



Community Based Research Report 2016

**Understanding the role and the uniqueness of the
EMC community animator model in empowering
ethno-cultural communities in Edmonton**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The part that I enjoyed the most watching all the community members come together and share ideas and discover that their community wasn't only community with the problem! That is empowering and from that empowerment then they would start to work together to solve their problems or start project between communities, which was so beautiful to see. [EMC community animator, 2016]

Background: Over the last decade, the City of Edmonton has experienced exponential population growth as thousands of new immigrants and refugees have landed in Edmonton and still new people are coming to the City either from outside of Canada or from other provinces in Canada. In addition to international and inter-provincial migration, rural to urban migration has recently accelerated the rapid population growth in Edmonton. However, unlike Canadian-born population, newcomers—who migrate to Canada from other parts of the world—face significant barriers to integrate into the Canadian economy and society. Some of the not-for-profit and community-based organizations are working with newcomers in Edmonton to provide support and opportunities for fostering their settlement, integration and citizenship processes through community animator model (s) and facilitation programs. However, little is known about the impacts of these community animation or community facilitation works on the emerging communities in Edmonton.

Objectives: A community-based research was undertaken to evaluate the effectiveness and to understand the uniqueness of the community animator model of Edmonton Multicultural Coalition (EMC). This study intended to assess the effectiveness of community animator model by making a systematic comparison between the theoretical basis of EMC's community animator model and the changes experienced by the community animators and community members. It also aimed at differentiating the EMC community animator model from similar community facilitation programs of other community-based organizations in Edmonton.

Methods: This research was conducted by the Research Facilitator and was supervised by the Community Research Advisory Committee (CRAC) of EMC. A series of semi-structured individual interviews and focus group interviews were conducted with a total of 30 research participants to collect qualitative data. These research participants were: community animators, community members, EMC organizational staff, CRAC members and EMC Board members, and program managers of Action for Healthy Communities (AHC) and REACH Edmonton. The study followed purposive sampling procedure to recruit these research participants. In addition, the Research Facilitator participated in several different trainings, meetings, and social gatherings of EMC community animators.

Key Findings: Findings show that the EMC community animator model is working effectively to support, to enable, and to empower the citizens of different ethno-cultural communities in Edmonton. The model has been useful for community animators and community members especially for newcomers in many different ways: a) understanding

local cultural and legal system in Edmonton, b) building new capacity, c) validating the embodied knowledge, experience, and capacity that they have brought from their back home, and d) harnessing the existing skills and capacities to navigate various opportunities in Edmonton. Animators and community members have also achieved the ability to interact with people in complex social environments, to break social isolation and to extend social networks. EMC community animator model has helped newcomers to a great extent to remove various cultural, linguistic or social, economic and structural barriers in their earlier phase of the transition and integration process.

This research also shows that EMC has a unique, a well-defined and theoretically informed community animator model, which is grounded in community development approach. The model emphasizes the overall community development process rather than focusing a particular issue in the community or providing services to a certain group of people and/or to clients. This model is being used to empower and to sustain different communities through a slow process of relationships building and community capacity building. Unlike other community facilitation programs of other organizations EMC community animator model is significantly based on volunteers and they are not treated as paid staff and professional service providers.

Policy Recommendations: EMC as a capacity building organization has already achieved some important successes through the use of its community animator model. In order to achieve further enhancement of the model and to provide more effective supports and opportunities for newcomers and marginalized communities in Edmonton this study recommends the following policy reforms for EMC:

- Recruitment of more full-time staff to reach out more communities and to keep connected with animators effectively.
- Providing more training and supports for community animators on seed grant projects.
- Providing training to EMC staff to help them understand the cultural context of community animators and community.
- Maintaining positive and effective relationship between EMC staff and the mainstream agencies for creating more space for the organization, animators and communities to access resources and opportunities.
- Having an effective follow-up about the progress of the organization and the work of community animators.
- Having more community animator appreciation programs to keep animators active and connected.
- Providing transportation and childcare supports for animators and members.
- Reaching out more diverse communities and establishing connections between established and marginalized communities to make more positive impacts on the marginalized communities.
- Adopting and implementing the inter-cultural capacity building approach to bring animators and members of different communities under one umbrella.

ABBREVIATIONS

AHC	Action for Healthy Communities
ARECCI	A pRoject Ethics Community Consensus Initiative
CRAC	Community Research Advisory Committee
EMC	Edmonton Multicultural Coalition
EMCN	Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers
MCHB	Multicultural Health Brokers

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INTRODUCTION

Background

Alberta is the third-largest immigrant-receiving province in Canada (Alberta Association of Immigrant of Serving Agencies 2013) and in the last several years the City of Edmonton has experienced a significant population growth driven both by international migration and inter-provincial migration. Rural to urban migration of Canada's Aboriginal peoples as well as natural growth have also impacted Edmonton's population growth rate (Cardinal, 2006; Sawchuk, 2011). The first municipal census recorded only 147 population in Edmonton in 1878 and Edmonton became a city with a total of 8,350 population in 1904. Since 1950s Edmonton's newcomer population has consistently been increased and in 2014 Edmonton had the 2nd-highest population growth rate in Canada¹. According to the most recent data, the City of Edmonton has 899,447 population (Vital Signs, 2016, p.1). Almost 50,000 settled in Edmonton by the end of 2015. Among them about 71% came as economic immigrants, 21% came under family reunification categories and just over 7% came as refugees (Vital Signs, 2016, p.2). Between 2005 and 2015 the number of newcomers arrived in Edmonton as landed immigrants or permanent residents has increased from 6,016 to 16,739—about 178.2% increase in Edmonton in comparison to only 3.7% in Canada (Vital Signs, 2016, p.2). This trend is still continuing as more new people are coming to Edmonton (e.g. Syrian refugees, permanent residents).

Except refugees and forced migrants, the majority newcomers have landed in Edmonton or elsewhere in Canada to have a better life for themselves and for their children. They have come from relatively a less complex to a more complex society, and from different cultural, linguistic and economic backgrounds and whatever skills, knowledge or capacity they bring from back home cannot necessarily be translated into the Canadian context independently. Unlike Canadian born-population, these newcomers have to face significant barriers in a new society, which may include: inadequate language skills, lack of Canadian work experience, lack of credential recognition issues such as lack of recognition of the immigrant's back-home work experience, or lack of familiarity with public participation process in Edmonton (Alexander *et al.*, 2012; Ali, 2013; Edmonton Multicultural Coalition, 2014). These barriers may prevent newcomers from participating in the labor market, public engagement processes or in local social cultural system in a meaningful manner in Edmonton. Hence it is important to newcomers to learn about how the Canadian system works, how they can translate their existing capacity and skills into Canadian context, and how they can make their voices heard by the Canadian society as a whole. Not-for-profit and community community-based organizations such as Action for Healthy Communities (AHC), ASSIST Community Services Centre, Edmonton Multicultural Coalition (EMC), Multicultural Health Brokers cooperative (MCHB), Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers (EMCN), REACH Edmonton and other

¹ Vinesh Pratap, "Edmonton region has the 2nd highest population growth rate", *Global News Edmonton*, February 11, 2015. Accessed on December 27, 2016. Retrieved from <http://globalnews.ca/news/1824910/edmonton-region-has-canadas-2nd-highest-population-growth-stats-canada/>

organizations have been working with newcomers or members of different ethno-cultural immigrant communities for over a decade to support them to adapt to local cultural, legal, and economic systems in Edmonton. EMC is using its community animator model and other organizations are using similar community facilitation programs to help newcomers in their settlement, integration, and citizenship processes in Edmonton.

The term animator originated from the Latin work “animere”, means to breathe life into something. From this perspective, “A community animator is someone who comes from the community; knows the culture and the language of his/her community; has time to commit to the project; willing to learn and most of all dedicated to serve the best interest of the community... A community animator uses his/her skills and talents to enable people and groups to learn from each other and take action on their needs and aspirations” (Edmonton Multicultural Coalition, 2016). A community animator should be someone who is neutral and someone who has the best interest of the community ahead of personal recognition. Animators also need to have some sorts of understandings about both the Canadian system and back home political cultural dynamics. Importantly, a community animator is typically a volunteer position—not an employee—who is recruited and is provided training by a community-based organization based on the need and aspirations of that animator’s ethno-cultural community. Then the animator goes back to his or her community to help community members to connect to various resources and opportunities. It is expected that the community should be able to utilize those resources and opportunities to make transition and integration process into the mainstream society easier and smooth. However, the outcomes of a community animator model or an equivalent community facilitation program largely depends on how an organization designs its community animation works or community facilitation programs, types of resources and supports the organization provides to its animators, and how the organization engages community animators to uplift their communities.

Knowledge Gaps and Evaluations of the EMC Community Animator Model

Past studies on different organizations working on immigrant communities in Edmonton (e.g. AHC, EMC, EMCN, MCHB, etc.) provide an overall understanding about the impact of various programs on the lives of immigrant communities the specified effectiveness of community animation models or roles of the community animators is sparsely documented (see Zhao, 2009; Zulla *et al.*, 2012; Zulla *et al.*, 2013; Tang, 2016). Very little is known about the effectiveness of variations to the community animator model and the effectiveness of similar facilitation works in different organizations for the successful integration into the Canadian system and for the sustainability of the immigrant population in Edmonton as a whole. In fact, none of the organizations (AHC, REACH Edmonton, EMCN or MCHB) that use the community animator-like program has conducted a systematic evaluation research to assess the effectiveness of that model on the communities. This community-based research was conducted to investigate the effectiveness of the community animator model of EMC and to locate the position of this model in relation to other similar community facilitation programs in Edmonton. This research used both process and outcome evaluation perspectives to assess the effectiveness of the EMC community animator model.

Process evaluation—describing about program participants and their actions and evaluating the activities, dimensions, and characteristics of an intervention or a program (see Tucker *et al.*, 2006)—was used to describe the theory of community animator model of EMC and was evaluated in two ways: I) comparing /contrasting the EMC theory of community animator model to /with other similar models, and ii) describing the roles and activities of EMC and community animators, means of communication between organizational staff (e.g. EMC) and community animators, types and nature of training, resources and supports that were being provided to the community animators and how they were using these knowledges, skills and resources. For assessing the EMC community animator model both background data and primary data collected from community animators, community members and EMC staff were analyzed.

An act of solving practical problems and the perceived and realized outcomes was considered as part of the practical impact or outcome evaluation. This research explored a fundamental relationship between the process of the EMC community animation and the changed outcomes that the community animators and members of different ethno-cultural community had experienced in their personal, family and community lives. From this perspective, the effectiveness of the community animators' work was assessed based on some practical short-term and long-term outcomes that the community animators were able to bring about to their lives as well as to their community.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

Process of Identifying the Research Question

The decision to evaluate the effectiveness of the community animator model and the roles of the community animators came from several meetings of the Community Research Advisory committee (CRAC) members, community animators, EMC Board members, and EMC staff. Overall, several important ideas were identified by the community animators:

- Barriers to social-cultural and economic transition and integration into the Canadian economy.
- The roles of community animators in fostering a positive social relationship within and among members of ethno-cultural communities.
- The critical roles of EMC in building capacity of community animators and members in the past and present.
- The roles of EMC community garden (i.e. food security project) and community animators in creating sustainable and healthy community (in terms of economic sustainability, health and nutrition as well as extension and continuation of social relationship), and
- Lack of resources (financial and other supports) of EMC.

In addition to considering these ideas and issues identified and raised by the community animators several other important factors were taken into account to finalize research topic and research question—as an evaluation of the effectiveness of the community animator model:

- i) the Community-based research theme 2016: Evaluating the community animator model discussed in CRAC meeting on 29 June 2016.
- ii) feedback of the EMC Executive Director on the focus group discussion with community animators on 19 July 2016.
- iii) the Research Facilitator's participation in the workshop of community animators and his conversations with community animators.
- iv) the three-dimensional roles of the community animators outlined in the conceptual framework of the EMC community animator model (see EMC 2014).
- v) knowledge gaps in the current literatures about the effectiveness of community animator models and community animation work.
- vi) the view of the community animators reflected in the focus group discussion with the community animators on 17 August 2016, which was conducted for testing possible research questions for this research project, and finally
- vii) feedback from CRAC members on monthly CRAC meeting 31 August 2016.

Specific Research Questions

The central research question that was identified as the most relevant to the current research project is: *How effective is the EMC community animator model for empowering ethno-cultural communities and how is this model is different from other similar community facilitation programs in Edmonton?*

The following specific research questions were identified to collect primary data from community animators, community members, and staff of EMC and other organizations:

1. How is EMC community animator model different from other animator models or community facilitation programs of similar organizations?
2. How do different organizations implement their programs and engage the equivalent of community animators in such facilitation work?
3. What have the community animators [both of EMC and others] achieved in terms of developing their capacity?
4. What do the EMC community animators do to build capacity and help communities to break social isolation and how do they do this?
5. What is the relationship between the theory of EMC community animator model and the practical roles and functions which its community animators play and do (i.e. theory-practice relations)?
6. How should the EMC and other organizations act to make their processes more effective for diverse immigrant ethno-cultural communities in Edmonton?

Objectives

1. To learn about the community animator model and the implementation processes of variations from this model of different community-based organizations;
2. To assess the effectiveness of EMC's community animator model by making a systematic comparison between the theoretical basis of the EMC community animator model and the changes experienced by the EMC community animators and community members;

3. To improve interventions of the community animator model (e.g. recommendations).

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Approach: Community-Based Participatory Research

This research follows a community-based participatory research approach which requires the active engagement of community members and community-based organizations in the research process in some meaningful ways. The major collaborative roles that the community animators, community members and the EMC played as an organization included:

- Identifying research problems (e.g. roles in research design),
- Developing solutions on the research process (e.g. getting access to research participants, helping the research facilitator to collect data), and
- Participating in shared decision-making processes about various issues related to research (e.g. using or sharing research findings).

This research is collaborative from different perspectives and contexts because there was a significant involvement of the CRAC members, EMC administrative staff, community animators, community members, and the Research Facilitator in terms of research planning, time involved, data analysis, and detailed issues needing attention when this research was being conducted.

Recruitment of Research Participants and Data Collection

A series of semi-structured individual interviews and focus group discussion were conducted with a total of 30 research participants—which included community animators, members, and organizational staff—to collect data. Purposive sampling procedure followed to recruit research participants and they were conveniently being recruited through EMC. A total of five focus group discussions were conducted and there was a total of 24 research participants, included: community animators, community members, CRAC members, and EMC Board members. A total of six one-on-one interviews were conducted with the staff of different organizations: EMC (four EMC staff), one AHC staff (program manager), and one REACH Edmonton staff (program manager).

The EMC Community Animator Coordinator assisted the Research Facilitator to make contact with community animators and community members to recruit them research participants. EMC Executive Director made necessary contacts with EMC staff and with the staff of other organizations to recruit five research participants for this research following the specified research participant recruitment criteria and conditions. The Executive Director also helped conducting an focus group interview with some CRAC members. Based on the broad and specific research questions and the objectives of this research (see RESEARCH QUESTIONS & OBJECTIVES above), an interview guideline or interview protocol (please see Appendix 1) was created to collect data from the selected research participants.

Most of the questions in this interview guideline were tested before conducting actual research. There were several different sections in this interview guideline: some of these

sections and questions were used for all research participants across different groups, and there were some questions that were used for a specific group of research participants. All focus group discussions with the community animators and members and the EMC staff were conducted at the Inter-Cultural Centre and the research facilitator went directly to the Office of AHC & REACH Edmonton to interview each of the staff from these two organizations.

The Research Facilitator also used direct participant observation method in this research through his participation in several different training sessions and monthly animator meetings organized by EMC. He sat with the animators, Board members, and staff, ate food with them, talked them, listened to the trainers, participated in discussions and express own views as other animators/meeting participants did. From this perspective, the research facilitator played dual roles: insider (emic, feeling like they feel) and outsider (etic, observing from distance, what they do, how they think about various issues).

Data Analysis

All interviews were transcribed into English. ATLAS.ti.6.2, qualitative data analysis software, was used to define codes and themes. New codes were developed while analyzing the data using this software. A code manager was used to derive all the quotations for selected codes. This code manager was useful for collecting all quotations list names, references, and detailed quotations in quotation filter. Then, all the data were organized and put into thematic categories, including key analytic concepts. These processes of data analysis were conducted to produce final results.

Ethical Considerations

To protect the research participants from any potential risks, the current research followed all the steps of ARECCI Ethics Screening Tools and an ethics application were completed by answering all the questions in the ARECCI Ethics Guidelines². A digital voice-recorder was used to record all interviews and special attention was paid to research ethics in order to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of research participants and minimize the risks for them. A written informed consent (please see Appendix 2) was collected before recording each interview and all other relevant human research ethics issues were followed in accordance with the ARECCI Ethics Guidelines.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The findings are presented in three parts:

- A) Current EMC Community Animator Model and its impact on community animators and communities.
- B) How the EMC community animator model is different from similar facilitation programs of AHC and REACH Edmonton.
- C) Major challenges the EMC is currently facing and recommendations for policy changes to overcome those challenges.

² A pRoject Ethics Community Consensus Initiative (ARECCI) (formerly The Alberta Research Ethics Community Consensus Initiative). For more detail please see at <http://www.aihealthsolutions.ca/arecci/screening/122586/5e90b3c36274bbac4a3ceefd642cf73>

Finally, the report concludes by summarizing key points on the applied significance and rationality of the EMC community animator model.

Part A: Evidences of the Effectiveness of EMC Community Animator Model

EMC community animator model is based on the idea that community animators and members possess inherent knowledge that can be used to identify problems and to solve practical problems through the quality community animation work. Animators are a number of people coming together: they are trained in community animation and are expected to go into their community to actually energize the community in terms of project, ideas and to bring forward some cultural exchanges, and try to expand, open-up whatever projects or ideas they have got. Based on this core idea of community animation, the EMC set the three important roles of a community animator: (1) conceptual roles, (2) operational roles, and (3) organizational roles (see Figure 1).

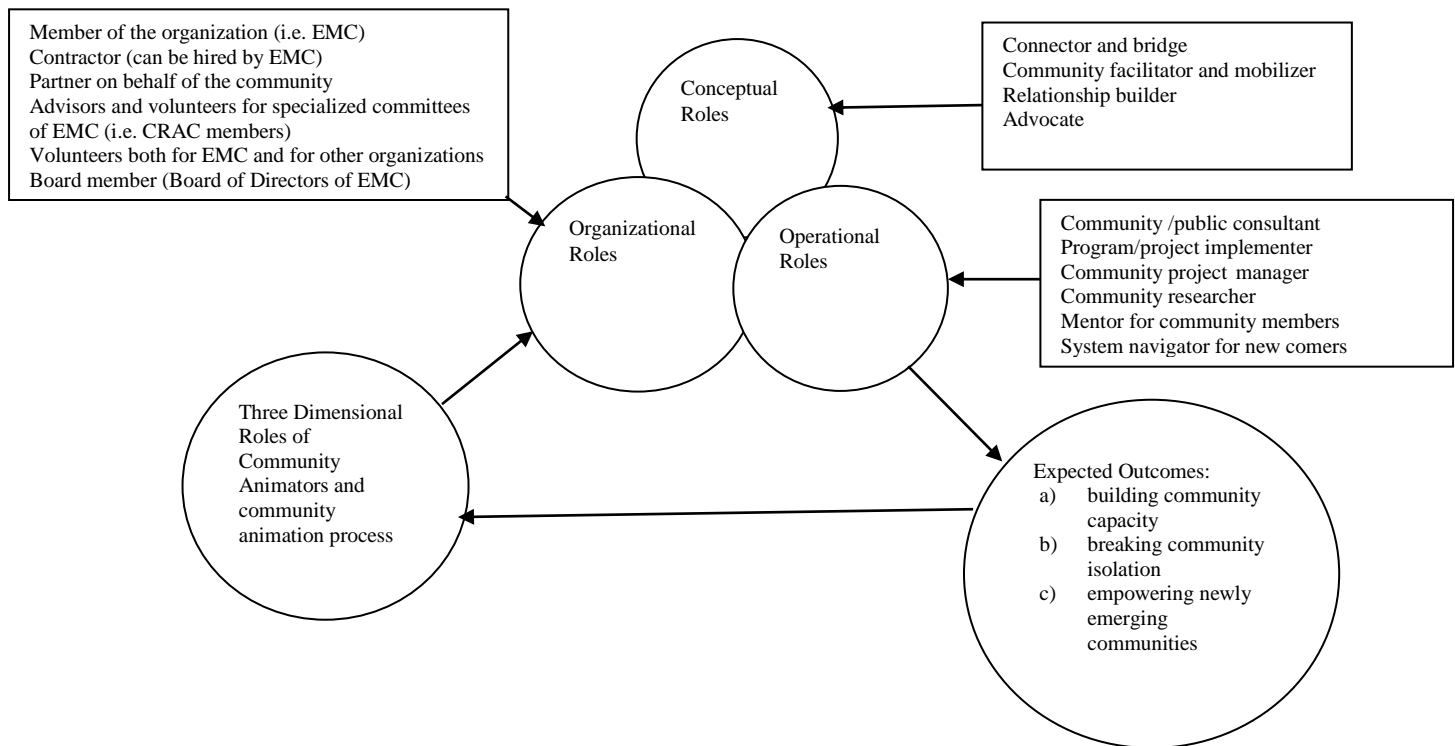


Figure 1: Intersection of theoretical basis of EMC community animator model, community animators' roles, and expected outcomes.

In Figure 1, the first three circles show interactions of three sets of roles of community animators, which are the underlying features of the EMC community animator model (Edmonton Multicultural Coalition 2014). All these three well-defined roles of the community animators are part of the “processes” of community animation and earlier this research assumed that these processes should produce practical “outcomes” both for community animators and community members, showing in the left-bottom and right-bottom circles. This model of community animation was systematically evaluated below following both process and outcome evaluations and this community-based research

findings show that the model is working effectively for making many positive impacts both on the animators and community members (see Figure 2 below).

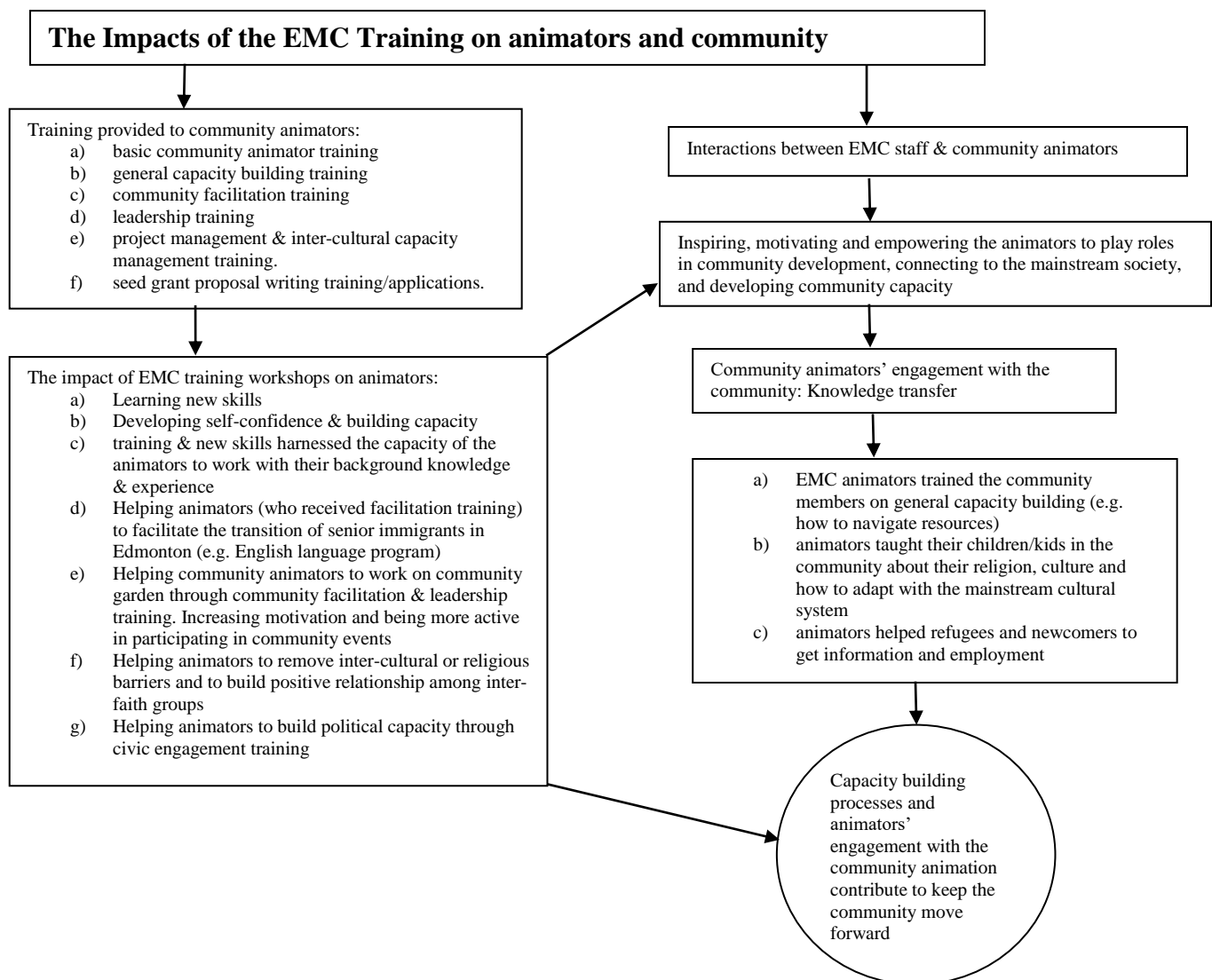


Figure 2: The impact of EMC training and supports on the community animators and their community

Figure 2 shows an important connection with Figure 1 (see above) in terms of understanding process and outcome evaluations. Clearly, animators’ participation in EMC training, English language program and seed grants writing projects, community development programs, and participation in the events of the City of Edmonton (public engagement programs, for example) contributed to the development of their capacity to act independently and effectively in different complex social environments. Animators’ active engagement in the community animation work such as transferring knowledge or helping newcomers to navigate the mainstream system or helping community members to solve various practical problems in the community indicate that EMC community animator model is working following its fundamental theoretical framework.

Impacts of EMC Training and Supports on Community Animators & Members

A total of four EMC staff members were interviewed and they were asked to describe the training or supports that they had provided to community animators and how they had selected training or workshop topics. Building capacity of the community animators and community members is central to EMC community animator model. Findings confirm that EMC staff followed various democratic and collaborative processes (e.g. conversations, dialogues) to identify the types of training animators like to have. EMC usually arranged meeting(s) and invited animators to participate in the meeting to talk about topic of training. The participants of the meeting used star signs on different potential topics or themes. The topic or theme that receives most star signs should be highlighted and chosen to act on (i.e. selected for providing training). The research facilitator's direct observation and interviews with staff and community animators reveal that EMC training involves two processes: (1) introducing the theoretical concept on a certain topic to the animators and (2) each participant was being asked to do some activities, for example, engaging in discussions or interactions with his or her peer about a particular concept or topic. Participants' active engagement in discussions about an issue gives them an opportunity to reflect on whether a certain concept is matched to their preexisting knowledge or they have just learned the concept as something new. Overall, EMC provided several different types of trainings:

- Basic community animator training and general capacity building training.
- Community facilitation and program development training.
- Leadership training.
- Project management and inter-cultural capacity management.
- Seed grant proposal writing training (helping developing the ability to get funding).

Examples of the Effectiveness of EMC Training:

Focus group interviews with community animators show that they had participated in most of these training sessions and had found those trainings useful for them and their ethno-cultural communities. EMC community facilitator training, leadership building training, language program and seed grant projects were popular among animators. EMC community animators took their skills and knowledge to their community and worked with them to connect to the mainstream system. EMC training contributed to empower the community animators and community members in terms of building capacity, solving practical problems, and integrating into the Canadian mainstream. As this community animator of EMC said:

I have two training with the coalition here as a community animator. First one is community facilitator skill training and the second one was leadership training. Another training I have received through coordinator who had connected me to training and activities related to community garden. These trainings helped me to learn how to facilitate community and community garden program...I think it is connecting to resources, to provide training and bringing it back to the people that you want to empower. It is all about empowering; to me it is building connections. [EMC community animator, 2016]

Engagement of EMC Community Animators in the Community Animation Work

Typical roles and activities of the EMC Community Animators

This research has documented the following roles and activities of EMC animators that they were actively engaged in:

► *Knowledge Transfer*: EMC community animators transferred knowledge to or shared information with members of their community that animators received from EMC through different ways (e.g. providing training, sharing information through interpersonal interactions, bring community animators to EMC or to a service provider). Information that was passed from animators to community members included:

- how to navigate various resources and information to connect with the mainstream system.
- how to facilitate community development and to play a leadership role.
- how to raise children in bicultural families and how to teach kids and young children immigrants' religious values, language and their traditional cultural values.
- how to manage financial life in Canada (i.e. information on financial literacy).

► *Engaging community members in the community development work*:

Many of the community animators actively engaged themselves in their community development work and they also encouraged other members in their community to engage in community work to contribute to community development.

► *Establishing connections between communities*: EMC community animators have played many important roles in connecting members from different ethno-cultural communities, strengthening unity among these members, and through this process they have contributed to extend social networks within and beyond their communities. As this community animator exemplified:

The knowledge we got from our side we put them in the community and motivated members of our community to look outside, look around and to invite someone to their community, or to attend somebody's event [other community events]. And as a result, they liked to go outside, they liked to get involved in different programs, they got used to work collaboratively now. Now they invited other people and they attended other people's events. So, they become a part of other and they make other part of their community. So, it is now a big unity, a big change. [EMC community animator, 2016]

Another EMC community animator added:

As a community animator, I introduce my community to other community animators and to take experience from other community animators and then I give this experience to my community. I try to make them involve in my community activity because they do not have any idea what a community animator does. I tell them what they can get or how they can benefit from this position. [EMC community animator, 2016]

► *Connecting communities with organizations/service providers*: EMC community animators have opened the doors for each of their ethno-cultural communities by establishing connections between themselves and various organizations, agencies or service providers—connecting communities to various resources and services.

► *Seed grants project related roles and activities of EMC community animators*:

The intent of the EMC seed grant program is to provide a small amount of fund to the community to implement some community development activities. EMC provides training on seed grant applications and its utilization issues to the community animators so that they can take the skill outside of the room and apply the skill in practical field.

Solving practical problems by the EMC Community Animators

As part of outcome evaluation (see Figure 2 above), this subsection provides some concrete instances on how EMC community animators work with the community members to solve many different practical problems. Major areas in which the community animators worked to solve some practical problems include:

► *Helped getting access to education:*

- EMC community animators helped members of new immigrant families in upgrading back-home education to get a job (e.g. nursing degree certificates), getting access English language program (e.g. ESL or training).
- Animators helped school students to solve educational problems (e.g. solving mathematics, physics, chemistry or other science subjects free of cost).

► *Helped newcomers and community to navigate the Canadian system and to get access to resources:*

- helping newcomers or new immigrants to navigate the Canadian system by connecting them to appropriate services and opportunities.
- Helping senior citizens to get access to an appropriate transportation.
- Helping community to get access to community space or a recreation center (needed for the celebration of community program, sports or games).
- Volunteering as interpreters for newcomers, especially those community animators who know two different languages or more including either of the official languages of Canada.

► *Solving economic problem:* Community animators helped community members to solve economic problems in several different ways: engaging members of different ethno-cultural communities in the community gardening and food insecurity projects³, helping communities to solve practical problems by identifying the problems and strengths/resources in the community. The EMC community gardening project, for example, helped the community to grow culturally appropriate foods, which helped community members to gain economic benefits and to lead a healthy life. As one community animator described:

We have a community garden that helps us to solve our economic problem because we are contributing to our own food, though not like everything but so much stuff we get from our garden that we like. Sometime people can find other stuff they buy from super store that like that we have. So, it saves money and helps us financially. This project also helps the community to address malnutrition and to eat healthy food. So, it has health component as well. [EMC community animator, 2016]

³ EMC community gardening in the Kilkenny community provides resources and opportunities for newcomers and mainstream community members to grow culturally appropriate foods and to build social networks among members coming from different cultural backgrounds. EMC food security project provides for members of different ethno-cultural communities to meet their food security needs. Accessed on December 29, 2016. <http://www.emcoalition.ca/food-security/>

► *Helped managing familial or social matters:* Animators helped families in emerging communities to address family problems (e.g. managing family conflict, family violence, divorce, etc.), parenting in bicultural families, information on youth and teenage activities. As one community animator exemplified:

We have lots problems in our community such as family violence, broken family problem, and there are lots of families in my community that has divorce problem. This is a concern for my community and so having that as animator I bring them together and I talk about it and try to find solutions how we can solve the problem. [EMC community animator, 2016]

► *Helped conducting community-based research:* ECM community animators often worked as a gateway for community-based researchers, for establishing connection of the researchers [outsiders] to the community. The ability of the community animators to connect such researchers to the community members and to help doing research implies that these community animators are well-connected to their community members, have earned their trust and confidence and thus they have been able to develop multidimensional skills and capacities valuable in the Canadian context.

The impact of EMC community animation work

All the research participants were asked the question: *What kind of change do you see in community animators or in the lives of community members after their participation in the community animator model?* Analysis of the responses to this question demonstrates that most of the animators have learned new skills, learned more about local legal-cultural system and have met and connected with members of different ethno-cultural communities. Overall, this study has identified the following changes to animators and their communities:

► *Created a space for togetherness and a sense of community belonging:* The work of community animation gave the community animators an opportunity to meet, interact, and share stories, experience and foods with other members in the community. It also allowed animators and members to create new friends, keep connected and to create a space for togetherness and sense of community belonging. As this community animator explained:

We have place where we can have a meeting, can interact with others, and have some fun. We can share food with others, share experiences and to talk to other community members. This helps us a lot because sometime I feel like before I was isolated and now I am close with other people. Everyone can express his or her views here openly like we are not afraid of talking to other people or may be feeling different from others and we have kind of common goal. We have kind of community fellow feelings and feel part of each other's community. [EMC community animator, 2016]

► *Increased levels of individual confidence and capacity:* EMC community animator model has significant role in enhancing confidence and capacity of both community animators and community members. As the community animators exemplified:

I used to do something back home, but I didn't feel confident after coming here in Canada...Now I think it is very good; very good change for me. For example, now I am doing things that I haven't done before in Canada. Like someone was pushing you to do something but you did not realize that before that you do things by yourself. [EMC community animator, 2016]

Another community animator witnessed:

I think capacity building is a bigger one because initially I was not like a group leader. I came here at the time when my community was completely broken. There was a big division, there was a big fight and then what the knowledge I had I decided to take a lead. I was not eager to be in a committee or become a leader but it was a time that I needed to take this position to unite my community, I had to bring the community together. So, there is a big change for my community. [EMC community animator, 2016]

► *Empowering marginalized communities:* Community became empowered through the process of sharing and exchanging information with each other about the common problem in the community and knowing about how to solve the problem. As this EMC community animator exemplified:

As community animators, we bring our community members to meeting and to know about what our problems are and at the same time we discover that we have the same problems, you know! Various issues such as employment, education, recreation center, health and where and how seniors have to go something like that. Then we try to find ways of solving those problems. [EMC community animator, 2016]

Community animators bring the community members to the organization and make them familiar with the problems that other communities are facing and it is an important way of knowing about the strengths and weakness of each other's community

► *Building political capacity of the community animators and communities:*

Animators' participation in the public events of the City of Edmonton and doing activities (e.g. designing what kinds of questions should be asked, giving a speech, moderating the meeting, writing meeting minutes and reports) had a great impact on them. These processes enhanced their self-confidence, helped develop their capacity to talk in public space, and encouraged them to engage in dialogues with delegates and participants from high rank political office. These processes also helped them to learn how to act on managing big public events in Canadian context.

► *Breaking community isolation:* Social capacity gives animators and community members the ability to connect them with other community, to flourish, to expand and to prove valuable and effective. Various processes of training, interactions of community animators with members of other ethno-cultural communities, with EMC staff, trainers, or with people from different public service and non-governmental offices significantly helped community animators to build their capacity, to break community isolation and to be connected to the mainstream system (see Figure 3). Community animators exemplified how the community animator was helpful for breaking community isolation:

We get some supports from the coalition and I think it works like this kind of project [community garden] is not so big but still makes people move and to get out of their houses. So, that is a part of breaking the isolation, right? So, the coalition helps us in building the project and getting us to know other people or making us know the people from other communities and to enlarge our approach. [EMC community animator, 2016]

And one thing I always said to my community is that “if we do things only ourselves then we are not breaking barriers because we know each other. If we break the barrier you will not be afraid of me, we will not be afraid of you. It is only way to come together to understand each other’s culture and then we can know oh my perception I have about this is wrong, this is different! So, if I only do thing within me yeah it is not ok.” [EMC community animators, 2016]

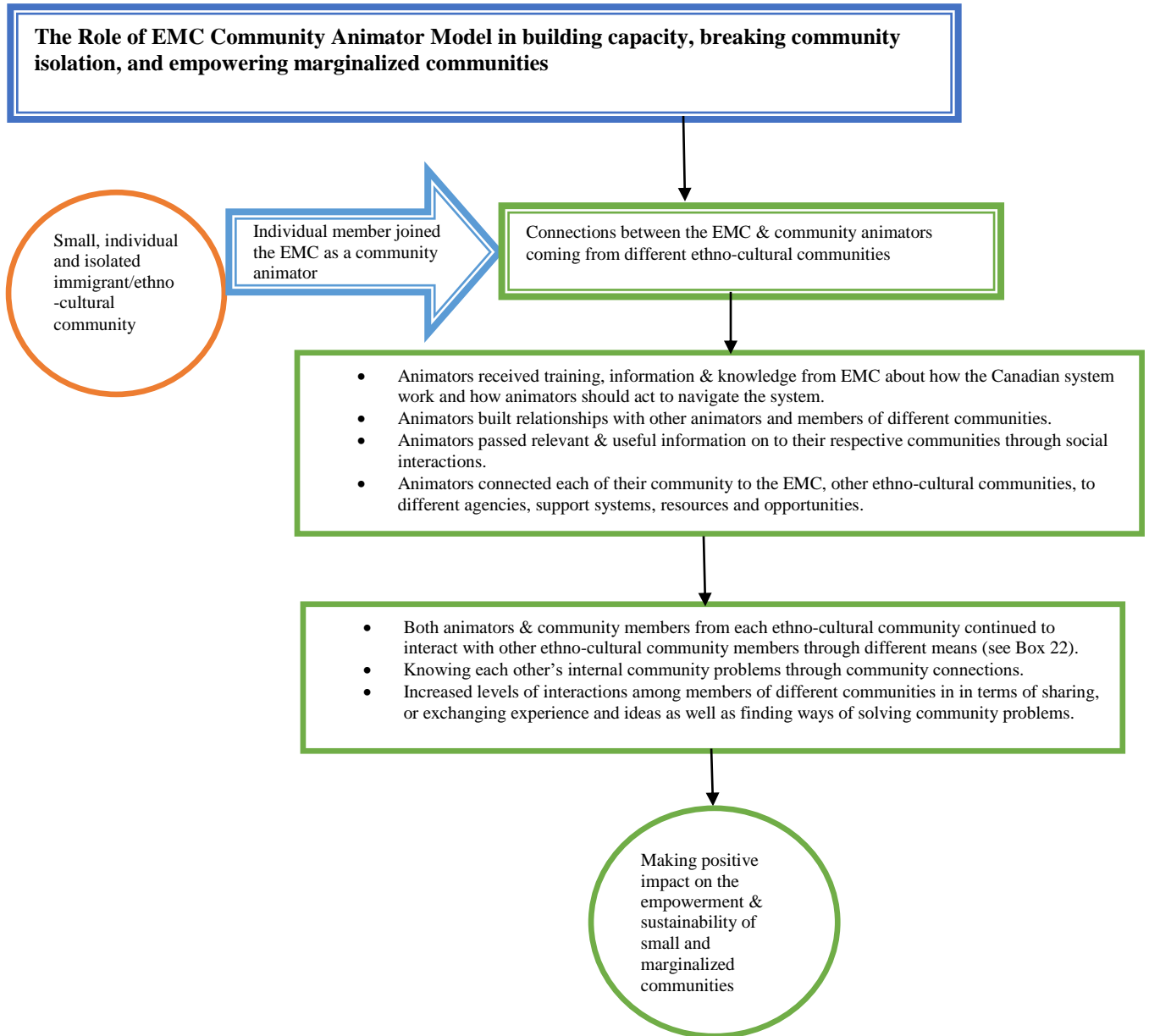


Figure 3: The role of EMC community animator model in building capacity, breaking community isolation, and empowering marginalized communities

Part B: Differentiating EMC Community Animator Model from AHC and REACH Edmonton Community Facilitation Programs

Like EMC, several different other not-for-profit organizations use community animation programs to build capacity of newcomers and members of marginalized communities and to connect them to the mainstream system in Edmonton. Organizations such as AHC, MCHB, EMCN, and REACH Edmonton all have community facilitation programs for members of new immigrants, refugees or for the newly emerging communities. Each organization engages a group of people as community facilitators to help newcomers or members of different ethno-cultural communities in terms of their settlement, integration or solution of a particular community problem. As described earlier, EMC has a well-defined and theoretically informed community animator model (see Figure 1 above) and EMC calls its community facilitators “community animators.” AHC has two types of community facilitators who are known as: (1) community facilitator animators and (2) settlement animators. REACH Edmonton prefers to call their community facilitators “cultural navigators” or “frontline workers.” While AHC and REACH Edmonton community facilitators have some roles and functions similar to EMC community animators EMC community animator model is different from that of AHC and REACH Edmonton from several different perspectives and contexts. These can be similarities and differences in organizational goals and objectives, recruitment criteria and processes, scope and nature of work of animators, whether animators are volunteers or paid staff , or how animators or facilitators are treated by each organization. All these similarities and differences are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Differentiating the EMC community animator model from similar community facilitation programs.

Similarities	Differences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EMC, AHC and REACH Edmonton all organizations work with animators and members of ethno-cultural communities to build their capacity and to connect them to the mainstream system in Edmonton. • All community animators, community facilitator and settlement animators and cultural navigators of EMC, AHC, and REACH Edmonton need to have some sorts of community connections and knowledge about both their own ethno-cultural communities and about the mainstream Canadian system. • There are some significant similarities of roles and functions between EMC community animators and AHC community facilitator animators. • All three organizations provide some common training to their 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unlike AHC and REACH Edmonton, EMC has a well-defined and theoretically informed community animator model (see Figure 1) and the roles and relationships of the community animators with the organization are clearly defined in the model. • Except community animators working on community garden and food security projects all the EMC community animators are volunteers. None of the EMC animator is treated as staff. On the other hand, all the AHC animators and all cultural navigators of REACH Edmonton are paid staff. • EMC follows a more flexible (e.g. words of mouths, referred by other animators or community leaders) approach and policy to recruit its community animators than AHC and REACH Edmonton. AHC animators and REACH Edmonton cultural navigators are typically recruited as paid staff following all the formal employment recruitment procedures and processes (e.g. job advertisement, job applications, interviews, a particular skill set to work on a particular issue). • Unlike AHC, EMC animators are not usually terminated or excluded from their position or from the organization unless they are being inactive, discontinued or left the organization. • While AHC evaluates their animators as staff on a regular basis, EMC and REACH Edmonton do not evaluate their community animators and cultural navigators respectively.

<p>animators and cultural navigators such as community facilitation training, leadership training, capacity building training, and cultural capacity building training.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None of the organization has evaluated or developed any concrete process, solid measuring tool or criteria to assess the effectiveness of the work of community animators, community facilitators or cultural navigators respectively. However, the EMC has recently started to develop an evaluation framework to determine the effectiveness of seed grants project whether the community can achieve any outcome. And this research is done for assessing the effectiveness of the EMC community animator model. 	<p>However, both EMC and REACH Edmonton keep track record of who are community animators and cultural navigators (Spanish, African, Muslim, etc.), how many community animators and cultural navigators they have and what they are doing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EMC community model is more about process and is aimed at achieving long term positive impact through relationship and capacity building. Unlike EMC, AHC and REACH Edmonton usually look for the immediate change to the community or groups of people they work with. EMC community animators work on the overall development process that works slowly—it brings changes to community over a long period of time (i.e. grounded in community development approach). Conversely, REACH Edmonton cultural navigators work to bring an immediate change. For example, keeping individuals away from having serious family conflict or from having their children apprehended or from having assaulted one of the central objectives of cultural navigators. • Unlike AHC settlement animators and REACH Edmonton cultural navigators EMC community animators do not provide any direct services to community or to a particular group of people. • While AHC treats its community animators as professional, REACH Edmonton does not view that cultural animators are necessarily professional. However, the EMC animators are not either professional, paid staff or engaged in a particular area of work requiring specialized training or expertise.
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Part C: Challenges for EMC and Policy Recommendations

Challenges for EMC

As already described earlier, currently, EMC is providing different types of training and supports to community animators to help them build their capacity. Findings suggest that these supports are very helpful in terms of building capacity of both animators and community. However, there are still some concerns or challenges within the organization, which need to be fixed for more effective outcomes. This study has identified the following challenges for EMC:

► *Discontinuity of community animators:* In the last several years EMC had lost some of its community animators and still it is facing challenges to keep all of its animators engaging and active in the organization’s community animation work. This research observes that leaving the coalition, being inactive, or discontinuing from the community animation work can be for several different reasons:

- Animators got new jobs and moved from Edmonton to another place in Alberta or elsewhere in Canada.
- Animators have been engaged in some other business that made it difficult for them to continue to do their community animation work.
- Complicated life circumstances such working double-shifts, family management, or illnesses of family members.
- The community animators who are no longer in the program may be because of the conflict back home (e.g. fighting between two different ethnic groups).
- Lack of follow-up of the community animators’ activities/organizational program

- Lack of attractive, timely and dynamic community-based development program
 - Nature of relationship of the animators with the organizational staff (e.g. lack of positive social interactions, or cooperation, not keeping in touch with animators).
- *Lack of resources and staff:* Currently, EMC has only two full-time staff and a part-time community animator coordinator. Lack of funding or financial resources forces the coalition to work with a part-time community coordinator, which makes it difficult for EMC to keep connected with its all community animators and members actively and effectively.

Policy Recommendations

This study suggests EMC considering the following policy recommendations to overcome its current challenges and to strengthen the community animator model:

► *Recruiting more staff:* having more staff, including having a full-time community coordinator, can help the organization to approach different communities proactively and to connect with the community animators and help them doing their job more effectively than what the current part-time coordinator is doing.

► *More training for animators:* Some community animators still lack capacity to write successful seed grant proposals, manage fiscal issues, to run or to implement community-based development projects. Therefore, community animators should be provided more specific and effective training especially how to prepare successful funding proposal, manage fiscal issue, and how to prepare report on the outcomes on the project.

► *Training for staff:* *The organization should also provide training to its staff to ensure that they are better prepared to help the animators to work on an ever-evolving subject. It needs to build the capacity of the trainers first to build the community asset or animators as an asset. Areas of training for the staff may include:*

- How to mentor the community leaders, and the processes that the staff should forefront to mentor the community animators so animators can be more effective for working with their communities and for making more positive impact on the communities.
- Thorough knowledge and understanding of the cultural backgrounds and contexts of community animators and communities can help staff to design and to provide more appropriate training and supports for animators required for the effective community animation. Every staff should have some basic ideas about animators' cultural contexts and political dynamics (e.g. ethnic-conflict back home can affect community relations in Edmonton and hence the ability of a community animator to work with his community).

► *Maintaining positive and effective relationship between EMC staff and the mainstream agencies:* It is important for having a very good relationship between EMC staff (e.g. Executive Director, Community Animator Coordinator) and the mainstream agencies (e.g. City of Edmonton, funders, non-profits, social workers, community recreation coordinators) to create more space for the organization, animators and communities to access resources and opportunities.

► *Having a follow-up process:* *EMC needs to work on its official homepage/ website so that they can keep the animators update about their work, outcomes, research findings, and other information relevant to different stakeholders. It is also important that EMC has a follow up process in the community where its animators are working. Working on this area should help the organization to ensure that the City of Edmonton*

and other stakeholders are aware of the overall the progress or development made by the EMC animators and community members.

► *Having more community animator appreciation programs:* having more appreciation and recognition programs for animators and special rewards in the form of money incentives or gifts for those who have outstanding contributions to the community development at the end of year can help boost their motivation for community animation work.

► *Providing transportation and childcare supports for animators and members:* EMC community animators are now provided bus tickets and foods for attending EMC training and childcare supports for those who bring children with them. EMC should continue provide these supports its animators and should add little more financial supports in terms of transportation rather providing bus tickets. There are some senior citizens— who are EMC community animators and have been with this organization for a long time— are still very interested in participating in EMC training, meeting or programs. EMC should pay more attention to these animators in terms of transportation supports and to encourage them to continue with the organization.

However, EMC should continue to follow its current policy and approach not paying their animators. Since the current community development approach and goals of EMC is different from that of other similar organizations— AHC and REACH Edmonton— EMC does not need to pay animators (excluding animators working on community garden and food security projects). EMC community animation and community development program (e.g. capacity building) is about process and is expected that the change will happen to the community slowly, over time, not rapidly. From this context, EMC does not require its animators to work intensively with a certain goal to achieve within a specific time frame. While the EMC animators are not paid for their work they are benefited a lot from their participation in the organization and involvement with the community animation work.

► *Reaching out more diverse communities:* Currently, EMC is working with mostly African communities and from demographic perspective, it has more than 60% African communities. There is a very little representation from the Latin American, South Asian, South East Asian, and Central Asian communities. The organization should work on reaching out the diverse and emerging communities those are left out and are interested in getting involved in the organization.

- Engaging more communities is very important, as there are still many communities left out and they may need support from EMC.
- Engaging diverse communities, including the inclusion of the established communities with the marginalized communities, can help the organization to accomplish their vision of an inclusive society.
- Both EMC and marginalized communities should benefit from the expansion of the coverage of the community animation work—the inclusion of more diverse communities and animators from these communities— because these processes and practices can help the organization to put different ideas and expertise together and to produce better results. Therefore, putting different skills and expertise together can help the organization move forward.

How can EMC reach out more communities and get them involved in the organization?

Based on the views of the research participants this research suggests the following issues to be considered:

- Using a list of immigrant and refugee communities in the Metropolitan Area of Edmonton EMC can look for the demographic information to develop a map based on who are currently with the organization and who are not. Then EMC can identify the gap and find a community animator from the community to work that new community.
- The organization needs to be more active in terms of recruiting and working with different communities, not just passively waiting for some who will willingly come to the coalition to work as a community animator.
- EMC staff can visit different communities proactively and directly and introduce them to the community what EMC is and what it is doing. This can help the organization to find people who are interested in getting involved in the program and working as animators.
- The organization can reach out more communities by using social media such as Facebook to spread out the information about the organization.
- EMC can also reach out print and electronic media (e.g. newspapers, radio and TV) with some success stories of its community animators or members of marginalized community in terms of their successful transition and integration into the mainstream society in Edmonton.
- Partnering with other organizations like Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, ASSIST Community Services and other organizations can also be helpful to reach out more communities.
- Establishing a link between established and marginalized communities can be useful for EMC. Bringing some established communities such as Ukrainian, Jewish, Irish or Scottish, French community under one umbrella can help the members of the emerging communities to get their experiences and share their experience with them and this process of sharing and exchanging experience and ideas should help these emerging communities to move forward.

Adopting the Inter-Cultural Capacity Building Approach

Currently, EMC is working with a solo community development approach, ethno-cultural approach, which is a part of “All Together Now Program.” Following this approach EMC helps community animators from an ethno-cultural community to develop their capacity, such as community facilitation and leadership skills, and then these animators go to their community to work with the community to build community capacity. This research suggests that EMC should adopt an inter-cultural capacity building approach and should develop a new community program where animators from one community should be able to attend the community development activity of another community (e.g. sharing and exchanging ideas and experience how to solve practical problems, how to help a community move forward). Currently, while some of the community animators may attend various social cultural programs (e.g. wedding, religious program, soccer, picnic or other social gatherings) of another ethno-cultural community it is less visible that animators from one community attend the community development program of another community. Because these animators do not have sufficient resources and so they cannot

move from their own community to another community. But this has to be changed and the organization should be able to find sources of some resources to have some kind of influences on its community animation program. It needs to have planning to have animators working on different cultures, engaging different ethno-cultural communities in various social and economic development programs, and/or working together in a project based on their needs and aspirations and the cultural capacity that they have. The development of neighborhood or a geographical-based community development program, for example, can bring animators and members of different communities under one umbrella. This approach will be important because:

- The implementation of this approach should help the organization to ensure its animators activity more engaging, active, and visible.
- This approach should challenge the mainstream culture to recognize the value of diversity within their geographical communities, to recognize the values that the newcomers bring to their communities [Canadian societies], and to recognize the skills they have or capacity they have.

CONCLUSION

Findings of this study provide adequate evidences that the EMC community animator model is a powerful tool for new immigrants to be connected to the mainstream Canadian system, who come from different part of the world, from different lands, different system, different languages and cultures. The work of EMC community animators is important because they work as bridge between the organization and the community members and the information or knowledge they receive from various training provided by the EMC is being passed on to community members.

The EMC community animator model is important because it is building capacity of newcomers and members of emerging communities and is helping them to modify and redefine their back-home mindset, reframing the skills and capacity so they are acceptable to the Canadian labor market, different institutions or organizations in Canada. In brief, this animator model has been effective in producing many inspirational and motivational roles for the community animators and for the community, which has also instigated many of the community animators to be active and positive in the community life. EMC as a capacity building organization is thus playing many important roles in empowering newcomers and members of marginalized communities, and fostering their settlement, integration and citizenship processes through its community animator model.

The EMC community animator model is distinctive from AHC and REACH Edmonton community facilitation systems or programs in several different ways:

- EMC community animator model is grounded in community development and is dealt with overall community development processes rather than working with a particular theme or social issue.
- Instead of imposing a certain idea or a set of predefined job responsibilities from above the EMC community model allows animators to act naturally using their existing community relations.

- Doing community activity together or identifying a problem in the community and solving the problem together is another important unique aspect of the EMC community animator model. Because EMC community animator model encourages animators to work with the community rather than working for the community. The notion of “working with” the rather than “working for” the community distinguishes EMC from those organizations that provide services for the community by paid staff.
- EMC community animator model works for strengthening ethnic identity and for creating a space for different ethno-cultural communities to preserve and to celebrate their cultural identities.

Limitations of the current research and some thoughts for the future research

One of the biggest challenges in conducting this research was to reach out more research participants especially community animators and staff from other similar organizations. Due to lack of time it was not possible to conduct interviews with those equivalent to community animators and members of other organizations: AHC, REACH Edmonton, and MCHB. AHC and REACH Edmonton program managers participated in this research but none of the staff from MCHB was available to interview. It was not possible to do a comparative analysis of the findings because of a lack of access to research participants from these organizations.

For the future research, the following issues should be considered:

- EMC should recruit a new research facilitator by March-April to allow the research facilitator enough time to design research proposal and to conduct the actual research in summer and to write the report by the end of December.

It is important for EMC and other similar community-based organizations to cooperate the research facilitator in conducting research especially if the research design requires interviewing different organizational staff, animators and community members.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 EMC Community-Based Research 2016: Interview Protocols

Project Title: Assessing the Effectiveness of the EMC Community Animator Model

Part One: Focus Group Interviews with Community Animators

1. To begin with, can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
2. When did you join the EMC as a community animator and why?
3. What is the most fascinating part of the community animator model?
4. How does the EMC prepare you to do the community animation work?
5. What do you do as a community animator & why?
6. Why is a good community animator important for [new] immigrant families/ members of an inter-cultural community?
7. How do/did you establish, extend, interact and continue a positive relationship with members of your own community and/or with members of different ethno-cultural communities?
8. How do you identify various resources and challenges within your community/your area?
9. What kind of roles may you have to solve practical problems for your community members?
10. How do you connect community members with various organizations/agencies/NGOs?
11. According to your knowledge, how is the EMC community animation model/work different from other organizations' community animation work?
12. What kind of change do you now see in you and in your community after joining the EMC, as you have worked or still you are working with the EMC as community animators?
13. What resources/support do you need as community animators to do your community animation work more effectively?
14. What should the EMC need to do in order to ensure more active engagement of members of different ethno-cultural communities in community animation program?

Part Two: Focus Group Interviews with Community Members

1. To begin with, can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
2. When did you join the EMC as a member of this organization and why?
3. Can you tell me little bit about the EMC community animation work that you are familiar with?
4. According to your knowledge, what does a community animator do?
5. How often do you visit EMC office/attend programs organized by EM and why?
6. According to your knowledge, how do the community animators engage you or other members from your community in various programs conducive to the community development and wellbeing?
7. Overall, how do you feel about the work of community animators?

8. Do you think the work that the community animators do is important? How and why?
9. Do you think your participation in EMC community development program is important? How & why?
10. What kind of change do you see in you/in your community life after joining the EMC program?
11. According to your knowledge, how is the EMC community animation work different from other organizations' community animation work?
12. How can the EMC make its community animation process more effective for members of different ethno-cultural immigrant communities in Edmonton?

Part Three: One-to-one Interviews with the Organizational Staff

1. To begin with, can you describe the community animator model of your organization?
2. How are the community animators selected/recruited for community animation work?
3. How is your community animator model different from community animator models of other different organizations that are working with refugee and immigrant communities in Edmonton?
4. What kind of training/resources do you provide to the community animators?
5. How is the relationship between organization staff/Board members and community animators built and maintained?
6. What are the typical activities that community animators do or get them involved in?
7. What are the organizational objectives that you may want to achieve through your community animation program?
8. How effective is your community animation program for achieving your organizational missions or goals?
9. How do you assess the effectiveness of your community animation program?
10. What kind of change do you see in community animators or in the lives of community members after their participation in the program?
11. What have the community animators achieved in terms of enhancing their individual agency and social capacity?
12. How do you keep your community animators active in terms of their involvement with your organization and continuation of community animation work?
13. What else you may need to do to make your community animation program more effective for creating sustainable ethno-cultural immigrant communities, especially in the context of changing socioeconomic and demographic environment in Edmonton?

Appendix 2 Information Sheet and Informed Consent Form

Project Title: Assessing the Effectiveness of the EMC Community Animator Model

Sponsor: Family Community and Support Services (FCSS)

Agency: Edmonton Multicultural Coalition

Principal Investigator: *H M Ashraf Ali, PhD*

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Executive Director: Phil O'Hara (Phone: 780-760-1973; Email: phil@emcoalition.ca)

Project Volunteers: 1) Lida Isabel Pinzon, 2) Lubna Yasmin, 3) Pastor Menghistab Teclenariam, 4) Isshak Aduss, 5) Thomas Bumbeth, 6) Amandla Ngwenya
7) Telesfora Balanag, and 8) Geleta Tsegaye.

Community Research Advisory Committee (CRAC): 1) Yun-Csang GHIMN, 2) Phil O'Hara, 3) Keren Tang, 4) Maricon Hidalgo, 5) Justin Kehoe, 6) Sanjaya Dhakal, 7) Amandla Ngwenya, 8) Kafia Yusuf, 9) Amal Issa, and 11) Aloy Das.

Project Description: This research assesses the effectiveness of community animator model and community animation work that the community animators do in Edmonton area with the collaboration of Edmonton Multicultural Coalition (EMC). This is a community-based participatory research (CPBR), which incorporates values and strategies to promote collaborative inquiry based on community-identified issues, equitable partnerships, and structures for participation. One of the central objectives of this research is to understand the effectiveness of community animator in empowering ethno-cultural communities and making the transition and integration process of the immigrant communities into the Canadian society less stressful and smooth.

What will you be asked to do? Today you are sincerely requested to respond to the question I will ask you! I would like to record this discussion by using a digital voice recorder to better understand your experience and to save your time. You can definitely review the notes /transcripts later, by letting us (please see contact information below) know how to get in touch with you. Today's is a group discussion/one-on-one interview and your participation is completely voluntary, and so you are free to participate as you wish, free to decide what and how much information you will share with us. You can even change information at any time. However, 30 days after today, you won't be able to withdraw, add or change information.

How will your privacy and confidentiality be maintained and protected? Your identity will be kept strictly confidential throughout the study and whenever findings are reported. Any tapes, notes and interview transcripts will be labeled with a code number and/or false name, and stored in a locked filing cabinet. This data file will safely be stored for about a year from today. Any computer files relating to this research will be stored on password-protected computers. When findings are reported, we will not report details about your or your family/community that would allow others to identify you. We also strongly encourage you to not disclose any information outside or discuss this

meeting with people outside of today's group to respect others' privacy and confidentiality.

What are the potential risks? This focus group discussion takes about 1.5 hours and so participation in this research may cause you some inconvenience due to the time involved. If at any time, you feel uncomfortable to answer a question, we will do our best to support you, and you don't have to answer if you don't want to. You can also choose to talk with us one-on-one if you'd like. We will arrange an alternative schedule for your interview.

What are the potential benefits? This discussion will help us to understand about the nature of community animator work and how effective the community animation model is for empowering ethno-cultural communities in Edmonton. It will also help us to determine the position of EMC community animator model in relation to other community animator models of Edmonton-based different other community organizations. The research finding will help us to identify the strengths and limitations of the current community animator model and will support and strengthen programs, services, and various activities in the community conducive to the overall community wellbeing. It should also be useful for organizations and service providers working with the immigrant communities to reform policy or to undertake community-based development programs relying on community animators to implement these programs. Your participation in this study may thus benefit Canadian society by helping us understand the social, cultural, health and economic issues immigrants/multi-cultural communities face and how the transition and integration process of the immigrant communities can be made less stressful and easier in Edmonton.

Future use of data: What will we do with this information? Information collected through this group discussion will be used to write the final research report, which will be submitted to the EMC and the City of Edmonton. The findings can be used to prepare papers, pamphlets and PowerPoint presentations to share with the CRAC members, community members, funders, partners, and service providers and other audiences.

What do we need from you? If you agree to participate in this group discussion, please check the "YES" box below. If not, please check the "NO" box. Thank you very much for coming and participating in today's discussion!

I agree and I am willing to participate in today's discussion.

Yes

No

I agree to an audio recording of interview/group discussion.

Research Participant's Rights and Specific Options: As the research participant, I have been fully informed of the following points before proceeding with the interview/discussion:

1. My participation in this research is completely voluntary and that I may refuse to participate or to answer any questions, and I may withdraw from the study at any time.
2. I understand the intent and purpose of this research.
3. I understand that my identity will be kept confidential and that I have the right to withdraw from this research at any time.
4. I am aware that others will be reading the results of this research and that this research will eventually be published. In any publication, I will not be identified by name.
5. I assent to participate in this study.

Print Name

Signature

Date: _____