Gender Based Analysis+ in Alberta's Big Cities: The Effects on Local Organizing

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Abstract

Calgary and Edmonton have each launched strategies and initiatives to incorporate Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) processes into their policy development in the last few years. Do these plans make a difference to grassroots organizers and non-profits working toward equity in these communities? Through seventeen semi-structured interviews with members of city administration, front line workers, grassroots organizers and heads of various non-profits, this thesis works to develop a better understanding of how and if municipal strategies have an impact on local organizing.

The majority of research on GBA+ examines the challenges of implementing GBA+ policy processes and the subsequent outcomes in international or Canadian federal contexts. This thesis will address gaps by focusing on gender-mainstreaming approaches in the municipalities of Calgary and Edmonton, and the impacts on local organizers outside of administration. Participants shared experiences of navigating bureaucratic structures to affect change and GBA+'s limited capacity for radical change. Furthermore, participants discussed the influence of private and public funding on equity-related organizing and links to extractive industries.

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1. Introduction

The fact is, the policy isn't connected to people's lived realities most of the time, and so policymakers have to be reminded of who are we designing this for? Who is this policy going to impact? – Crystal, Research Participant

There was space for every bright shiny object, every possible political distraction. Kooky academic theories like intersectionality found their way into yesterday's throne speech. – Alberta Premier Jason Kenney, Sept 24, 2020.

Does gender make a difference in how people experience snow removal? Or public transit? Or subsidized housing? Alberta is home to over 2 million women, including 130,000 Indigenous women, and 430,000 female immigrants. In a ranking of the top 26 cities to be a woman in Canada, Calgary ranked 21st and Edmonton 25th (Scott 2019). Women in Edmonton make an average of 64 cents for every dollar a man earns, and racialized women even less. In Calgary, women make up 3 of 15 elected positions at City Hall, in Edmonton its 2 out of 13. Violence against women is among the highest in Canada; in 2018, 23,247 women and children requesting admission to an emergency shelter in Alberta were turned away due to a lack of capacity (ACWS 2019). Alberta is a province of extremes, divided among gender, income, race, and urban and rural. In striving toward equity, policy development is just one piece of a complex puzzle with potential to level the playing field. Municipal governments in Edmonton and Calgary have made commitments to improve equity and taken steps to integrate a gender lens into their policies and programming. But how successful are new forms of policy analysis and development in municipalities with strong roots in colonialism, neoliberalism, and gendered oppression? This leads to my research question: *How has the implementation of GBA+ related municipal strategies/initiatives in Calgary and Edmonton, Alberta affected non-profit organizations and grassroots advocacy work toward gender equity?*

My interest in this research grew from of my background in feminist organizing in Calgary, largely connected to my previous employment. I started working at the Women's Centre of Calgary in 2014 and wore several different hats, moving from communications and fundraising to community engagement and some advocacy. Over five years, I worked to build connections between women who came to the space looking for a sense of community and supports, and local groups organizing on a variety of topics like poverty reduction and access to family courts. Part of the goal was to ensure that women with lived experiences had their voices heard, and were able to become engaged in civic processes or advocate for the changes they would like to see. The open environment meant that every day I was interacting with dozens of women from all walks of life with a variety of interests and skills that they shared with peers to build a strong community. Together, we strived to think critically about how explicit and implicit power structures shaped how we worked together. The outreach work was extensive and highlighted to me the mixed levels of support or understanding for the benefits of feminism in public life. I also saw the influence that various public and private funders had on programming and limiting public calls to action, even when those limitations were never made explicit.

One avenue for change that we eyed hopefully was a potential shift in policy processes to implement Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) or Gender Mainstreaming, two similar approaches that have continued to gain traction globally over the past several decades. A province or municipality taking up the mantle of GBA+ would, in theory, increase equitable outcomes and therefore reduce the pressure on community leaders and members to organize on certain issues. Edmonton and Calgary have each introduced women or gender-focused advisory groups and committees respectively in recent history, with mixed results. In 2019, thanks in part to work from groups like the Women's Centre of Calgary, the YWCA, Vibrant Communities

Calgary, Momentum, Calgary Equal Voice and the success of the Notice of Motion, the City of Calgary launched a Gender Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy with the mandate to provide Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) on municipal programs and projects. It is unclear how much collaboration or communication there was with Edmonton, the capital of the province, which launched a Women's Initiative with a mandate to "ensure women's rights, issues, and opinions are represented fairly and equally from every background including social, cultural, physical and occupational" in 2013 (edmonton.ca 2020). Both cities established advisory groups to help shape the strategies moving forward: Calgary launched a Gender and Diversity Advisory Committee and Edmonton hosts the Women's Advocacy Voice of Edmonton Committee (WAVE) made up of community members tasked with informing city administration and council on gender mainstreaming.

As previous research and findings from this project have uncovered, GBA+ is not as transformative as would be necessary to challenge structural oppressions within patriarchal and colonial institutions. As I will explore further throughout the thesis, it is shaped by who holds political power, which limits acceptable kinds of change and the scope of discourse. Most research on the efficacy of GBA+ focuses on international policy, or implementation across federal levels of government. There is little written about GBA+ adoption by municipal governments, especially in North America. Research that captures impressions and experiences of GBA+ via interviews tended to focus on people working within government, not those potentially advocating for or impacted by policy changes in community. There is also a wealth of research on equity in municipalities examining urban design and planning, however less so with a lens on injustice and links to resource extraction industries, or the role of community organizing in urban planning in this context. Additionally, this research project explores the

challenges communities identified when working toward equity with a focus on gender, or toward equity with a broader, intersectional lens.

Over the course of this thesis, I will outline my theoretical approach and methodology, and I will analyze the data collected by weaving together lived experiences with references to existing literature. My theoretical approach is largely based on the writings of Leanne Betasamosake Simpson and David Harvey. Harvey's work informs a critical perspective on neoliberalism in Alberta's governance, while Simpson's writing about "Indigenous freedom through radical resistance" recognizes the ongoing impacts of colonialism and radical reimagining of governance that is not founded on "enclosure, authoritarian power, and hierarchy" (Simpson 2017, p. 22). Together, these thinkers provide a way to frame the existing political, economic and social environment of Calgary and Edmonton, and consider what comes next. The methodology, a combination of key points from feminist and Indigenous texts, focuses on the voices of community advocates and a commitment to challenging structural forms of oppression. To accomplish this, I gathered data through semi-structured one-on-one interviews with seventeen research participants that covered their day-to-day activities, the perceived benefits and challenges of advocacy work toward equity, and influence of different sources of funding. Interviews were transcribed and analyzed using an exploratory coding technique to uncover themes and trends.

Once this foundation is laid, this research project turns to the experiences of community advocates to evaluate the extent to which municipal governments' approach to policy development and relatively new commitments to a gender lens has an impact on various communities. There are two main areas of analysis: Gender-Based Analysis + and Funding. In the first, I outline the structures of advisory groups and committees which are used to introduce

and apply a gender lens that exist in Calgary and Edmonton. Then, I weave together existing research on the benefits and limits of GBA+ with the opinions and experiences of local advocates to better understand how this policy approach contributes to change in communities while upholding the restrictions built into municipalities' colonial and sexist foundations. A process that looks at outcomes or impacts of programming or policy on different groups can improve equity, however it is not designed to target the root causes of inequity or oppression. Like many municipal strategies or policies, GBA+'s power to lead to radical systems overhaul is limited, but many advocates and community organizers are still generally supportive of any movement toward justice and equity.

In the Funding chapter, I link the reliance on extractive industries for public and private funds, and the subsequent effects on charities, non-profits and grassroots groups. Many research participants shared how either their sources of funding shaped their advocacy strategy, or how the lack of funding limited their capacity and freed their scope. In some cases, refusing to accept certain funds can be framed as an act of resisting dominant colonial forces and imagining new futures. Refusing funds from resource extraction industries is one example. Oil and gas industry is practically omnipresent across the province; provincial budgets are reliant on revenue from the tar sands, they donate millions of dollars to support local charities, and they generate many social, economic and environmental inequities and injustices. Future research could take a closer look at the power within organizing people outside of non-profits and charities, and their contributions to increasing equity in their communities. This would also mean connecting more directly with people with lived experience who do not work for a non-profit or identify as a leader in a grassroots group.

Gender Based Analysis Plus has the potential to improve the status of women in many ways. It also has the potential to solidify and sustain some forms of oppression. How this manifests in Alberta's largest cities will make up the bulk of this thesis. Ultimately, this work may help inform other municipalities looking to establish similar approaches to examining policy with a gender lens. It can also aid advocates in determining whether this is the approach they want to promote in their own cities, and have realistic expectations for the kinds of outcomes that they may see. For the research participants of this project, I hope this writing will reaffirm a sense of solidarity between feminist advocates working in a political climate that, at the time of writing, is in opposition to many of their core values. There were more similarities in experiences, opinions and goals for change than there were differences. Gender Based Analysis Plus is just one piece of a complex puzzle when working toward social justice.

2. Theoretical Approaches

When preparing for this research project and in the course of analyzing interview transcripts, I relied on a number of writers and texts to guide a theoretical framework which combines literature on colonialism and neoliberalism with links to gender and extractivism. I refer heavily to the work of Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, in particular *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance* (2017), for linkages between colonialism and resource extraction, and Indigenous conceptions about resistance and imagined futures. By writing from a decolonial perspective, Simpson challenges the foundations of Canadian institutions like governments and their organizing principles. Before diving into Simpson's work in this chapter, I will lay out David Harvey's definitions of neoliberalism, make connections to the Alberta context, and outline the gendered impacts of this evolution of capitalism and its influence on governance. The goal is to provide a framework for understanding the neoliberal environment in which GBA+ work in municipalities is taking place, followed by a theoretical perspective that can inform *what comes next* with roots in decolonialism. In the words of Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck and Angie Morrill, Indigenous feminist theories "offer new and reclaimed ways of thinking" that not only impact Indigenous and settler communities, but "also how feminist theories can imagine and realize different modes of nationalism" and governance (2013, p. 9).

I would be remiss to cite these incredible scholars and thinkers throughout this chapter without recognising the support and knowledge I have gained from connecting to so many women and non-binary folks in my daily life. Some may be unpublished in the academic sense, but their knowledge should not be relegated to an acknowledgements section. Here is where I'd like to thank (in no particular order) Susan Gillies, Rhoda Mitchell, Pamela Beebe, Bobbi-Jo

Amos, Nevena Ivanovic, Barbara Santos, Jacie Alook, Olivia Golosky, Nicole Montford and Rachael Chaisson for introducing me to many of the concepts discussed below, and taking the time to talk through my countless questions and misunderstandings. Their knowledge has helped shape my worldview and exists in every sentence.

There is a trepidation that comes with using a theoretical framework developed by Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars to think about the relationships between colonialism, neoliberalism and patriarchy. Many texts about colonialism are focused on land, people's relationship to land, and federal-level policies about the elimination of Indigenous people in order to access and extract from the land. In shifting this lens to examine municipal policy development processes that primarily examine gender, I, as a researcher and writer, will need to ensure that I am not appropriating these perspectives and pasting them onto a context for which they were not intended. Municipal policies do oversee land management and usage, but that did not emerge as a major theme or trend in conversations with research participants. As I will discuss in the Methodology section, I aim to participate in a conversation about the ongoing manifestations of colonialism without speaking for Indigenous peoples. In refusing colonial constructions of settler governments, Simpson is also rejecting the current form of neoliberalism that is especially popular in the context of Alberta.

Neoliberalism and Gender

Let us begin with a general definition of neoliberalism, specifically referring to aspects that are most relevant to the context of this thesis. David Harvey has an approachable summary of the characteristics of neoliberalism in theory: "the neoliberal state should favour strong individual private property rights, the rule of law, and the institutions of freely functioning

markets and free trade" (2005, p. 64). In essence, the state largely exists to protect and promote the rights of individuals, private enterprise is key to growth and innovation, and as such, public sectors are best privatized and deregulated (Harvey 2005, pp. 64–66). In terms of governance, democracy is "suspicious," and instead leadership by experts and elites is preferred. In addition, Harvey (2005, p. 69) argues that neoliberal states prefer that citizens join voluntary charitable organizations instead of some form of collective organizing or labour union, as the former is less effective at challenging neoliberal norms.

These definitions are particularly useful for this thesis considering the political and economic climate of Alberta over the past few decades. Alberta has a long history of conservative governments at the provincial level, while city councils for Edmonton and Calgary are made up of a variety of political leanings. While Harvey is largely writing on a global scale in *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (2005), many of these characteristics including austerity budgets turn up in provincial or municipal settings as well. When cuts to social services amount to a reduction in public services, the issue becomes explicitly gendered. I turn to writers like Nancy Fraser (1989), Marilyn Waring (1999) and their contemporaries to link Neoliberalism to patriarchal structures. Women rely on social services like child care or income supports more than their male counterparts. Women are more often employed by these sectors and therefore face significant job losses or wage losses when public services are cut or privatized (Horton 2019). And last but not least, women perform most of the unpaid care labour or reproductive labour that makes private enterprise on this scale possible. When public services are reduced, women's labour (especially that of racialized women) fills the ever-increasing gaps (Elson 2017, p. 54). Women's interests are "conflated with family interests" and society is dependent on their labour to continue this particular "model of social reproduction" (Brodie 2008, p. 150).

Harvey (2005, p. 76) and Fraser (1989, p. 155) both describe neoliberalism as an ideology that shifts citizenship from the collective to the individual, with unique effects on women. Poverty is framed as a personal failing with blame falling on individuals and their "choices," rather than on structural forms of oppression including sexism, racism, and ablism. Women, people of colour, disabled people, low-income people, Indigenous peoples and others are disproportionately marginalized due to the ongoing effects of settler colonialism and neoliberalism, while also being categorized as special interest groups and villainized for accessing entitlements.[1] As Brodie writes, this construction places women's interests "outside of and in opposition to the interests of 'ordinary Canadians'" (2008 p. 155). Albertan social programs, including a short-lived $25/day childcare program, health care, and income supports for people with disabilities, have seen significant cuts or increasingly stringent qualifications in recent months despite an ongoing global pandemic.

At a municipal level, this manifests in long, invasive applications for everything from subsidized housing to subsidized transit passes. While the values of neoliberalism are often (but not always) in conflict with the guiding principles of many non-profits, the discourse does shape the ways in which these groups are able to function. Organizations with limited spaces and resources will refer to intake processes as a way to point people toward the most appropriate program, when in practice they can become tools for barring those who do not meet certain qualifications. Grants for non-profits tend to prioritize individual outcomes, not broad-scale advocacy work that addresses the root causes of social issues. Registered charities potentially have more access to funds but further limits on their advocacy work and political engagement.

[1] A note on language; the disability community increasingly uses 'disabled people' instead of people with disabilities or people-first language. I've chosen here to follow their lead.

This will be expanded on in chapter 5, which focuses on funding.[2]

Colonialism

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson is a Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar, writer and artist who writes extensively about Nishnaabeg intellectual practices, politics and land. Her work spans theory, practice and occasionally storytelling to describe contemporary Indigenous ways of life and describe alternatives to settler colonial logics. While her work is not concentrated on neoliberalism, there are references to the governance style and the links between land, capitalism, and colonialism throughout her writing. When defining colonialism, she writes that land is central, and "everything else, whether it is legal or policy or economic or social, whether it was the Indian Act or residential schools or gender violence, was part of the machinery" (Simpson 2017, p. 15). Colonialism is the continued process of elimination, not assimilation, of Indigenous peoples in order to extract value from their traditional lands.

I find parallels between Simpson's work and Patrick Wolfe's (2006) popular description of colonialism as an ongoing structure (machinery) rather than a completed historical event. In more recent work with David Lloyd, Wolfe draws a link between colonialism and contemporary neoliberalism. Settler colonialism is "not some transitional phase that gives way to – or even provides a laboratory for – the emergent global order," but is instead foundational to that order (Lloyd and Wolfe 2016, p. 113). Simpson also overlaps with Wolfe in her own definition: "I certainly do not experience it as a historical incident that has unfortunate consequences for the

[2] Preparation for interviews included reviewing annual reports and Canada Revenue Agency filings to determine major funding sources. During the interviews, I asked participants if various funding sources (government, corporate grants or individual donors) had an influence on their advocacy work. When relevant, I also asked if CRA charity regulations had any influence on the scope or activities of advocacy work. While this made up a small number of the overall interview questions, several participants had much to say on the subject.

present. I experience [colonialism] as a gendered structure and a series of complex and overlapping processes that work together as a cohort to maintain the structure" (Simpson 2017, p. 45). Colonialism lives on in the institutions and policies that continue to eliminate Indigenous cultures and peoples. The elimination of a people who have the earliest claims to this territory is driven by white supremacy, which in turn has roots in the quest for capital.

Neoliberalism produces, in part, the context that Indigenous peoples and allies are resisting. In *As We Have Always Done,* Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2017) uses specific language to distinguish between resistance and resurgence: the former acts against an external force — like an immediate threat from a settler colonial structure — while the latter refers to strength and growth from within Indigenous communities. Resurgence has a slippery definition, she adds, "it is now used in all kinds of ways, some of which feed nicely into discourses around reconciliation and neoliberalism, and others that remain in critical opposition to both" (p. 48), but it ultimately is related to revolution from within (p. 49). I appreciate the use of 'resurgence' instead 'resilience,' which is easily co-opted to individualize systemic issues, placing responsibility on a single person for the problems created by settler colonial structures.[3] Similarly, 'resurgence' is different from 'reconciliation' in that it does not concern building bridges with settlers in a manner that compromises both parties. The individualization of structural issues which 'resurgence' counters is similar to the process attributed to neoliberalism by Fraser and Harvey.

This distinction between terms also places settler feminist allies, who take up a disproportionate amount of space in gender-related activism in Alberta, in a unique role.

[3] Simpson adds that she is "strategic and deliberate" in using the word 'radical' in front of 'resurgence' (p. 49). References to cultural resurgence with a focus on healing, storytelling, art and dance are increasingly prevalent in "reconciliation discourse" and depoliticized, whereas Simpson argues radical and cultural resurgence are "inseparable," connected to land, and challenge settler colonialism (p. 49).

Simpson does not write for a white reader, so here I venture on my own a bit. White feminists are not invited (for good reason) to be leaders in resurgence. However, we can learn from the foundational values outlined above to guide resistance work alongside and led by Indigenous Elders and activists. Simpson writes that by working with Nishnaabeg Elders, she learned about a worldview that "didn't recognize or endlessly accommodate whiteness, it didn't accept the inevitability of capitalism, and it was a disruption to the hierarchy of heteropatriarchy" (Simpson 2017, p. 17). She learned from her community leaders about the generative qualities of refusing settler colonialism.

Simpson regularly blurs the lines between theory, praxis, and story. She quotes poetry, includes traditional legends and in the same texts, writes that "practices are politics" and "processes are governance" (2017, p. 20). Simpson also refers to Glen Coulthard's concept of grounded normativity to describe the basis of Indigenous political systems and governance processes. Grounded normativity captures Indigenous practices connected to land, which then informs relationships with people and other living things. In early writings together, Simpson and Coulthard (2016, p. 254) describe grounded normativity as a method of deep reciprocity and way of living founded on "nonauthoritarian, nondominating, nonexploitive" manners. It "creates process-centered modes of living that generate profoundly different conceptualizations of nationhood and governmentality — ones that aren't based on enclosure, authoritarian power, and hierarchy" (Simpson 2017, p. 22). Grounded normativity supports continual forms of refusal and frames it as generative, as a "living alternative" (Simpson 2017, p. 33). Refusal of colonial oppression, refusal of heteropatriarchy, and refusal of structural racism opens up avenues for new ways of governing and new ways of recognizing the value of community over financial or political power.

How does this relate to the question of gender mainstreaming in a local context? Gender Based Analysis Plus is often referred to as a process, a practice, a lens, a strategy, and/or a tool. All considered, GBA+ is inherently political; when implemented effectively – and even when not – it becomes part of a governance structure. That said, it is also an inherently western approach to revising and developing policy that has very limited if completely non-existent connections to the land. In my personal experience reading through a variety of GBA+ toolkits and handbooks, there is at best a reflection on Indigenous cultural practices, but I have never seen a call to return lands or shift ownership of territories as part of the application or outcome of a gender lens. For example, in the free, online Status of Women GBA+ course, students work through applying GBA+ to a forestry case study. According to the course, "in Indigenous communities, the forest represents both a means of economic survival and a traditional source of spiritual well-being. If they are not considered, economic diversification strategies could jeopardize local traditions and traditional land management practices." The course then presents three options for outcomes, none of which recommend returning full ownership of territory to local Indigenous leaders. The framing of cultural practices as one of many aspects of intersectionality to consider may also paint Indigenous peoples as one of many 'others' in a checklist, instead of the original keepers of the land. I hope to reference Simpson and Coulthard's commitment to place-based, non-authoritarian and anti-racist relationships and processes to consider how I can meaningfully complicate applications of GBA+ that exist in colonial municipal governance structures. GBA+, as I will explain in detail in later chapters, does not have the capacity to direct radical structural change. It is not decolonial. A reimagining of governance at its core can shift the discourse or realm of possibility in terms of equity in community settings.

"Fixing" the "social ills" without addressing the politics of land and body dispossession

> serves only to reinforce settler colonialism, because it doesn't stop the system that causes the harm in the first place while also creating the opportunity for neoliberalism to benevolently provide just enough ill-conceived programming and "funding" to keep us in a constant state of crisis, which inevitably they market as our fault. – Simpson 2017 p. 42

Simpson's quote also serves to critique the colonial roots of many charitable organizations and non-profits. Not only are the larger political and private funding bodies implicated in furthering colonial logics, the historical and sometimes contemporary operation of many non-profits also works this way. As came up in the interviews, many groups focusing on domestic violence, food security, education or housing are aware of their colonial histories and past violence against Indigenous people, and are working to end this particular kind of oppression. These comments will be addressed further in the analysis chapters. Whether they are able to do so without a complete and radical overturn in leadership, models of work, or rejection of significant funding is a question worth exploring.

Settler colonialism first and foremost targets Indigenous peoples. The institutions and structures that enact and propel settler colonialism are ubiquitous in Alberta. Settler colonialism is a system that sustains discrimination against Indigenous peoples for the express purpose of removing them from the land, and *someone else then taking ownership.* Those who benefit the most, especially in the context of Alberta, are individuals and corporations who aim to maximize earnings from resources extracted from these lands. This includes the most obvious examples of infrastructure responsible for extracting bitumen from the tar sands—from pipelines to the gleaming, branded office towers in downtown Mohkinstsis, now known as Calgary. 'I ♥ AB Oil and Gas' bumper stickers and lawn signs are sprinkled through nearly every neighbourhood. It is exceedingly difficult if not impossible to tease apart the role and influence of these "producers"

from most aspects of everyday life, including but not limited to community organizing, local governance, and conceptualizations of race and gender. Dispossession is acceptable to colonizers when extraction is made in the name of economic development, and a minimum of effort is made to pass on the financial benefits regardless of harms.

Resource Extraction with a Gender Lens

While settler colonialism is adaptable. It has not fundamentally changed in motivation or goal. One tactic of colonialism is to divide and create tension among Indigenous peoples, and between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous people with the goal of further consolidating power, neutralizing resistance and fueling extractivism (Simpson 2017, p. 46). Policy announcements, inquiries and subsequent reports acknowledge a history of violence and set out recommendations, but are unable or unwilling to dismantle industry on Indigenous lands. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson lists the government-led processes of Truth and Reconciliation and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls as examples; in each case critics who argued that these projects did not go far enough were identified as radicals or ideologists "unwilling to work together for the betterment of Indigenous peoples and Canadians" (Simpson L. 2017 p. 46). Mohawk scholar Audra Simpson (2016, p. 12) is suspicious of calls to reconcile "with something that is so violent, so relentless" and argues that the "settler state is asking to forgive and to forget, with no land back, no justice and no peace." The 94 Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission address child welfare, education, language, health, and justice. While some progress has been made, there is no movement on calls to "repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery" or recognize Indigenous title claims (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2012).

Recognizing title claims would require relinquishing access to land slated for extractive development or pipeline routes. In 2020, Indigenous protestors organized to stall the construction of the Coastal GasLink pipeline through the Wet'suwet'en First Nations territory in British Columbia. Coastal GasLink had secured benefit impact agreements with the elected band councils of Wet'suwet'en, but not the consent of hereditary chiefs. Protests cropped up in solidarity across the country, and both Indigenous and settler demonstrators faced a significant amount of criticism. Protests against oil and gas infrastructure in Alberta were targeted in the summer of 2020 via the passing of Bill 1, the Critical Infrastructure Defence Act. The Bill, introduced as a response to Coastal GasLink protests, levies huge fines against any inference with "essential infrastructure" (Heine and Twa 2020). According to Heine and Twa, these activities could also include vigils in public spaces that spill onto streets, workers rallying in parking lots outside their work, or disabled people protesting cuts to supports while taking up space on sidewalks. In this example, the Alberta government prioritized the desires of an Oil and Gas company over the individual and collective rights of Indigenous leaders to protest and to inhabit their own lands, regardless of commitments to improve relationships. This crosses over into municipal purview when local police forces enforce these laws on protestors and activists.

In *As We Have Always Done*, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's chapter on capitalism and resource extraction begins with a transcription of an interview between her and Naomi Klein, a Canadian activist who writes extensively about globalization and climate justice. Here, Simpson (2017, p. 75) links extraction and elimination to colonialism and capitalism noting that not only is the land regarded primarily as a resource, so is her body and the bodies of her children. This is where we can draw parallels to theories on the gendered impacts of capitalism and neoliberalism, namely the dependence on women's care labour to replicate the conditions necessary to extract

value. Audra Simpson also connects body to land in her work, writing that Indigenous women's bodies "have historically been rendered less valuable because of what they are taken to represent: land, reproduction, Indigenous kinship and governance, an alternative to heteropatriarchal and Victorian roles of descent" (A. Simpson 2016, p. 8). The Indian Act, for instance, initially made Indigenous women on reserve the property of their husbands, removed Indian Status from women who married off-reserve and installed patriarchal governance structures as a "legal form of femicide" (A. Simpson 2016, p. 5). Court battles addressing the gendered inequities in assigning Indian Status from the Act have resulted in amendments as recently as 2019. Indigenous women in particular are subjected to multiple forms of violence from settler colonialism and dispossession.

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson takes on the necessary discussion of queering colonial narratives around Indigenous gender identities and sexualities with great skill, however I will also be bringing in a few other scholars to flesh out theories on decolonizing concepts of gender. Heteropatriarchy is not an accidental bedfellow to colonialism, but an integral part of the machinery. Identifying and classifying oppression of Indigenous women and settler colonialism into two separate issues creates a hierarchy and only serves to divide efforts for equity.[4] Indigenous women who critique "band politics, or distribution of resources, or violence against women and children, sometimes find they are slapped with the label feminist as a pejorative" writes Joyce Green in the introduction to her collection on Indigenous feminisms (2017, p. 6). On the other hand, white mainstream feminists have been "roundly criticized for failing to consider how especially middle-class white women and Western societies and governments are

[4] It is possible to draw parallels between the tensions that exist between advocating for decolonization in governance and advocating to challenge heteropatriarchy, and the tension between Gender Based Analysis Plus approaches and Intersectional/Equity centered approaches. Combining the two acknowledges shared foundations and impacts, but installs one as a priority. This will be explored further in the GBA+ chapter.

implicated in the oppression of women who are less privileged" (Green 2017, p. 8). When linking colonialism to patriarchy, she points out that assumptions or conceptions of white supremacy are predicated on assumptions of Indigenous inferiority. The racism is "instrumental," meaning it is a tool that diminishes the humanity of Indigenous women to further benefit settlers. Settlers, especially in the Alberta context, also benefit from racist and sexist narratives that link masculinity to conquering the frontier, cowboy pioneering and dominating 'wild' lands via resource extraction (Haluza-Delay and Carter 2016). As a brief aside, Lugones complicates conceptions of gender by reminding readers that gender is performed in different ways by different Indigenous cultures; while links between colonial oppression and heteropatriarchy do exist, the effects are not universal (2020, p. 28). To essentialize gender within Indigenous groups and imply it was/is always a social organizing principle is itself an act of colonial thinking (Lugones 2020, p. 29).

Lastly, let us loop back to Simpson's writing on resistance and refusal and stir in the work of Winona LaDuke and Deborah Cowen (2020) on "Beyond Wiindigo Infrastructure." LaDuke and Cowen also refer to Simpson's writing to build an analogy between the greed of the Wiindigo monster and settler infrastructure like pipelines and sawmills.[5] Wiindigo economics is "organized by an ethos of disposability and accumulation" (LaDuke and Cowen 2020, p. 253) with no consideration of the violence inherent in that ethos. Throughout the article, the scholars share a few examples of Indigenous nations rejecting settler infrastructure developments and instead building their own green energy projects, food programs or otherwise working to strengthen communities from within. In the end, they explain that the story of the Wiindigo shows a path forward. Rejecting settler infrastructures, physical and economic, and building

[5] A Wiindigo is a "cannibal monster of Anishinaabe legend" and a metaphor for human indulgence or greed (LaDuke and Cowen 2020, p. 244).

something generative in opposition "is the slow, transformative feminist work of social re/production. It is the return of life forces" (LaDuke and Cowen 2020, p. 264).

Altogether, understanding the neoliberal aims of the Alberta government and the ongoing effects of colonialism across the province are the main theoretical framings that guide the construction and analysis of this research project. Colonialism laid a foundation for settlers to appropriate lands and build structures that continue to oppress Indigenous peoples in the name of economic development. Neoliberalism explains the characteristics specific to Alberta's political history; a focus on individual "freedoms" instead of collective citizenship and equity. In both cases, gender oppression places women, non-binary people, transgender people and other gender non-conforming folks at a disadvantage. Gender Based Analysis theoretically has the potential to mitigate or challenge some of the inequity resulting from both colonialism and neoliberalism, but in practice is limited by these very frameworks.

3. Methodology and Methods

Research Question: How has the implementation of GBA+ related municipal strategies/initiatives in Calgary and Edmonton, Alberta affected non-profit organizations and grassroots advocacy work toward gender equity?

Methodology

There are many shifting pieces of information, contexts and perspectives that come together for this research project. In this chapter, I will outline my methodology and methods, the challenges of doing feminist research during COVID-19, data collection, validity and lastly my analytical approach.

For the purposes of this research project, I primarily refer to a combination of key points pulled from various Feminist and Indigenous Methodologies. As there is no singular, established Feminist or Indigenous Methodology, I culled certain characteristics described by a number of scholars that best fit the research question and scope. These include 1) a focus on the voices of grassroots advocates, and 2) a commitment to challenging structural forms of oppression. These methodologies informed the process of research design, data collection and parts of the analysis. Together with the theoretical approaches outlined earlier, these two guiding principles contribute to an analysis that questions and critiques established power relations in a systematic way.

Feminist methodologies challenge established norms with respect to what constitutes knowledge. They create space to decenter white, masculinist, capitalist, heteronormative hierarchies of power. Traditional feminist methodologies have, at times, replicated some of these structures by creating new sets of norms that continue to center white experiences or fail to

consider certain forms of oppression. This is not meant to dismiss these methodological foundations, but to recognize the need for continued reflection and discomfort. Indigenous methodologies have further propelled conversations about knowledge by again calling for the dismantling of the privileged authority that white experts hold (be they policy advisors or academics).

In her writing on 25 Indigenous Projects in *Decolonial Methodologies*, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) clearly outlines central tenets to Indigenous research methodology and practical methods. I found this bridging between methodology and praxis to be instructive in my own work and saw many parallels between the New Zealand and Canadian contexts. Tuhiwai Smith's list includes, but is not limited to:

- Connecting: relationships between people, spaces and places
- Reading: criticizing Western histories
- Envisioning: celebrating hopeful futures
- Democratizing: restoring Indigenous notions of governance
- Sharing: knowledge for the collective benefit

Not all of the tenets are applicable to this research project, however many have informed the research design. For example, policy development is often an exercise in relationships between people, and studying those connections also benefits from open, honest communication. Criticizing dominant narratives about the white, pioneering Western prairie histories informed and complicated both what is the norm in Albertan cities, and in what ways change is feasible. Personally, I find it easy to grow cynical and discouraged with the pace of progress on equity fronts therefore choosing to celebrate moments of success and the possibility of a hopeful future shifted the focus and tone of much of my analysis. Together, the guidelines encourage research

that is critical of Western concepts of "human nature" that are steeped in racist and colonial understanding of "what counts as real" (Tuhiwai Smith 2012, p. 96). The 25 Projects describe a set of core values with which to approach research questions.

In regards to feminist methodologies, I rely on a number of scholars including Nancy Naples (2003), Gesa Kirsh (1999) and Sharlene Hesse-Biber (2007). All three refer extensively to the work of Patricia Hill Collins, Dorothy Smith, Sandra Harding and Donna Haraway, operationalizing much of their more theoretical writing on Black women's experiences, feminist research ethics, positionality and knowledge production. These subjects within the field of feminist methodologies support my commitment to centering the voices of advocates and challenging structural oppression.

Hesse-Biber provides a chronological outline of the philosophical dialogue these various thinkers have had over the past thirty years in *Feminist Research Practice* (2007). She begins by explaining that feminist standpoint epistemology "challenges us to see and understand the world through the eyes and experiences of oppressed women and apply the vision and knowledge of oppressed women to social activism and social change" (Hesse-Biber 2007, p. 3). This happens when researchers work with women to study their experiences, their actions and their understandings of the two. She refers to Patricia Hill Collins' and Dorothy Smiths' research as a prime example; both connecting with black women in the context of their communities to capture a more meaningful understanding of their experiences and to draw attention to social, economic and political inequalities (Hesse-Biber 2007, p. 6). There is no universal women's experience, but this does not mean that a multitude of positions, even when in contradiction with each other, cannot come together to uncover inequity in larger social structures. To then take action to address these inequalities requires community building and reciprocity. While it is

challenging to practice quality relationship building for a Masters' Thesis largely written in isolation, the goal remained.

Nancy Naples writes extensively about the relationship between Feminism and method, with a focus on standpoint epistemology and activism (2003). While much of her work explores ethnography, I found it also helpful in considering my approach to in-depth interviews for data gathering. This meant not only reflecting on the positions of the research participants, but also how to situate myself in the research and the potential value of this placement (Naples 2003, p. 37). Naples also links research on everyday experiences to activism and policy much like I attempt to do in talking to community advocates about municipal policy initiatives in their communities. Talking to women directly about their everyday experiences uncovers the unpaid and unrecognized labour they contribute to their communities, and the uneven impacts of policy on women's lives. Naples concludes, "By making visible the material practices and textual forces that contribute to women's difficulties […], it is possible to challenge the bureaucratic processes and sexist assumptions that contribute to women's impoverishment" (2003, p. 161). Lastly, while encouraging reflection on one's own position and privilege, Naples acknowledges that we cannot completely eliminate power imbalances during the research process (2003, p. 161).

I came across Gesa Kirsh's *Ethical Dilemmas in Feminist Research* in an undergraduate course, and have found myself referring back to it frequently both in my activism work and now in research. While much of the writing is quite practical, Kirsh's call to prioritize the accessibility of research processes and outcomes, and ethical responsibilities of researchers to participants and readers has made a lasting impact. By committing to focus on the voices of grassroots advocates and challenge structural forms of oppression, I am also committing to

prioritize the wellbeing of the research participants and the communities they are part of. This does not mean avoiding all risk, but remaining accountable, open to criticism and accessible to the research participants. This also entails writing and sharing the final product in a way that is ideally of some use.

Methods

My research question aims to identify the experiences of grassroots organizers after the implementation of GBA+ strategies at the level of municipal government. In the broadest sense, qualitative research is ideal for my particular research question as I am interested in practitioners' impressions of how these strategies came about, how they are being enacted, whether they are achieving the desired outcomes and what the challenges have been. In-depth, semi-structured interviews have frequently been used by feminist researchers to collect experiential, qualitative data (Hesse-Biber 2007, p. 6). There are a significant number of reports, strategy documents and publicly available articles and updates on how Edmonton has progressed in implementing their Women's Initiative, and less available for Calgary Gender Equity Diversity and Inclusion (GEDI) Strategy. I chose to interview community members with a promise of confidentiality instead of only examining reports to gather a more personal perspective. Interviewing participants about their opinions and experiences regarding city-level advocacy raises questions about how to recognize experience as a form of knowledge. Questions were asked with the intent to acknowledge and validate their experiences (Kirsh 1999, p. 5). According to Nancy Naples, information gathered this way captures one person's perspective, and must be contextualized and historicized by placing it within a larger conversation with others' perspectives (Naples 2003, p. 73). This is addressed by the process of weaving multiple

interviews together with existing research literature, whether to show alignment for certain perspectives and opinions or to challenge and complicate them. It is not possible to capture a complete image of the community of organizers in a handful of interviews, and so this project instead aims to present a number of general themes to reflect some of the diversity of perspectives in this sector.

Recognizing first-hand or lived experience (in this case, specifically in community organizing and policy related advocacy) as knowledge is also grounded in Indigenous epistemologies. Referring to my methodology as 'decolonial' is not without complications, as there is little directly related to land ownership or the return of land to Indigenous peoples (Tuck and Yang 2012). Aspects of decolonial theory are present in my theoretical framework and analysis, but less so in my methodology. The belief that community members with lived experience have intimate knowledge of social issues and therefore should have authority in policy development addressing these issues did guide the design of many interview questions. Similar to the tenets of feminist research methodologies, Indigenous research methodologies critically challenge assumed norms of political structures and organizing based in colonialism and heteropatriarchy.

Employed community advocates exist in a unique space; gaining privilege due to their steady employment, Western education, and the power that comes with a formal title. These community advocates also often have the lived experiences of various social issues including sexism, racism and other forms of oppression. Their advocacy both enables and requires them to navigate the tension of speaking *with* and not *for* the communities they are connected to. Sketching out a social context that reflects the diverse community of advocates in Alberta is an inherently fractured and incomplete process. In describing feminist research, Kirsh writes "I am

not suggesting that we aim at discovering singular truths, or that we describe these truths in a singular voice. Instead, we should attempt to reveal, as much as possible, the conflicting points of view emergent in our data" (Kirsh 1999, p. 13). The interviews do shine a light on some of the systemic barriers and challenges to feminist activism, however there are limitations to how much a researcher can understand the motivations and compulsions behind certain actions, or in Joan Scott's words, "making visible the experience of a different group exposes the existence of repressive mechanisms, but not their inner workings or logics" (Scott 1992, p. 25). For the purpose of this research, I focused on historicizing the broader social and political context juxtaposed with more personal experiences from individual interview participants, as a way to address both the macro and micro-environments.

By comparing Edmonton and Calgary, I am able to determine common trends and specific differences in the ways in which women's organizing takes place, and the various kinds of challenges or successes they encounter. I have also compared aspects from a national context (federal funding, Canada Revenue Agency limitations) next to regional differences (political will, councillors' interests, and structural capacity in different municipalities) to show how existing research on the federal level is relevant to local organizers. Over the course of data analysis, many of the themes remained the same across national and local levels. Victor Jupp (2006) summarizes the benefits of comparison in qualitative research thusly:

> Qualitative, ethnographic work emphasizes the development of generalizations and of grounded theory by the systematic comparison of cases in terms of their similarities and their differences. The cases which are compared include interactions, social meanings, contexts, social actions and cultural groups. (Jupp 2006)

There was one exception to generalizable shared experiences between existing research and my conversations with research participants. At the time of writing, there was little published research that discussed GBA+ in the context of a global pandemic.

Complications in Doing Feminist Research, COVID Edition

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, this research project was less collaborative than originally intended. Interviews began in the fall of 2020 and continued until mid-December 2020, as back to school plans were constantly shifting across the country. Many of the interview participants are parents who were juggling working from home with caregiving duties under lockdown conditions. Under the best circumstances, non-profit staff are often expected to provide care for themselves, their families and their communities with very limited time and resources. These expectations are multiplied during times of crises, especially for frontline care workers. Some interview subjects were able to participate during work hours, others were not. As I was not able to offer any compensation for participation, did not want to ask for too much time, and was managing my own mental health, aspects of engaging the community in research design and execution were cut.

Before interviews began, the questions were tested on a volunteer with significant experience in related advocacy work and tweaked based on their feedback. The amount of input that community members had in shaping the research questions and interview questions was limited, however. This may have an impact on how useful or practical the findings are to the community that the research is about. My goal was to answer a research question that would be for a community, and not merely on or about the community. It is unclear at this stage if this goal

was accomplished. Ideally future research examining GBA+ in municipalities will also collaborate with individuals who are not directly employed by a non-profit or city government.

In addition to impacting the amount of collaboration, a handful of research participants did not have access to their usual servers and were not able to share specifics for questions regarding volunteer or client demographics. I do not believe this had an impact on the findings as they were still able to share estimations, and this information was not central to the research question.

COVID did change the landscape in unpredictable and unforeseen ways. Advocacy needs changed and strategies shifted. Gender Based Analysis+ was often not a primary concern despite the pandemic having varied impacts on women. In one case, an early interview with a community advocate touched on the lack of gendered analysis for their city's COVID response and the participant said they would bring it up with city administrators. Months later, a member of administration mentioned that they received a request to examine their COVID responses with a gendered lens, and was working on a report. I cannot say that this research project was the only reason this request was made, but it does raise interesting considerations about the active role that research can play in shaping outcomes.

Data Collection

Recruitment occurred largely via targeted emails. I had a handful of contacts in Calgary and Edmonton in mind to get started, and then asked early participants to share the recruitment materials with other advocates in their communities, as per the suggestions of the Memorial University Ethics Committee. I initially focused on individuals who volunteered or worked in two main areas: non-profits with a focus on women and groups with a strong advocacy history. I

also targeted Indigenous-led or Indigenous-serving organizations within these categories with limited success. Ultimately, I reached out to about 50 organizations and individuals. I tested the interview questions on an acquaintance familiar with this area of work and updated the questions as necessary. In the end, there were 17 interview participants. Each interview lasted between 45-90 minutes.

In preparation for the interviews, I read available materials on the interview participants, annual reports from the non-profit or agency they worked for or volunteered with, Canada Revenue Agency filings (if available) to determine primary sources of funding, online newsletters, social media posts, and other publicly available information. I had planned to collect quantitative data on the demographics of participants/clients of the various organizations to assess whether community organizing on equity and inclusivity was also reflective of the organizations' internal membership or staff. In other words, were these organizations able to incorporate anti-oppressive practices in their own spaces, and how did this influence the advocacy work? According to Jennifer Nash, "intersectional projects often replicate precisely the approaches that they critique," reducing identity to a cumulative series of markers including race, gender, sexuality, income (Nash 2008, p. 6). She problematizes the reliance on black women's experiences in feminist research, writing that they are "treated as a unitary and monolithic entity" (Nash 2008, p. 8). For the purposes of my research project, data on community demographics were often not collected and therefore not available, or not something that the organizations could share. To address this gap, I asked interviewees for their perceptions of who was present during community engagement or who made up the volunteer body that worked on relevant advocacy projects in an attempt to assess the diversity of perspectives in engagement work. This

was most effective in conversations about community engagement activities and the impacts of funding on public messaging, as will be explored in the chapters on GBA+ and Funding.

In terms of quantitative data, I was able to collect personal demographic information from fifteen of the participants. This information informed analysis of responses, recognizing that many of the participants were relatively privileged in some ways, while experiencing unique forms of oppression in others.

- 14 participants identified as female, one as male
- Ages ranged between 28-57, averaging 43.
- Five participants identified as racialized or people of colour.
- Two identified as living with a disability or chronic health issue.
- One identified as LGBTQA2S.
- Seven participants were based out of Edmonton, ten were based out of Calgary.
- Income ranged between $20,000/year to over $200,000/year, with an average of >$80,000. Several participants volunteered for non-profit boards or community collaboratives and committees, and their incomes came from private sources. A small number were unemployed or underemployed at the time of the interview for a number of reasons including COVID layoffs, but still had some income to claim from pre-COVID or gig work. I asked participants to share an income range, and so an exact average cannot be determined.

Participants worked or volunteered for a wide variety of organizations. Given the small number of people involved in some of these areas of work and the need to maintain confidentiality, the information below is presented in aggregate and is deliberately non-specific at times. The totals do not equal seventeen as many individuals were working and volunteering in multiple capacities.

- Eight had a working relationship with the City of Calgary or City of Edmonton of some kind. This could be characterized as working for administration in a role related to gender equity, participation in a committee that oversees relevant strategic work, or past work experience in one of these roles.

- Participants were involved with organizations ranging from small working groups of 2-3 with no established source of income or grants, to large charities with budgets >$25 million and over 250 employees (full and part time). I spoke to a combination of high-level executive directors/CEOs, program managers, board members and front-line staff.
- Participants engaged in advocacy work on a wide variety of topics, including but not limited to social assistance, income, public transit, education, housing, Black Lives Matter, policing, food sovereignty, women's safety, cycling, environment, Reconciliation, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, leadership development, violence against women, mental health, addictions, physical health, court navigation, human trafficking, and childcare. There was a diversity in responses regarding an explicit or implicit gender lens to this work, which will be explored further in the analysis chapter.

Interviews were conducted via video chat and audio-recorded. All participants gave consent to recordings, which were either personally transcribed or transcribed through an online automated process that passed institutional ethics review. A handful of participants asked to see their completed transcripts for review; none requested any revisions or edits after review. Several followed up interviews with emails linking to relevant reports or additional resources which helped in my understanding of the context. All interview participants' names have been changed; pseudonyms were either chosen by the participants or found using a random name generator with a conscious effort to avoid white-washing names.

Validity and Trustworthiness of Data

Going into this project, I had strong opinions about organizing and the non-profit sector. In several interviews, I initially felt surprised by a number of responses which challenged these opinions, then realized I needed to evaluate my preconceived ideas of what the answers would be. I had to reflect on the differences between approaching a subject with a theoretical framework, and approaching a subject with a personal ideology. In the first case, I am working within a scholarly conversation and existing foundation for how to consider a question. In the second, I would be restricting interpretation in ways that match my worldview and past experiences in the field. Additionally, I also occasionally was able to interview people in positions of authority who would otherwise be difficult to access. I was cognizant of the need to critically reflect on how their status may colour my interpretation of their responses.

Many of the Calgary participants were people who I had worked alongside in some capacity prior to the research project. Edmonton participants were less familiar with me personally, but knew of projects I was involved in. It is likely that my previous relationship with a handful of participants swayed recruitment for this project, and also added another layer of experience that informed the conversations. Shared experiences made it easier to establish rapport with participants, and I believe allowed for a level of trust that would otherwise take months to develop. Linking to Tuhiwai Smith's writing on methodology, connections and relationships was beneficial to the research project (2012). While there was a minimal power imbalance during the interview process — I had no authority over the participants and there were no negative consequences to declining — I do have power in interpretation. The subjective nature of this research does not inherently introduce bias, but instead uses "the social situatedness of subjects of knowledge systematically as a resource" (Jaggar 2008, p. 337).

After interviews were coded, themes outlined and a draft written, I shared the draft thesis with all seventeen participants and invited feedback. Ongoing engagement and thorough reciprocity was not possible for this particular project, however I wanted to allow participants a chance to reflect on how their comments were interpreted and possibly correct or clarify when needed. I heard back from seven participants with suggested edits from three. Those suggestions were incorporated before the final draft.

Data Analysis

Interview transcripts were uploaded into NVivo software for coding into descriptive categories (or themes) and sub-categories. An initial set of codes was developed based on the interview questions and research questions. More codes were added using an exploratory or emergent method along the way (Saldana 2016). Codes tended to emerge around advocacy processes, gender lens / GBA+, and funding. I found that the coding process helped illuminate shared and contrasting opinions and experiences as I could see all responses to a particular question or issue side-by-side. Coding also made working with a significant volume of data much more manageable. I did not code for values (for example: were opinions about a strategy positive or negative) because many of the answers were fairly nuanced and difficult to place on a value binary or grading scheme.

With regards to reflexive aspects of analysis, the social and political context is examined by exploring my own situated knowledge and shifting insider/outsider status (Naples 2003, p. 79). In one city, I situated my past involvements and lived experience working within one of the organizations and advocating for a gender lens on various issues, and in another, I approached the interview participants with no existing relationship to them or their organizations. Naples complicates the distinction between insider and outsider in a few ways; the divisions are

subjective and fluid, and there exists a tension between "a conceptualization of standpoint as embodied in particular knowers and one that defines standpoint as constructed in community" (Naples 2003, p. 54). Furthermore, my past experience allows me to exist as a 'knower' and previous community member in some contexts, and as neither in others. I am a woman, an advocate, and was an Albertan for fifteen years. I am also privileged, white, had a job title that carried limited authority and made a living wage. This combination of situating the individual interview participants and myself in a larger context is part of a "valuable methodological strategy for exploring how power dynamics are organized and experienced in a community context" (Naples 2003, p. 83). It merges a look at the larger social, political and economic context with a person-to-person examination of women's everyday activities.

By using concepts of both Feminist and Indigenous methodologies to design the data collection and analyze interviews, I was better able to reflect on what is deemed relevant, what constitutes new knowledge, and what falls inside or outside the scope of this research project. I referred to Tuhiwai Smith's concepts of connection and sharing, and Hesse-Biber's challenge to focus on the experiences of oppressed women to shape how this projected unfolded. These methodologies together guide analysis to decenter traditionally privileged or hegemonic analysis of policy development and advocacy work on gendered topics.

4. Gender Based Analysis Plus

Conversations with research participants started with a focus on GBA+ strategies and initiatives at the municipalities, and expanded to include how the concepts gender equity, diversity and inclusion come to manifest in organizations, and how this informs their policy work with external partners including the two cities. Participants also shared thoughts on city strategies in general, and how they do or do not impact community members or shape the way that advocacy work is taking place. Over the course of this chapter, I will briefly outline the history of Gender Mainstreaming and GBA+, examine the differences in structures in Calgary and Edmonton, and highlight a few successes. Then I will examine the kinds of relationships the advisory group and committee have with the wider community, and what participants thought of city engagement. Lastly, I asked research participants about the transformative potential of policy development in cities guided by GBA+ type strategies. In essence, is it able to accomplish feminist goals, improve equity and fully recognize calls to implement intersectionality?

Definitions and A Brief History

Many research papers and literature reviews on the topic of gender mainstreaming point to the 1995 United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing as a significant moment in the large-scale acceptance of this concept (Scala and Paterson 2018, McNutt and Beland 2015, Meier and Celis 2011, George 2011). Canada was one of the signatories to the subsequent UN Platform for Action, which aligned with existing support for gender equality established by the creation of the ministry of the Status of Women (SoW) in 1971 and the ratification of The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1981 (Rankin and Vickers 2001). There are many examples of Canada's

formal obligations regarding women's equity on international scales, however these two commitments are the most frequently referred to in existing research and have shaped the kinds of definitions of GBA+ and equity used in federal, provincial and municipal contexts.

In more recent history, Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE, previously the Status of Women Canada) has played a crucial role in promoting Gender Based Analysis Plus policy approaches across the country. They define GBA+ as "an intersectional analytical process for examining how various intersecting identity factors impact the effectiveness of government initiatives. It involves examining disaggregated data and research, and considering social, economic, and cultural conditions and norms" (Status of Women, 2018). The direction of this sentence structure is perhaps worth noting; GBA+ is meant to examine how identity impacts government initiatives and not how government initiatives are or are not suited to different identity groups. Additionally, the 'plus' is meant to add multiple layers of diversity to this approach, including race, class, LGBTQ2SA, age and ability. GBA+ aims to uncover how even seemingly run-of-the-mill policies can have unique impacts depending on an individual or group's gender and other aspects of identity. This "analytical process" can become part of a complex set of tools that together inform policy development. For example, the 2017 Calgary Notice of Motion which initially proposed city-wide implementation referred to GBA+ as a "tool" used by the Canadian federal government (Carra 2020).

Various international political bodies use different definitions when referring to the process of applying a gendered perspective to policy development and implementation, with impacts on the goals and outcomes. While the GBA+ definition listed above predominates in Canadian research at the federal and provincial levels, the Council of Europe prefers the term "gender mainstreaming." According to the Council, gender mainstreaming entails "(re)

organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy making" (Council of Europe 2004). The Council goes on to define gender equality as "an equal visibility, empowerment and participation of both sexes [sic] in all spheres of public and private life" (Council of Europe 2004). Where mainstreaming centres equity and equality in *outcomes*, GBA+ in Canada tends to centre the *process of analysis* (McNutt and Beland 2015, p. 468).[6] McNutt and Beland go on to provide an example on budgets: gender mainstreaming is proactive and would require a total overhaul of the planning, budgeting and evaluation, while the GBA+ approach is reactionary, "works within existing budgetary frameworks," and analyzes outcomes after the fact. In Canada, where the two terms are often used interchangeably, the Status of Women office is mandated to share GBA+ knowledge, provide assistance to federal departments and develop training, but it is up to each department or agency to integrate the practice and monitor outcomes. This division between providing guidance and holding departments accountable to outcomes is reflected in municipal structures.

In several interviews, participants referred to the free GBA+ training available on the Status of Women Canada website as a helpful resource. The trainings, which can be completed in an afternoon, provide a general overview of concepts including implicit bias and intersectionality through case studies on forestry and parental leave. The Status of Women Canada has seen significant fluctuations in funding and authority since its inception, often depending on political will, the ideological motivations of the party in power, and a shifting

[6] To complicate matters further, research on gender mainstreaming in Europe acknowledges that there "is no consensus on the concrete meaning on the concept of 'equality,' not even amongst the bodies charged with promoting gender-mainstreaming policies" (Meier and Celis 2011, p. 471).

budget (Rodgers and Knight 2011). In 2016, the Office recommitted to implementing GBA+ across federal departments, improving training and addressing other concerns raised in a 2015 Auditor General's Report (Status of Women Canada 2016). Many of the concerns raised in this report are reflected in Canadian-centred research on Gender Based Analysis + and the challenges that local advocates are facing.

Drilling down to a smaller geographical scale, the Status of Women Alberta office was officially established in 2015 soon after the election of the New Democratic Party of Alberta. The SoW had a triple mandate to improve access to affordable childcare, improve women's economic security, and reduce instances of domestic violence. They developed, launched and promoted Gender-Based Analysis training throughout various departments in government, although little information is available on how many staff received training or the measures of its success. Some of the research participants mentioned receiving or facilitating similar kinds of training. The 2019 provincial election brought the United Conservative Party into power, quickly followed by a narrowing in the SoW mandate. At the time of writing, all mention of GBA+ has been removed from the Alberta SoW website; the Office was combined with the departments of Culture and Multiculturalism and the minister "directed the ministry to redesign Gender Based Analysis+ and Unconscious Bias training to better reflect the ministry's multiculturalism mandate" in January 2020 (Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women Annual Report 2019–2020). It is not clear what this means in practice.

Edmonton's Women's Initiative, described in the Introduction, was developed out of a symposium hosted by the mayor's office in 2012. Calgary's Gender Equity Diversity and Inclusion Strategy was driven by a councillor's notice of motion in 2017. In both cases, the shift in provincial priorities after the 2019 provincial election has impacted the capacity and strategy

of both city administration and community organizers around social issues, and the work to progress women's equity. Several participants referred to Alberta Premier Jason Kenney's September 2020 comments on intersectionality being a "kooky academic theory" that distracted attention away from the need for oil and gas industry supports and rebalanced transfer payments, and questioned whether this meant that city administration or advocates would have to downplay their commitments to intersectional approaches (Woods 2020, Gladys Interview 2020, Cora Interview 2020).[7] Policy development, according to existing research in the field of gender mainstreaming, is not apolitical as "politics features largely in shaping how a gender analysis policy is imagined and configured" (Bacchi and Eveline 2011, p. 3). Political powers shape acceptable discourse and set the boundaries for possibilities for change within predetermined frameworks, much like the party in power decides the level (or lack) of authority and funding that an office like Status of Women has across departments. This thesis will examine the ways that provincial and private funding sources influence advocacy and organizing in a later chapter.

Edmonton's Women's Initiative has an explicit focus on the issues impacting women, while the Calgary Gender Equity Diversity and Inclusion (GEDI) Strategy takes on a seemingly broader scope, much like adding 'Plus' to existing GBA policy. In Edmonton, research participants with the Women's Initiative said that focusing on women's needs and women's equity benefits the larger community. "Women's needs are everyone's needs," said Jessica, adding that she's working to break down barriers that have been built inadvertently over the years by "not looking through different lenses and perceptions." In Calgary, the broader gender, equity, diversity and inclusion scope evolved after many conversations between community organizers and city administration. "Some of the folks who were advocating for the strategy

[7] Kenney's comments are in contrast to shifting trends at the federal level, where acceptance of intersectionality or social justice has been generally on the rise since the 2015 election (Hankivsky and Mussel 2018, p. 307).

wanted it to be a women's strategy," said one participant. Both approaches have unique strengths and challenges according to the participants and existing literature on the topic (Hankivsky and Cormier 2011, p. 225, Hankivsky and Mussel 2018, p. 308). A broader scope would theoretically better recognize the intersecting forms of oppression that individuals face, with the potential of shifting focus away from the specific experiences of women. A 'women's strategy' can be intersectional, but the title continues to imply a certain priority of focus. 'Intersectionality,' coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, originally refers to the unique experiences of oppression that black women faced because of the racial and gendered aspects of their identity (Crenshaw 1989). With time, the term expanded to include class, education, disability, immigration status and other aspects of identity. Combinations of these identities or categories of social difference 'intersect' in unique ways, and the resulting impacts cannot be fully grasped when separated. In practice, adding an intersectional lens to GBA "can thus be interpreted as a policy strategy of 'incremental radicalism,' meaning it builds on an existing approach rather than being developed as a new innovation" (Hankivsky and Mussel 2018, p. 304). That said, research also points to limited understanding within government of the difference between GBA and GBA+ (Hankivsky and Mussel 2018, Paterson and Scala 2018). Defining the scope in Calgary, or broadening it to be more aware of other forms of oppression in Edmonton, has been an ongoing topic of consideration. There will be more on the limits of intersectionality in city approaches toward the end of this chapter.

Structures of Power in Municipalities

GBA+ requires support for research, data collection, design, and implementation to take place. In Calgary and Edmonton, the municipal organizational structures that support these steps

have manifested in different ways, influencing how these strategies and their supporting committees guide policy development and connect with community. Mapping out the relationships between various city committees, community members, and strategies is no easy task, even for those directly involved in the committees.

Committee:	Women's Advocacy Voice Edmonton	Calgary Gender Equity Diversity and Inclusion
Year Established	2014	2019
Membership	Members of the public, mixed experience in academia, non-profit sector and business. Existing members review applications and choose new members.	Members of the public, mixed experience in academia, non-profit sector and business. City administrators use a skills-based recruiting matrix when reviewing applications from the public.
Priority Areas	1. Make recommendations to Council about gender-based issues 2. Promote leadership development to empower Edmonton women to fully participate in civic life 3. Research and share information on resources for women in Edmonton (2018–2019 WAVE Annual Report)	Because the committee was recently established, its priority areas are in development. The guiding strategy lists three primary goals: 1. City Service Delivery: Calgarians of all genders have equitable access to municipal services. 2. City Council and its Committees: The membership of Council Boards, Commissions and Committees reflects the gender diversity of the City's population. 3. City Workforce: Calgarians of all genders have opportunities to participate in an inclusive City of Calgary workforce.
Oversight / Alignment	Women's Initiative, Social Development, Citizen Services	Gender Equity and Diversity Strategy, Social Wellbeing Policy and Advisory Committee (est. 2019)
Activities	Conference approximately every other year, IWD Celebrations, Women's Quality of Life Scorecard, Construction Hoarding Review*	Very new committee, limited number of meetings to date.
Support from City Administration	Furloughed due to COVID, meetings on hold.	At time of writing, one administrative staffer who had support from mentors in city hall. High turnover in first year of operation.
Financing	Previous support for conferences. Exact amount unavailable.	Exact amount unavailable. Participants discussed budget cuts impacting ability to gather gender desegregated data and postponing certain timelines.

Sources: Interviews, 2018-2019 WAVE Annual Report, GEDI Strategy
*Hoarding refers to the plywood paneling that surrounds construction sites in the downtown core. WAVE recommended adding more lighting and improving security.

Setting the Agenda

In theory, both WAVE and the GEDI Committee have the ability to provide guidance on gender equity and inclusion practices to city policy in development or in review. In both cases, participants described the process as working in multiple directions, meaning that city administration or departments can request feedback on areas of work, or the committees can identify issues and present recommendations as they see fit. In practice, there are challenges with capacity, access to information and resources that limit the scope and volume of work that these volunteer groups can take on. In both cities, the establishment of a dedicated body to guide gender equity work is fairly promising, as similar work is being dismantled at the provincial levels across the country. Researchers Bacchi and Eveline highlight a case in British Columbia where the Ministry of Women's Equality was dismantled using the argument that a gendered perspective can be integrated throughout existing government structures, and does not require unique resources (2003). Canadian researchers Scala and Paterson also found examples of disappearing gender mainstreaming units in federal agencies as a consequence of framing gender equality as everyone's responsibility (Scala and Paterson 2018, p. 230). It would be ideal for all departments to practice a GBA+ approach, but without specific oversight or resources this is unlikely and difficult to do. When GBA+ becomes the responsibility of all, it easily becomes the explicit duty of none. Bodies tasked specifically with providing some oversight have their own limitations. "I haven't seen WAVE be critical of the City, and not just for the sake of criticizing, but taking a real critical lens and looking at [what] the city's offering," said Angela, a former member of Women's Advocacy Voice of Edmonton. Angela said that WAVE's influence in various departments has "ebbs and flows," with fewer members of administration knowing that the group exists and is available today than after their initial launch.

Over time, Angela mentioned that the direction has shifted from WAVE committee members working proactively to tackle community issues, to city administration bringing forth ideas and potential projects. WAVE committee members volunteer their time to the committee, and the majority of them also work or volunteer for local non-profits a gender equity or poverty reduction focus. Considering the small number of people involved, individuals like the Committee Chair or a single support staff also play a significant role in shaping what the group takes on, and how they relate to city administration and community (Angela Interview 2020, Crystal Interview 2020, Maya Interview 2020). This is also reflected in the work of Scala and Paterson, who interviewed dozens of civil servants in the federal Status of Women office to more closely examine the work of feminist bureaucrats, or "femocrats" (2018). Instead of looking at a top-down approach in which political leaders set the agenda, they studied how policy analysts navigated the institutional structures to implement what was feasible. In certain circumstances, this means staff have a significant amount of influence on the scope, direction, priorities and outcomes of gender mainstreaming initiatives.

"I would like to see WAVE take back its old place as being a trail blazing advocate for women versus a place where city of Edmonton administration can come in and kick ideas past them," said Angela. Other previous and existing members of Edmonton's committee took a different approach and said their strong relationship with City Council was how change became enacted, despite there being no reference to a formal requirement for councillors to implement suggestions. Committee members exist in a unique space that merges community advocate and feminist bureaucrat; they have very limited authority within city institutions but have more access and influence than most civilians.[8] "[We] give Council advice and the Council decides

[8] For the duration of this project, I use a fairly broad or inclusive definition of community advocate. These are individuals who volunteer or are paid to advocate toward improving quality of life, equity, and justice.

whether or not to enact the change that those committees bring forward," said Jessica. "WAVE has a very, very strong positive relationship with City Council. When we do come and make recommendations to City Council, they respect that committee and they do listen."

Calgary's GEDI Committee and the overseeing Social Wellbeing Advisory Committee, both relatively new, have the potential to benefit from the growing pains of other cities. Both are working through setting work plans and terms of reference, while negotiating shifting political and economic environments. Some research participants said they were working on setting up the structures that would allow the committee members to have more influence on setting the short- and long-term agenda:

"If we give input into whatever it is that the City or a council member is asking for, where is the feedback on what we gave, and how that was implemented and taken into account?" asked Cora. "What we were really clear about is that we didn't want it to be a rubber stamp."

Literature examining challenges of navigating institutional pressures often focuses on the strategies that femocrats employ to enact change, as much as is possible. It is challenging to find research that extends to the relationships between these femocrats, advisory committees and community advocates. This thesis aims to bridge a gap between research that evaluates the consequences for gender equality and transformative politics, how GBA+ is implemented, and the possible impacts on community members.

Allyship in Government

Existing research on the efficacy of GBA+ or gender mainstreaming approaches in policy development often credits allies in positions of authority with the power to make change happen. Internal policies or strategic direction may set priorities, but buy-in from leadership is crucial to meeting equity goals in a meaningful way. On the other hand, when leadership's beliefs do not

align with the need or goals of a gender equity strategy, they may not prioritize time or resources needed to gather data, apply the lens, or implement recommendations (Bacchi and Eveline 2003, p. 104). Research participants with connections to the relevant committees had varying opinions on the benefits and potential influence of relationships with city administrators and councillors in their work.

In Edmonton, several participants with current and past involvement on WAVE referred to two primary allies or "sponsors": Mayor Don Iveson and Councillor Bev Esslinger. Some found that the support was encouraging and reflected in outcomes, while others thought the ongoing presence of councillors steered conversations in specific directions and limited the scope of the committee's work. "First of all, they don't need a sponsor anymore," said Angela. "[Esslinger's] happy when they're advocating and when they're pushing the envelope, but only the envelopes that she cares about." Councillor Esslinger has a history of involvement with the Women's Initiative, child-friendly policy and combatting gender-based violence.

In contrast, Hannah, also from Edmonton, appreciated the presence of male champions who "took things back to their office the next day." Finding male champions to GBA+ is a common strategy to fostering GBA+ adoption (Scala and Paterson 2017, p. 435). Male champions can both downplay the "feminist origins" of a policy proposal to make it more palatable, and lean into masculine conventions of "objectivity" (Scala and Paterson 2017). "They stayed off in the background, listened to what we were saying, did not speak during the whole time, but you could see in the tweets afterwards that they're really supporting us in social media," said Hannah.

Calgary participants had less to say about allyship, possibly because the committee is so new, however they were generally favourable. A few pointed to high turnover in the city support

role as slowing down the committee's progress in the initial months. "We're just so well supported by admin," said Cora. "Everybody who's kind of been involved in that and carrying the work forward is fantastic."

Cora referenced specific councillors as well. She mentioned that Councillor Druh Farrell asked for particular policies or initiatives to be shared with the Social Wellbeing Committee during council meetings. This example points both to the benefits of allies in positions of authority, but also the informal nature of the relationships between the committee and other business units in the City. Without specific prompting from a councillor, it is unclear if these policies or initiatives would have made it to the Social Wellbeing Committee. Councillor Farrell and Mayor Iveson have announced that they are not running for re-election in 2021, and there is no guarantee that future representatives will maintain this commitment to equity. Without support from certain individuals, there does not currently exist a requirement for policies to be shared with these advisory groups, or a requirement for the groups' suggestions to be implemented in consequential ways. Scholarly literature on gender mainstreaming reflects many of these perspectives on the benefits and constraints associated with building partnerships between community advocates, committee members, administrators and elected officials.

Tension with other existing strategies and policy priorities

The concept of equity is not new to either city; both have existing policies guiding diversity and inclusion work on a number of fronts. For example, Calgary's Council-approved strategies include but are not limited to: Enough for All poverty reduction strategy, Seniors Age Friendly Strategy, Mental Health and Addictions Strategy, the White Goose Flying Report, and a

Climate Resilience Strategy.[9] In Edmonton, there is a similar slate of guiding documents for Poverty Elimination, an Urban Wellness Plan (Recover), a Transit Strategy, a Corporate Accessibility Plan, and an initiative for Gender Based Violence and Sexual Assault Prevention. Over time, strategies without end dates are rarely officially retired and sporadically revised. This creates a challenge for administrators needing to consider the Council's direction on multiple priority areas with shifting interests and pressures from community. In conversation with city staffers and community advocates, the challenge of navigating multiple strategies and understanding which parties were responsible for meeting which goals was mentioned multiple times.

One prime example about the role of municipalities in combatting racism came up multiple times during conversations with community advocates. Interviews for this research project started in October 2020 after a summer of Black Lives Matter protests and communities organizing to defund police across the country. The City of Edmonton launched public hearings on systemic racism in June, and The City of Calgary followed suite in July (Boothby 2020, Smith 2020). Both cities saw hundreds of community members speak, and came to very different conclusions. Edmonton cut police budgets by $11 million and founded a task force to create recommendations (Cook 2020), while Calgary created an Anti-Racism Action Committee and ultimately reversed all decisions to cut police funding, instead increasing their budget (Appel 2021). Research participants supported the calls to combat racism and white supremacy in both cities, while questioning how this would work in conjunction with existing equity-related committees and strategies.[10] "There's a bunch of committees that would be doing similar [work],

[9] Not all these guiding documents are titled strategies, but all were referred to as strategies on the City's website. The use of the phrase 'strategy' is not entirely consistent.

[10] After sharing an early draft of this thesis with participants, one responded to say that there is a strategic session planned for the summer of 2021 where administration will ask Council to "adopt a values statement on equity" and

not even to mention the previous work that they haven't actually moved forward like The White Goose Flying report," said Cora. "They've commissioned a bunch of other work on racial equity that just hasn't gone anywhere." Participants feared that additional community engagement and research would lead to another document sitting on a shelf.

Over the course of several conversations, The White Goose Flying report came up as an example of disconnected strategies. Published by the Calgary Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee (CAUAC) in 2016 at the request of Council, the report identified 18 of 94 Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) that fall under municipal jurisdiction. CAUAC's recommendations included training for public sector staff, Indigenous library programming, funding healing centres, treaty recognition and many more (CAUAC 2016). While the full TRC Calls to Action include several references to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, the White Goose Flying Report had very limited references to gender of any kind. Likewise, the 15-page GEDI Strategy document does not mention Indigenous people once.[11] Several research participants felt that reports like this had recommendations important to improving equity, but had limited success and needed more support and coordination so shared goals can be made clear. Advocates and administration alike saw overlap in goals, and yet seemed unsure of how the various groups could collaborate. They said the source of this uncertainty was partly due to a lack of capacity. In the literature, McNutt and Beland (2015) recommend prioritizing "identifying an optimal integration strategy" when selecting or designing gender equity instruments, meaning a strategy to guide the wide-spread implementation of these mechanisms is as important as having right mechanism. Enhanced

"show promise in moving towards concrete actions to advance equity." I found this feedback an important reminder that work to improve equity in each city is ongoing, and this thesis captures a mere snapshot.

[11] There are two brief references to racialized women, both regarding a transit usage survey.

accountability around outcomes (specifically identifying who is responsible for achieving a goal) is one place to start (McNutt and Beland 2015, p. 480), but will not change engrained biases or institutional racism that play a part in excluding recommendations like those in the White Goose Flying report from being thoroughly integrated into strategies with more institutional support. In some cases analysts argued that being "open to gender" is an approachable bridge to other facets of diversity, but this is not always possible (Hankivsky and Mussell 2018, p 307). Tammy Findlay (2019), a scholar of political and Canadian studies, wrote that there are conflicting opinions about the relationships between GBA+ and decolonization activism. On one hand, GBA+ often ignores the gendered impacts of colonization and on the other hand, Indigenous worldviews are often already intersectional, "revolving around principles of interconnectedness, relationality, dynamism, [and] balance" (Findlay 2019, p. 521). Simpson continues this further when she writes that "engagement with the theories and practices of co-resistors," meaning black radicals, revolutionaries from the Global South and anti-capitalists, "is powerful because it often illuminates colonial thinking" (2017, p. 66). She addresses the need to ensure that an Indigenous resurgence does not replicate anti-Blackness, or other forms of oppression.

The lack of progress on existing strategies to increase equity in communities "can kind of breed cynicism from the community," said Cora. Community advocates said they saw frustration in city administrators who had been working on similar approaches for years with little recognition from within the city or outside stakeholders (Gladys Interview 2020). Others said that the connection between GEDI and anti-racism work would be more intentional with time, despite documents like the Indigenous Policy Framework (2016) or the White Goose Flying Report (2016) being published years prior with limited reference in more recent strategy documents. One participant pointed out that there are roughly 15,000 people working for the City

of Calgary, and that an overarching model like GBA+ would help increase awareness about the needs of diverse populations while also ensuring no one group is left behind. The other strategies targeting equity for specific communities including racialized newcomers, seniors or people with disabilities have theoretical links to GBA+, but are not explicitly linked in their current forms possibly because of how new the GEDI Strategy is. That said, Edmonton participants pointed to overlap with policies and programs on housing, immigration, court navigation, gender-based violence and others with similar disconnects.

Examples of Success in Municipalities

Examples of the benefits of Gender Based Analysis Plus in municipalities can be found in existing research and literature, although the majority are not within a Canadian context. Within Canada, the line between municipal and provincial jurisdictions is somewhat permeable; there is a history of Alberta municipalities offering services that typically fall under provincial or federal jurisdictions, especially when cost sharing programs are available.[12] Child care, housing, subsidized transit and mental health services are all services that have seen shared municipal and provincial interventions in Alberta, however shifting political priorities and funding impact the long-term viability of many of these programs. There have been limited efforts to update the Municipal Government Act, which covers governance, taxation and planning, to give more control to larger municipalities. “The role of municipalities and the provision of direct services has changed a lot in Alberta,” said Angela, from Edmonton. Nicole, from Calgary, recognized

[12] One example would be subsidizing low-income transit passes: public transit falls under municipal budgets but social programming for low-income people is generally under the purview of the provincial government. Alberta put forward $13.5million in 2016 to partially fund a sliding scale fee structure for Calgary public transit, and usage of the subsidized passes was significantly higher than expected. As of 2020, provincial support for the program was reportedly reduced to $9.5million for Calgary and Edmonton combined. The program continues with municipal budgets and increased fees making up the difference.

the severity and complexity of inequity that women face across the province. For her, clarifying the City's sphere of influence to what they could "control" was an important step in setting effective priority policy areas and increasing chances of success.

I asked participants on the advisory committees and advocates from outside official City structures about examples of successes related to policy. Community advocates in the non-profit sector did struggle more than committee members to point out specific areas of success, however this may stem from them not knowing about the activities of the committee more than a lack of positive outcomes. Most of the responses came from Edmonton, as Calgary's GEDI and Social Wellbeing committees are very new. I have some personal experience in the application of GBA+ from past work, and will use this example to set the stage. In Calgary, the first order of business in developing the strategy was to pilot GBA+ on work already underway. Despite it being the middle of summer, a vote was coming to City Hall on whether or not snow removal needed a bigger budget. Community engagement on the topic was relatively easy considering everyone had an opinion and was personally impacted by existing removal practices in some way. Employed by a local non-profit, I worked with other collaboratives and community members to gather hundreds of stories, help community members prepare presentations for council and draft our own recommendations for changes. I compiled existing research on the unique travel habits of women and low-income folks, and how other cities had addressed these different usage patterns in their snow removal procedures to de-centre male-focused service delivery to share with a city staffer drafting the administration's various recommendations. For example, women are more likely to "trip chain," meaning they travel to multiple locations in a row running errands and managing childcare pick-ups and drop-offs in addition to paid labour, while men are more likely to only travel from home to the downtown core and back for work.

Gender responsive snow removal would call for plowing around elementary schools before roadways leading into the downtown core, where families on foot or public transit are more hindered by small amounts of snow than people driving in cars. Snow removal is not generally regarded as a policy area that benefits from gender sensitivity, but this research suggested otherwise. The other collaboratives brought forward the concerns of seniors' communities and people with disabilities. Once the vote came to pass, the outcomes were mixed. An additional $9.5 million was going toward improving snow removal, bettering accessibility and mobility for transit users, and improving sidewalk cleaning on public property like parks and schools (Ward 2018). On the other hand, fines for citizens who do not or cannot clear their sidewalks also increased substantially; up to $750 for the third offence. People with reduced mobility, seniors, low-income people who cannot afford shoveling services, and single parents are disproportionately impacted by high fines, and the consequences of not being able to pay these fines. This example is a great case study of the benefits and limits of GBA+ in public policy; steps were taken in the right direction however increasing public services was limited in scope and "paid for" by inequitable means.

A few other Edmonton examples of success came up in the interviews, including a WAVE review of hoarding policy that included recommendations to improve lighting and physical accessibility, and therefore improve women's sense of safety in the area. WAVE supported new language on the emergency assistance buttons found on train lines to encourage use rather than highlight fines for misuse. They also made recommendations to update transit routes and schedules with a focus on safety. The group suggested changes to the 2019 City Census language, which subsequently added more categories to the gender demographics questions to include Man/boy, Woman/girl, TransMan (FtM), TransWoman (MtF), Two-Spirit,

Non-Binary, Another and Prefer not to Answer (2019 Municipal Census Results, edmonton.ca). Additionally, research participants from both cities pointed to the adoption of gender equity or GBA+ practices within Human Resources and hiring policies as a priority. Crystal mentioned that encouraging women to run for office was another positive outcome of WAVE's work. There are now two women serving on City Council in Edmonton out of 12 councillors, an increase still far below parity. "I think the scope was really focused, in the two years that I was there, on increasing the number of women running for council," said Hannah. "They really wanted to see a balance on council so that the voices that were there were really representing the population of the city."

Relationships with Community

WAVE is unique to the GEDI committee because part of their mandate is to connect directly with community members and agencies to learn more about social issues impacting women. Community members in Edmonton can reach out to WAVE to give presentations, provide information on their mission and ideally impact policy recommendations. One participant said community presenters are encouraged to come with a specific ask that the committee can potentially adopt. Partially due to the newness of the GEDI committee and a number of COVID-19 limitations, a similar process does not exist in Calgary at the time of writing. City staffers described a two-way, "up and down continuum of communication" between community members, committee members and city, where administration brings items to the committee and vice versa. While it may have been unintentional, one participant consistently framed the community at the bottom and the city at the top of this vertical continuum. Other avenues for community to inform policy are available, including advocating

directly to elected officials or participating in town halls. The relationship between community and city policy is largely maintained by traditional channels.

Feminist activists have a long history of providing a gender lens to policy development. Their capacity for activity during this time has also been impacted by shifts in political leanings, either by changes in access and funding or by adoption and replacement by political institutions. Many of the community advocate participants in this particular research project were not familiar with the specific mandate of either WAVE or the GEDI committee, but were able to speak about their approaches to aligning advocacy work with City priorities. The next portion of this chapter will start by examining the relationships between community advocates and the bodies that guide or enact city strategies, followed by a brief look at the impacts of COVID. Lastly, there will be a critique of the transformative feminist potential of this kind of organizing model, both with the City and within non-profits.

Aligning Advocacy Work

Edmonton and Calgary have long lists of existing policy positions and strategies. Both cities established gender mainstreaming policy positions out of community consultations, either via a symposium or a series of roundtables with stakeholders, setting a precedent for community members to shape the direction of their work. Gladys, a local advocate not on the advisory committee, described how the Calgary process of connecting with stakeholders guided the "main planks" of the strategy which took nearly a year. Since then, she has referred to the strategy when writing letters to provide a gender lens on city budgeting processes, pointing to its existence as a gentle reminder of promises made. While an internal accountability framework to measure progress toward outcomes is still in the works, this has not prevented community

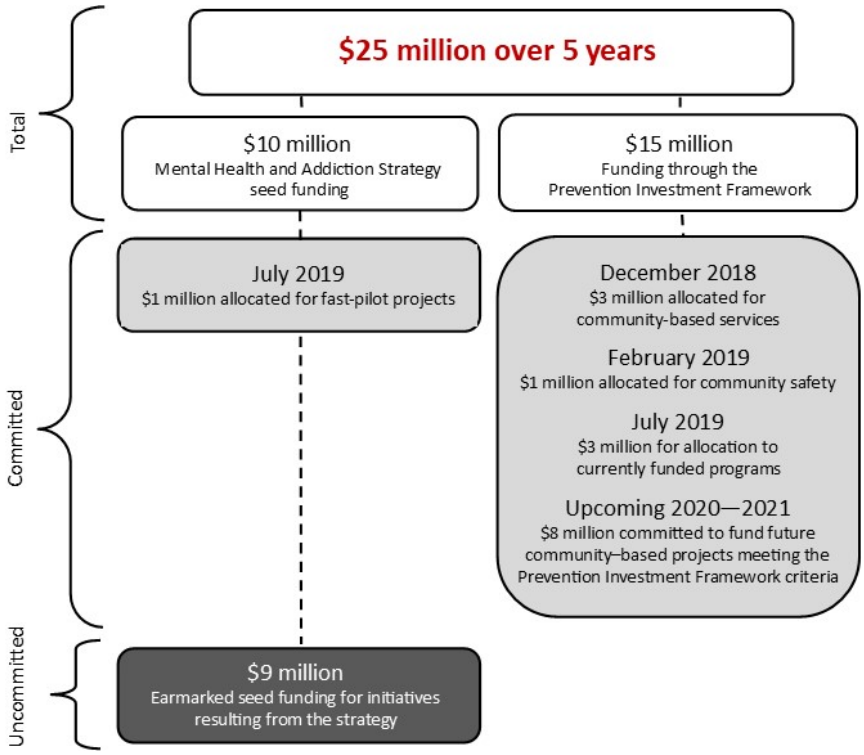
members from using the existing strategies to show alignment when making specific recommendations or requests.

To gather more information on the practical usefulness of these strategies to community members, I asked participants whether the strategies (GEDI, Women's Initiative, or others) came up in their planning or conversations around community needs. The responses were generally varied, mirroring different levels of familiarity with city strategies, advocacy methods, and hopefulness or skepticism, which will be explored in this section below. When they were not familiar with the gender-specific strategies, many still pointed to other city initiatives that aligned with their work. Whether the initiatives influenced how advocates organized around issues beyond pointing out alignment was also quite varied.

"If Calgary has a mental health strategy, which they do, if we have a poverty strategy, which we do, if we have a climate change strategy with which we do, you know, there's all these other strategies that are being built and being funded," said Alanna, a community advocate who focuses on early learning and childcare. "If they've already got legs, then our strategy was basically to ask where we could work to embed early childhood [education] in within those ones, instead of trying to build our own. […] It's just because there's so much going on, people can't keep track of it."

The example of the Community Action on Mental Health and Addiction Strategy came up in several interviews when I asked about the relationship between city strategies and public funding. The strategy, released in early 2021, originally had $25 million in committed funding. The majority of these funds come from the City and a portion of the $1 million for fast-tracked pilot projects came from the Community Investment Table, which is also a leadership partner. The Table is made up of the City of Calgary, the Calgary Foundation, Calgary Health Trust,

Hunter Family Foundation, United Way of Calgary and Area, and Viewpoint Foundation. When strategies came with funding attached, community advocates seemed to hold them in higher regard.



Source: City of Calgary, Community Action on Mental Health and Addiction Strategy: www.calgary.ca/csps/cns/mental-health-and-addictions-funding-proposals.html

One research participant worked in an organization with a mandate related to mental health and addictions, and successfully received a portion of the funding mentioned. "I look at the way that the citywide mental health and addiction strategy is rolling out," said Evie, "and it actually totally informs what we're doing at [our organization] in terms of how we approach supporting people who have addictions and mental health. And so whenever these either projects or initiatives are set up, I think it's, you know, you'd be silly not to be tap into what's been set up in terms of that particular strategy." Evie explained that the non-profit's work does not specifically approach issues like addictions and mental health with a gender lens. Had the GEDI

Strategy come with funding attached, it may have encouraged some groups to integrate a gender and/or equity lens more explicitly into their work.

Balancing the call to align with existing strategy while representing the needs of the community is a challenge that exists across areas of work. Edmonton advocate Crystal shared similar opinions on alignment; one described the advocates' role as understanding how an issue "ties in with a bigger vision of the city" and "translate why it's important to make that linkage." Maya, who has previous experience working for the City and helped organize multiple campaigns on community issues, said highlighting alignment works as a "place to start from," but may have limited success as many administrators have "heard it so many times." "It's not what we should rely on because it's very easy to come up with a strategy and then report back on it with a bunch of platitudes," said Maya. "I don't know if that's being too frank."

Nothing about Us Without Us: Speaking *For* and Speaking *With*

Advocates working for established non-profits or charities are often tasked with bridging the space between marginalized citizens and city planners.[13] While there are multiple ways for citizens to connect with representatives, there are also countless barriers that limit accessibility. Citizens can write letters, present at City Hall, participate in in-person engagement events or fill out surveys online. Each method offers a different way of connecting, and cities are working to reduce barriers, but there are some voices left out. City Hall presentations require flexible schedules and confidence navigating intimidating spaces, in-person events rarely provide childcare or subsidized transit, and online surveys assume access to technology and moderate

[13] A similar relationship existed prior to the early 2000s at the national level. Rankin and Wilcox (2004) wrote an article describing the trend in which GBA approaches were replacing community advocates with policy experts, in part due to significant cuts in public funding to women's organizations.

literacy levels. In many cases, community members and elected officials expect representatives from various agencies to communicate the needs of the community to those with decision making powers. Several research participants acknowledged that they did not have the capacity to do this kind of work as much as they would like. They shared a few examples of community engagement and storytelling projects with an aim to affect policy change on a number of issues, including transit, domestic violence, education, income supports, mental health supports and others.

An organization that takes on some aspect of advocacy work can "come to understand the issues, concerns, needs, priorities and lived experiences of those it serves, presents, or advocates on behalf of" in two primary ways: engagement (asking) and assessment (studying) (Andrasik and Mead 2019, p. 36).[14] The first includes storytelling, advisory groups and informal conversations, the second includes surveying and observation. These categories are perhaps representative of more traditionally constructed organizations or formal societies, and leave out grassroots advocacy groups where the community members most impacted by a social issue are the ones leading the calls for change. On the subject of gender oppression, a disproportionate number of women working in front-line services and non-profits in low-wage roles are themselves experiencing the impacts of patriarchal structures. Attempting to draw a distinct line between 'community member' and 'organizer' creates a false dichotomy by upholding an arbitrary division between 'us' and 'them.'

This act of bridging the gap between certain communities and decision makers raises multiple questions. First, how do these advocates navigate the challenges of organizing *with*

[14] Andrasik and Mead (2019) also include immersion as a third technique, pointing to a case study in which a CEO pretends to be homeless for nine days. I have left this out as the researchers admit there is little literature on this representation mechanism, and it was not brought up in any of my interviews.

community members and not speaking *for* them? And second, how do the concepts of equity and intersectionality play out in this advocacy on policy? In other words, how do organizers ensure they are not also replicating heteronormative, colonial or patriarchal forms of oppression in their work?

Crystal is a research participant who wears many hats. A researcher herself and a member of multiple non-profit boards, she also worked extensively at the City to develop new ways of connecting to people living in Edmonton's downtown core. She spoke in favour of a mix of open and targeted community engagement "connected to the ground" to better capture the experiences of certain populations, including gendered and racialized experiences. "It's just simply the people you're exposed to," she said. "Their stories will convey that lens naturally in my opinion, but the fact is the policy isn't connected to people's lived realities most of the time, and so policymakers have to be reminded of who are we designing this for. You know, who is this policy going to impact?"

Her thoughts on the matter highlight the limitations of a policy approach without sufficient community consultation and complicates the way that GBA+ is occasionally made procedural or standardized. Crystal gave the example of a project related to food security in different cultural communities, and the unexpected responses that came from men and women. They provided feedback and insight that would have gone ignored without direct consultation of this kind. Gender experts gain significant authority, go unquestioned, and often work within existing limits established by the ruling governments employing them, which can stymie creative or radical policy solutions (Paterson 2010). By employing one or a handful of gender experts, the pressure to consult with community on gender issues is reduced. Fewer perspectives come into consideration, and the impacts on diverse populations may be sidelined. Expertise cannot replace

the input from a diversity of lived experiences. Literature also argues that a GBA+ approach can be turned into a checklist, completed at one stage of policy development and not fully engaged with or open to input from those who will be impacted (Findlay 2019, p. 522). According to Crystal, the city tends to approach equity as "a process question" and sticks to "traditional methods" of engagement and development.

Evie and Angela, current and former heads of large non-profits in Calgary and Edmonton respectively, shared some examples of collaboration among agencies and community engagement activities that informed local policy. They both characterized the advocacy work as not formalized with the cities,[15] and therefore their approaches included a mixture of reactive and proactive work. In Angela's case, an advocacy director would keep track of opportunities or threats at different levels of government, and then help prioritize areas to focus on. Angela acknowledged that this was relatively unique, as not many agencies or non-profits have dedicated advocacy staff. When certain policies or updates were going in front of Council, collaboration among non-profits with similar priorities became key. "You have two options," said Angela. "You can say, 'come help us influence the work that we're doing,' or we can say to them, 'the report is coming to council at Thursday, I'm going to send it to you in case you want to weigh in on it so that your voice is at least at Council.'" In the latter approach, limited time frames make a larger community engagement process challenging for groups to organize. A history of working with communities combined with a proactive approach allows advocates to already have a fairly strong understanding of the experiences and issues at hand. Relationships are ongoing and continual. But this approach raises the question of whether cities should be responsible for developing these relationships as well. Community groups working toward

[15] This was iterated by City staff during interviews as well.

gender equity with strong connections to diverse groups of women, non-binary and transgender people are, resources permitting, well situated to provide recommendations should the City not be equipped to build these relationships directly.

Even with a strong plan in place to gather community feedback and share that directly with government officials, the outcomes are not always what advocates hoped for.[16] Again referring to Scala and Paterson (2017), their study found that "building and sustaining relationships and networks with women's organizations did not figure prominently among the relational strategies of GBA analysts" at a national level. In Calgary and Edmonton, the closest equivalency to a GBA analyst would likely be the WAVE or GEDI committee volunteers and the small number of support staff. Evie described a community engagement event co-organized with a separate, friendly organization that brought together dozens of community members and non-profit staff to talk about changes to Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH), a provincial aid program. These changes had disastrous impacts for recipients trying to make ends meet. "They invited so many folks from the provincial government, from both government and the opposition, and they had one constituency assistant who showed up and I thought it was so disrespectful," said Evie. "They didn't take the time to come listen to the folks that it affected." The majority of community engagement projects have been on hold during the last year due to COVID-19.

Building capacity for marginalized communities to take on relationship building with public officials may address some of the disconnect between government and those they are meant to represent, albeit again shifting the responsibility away from municipalities. Crystal

[16] One possible exception to this trend came up in an interview with Zoe, who said that a city social worker occasionally organizes round tables which bring together community members and organizations to engage on various topics. The round tables have directly identified community needs, which then informed new programming if not changes to policy or advocacy plans.

described working with an environmental group in Edmonton made up of mostly white, male, retired business leaders and past politicians ("an old boys club") who had relationships with staffers and knew how to lobby them. "Most people don't have this MLA on their speed dial or this councillor, and most people don't get to have coffee with their mayors on a regular basis," she said. "That's political capital and I think for any community, for any advocacy, to succeed you really need that." She followed this by talking about the critical role that community leaders and liaisons play in developing this capacity and maintaining relationships. Similar sentiments were shared by several research participants.

How Feminist is it, Really?

"I didn't even know the word 'intersectionality' until I joined WAVE. […] I was born in the seventies, so I think I grew up with the idea of feminism as this revolt against men, as opposed to the actual wanting to take up space; that we are allowed to take up what we want. I'm really on the journey of learning about feminism still." - Hannah

Transformative vs. Incremental Change

Gender Based Analysis Plus is ultimately a policy about policies, which means it is subject to the limitations and frameworks created by the infrastructure already in place. A wealth of research has examined whether GBA+ has the ability to fundamentally change the ways in which governments govern and contribute to ending systemic forms of oppression. In some cases, scholars argued that it may continue colonialism and ignore issues of Indigenous sovereignty (Clark 2012). Similar to what many research participants shared, the literature is not overly optimistic about the transformative feminist potential of this policy approach.

Carole Bacchi and Joan Eveline question whether "mainstreaming ought to be considered a victory for feminist reformers, or whether it actually undermines important equality initiatives" (2003, p. 98). Using examples from Europe, Canada and Australia, they argue that gender

mainstreaming poses no real threat to neoliberalism, and supports government management (small government) instead of service delivery (big government). Neoliberalism came up infrequently during the course of the interviews, but is well represented in research literature. Alignment with existing policy frameworks is a "double-edged sword;" on one hand the linkages legitimize feminist arguments while on the other, the "seeming attentiveness to gender differences may well be woven into political agendas and policies that are antithetical to women's interests" (Teghtsoonian 2004, p. 272). Teghtsoonian goes on to give an example from New Zealand, where gender analysis was identified as a way for private businesses to improve sales and increase productivity among staff with no specific mention of equal wages or increased benefits.

Andrea Cornwall and Althea-Maria Rivas refer to ambiguous support for 'gender empowerment' as "a Trojan Horse with which to imbue apparently innocuous interventions with radicalizing potential" (2015, p. 404). Some examples of this phenomenon can be found in the list of benefits outlined earlier (p. 56), including revising HR policies or new, inclusive census language. Gender empowerment is a popular cause to rally behind, but the definitions of empowerment can be manipulated in ways that limit its potential for justice (Cornwall and Rivas 2015). Empowerment or gender equality is too often separated from who is responsible for the disempowerment/inequality, or in other words, the beneficiaries of systems of oppression are made invisible. The framing of a particular issue can shift the kinds of solutions proffered, eg: offering leadership training to individual women as opposed to instituting quotas for public boards and committees. In their many interviews with feminist bureaucrats, Scala and Paterson (2018, p. 229) found that the "transformative or emancipatory potential of GM did not come up,"

instead gender mainstreaming "was represented as an effective technocratic tool for achieving program outcomes."

Intersectionality Informing Policy

Rodriguez et al (2016) aptly captured the collection of definitions of intersectionality in the opening of their paper on "The Theory and Praxis of Intersectionality in Work and Organizations" by stating: "Intersectionality is understood as a metaphor (Acker 2011; Cuadraz and Uttal 1999), a concept (Knapp 2005; Styhre and Ericksson-Zetterquist 2008), a research paradigm (Dhamoon 2011; Hancock 2007), an ideograph (Alexander-Floyd 2012), a broad-based knowledge project (Collins 2015) and an analytical sensibility (Crenshaw 2015)." The diverse understandings of intersectionality have complicated its use by policy makers and advocates alike, but have not seemingly reduced its importance to building equity. With so many ways to interpret the term, knowing how to 'be intersectional' or 'use an intersectional approach' is understandably challenging. Even Patricia Hill Collins (2015), arguably a leading thinker in this field, has developed course syllabi around the exercise of exploring these various definitions. When asking research participants about their thoughts on the integration of intersectionality within municipal policy development, or intersectionality within their own organizations, responses generally reflected a familiarity with the concept and some confusion around how to operationalize it.

"I think we've had this idea in the past that policy analysis and development could somehow be really neutral," said Cora. "But then that neutral lens was always kind of like the white, heterosexual dominant lens." This sentiment echoes existing research that argues a history of privileging "value neutral" and "depoliticized" approaches to policy analysis stifles the

feminist roots of GBA+ (Teghtsoonian 2004, p. 281). With time, pressure to accomplish a more radical feminist set of outcomes has shifted to a model that better suits the status quo. What gets categorized as default or neutral is in fact white, heteronormative, and colonial. Several community advocates spoke about how the confluence of racism, sexism, poverty, transphobia and ableism informed their work, but these lenses were not attributed specifically to Gender Based Analysis Plus approaches.

Zoe, who organizes on the issue of food sovereignty, said acknowledging the complexity of these issues guides many of the conversations within her organization. "It ties into poverty, it ties into racism, it ties into gender issues," said Zoe. "One of the most impacted groups of food insecurity are single mothers, and really the only way to combat food insecurity is through increased income." In this example, considering one social issue with an intersectional perspective has led to a policy solution that is more transformative in nature. Zoe's organization's day-to-day activities include traditional food delivery and hamper programs, while their policy stances and advocacy work support a universal basic income.[17] That said, ongoing research cautions against the co-optation of intersectionality in GBA+ circles (Hunting and Hankivsky 2020). Gender-Based Analysis+ continues to centre gender and frames intersectionality as a "logical addition" which researchers Hunting and Hankivsky (2020) ague is "inherently contradictory." Instead, they call for the integration of intersectionality into gender mainstreaming to cease and future equity work to use a "broader framework of intersectionality in an accurate and meaningful way" (Hunting and Hankivsky 2020).

[17] Zoe made an interesting link between the Canadian Emergency Relief Benefits COVID response and a significant drop in the need for food hampers, saying CERB was "the closest that we've ever come to a universal basic income." She went on to say they see an increase in the demand for hampers any time a social assistance program changes eligibility requirements or restricts qualifications.

Other advocates generally favoured an intersectional approach instead of a women's-only or gender-centric approach. According to the literature, a focus on gender has a tendency to reduce the gender spectrum into a binary and replicate issues of gender essentialism, or "the implicit belief that there is some kind of pre-existing essence that constitutes 'women' and 'men' as separate and different" (Cornwall and Rivas 2015, p. 401). There is no universal women's experience; and the categories of 'male' and 'female' are not exhaustive, inherently oppositional or exclusionary (Cornwall and Rivas 2015, p. 403).

Maya called for the city to look at race, income, class divisions and other factors. "I think that needs to be taken into account besides just, I don't want to say 'gender equity' cause I actually think that term is really powerful in itself, but we're only interpreting it at a very surface level," said Maya. "I wish they'd actually take it more seriously and look at what the equity side of that really means."

Hankivsky and Mussell (2018, p. 312) write that the materializing of intersectionality within GBA+ could improve "understandings of how power, privilege, and inequities can be applied in policy practices," however it is only the beginning of a long process and subject to several significant flaws described above. Dhamoon (2005 p. 239) takes this one step further by bringing it back to the community, arguing that because different systems of oppression are so enmeshed, it is not possible to radically effect change in one without tackling them all. This has "political implications" meaning it highlights "the need for alliances *between* different kinds of activist spaces and movements and changes *within* activist circles that displace the primacy and presumed stability of one or two or three kinds of oppression" (Dhamoon 2005, p. 239 italics in original). Dhamoon (2005 p. 240) writes that the best way to operationalize intersectionality in order to maintain its radical capacity is to "foreground it as a political critique" and a way to

confront power. In a city where no gender mainstreaming policy already exists, perhaps starting from a focus on equity with an intersectional lens would better achieve the desired outcomes.

GBA+ and Intersectionality within Organizations

Questions around intersectionality or Gender Based Analysis Plus within their own organizations were often met with a description of increased diversity in organizations and women in leadership roles. Conversations often referenced representation or plans to launch advisory committees as the most common way of combatting issues of racism and sexism which participants shared via stories of sexist board members, skewed work loads, low wages and tokenization. For many, representation was the preferred way to integrate a specific perspective, not policy. “In the community, people don’t use those kinds of lenses in the same way policy makers do,” said Crystal. “There’s no template for them to fill out or anything like that. I think it’s about practicality and, and just people’s lived reality.”

Tom organizes on social issues using a collective model that includes a focus on consensus building and leadership development. The collective has been successful in mobilizing people on a number of social issues, and likely played a significant role in minimizing municipal budget cuts in the fall of 2020. Like other research participants, their work does not explicitly employ GBA+ but rather relies on diverse populations engaging in day-to-day organizing and bringing forth their own experiences. With the exception of the working group on Truth and Reconciliation which is largely made up of Indigenous leaders, membership is tied to the financial commitment of collaborative organizations and not aspects of identity. Tom gave the example of a member who is the mother of a child with mental health issues, and consistently brings forth those experiences in meetings. Her perspective is informed by her personal experiences, and her presence implies both buy-in with the cause and willingness to contribute.

The collective has a history of organizing 'listening campaigns' which address financial barriers to formal membership to an extent.

"How are we building our city and income and economics around those who count in our public dialogue and then excluding, minimizing, not valuing all these different people who don't count?" asked Tom.[18] Cornwall and Rivas (2015 p. 409) used the word "inclusion" to refer to this model in an eerily similar way: an inclusive approach "would invite hard questions to be asked about who is at the table, who decides, who acts, who strategizes and who benefits. And it would bring into the equation other questions, other oppressions and differences – of class, race, ethnicity, age, disability and sexuality. As such, it would present a means of going beyond the 'add women and stir' approach, with all its pitfalls and tokenisms."

Yasmin, who works with an anti-racism organization, organized events (pre-COVID) to build relationships and open lines of communication between racialized community members, new immigrants and local services. The racialized communities she works with saw more potential and need in working to address racism within other agencies and services than city policy as a whole. "There's a disconnect between the whole domestic violence service providing agencies and again, the community members or the racialized community members, and then also the law enforcement agencies, like the police," said Yasmin, who also said that many intimate partner violence services are lacking racialized, queer, and transgender lenses. Furthermore, she notes that the "lack of representation of racialized communities, either as staff, volunteers or even at the policy making" tables, is a significant factor in the ongoing challenges to reduce violence.

[18] During the interview, Tom added that there does exist a gender divide in "who actually does the work and who sits in positions of leadership," saying that in many meetings men would set the agenda and goals, while women did the administrative work and project execution.

Evie was blunt in her response, saying she does not focus on gender but "issues that span gender." Zoe said gender was one component among many kinds of lived experience. Intersectionality was "huge," however Zoe and her colleagues were still struggling to ensure that no perspectives were left out. Maya reflected this in her answer, saying that "not all of us were well-versed to intersectionality" and it is a difficult concept to understand without formal study or training. Jessica, a member of WAVE, brought the training she received there into her work on a non-profit board. She characterized GBA+ at the organization as not deliberate, but intrinsic to their work with young mothers. "With the WAVE work though, we were deliberate about applying it," said Jessica.

Tom warned against getting bogged down in the definitions of concepts which has the potential to paralyze building power toward justice. Ultimately, the goal of an intersectional lens on policy development or policy analysis is to eliminate inequity which requires some kind of enactment or practice (Rodriguez et al. 2016 p. 207). It is a messy process that challenges social norms and will cause discomfort, a long-standing feature of feminist activism.

In conclusion, Gender Based Analysis + can be employed by municipal governments in a variety of ways with some success, and yet is unlikely to challenge the fundamental structures that shape policy development. Community advocates see GBA+ as one tool within their tool kits when calling for policy changes while also recognizing that city administrators are pulled in many directions and have limited resources. Building strong communities and engaging citizens in political processes are crucial to challenging structural oppression. Community advocates were keen on implementing an intersectional approach to both their advocacy work and within their own organizations, despite some confusion on how exactly to do that. As so many conversations referenced limited capacity, it seemed prudent to explore whether existing

financial resources improved or impeded it. The following chapter will take a step back from the current activities of research participants and look at the role that funding sources play in these activities and in shaping the political climate of Alberta more broadly.

5. Funding: Biting the Hand

Funding plays a significant role in defining both the capacity and the scope of work of organizations, be they non-profits, charities, or other kinds of associations. In the context of Alberta, the linkages between the resource extraction industries and various key sources of funding (government, corporate or individual) run deep. As a major source of revenue for provincial coffers, a large portion of the municipal property tax base, and a major employer of individuals across the province, oil and gas companies have an undue amount of influence. It is often indirect and so ingrained in everyday thinking, that the depth or severity of influence goes unrecognized. When interviewing community advocates about their work, the connection between gender, equity and funding was clear, however the link between gender, equity and extractivism was less obvious. There also seems to be a gap in existing research: much has been written about funding and advocacy work, or the limited outcomes of Gender Based Analysis Plus on policy, but not much that measures the impacts of private financing on groups advocating for radical changes in policy. Mapping out the entire breadth of funding arrangements between the public sector, private sector and local non-profits is not feasible in the scope of this research project. Instead, I plan to focus on two examples of major sources of funding in each city to illustrate the connections, limitations and advantages. This chapter will examine local advocates' opinions of the relationship between community-level advocacy and Family and Community Support Services grants (government funding), and United Way funding (itself a combination of corporate donors, individual donors and some government grants). Both these sources existing in both Calgary and Edmonton. This chapter will also explore the ongoing influence of colonialism, anti-black racism, and heteropatriarchy in the underlying infrastructure of charity and non-profit funding.

Funding and Advocacy Chills

Colonial Roots

Non-profits and voluntary organizations in Canada are well-placed to engage with community members and support their involvement in policy arenas, however a relatively small number of these groups take up any form of government relations or policy advocacy. There is a wealth of literature exploring the relationship between advocacy and funding that recognizes the limitations that certain sources of funding place on advocates (Hasenfeld and Garrow 2012; Mosley 2012; Harder 2003) and occasionally questioning whether the extent of self-censorship is exaggerated (Lu 2018). Research participants had a wide range of impressions regarding the influence of funding from different sources. Many believed that government funding and corporate funding alike placed pressures on the kinds of topics and activities they took on and increased the number of hours they spend tracking political activities (Kirby 2014). Others pointed out that both the granting institutions and the policies that shape the structures of many non-profits and charities in Canada have colonial roots, and vestiges of this colonialism lives on despite growing recognition and efforts to decolonize.

Research participant Crystal talked about family foundations and private foundations, often "pretty white," wanting to help Indigenous and racialized communities. She pointed out that "for generations, often that money comes from reaping of the benefits of colonialism, displacement of Indigenous people and slavery" which creates conflict for racial justice organizations. In accepting funds from foundations with colonial histories, are they excusing historic oppressions? On the other hand, do institutions that continue to benefit from resource extraction or related investments have an obligation to examine their granting priorities and how they may be continuing to exacerbate the issues they claim to support? In the previous chapter,

the Hunter Family Foundation was listed as one of the community partners leading and funding a small portion of Calgary's Mental Health and Addictions Strategy. Their website stipulates that they will not fund "anti-fossil fuel advocates" and "climate change issues." There are strong links between the dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their lands for extractive developments, intergenerational trauma, and the ongoing mental health and addictions crisis in Alberta. In contrast, the Foundation will fund "advocacy of capitalism, free market economies, and entrepreneurial thinking." Researcher and scholar Damien Lee also questions the nature of these power structures by asking how some non-governmental organizations perpetuate colonialism by legitimizing state control of Indigenous lands (2011). These questions will be explored further, later in this chapter.

Regulations

Non-profits and registered charities all have unique sets of regulations and policies that require certain structures, bylaws and public reporting. This bureaucratization requires a certain kind of experience or skill set to manage. Jumping through these extra hoops can open up additional avenues for resources, but also introduce a host of new regulatory requirements and limitations to partisan activities.

Table: Partial regulations of registered non-profits, charities, grassroots and for-profit organizations.

	Non-Profit	Charity	Informal Grassroots	For-Profit Company
Board of Directors, membership, bylaws	Yes	Yes	Optional	Not required
Public Reporting	Annual General Meetings and Annual Reports, including audited Financial Statements in Alberta	Annual General Meetings and Annual Reports, including audited Financial Statements	Optional	Not required
Tax Receipts for Donations	No	Yes	No	No
Political activity: calls to action and advocacy	No limitations*	No limitations. Regulations prior to 2018 limited certain kinds of political activity to 10% of budget. Must be related to mandate.	No limitations	No limitations
Partisan activity: supporting a particular party or candidate	No limitations	Prohibited	No limitations	No limitations

*Non-profits that serve union or professional interests, or non-profits that represent a majority of profit-seeking groups are also subjected to the Alberta Lobbyists Act.

Grassroots organizations have the fewest official regulations and therefore the most flexibility when it comes to radical advocacy work, but are ineligible for most public or private grants. These groups are not explicitly ruled out, however the majority of large grants are only available to registered charities or non-profits. Meta-analysis compiling dozens of studies on the impacts of government funding on advocacy work has found slight positive associations between government funding and levels of advocacy work (Lu 2018). This could be interpreted to mean that an increase in resources opens more doors than fear of losing those resources closes. This was not always the impression of local advocates. “I know some organizations did feel like they

couldn't ask for certain things because of how they were funded," said Alanna. "If the government of Alberta is funding a childcare facility or a group of childcare facilities, it might get tricky to start to push back on them about certain things, you know?" This fear of reprisal is often referred to as an 'advocacy chill' among non-profits, charities and grassroots groups. In contrast, private companies also receive public subsidies and face no similar regulations on their campaigning on political issues (Kirby 2014).

A common theme throughout interviews with research participants was the kinds of work that traditional funders are willing or unwilling to support. Yasmin's work on anti-racism with a registered charity does not fit under a service provision model, meaning she does not provide 'clients' with a service like food or housing. Instead, her focus is on community development, leadership training and building a foundation for structural change. All activities which require time and resources. Research on marginalized voices in advocacy generally finds that their participation often involves storytelling to raise awareness among the general public or government representatives (DeSantis 2010). This brings us back to the discussion between speaking *for* versus speaking *with* marginalized communities from the previous chapter. Storytelling is just one aspect of leadership training, and a hyper-focus on personal stories may limit the ways in which community members are able to participant in public discourse. "The success of such [community-driven development] projects also depends on the sustainability of funding, which usually we struggle with," said Yasmin about building leadership capacity in racialized and newcomer communities. "They don't really understand, or they don't feel that this work is very important." She argued that more diverse representatives within city government and funding leadership, as well as more awareness of violence and racism could help. Research

participants acknowledged that funding for policy advocacy positions was extremely rare, and funding for engaging marginalized community members in advocacy even more so.

Zoe has been following developments in Calgary around anti-racism work in non-profits, and questioned why outcomes are not expressly linked to funding. “The grant system is broken because they’re giving money based on a project idea, not on a project execution,” she said. She described filling out grant applications that focused on serving a certain number of individuals, or a certain demographic (eg. racialized or low-income) which obliges organizations to ask community members invasive and qualifying questions before providing a service. “Am I going to ask people, ‘Oh, sorry, are you Indigenous?’ so that I can hit my demographic. That’s insane. But the other piece is like, what does it mean to serve that person? Just because I serve them doesn’t mean that I achieved the outcome that was desired.” In essence, a single interaction can provide basic needs support, but is unlikely to create long-term change for either an individual or structural issue. Funding that attempts to address inequity specific to certain groups, like Indigenous or otherwise racialized peoples, can introduce a new set of barriers by continuing to rely on Westernized concepts of identity, screening and measured outputs. In the most extreme cases, funders act in ways that imply they do not trust the community organizers or people accessing services. “I just had someone tell me today that a grantor specifically asked them to take out volunteer supplies because they didn’t want to fund volunteer supplies,” said Zoe.[19] Volunteers, often a gendered workforce in community service organizations, provide free labour. In this example, their contribution is not recognized or valued by those with resources.

[19] I neglected to ask Zoe for clarification. It is possible that volunteer supplies include training materials, snacks, or personal equipment like gloves. Hesitation to fund these kinds of supplies may stem from the existing myth that non-profits and charities spend too much on ‘overhead’ which is incorrectly understood to be separate from program delivery.

Researchers Hasenfeld and Garrow (2012, p. 296) argue that many welfare programs may be guided by concepts of social rights and active citizenship, but implementation has been "contentious, fragile, and suffused with racial and gender biases." They list mainly American examples of non-profits and charities partnering with governments to provide social services, while advocating for policy changes that were at times progressive, and at other times oppressive and colonial. Hasenfeld and Garrow also point to the rise of neoliberalism for shifting the role of the state from redistributive and collective to individualized and market-based (2012, p. 301). This ideology trickles into how non-profits are governed as well; each individual organization 'benefits' from competition at local levels. Neoliberalism ultimately alters the political and economic climate that non-profits operate within, and negatively impacts their ability to advocate for social rights (Hasenfeld and Garrow 2012, p. 302).

The majority of research participants were targeted because of their involvement in advocacy related to gendered issues and equity issues with a gendered lens, primarily in social services. The findings are therefore very limited regarding the experiences of organizations striving for environmental justice or Indigenous sovereignty; a gap that is not insignificant and needs further exploration in future research. Another gap in the interviews that has been addressed by existing research is the link between oil sands development and masculine and colonial narratives of conquering wild lands or dominating an 'empty' frontier. Not only was this territory populated by Indigenous peoples, development was by no means a solitary, hyper-individualistic endeavor. Government and industry leaned into false and toxic narratives as justification for violence and exploitation of people and lands. In Fort McMurray, a northern community near many of the extraction sites, oil sands workers are still predominantly white males, while women hold many of the low-wage administrative jobs (O'Shaughnessy and Dogu

2016, p. 270). Racialized workers, whether Temporary Foreign Workers or new immigrants, work many of the low-wage caregiving roles (O'Shaughnessy and Dogu 2016, p. 280). This division of labour, founded on sexism and racism, is not unique to Alberta's "boomtown" economies. The demographics of the front lines or blue-collar workforce are reflective of the downtown offices, where the Corporate Social Responsibility policy documents are written and funding decisions are made.

Lastly, changes to the Canada Revenue Agency's regulations on registered charities and public calls to action have allowed many organizations to increase their advocacy work on social justice issues, but according to many of the research participants, there continues to be hesitation. Prior to 2018, registered charities were only able to spend 10 percent of their total budgets on certain 'political activities' including openly advocating for specific policy changes or public calls to action. After a court case brought forward by Canada Without Poverty arguing that the regulations limited their free speech, this kind of activity is now unrestricted (CG-027). Charities were and are able to meet one-on-one with or write letters to elected officials at municipal or provincial levels to inform on social issues without limits.[20] Today, there are still restrictions on partisan activities like supporting or opposing a political party or candidate, which in my experience, can restrict public conversations and consultations that may give the appearance of partisanship. For example, a public campaign in support of publicly funded childcare could be interpreted as partisan if only one political party supports this policy. The CRA has clarified that charities can inform people about policy positions of candidates, and can communicate about policy issues "as long as in doing so the charity does not refer to or otherwise identify the political party or candidate" (Government of Canada 2020). How to navigate both these points at

[20] Paid staff who lobby federal officials more than a certain number of hours every month are potentially subjected to the Lobbying Act and a separate code of conduct (Holmes and Lithwick 2020).

the same time is still complicated. One research participant shared that their board expressed caution for a Get Out The Vote campaign. “We’re literally asking people to go vote,” she said. “There’s nothing less partisan than that. There’s just real trepidation around politics here.” Research participants were generally supportive of the changes to CRA regulations on political activities, however it did not seem to have changed their approaches to advocacy work too significantly. Those who worked for registered charities said that their missions were primarily service driven, and new regulations did not change that.[21]

Evie, who works with an organization that has over 400 staff, said “even if I spent every waking hour of my day doing advocacy, it’s not even remotely close to 10 percent.” She was not “overly concerned” with reaching limits as the vast majority of the organization was focused on delivering front-line supports. According to a Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations survey of the non-profit sector in Alberta, 69% of respondents did not have any staff dedicated to public policy (CCVO 2019). Gladys, who works for a much smaller charity, said the changes were “wonderful,” and allowed for much more freedom to take on certain kinds of activism. She said the effects were limited however, because other factors were also important in limiting her ability to do advocacy. “It’s a significant improvement, but that’s not the only thing that matters,” she said, referring to other pressures that come with private and public sources of funding. Tom added to this sentiment, saying the limitations that come with various sources of funding “may not be explicit, but it has a huge chill effect” that’s “clear and profound.”

[21] Expectations of non-partisanship or a separation of policy and politics can influence the advocacy approaches of groups that are not under charitable regulations. The long-standing regulations have solidified into a norm, interpreted as a strategic strength. One participant described her government relations work this way: “We sort of positioned ourselves as ‘we have a neutral voice.’ If there’s something that you need to ask for that you can’t ask for, we’ll ask for it. That neutrality in the system is really, really important.”

Other examples of the chill effect came up in separate interviews about environmental justice, safe injection sites and sexual health. Open discussion about contentious or controversial topics, whether they directly challenge the existence of the funders or not, are heavily moderated. Advocacy on environmental issues seems particularly risky for some, especially after the provincial government launched public inquiry into "foreign sources of funding" for groups that oppose tar sands development (Cora Interview 2020). Since these interviews were conducted, new fines have been introduced for protesters who interfere with essential infrastructure, including blocking railways or pipeline construction sites, as was mentioned in the Theory Chapter. One participant questioned why local non-profits were not more active in critiquing the provincial government's calls to close safe injection sites across Alberta. When talking about reproductive health and sex education, Paige referred to limits on her communications and advocacy work. "Our whole team really struggles because there's such a need not being met by us not having a presence online, but I think the damage, if we were to [post] and lose funders means that hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people might lose services." According to Paige, colleagues are concerned that frank communications on social media about topics like abortion or sexual health could reduce funding for their other programs, which include domestic violence supports.

The chill effect is difficult to measure. While many funders simply list advocacy work as ineligible, those who do not still hold power over recipients. Some aspects of gender equity like ending domestic violence or promoting more women to leadership positions see little opposition, however other aspects can and have put resources at risk. Research points to a hesitation to "bite the hand that feeds them" as a consequence of the "marketization" of the sector (Feldman, Strier

and Koreh 2017, p. 258).[22] Competition for a limited pool of resources pressures organizations to increase their visibility while obscuring political calls to action (Feldman, Strier and Koreh 2017). This pressure can lead to a type of advocacy that prioritizes relationship building with decision makers and promoting the organization rather than working toward "substantive policy change" (Mosley 2012, p. 854). What "counts" as advocacy work has a fluid definition, leading to relatively inconclusive meta-analysis of whether government funding increases, decreases or changes the types of advocacy work (Neumayr et al. 2015). That said, some research participants thought the risks associated with public-facing advocacy were inflated or perhaps worthwhile. Crystal thought the landscape was shifting, with more people asking why non-profits were scared of criticizing policy. Cora agreed, saying in many instances the threat was more "perceived" than "real." "People calculate what the threat is of speaking out and not what the potential benefit is of speaking out," she said. Reluctance to get engaged in public debates is a lost opportunity.

In the next portion of this chapter, I will outline more specifically how different sources of funding influence the kinds of advocacy work that organizations take on, and whether this impacts public calls or activism to improve equity in Calgary and Edmonton.

Municipal / Provincial Funding

Over the course of each interview, I asked research participants if they were familiar with their organization's primary sources of funding and if those funding sources had any influence on their daily activities or strategic planning on advocacy work. These questions were broken up into municipal/provincial funding sources and private/corporate funding to see if there was a

[22] Interestingly, this exact idiom also comes up in the context of Indigenous criticisms of oil sands developments. First Nations who ask for better economic returns and better environmental outcomes are "framed by some as being hypocritical – as biting the hand that feeds them" (Haluza-Delay and Carter 2016 p. 462).

difference in how research participants interpreted the two. The majority of participants were fairly familiar with the primary funding sources of their organizations.

Launched in 1966, Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) is a partnership between Alberta municipalities and the provincial government. The province provides up to 80% of funding toward grants for community agencies or direct service that will "help communities identify their social needs and develop responses" (Government of Alberta website, FCSS Program). In the case of Edmonton and Calgary, many non-profits apply for grants at the city level and city administrators administer the funding according to frameworks developed by the province. In some regards, this continues the trend within neoliberal governments to download provincial responsibility to municipalities, without allowing the municipalities the ability to raise necessary funds. Calgary and Edmonton, like every other city, town and village in the province, are subject to the Municipal Governance Act which outlines how municipalities should be governed, how they can collect taxes, and what aspects of community planning they are responsible for. While large cities are taking on more social wellbeing programming, efforts to update a fiscal framework for Edmonton and Calgary have been in the works for years. FCSS dollars fund youth education or mental health supports, blurring the lines between provincial and municipal mandates (Hasenfeld and Garrow 2012). The Table below outlines 2018-2019 summary data of FCSS funding in both cities prior to the COVID-19 outbreak of 2020. An additional $30million in funding was announced in early 2020 as part of a COVID response, but few details about recipients were available at the time of writing.

FCSS Data	**Edmonton**	**Calgary**
Total Budget	$16.6 Million in core funding, breakdown not available	$39.6 Million in total, $9.9M from City of Calgary, $29.7M from Government of Alberta

Volunteers in FCSS-funded programs	11,373	19,616
Volunteer Hours	498,924 – program hours 1,266 – committee hours	668,834
Number of organizations that received funding	70 agencies, 100 programs	77 organizations, 150 programs
Number of individuals who benefited from FCSS-funded programs	225,079	54,055*

Source: 2019 Annual Report for Calgary, 2018 Outcome Summary Report for Edmonton, and 2019 Approved FCSS Funded Agencies list for Edmonton.
*Unclear why there is such a significant difference in number of participants or individuals who benefitted from FCSS programs. Possibly due to differences in data capturing for flexible/drop-in programs, or definition of 'participant.'

The Government of Alberta portal for FCSS has not published an outcomes or progress report since 2013. The Ministry for Community and Social Services Annual Reports showed the following trends in FCSS funding:

Year	Amount	
2019-20	$100 Million	
2018-19	$101 Million	
2017-18	$101 Million	
2016-17	$101 Million	
2015-16	$76 Million	(NDP elected in 2015.)
2010-11	$74.8 Million	
2005-06	$62.5 Million	
2000-01	$37.6 Million	

Sources: Ministry for Community and Social Services Annual Report 2020. Family and Community Support Services Program Handbook 2010.

Other government grants have seen significant cuts in recent years, including the Community Facility Enhancement Program, the Community Initiatives Program, the Other

Initiatives Program, and the Ministry of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women (CCVO, 2021). Public service spending in health and education also saw large cuts, despite the pandemic crisis. It is difficult to track long-term budgeting for the Ministry of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women as it is a collection of previously separate offices. Research participants received funding from a variety of these different provincial programs; FCSS is highlighted here because of the relationship with municipalities. The outcome measurements and eligibility guidelines of FCSS are largely developed by the province, and are likely not impacted by municipal strategic goals like those stated in the Women's Initiative or Gender Equity Diversity and Inclusion (GEDI) documents of Edmonton and Calgary respectively.

Research participant Alanna works across a number of smaller rural municipalities as part of her consultancy role. She mentioned that there are a number who are taking on social planning and developing "their own internal policy shops" but that it is "really focused around FCSS funding." Without this source of support, many small municipalities are not able to maintain long term social planning. FCSS does not fund advocacy work, basic living supports, rehabilitation or recreation. Crystal volunteers for several community-focused and environmental grassroots initiatives; some receive formal government funding and others do not. "We're not a registered charity because it's very explicitly advocacy," she said, regarding an active mobility group. "We probably won't get a whole lot of money for advocacy work from foundations, from government. And on the other hand, we don't think we want to take that money anyways because we want to be able to say whatever we want." She added that her work with another coalition that does receive FCSS funding consciously avoids "straight up advocacy work."

Impacts of Cuts

While city strategic goals, including improvements to gender equity, may not hold sway over FCSS guidelines, provincial funding trends do have an influence on the strategic or planning work of municipalities and community groups. Effects of changes in provincial leadership, like the shift to the New Democratic Party in 2015 and the return to conservative leadership with the election of the United Progressive Conservatives in 2019, cannot be understated. “There’s a huge amount of resistance in the City to being critical of the Conservative party and their policies or any of their actions, because they know what will happen to them if they are public in opposition,” said Tom, whose collective primarily relies on membership dues from other organizations. Some of the member organizations who receive city funding are also nervous about publicly critiquing the city and risks to their funding, he said.

One research participant, Gladys, pointed out that the development of the GEDI Strategy happened during “times of austerity.” Not only were budgets on the chopping block, but a drop in the price of oil led to significant layoffs and office closures in both cities. Municipal budgets are closely tied to property taxes, and cities cannot run a deficit. Gladys said she thought that the downturn contributed to the modest scope and ambition of the document. City administrators also mentioned that shrinking budgets have changed timelines for some of the strategic goals. Initially there was a budget for data disaggregation planning and implementation, which would allow the City of Calgary to better measure how certain programs or policies impacts different genders and races. Significant budget cuts have stalled some parts of this work, and extended timelines for others.

One research participant said that the budget cuts limited the city’s ability to hire consultants with relevant expertise, and place additional work on city staff already stretched thin. These types of cuts are not new. Women’s movements across the country have been subject to

dramatic budget cuts to "cement the decades-long erosion and delegitimization" (Rodgers and Knight 2011, p. 570). Similar cuts at the provincial level have long shaped the activities of women's groups and ability to respond to policy changes that negatively impact communities (Harder 2003, p. 122). The lack of funding for policy or advocacy work related to gender equity is so normalized that losing the small amount of dedicated funds for this project is no surprise.

While FCSS funding has remained relatively stable despite rumours of cuts, other provincial departments have seen significant reductions that impact community work. "The government has cut everything and so they're reimagining themselves a little bit," said Jessica, who sits on the board of a youth-focused Edmonton non-profit. "When there's reductions in funding from the government sector, there has to be a reduction in the services provided. It's just the fact of the matter." She added that no increase in private fundraising, especially during COVID, is able to make up for provincial funding reductions to youth education or housing programs. Tanya, who works for a housing non-profit, said cuts to programs that funded environmentally friendly renovations reduced their capacity to upgrade and maintain dozens of homes for low-income families. Her organization has had to scale back future plans, impacting the quality of life of dozens of families.

Existing research on government funding and non-profit advocacy work adds a layer of complication to methods or tactics of advocacy work as well. When conducting interviews with non-profit leaders in Chicago, Mosley (2012, p. 855) learned that they focused their advocacy strategies or plans on building partnerships via "insider tactics" like one-on-one meetings with city officials. Marches, protest or public campaigns were seen as ineffective and unnecessarily adversarial. This theme came up in a handful of interviews, even in circumstances where government was actively cutting funding to their respective sectors. Working with or from the

inside of existing power frameworks was described as the most effective use of time and resources (Jessica Interview 2020; Evie Interview 2020; Alanna Interview 2020). In her conclusion, Mosley argues that partnership-centered advocacy by non-profit providers in the human service sector "may be supporting current political and institutional arrangements more than it is calling for fundamental change" (2020, p. 863).[23]

Governments as Colonial Institutions

Folks working alongside city administration from Edmonton pointed out that the city structures, including funding bodies and advisory committees are "colonial organizations" (Renee Interview 2020). Ongoing efforts to move away from these "traditional structures," like working with Indigenous Circles, are slow to progress and may require frequent compromises, said Renee. One example arose in the spring and summer of 2020, when Black Lives Matters marches in Edmonton and Calgary culminated in City Hall hearings. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) have a long history of perpetuating colonial oppression against Indigenous peoples and serving the interests of landowners (Preston 2017, p. 358) (to say nothing of the ongoing sex scandals or mishandling of thousands of cases of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls).[24] These structures exist in other police forces, as can be seen in the high rates of incarceration of Black and Indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples make up 4.5% of the population in Canada and represent a third of provincial and federal correctional services admissions (Malakieh, Statistics Canada 2019). In 2020, the Calgary Police

[23] Another tactic used by activist organizations facing significant cuts in Canada is to shift to increased service provision (Rodgers and Knight 2011, p. 577). This allows the organization to continue with the same core principles, even if primary activities are fundamentally changed.

[24] Preston (2017) also writes about the RCMP's role in establishing the borders of Treaty 6 territory, now Edmonton and surrounding area, to remove Indigenous peoples from land with known crude oil and bitumen deposits.

Service budget was $401million and the single largest line item in the municipal budget. The Edmonton Police Service budget was $388.8 million for 2021. Together, these numbers total nearly eight times the total annual FCSS budget for the entire province. Some research participants shared that they supported cuts to police funding, in part because those funds could be moved to preventative measures, or areas that better benefit their communities. Police funding is "part of a larger ecosystem" and closely tied to anti-racism work in either city (Zoe Interview 2020). The GEDI Strategy in Calgary and the Women's Initiative in Edmonton have no explicit written stance on policing, according to publicly available documents. City hearings were populated with individual advocates and representatives from community organizations.

Angela said that government funding morphs "radicalism" into "more traditional advocacy." She had fairly strong concerns about the limiting influence of government funding on advocacy, and said that the Women's Advocacy Voice of Edmonton (WAVE) should have been the Women's Advisory Voice of Edmonton. "How easy would it be for WAVE to say to the City of Edmonton, 'your snow clearing policy is BS because it's not looking at women?' " she asked. "It's not looking at intersectionality. It's not looking at gender. It's not doing all the things you've said we're supposed to do. How long would that group last?" She followed up by saying that city councils funding groups specifically to critique their work does not lead to radical solutions to structural problems. Gladys summed up similar concerns by saying she wished there were more independent groups without FCSS funding or free from charity regulations to take up advocacy on social issues related to equity. Grassroots groups who build collective strength without these formal resources may be better situated to advocate for radical change, as they are also free from the limitations outlined in equity seeking strategies and initiatives. Like Simpson's writing on the resurgence of Indigenous communities coming from within and refusing the abide

by colonial institutions, advocacy collectives built from within communities are most able to press for radical change.

Private Funding and links to Resource Extraction

Alongside government grants, private and corporate donations make up a significant portion of funding for many non-profits and charities. Alberta has a long and complicated history with resource extraction industries, which serve as a huge source of revenue for public and private coffers while violently destroying tracts of Indigenous lands and contributing to the climate crisis. Charities must report financial statements annually but are not required to share specific information about the individual sources (for example, revenues are often reported under categories like 'grants' and 'donations'). To try and illustrate the volume and scope of oil and gas industry donations in Alberta, I will focus on two chapters of United Way. United Way Calgary and Area, and United Way Alberta Capital Region (which includes Edmonton) organize corporate fundraising events and fund large grants related to their priority areas. In 2019, UW Calgary and Area invested over $48 million in local non-profits, while UW Alberta Capital Region raised $25.5 million (UW Report to Community 2019). In each case, they fund more than FCSS, but less then all government grants combined.

The UW Alberta Capital Region 2019 Report to Community lists these companies among major donors:

- PCL Construction, a petrochemical construction company, +$2million
- Enbridge, oil and gas company, +$1million
- EPCOR, utilities, +$600,000
- Imperial, oil and gas company, +$500,000
- Shell Canada, oil and gas company, +$400,000

- Nutrien, fertilizer, +$400,000[25]

Between the $200,000 and $100,000 mark, the list also includes Pembina Pipeline Corporation, Capital Power, Suncor, and Stantec.

The UW Calgary and Area reports corporate support differently, recognizing donors who have contributed certain amounts over the past five years. Their top slot is the President's Circle for members who have given over $5 million and is entirely made up of five oil and gas companies: Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Enbridge, Imperial, Pembina Pipeline Corporation and Shell Canada Limited (United Way Calgary and Area Website 2021). The Corporate Million Dollar Roundtable of companies that donated between $1million and $4.9 million over the past five years includes AltaGas Ltd, AltaLink, ARC Resources, Enmax Corporation, Inter Pipeline Ltd, Keyera Corp., NOVA Chemicals, Nutrien, PCL Construction, PETRONAS Energy Canada, Repsol Oil and Gas Canada Inc, Suncor, TC Energy, Tourmaline Oil Corp., TransAlta Corporation and Vermilion Energy. Several banks and provincial granting bodies are also listed as top funders.

In addition to raising funds via private companies, UW also fundraises directly with individuals who work at these companies. Over the course of the research project, I talked to one United Way campaigner who described the relationship-building aspect between the fundraiser and the corporate partners. United Way hires campaigners on short-term contracts every fall to organize fundraising events at corporate offices across the city. Corporate staff participate in events to raise money for UW via bake sales, office games or even plane pulls. These would be reported under individual donors and not part of the corporate tally; for example, the United Way

[25] While not a traditional oil and gas company, Nutrien identifies as the "world's largest potash producer" with mines across Saskatchewan. I have included them above because these mining activities fall under the umbrella of resource extraction.

Capital Region reported nearly twice the amount funds raised from individual donors than from corporate donors.

Why do oil and gas companies donate to non-profits like United Way? Research from Du and Vieira (2012) outlines the rise of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategies or policies in oil and gas industries. They write that resource extraction industries are "controversial" because of their "unscrupulous business practices that entail adverse social, environmental and ethical consequences" (p. 1). I would add a growing public awareness of settler colonialism and conflict between oil companies and Indigenous communities to the list (Preston 2017). CSR is part of a public relations strategy to better public opinion and maintain a sense of legitimate control over the resources or necessary land, achieved through publicizing commitments to safety, diversity, improving environmental practices and charitable giving (Du and Vieira 2012). Whether these CSR strategies amount to a change in practices is debatable, depending on the size of the company, where they operate, and the particular area of commitment (Berkowitz et al. 2017). Berkowitz argues that "issues on gender equality in the workplace for white collar workers in the main multinationals' corporate headquarters will have very little to do with those around human rights abuses of oil workers in Nigeria" (p. 756). Companies like Chevron and Shell both operate in Nigeria and have professional offices in Alberta. Bettering public perception and improving staff morale work to counteract negative opinions stemming from abuses at a local and international scale. According to Preston in her article *Racial Extractivism and White Settler Colonialism: An Examination of the Canadian Tar Sands Mega-Projects, "*CSR discourse (including gaining the social license to operate) does not pose any fundamental threats to the free market, nor does it disrupt any of the foundational logics of racial extractivism or racial capitalism" (2017, p. 368). These strategies are designed to

mitigate liabilities and bad press, not correct the violence against people and lands fundamental to profit earnings.

United Way has the connections and capacity to raise significant funds in ways that many grassroots groups are unable. They also set parameters for which groups are eligible for funding, and what kinds of work are prioritized. The United Way campaigner who participated in this research project said they are well equipped to know what is needed where, and to channel resources appropriately. She was not personally familiar with where the majority of UW funds came from. In Edmonton, the three priority areas for funding are Break the Cycle (educational programming), Lift People Out (basic needs and employment services) and Provide a Safety Net (mental health supports). While these categories are fairly broad, they do leave out a significant number of organizations that are working to better communities. When UW priorities shift, or project funding comes to an end, there are no guarantees that support for ongoing work will be renewed.

Impacts on Organizations

Due to a lack of long-term funding, one Calgary participant has recently ended a long-running network after years of work to build connections, share information and develop capacity for advocating on improving early learning and childcare. After developing a strategy and a final report on lessons learned, there was no funding available to advocate implementing the strategy. She's now working to keep folks connected via email newsletters. "It wasn't that United Way, for instance, didn't find it valuable," she said. "I can't speak for them, but it just didn't happen. [The strategy is] honestly sitting there for the next early childhood table to form. Another one will pop up, I'm guessing in about a year or two. Ironically probably through United

Way." Limited budgets or surprise cuts mean strategies are developed, but there were no funds to implement recommendations or follow-through in the long-term. Work inevitably gets repeated; people are consulted over and over again because that is often the first step of a strategy development process. Community consultation falls within the umbrella of appropriate activities for some funders, but in many cases implementation of a strategy to improve such a significant piece of social infrastructure would shift into the territory of public advocacy. The lack of follow-through or implementation can harm community building and damage trust with leaders, adding to the challenge when the next iteration of a similar project comes around.

A relatively new collective with a strong activism focus gets the majority of their resources from memberships and dues, choosing not to apply for or accept United Way and many other corporate sources of funding.[26] Tom, speaking on behalf of this group, said there was "some really strong resistance" to the "corporate money that goes through these foundations." The relatively homogenous corporate source of these funds speaks to "the interests that these bodies ultimately have to serve." "We see that in a hesitancy to be advocating on issues that would go against any of these interests or political parties, issues wise, public discourse wise. And we encountered that a lot, especially when we started to get going," he said. Since their inception, the group has organized several significant campaigns, led leadership training and publicly protested budget cuts at City Hall with great success. Non-profits who rely on city funding do often provide input or suggestions at public hearings, but risk alienating councillors or administrators who have influence on funding decisions if they were to organize large protests of specific budgetary and policy decisions. Put another way, it is safer to advocate for more

[26] Tom estimated 80% of their funding came from memberships and dues. Their goal is to reach 100%. He acknowledged that the requirement to pay membership fees was a barrier to participation for some groups, and said the financial contribution creates a sense of ownership.

women in leadership positions at City Hall than major cuts to police spending when your council representative is a former police officer.[27]

Research participants were clear that the majority of corporate donors were not interested in funding advocacy, with one exception. Evie mentioned that corporate donors and individual philanthropists "want to know what you're doing from an advocacy perspective" because they "want to know that eventually you wouldn't need their money." This approach may work well for short term projects, but many radical solutions to inequity challenge the very structures that generate wealth for these corporations or individual philanthropists.[28] Research from Feldman, Strier and Koreh (2017, p. 254) links the rise of neoliberalism to a set of contradictory outcomes: it has undermined the non-profit sector's ability to engage in advocacy, "but in a paradoxical way has also created conditions that induce non-profits to practice advocacy." Privatization and contracting out social services to non-profits can also serve the purpose of enhancing the power of the state as it subjects non-profits to their regulations in order to receive funding (Feldman, Strier and Koreh 2017, p. 257).

Refusing Funds, Alternate Sources

Rejecting certain funding source is a legitimate form of resistance to the control or limitations that funders place on community work. Many organizations have gift acceptance policies or guidelines; in most cases these stipulate best practices for donor rights and recognition, but in some they also provide guidance on when to forego accepting funds. There were only a few examples of this in conversations with community advocates, however there are

[27] Sean Chu is the Ward 4 City Councillor in Calgary, elected in 2013. He previously worked in the Calgary Police Service for over 20 years.
[28] Zoe listed universal basic income as an example. Her organization supports it as part of a policy solution to food insecurity, but she said they were "never going to write a grant to fund a person to look at how we can get more involved."

interesting parallels to Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's work on resurgence and refusal to engage with colonial institutions. When researching the work of Alberta social movements opposing Oil Sands development, Randolph Haluza-Delay and Angela V. Carter write that countering the existing normative discourse will require "rethinking the material processes of production and social reproduction *as well as* reimagining the cultural foundations and collective identities of Albertans beyond being producers of energy" (italics in original, 2016, p. 457.) Many Albertans hold fast to a racist settler/cowboy identity that is constructed on the myth of conquering a frontier. Challenging that narrative is an integral part of breaking away from a dependence on oil. The hyper-individualistic conception of Alberta's 'origin story' align with contemporary neoliberal and colonial narratives (Haluza-Delay and Carter 2016, p. 468). Some organizations and many grassroots groups reject these constructions by taking Tom's approach, explained above, and relying on community members or like-minded groups for resources. Others find compromises or rely on existing power to negotiate with funders; two options that will be explored now.

One research participant, Zoe, talked about an internal matrix her organization uses to evaluate funders based on "values alignment." "It has a bunch of questions," she said. "Some are yes and no. Some are on a scale […] of one to 10 and at the end it kind of spits out a rating." If the rating falls below a certain threshold, the organization will not move forward with an application, or say no to a funding offer. The matrix was developed with input from people throughout the organization, with the intention that everyone would feel like they had involvement in the decision-making process. Zoe added that working with non-profits provides positive branding for many funders, be they companies or individuals, as was outlined in research about Corporate Social Responsibility strategies above. Partnering with funders who do

not align with core values would lead to brand erosion for the non-profit. “We’re not in the business of selling brand association. That’s not like our vibe. We want to work with people who want to make the city a better place. So, you know, there are prominent individuals who would absolutely give money that we just can’t accept,” she said. She added that one question on the matrix is “can we afford to say no.” At the end of the day, despite support from across the organization to reject certain funders, they must still find adequate resources to continue working. In this case, Zoe’s organization is looking into options for pay-what-you-can programs, and potentially selling an app to coordinate services at a sliding scale. Charging for services would make them ineligible for charity status in Canada, she said.

Not all government funding comes in the form of grants. One research participant, Angela, shared a story of contract negotiations with the province to provide disability services. Provincial officials tried to reduce the amount of funding per person provided, but staff at the organization felt they could not provide adequate supports with that amount and the organization rejected the revised offer. She acknowledged that having board support to do so was unique and that many smaller organizations would not be in a position to refuse. Their size, long history in the community, and the lack of other qualified groups to take on the work gave them ability to negotiate on behalf of their clients and staff.

“The province came in with this new system to remeasure everybody and lo and behold, most people weren’t as disabled as they used to be,” said Angela. “Our team on the ground was seeing the heartbreak of this.” The organization was in the middle of contract negotiations with the province during the changes, and “decided to use [their] leverage” to try and reverse those decisions without success. “We were stuck,” she said. The board supported their decision to refuse the initial contract offer, even if this loss of funding “would have devastated that

organization." Ultimately, they were able to secure a funding contract to provide services at fair levels of compensation. Angela described the back and forth as both liberating and terrifying. Cuts to public spending on the care sector is a common theme in neoliberal governments favouring austerity budgets, and one with clear imbalanced consequences given the gendered and racialized workforce. Research on non-profit disability services in Canada found a quickly increasing need for services, partially due to aging populations, and a sector struggling to grow capacity (Chouinard and Crooks 2008, p. 175). Government funding was consistently shrinking, as was the list of eligible expenses. Over time, some organizations are obligated to cut back on services and overhead, including phone lines, employee health benefits, maintenance and wages (Chouinard and Crooks 2008, p. 183). Cuts to this sector mean more labour is shifted onto volunteers and families or the work is privatized, both outcomes leading to inequalities for gendered and racialized populations and negative impacts on people with disabilities. What is surprising about Angela's anecdote beyond her supportive board, is that the government was not in a position to turn to private providers (Harder 2003, p. 130–138).

Last but not least, the power, reach and influence of grassroots coalitions should not go unrecognized. Crystal, when talking about a multicultural group representing newcomer communities, said most of their funding comes from one grant. That said, "we tend to underestimate people's ability to fundraise. A lot of ethnic cultural communities can mobilize very quickly inside themselves and do a lot of PR [public relations], deliver a lot of programs and services for their families." Yasmin, who also works with racialized and newcomer communities, had similar sentiments. There is a high level of interest and capacity to develop and lead "community action plans" responding to issues like gender-based violence in communities, but only "small pockets of funding available" for implementation. It is often up to

the communities themselves to volunteer labour and/or find necessary funds. In research examining the changes to government funding and national feminist women's organizing in Canada, scholars also described dependency on government supports as one reason why larger groups become disconnected from their base, which is "the foundation of their legitimacy and protest capacity" (Rodgers and Knight 2011, p. 574). In many situations, organizations remaining small and independent from formalized sources of funding can benefit the community.

In sum, it would be difficult to underestimate the influence that extractive industries have on advocacy work in Alberta. Oil and gas companies create and uphold violence and poverty, partially fund programs to address the symptoms, and stifle work that targets the root causes. Not only are funds for advocacy difficult to source through these traditional channels, available funding can further limit the radical overhaul needed to address inequity. Whether through corporate donations, foundations or government grants, nearly all sources have some link to these industries and therefore the colonial program of systematic elimination of Indigenous peoples from their land. Working within existing structures can lead to incremental change. Advisory groups like WAVE and the GEDI committee have the ability to inform policy development and city programming to a certain degree. Strong relationships with decision-makers can lead to positive outcomes. But what was made clear over the course of these conversations was the need to continue developing capacity for leadership within communities, independent of traditional forms of funding. Power to change comes from people striving together toward more equitable communities and organized resistance.

6. Conclusion

How do you summarize two years of reading, talking and thinking about a single question that spans three lines? Trying to bridge the topics of Gender-Based Analysis Plus, community advocacy, and funding within the context of Alberta's two major cities can lead a researcher in many directions. Literature on GBA+ explores efficacy of various kinds of implementation, debates the role of femocrats, and questions its ability to lead to feminist goals. Research on advocacy chills and funding is plentiful, but there are small gaps when it comes to looking at the Alberta context and linking the oil and gas industry to gender-related advocacy. Ultimately, the advocates who participated in this research project shaped the final outcome by sharing their experiences and opinions on navigating through all of these interconnected forces.

This conclusion will start by asking 'where are we now?' The COVID-19 outbreak will have long lasting effects on gender equity around the world. Community advocates are working to ensure that all levels of government are proposing solutions that do not perpetuate violence, and yet it is too early to know how this will turn out. Next, I will summarize the key themes made by participants when asked about their work with communities, with cities, and with funders. Lastly, I will tackle the question 'what comes next,' looking forward to potential avenues of future research and implementation of Gender-Based Analysis Plus.

Where are we now?

"This provincial government is clearly focused on industries that are male dominated and recovery for jobs that actually weren't even lost because of the pandemic. But we know that it has hit women harder and racialized women hardest of all. There is actually no specific mention or plan for that from this particular government, and I think that it's important for us to fill that gap and shine a light on that particular issue. If the government's not going to do it, then we should." – Cora

Unsurprisingly, both Calgary's GEDI strategy and Edmonton's Women's Initiative have been significantly impacted by COVID-19. Staff cuts and new priorities moved gender equity initiatives to the back burner, despite growing recognition of the unequal impacts of the disease. Looking at gender specifically, research points to worse outcomes for workers in retail or health care (Milliken et al. 2020), increased demands on care workers in Spain and Bangladesh (Farre et al 2020, Sarker 2020), and increased gender-based violence (Chandan et al 2020). Interviews with participants took place during the second wave of COVID-19 infections in Alberta, roughly 6-8 months after the first. By mid-October, there were over 200 new cases daily, over 50 schools were identified to have outbreaks and many non-profits were closed to the public. There will likely be a flood of new research published in coming months about the gendered impacts of COVID-19 on the workforce, education, poverty and other sectors. Support staff for WAVE and across other departments were temporarily laid off. Calgary administrators were furloughed, and capacity significantly reduced. It is too early to fully measure the setbacks to gender equity in either community. Many of the research participants were personally impacted, juggling child raising and education with working from home. In a time when care work is gaining recognition as essential, the gender equity perspective to city responses is lagging.

Jessica, an Edmonton participant, said financial struggles have forced the city to prioritize spending, and that the Women's Initiative does not seem to be a priority. "I do worry that the Women's Initiative is one of the areas that they may just stop putting attention to," said Jessica. Angela, also from the City of Edmonton, said the group had been well-resourced with support staff and meeting space, but cuts were likely coming. She framed it as positive, "it's a good time to just break and start over again." In Calgary, GEDI committee members asked about a gender

lens on the City's recovery planning. Any response to that question has not been made publicly available (Maya Interview 2020).

External to City Hall, non-profits and grassroots organizations are struggling to make ends meet. Annual fundraising events were cancelled or moved online with mixed results. The fall United Way campaigns have also shifted online, and the results have yet to be reported. Apart from funding, the day-to-day activities of many groups were in flux, or on hold for months. Several areas of concern came up during interviews: isolation among communities with limited access to technology, increased isolation in racialized communities or newcomer communities with limited connections, increase in domestic violence, increase in poverty due to lost employment. Demand for counselling services related to domestic violence had increased, said Rachel. Municipalities have some authority over access to technology via libraries, public transit, and community development projects that target isolation. A number of research participants (those working for community groups and several members of city committees) worried that each city's response is lacking GBA+ analysis, and they felt out of the loop.

"When you shut down, we all have to stay home and work and take care of children," said Crystal. "It doesn't feel like the analysis was there to say who's impacted and why."

What's been said

Hours of conversations with seventeen research participants and over 90,000 words of transcriptions were analyzed and summarized over the course of this project. Some had shared viewpoints and past experiences, while others differed greatly in how they characterized the political, social and economic environment they worked in. Revisiting the interviews repeatedly revealed layers of potential meaning and avenues of further discussion I wish I had followed. That said, the key themes of the interviews revolved around how power was structured in their

cities, and how those formations encouraged or limited different kinds of relationships between administrators, decision-makers, advocates, and communities at large. Applying an intersectional gender lens to policy development happens in many ways; community engagement, gender experts and advisory groups work in parallel if not collaboratively to move towards more equitable futures. Research participants and existing scholarship recognize the limited potential of using this approach to encourage radical change and yet also see the benefits that come from the incremental change it encourages. GBA+ does not replace calls for more substantial shifts in policy that challenge colonial and neoliberal frameworks. It is most effective when there is the capacity to apply this analytical tool to all areas of work and implement findings, when it meaningfully engages with other strategies that also work toward equity, and when there are allies with authority throughout government and community.

Research participants also spoke enthusiastically about the need to connect with communities experiencing various forms of oppression, and many wished they had more time or resources to engage on advocacy. Organizations with a service provision model have many points of contact with community, but this does not always translate into inclusion of the community in policy debate. Within government, some administrators referenced the need to engage with diverse citizens but mentioned they are limited by leadership with different priorities and austerity budgets. Several advocates noted the importance of 'nothing about us without us.' It's a common phrase that calls for inclusivity while also recognizing the separation between 'us' and 'them,' meaning decision makers/authority figures and those without access to power. Defining who 'us' is part of the challenge of integrating an intersectional approach. As was mentioned previously, a focus on equity with an intersectional and inclusive lens may achieve more significant outcomes than a policy approach strictly focused on gender. Calgary is

in the early stages of understanding what their Gender, Equity and Inclusion Strategy will look like in practice. Edmonton has had a few more years, but continues to adapt to a changing political landscape and shifting levels of influence. In both cities, feminists of all stripes are working toward progress.

The final chapter takes a closer look at two major sources of funding in Alberta, its ties to the oil and gas industry and the possible impacts on community organizing. Again shaped by the experiences of research participants, this portion explores how the colonial roots of these extractivist activities continue to chill the kinds of work that many charities, non-profits and grassroots groups engage in. Some participants talked about the necessity of these resources to provide the many services and programs they offer, while struggling to navigate the pressures of various explicit and implicit limitations on speaking about the underlying causes of issues like poverty and violence. The chapter wrapped up with a few stories about refusing to accept awful contracts and finding strength and resources from within communities to support change. Resistance can be generative and can open doors for different kinds of conversations and organizing.

What comes next

There are inevitably gaps in this research project. I would have liked to have conversations with community members who are not employed by organizations or volunteering on boards. Their voices would have brought valuable insights to the impacts of policy on lived experience. I would have liked to connect with more Indigenous organizers and learn about their perspectives on municipal policy, resource development, resistance and equity. Both community organizing and Gender Based Analysis Plus are busy fields for researchers, and I am confident

there will be more written about the intersections of these concepts in the future. Within communities, COVID-19 and the Black Lives Matter movement has drastically changed the environment for policy development and social justice organizing. Previously neglected or minimized forms of violence and oppression are increasingly shifting into the public consciousness. Calls for equity are not new, but there seems to be a new surge in momentum on some fronts, whether or not policy approaches like GBA+ are along for the ride.

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