



DISCUSSION SUMMARY

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR PROVINCIAL CLUSTER MEETING

November 26th, 2015, 11:00 am – 2:00 pm

St. John's (Boardroom, On the Move Partnership Office, Memorial University – 202 Elizabeth Avenue)

SUMMARY OF MAJOR ACTION ITEMS

*In order to move forward with the work on this initiative, six **major action items** were identified at this meeting as important next steps for the Newfoundland and Labrador provincial cluster:*

- 1) Post brief synopses of both CRWDP-funded student research projects on the CRWDP project page of the SafetyNet website (<http://www.mun.ca/safetynet/projects/CRWDP/crwdp.php>);*
- 2) Follow up with the National Manager regarding the compilation and distribution of a national student directory, comprising names and contact information for all CRWDP student fellows across Canada;*
- 3) Follow up with the National Co-Leads regarding the possibility of developing a national webinar series, in which seed grant recipients across the country can present on their work;*
- 4) Recommend to the National Office that Steve Mantis remain in his paid position of Community Groups Lead for a minimum of one day a week;*
- 5) Develop some of the ideas generated during our discussion on seed grants into full proposals, to be submitted in response to the upcoming calls; and*
- 6) Ensure that future advertisements for students/trainees are distributed broadly – not just within Memorial University, but through disability groups and other outside organizations as well.*

This document summarizes the discussions that took place at the fourth Newfoundland and Labrador provincial cluster meeting of the Centre for Research on Work Disability Policy (CRWDP), which took place at the St. John's campus of Memorial University on November 26th, 2015.

The meeting was chaired and facilitated by Barbara Neis, Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Co-Lead. In addition to Dr. Neis, the following individuals were in attendance:

- Stephen Bornstein – Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Co-Lead
- Gordon Cooke – Academic Co-Investigator (Business Administration)
- Catherine de Boer – Academic Co-Investigator (Social Work)
- Kathy Hawkins – Manager of Employer Supports & Services, Independent Living Resource Centre of NL
- Aleksandra (Saska) Stefanovic – PhD Student (Community Health), CRWDP Student Fellow



- Daniella Simas Medeiros – Master's Student (Sociology), CRWDP Student Fellow
- Tina Hickey – Employment Equity Officer, Department of Human Resources, Memorial University
- Tina Eddy – Workers' Advisor, Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour
- Mary Reid – Director, Disability Policy Office, Government of NL
- Susan Tobin – Program Policy Development Specialist, Disability Policy Office, Government of NL
- Chrissy Vincent – Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Coordinator

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The meeting was opened with a round of brief introductions, intended for the benefit of those attendees who were either new to the provincial cluster or unable to attend previous cluster meetings. We were pleased to welcome four individuals who were new to the initiative and had not attended any of our previous three provincial cluster meetings – Tina Hickey, Employment Equity Officer with Memorial University's Department of Human Resources; Mary Reid, Director of the Disability Policy Office of the Government of NL; Susan Tobin, Program Policy Development Specialist of that same office; and Tina Eddy, Workers' Advisor with the NL Federation of Labour, who will be replacing John Reardon at our meetings for the time during which he has been temporarily reassigned.

REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

At our previous provincial cluster meeting on March 24th, 2015, six major action items were identified as being important next steps in moving our cluster forward. All six of those action items have now been addressed:

- 1) We are now actively using the CRWDP project page of the SafetyNet website as a central hub for posting key items specific to **our** provincial cluster (<http://www.mun.ca/safetynet/projects/CRWDP/crwdp.php>).
- 2) A recruitment letter outlining the benefits and responsibilities associated with CRWDP partnership was drafted, and it was distributed to cluster members to aid them in initiating contact with potential new partners. It will be re-distributed along with this discussion summary for the benefit of those who are new to the cluster.
- 3) Two seed grant proposals were submitted from our cluster in response to last year's call, one of which was successful in receiving funding.
- 4) The original idea of hosting a networking/outreach event eventually grew into the concept for our Roundtable on Inclusion, which was successfully held on November 12th with 35 attendees.
- 5) All interested members of our cluster were provided with an opportunity to connect with Steve Mantis and become involved with the Newfoundland and Labrador community caucus. That community caucus has now been active for several months and is gaining momentum.
- 6) The time lapse between this meeting and the last one was shorter than the lapse we previously experienced, so there has been some positive change in terms of more regular scheduling of meetings.



UPDATES ON RESEARCH PROGRESS

1) WORDS FROM OUR STUDENT FELLOWS

Both of our cluster's student fellows were present at the meeting, and were given an opportunity to provide a brief update on their research activities in relation to their CRWDP-funded dissertations.

- **Aleksandra (Saska) Stefanovic** is a PhD student in Community Health, under the supervision of CRWDP co-investigators Dr. Stephen Bornstein and Dr. Rick Audas. The aim of her proposed research is to compare and evaluate supported employment programs for individuals with mental health disabilities in Newfoundland and Labrador, and it will be conducted in partnership with several different community organizations, including Evergreen Recycling – a local non-profit organization that provides meaningful and sustainable employment for individuals recovering from mental illness. Saska is currently completing her last term of required coursework for her PhD program, and she will be generating and submitting an ethics application for her proposed dissertation research very soon. Once she receives approval, she hopes to begin setting up interviews and focus groups right away. She mentioned that she has become very interested in the fact that 50-60% of human rights complaints in Canada are related to disability and accommodation, and she is considering somehow incorporating an examination of this (in relation to supported employment programs) into her work.
- **Daniella Simas Medeiros** is a Master's student in Sociology, under the supervision of CRWDP co-investigator Dr. Rose Ricciardelli. The aim of her proposed research is to explore the occupational health and safety experiences of provincial correctional officers, with a particular focus on mental health, and it will be conducted in partnership with the John Howard Society of Newfoundland and Labrador. Daniella has already received ethics approval for her dissertation research. She is now in the process of collecting copies of the Occupational Health and Safety Acts (and accompanying regulations) in her provinces of study, and she is also initiating contact with union representatives in order to gain access to any union-specific occupational health and safety regulations that might govern the employment of provincial correctional officers.

Attendees agreed that we should post short synopses of these student research project on the CRWDP project page of the SafetyNet website for cluster members and other interested parties to access and read.

2) WORDS FROM OUR CO-INVESTIGATORS AND PARTNERS

After hearing from our student fellows, the floor was opened to our co-investigator and partner attendees to provide updates of their recent CRWDP-related activities.

- **Stephen Bornstein** reported that work is now well underway on the seed grant project that he is leading in partnership with Kelly White of the Coalition of Persons with Disabilities NL (COD-NL). The project aims to examine disability support policies and their impact on labour market participation for persons



with disabilities in NL, and Aleksandra Stefanovic has been hired part-time to carry out the research. So far, she has conducted interviews with service providers (such as representatives of community organizations) as well as focus groups with service consumers. Although these have not yet been transcribed, it is clear that they resulted in some very rich qualitative data. Depending on the results produced from the analysis of these data, the team may wish to prepare an application for a larger grant to continue this work (for submission to a funder such as the Vanier Institute of the Family, for instance).

One interesting stumbling block that the team faced when embarking on this project is that Memorial University's ethics committee was not willing to permit representatives of COD-NL to be present in the room for any of the interviews or focus groups that were to take place. They reasoned that since many of the individuals involved in these interviews and focus groups were potential beneficiaries of COD-NL's services, having a COD-NL presence in the room might introduce a conflict of interest. This is an implication of partnered research that hadn't previously been considered, and it will be valuable to be aware of it when moving forward with other projects.

- **Catherine de Boer** reported that her team's revised and resubmitted seed grant application (led by Rose Ricciardelli) was successful in receiving funding during the most recent competition. Two new researchers – Alan Hall from the Department of Sociology and Kathleen Sitter from the School of Social Work – were added to the team this time around. The scope of study was also broadened somewhat, so that the project now aims to examine mental health policies for several different types of protective services workers (rather than solely correctional officers). In keeping with this, The NL Department of Child, Youth, and Family Services was brought on board as a partner as well. The team is hoping to use the seed grant funding to complete a policy review, and then develop a larger application for additional funding to expand their work. It has not yet been decided whether the policy review will be “broad and thin” (including many different types of policies, including Employee Assistance Programs, but with little depth) or “focused and deep” (including only a narrow range of policies, but with in-depth analysis).
- **Barbara Neis** reported that she has recently been working closely with Katherine Lippel (a CRWDP collaborator and also the co-investigator in charge of the policy component of the On the Move Partnership, which is headed by Barbara). They are working on developing an ad for a CRWDP-funded post-doctoral fellowship to look at employment-related geographical mobility (commuting and employment in transient/mobile workplaces) and work disability policy. Katherine is the Canada Research Chair in Occupational Health and Safety Law at the University of Ottawa, and she is now in the process of submitting a proposal to SSHRC/CIHR for a new partnership development grant to study return-to-work policies and practices for precarious and migrant workers. The focus on return-to-work for workers who have been injured suggests a close tie-in with many of the issues already being examined by CRWDP researchers, so this may present a possibility for collaboration across projects.

ACTION: Post brief synopses of both CRWDP-funded student research projects on the CRWDP project page of the SafetyNet website (<http://www.mun.ca/safetynet/projects/CRWDP/crwdp.php>).



REPORT ON ROUNDTABLE ON INCLUSION

Barbara Neis and Kathy Hawkins provided a brief overview and summary of what transpired during our recent Roundtable on Inclusion event, which took place on November 12th at the St. John's campus of Memorial University. There was a total of 35 attendees at this event, from a wide diversity of backgrounds and perspectives – representatives of post-secondary institutions, employer organizations, government departments, the provincial workers' compensation commission (now called Workplace NL), and various disability groups were all present, along with academic researchers and other professionals such as occupational therapists and architects. This allowed for a great deal of lively discussion and sharing among participants, touching on a broad range of issues and topics. Some of the major themes emerging from the dialogue included the value of universal design, the importance of considering skill-matching, pay equity, and career advancement in relation to employment for persons with disabilities, and the need for education/curriculum in disability studies in order to shed some light on these issues.

Both Kelly White and Kathy Hawkins played leading roles in the organization of the event. Kelly opened the session with a presentation on inclusion, and Kathy facilitated the roundtable discussion. All community partners found the experience to be worthwhile, and appreciated the opportunity to draw interesting information from a diverse group of participants. It was mentioned that Steve Mantis' presence at the event was particularly valuable, since he was able to bring a knowledgeable out-of-province perspective to the table. While Steve was in town, he also hosted an information session on the concept of Speakers' Schools for persons with disabilities, which was hosted by the ILRC-NL (attendees included Barb Neis). This is an initiative that has been successful in other provinces, and may soon be moving forward here in NL as well. The possibility of initiating a Speakers' School in American Sign Language was suggested at Steve's session, which could provide an exciting opportunity for members of the NL Deaf community.

Roundtable attendees were eager to build on the momentum from the event, and expressed an interest in re-convening next year to continue discussing these issues. Although there is no current allocation in our CRWDP budget for an annual event of this nature, there are potential alternative sources of funding that could be explored (such as funding through Memorial University's Office of Public Engagement, for example). It was suggested that Memorial's Human Resources Department might also be interested in seeking similar funding for an event that could bring them together with community disability groups, in order to explore whether there might be invisible barriers for persons with disabilities hiding within their current policy framework related to hiring at Memorial.

REPORT ON THE NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

Stephen Bornstein provided an overview of what transpired during the CRWDP National Symposium, which was held the previous week in Toronto. The National Symposium consisted of three events, which took place on November 19th, 20th, and 21st. The following text is a summary of Stephen's report on these three events.



The policy roundtable event on November 19th brought together approximately 20 mid-level policymakers and experts from various organizations across the country, and comprised a mixed agenda of presentations and discussions. Government policymakers attending from NL were somewhat limited in what they were able to share as they were under an election writ, but even despite this, discussion was very open. Aisling Gogan, Director of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Division of the Government of NL, gave an interesting presentation on the poverty reduction program in our province. This was well-received by the meeting's attendees, who were excited to hear about a program aimed at reducing poverty (including for individuals with disabilities) that seems to have had some degree of success.

The main symposium event on November 20th saw over 120 academics, trainees, community partners, policymakers, and experts come together from all parts of the country for a day of keynote speeches, presentations, and discussion sessions organized around three major themes:

- 1) **Policy Coordination.** This theme focused on exploring how disability support programs might be better coordinated or harmonized with one another in order to meet the needs of people with work-related disabilities. Issues covered under this theme included ease of access to supports and services, navigability of support systems, the adverse consequences for individuals of the way various programs interact with and conflict with one another, and the distinction between harmonization of programs and adequacy of programs (coordination/harmonization does not necessarily equate to adequacy).
- 2) **Employer Opportunities.** This theme focused on the ways in which employers could better engage with workers who have disabilities. Much of the dialogue around this theme focused on the business case for employing people with disabilities, but with a recognition that some of the identified benefits to employers may come at a cost to workers with disabilities themselves. For example, lower rates of turnover among workers with disabilities may sound like great news to employers, but such lower turnover rates may exist because these workers lack opportunities for career advancement and are therefore stuck in entry-level positions.
- 3) **Program Supports.** This theme focused on identifying important gaps in the supports currently provided across existing disability programs in Canada. Much of the discussion within this theme centered on potential ways to best pinpoint exactly where these gaps are, with one interesting suggestion that members of the CRWDP team may wish to help guide the development of a new set of questions on disability support programs to be included in the newly reinstated Canadian long-form census.

During this main symposium event, there also was a poster display showcasing the projects being undertaken by CRWDP-funded student fellows. Attendees enjoyed having the opportunity to read about these student projects, and students themselves found it particularly helpful to be able to network with one another and learn about the work being done by their peers. It was suggested that it might be helpful for students to have access to a directory of contact information for all CRWDP student fellows across Canada, so that they might be better able to connect and keep in contact with one another.

The third event on November 21st was a smaller action planning meeting, open only to formal members of the CRWDP. This meeting was primarily a brainstorming session intended to generate a repository of research ideas for possible future seed grant proposals and spin-off projects that might be undertaken over the next two and a half years (during which time there will be two more seed grant competitions). The master list of ideas produced by this meeting will be circulated by the national office in the coming weeks, so that team members across the country who are interested in the same potential projects can connect with one another and pursue them together. From this brainstorming session, a suggestion was also put forward for a possible national webinar series, in which seed grant recipients across the country could present on their work. If need be, the NL cluster would have the capacity to make the organizational arrangements for such a series.



In addition to the above three events reported on by Stephen, there was also a national meeting of all community caucuses on the evening of November 19th. Kathy Hawkins (who was present for this meeting) reported that community partners were appreciative of the opportunity to meet members of caucuses from other provinces, and all caucuses across the country made a commitment to open up their conference calls to one another from this point forward. This way, provincial caucuses will be able to learn from one another's experiences and develop together. At this meeting, community caucus members also learned that that Steve Mantis' employment as Community Groups Lead may not continue for much longer, which came as a great disappointment to everyone. There was unanimous agreement that Steve is a very important team member, and should remain employed as Community Groups Lead for a minimum of one day a week.

ACTION: Follow up with the National Manager regarding the compilation and distribution of a national student directory, comprising names and contact information for all CRWDP student fellows across Canada.

ACTION: Follow up with the National Co-Leads regarding the possibility of developing a national webinar series in which seed grant recipients across the country can present on their work.

ACTION: Recommend to the National Office that Steve Mantis remain in his paid position of Community Groups Lead for a minimum of one day a week.

GROUP BRAINSTORMING/DISCUSSION SESSION: SEED GRANT PROPOSALS

As indicated in the summary of the National Symposium (see above), it was revealed that there will be a total of two more CRWDP seed grant competitions. The first call for proposals will occur in the coming months, and will be specifically focused on the three National Symposium discussion themes outlined above. The second call, which will occur later, will be more similar to the two calls that have previously been issued. Both calls, however, will aim to encourage larger projects with more collaboration across provincial clusters and emphasize the development of follow-up applications to national or provincial funding agencies.

In light of these two upcoming calls, the NL cluster meeting included a short brainstorming session to generate ideas for new proposals that might potentially be developed and submitted in response. The following possibilities were put forward:

- A study aimed at mining useful information from datasets that are already available for analysis. One example of such a dataset is the one discussed by John Stapleton at the National Symposium on expenditure patterns on Canada's nine types of disability programs, which he indicated would be made available for use by team members across the country.
- An examination of the NL Poverty Reduction Strategy and/or other similar programs in an effort to figure out whether or not they work, and if so, how. One question of interest could centre on identifying which specific segment of the impoverished population such programs tend to reach.



- A network analysis of disability-related organizations focused on disentangled how they are (or are not) connected to one another and the ways in which communications and information flow between them. The main objective would be to identify gaps and points of vulnerability in these networks, and ways in which these could be addressed.
- An investigation of wage subsidy programs and whether or not they work (and if so, for whom).
- A study examining employers' perceptions of hiring and accommodating persons with disabilities in their workplaces, with an aim to identify major motivators and barriers.
- An analysis of the employment equity policies at Memorial University as they relate to people with disabilities, with comparisons to other universities in Canada and perhaps internationally. This idea was proposed at our last provincial cluster meeting and there still seems to be a great deal of interest in it.

ACTION: Develop some of these ideas into full seed grant proposals, to be submitted in response to the upcoming calls.

GROUP BRAINSTORMING/DISCUSSION SESSION: TRAINEE RECRUITMENT

Since we will be looking to recruit one new student fellow for the fall of 2016, we held a brief discussion regarding trainee opportunities and possible strategies for advertising them. The lack of a dedicated disability studies curriculum at Memorial University means that finding interested students can be a particularly difficult challenge for our cluster, and this is further complicated by the fact that many graduate students in areas such as Business and Social Work are individuals with full-time jobs who are pursuing advanced degrees on the side (CRWDP student fellowships are available only to full-time students who work less than 24 hours per week). Nevertheless, meeting attendees expressed optimism – the consensus seemed to be that if we cast our net wide enough, our search will be successful. It was suggested that we advertise broadly to all MUN departments, but more importantly, not just internally at the university but also externally through disability groups and other relevant channels. This way, we could reach not only current students, but also individuals who might be interested in returning to school for a graduate degree if funding were to be made available to them.

ACTION: Ensure that future advertisements for students/trainees are distributed broadly – not just within Memorial University, but through disability groups and other outside organizations as well.

WRAP-UP

During wrap-up, it was emphasized that our most important priority at the current time is to keep our eyes open for the next seed grant call, so that we will be ready to spring into action in response to it. The earlier our cluster's proposals begin to be developed, the stronger they will be when submitted.