Support for, and engagement in, community-based research (CBR) has increased over the past decade (Green et al., 1995; Sclove, 1997). Research partnerships between university academics and community-based individuals and organizations have spread. Such partnerships are said to generate new knowledge, empower community members, build common ground, stimulate collective action and solve complex problems. Yet the qualities of these “partnerships” vary, and research on the process and outcomes of these forms of research is limited (El Ansari, Phillips, & Hammick, 2001).

This paper aims to bring attention to the opportunities and pitfalls associated with CBR. We are particularly interested here in the tensions that arise when university academics engage in CBR projects. To this end, we draw on our experience as academic partners in a recent two-year CBR project aimed at stimulating research by, and collective action to improve the situation of, Ontario injured workers.

Our experience suggests that CBR, even when based at a university setting, has the potential to engage marginalized communities in critical reflection and action on their social concerns. It can stimulate learning, and build people’s capacity and commitment to collectively address real-world problems. However, the institutional structures and university culture pose fundamental challenges to practicing CBR. University researchers need to be aware of these potential pitfalls to be successful in building new knowledge and stimulating informed community action to address social problems. Otherwise, they may unwittingly exacerbate marginalized communities’ alienation and distress, and actually perpetuate injustice and inequality.

Participatory Research

Researchers have come to question the capacity of conventional research approaches to understand and stimulate action on complex and enduring social problems (Hohrman & Shear, 2002; Mason & Mitroff, 1981). They doubt outsiders’ capacity to understand issues that have important normative and experiential dimensions (Ansley & Gaventa, 1997; Evered & Louis, 1981).

Academic researchers are recognizing that community involvement can help access research participants, make research more relevant, improve interpretation of study results, and increase the likelihood that findings will be applied (Schensul, 1999). At the same time, citizens and communities are increasingly seeing research as an effective approach to solving local problems, and are claiming the right to participate in research on issues affecting them. Educators are also recognizing the potential of community involvement and service-learning as an effective means of applied learning and citizenship building (Eyler & Giles, 1999).

The renaissance of CBR over the past decade has spawned a new literature on the topic. Researchers have conducted case study reviews (Sclove, 1997), topic-specific reviews (Allman, Myers, & Cockerill, 1997), and assessments of challenges and facilitating factors (Wolff & Maurana, 2001) on this topic. However, to understand CBR dynamics, Israel and colleagues (1998) suggest the need for “in-depth, multiple case study evaluations of the content and processes (as well as outcomes) of community-based research endeavours” (p. 194).

CBR has roots in “participatory research” (PR), a term coined in the early 1970s by adult educators and
community groups in developing countries who saw the approach as an alternative to colonial research practices (Hall, 1993). PR, referred to by some as “participatory action research” (Whyte, 1991), is a collective process of investigation, analysis, and action through which marginalized groups identify and address problematic social and economic issues and interactions. It emphasizes the importance of alternative, non-dominant systems of knowledge production, such as traditional knowledge and local experience. To Rajesh Tandon (1988), “participatory research attempts to present people as researchers themselves in pursuit of answers to the questions of their daily struggle and survival” (p. 7).

As CBR has grown in popularity and been increasingly adopted by researchers, an important question arises: can CBR adhere to its participatory and emancipatory principles when based in a mainstream institutional setting (Forester & Ward, 1993; Hall, 1993)? In other words, we need to better understand the ways in which the institutional characteristics of university settings structure and shape the process of CBR. To this end, this paper reports on a process evaluation of one CBR project.

CBR is relevant to those engaged in promoting community service learning (CSL). Both CBR and CSL encompass the dual objectives of learning and social change, seek to situate community concerns in the broader social context, involve a process of reflective practice and reciprocal learning, and seek to build citizenship and civic participation.

Injured Workers’ PR Project

This project’s purpose was to examine the needs and experiences of injured workers in Ontario and stimulate injured worker action to address their needs (Making the system better, 2001). It was initiated by injured workers and a researcher who met at a multi-stakeholder conference on repetitive strain injuries. Funded by the Ontario Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WCB/WSIB), the project sought to assess the extent to which a PR process could deepen understanding and stimulate action by injured workers and others to address the identified needs of injured workers.1

The project had four stages, as described below. Project participants’ various roles are summarized in Figure 1.

1) Orientation of project planning group (eight months). The project planning group was oriented to CBR principles and process, defined project objectives and an initial implementation plan, and recruited injured workers for an orientation conference.

2) Definition and preliminary analysis of general research problems (four months): Fifty injured workers, many with little or no research experience, participated in a two-and-a-half day orientation conference at which they identified issues relevant to injured workers, generated potential research questions, and discussed possible methods of obtaining desired data.

Twenty-five injured workers signed on for continued involvement in the project as “peer researchers.” These injured workers, along with planning team members, identified a three-pronged approach to the research: a) a survey of injured workers; b) in-depth interviews with injured workers; and c) an analysis of current and historical documents relevant to injured workers. Peer researchers and planning team members joined one or both of the project coordinating committee (which oversaw and coordinated all activities of the project) and a research group (described below). The coordinating committee met monthly throughout the project, and the sub-groups met on an as-needed basis.

3) Data collection and analysis (eight months): The three research groups, overseen by the project coordinating committee, designed and carried out research plans.

a) the “survey group” conducted a survey of a random sample of injured workers to gain a broad view of injured workers’ needs and experiences.

b) the “interview group” designed and conducted in-depth interviews with a diverse sample of 17 injured workers who had experienced difficulties in either seeking compensation for their injuries or returning to work. Interview participants were recruited through newspaper and community advertisements and injured worker groups.

c) the “document group” collected and reviewed over 100 reports, articles, and other documents on the legislative context, and compensation and return-to-work experiences, of injured workers in Ontario.

4) Development of recommendations and plans for action (nine months): When data collection was complete, a second conference was held with peer researchers and injured workers. Its purpose was to review the preliminary research results and to develop recommendations and action plans. “Action groups” were then formed to implement action plans.

Methods of Process Evaluation

CBR focuses on collective inquiry and engagement. Therefore, we drew upon a participatory evaluation approach, an approach that “aims to create a learning process for the program recipients that will help them in their effort to reach desired goals” (Elden & Levin, 1998, p. 239).
Polanyi and Cockburn

At the project outset, the project planning group identified three process and outcome objectives: community involvement and participation, community capacity building, and building equity/systemic change. For each objective, guiding indicators were defined (see Figure 2).

**Data Sources**

Data relating to these indicators were collected in four ways: participant journaling, participant surveys, group evaluation sessions, and project document analysis.

**Participant journaling.** Each project coordinating committee member (N = 15) was provided with a diary with the process outcome and indicators pasted on the inside front cover. Members were encouraged to make regular entries based on their project experience. The extent to which participants recorded their experiences varied. For example, the project coordinator recorded 20 single-spaced pages of typewritten notes, while others wrote...
### Figure 2
*Project Goals and Process Indicators*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Indicators or dimensions</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community involvement and participation</td>
<td>Participants will include individuals who reflect diversity in the community of interest. They will be active participants in all research stages.</td>
<td>levels of participation (# of people, attendance, acceptance of roles and responsibilities) community of interest controls decision-making research needs are identified by community of interest researchers change research strategy according to information from participants researchers are often open about limitations and scope of CBR activities people can articulate what they hope to gain from research people are animated about the research process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community capacity building</td>
<td>The PR process will contribute to community capacity building. Capacity can be considered at individual, group, institutional, or community levels. Stages of capacity building are interactive and include: increasing awareness, mobilization, planning and organization, learning and development of new knowledge, diffusion of knowledge, and institutionalization of knowledge and action.</td>
<td>group had developed mutual support and leadership group has identified environmental and social problems as well as options for solving these problems action being taken by participants people refer to “their” plan or activity people act independently of researcher facilitation people show increased confidence (more vocal, organizing to deal with problems) increase in decision-making by injured workers strengthened ability to assert rights improved ability to manage conflict ability to access funds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building equity/systemic change</td>
<td>The research process will reflect a world view which acknowledges that inequities and various barriers to access exist for many people in society. The research process will integrate in all activities opportunities to identify, investigate, analyze, and challenge barriers and inequities.</td>
<td>equity issues are explored and attended to increased access to systems that impact injured workers increased participation of injured workers in structures/bodies that affect their lives creation of new structures/improved supports for injured workers increase in organizational liaisons, networks situation of individual experience in broader social/economic context provision of information and recommendations to public and appropriate decision-making bodies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
shorter notes, and some did not use their diaries. Participants did not hand in their diaries, but used them in responding to the group evaluation sessions and individual surveys described below. At the project end, participants in research groups also wrote a brief reflection on their particular action group’s process and outcomes.

**Participant surveys and interviews.** Two surveys of project participants were conducted. The first was developed by the project planning group, and implemented at the end of the orientation conference. It focused on the conference experience. The second survey, developed by the process consultant, with input from the project coordinating committee, was circulated to peer researchers at the project end (N = 15, response rate = 80%). This survey focused on levels of involvement, power, capacity building, and overall satisfaction with the project. In addition, students (N = 4) who participated in the project as peer researchers were interviewed in order to explore issues relevant to community service learning.

**Group evaluation sessions.** Two focus group evaluation sessions were designed and facilitated by the process consultant, one mid-project, one at its end. Participants worked in pairs to reflect on key process and outcome indicators, recording views on forms submitted at the session end.

**Project documents.** Meeting minutes were taken for steering committee, research, and action group meetings. We tried to discuss and take notes on a group process evaluation at each meeting end, but did not always succeed due to lack of time. Finally, email correspondence was filed, and the project coordinator (Polanyi) recorded notes on telephone conversations in his project notebook.

**Data Analysis**

Different team members played different roles in analyzing process-related data. A project planning group member compiled the first questionnaire. Project coordinating committee members reviewed their own diaries. The process consultant played the lead role in compiling and summarizing the content of the second survey and the group evaluation sessions, reporting the findings in the project report (“Participatory Research by Injured Workers”, 2001). Preliminary findings were fed back to the project coordinating committee for comment and reflection. Finally, Polanyi thematically analyzed the documents (including meeting minutes, correspondence, research plans and reports, and coordinator’s journal entries and notes).

It should be noted that the project design group discussed and debated the evaluation design extensively. Some wanted to design and carry out a more structured pre- and post-survey to examine changes in injured workers’ beliefs and perspectives (e.g., Belenky, Bond, & Weinstock, 1997). Others felt that this would damage the process by turning injured workers into research subjects, rather than agents, of the process, and by turning the focus to individual, rather than collective and systemic, change that was felt to be the focus of CBR. The latter perspective prevailed, and the evaluation was informed by principles of ongoing collective reflection and interpretation.

Polanyi and Cockburn drafted an initial outline of this paper. Two injured workers offered feedback on the outline, and began participating in the writing process. Subsequently, both experienced changes in life circumstances related to work and health issues, and were therefore unable to continue with writing. After an initial draft of the paper was developed, other research team members (both academic and injured worker) reviewed it, and feedback was incorporated into the final manuscript.

**Findings**

Before we report on the main findings related to this CBR project, a few comments about the overall process and impact of the project should be made.

First, over 70 injured workers participated in this project in some way, of which 18 were trained and active as “peer researchers.”

Second, the collective research findings were compelling (Making the system better, 2001): between one-quarter and one-third of injured workers surveyed were experiencing serious problems securing adequate compensation for their injuries, accessing appropriate medical treatment, and getting the support and accommodation they needed to return to meaningful and safe work. These findings were presented to the WCB/WSIB, injured workers groups, students, health and safety professionals, and academics. Articles were developed for peer-review journals, and a follow-up funding proposal to explore injured worker health care experiences was developed.

The project had a significant impact on many participants. According to the end of project survey, 80% of project participants learned “a lot more” about injured worker issues, and 73% learned “a lot more” about injured worker resources. Ninety-three percent felt that they were “helped” by the project.

One injured worker wrote:

When I was invited to the conference last year, it was like entering a new world. Here I was, among people who have been in the same situation... All of a sudden things seemed to be clearer and I seemed to fit in and learn and contribute. I was treated with respect and con-
sideration and that was a big part of my healing process at the time.

Participants spoke of the strong sense of mutual support and community that they found through their project participation.

Unknowingly, I was brought into a community of workers and academics that became a vital and enriching part of my new life as an injured worker.

There was also evidence that injured workers’ capacity both to deal with their own situations and take action to effect broader change was enhanced.

At the onset of this document research, I had a strong feeling, what possible asset could I be to such a huge undertaking as this? The answer to that was clear now. I was and could be useful to the group and project as an injured worker. Being hurt at work often takes one’s sense of feeling of being useful away. Being an active member of the document group has given me a positive drive to better myself and, hopefully, the lives of fellow injured workers. If I had this opportunity again, I would definitely become involved, without hesitation.

Finally, the project seemed to help injured workers feel that they were making a meaningful contribution to others:

The best thing about the experience was meeting other injured workers, realizing that there are others who need help and that this research might help others in the future.

In sum, the project achieved significant success. Success was constantly challenged, however, by three kinds of issues: a) constraints and implications of academic research funding; b) diverging goals and interests of academic researchers and injured worker community members; and c) other issues related to institutional structures of the university setting.

Funding of a CBR Project

Institutional sponsorship and researcher involvement from the University of Toronto allowed us to access research funds. The advantage of having adequate, multi-year funding is evident to those who have run previous CBR projects on a shoestring (e.g. Woodill & Jean-Baptise, 1992). The funds allowed us to hire a (part-time) project coordinator, cover expenses for conferences and meetings with injured workers, and provide injured workers with an honorarium for their participation.

However, there also may be a price to pay for external funding, depending on the source of funds and associated requirements. First, before granting funds, many agencies want to know detailed objectives, research questions, and project methods and activities. Therefore, in developing the proposal, we had to set up a project structure and focus. We tried to provide enough definition and clarity about the project to “sell” it to the funder, while at the same time leaving open the opportunity for injured worker participants to develop specific research questions, objectives, and activities that fit with their interests, concerns, and skills. By outlining the CBR process structure in the proposal, and limiting discussion to “expected” or “potential” issues for exploration, we were able to somewhat finesse these competing requirements.

Second, funding CBR through academic research grants constrains who is involved, what roles participants can play, and what activities are undertaken. In our case, salaries for principal investigators (PIs) were not fundable. Therefore, the PI has to be a salaried university faculty member, or come from an organization with sufficient resources to cover his or her time—a restrictive requirement. Members of small community organizations (which tend to be the characteristics of groups working with marginalized populations) are thus largely excluded from this role. This is compounded by a significant emphasis often placed on the publication and grant records in funding applications.

Third, funding requirements also affect who has power over the project. Official financial accountability for our project rested with the PI and her university department, thus institutionalizing a particular role for this person, and hindering our attempt to build collective control—and responsibility—for the project. Some terminology used in the application form (e.g. providing “a review of the literature”) also tends to link the proposed research to an established research field and set of methodologies, subtly discouraging more innovative, community-driven, participatory approaches.

Fourth, the project content and approach are also subtly shaped by the requirement that academic research proposals undergo a university-based ethics review. The timing of this review meant in our case that some definition of the research process and methods had to take place before injured workers were fully engaged. Further, our project ethics were assessed by university academics, some of whom had limited experience with, or knowledge of, either CBR or injured workers; this concerned some injured workers, and posed an additional barrier to building injured worker ownership over the project.

Fifth, projects become automatically identified
with the orientation and interests of the funding body. Our project was identified with an institution (WCB/WSIB) that lacks legitimacy with many injured workers. Injured worker participants were specifically concerned about the extent to which they would actually have a voice in a project the WCB/WSIB funded. And some participants were afraid that information they shared would be passed on to the WCB/WSIB and used against them in their claims, appeals, or cases more generally. To deal with these concerns, significant (unplanned) time had to be spent at the orientation conference and subsequent meetings to outline WCB/WSIB’s role in the project, stress that it had limited influence over the project, and reassure participants that their individual views would be kept confidential and anonymous.

Finally, having funding to provide honoraria for CBR participants was also a mixed blessing. In designing the project, we recognized the financial difficulties faced by injured workers, and also recognized that other project participants had jobs that either paid for their time on the project or allowed them the flexibility and financial security to participate. The project planning group, therefore, felt strongly that injured workers’ time and effort on the project should be compensated in some way, even if we were not able to pay an hourly wage. Based on the budgeted amount available, the project coordinating committee decided that peer researchers would receive four quarterly honorarium payments of $275 (assuming that they met a minimum required participation level in each quarter).

The honorarium was important to injured workers. This was made clear both directly from their comments and the gratitude they expressed, and indirectly, through the eagerness and anxiety they showed concerning when they would be paid.

Yet, a difficulty soon arose. The project coordinating committee had to decide how to compensate peer researchers equitably and fairly, given that some contributed more time to the project than others. Did some deserve a larger honorarium than others? What constituted the minimum involvement level necessary to receive an honorarium? At what level were we to compensate injured workers whose participation was hindered by various factors (sickness, task difficulty, forgetting meetings)?

Importantly, injured workers were involved in these decisions so that a dynamic of academic researchers paying (or not paying) injured workers was not established. We put significant effort into ensuring fairness and identifying minimum participation standards. Some injured workers still felt upset about not receiving an honorarium when they fell below the required participation threshold.

That the research approaches and tasks were being developed as we went along made it difficult to be clear in advance what should be required—and what was possible—for each injured worker to contribute.

Bringing CBR into the academic setting provides new opportunities for external funding, but researchers need to ensure that these opportunities do not subtly undermine the transformative principles, and democratic process, of CBR projects.

**Competing Goals of Participants in CBR**

Different participants bring different goals and agendas to CBR, especially in a university setting. In this project, a tension existed between university participants’ research and knowledge-generation goals, and the injured workers’ more action-oriented stance. The project planning group struggled at various times with a fundamental question: what was the legitimate scope of activity—and focus—for the project? Should the product of the orientation conference be limited to research or was there also space within the project for injured-worker defined actions that were more political (i.e., lobbying, education, protest, networking, etc.)? On one hand, we wanted to respect injured workers’ desires and encourage their ownership over, and direction of, the project. On the other hand, we were funded as a “research” project, and research is central to CBR. At the orientation conference, it emerged that some injured workers were interested in engaging in research, while others were more keen on taking action (feeling that their problems were already sufficiently understood). Project planning committee members indicated that while there was openness to action, conducting research was one of the project funder’s requirements. Moreover, we tried to make the case that further information could help to convince decision-makers of the prevalence and seriousness of injured worker concerns.

Imposing a research focus may have hindered our efforts to build injured worker control and ownership over the project. Indeed, injured worker participants sometimes spoke of the project as “your” (i.e., the project planning group’s) project, and it was, indeed, sometimes difficult to convey to injured workers that this was a joint project when some decisions had been made without their input.

At another level, academic participants were in the difficult position of wanting to work with the process and respect injured workers’ desire for social change, but also, almost subconsciously, of wanting to ensure that their time invested in the project would lead to some publishable output. Hence, the institutional requirements faced by aca-
demics conflicted to an extent with the workers’ action-oriented goals, who did not see academic publications as a high-priority action. Academic participants spoke of how difficult it was to find the time needed to support this intensive process of collaborative inquiry, given heavy teaching, research, and publishing requirements. In her written reflection, one academic wrote:

I was really pleased to be a part of the group, but felt bad that I didn’t have more time to give to it. It seemed we were always running out of time, and I found it hard [not] to feel that I wasn’t doing enough. If I was going to be involved in something like this again, I would think very, very carefully about what my involvement could be.

The academics’ desire to conduct systematic, in-depth, and publishable research also made the research process more time consuming, complex, and technical. At times, it therefore proved difficult to include injured workers without formal training as meaningful participants. Some injured workers felt intimidated by the challenge of conducting research for the first time, and found it difficult to follow discussions and contribute to decisions on research design and implementation.

Some of the academics’ emphasis on rigor also impacted the extent to which decision-making was democratic and participatory. For example, the strong desire on the part of academics, and some injured workers, to pursue a random sample of injured workers, only accessible through the WCB/WSIB database, raised opposition from a number of injured workers who did not trust the WCB/WSIB. These workers felt that WCB/WSIB involvement and endorsement of the survey would deter some injured workers from responding, thus skewing the results. They were also uncertain that the WCB/WSIB would actually deliver the survey to a truly random sample of injured workers. The academics in the study persisted in emphasizing a random sample’s scientific importance, and the decision was made to involve the WCB/WSIB, to the dismay of some injured workers.

The above tensions go to the heart of the CBR process, especially in a university setting. To some, CBR is advocacy—finding information to support justice for marginalized groups. To others, CBR is more of an open-ended investigation of issues—to explore the extent to which injustice exists. Indeed, those who are drawn to CBR usually have a dual commitment to truth, on one hand, and justice on the other. The relationship between truth and justice is complex. For example, when those suffering from injustice have the opportunity to reflect on and speak their truth, as they do in CBR, then a step has been taken toward justice. At other times though, a tension between the pursuit of truth and a commitment to justice can arise. In our project, injured workers hoped to discover data consistent with their own personal experiences. Some injured workers acknowledged that this desire colored the way that they collected, interpreted, and reported on data. Some interviewers found it hard to refrain from telling their own stories and perhaps leading interviewees to respond in kind. Likewise, document group researchers found it hard simply to report what they read without searching out and emphasizing themes that coincided with their own personal experiences.

All of this reflects fundamental ambiguities and tensions in CBR: ambiguity over how to balance the goals of advocating for justice on one hand, and seeking truth on the other, and the tension between assuming a priori that systematic inequity and injustice exist, and following an open and critical social analysis to determine whether, in fact, they do.

Despite these tensions between academic and community aims, some aspects of CBR do act to enhance the extent to which findings are rigorous and robust. For example, in our project, the lengthy and intense contact between the project planning group and injured workers helped to identify key and relevant research questions based on real-life challenges injured workers faced. As well, injured workers’ involvement helped to deepen the analysis and interpretation of results, and opened up new ways of understanding and explaining the findings.

The University as Institutional Base for CBR

Having a university as the institutional base for the project brought both infrastructural supports and structural constraints. We benefited from a number of in-kind contributions from the University: use of a shared office space with telephone and computer, access to fax machine, photocopier, and meeting rooms. As well, we received support administering and reporting on the project budget from the department’s business officer, and some administrative support from the department’s receptionist.

Physical space is a necessity for CBR projects. However, borrowed university space—as in this case—may not meet community needs. Injured workers from our project expressed concern at various times about the lack of comfort of chairs, the poor air quality and lack of fresh air in windowless rooms, and odors from chemicals used for cleaning floors.

Other subtle barriers to participation included lack of parking and lack of street access to the project office in the evening. We had some budget for
reimbursement of parking expenses, but this did not fully cover all barriers (e.g., lack of a car, costs associated with car travel, etc.).

Some barriers to participation were anticipated and addressed, in part, because we had an injured worker on the project planning committee who raised potential issues. For example, we approached the Obus-Form Company and received a donation of eight back rests which were used to improve seating comfort for injured workers. We also tried to limit the length of meetings and incorporate regular breaks.

Basing the project at a university site created a certain climate or culture that contributed to some participants’ sense of insecurity or alienation. For example, the sign on the shared project office read “Psychosocial Research,” which elicited comments and concern from more than one injured worker (“psychosocial” is a term which is sometimes used pejoratively to deny a workplace contribution to injuries, and instead ascribe them to the mental state or individual psychological susceptibility of workers). The label on the door was changed to “Research Office,” although this took several weeks.

While we initially worked to alternate the meeting location between the University and community locations to reflect the spirit of equal partnership, the convenience and consistency of having meetings at the University where project files and four project participants were located, and which had better resources (e.g., conference-call phone, space for larger meetings, a kitchen) and a central location accessible to public transit, meant that most meetings were held there.

Finally, administering PR projects within large bureaucracies such as universities can also slow down important administrative procedures. Delays in processing injured worker honoraria checks was a particular concern here. Since injured worker participation levels tended to rise and fall, participant cheques could not be requested from the University until we knew who had participated sufficiently to receive an honorarium. (Injured workers argued strongly that injured worker researchers should meet or surpass a minimum participation level in order to receive their honorarium.) This requirement, and the centralized University processing of cheques sometimes caused delays. As most injured workers relied quite heavily on the money, this caused unnecessary hardship and tended to undermine the trust we were working to build with injured workers.

Final Discussion and Conclusions

Based on data collected during a project with injured workers, we have reflected above on challenges and tensions arising in CBR. We have left unexplored, tensions and challenges that we feel were less related to the university setting of the project, and more inherent to the CBR process itself. We have focused on institutional constraints arising from academic funding: the challenge of bridging academic and injured worker goals and interests (specifically the difficulty of bridging conducting rigorous research and stimulating community action), and opportunities and constraints connected with implementing the project in a university setting.

In general, creating an equal partnership between groups—academic and community—with different levels of skills, resources, and power is a tall task (Mason & Boutillier, 1997). An explicit and mutual negotiation of the power between researchers and participants is a constant challenge (Soltis-Jarret, 1997).

While CBR has the potential to contribute to research, education, and community action, academic researchers need to work hard to maintain their commitment to CBR principles, and sustain the reflexive and transparent relationships that the processes demand. Including students in CBR projects can present challenges for both faculty and students involved.

CBR can stimulate critical thinking, learning, capacity-building, and action on pressing community and social issues. But the approach is not without dangers and pitfalls. We have tried to illustrate some challenges in the hope that CBR can be practiced reflectively and effectively to the mutual benefit of the academy and community of which they are a part.

Notes

1 Most injured workers in the project preferred to call the Workplace Safety & Insurance Board by its previous name (Workers’ Compensation Insurance Board, or WCB), which they felt better reflected its purpose. We therefore refer to the WSIB as WCB/WSIB in this paper.

2 The WCB/WSIB has somewhat relaxed this requirement.

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