Dr. Elaine Laberge, PhD
Imagining Otherwise

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Academic Profile

I have always made sense of the world through story. Before I had the language or theories to understand the questions I carried, I was observing the social world and trying to understand how lives take shape, why some possibilities seem available to some people and not others, and how the stories we tell about ourselves and one another come to feel like truth. Sociology gave me a way to pursue those questions. Over time, it also changed the questions themselves.

Reading Nigerian writer and thinker Ben Okri's *A Way of Being Free* was a turning point in my intellectual life. Even after studying Sociology, I was still inclined to blame individuals for their circumstances, particularly poor mothers. My sociology classes had not yet unsettled those judgments. Okri did. His wisdom challenged me to question the stories we inherit and the stories through which we learn to judge others. I began to recognize how readily individual blame obscures the social worlds in which lives unfold, and how narratives of responsibility and deservingness can make inequality appear natural. This encounter changed how I understood poverty and social inequality, and helped shape the sociologist I would become.

Research and knowledge creation

My research has centred on poverty, social class, social worth, and the ways institutions shape the lives and possibilities of people whose experiences are too often rendered invisible. I am particularly interested in how dominant narratives of merit, responsibility, and deservingness become embedded in institutional practices, and how people can challenge the assumptions through which their lives are interpreted.

My master's thesis, *The Reverberations of Childhood Poverty: Composing Lives in Higher Education* (2017), used narrative inquiry to explore how systemic childhood poverty continues to shape university students' experiences. Working alongside three undergraduate students over nine months, I examined how poverty reverberates through students' lives beyond university entry, affecting belonging, learning, and their ability to compose lives within institutions that often assume students arrive on equal footing. The research underscored the importance of taking students' experiences seriously and of educators' belief in their possibilities.

My doctoral dissertation, *Pushing Privileged Pillars in Canadian Universities*, extended this inquiry through community-based participatory action research alongside seven women with lived experience of persistent poverty who had accessed undergraduate education. The research examined poverty discrimination and classism in Canadian universities, including their gendered dimensions and the institutional narratives that shape who is considered deserving of higher education. Through research conversations, focus groups, case studies, photography, and poetry, including found poetry, we explored the consequences of being judged against dominant standards of merit and worth.

One of the most consequential findings was that the Research Sisters refused to justify their worthiness of a university education. I had spent a lifetime trying to justify my own. Their refusal unsettled the assumption that women whose lives have been shaped by persistent poverty must prove they deserve a place in higher education. It changed how I understood myself, the women alongside whom I worked, and the institutional expectations that make belonging conditional. The dissertation received the Canadian Association for Action Research in Education's Outstanding Dissertation in Action Research Award in 2022.

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During my doctoral journey, I conceived the **Underclass Sisterhood of Solidarity** and the idea of **Research Sisters** (versus research participants). These concepts emerged from questions about who gets to define community, whose knowledge is recognized, and how solidarity might be created across experiences of marginalization. The research put these ideas into practice while challenging conventional boundaries around research participation and knowledge production.

In 2018, I founded the Shoestring Initiative, a grassroots social innovation initiative supporting first-generation university students from poverty-class backgrounds through mentorship, belonging, intercultural connectedness, and advocacy. The initiative brought research-informed ideas into practice and created opportunities to build community beyond the university's conventional structures.

My postdoctoral research at Carleton University extended my interests into housing and homelessness, examining young people's transitions into supportive housing. As National Education Lead with the Making the Shift LivEx Network at York University, I developed educational programming and knowledge-translation opportunities for postsecondary students with lived and living experience of homelessness. Across these projects, I have remained interested in the relationships between individual experience, institutional practices, and the wider social arrangements that shape people's lives.

Research beyond the university
My research has taken me well beyond the university. It has shaped the communities I have helped build, the initiatives I have created, and the way I approach my work as a researcher, educator, and leader.

As Executive Director of the Canadian Mental Health Association's Northern BC branch, I established its first research initiatives in its 60-year history and secured $75,000 for two community-based participatory action research projects: one examining mental illness and housing discrimination in Northern BC, the other exploring seniors and mental health in Prince George. My work in mental health and community services continually brings research into conversation with the realities of housing, poverty, social exclusion, and access to support. I also work with staff and organizational leaders to deepen their understanding of the social determinants of mental health.

My earlier professional experience in accounting, financial analysis, communications, marketing, and organizational leadership has also shaped how I approach research and knowledge mobilization. I have worked across sectors and institutions, translating ideas for different audiences and building initiatives in complex organizational environments. These experiences inform my interest in how knowledge travels, how it is used, and what changes when research is brought into conversation with the people and institutions it concerns.

Teaching and pedagogy
I want students to experience Sociology as a discipline that can change how they understand themselves and others, reveal the social arrangements shaping their lives, and expand what they believe is possible. I want them to leave my classroom thinking differently—not necessarily agreeing with me, but better equipped to question assumptions, assess evidence, recognize the relationship between individual experience and social structure, and consider whose knowledge shapes the explanations we accept.

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As a teaching assistant in Introduction to Sociology at the University of Victoria, I developed weekly tutorials around special topics and supported students in literature reviews, thesis development, evidence-based argument, and academic writing. I have also contributed guest lectures in university courses and interdisciplinary settings. These experiences have reinforced my interest in creating learning environments where students can engage critically with difficult questions, encounter perspectives that unsettle familiar explanations, and develop confidence in their ability to think and argue carefully.

My approach to teaching is informed by narrative, critical inquiry, and a recreative approach to learning. I am interested in the possibilities that emerge when students are invited to look again at what they thought they knew, to make connections between concepts and lived realities, and to imagine social arrangements otherwise. I value rigour, evidence, curiosity, and disagreement; I do not see learning as the transmission of settled answers, but as an opportunity to develop more thoughtful questions and more nuanced understandings.

At Vancouver Island University, I would welcome opportunities to teach courses addressing poverty, social class and social worth; sociology of higher education; sociology of imagination; and research ethics, relational accountability, and knowledge mobilization. I would bring a research-informed and community-engaged perspective, with experience connecting academic inquiry to social innovation, organizational practice, and the work of educators, institutions, and communities on and off the higher education landscape.

An ongoing inquiry
My path into Sociology has moved through theatre and English, accounting and communications, graduate research, community-led initiatives, postdoctoral work, and executive leadership. What connects these experiences is a continuing interest in how we make sense of the world, how our understandings shape the possibilities we recognize, and how we might create different ones.

I am drawn to a Sociology that takes individual lives seriously without detaching them from the social worlds in which they unfold; that questions how worth is assigned and belonging granted; and that remains open to forms of knowledge and imagination beyond dominant academic traditions. For me, research, teaching, and leadership are connected ways of pursuing these questions. Each offers opportunities to challenge accepted explanations, make room for knowledge that has been overlooked, and change what people and institutions understand to be possible.

These questions have stayed with me, although the language I bring to them has changed. They have taken me into research on poverty and social class, the reverberations of childhood poverty in higher education, and the ways institutions shape belonging, recognition, and social worth. They have led me to work alongside women whose knowledge challenges dominant accounts of merit and deservingness, to explore the experiences of homeless youth transitioning into supportive housing, and to bring research into grassroots action and community mental health. Across these different landscapes, I return to a persistent sociological question: how are lives shaped by the social worlds we inhabit, and how might we come to understand—and change—the conditions that constrain their possibilities?

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Areas of Experience
My work spans university research and teaching, community-based initiatives, communications and marketing, financial analysis, and executive leadership. As Executive Director of CMHA of Northern BC, I oversee a $5M+ budget, a team of approximately 70 staff and volunteers, and more than 12 programs; I secured more than $500,000 in additional funding during my first year. Earlier roles in accounting, financial analysis, communications, and marketing inform my approach to organizational leadership, knowledge mobilization, and institutional change.

CV SUMMARY

Research Areas

- Social stratification, social class, and inequality in Canada
- Poverty discrimination, stigma, deservingness, and social worth
- Sociology of higher education and educational inequality in Canada
- Gender, intersectionality, and the reproduction of inequality
- Institutional power, recognition, belonging, and participation
- Cultural representations of poverty, class, and social worth
- Housing, homelessness, mental health, and the social determinants of health
- Knowledge democracy, community-based participatory research, and social innovation
- Research ethics, relational accountability, and the politics of knowledge and representation
- Social structures, agency, choice, and the sociology of imagination
- Knowledge translation, knowledge mobilization, and public scholarship

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Education

PhD, Education | University of Victoria | 2021
Dissertation: *Pushing Privileged Pillars in Canadian Universities*
Supervisor: Dr. Kathy Sanford
Co-supervisor: Dr. Budd L. Hall
External examiner: Dr. Marjorie Mayo, University of Bristol, UK
Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship, 2018–2021
My doctoral research continued my sociological investigation of poverty discrimination, social class, and inequality in Canadian universities.

MA, Sociology | University of Alberta | 2015–2017
Thesis: *The Reverberations of Childhood Poverty: Composing Lives in Higher Education*
Supervisor: Dr. Herb Northcott
External examiner: Dr. Jana Grekul, Sociology/Criminology, University of Alberta
SSHRC Canada Graduate Scholarship

BA, Sociology | University of Alberta | 2013–2015
Undergraduate research: *Barriers and Challenges Low-Socioeconomic-Status Students Face as They Transition into and Through Canadian Universities*
Pilot study examining the university experiences of students from low-socioeconomic-status backgrounds, conducted through a graduate-level qualitative research methods course while I was an undergraduate Sociology student.

Separately funded undergraduate research project: "*White Trash": Welfare Queens, Pregnant Teens and Unclean Scenes—the "Honey Boo Boo" Phenomenon*
University of Alberta Undergraduate Research Initiative award: $5,500

BA, Theatre and English | Dalhousie University | 2012
Cashier Confessional, an original play written, directed, and staged at Dalhousie Arts Centre.

Diploma, Computer Information Systems and Design
Lethbridge Polytechnic (formerly Lethbridge Community College) | 1992

Diploma, Accounting
MacEwan University (formerly Grant MacEwan Community College | 1985

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Leadership and Professional Experience

My teaching and mentorship help students move beyond the familiar worlds of their own backyards to examine the storied social world around us: histories, institutions, cultural narratives, government policies, and relations of power. I encourage critical engagement with sociological theories and theorists, evidence-based argument, and independent interpretation. I bring research into dialogue with action through the Shoestring Initiative, founded in 2018 as a grassroots social innovation initiative supporting first-generation university students from poverty-class backgrounds.

Teaching, Grassroots Action, and Knowledge Mobilization and Translation

- Executive Director, CMHA of Northern BC: established the organization's first research initiatives in its 60-year history and secured $75,000 for two community-based participatory research projects on mental illness and housing discrimination in Northern BC, and seniors and mental health in Prince George.
- Postdoctoral research, Carleton University (2023–2024): community-based research focused on homeless youth transitioning into supportive housing.
- PhD, Education, University of Victoria (2021): Pushing Privileged Pillars in Canadian Universities; community-based participatory action research with seven women with lived experience of persistent poverty who had accessed undergraduate education. Recipient of the 2022 Outstanding Dissertation in Action Research Award.
- MA, Sociology, University of Alberta (2017): *The Reverberations of Childhood Poverty: Composing Lives in Higher Education*; narrative inquiry examining how childhood poverty continues to shape students' experiences in university.

Selected Research

My scholarship examines social class, poverty discrimination, social worth, and inequality in Canada, with particular attention to how institutional practices, government policies, and dominant narratives shape belonging, recognition, and opportunity. Across higher education, housing and homelessness, cultural representations of poverty, and community mental health, I connect sociological inquiry with lived experience and community knowledge. Knowledge democracy and praxis are central to my work: critical inquiry, reflection, and action inform and transform one another.

Research and Intellectual Contribution

My intellectual contribution lies in examining how social class and poverty shape lives, social relations, and institutional practices, and in questioning the assumptions through which inequality is understood and reproduced. Across my research on childhood poverty and higher education, poverty discrimination, housing and homelessness, and community mental health, I investigate how dominant narratives of merit, deservingness, personal responsibility, and social worth shape whose experiences are recognized and whose knowledge counts. My scholarship brings together sociological inquiry, lived experience, narrative and arts-based approaches, and community-based participatory action research. Through this work, I have explored how research can challenge taken-for-granted assumptions while creating space for people whose experiences are often marginalized to participate in producing knowledge. My work on the Research Sisters and the Underclass Sisterhood of Solidarity, alongside the grassroots action of the Shoestring Initiative, reflects a sustained commitment to knowledge democracy and to questioning who gets to define community, produce knowledge, and belong within higher education.

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Praxis is central to this contribution—not simply as a theory, but as a way of working and being in the world. I understand research, critical reflection, and action as interconnected: research informs action, action generates new questions, and reflection changes how we understand and respond to the social world. This commitment extends across my academic research, community-engaged work, teaching, and organizational leadership.

My work seeks not only to make inequality visible, but to deepen our understanding of how it is produced, experienced, and challenged—and to consider what becomes possible when sociology engages seriously with the knowledge and experiences of people whose lives it seeks to understand.

RESEARCH PROFILE AND INTELLECTUAL QUESTIONS

My research investigates how social class shapes social relations, institutional practices, government policies, and judgments of social worth in Canada. I am particularly interested in how poverty discrimination persists within institutions that understand themselves as equitable, and how dominant narratives of merit, personal responsibility, and disadvantage become embedded in institutional practices and government policies, shaping the recognition and treatment of people experiencing poverty. Gender and intersecting relations of power are integral to this analysis.

These questions have informed my research across the sociology of higher education, cultural representations of poverty, housing and homelessness, and community mental health and housing. I examine how social classifications and institutional practices shape belonging, participation, and access to opportunity, as well as how people interpret, navigate, and challenge the conditions affecting their lives. My work connects individual experiences to the broader social structures and cultural narratives through which inequality is produced and justified.

Knowledge democracy and praxis are central to how I approach these questions. I understand praxis as an ongoing relationship between critical inquiry, reflection, and action: research informs practice, action generates new questions, and reflection on what happens changes how we understand the social world and what we do next. My research engages qualitative and narrative inquiry, arts-based methods, and community-based participatory action research (CBPAR) to explore not only what can be known about inequality, but also who participates in producing that knowledge. This raises questions of research authority, representation, ethics, and accountability: who defines the problem, whose interpretations carry weight, and what responsibilities researchers have to the people and communities involved.

Across these approaches, I seek to understand the relationship between social structures and human agency without reducing people's experiences to individual circumstances or treating structural conditions as immutable. My scholarship brings sociological analysis into conversation with lived experience and community knowledge, attending to how inequality is experienced and understood, how dominant explanations can be challenged, and what possibilities emerge when people most affected participate in shaping knowledge about their lives.

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Research

Research Profile and Intellectual Questions
My research investigates how social class shapes social relations, institutional practices, government policies, and judgments of social worth in Canada. I am particularly interested in how poverty discrimination persists within institutions that understand themselves as equitable, and how dominant narratives of merit, personal responsibility, and disadvantage become embedded in institutional practices and government policies, shaping the recognition and treatment of people experiencing poverty. Gender and intersecting relations of power are integral to this analysis.

These questions have informed my research across the sociology of higher education, cultural representations of poverty, housing and homelessness, and community mental health. I examine how social classifications and institutional practices shape belonging, participation, and access to opportunity, as well as how people interpret, navigate, and challenge the conditions affecting their lives. My work connects individual experiences to the broader social structures and cultural narratives through which inequality is produced and justified.

Knowledge democracy informs both my research questions and my approach to knowledge production. I draw on qualitative and narrative inquiry, arts-based methods, and community-based participatory action research (CBPAR) to examine not only what can be known about inequality, but also who participates in producing that knowledge. Knowledge translation and knowledge mobilization are integrated throughout my research life cycle, from identifying questions and developing research approaches to interpreting findings, communicating knowledge, and creating opportunities for engagement and action. These practices raise questions of research authority, representation, ethics, and accountability: who defines the problem, whose interpretations carry weight, and what responsibilities researchers have to the people and communities involved.

Across my work, I examine the relationship between social structures and human agency without reducing people's experiences to individual circumstances or treating structural conditions as immutable. I bring sociological analysis into conversation with lived experience and community knowledge, attending to how inequality is experienced and understood, how dominant explanations can be challenged, and what possibilities emerge when people most affected participate in shaping knowledge about their lives and how it is shared and used.

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Research Experience and Projects

Canadian Mental Health Association of Northern BC | Principal Investigator and Executive Director | 2024–Present

Established the first research initiatives in the organization's 60-year history, securing $75,000 in combined funding for two community-based participatory action research projects. Both projects emerged from concerns encountered in community mental health work and extend my research on poverty discrimination and institutional inequality into the social, geographical, and institutional contexts of Northern BC.

> ***Seniors, Mental Health, and Mental Illness***
> A community-based research project centring seniors' experiences and knowledge, with attention to whose perspectives are represented and valued in research on mental health and mental illness.
>
> ***Mental Illness and Housing Discrimination in Northern BC***
> Developed in response to discrimination experienced by CMHA clients seeking housing, this project investigates housing exclusion as a social and institutional issue rather than an individual problem.
>
> Both projects begin with the particular geographical, social, and institutional realities of Northern BC. The findings and questions may inform comparative research elsewhere, while recognizing that regional experiences cannot automatically be assumed to represent other communities.

Knowledge Translation and Mobilization
Knowledge translation and mobilization are integral to both projects. Planned activities include academic and community presentations and a video to be shown in public forums, creating opportunities to share findings with scholarly audiences and the wider communities connected to the research.

Carleton University | Postdoctoral Researcher | 2023–2024
P4: People, Places, Policies and Prospects: Affordable Rental Housing for Those in Greatest Need
Conducted community-based participatory research focused on homeless youth transitioning into supportive housing. The work brought together research, community partnerships, housing policy, and young people's experiences of housing transitions. Responsibilities included coordinating research activities, partnerships, and deliverables within a larger national housing study.

University of Victoria | Doctoral Research | 2017–2021
Pushing Privileged Pillars in Canadian Universities
Conducted community-based participatory action research with seven women with lived experience of persistent poverty who had accessed undergraduate education. The research examined how social class, institutional practices, material circumstances, and dominant narratives about merit and responsibility shape experiences of higher education. It explored barriers to recognition, belonging, and participation, including forms of discrimination that can remain difficult to name within institutions that understand themselves as equitable or meritocratic.

A central contribution was the development of the Research Sisters / Underclass Sisterhood of Solidarity, a collective approach to knowledge production and action that challenged assumptions about who constitutes a

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research community and who has authority to define the questions that matter. Research methods included conversations, focus groups, case studies, autoethnography, poetry, found poetry, and photography. Knowledge translation and knowledge mobilization were integrated throughout the research life cycle rather than treated as dissemination after completion. Grounded in knowledge democracy, this approach sought to make research accessible, challenge deficit-based understandings of poverty, and create opportunities for engagement with the research. The work also informed a social innovation model for widening access and participation for poverty-class students.

The dissertation received the 2022 Outstanding Dissertation in Action Research Award from the Canadian Association for Action Research in Education. I independently developed the research ethics application, which was approved without revisions.

University of Alberta | MA Research | 2015–2017
T*he Reverberations of Childhood Poverty: Composing Lives in Higher Education*
Used narrative inquiry to explore how childhood poverty continued to shape the lives of three undergraduate students, both within and beyond university. Over nine months, the study examined relationships among social class, institutional expectations, merit, responsibility, and educational opportunity. I carried insights from this research beyond academic scholarship and into grassroots action, founding the Shoestring Initiative in 2018 to support first-generation university students from poverty-class backgrounds.

The research incorporated ongoing research conversations, autoethnography, and narrative analysis. Poetry and found poetry provided creative ways to engage with and communicate experiences emerging from the research. I engaged in knowledge translation and mobilization alongside the research, although these practices were not formally incorporated into the research plan as a methodology.

University of Alberta | Undergraduate Research | 2014–2015
Barriers and Challenges Low-Socioeconomic-Status Students Face as They Transition into and Through Canadian Universities
As an undergraduate Sociology student, undertook a pilot study of the experiences of students from low-socioeconomic-status backgrounds through a graduate-level qualitative research methods course. The project provided an early foundation for subsequent research on poverty discrimination and higher education. Knowledge translation and mobilization were part of my research practice throughout the project.

"White Trash": Welfare Queens, Pregnant Teens and Unclean Scenes—the "Honey Boo Boo" Phenomenon
Received $5,500 through the University of Alberta Undergraduate Research Initiative for this separate research project examining online discourse surrounding media representations of poor white women and their children. Using online discourse analysis, the project explored how popular culture constructs social worth and reproduces classed and gendered judgments. Knowledge translation and mobilization were part of my research practice throughout this project.

Additional Research Projects
F*unding Approaches with Indigenous Partners Providing Indigenous Early Years Service*s | University of Victoria | 2019
Conducted research for the British Columbia Ministry of Children and Family Development, including jurisdictional analysis and academic and grey literature reviews of government funding approaches for

Indigenous early years services. The related report was published through the University of Victoria repository as "A Comparative Analysis of Indigenous Early Years Services Government Funding Models."

Undocumented Migrant Workers in Alberta: Experiences and Consequences | *Athabasca University* | *2016*
Research assistant on a community-based participatory research project led by Dr. Jason Foster. Responsibilities included literature reviews, annotated bibliographies, engagement with advocates and community organizations, participation in roundtables, and support for workshops to develop research questions and processes. The project raised questions about research relationships, recruitment, community benefit, and the responsibilities involved in conducting research with people in precarious circumstances.

Sustainability in Higher Education Institutions | Athabasca University | 2020–2021
Research assistant on a study led by Dr. Eduardo Ordonez-Ponce examining the integration of sustainability and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals into teaching and research. Contributed to a scoping review and content analysis of selected Canadian and Australian business and management schools' sustainability reports.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Resources for Research Plans | University of Victoria | 2020–2021
Research assistant with the Office of Research Services. Contributed to literature and resource reviews, analysis of institutional equity, diversity, and inclusion policies and strategic plans, work on intersectional approaches, and the development of visual resources and tools to support equity, diversity, and inclusion in research planning.

*"I'm too Stupid to Learn Math": Math Anxiety and Socioeconomic Factors in Adolescent Le*arners | 2016
Conducted quantitative analysis of Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) data using R to examine relationships between socioeconomic factors and math anxiety.

The Search for Subversive Class-Based Humour | 2013
Conducted academic and grey literature reviews and narrative analysis, developing an early interest in the cultural representation of social class.

Research, Creative Practice, and the Ethics of Representation
*Move Along: Outsiders Telling the Story of Oth*ers | 2016
Microdocumentary anthropology research project, co-created with Dallas Hauck and presented at the Canadian Sociological Association conference. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OzBe2oCOxEU

Beginning with an interest in how people experiencing poverty in Edmonton's inner city adapted shopping carts to sustain themselves, this project developed into a reflexive inquiry into the ethics of representing other people's lives. Decisions about when to film, when to turn off the camera, and when not to take photographs raised questions about visibility, surveillance, identification, and the potential consequences of making people visible to others.

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The project became an early point of departure for my continuing questions about who has the authority to tell stories, what researchers owe the people whose lives they document, and whether research can reproduce the inequalities it seeks to expose. My doctoral work deepened these concerns through critical reflection on representations of hardship that document suffering without addressing the conditions that produce it. These questions remain central to my scholarship: what responsibilities follow when research makes other people's lives visible, and how can knowledge production remain accountable to the conditions it examines?

My broader creative and arts-based research has incorporated poetry, found poetry, photography, narrative, visual communication, and participatory knowledge production. I approach these practices not simply as ways to illustrate findings, but as ways to ask sociological questions, challenge conventional assumptions, and examine whose knowledge is recognized.

Knowledge Mobilization, Translation, and Public Scholarship
Knowledge mobilization and translation have been part of my research practice since my undergraduate studies, initially as an informal and intuitive practice. During my undergraduate and master's research, I used creative work, visual communication, and accessible forms of scholarship to communicate sociological ideas. In my doctoral research, I explicitly integrated knowledge mobilization and translation throughout the research life cycle, treating them as methodological commitments grounded in knowledge democracy rather than as dissemination after research is complete.

My approach recognizes that communicating research is also a question of power: whose knowledge becomes visible, how people are represented, which audiences can access research, and whether knowledge can contribute to meaningful change.

Visual and creative scholarship. My practice includes research posters, infographics, mind maps, word clouds, photography, poetry, found poetry, and other visual and arts-based approaches. These forms allow me to communicate complex sociological ideas accessibly while retaining their critical content.

Public scholarship and knowledge translation. I have shared research through public-facing writing, digital communications, invited lectures, workshops, conference presentations, guest lectures, and community dialogue. I served as a Human Library "Book" at the University of Alberta (2015–2017) and the University of Victoria (2019), sharing experiences of poverty and helping create opportunities for dialogue about how poverty shapes lives.

Collaborative knowledge production. I have supported research communication and poster design to help other researchers translate their work into accessible visual formats. This work extends my interest in how knowledge is communicated, whose perspectives are represented, and how research can reach audiences beyond academic settings.

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Research-informed social innovation
In 2018, I founded the Shoestring Initiative, a grassroots initiative advancing social class diversity in Canadian higher education through community-building, mentorship, belonging, advocacy, and public engagement. The initiative grew from the questions and insights of my graduate research and my recognition that research on educational inequality should not stop at identifying barriers. It exemplifies my commitment to praxis: carrying research into grassroots action while allowing that action to generate new questions and directions for inquiry. It provides a way to translate sociological knowledge into community-building and institutional engagement while challenging deficit-based narratives about students from poverty-class backgrounds.

Selected examples of public scholarship and creative knowledge mobilization include *Social Class Narratives: The Stories We Don't or Won't Tell, Caste in a Box*, *Move Along: Outsiders Telling the Story of Others*, the Research Sisters / Underclass Sisterhood of Solidarity, and visual research communication for *deCOLONIZING OPEN SCIENCE.*

Further examples of my knowledge mobilization and translation practice are available through www.echoesofpoverty.com and www.shoestringinitiative.com

Presentations, Invited Talks, and Scholarly Convening
I have delivered more than 50 conference presentations, invited talks, guest lectures, workshops, and community-based presentations in Canada and internationally. My contributions include presenting sociological research, organizing scholarly sessions, convening researchers around social class and poverty discrimination, and developing participatory approaches to knowledge mobilization.

Selected International Presentations
- 2021 — "Trickle-Down Poverty Discrimination in Canadian Universities." Sixth Peter Townsend Memorial Conference, Bristol, UK.
- 2020 — "Stringing Together a Community of Belonging." Centenary Commission Adult Education Research Circle, UK.
- 2020 — "From Utterly Devoid of Imagination to Radical Imagination." #CHEN2020: Creative Ecologies, Creative Futures, Australia.
- 2020 — "No Landscape for a Good Underclass Woman." First International Online Working-Class Academics Conference.
- 2019 — "Coming Out of the Social Underclass Closet." 15th International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, University of Illinois, USA.
- 2018 — "The Echoes of Childhood Poverty: Composing Lives in Higher Education." Society for the Study of Social Problems, Philadelphia, USA.

Scholarly Convening and Session Organization
- *Canadians Working* in *Class* | International Online Working-Class Academics Conference | 2020–2021 Concept developer and session organizer. Developed and organized the Canadian contribution to an international collaboration involving Canada, the UK, the USA, and Australia. Convened scholars and academics with poverty- and working-class heritages to examine class and poverty discrimination in Canada, connecting social class with colonialism, racism, ableism, sexism, higher education, libraries, and hostile architecture. Developed a participatory knowledge-mobilization process that culminated in a collective found poem.

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- *Identity Politics Needs Some Class* | Canadian Sociological Association Annual Conference | 2021
  Designed and co-organized and chaired two scholarly sessions with Jes Annan of the University of Victoria. The sessions examined the place of social class in conversations about identity politics and social justice. I also presented "Fad or Fetish? The Curious Case of 'Distressed Jeans'," examining poverty-class clothing, stigma, social stratification, and the fetishization of poverty.

Selected Additional Session Organization
- 2023 — "Homeless by Degrees: (In)Visibilizing Social Condition." Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness Conference, Halifax, Nova Scotia.
- 2022 — Co-Learning and Knowledge Translation Symposium. LivEx Network, held in connection with the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness conference, Toronto.
- 2021 — "Poverty-Class Students Persist, Together." World Access to Higher Education Day.
- 2021 — "Revolutionizing and Radicalizing Poverty Definitions." Poverty, Class and Inequality Division, Society for the Study of Social Problems.
- 2021 — "Global Radical Imagination, Social Change and Empowerment in Higher Education." Educational Problems Division, Society for the Study of Social Problems.
- 2017 — "Narrative Understandings of Social Inequality: Bringing Participants' Experiences and Knowledges to the Centre." Canadian Sociology Conference, Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences, Toronto.

Selected Invited Guest Lectures
- 2023 — "If You Won't Call Us, Then Don't Call Us Low SES." Community Service Learning 350, University of Alberta.
- 2023 — "Poverty-Class Students Advancing Epistemic Justice." Leadership Studies: Knowledge Democracy and Adult Education, University of Victoria.
- 2022 — "Finding Poverty-Class Students." Community Engagement Foundations for Graduate Students, University of Alberta.
- 2022 — "Debunking a Bunch of Baloney Poverty Myths." Faculty of Education, University of Victoria.
- 2022 — "Considerations of Poverty and Social Class." Secondary Summer Institute, University of Victoria.
- 2022 — "Un/Doing Social Justice: Engaging in an Ethical Academic Practice as a Doctoral Researcher," with A. Christou. Middlesex University, UK.
- 2021 — "Knowledge Democracy: Community Engagement with the Other 99%." Community Engagement Foundations for Graduate Students, University of Alberta.
- 2020 — "The Underclass Sisterhood of Solidarity: Pedagogies of Hope." Pedagogies of Hope, Middlesex University, UK.
- 2020 — "Classing Community Engagement." Community Engagement Foundations for Graduate Students, University of Alberta.

Selected Scholarly Service
- Panel Chair, International Online Working-Class Academics Conference (2021).
- Presider and Table Presider, American Sociological Association Annual Meeting (2018).
- Discussant, Canadian Sociology Conference Undergraduate Voice Session (2016).
- Event Developer, W. David Pierce Research Colloquium, University of Alberta (2015).

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Teaching Experience, Philosophy, and Preparation

Teaching Approach
I want students to leave my classes thinking differently than when they arrived. For me, Sociology was the missing piece of the puzzle. It helped me see connections I had not previously recognized and understand individual experiences in relation to broader social structures. In Introduction to Sociology, I want to spark that same sense of discovery in students, whatever their disciplinary interests: the excitement of seeing something familiar differently, asking new questions, and imagining how things could be otherwise.

I design learning opportunities that ask students to do more than memorize concepts. I want them to work with sociological ideas and theorists, examine evidence, and develop and defend their own interpretations. This requires clear expectations, meaningful opportunities to participate, and respect for the different experiences and perspectives students bring to the classroom. I do not require students to disclose personal experiences to demonstrate their understanding, particularly when discussing poverty, marginalization, or trauma. I also recognize that students' interpretations can challenge my own assumptions. Teaching is not about securing agreement with me or any single theorist; it is about creating conditions for rigorous inquiry, critical engagement, and evidence-based argument.

My teaching draws on my experience in Sociology, community-based participatory action research (CBPAR), curriculum development, student mentorship, and professional and community-based education. I want to help students look beyond the familiar worlds of their own backyards and engage with the storied social world around us: the histories, institutions, cultural narratives, government policies, and relations of power that shape how lives unfold and whose experiences are recognized. I encourage students to engage critically with sociological theories and theorists, question taken-for-granted assumptions, and examine how individual lives are connected to broader social arrangements. I am attentive to the practical constraints of different teaching environments, including large introductory classes, and to opportunities for students to engage with sociological questions beyond multiple-choice examinations and the recall of information.

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Undergraduate Teaching and Teaching Assistantships

- Introduction to Sociology (SOCI 100)
  University of Victoria | Fall 2017 | Teaching Assistant to Dr. Bruce Ravelli
  Led three tutorial sections each week, maintaining attendance above 95% despite tutorials being non-mandatory. Developed and delivered complementary learning material on systemic inequality, media portrayals of social issues, globalization, and qualitative research methods. Supported students with academic writing and examination preparation. Encouraged inclusive participation and connected sociological concepts to lived experience and intersectional frameworks.
- Sociology of Gender (SOC 301)
  University of Alberta | Winter 2017 | Teaching Assistant to Dr. Robyn Lee
  Supported students' learning, graded essays and examinations, attended classes, and assisted students in developing academic papers.
- Sociology of Aging (SOC 375)
  University of Alberta | Fall 2016 | Teaching Assistant to Dr. Herb Northcott
  Supported students, proctored examinations, assisted with academic papers, and managed course materials through eClass. Mentored five socioeconomically marginalized students in academic writing, study skills, note-taking, and examination preparation. All five completed the course and improved their academic performance.
- Self, Identity, and Society (SOCI 204)
  University of Victoria | Winter 2018 | Teaching Assistant to Dr. André Smith
- Introductory Sociology
  Transition Year Program, Aboriginal Student Services, University of Alberta | 2017
  Mentored Indigenous students in sociological concepts, terminology, theories, and qualitative and quantitative methods. Supported students in developing note-taking, multiple-choice examination strategies, and academic writing skills.
- Introduction to Professional Practice (COM 204)
  Peter B. Gustavson School of Business, University of Victoria | Fall 2017
  Drew on professional experience in business, marketing, and communications to provide practical examples of professional branding. Supported students in developing results-oriented résumés and professional profiles, and graded assignments within short turnaround times.

Invited and Other Guest Lectures

I have delivered guest lectures through both self-initiated outreach and invitations from instructors and academic programs. Entries marked invited are confirmed invitations; the remaining entries are listed without assigning invitation status.

- January 19, 2023 — "If You Won't Call Us, Then Don't Call Us Low SES." Community Service Learning 350, University of Alberta. Invited.
- January 17, 2023 — "Poverty-Class Students Advancing Epistemic Justice." Leadership Studies: Knowledge Democracy and Adult Education, University of Victoria. Invited.
- December 15, 2022 — "Finding Poverty-Class Students." Community Engagement Foundations for Graduate Students, University of Alberta.
- November 7, 2022 — "Debunking a Bunch of Baloney Poverty Myths." EDCI 404, University of Victoria. Invited.
- July 18, 2022 — "Tattoos, Starbucks, Avocado Toast, and Other Baloney." EDCI 490: Transformative Inquiry, University of Victoria.

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- June 9, 2022 — "Considerations of Poverty and Social Class." Inclusive Worldviews: Teaching Fairly in an Unfair World, Secondary Summer Institute, Faculty of Education, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Victoria.
- January 19, 2022 — Laberge and Christou, "Un/Doing Social Justice: Engaging in an Ethical Academic Practice as a Doctoral Researcher." Middlesex University, United Kingdom. Invited.
- December 17, 2020 — Laberge and Thomas, "Sifting Through Your Perspectives to Radical Imagination." Community Engagement Foundations for Graduate Students, University of Alberta.
- August 11, 2021 — "Knowledge Democracy: Community Engagement with the Other 99%." Community Engagement Foundations for Graduate Students, University of Alberta. Invited.
- August 7, 2020 — "Classing Community Engagement." Community Engagement Foundations for Graduate Students, University of Alberta.
- June 1, 2020 — "The Underclass Sisterhood of Solidarity: Pedagogies of Hope." Pedagogies of Hope, Middlesex University, United Kingdom. Invited.
- October 1, 2018 — "Homeless Deterrence Technology and …" Social Class and Inequality (SOCI 215), University of Victoria; guest lecture for NDP MP Laurel Collins, ABD.
- August 3, 2016 — "Media Portrayals of Social Class." Introductory Sociology (SOC 100), University of Alberta.
- May 31, 2016 — "Global Inequality: Poverty on International and National Stages." Introduction to the Sociology of Globalization (SOC 269), University of Alberta.
- March 22, 2016 — "Understanding the Experiences of University Students: Beyond Statistics, Fairy Tales, and Neoliberal Ideologies." Social Inequality and Stratification (SOC 260), University of Alberta.

Curriculum Development and Course Preparation

- Social Inequality and Stratification
  University of Alberta | 2016
  Completed a three-month Graduate Teaching Learning Practicum focused on developing a plan for a 200-level introductory course. Prepared a syllabus and explored participatory and inclusive teaching approaches. My subsequent course development and research have further developed this foundation through attention to Canadian social stratification, lived experience, intersectionality, sociological theory, and everyday life.
- The Business of Writing
  Professional Writing Program, Grant MacEwan College | Project Lead and Sessional Instructor | 2006–2008
  Developed interdisciplinary curriculum integrating communications, graphic design, and sales; the curriculum was adopted by the department. Created an instructor manual and student website. Integrated feedback and class-review models into the learning process. Emphasized reflective, student-responsible learning and a safe, respectful learning environment for students with diverse backgrounds and experiences.

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Select Courses of Particular Interest to Teach

My research, teaching experience, curriculum development, and professional practice prepare me to contribute to foundational Sociology courses and upper-level courses examining social inequality, research methods, theory, and community life. Courses I would be particularly comfortable teaching include:

- **Introduction to Sociology** and **Canadian Society in the Contemporary World**: Introducing sociological thinking and helping students examine connections between individual lives, social institutions, and broader social conditions.
- **Social Inequality**: Drawing on my research on poverty, social class, stratification, and inequality.
- **Introduction to Social Research**: Connecting research questions, research design, ethics, evidence, and interpretation.
- **Contemporary Sociological Theory**: Connecting theory to questions of inequality, institutions, power, knowledge, and everyday life.
- **Qualitative Research**: Drawing on experience with narrative inquiry, interviews and conversations, focus groups, case studies, autoethnography, and community-based participatory action research.
- **Community Organizations and Social Action**: Connecting community-based research, social innovation, nonprofit leadership, and social change.

My research and teaching also provide a foundation for courses addressing education, gender, race and ethnicity, health, work, social movements, and other areas of social inequality.
I would welcome opportunities to contribute to experiential learning, community-engaged research, and student-led projects. My experience in CBPAR, qualitative inquiry, educational programming, and student mentorship provides a basis for guiding students as they develop research questions, engage ethically with communities, interpret findings, and communicate knowledge beyond academic audiences.

- **Sociology of Poverty, Class, and Social Worth**
  Examines poverty and social class as structural and social phenomena, exploring how stigma, deservingness, and judgments of social worth shape institutional practices, social relationships, recognition, and belonging. Students would examine how poverty is understood, represented, and governed, and how these understandings affect people's lives.
- **Sociology of Higher Education**
  Explores higher education as both a site of opportunity and a mechanism through which social inequalities can be reproduced. Drawing on sociological research, students would examine how social class, poverty, race, and gender shape access, participation, belonging, and educational outcomes, as well as the institutional practices and narratives that influence whose knowledge and experiences are valued.
- **Sociology of Choice**
  Investigates how choices are shaped by social structures, material circumstances, institutional arrangements, gender, class, and social expectations. Students would consider how some choices become available, expected, or rewarded while others are constrained, obscured, or denied, challenging explanations that treat individual choice as independent of social context.

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- **Sociology of Imagination**
  Explores the relationship between imagination and social life, including how people envision futures, how social institutions and inequalities shape what seems possible, and how imagination informs cultural change, collective action, and social movements. The course would invite students to consider not only how society is organized, but how it might be otherwise.
- **Research Ethics, Relational Accountability, and the Politics of Knowledge**
  Examines the ethical, political, and relational dimensions of research, including positionality, power, consent and refusal, representation, lived experience, and the production and circulation of knowledge. Drawing on community-based participatory action research and knowledge democracy, students would consider what it means to conduct research with communities rather than simply about them. Indigenous research ethics and approaches would be addressed in collaboration with an Indigenous scholar or knowledge holder whose expertise would shape that part of the course.
- **Knowledge Translation and Mobilization in Action**
  Explores how research moves beyond academic publication into policy, organizational practice, public engagement, and community action. Students would examine how knowledge is communicated, whose knowledge is recognized, and how research findings can be mobilized responsibly and effectively to inform decision-making and social change.

Research, Mentorship, and Experiential Learning
My approach to teaching extends beyond formal classroom instruction. Across university settings, community initiatives, and professional education, I have supported students and emerging researchers in developing research skills, navigating institutions, building academic confidence, and connecting knowledge to practice.

- Undergraduate Research: From Student to Knowledge Producer | University of Alberta
  Conducted a pilot project in Dr. Sara Dorow's graduate-level qualitative methods course examining the experiences of low-SES students entering and progressing through Canadian universities.
- Undertook a separate funded Undergraduate Research Initiative project examining media representations of social class, poverty, and gender.
- Undergraduate Mentorship and Graduate School Preparation | University of Alberta
  Helped undergraduate students identify research opportunities, clarify academic interests, and navigate graduate applications and funding.
- As a master's student and SSHRC scholarship holder, supported undergraduates in developing their own scholarship applications, sharing knowledge of the process rather than writing applications for them.
- Peer Support for Students Experiencing Poverty | University of Alberta
  Responded to students who approached me after learning about my master's research, as well as students referred by faculty.
- Created opportunities for students to discuss experiences of poverty and higher education without reducing structural barriers to individual shortcomings.
- International Graduate Student Mentorship and Community-Building | University of Alberta
  Served as a peer mentor to first-year international graduate students, helping them navigate housing, winter clothing, and university resources. Organized a potluck that brought students together through food and cultural sharing.
- Informal Graduate Student Mentorship and Academic Solidarity | University of Victoria
  Supported domestic and international graduate students with scholarship applications, academic writing, housing, food and clothing needs, and navigating university systems.
  Shared resources and support in an environment where students could also be competing.

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Research Design and Methodological Approaches

My methodological experience includes:

- Qualitative and interpretive methods: narrative inquiry, qualitative interviews and conversations, focus groups, case studies, and critical autoethnography.
- Community-engaged research: Community-based participatory action research (CBPAR).
- Arts-based and visual methods: Poetry, found poetry, photography, and visual anthropology.
- Discourse and media analysis.
- Quantitative analysis: Analysis of PISA data using R.
- Literature and policy research: Scoping reviews, academic and grey literature reviews, jurisdictional scans, and content analysis.
- Across these approaches, I examine how methodological decisions shape what becomes visible, whose experiences are recognized, which explanations gain authority, and what remains overlooked.
- Research Ethics, Positionality, and Relational Accountability
  I approach research ethics as an ongoing intellectual and relational responsibility, not simply a procedural requirement to obtain approval before collecting data. My research has required careful consideration of representation, consent, participant authority, power, and the potential consequences of making other people's lives available for interpretation.

  In my master's research, I used narrative inquiry and poetry while attending to relational ethics and participants' authority over their stories. In my doctoral research, I independently developed the research ethics application for a community-based participatory action research project with seven women with lived experience of persistent poverty. The application was approved without revisions.

  My creative research also informs how I approach these questions. In Move Along: Outsiders Telling the Story of Others (2016), a micro-documentary developed during my master's studies, an initial effort to document how people adapted shopping carts to survive in Edmonton's inner city became a reflexive inquiry into the ethics of representing other people's lives. My later doctoral work extended these concerns through a critique of research practices that repeatedly document hardship without addressing the conditions being documented.
- Community-Based Participatory Research and Knowledge Democracy
  My experience with CBPAR informs my understanding of research as a process in which the people and communities whose lives are being studied can participate in shaping questions, interpreting experiences, producing knowledge, and considering possibilities for action.
  In my doctoral research, this approach informed the development of the Research Sisters and the Underclass Sisterhood of Solidarity. This work challenged assumptions about who constitutes a research community and who has the authority to define its knowledge and priorities.
  My work also engages with knowledge democracy and the relationship between research, knowledge mobilization, and social change. Knowledge translation and mobilization are not simply activities undertaken after a study is complete; they inform how research is designed, communicated, and made useful to different audiences.
- Teaching Research Through Sociological Practice
  I want students to encounter research as a way of investigating questions that matter to them and understanding the social world differently. From introductory Sociology onward, students can learn to formulate researchable questions, engage relevant scholarship, consider methodological choices, evaluate evidence, and develop defensible interpretations.

My approach emphasizes the relationship between research questions, methods, and the knowledge they produce. Students should have opportunities to examine assumptions embedded in their questions and categories, consider whose perspectives are missing, distinguish evidence from inference, and recognize the limits of their conclusions. They can also explore how different methods illuminate different dimensions of a social problem.

My experience supporting research development extends to informal mentorship of doctoral students at the University of Victoria and through PhD OWLS. I supported doctoral students working with different methodological approaches, sharing knowledge and helping them think through aspects of their research. Ultimately, I want students to understand research as more than a sequence of techniques. It involves asking consequential questions, making and defending knowledge claims, remaining accountable for how knowledge is produced, and considering how that knowledge might contribute to a more critical understanding of social life.

Professional & Organizational Leadership

Professional Experience

Executive Director | Canadian Mental Health Association of Northern BC | January 2024–Present | BC

Strategy & Organizational Development

- Lead a regional nonprofit organization with a $5M+ budget, more than 70 staff and volunteers, and 12+ programs and services spanning mental health and addictions, housing, employment, counselling, peer support, and food security. The organization serves communities across a vast region of Northern BC, with Prince George as its hub.
- Lead organizational strategy, governance, financial stewardship, risk management, people leadership, partnerships, communications, and organizational renewal.

Financial & Organizational Sustainability

- Developed and advanced a long-term financial diversification strategy, securing more than $500,000 in additional funding during the first year through government and philanthropic partnerships, strategic relationships, advocacy, and communications.
- Developed Northern realities; shared recovery, a five-year strategic direction connecting the organization's next chapter to the distinct social, geographic, and community realities of Northern BC.
- Secured $75,000 in combined funding for the organization's first research initiatives in its 60-year history: community-based participatory action research examining seniors, mental health and mental illness in Prince George, and housing discrimination and mental illness in Northern BC.
- Secured funding for CMHA Northern BC's first in-house therapist, establishing no-barrier psychotherapy for people in Prince George, and supported the development of community-based services, including peer support in Quesnel.

People, Partnerships & Community Impact

- Secured an Elder-in-Residence to bring Indigenous guidance into organizational renewal, strategic planning, and work toward decolonization and Indigenization.
- Lead relationships with health authorities, government, Indigenous communities, municipalities, post-secondary institutions, foundations, employers, and community organizations.

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Research, Communications & Social Change

- Lead organizational communications and brand positioning, translating the organization's work and community needs into public-facing communications, partnerships, and opportunities for support.
- Sociological relevance: This work brings organizational leadership into direct contact with the social conditions shaping mental health and well-being, including poverty, housing insecurity, discrimination, geographic inequity, and access to services. It also creates opportunities to connect community knowledge and research with organizational practice, service development, and public understanding.

Postdoctoral Researcher | Carleton University | 2023–2024 | Contract, Remote

Research & Project Development

- Worked on *A Safe and Affordable Place to Call Home*, a five-year national housing research initiative examining affordable rental housing for people in greatest need, including youth transitioning from homelessness into supportive housing.
- Developed project infrastructure, communication processes, partner relationships, and systems for coordinating work across a national research collaboration.

Partnerships & Knowledge Exchange

- Served as a key contact for research and community partners, facilitating collaboration among researchers, nonprofit organizations, housing stakeholders, and other participants.

Financial & Project Stewardship

- Managed project budgets and forecasts across financial systems, including multi-million-dollar in-kind and financial resources.
- Designed project-management and communication systems to coordinate activities, track deliverables, and support accountability.

Research Translation & Impact

- Organized virtual and in-person events and translated research into reports, presentations, and recommendations for policy and practice.

National Education Lead | Scholars with Lived Experience Network, York University | 2022–2023 | Contract

Education & Program Development

- Led educational programming and student support within a national network for postsecondary students with lived experience of homelessness.

Equity & Student Support

- Developed equity-based bursary policies and procedures to support students with lived experience of homelessness in pursuing postsecondary education.

Mentorship & Learning

- Created and delivered educational and career programming and mentored more than 70 students in their academic, scholarship, and professional development.
- Developed a national student mentorship program and contributed to a 35% increase in network membership.

Program Stewardship & Evaluation

- Managed a five-year program budget and monthly forecasts and evaluated program impacts and effectiveness.

Partnerships & Knowledge Exchange

- Collaborated with students, postsecondary institutions, housing organizations, community partners, and national stakeholders.

- Contributed to the Making the Shift and A Way Home Canada Diversity and Inclusion Joint Working Group.

President; Director of Communications, Marketing and Business Development | JAM Inc. | 1998–2014

Business Strategy & Organizational Development

- Built and led a communications, marketing, and business-development company by identifying an underserved niche in a saturated market and developing a differentiated business model for regional, national, and international clients. Established the company's positioning, client base, operating practices, financial processes, and capacity for growth.
- Led business strategy, communications, marketing, public affairs, sales, and business development.

Financial & Business Sustainability

- Developed proposals, business cases, budgets, financial plans, and new service offerings to address client needs and create revenue opportunities.

Communications, Marketing & Business Development

- Designed and implemented communications and marketing strategies for diverse audiences and organizational contexts.

People, Partnerships & Client Relationships

- Built and managed multidisciplinary teams and a diverse talent pool.
- Developed and maintained long-term client relationships, negotiated vendor contracts, and facilitated conflict resolution between clients and suppliers.
- Identified emerging project risks and developed mitigation strategies while managing business and project budgets.

Accountant and Financial Analyst; later Manager, Communications and Marketing | Merit Contractors Association | 1992–1998 | Alberta

Organizational Development & Infrastructure

- Joined during the development of a standalone provincial Merit organization in Alberta. Developed its accounting and financial systems, policies, and procedures, and contributed to its administrative, communications, marketing, and membership infrastructure.

Financial Stewardship & Systems

- Developed accounting and financial tracking systems for the association and two interrelated associations, supporting multimillion-dollar budgets, reporting, resource allocation, and decision-making.
- Designed systems to improve financial accountability, use limited resources effectively, and reduce the risk of fraud or misuse of membership funds.
- Stewarded more than $20 million in membership-based funds alongside the President.
- Developed financial tracking and analysis systems for the Members' Employee Benefit Plan, serving hundreds of member companies and thousands of employees.
- Conducted financial analysis that identified substantial cost savings and enabled the establishment of a separate, arm's-length organization to administer the benefit plan; continued to provide financial oversight and guidance.

Communications, Marketing & Member Engagement

- Created Merit's communications function and developed the infrastructure for member communications and engagement.
- Repositioned and branded Merit as a leader in the Alberta construction industry, contributing to membership growth.

- Developed communications and marketing strategies to promote educational programs, member services, and effective use of the benefit plan.

Mental Health, Public Education & Impact

- Developed the communications plan for a new Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) for construction workers and their families. The initiative achieved unprecedented usage and helped destigmatize mental health in a male-dominated construction industry.
- Organized and promoted workshops, training sessions, conferences, and international events; built relationships across contractors, employers, suppliers, educators, government, and industry stakeholders.
- Monitored legislative and regulatory developments and translated their implications for members.

Social Innovation & Research-in-Action

Founder and Director | Shoestring Initiative | 2018–Present

Research-Informed Social Innovation

- Founded a grassroots initiative informed by research and community knowledge to support students from poverty-class and first-generation backgrounds in Canadian higher education.
- Developed a research-informed social innovation model focused on widening educational access and participation without deficit-based or assimilationist assumptions about students.

Program Development & Institutional Change

- Drew on academic and grey literature, case studies, and external examples to develop and refine approaches to mentorship, belonging, institutional engagement, and student support.

Community, Mentorship & Partnerships

- Built relationships among students, faculty, researchers, librarians, administrators, student organizations, and community partners.

Knowledge Mobilization & Advocacy

- Translated research and community knowledge into institutional advocacy, policy contributions, and practical approaches to educational access.
- Advocated for recognition of poverty discrimination and social class within human-rights and equity frameworks.
- Solicited seed funding and developed a strategic direction to support the initiative's work.

Governance & Institutional Service

Current Governance

- Director, Realistic Success Recovery Society | 2026–Present
- Director, Food Banks BC | 2025–Present
- Affiliate Director, Health Employers Association of British Columbia | 2025–Present
- Executive Partner to the Board of Directors, Canadian Mental Health Association of Northern BC | 2024–Present

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University & Academic Service

- Faculty of Education, University of Victoria | 2022
  Advocated for and authored the policy addressing social class diversity and poverty discrimination within equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization (EDID) work.
- Faculty of Education, University of Victoria | 2020
  Contributed to the development of assessment criteria for Graduate Associate Dean candidates.
- Department of Sociology, University of Victoria | 2018
  Played a lead role in the development of assessment criteria for Department Chair candidates.
- University of Victoria | 2018
  Contributed to the development of assessment criteria for Vice-Provost candidates.

Scholarly Service

- Committee Member, Center for Economy and Society, Johns Hopkins University | 2023–Present
- Advisory Committee Member, Working-Class Studies Association | 2022–Present
- Working Group Member, Institute of Global Homelessness | 2022–Present

Awards, Scholarships & Graduate Funding

Major Academic Awards

University of Victoria – PhD Awards & Scholarships

- 2023 — Finalist, Emerging Community-Based Researcher Award, Community Based Research Canada
- 2022 — Outstanding Dissertation in Action Research Award, Canadian Association for Action Research in Education
- 2021 — Sir James Lougheed Award of Distinction, doctoral level — $20,000
- 2018–2021 — Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship — $150,000
- 2020–2021 — Faculty of Graduate Studies Graduate Award, University of Victoria — $4,000

University of Alberta — MA Awards & Scholarships

- 2017 — Master's Graduate Student Scholarship, Student Aid Alberta — $3,000
- 2017 — City of Edmonton Social Justice Fellowship — $5,300
- 2016 — Queen Elizabeth II Graduate Scholarship — $10,800
- 2015 — Queen Elizabeth II Graduate Scholarship — $5,400
- 2015–2016 — SSHRC Canada Graduate Scholarship — $17,500
- 2015 — Canada Graduate Scholarship to honour Nelson Mandela — nominated
- 2015 — Walter H. Johns Graduate Fellowship — $5,700

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Graduate Research Funding

- 2018 — Shoestring Initiative Funding — $5,300
- 2018 — CUPE 4163 Social Justice Fund — $2,000
- 2017–2018 — Department of Sociology Doctoral Fellowship, University of Victoria — $12,000
- 2017–2018 — Department of Sociology Teaching Assistantship, University of Victoria — $6,000
- 2016–2017 — Department of Sociology Teaching Assistantship, University of Alberta — $10,800
- 2016 — Sociology Graduate Student Travel Grant, MA level — $500
- 2016 — Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research Student Travel Award, MA level — $1,660
- 2016 — Graduate Students' Association Travel Grant, MA level — $500
- 2015 — Mahatma Gandhi Summer Institute Tuition Award — $225

Professional Development

- Psychological Health and Safety
- The Working Mind
- ASIST
- Canadian Housing Evidence Collaborative — Summer Housing Institute
- Housing 101
- Community-Based Participatory Research
- Knowledge Democracy
- Research Ethics
- Gender-Based Plus (GBA+/SGBA+)
- Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging
- Trauma-Informed Practice