapologetic purveyors of white supremacy and ideologies of hate. B'nai Brith Canada reported that 2020 had the highest recorded number of anti-semitic incidents since their reporting began, the fifth consecutive record-breaking year. That same year, Statistics Canada reported that there were 2,669 hate crimes reported to police across Canada, a 40% increase from 2019, and an 89% increase over the past five years. Specifically, hate motivated crimes based on race or ethnicity were up 80% from the previous year, and 139% over the past five years.

Racism and poverty are intimately connected. People who identify as being from a racialized group earn less overall and are significantly more likely to be in poverty. Nationally, the income of racialized persons was 30% below that of non-racialized persons. Meanwhile, the poverty rate among racialized persons was 21%, almost double the rate of 12% among the non-racialized population.


Poverty, however, involves more than just income. Social and spiritual poverty are also important aspects to what is a multi-dimensional concept, and racism is deeply embedded in both. Social poverty arises when we lack the supportive relationships needed to thrive. Racism disrupts the relationships we all need in order to thrive and be resilient, especially in times of crisis and change like now. By disrupting those critical relationships, racism undermines our strength as a community and thereby touches every single one of us.



Spiritual poverty arises from a lack of meaning and purpose in life. Racism thrives when the meaning and purpose of life becomes distorted. False ideologies of racial superiority

produce a marred identity that corrupts the spiritual well-being of both the target of racism as well as those that promulgate it. A fundamental tenet of the Judeo-Christian tradition is the affirmation that all are created in the image of God and reflect God's divine nature. Racism in all its forms violates this fundamental principle and is utterly antithetical to the nature of God and the divine purpose of God in creation.

Following the Holocaust, the nations of the world collectively and resolutely said "Never Again." Today we must reckon with the uncomfortable reality that never again means now. We urge all people of faith and good conscience to actively oppose all manifestations of racism and hate whenever and wherever they appear, and to immediately disassociate from any space where they are present. Our silent disapproval is no longer enough. The moment requires each of us to speak out with our families, neighbours and friends; in our churches, schools and places of work; and in our online communities. This is our divine calling.

In our struggle against the resurgent heresy of hate, let us also be reminded that moths do not flee the darkness, they fly towards the light. Our divine calling is to be that light and inspire humanity with a vision of a world in which all are truly free. Free from the strictures of poverty; free to be in relationship with all who bear God's image; and free to pursue our authentic purpose untainted by distorted identities of superiority. The world is desperately waiting for such light. 

Break the Bias

March 8, 2022 is International Women's Day, and it is themed #breakthebias! International Women's Day is set aside each year to draw attention to women's challenges in both the private and public domain, take stock of the progress achieved and reflect on the work still to be done.

First held in 1911 in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland, over a million women and men attended public events to show their support (Women and Gender and Equality Canada). Over a century later, the day has grown into a global event, enthusiastically marked by communities in the know, but passes unremarked by many more.

In cultures around the world (western and non-western) women and girls have wielded less power, privilege and opportunity in daily living, political, social, religious, cultural, and many other contexts, and some of the bias around that resides in language (more on this later). The 1995 Beijing Conference on Women resulted in a seminal declaration of equality between men and women, boys and girls. In some countries, this statement was greeted with skepticism, ridicule and in some cases, disdain. Opponents argued that such provisions could/ will disrupt families and communities. As there were opponents, there were fierce advocates for the cause across the world; some toiling to more success than others. Today, we live in a paradigm of Mainstreaming Gender Equality as a result of the foundational work done before 1995, and since then.

In 2022, much can be said about the “equality” between men and women, boys and girls. Girl enrolment in schools have increased across the world except in some glaring cases of retrogression such as in Afghanistan. Much work is being done to improve women's place in the public domain with women working in diverse and complex STEM fields, politics and governance at the highest levels, business leadership, and reaching to the stars; so much so that these events are becoming routine. In Iceland, so powerful was Halla Tómasdóttir's unsuccessful run for the presidency, a young boy asked her if he could be president when he grew up (Tómasdóttir TED talk). This scant sampling points to a socio-cultural shift that has happened over time. They signal shifts in bias about are who females are, where they belong, what they can do, and what they can achieve. In short, #breakthebias has been happening.

I may be bursting the bubble, but on International Women's Day, 2022, the stock-taking suggests that the work has just begun. Females, women and girls, still face varying degrees of social marginalization and vulnerability. Power, privilege and opportunity may be equally available to all genders but the distribution is not equitable. Cue the semantic difference between equal and equitable. Much #bias and prejudice slow the rate of progress. The English language (for example) is replete with common phrases that [subconsciously] continue inequality between men and women— stop bickering like women, back to the



drawing table,
cast your net
wide, cut to the chase,
and drill down to the issue
phrases that descend from
masculinity or men's work in the
public domain. I have stopped
counting times I have been called
“my brother” or “Sir” on social media
where “intelligent” conversations are
happening and when the other party
(including females) does not know I
am a woman. You may be wondering
where I am going with this. Our
gender bias begins with the acquisition
of language ([Read more here](#)).

As we speak is as we think, as we
think is as we organize the world,
as we organize the world is as we
do. Prewitt-Freilino puts it more
elegantly: “The languages we speak
influence how we construct society,
and can even set the precedent for
gender equality in our social systems”
([Read more here](#)). #breakthebias!
Another 100 years is too long to wait
for when woman, girl, female is no
longer a question when a person takes
their place in the world. 🐦

**Rita Yembilah,
Senior Researcher / Evaluator**

**Dedicated to my two daughters
who must inherit a “gendersphere”
better than mine.**

**Visit the IWD website:
www.internationalwomensday.com/theme**

Evaluating for Individual and System Support

The mission of the CPI is “to contribute to the healing of poverty in Canada through teaching, research and public education that informs policy and enhances practice.”

In pursuit of this mission, one of the developing aspects of the work of the CPI is program evaluation, which straddles the research and practice strands of our work. Two recent evaluation projects undertaken by the CPI include the *Youth Resiliency Project (YRP)* of the Duke of Edinburgh’s International Award and the *Bow Valley Family Resource Network (BVFRN)* coordinated by the Town of Canmore, Alberta.

The similarity between these projects is that they are both multi-year projects but that is where the similarities end. The YRP is an interprovincial project that seeks proof of concept for turning around the trajectories of criminally involved youth. In contrast, the BVFRN is a newly formed intra-provincial service network that includes a Hub and 3 Family Resource Networks (Spokes). In essence, the YRP is a program evaluation whereas the BVFRN is a system evaluation. These align with the CPI’s approach to work that harnesses our research depth to support agencies and governments from the frontline (programs level) to the policy (systems level).

Much as these projects are different, the evaluative journeys have one common feature — the skill of the evaluator(s) to “read” the project and adapt. The YRP began as an indicator-based evaluation without a clear



framework to drive its tone and ended with a firm Contribution Analysis framework through which data was gathered, analyzed and presented. The BVFRN evaluation, meanwhile, involved working with the Spokes to help define their roles and coordinate activities to increase system efficiency and effectiveness. Because the Spokes were still delivering services, albeit at the height of the pandemic, a Development Evaluation (DE) consisting of three phases was put together.

The course of these projects illustrate the approach of the CPI where in any research and / or evaluation context, it is critical to be able to “read” the project and be nimble enough to respond swiftly. With the YRP, while a traditional evaluation approach where the process is led by the evaluator was successful, even after accounting for the interruptions caused by the pandemic, this approach needed to change as the project developed. Over the coming years, the YRP is being extended to the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, which will require a different evaluation framework to adapt to the northern context. Accordingly, a participatory plan has been developed, prioritizing arts-based reporting,

and the use of text and narrative as opposed to surveys.

With the DE that was developed for the BVFRN, a different adjustment was needed *within the same project, and involving the same actors*. To put this in context, the essence of a DE is to evaluate a project as it is being implemented. The findings of the evaluation are used in real-time to inform the program. It also means that the internal context of the evaluation is important where if something is not working as planned, a course correction is needed. The beauty of the DE is the CPI was able to witness its real application where unexpected events, some related to the pandemic, others related to the exigencies of a new group, required a course correction. This is a special event for the CPI. It was a learning moment, a teaching moment and a moment to recognize our attentiveness to the environments we work in.

Whether we research, teach or practice (including evaluating) it is our goal to continue that way, supporting various organizations as they do their best to foster poverty alleviation and promote human wellbeing. 🕊

Rita Yembilah,
Senior Researcher / Evaluator



Fostering Multi-Sector Collaboration

We've all seen it - utility bills are higher than usual. While this can cut deep into many household budgets, not all households are impacted in the same way. Households that spend a disproportionate amount of their income on home energy costs are sometimes referred to as experiencing energy poverty. While income and energy poverty are directly linked, there are many other factors that contribute to a household experiencing energy poverty, such as home size and efficiency. The complexities of energy poverty open up a unique opportunity for cross-sectoral collaboration to address this issue. The Canadian Poverty Institute facilitates the Energy Poverty Roundtable (EPR), a collaborative between government, energy providers and non-profit organizations. This group works to reduce energy poverty and develop policy and strategy recommendations for government and industry. Every two months, the EPR gathers to share new information and resources, trends in the community and energy sector, and identify opportunities for collaboration. For more information about Energy Poverty and the work of the Roundtable, visit www.energypovertyroundtable.ca. It is hope that this work can inform future planning to both mitigate the impacts of Covid-19 and lead to a more resilient future. 🌿

Laura Nauta,
Researcher / Program Coordinator

New CPI Publications and Resources

- **Poverty, Power and the Skyrocketing Cost of Utilities**
Editorial published in the March 10 Calgary Herald.
- **Covid19 and the Newly Vulnerable**
A series of videos presenting highlights of the research findings of this project to date.

Support the CPI

- **The Canadian Poverty Institute is a community partner of Sponsor Energy.** Customers of Sponsor Energy can direct a portion of all profits from their utility bill to the Canadian Poverty Institute. For more information, please visit: www.sponsorenergy.com/charity/cpi/
- **The Canadian Poverty welcomes individuals and organizations who wish to support the Canadian Poverty Institute financially.** If you wish to become a supporter, please visit <https://www2.ambrose.edu/donate> and indicate you wish to designate your gift to the Canadian Poverty Institute.



About the CPI

The Canadian Poverty Institute is an inter-disciplinary research and teaching institute housed within Ambrose University in Calgary. Our mission is to contribute to the healing of poverty in Canada through teaching, research and public education.

We are grounded in the Christian tradition of extending compassion while seeking justice and reconciliation for the marginalized and oppressed.

The Canadian Poverty Institute is a member of:

- Vibrant Communities
- Canadian Council of Churches, Commission on Justice and Peace
- The Calgary Alliance for the Common Good



AMBROSE
UNIVERSITY

Canadian Poverty Institute
150 Ambrose Circle SW
Calgary, Alberta, Canada T3H 0L5
403-410-2000 • 1-800-461-1222
Povertyinstitute@ambrose.edu
www.povertyinstitute.ca
[@CndPovertyInst](https://twitter.com/CndPovertyInst)