

**Mar 30, 2021 Presentation Script – Calgary Ability Network meeting**

**Presenters**

**Mario Ayudo**

Community Leader in South Sudanese Community.

Worked as Community Connector/Advocate with Action Dignity

**Rawya Guma**

Community Leader with Calgary Canadian Sudanese Community Association (CCSCA) which is a community organization in Calgary with just over 700 members.

Policy Advocate with Action Dignity

**Nazia Amin**

Community Engagement Coordinator with ActionDignity.

Worked with Action Dignity as a volunteer from Alberta International Medical Graduates Association in October 2019.

**Sheeba Vijayan**

Strategy Lead in Action Dignity with ActionDignity

Sheeba.vijayan@actiondignity.org

Time	Presenter	Slide	Script	Actions
1 - 115	Ermira		Introductions & Land Acknowledgement	
115 - 130	Sheeba	1	<p>Thank you for inviting ActionDignity and our community partners to present our collective learnings in effectively engaging and empowering diverse communities through the Broker Strategy.</p> <p>We are curious to know your current level of understanding of community participation.</p> <p>You will see a poll on your screen. Please respond to the poll.</p> <p>Current level of understanding of Community Participation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Not familiar</li> <li>b) Slightly Familiar</li> <li>c) Moderately Familiar</li> <li>d) Very Familiar</li> </ul>	
	Sheeba	2	<p>We have planned the two hours with a variety of activities that will keep you engaged:</p> <p>We will commence with an overview of ActionDignity and the strategies used to build capacity of ethnocultural communities.</p> <p>Then we will deep dive into the Broker Strategies</p> <p>We believe that lived experiences are important in our collective learning. My co-presenters, Mario, Rawya and Nazia will share their learnings as brokers and partner organizations who worked alongside brokers.</p>	

			<p>Following that, we will go into breakout groups to discuss the Broker Strategies. Then we will reconvene to share some of our learnings.</p> <p>Then we will pass the torch to the CAN team to discuss the next steps.</p> <p>We will have regular break during the activities and Ermira have kindly stepped up to help remind us.</p>	
Sheeba	3		<p>ActionDignity (formerly Ethno-Cultural Council of Calgary) is a community-based organization of over 80 ethno-cultural groups, organizations, and individuals based in Calgary, AB.</p> <p>Established in 2002, we <b>facilitate the collective voice</b> of Calgary’s ethno-cultural communities towards <b>full civic participation and integration</b> through <b>collaborative action</b>.</p>	
Sheeba	4		<p>ActionDignity’s key strategy is to engage and empower communities through Leadership Development and Community Broker Engagement to work towards social inclusion of individuals, families and communities.</p> <p>Through the various funded programs we empower youth, promote healthy communities through healthy relationships and build a sense of community in neighbourhoods.</p> <p>We work with community brokers/policy advocates to conduct <b>Community-based Participatory Action Research</b> and <b>connect with policy makers</b> to advocate for those public policy and system changes as identified by impacted community members.</p> <p>ActionDignity strives to improve <b>public policies and systems</b> for better informed policies and systems that reflect the reality of ethnocultural communities and all Calgarians, taking into account racial equity, diversity and inclusion as our guiding principle.</p>	

			<p>We have journeyed through tough times experiencing both successes and challenges in enhancing our community engagement strategy. As we reflect back on our work every time we put together our annual report, one key learning is a constant – Empowered Communities are key drivers of social change</p> <p>As we came together as a team to prepare for this presentation, we asked ourselves how we can better understand your feelings on empowering diverse communities.</p> <p>So we would like you to take a few seconds to look at the picture in the next slide and respond to the question beside the picture by typing in the chat.</p>	
	Sheeba	5	<p>(Picture)</p> <p>The question: What comes to mind when you see the community celebrate a social justice project?</p> <p>Please type your responses in the chat. Rawya – would you like to share a couple of the responses</p> <p>Thank you. (Share how the responses are some of the experiences of the ActionDignity team and communities)</p> <p>Building trust with wider network of diverse communities involves learning and understanding the ongoing social/cultural/economic challenges and successes of the community groups/organizations. As more ethnocultural groups approached us, we realized that we needed to engage grassroots and grassstops to help us stay connected with communities.</p>	
	Sheeba	6	<p>ActionDignity’s broker strategy has evolved through the years – 2004 to the present</p>	

		7	<p>Community Broker Strategy 2004 - First Pilot</p> <p><b>Aim:</b> Respond to gaps and challenges with regards to roles and expectations between ethno-cultural groups / organizations and service providers.</p> <p><b>Strategy:</b> Brokers were hired and trained to inform and share information with ethnocultural communities on specific newcomer services.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Increased access to newcomers’ services by ethno-cultural groups / organizations allowed them to identify and act on issues faced by their community members.</p>	
		8	<p>2010 – Building Bridges with Ethnocultural Communities Program</p> <p><b>Aim:</b> To build bridges and foster collaboration between ethno-cultural groups / organizations and service providers.</p> <p><b>Strategy:</b> Brokers were invited to capacity building activities – Broker training; field visits; community fairs; community forums; leadership training. Recruited as volunteers to connect newcomers and ethnocultural communities to service providers in ways that would meet their needs and result in more equitable access to supports. The Training, Resource, Information Orientation (TRIO) toolkit was co-developed (with community leaders &amp; brokers) and utilized as a guide for Brokers to assist newcomers to follow the settlement &amp; integration steps identified on the IRCC (then Citizenship and Immigration Canada) website before and after they arrive in Canada.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> With increased capacity and knowledge, the ethno-cultural Brokers were more informed and therefore more effective in engaging their organizations and collaborating with service provider organizations to better serve newcomers.</p>	
		9	<p>2016 - Present</p> <p><b>Aim:</b> To build capacity of racialized communities to act on issues important to them</p> <p><b>Strategy:</b> Brokers hired &amp; trained to lead social change</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Ongoing systems and policy change influenced by diversity of lens</p>	

<p>Sheeba</p>	<p>10</p>	<p>Action Dignity Brokers are guided by community-driven priorities. The Brokers                  Foster natural supports - personal associations and relationships -&gt; enhance the quality and security of life for people -family relationships, friendships reflecting the diversity of the neighborhood and the community,                  Facilitate Informal networks within communities - groups of people connected by social ties, including community organizations, faith groups and clubs.                  Mobilize and build capacity to implement CAP                  Use CD strategies to Create Community impact                  Support dialogue between CLs &amp; policy &amp; service decision makers to expand community impact by influencing systems change</p> <p>Depending on the program/project strategy, Brokers are referred to as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Community Brokers</li> <li>- Community Connector</li> <li>- Navigators</li> <li>- Community Advocate</li> <li>- Policy Advocate</li> </ul>	
<p>Sheeba</p>	<p>11  12  13</p>	<p><b>Action Dignity Broker Strategy</b></p> <p>The arenas of impact of ActionDignity’s Broker Strategy:                  We initially worked to increase access to resources and services and strengthen the cultural appropriateness of services.                  This increased knowledge &amp; networks thus creating impacts for individuals, families and service providers.</p> <p>Because of this success, ActionDignity continued to develop the Broker Strategy to create community impacts beyond service delivery context. Brokers were trained in community development strategies and have been effectively engaging the public to facilitate their collective voice on key issues</p>	

		14	<p>This power of collective voice has the impact to influence systems change. Ensuring that policies are informed by diversity of lens. And systems are relevant, accessible and integrated.</p>	
	Sheeba	15	<p>I will now pass it on to Mario Ayudo to share his lived experiences as a Community Connector and Community Advocate and how he continues to be a changemaker.</p>	
	Mario	15	<p>Thank you for this opportunity to meet with the Calgary Ability Network.</p> <p>I have participated in various projects in ActionDignity for more than 8 years. Today, I would like to share my lived experiences as a community broker in two different programs.</p> <p>I worked as a Community Connector in The Greater Forest Lawn (GFL) Community Connector Initiative.</p> <p>The initiative uses a community development approach to build resident and community capacity for change, by connecting residents, groups and organizations together to identify community-based assets, opportunities and issues and collectively address these.</p> <p>As a community connector in the GFL project, my main role was to work with a team to support residents and local organizations to take the lead in creating a resident-driven network of formal and informal supports for individuals, children, families and the community as a whole.</p> <p>Together with a team of brokers, I participated in capacity building programs on how to become connectors and bridge between neighbours, groups, community organizations, and service providers. Since my role involved</p>	

		<p>16</p> <p>17</p>	<p>working beyond my ethnocultural community, I faced some major challenges in trust building –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Firstly, was connecting with residents who were not familiar with my role in the community</li> <li>- And after building trust in the GFL community through team work with fellow brokers and partner organizations, it was challenging to build communities’ trust in services or to access resources that they were not familiar with.</li> </ul> <p>As the saying goes, Persistence pays off.</p> <p>Some of the successes of the GFL program included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Resident-led activities helped build a sense of community achievement by mobilizing community strengths and assets to create new opportunities for ethno-cultural residents to engage in the community.</li> <li>- Broader informal network and partnerships were built among groups of residents, community &amp; Faith groups, not-for profits and ethno-cultural organizations (ECOs). These new partnerships offered new programs and services to the community through various resident &amp; volunteer-led community actions.</li> <li>- I am proud to share the fact that these actions led to programs that filled some of the program and service delivery gaps identified by residents.</li> </ul> <p>I will be happy to respond to any questions you may have, before I move on to the next slide.</p> <p>Alright, I will continue with my next slide...</p>	
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		18	<p>My next broker role is a Community Advocate position in New Alberta Workers Program – a Community-Based Research project that aims to capture experiences of New Alberta Workers.</p> <p>The research was conducted to inform program and policy change to ensure workers’ health and safety, and equitable treatment in workplaces</p> <p>My main role as a broker is to conduct Worker Education Workshops to build capacity of workers to self-advocate.</p>	
		19	<p>The main challenge in this role was the lack of strong support network to sustain the capacity building work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We always hear that knowledge is power – workers learned about their right to know, right to participate and right to refuse work if unsafe or dangerous</li> <li>- In this project, we realized that in the absence of strong support system, fear of the consequences of losing jobs by exercising their rights, overruled the power of knowledge.</li> </ul>	
		20	<p>But we did experience major successes in the project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The increased public awareness led to collective voices that advocated for greater health and safety workplace policies</li> <li>•</li> <li>• And the subsequent change in public policy with increased guidelines for worker health and safety in the OHS Act</li> </ul>	
		21	<p>Celebrating these successes and learning ways to overcome the challenges, had great impact in my capacity to engage in systems change work as a community leader and community broker.</p>	



		24	<p>part of the Policy Advocacy team ( which I will be referring to as PATeam) last year – we participated in a series of capacity building workshops to conduct community-based participatory action research (CBPAR).</p> <p>Working together with a team from diverse communities to identify the focus area of our CBPAR, helped me better understand the challenges facing the ethnocultural communities. The experience of engaging communities for the focus group discussions was a very exciting and fulfilling process, seeing people leave the conversations empowered and hopeful for the possibility of a better future that they can help create made me feel really proud of the work we had accomplished so far. Because of my years of involvement in my ethnocultural community as a youth leader, I have built trust with both youth and elders in the community which helped me in my role as a policy advocate because I was able to engage individuals from both demographics.</p> <p><b>How: Preparation for Advocacy Work</b></p> <p>In order to engage community members in meaningful discussion about systems change processes the 6 policy advocates including myself had to undergo specific trainings that would help us navigate and engage ethnocultural community members in culturally sensitive and even controversial topics:</p> <p>Some examples of trainings include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Response to Hate Model, Intersectionality, as well as Artistic Expression, and Social Media</li> </ul> <p>This helped to prepare us for some of the challenges that we’d come across</p> <p><b>Challenges:</b></p> <p>This outreach work comes with some challenges in engaging participants due to several different factors, and as PAT members we had to come up with</p>	
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		<p>25</p> <p>26</p>	<p>strategies to provide the most optimal space for sharing and address participant concerns throughout the entire process.</p> <p><b>Some of the specific challenges included:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Engaging people outside of my community and network ( That’s why it was excellent working in a team of 3 people because the outreach was far greater)</b></li> <li>- <b>Limited time frame</b></li> <li>- <b>Lack of awareness</b></li> </ul> <p>Although there were some challenges, there were a lot of highlights and achievements within the tight timeline</p> <p><b>Successes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Engaging individuals and retaining participants online during COVID online</li> <li>- Successfully created awareness of an issue</li> <li>- Empowering participants to join initiatives</li> </ul> <p>Reflecting on my role as a Policy Advocate, I believe that having key trusted individuals reaching out to their communities is the best way to engage different ethno cultural backgrounds because they have deep connections and knowledge of their own ethnocultural, racialized and geographic communities.</p> <p><b>As a policy advocate, I continue to :</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Be a bridge between policy makers and different communities</li> <li>- Work with decision makers, ethno cultural and equity seeking groups to facilitate cross sectoral collaboration and intersectional dialogue</li> </ul> <p>This project has changed my perspective about community work. It has made me realize that small initiatives can have a large and lasting impact. Making a difference in even one individual's life can lead to a difference in a community.</p>	
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	Nazia	27	<p>Good afternoon everyone.</p> <p>My name is Nazia Amin, and I am the community engagement coordinator with ActionDignity, for almost 6 months now.</p> <p>It is a pleasure to be here and thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my experiences of working alongside a community cultural broker in ActionDignity.</p> <p>The first time I got a chance to work with Action Dignity using the broker strategy was a collaboration between ActionDignity and Alberta International Medical Graduates Association (AIMGA), where I was a member. The project entitled Sound Mind Sound Body aimed to instill knowledge and confidence of highly barriered women in regards to navigating the healthcare system, build greater awareness of addressing health concerns and develop leadership skills.</p> <p>One would assume that someone with knowledge of medicine or healthy living would start by sitting down, sift through some books, read through some latest journals, and come up with a health curricula ? that would cover most of the info, anyone would need to practice a healthy lifestyle. BUT... This was not the case here! In fact, some of my excitement and enthusiasm fizzled into fear and concern when I found out that over 95% of our target audience could not read or write English! Most of them were not literate in their own mother tongue either. In a situation like this where and how do you start?</p> <p>That is where I truly appreciated the role of the cultural broker whose knowledge and understanding of her community guided us towards creating the curricula, tailored to their needs. She knew exactly what health</p>	

		<p>information they could benefit from, using visual images, pictorial depictions, instead of graphs, statistics or even sentences in English.</p> <p>So, with the help of another AIMGA member we started by working with the Afghan cultural broker from the very beginning. She was well respected and trusted by her community and most of all very passionate about improving the lives of her Afghan compatriots who now call Calgary home. Born and raised in Afghanistan she was someone who had lived the Afghan life, spoke the same language as them, knew their history of coming from a war-ravaged country, unlike us, she could easily sense the pain when they talked about their past life, she was crystal clear how their women were not considered equal to men, she was cognizant of the taboos and a lot more. She had a solid understanding of their previous lifestyle in Afghanistan, the changes they have adapted to after moving here and some of the changes they were still struggling with.</p> <p>During the presentations, we were accompanied by the cultural broker who translated every single sentence in Farsi for the attendees. It was very easy to gauge the interest of the participants and success of those sessions, since majority of the participants, stayed up to an hour longer after the meetings ended. It clearly showed that they considered the program to be beneficial to them; or maybe they thought there was no other way for them to get this information in their own language from anywhere else. The active engagement and interaction during the sessions were proof that we did not lose any information from being conveyed just because they could not speak English and we could not speak Farsi.</p> <p>It is worth mentioning here that it was due to the expertise of the broker about her culture and her people that I was advised to emphasize on certain issues and refrain from a few sensitive topics. For example, I was told not talk about using/abusing drugs or alcohol as this is not an issue with their community or at least with the people in attendance, who the broker knew quite well.</p>	
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		<p>Another incident that I cannot forget is when I saw this teary-eyed mother of a child, who for the first time learned through our sessions that if she has a child with Down Syndrome, it is not because she is a bad or an irresponsible mother whose child had fallen off the bed in the first year of life and caused her to develop this condition. She could finally shake off the guilt and shame she had been carrying around for years and now actively seek help for her child.</p> <p>How in the world could I have known all that, if we did not have a cultural broker? Hundreds of hours of reading would have given me just a fraction of the knowledge the cultural broker had at her fingertips. The way I saw the role of the cultural brokers was that they were providing a culturally appropriate, custom designed service for that specific community, which makes it so much more effective. It was very impressive to see how this Afghan cultural broker engaged her community members who were living in isolation due to language and literacy barriers.</p>	
		<p><b><u>Key Learning</u></b></p> <p>Communities <b>trust</b> their cultural brokers and are not fearful of sharing their views and opinions with them. These brokers are <b>empathetic</b> towards them and are there to serve and help their community members, to improve their quality of life and <b>help them navigate</b> the current complicated systems. The cultural broker strategy is a successful way of <b>engaging communities</b>, especially the marginalized population.</p> <p>In fact, COVID19 has created a new barrier for some communities who have no access to technology. The cultural brokers have been reaching out and responding to these highly barriered communities by phone to help them navigate the healthcare system, access mental health services and other needed services and resources.</p>	
		<p><b><u>Impact</u></b></p>	

			<p>The community members from the Sound Mind Sound Body project shared stories of how the health and wellness workshops helped build their confidence and enhanced their understanding of healthy living. They shared their knowledge with family members and friends – thus becoming the ambassadors of social change. In fact, Mar 8, 2020 was a memorable event when these community members received their certificate for completing the health and wellness workshop. For these community members, that was the beginning of their journey as change makers.</p> <p>The collaboration between AD and AIMGA yielded excellent results and we presented the findings to AHS. It has now been identified by both AHS and IMAGINE CITIZENS as a promising practice of community-led health navigation and plans are in process to build capacity of a wider community of brokers as community health navigators.</p> <p>Overall, it was very impressive to witness and be part of a project of ActionDignity in collaboration with a professional organization like AIMGA...how they leveraged the skills and knowledge of international professionals, weaved the brokers role into it and successfully engaged and empowered a highly barriered community to be changemakers.</p>	
	Sheeba	29	<p>Breakout Session</p> <p><i>Probing Question</i>  <i>What stood out the most in the broker strategy and sharing?</i>  <i>What is your current strategy to engage ethnocultural communities?</i>  <i>What aspects of the Broker Strategy would work for your organization?</i></p>	
	CAN	30	<p>Next Steps</p> <p><i>If you apply the Broker Strategy, would this be a sustainable strategy in the CANetwork?</i></p>	