

**“FILLING EVERYBODY’S BUCKETS”:  
THE IMPACT OF PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
ORGANIZATIONS ON WOMEN’S CAPABILITIES IN NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA**

by

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## **Abstract**

This research explores the experiences of women participating in CDOs (community development organizations) in communities in northern British Columbia and how that participation affects their capabilities. Data was gathered through interviews, electronic surveys, and participant observation. This data was then assessed within the combined theoretical frameworks of the capabilities approach and participatory development. Through analysis, the positive impacts of women's participation in CDOs on their capabilities and communities were brought to light.

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## **Glossary**

**Capability:** Denotes whether or not a person can tangibly achieve a given thing, regardless of whether they choose to or not (Sen 1999).

**Capabilities Approach:** A cross-cultural method of determining human ability to pursue a life worth living (Global Ethics: Capabilities Approach n.d.). The initial theory developed by Sen (1999) and a portion of the expansion by Nussbaum (2000) form the theoretical framework for this research.

**Community Development Organization** “Community development organizations (CDOs) operate worldwide to leverage local assets and resources for the general benefit of local residents.” (Mcquarrie 2010, p. 525). In the context of this research this term will be used to refer to the organizations in which participants are involved.

**Constant Comparison Analysis:** Constant-comparison analysis is a method that focuses on finding the major themes of a given text through coding. It can be either inductive, allowing themes to emerge from the text, or deductive, searching for preselected themes (Leech & Onwuegbuzie 2007).

**Keywords in Context Method:** Method of data analysis used to analyze critical terms within their spoken context (Leech & Onwuegbuzie 2007).

**Northern British Columbia (NBC):** The portion of British Columbia stretching from Prince George to the borders of the Yukon and the Northwest Territories (HelloBC 2020). Divided by Statistics Canada (2015) into the four economic regions of: Nechako, Cariboo, North Coast and Northeast. See Appendix E for maps.

**Participation:** The involvement of community members throughout the development process with intentional space held for more disadvantaged members and their voices (Cornwall 2003).

**Participatory Development Approach:** A movement away from top-down development structures towards the participation of all stakeholders, particularly marginalized groups, in decision-making (Anyidoho 2010; Rahnema 2010).

**Word Count Method:** The Word Count Method helps to identify the critical words within a given set of data through a numerical ranking of frequently used words (Leech & Onwuegbuzie 2007).

## **Acknowledgements and Dedication**

This research is dedicated to the women working across northern British Columbia to improve their communities.

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## **Chapter 1- Introduction**

### **Overview of the Problem**

This research seeks to examine the relationship between the participation of women in community development organizations and their increased capabilities. The connection of these concepts is explored through the experiences of women working in development in northern British Columbia. The women of northern British Columbia (BC) face a unique set of difficulties concerning health and development. Since the colonization of the BC region, the resource towns in the north of the province have been painted as a "womanless frontier" (Sandwell 1999). Despite this, the lives and work of women are central to the growth of northern communities. Women, while not employed in the resource-extraction industry in great numbers, have been employed in other services (schools, stores, offices, etc.) that are essential to any community (Marchak 1983). The unpaid labour of women within the home has also been central in shaping the north (Marchak 1983).

While women have always been vital to the north, settler communities were largely male-centric, and the stories of women within those communities (particularly Indigenous women) have been widely excluded from the historical narrative (Sandwell 1999). Therefore, even today, we understand relatively little about the lives of northern women. Currently, the growing industrial economy of northern BC has led to much change within its communities (Wilson & Summerville 2014; Young 2015b). Not surprisingly, much of the literature continues to centre on the economic aspects of northern life. However, it is important to identify how women's lives are affected both by northern BC's industrial economy and by ongoing changes.

In addition to economic impacts, women's overall health status is profoundly affected by the infrastructure and services to which they have access (Women North Network/ Northern FIRE 2018). This is particularly true in remote communities where a lack of access to resources and services is prevalent. There are many social determinants which, when compounded with a northern living situation, can create poor health (Women North Network/ Northern FIRE 2018). These unique circumstances and the lack of attention given to them by larger bodies have led to the formation of small, community-based development organizations (Women North Network/ Northern FIRE 2018). Organizations such as the Northern Feminist Institute for Research and Evaluation and other groups like or connected to it are attempting to improve women's health status in the North (Women North Network/ Northern FIRE 2018). These organizations may be key to addressing the long-term solution for women's development.

Northern British Columbian development poses a unique problem concerning health status, particularly for women, due to a focus on resource extraction oriented economic growth rather than socio-cultural needs (Leipert & Reutter 2005). However, international examples of women's participation in community-based development organizations (CDOs) in rural areas can be drawn on in order to better understand similar groups in the context of northern BC. Within this research, women participating in such groups were interviewed to better understand how their participation impacts their capability growth.

Significant participation of women can positively impact the effectiveness of development (United Nations 2014). Additionally, when women are more educated and more involved in public administration, input increases for human development projects (United

Nations 2014). Many organizations have identified women and girls as the key for communities to escape the poverty trap (Chant 2016). The success of women's involvement in development internationally indicates that such success could be found in northern BC as well.

## **Definitions**

The process of *development* is meant to better the lives of all people at all levels and involves the holistic improvement of living standards and capabilities for all people (Todaro & Smith 2012). It is a process undertaken by governments, NGOs and community organizations. Ideally, development will address the root of a given problem in order to foster transformative change (Todaro & Smith 2012). Sen (1999) describes development as the expansion of people's real freedoms. Within the context of this research, Sen's definition of development is the most pertinent. The freedoms discussed by Sen move the concept of development past more quantitative methods of measuring growth, such as income growth, and towards the examination of how development affects every part of people's lives (Sen 1999).

This research endeavours to highlight the connection between capability growth and the participation of women in community development organizations in northern British Columbia. In this case, *participation* is the active involvement of marginalized people of a community in the decision-making and development that concerns their lives (Anyidoho 2010). *A capability* is the degree to which people have the freedom to pursue a life that they value (Nussbaum 2000; Sen 1999). These concepts will be examined in the context of community development organizations in northern British Columbia. Northern BC accounts for nearly seventy percent of the province's land but only seven percent of the population (Young 2015a). Perhaps due to the

relatively small population and large geographical area of the region, it can be difficult to define the North in socio-economic terms. Statistics Canada (2015) divides northern BC into four economic regions: Cariboo, North Coast, Nechako, and Northeast (Appendix E). For the sake of clarity, this research will use the geographical definition of the North, as presented by Statistics Canada, when speaking about the region.

The supervisory committee for this research and I initially used the term “WCDO” to represent the small-scale, women-centred development organizations that were used for sampling. While this classification has been very useful for sampling and as an initial framing of what these organizations may look like, it has turned out to be too narrow of a definition. While many of the participants are involved in women-specific organizations, several participants are not involved at this time or are involved in several different types of organizations. Additionally, the organizations themselves, by necessity, do not serve or employ only women. Even the organizations that are, in name, women-focused serve many needs within their community. Due to the rural nature of northern BC, many communities do not have enough resources to serve every need of an individual organization. For example, a women’s centre that two of the interviewees are a part of is focused on early childhood education and family care. However, the centre also serves as a hub for several community activities, as a safe place for people to come when they need help, and as an initial point of contact for community members looking for other social services. Due to the diversity among their services and objectives, the organizations in this research will be referred to as CDOs, community development organizations.

## **Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity**

In order to understand the impetus for this research, it is important to examine some aspects of my own personal and academic history. This will frame my perspective as well as highlight the foundational assumptions of this research. Placing myself within in the framework of this research helps to address and negate some of my own biases (Haraway 1988). Additionally, understanding where I fit within the framework of this research helped me to bridge the gap between the formality of research and the informality of the interview process (Pechurina 2014). My position of relative power as a researcher necessitates that the rules and ethics required are followed. It is vital to take into account how the different circumstances surrounding a research project affect both the researcher and the data itself (May & Perry 2011). However, my lived experience as a woman in the North also puts me on familiar ground with participants. The balance between these two facts allows me to move past the concept of an impartial observer to this research and to connect with participants on a more human level.

To begin, I spent my life, from birth until high-school graduation, in various northern Canadian towns and cities. I was born in Inuvik, N.W.T. and lived in northern Saskatchewan and British Columbia, spending the most time in Prince George. I grew up learning about the unique difficulties faced by those living in northern Canada. The lack of health and social resources, dependence on the largely male-driven resource extraction industries, and gendered social expectations in northern communities were all part of my fundamental understanding of life. It was not until I grew older and spent more time in larger urban centres that I understood how distinctive these difficulties were to the North. This new perspective ignited a desire to

understand the context for, causes of, and solutions to northern, rural problems. Additionally, my experiences of life in the North have led me to be both critical and appreciative of northern, rural communities. I believe this is reflected in my research through the direction of the interview questions. Due to this, my perspectives were both challenged and affirmed throughout this research process.

A desire for new perspectives and experiences led me to attend Daystar University in rural Kenya. There I took a BA in Community Development that was foundational to my view of development and, in turn, this research. In undertaking this program, I learned to view development as fundamentally participatory and community-led in both its goals and methods. This view of development is what informs the conceptual framework and methodologies of this research. These foundational elements are built around both my research, shown in the literature review, and my practical and educational experience in Kenya.

I also found that women in rural locations globally struggle with many similar problems. Poor health care, lack of resources, and social isolation are just a few of the difficulties that I have noted rural women have in common in both Kenya and Canada, despite the disparities between the two regions in both wealth and environment. These similarities are the motivation for the global perspective of this research, alongside my own experience of different cultures.

During my undergraduate degree, I learned that the goal of a development professional should be to grow the capabilities of community members until they can undertake development independently. In short, a development worker should look to foster empowerment within the community. Internationally located community development organizations have displayed this

culture. Thus, it may also be found within similar organizations in northern BC. I wish to address how participation with such groups in northern BC affects women's capabilities.

### **Research Questions, Objectives, and Significance**

This research endeavours to answer the following question: How does participating in community development organizations in northern British Columbia affect the capabilities of women?

The focus of this research is on the understudied experiences of women in northern BC participating in community development organizations. As a result, describing the experiences of these women is a central objective. Given the relatively small amount of research on this subject, focusing on participants' lived experiences helps to centre them within the narrative.

Next, this research analyzes participants' experience in relation to their capabilities. Understanding how women's participation in development can lead to increased capabilities, both individually and within the community, shows the importance of these organizations and the women who run them, to development in the North.

Finally, this research contributes to global literature on women participating in rural community development organizations. While there is literature on women's involvement in development globally, the location and focus on capabilities in this research add a different perspective to the literature.

The title of this research comes from the following quote:

I keep going back to empowering and all of this too, it just makes me feel good. And yeah like, making others feel good in turn makes you feel good and you're just filling everybody's buckets-- it's just a good feeling. (Katrina)

This quote gets to the heart of the goals for this research. Does participating in CDOs help women develop their capabilities and become, as Katrina says, “empowered?” How can that empowerment and capability growth make women in northern BC more able to “fill up each other's buckets” and those of their communities?

### **Overview of the Research**

In the process of completing this research, I examined the subject of women's involvement in development from several different angles. The different modes of understanding, after being introduced in this first chapter, will be covered within the four remaining chapters of this thesis.

The second chapter explores the available literature on women's participation in development, the capabilities approach, participatory development, examples of women centred development organizations, and, finally, highlights the gaps in the literature and the goals of the research. The third chapter covers the research design of this thesis. It outlines the theoretical framework, methodologies, methods of data collection and analysis, recruitment, ethics, and the various organizations of interest within this research. The fourth chapter highlights the results of the data analysis within distinct categories and themes. Finally, the fifth chapter discusses the research results, how they relate to the research questions and objectives, and gives recommendations based on the connections between the two.



## **Chapter 2- Literature Review**

Women's participation in development in northern British Columbia is an understudied subject. With this in mind, this literature review aims to establish how women's participation in CDOs relates to capability growth. The concepts explored here have also been central to the development of the methodology of this research as well as assessing the research results in a global context. I begin with scholarship on women's participation in development at both theoretical and practical levels. Here I include a critique of large-scale, mainstream development's attempts at creating capability growth and involving women. Next, I draw on the example of CDOs globally to highlight their benefits to capability growth and to locate women and CDOs within development. Then I narrow the context to CDOs in northern BC to bring them into the frame of global development. Finally, I will highlight the gaps I have found in the literature and the goals for my research into this area.

### **Women's Participation in Development**

Modern international development includes a heavy emphasis on the development of women's rights on an international level (United Nations n.d.). While this focus is a movement in the right direction, women's involvement has not always been a priority in the grand scheme of development (Benería et al. 2016). This lack of attention is reflected in the history of women in northern British Columbia (Leipert & Reutter 2005). Therefore, for the purpose of looking at women's development in northern BC through an international lens, it is beneficial to understand the general phases of women's development internationally.

Pre-1970s development, as it pertained to women, focused mainly on their roles as mothers and wives, and targeted programs were created that mirrored that sentiment (Benería et al. 2016). The prominent approach of this time was that of welfare, leaving in place systems of oppression in which inequality is unchecked and unquestioned (Rai 2011). The conversation concerning women and their place in development moved to the forefront of the development research in the 60s with the UN's request for a report on women and development (Rai 2011).

Post-1970, three main phases of women's involvement in development became apparent. Strong ties with liberal feminism typified the first phase, Women In Development (WID). This phase questioned the invisibility of women throughout the development process and the apparent lack of benefits for women within previous development models (Rathgeber 1990; Regan 2012). Research on women's distinct experiences of development became more prevalent (Rathgeber 1990). Furthermore, it challenged the defeminization of labour and promoted women as economic contributors, also highlighting the connection between work and status (Boserup 1970 as cited in Benería et al. 2016; Rai 2011). However, this approach was heavily critiqued for positioning women as clients outside of, rather than participants in, the development process (Regan 2012; Visvanathan 2011).

The next phase, Women And Development (WAD), challenged WID's lack of emphasis on structural change. Its proponents felt that the mainstream of economic analysis was fundamentally flawed and that the economic systems that created gender inequalities should be restructured (Benería et al. 2016; Rathgeber 1990). Rather than integrating women into the development processs, however, it assessed their interaction with development as outsiders

(Regan 2012). Additionally, much like previous theories, there was a tendency throughout this period to group women together regardless of other factors like class or race (Regan 2012). Finally, WAD, much like WID, focused heavily on women as producers and disregarded the other components of their lives (Rathgeber 1990).

Finally, Gender And Development (GAD), discussed by Benería and Sen (1981, as cited in Benería et al. 2016), brought forward a more holistic view of women's involvement in development and encompassed the theories of both WID and WAD. This theory acknowledges the effect of colonialism on both men and women, women's shifting place in society due to capitalist development, and the effects of social class difference in addition to gender (Rathgeber 1990). Throughout the 1980s Amartya Sen began to build upon the theory of Basic Needs (originating in the 1970s), eventually leading to the capabilities approach, which will be further explored as a major component of the theoretical framework for this research (Global Ethics: Capabilities Approach n.d.; Rai 2011). Mainstreaming of gender-aware development is important; development must aim to dismantle the systems that cause gendered difference rather than reinforce them (Chant 2016). This requires initiatives to focus on more long-term, culturally relevant goals. Unfortunately, focusing on such goals can be difficult, particularly when so much emphasis is put on easily measurable achievements (Vannier 2010). However, measurable goals and the accountability that comes more easily with them are an essential part of modern development (Vannier 2010).

### ***Participatory Development***

Participatory development is a theory of development centred on the ideal of active community inclusion at all stages and levels of the development process (Bessette 2004). The theoretical perspectives of this concept and its impact on this research will be further explored in the theoretical framework in Chapter 3. Here I explore the importance of participatory development to women and development and the shortfalls that can be found in the practical reality of participatory development.

Participation emerged as a theory of development in the late 1950s, through a call to end top-down development strategies (Rahnema 2010). It emphasizes the participation of all stakeholders, particularly marginalized groups (including women), in decision-making (Anyidoho, 2010). In the 1970s, internationally operating development organizations began to acknowledge the structural flaws of development that were leading to inequitable growth (Rahnema 2010). This led many international aid organizations to adopt participation, to the point that, today, it is a part of nearly all development policy (Kapoor 2005; Rahnema 2010). This approach highlights the development of fundamental human rights through participation that can then aid in meeting other goals (Rai 2011). Thus, participatory development, wherein community members expand their skills through their involvement, is a method by which capabilities can be developed, allowing for more significant development moving forward (Rai 2011). However, the reality of participatory development far too often falls short of its ideals. We must first examine how and why this happens in order to enact participation effectively.

Therefore, I will outline three significant shortfalls that can be found in mainstream participatory development.

### ***Shortfalls of Participatory Development.***

**Rhetoric and Gender Mainstreaming.** While participation is central to modern development rhetoric (i.e., Sustainable Development Goals), such rhetoric does not necessarily translate into practice (Rahnema 2010; Yount et al. 2018). Gender mainstreaming in development has not necessarily led to the holistic involvement of women (Bernal et al. 2014). In fact, it is difficult to pinpoint what exact methods of measuring involvement best reflect the reality of development (Raj 2017). The dogma of participatory development allows organizations, both large and small, to present as "naturally progressive" while still supporting colonial and imperial power structures (Kapoor 2005). Failing to address these power structures does not allow for the full range of privileges and disadvantages among both men and women to be addressed in order to create transformative change (Cornwall 2003). The cultural roots of gender roles (or any given issue) must be understood in order to fully, sustainably affect change.

**Socio-Cultural Relevance.** A major critique of mainstream development, particularly when focused on women of the global south, is the homogenizing of women's unique socio-cultural circumstances (Mohanty 1991). Many women identify culture as a vital part of their lives and wish to preserve it, only changing the parts that negatively affect them (van der Hoogte & Kingma 2004). Removing women from their social, political, cultural, or economic context does not allow for transformative development (Zackaria 2017). On the other hand, if the socio-cultural systems that contribute to women's oppression are not addressed and changed,

development is unlikely to be holistic and sustainable (Handy et al. 2006). Thus, it is vital to identify what causes gender-based inequality within a community and how it can change.

**Short-Term Goals and Results (Audit Culture).** It is challenging for the public sector or large-scale organizations to engage in social reform activity due to their very nature (Wharf 1992). Such organizations focus on a results-based, heavily audited developmental process to ensure transparency and accountability. The intention behind this 'audit culture' is to avoid corruption and political ineffectiveness (Vannier 2010). Thus, in order to meet goals with relative logistical ease and avoid political pressure, large-scale development tends to treat the symptoms of inequality rather than the source (Benería et al. 2016). However, this depoliticizing of development, particularly by avoiding organizations involved in overtly 'political' activity, can act to undermine the values and actions of these local organizations (Vannier 2010).

Many small organizations become dependent on outside development due to a lack of resources (Bernal et al. 2014). This dependence is enacted by intermediary NGOs who serve as connection points for national or international groups and smaller, community organizations (Vannier 2010). While this role can be beneficial, it may also lead to the NGOs' becoming 'gatekeepers' by legitimizing only grassroots organizations that are backed by their funding organizations (Bernal et al. 2014). These outside organizations often avoid more 'political' groups, making it very difficult for these groups to become 'legitimate' and compounding barriers to their creating impactful change (Vannier 2010). At the same time, groups that get support may experience pressure to create results centred on specific goals that may not address the community's socio-cultural needs (Vannier 2010).

Given the gaps to be found in the effectiveness of large-scale development and the implementation of participatory theory, it has become necessary for communities, and women in particular, to take up the mantle of change-making (Atampugre 1998; Benería et al. 2016; Rahnema 2010). Here, I will examine community development organizations and global studies and examples of women participating in them in order to assess their potential impact on capabilities.

### **Community Development Organizations**

While community development organizations are not, in and of themselves, the focus of this research, it is important to define what they are to understand why this term is being used. A community development organization (CDO) is a group that works to improve a community using the assets available within that community (Mcquarrie 2010). CDO is not the only term used in the literature for organizations like the ones that will be discussed throughout this research (others include “community-based organizations” and “community-based development organizations”). For the purpose of the research CDO serves as an encompassing term for organizations that serve a wide variety of needs in many different ways in their communities. The key component of a CDO for this research is not necessarily the aims of the organization but, rather, their participatory nature. Through the examples to follow and my review of the literature, it has become apparent that CDOs have the potential to overcome some of the barriers to capability growth presented with larger scale ‘participatory’ development.

## **Global Examples of Women's Participation in Community Development Organizations**

Globally, organizations created due to women's felt needs and within their cultural context have been shown to aid oppressed women on a direct and practical level (Handy et al. 2006). These organizations, created by women and for women, display a focus on the issues most pertinent to women's lives, evince a desire to create effective change at the core of inequality, and help to develop women's capabilities for future involvement in development (Wallace et al. 2013). Here I will examine international examples of women's participation in such organizations in order to understand the impacts it can have on women in rural communities. The case studies used as examples did not use the capabilities approach as their theoretical framework or as an assessment tool. However, the impact of participation on women's capability growth is apparent throughout the results of these studies. Here I will summarize those findings and highlight the general impacts on women's capabilities.

The first study is on a women's grassroots organization in Mali. The women in Mali that were represented in this study have limited access to paid employment (Konate 2007). This translates to women, especially rural women, having very little influence over the socio-cultural aspects of their lives. However, when some women became involved in "*Les Femmes Fabricantes de Savon de Koulikoro Plateau I*" (Women's Soap Manufacturers of Koulikoro Plateau I) they grew into agents of change in both their homes and communities (Konate 2007). This group focused on the development of skills for increased economic independence. In addition to helping to meet financial needs, their involvement allowed them to build both their skills and a community of support.



The study of this organization reported four different points of interest when it came to women's participation in this group. First, the women placed a great deal of value on their culture and its preservation, despite the negative impacts it may have on them. Second, the women used the organization to create a system of support for one another. Most participants reported feeling lonely before they became involved in the group and how valuable the support from other participants had become in their lives. Third, women found that, due to their emerging economic independence, they had more autonomy in both their homes and communities (Konate 2007). Finally, participants became more actively involved in decision making, both in their communities and at home. All of the participants highlighted their increased income as the reason for this change. Several of the involved women's husbands displayed a willingness to increase their duties at home in support of their wives' economic activities. However, the women felt used for their organizational and mentorship skills by politicians who forgot about them once elected. This study shows a variety of impacts on the participants' capabilities. Their increased freedom within the home, improved social circles, and ability to improve their economic circumstances all indicate a positive impact on their capabilities. The frustration they felt towards politicians they viewed as using them for political gain shows a lack capability growth in terms of political power. In fact, it shows that, even in community-based development organizations, outside actors can disrupt capability growth by acting against the felt needs of the community. However, the frustration the women felt could also be viewed as an increased ability to recognize their own value within politics as well as their ability to criticize shallow political lip service.

Next, the Manyakabi Area Cooperative Enterprise, a farming cooperative comprised predominantly of women in several districts and counties of Uganda, was formed by widow groups looking to pursue financial independence through agriculture (Ferguson & Kepe 2011). The group, at 900 members in 2011, is not necessarily classifiable as a small organization. However, it has impacted participants in ways that could add to this research.

The organization had a focus on collective decision-making and bargaining in pursuit of greater economic freedom. This focus helped members to develop business and social skills as well as improve their interpersonal cooperation and problem-solving. With these new skills, group leaders became sources of information within their community and helped to foster other development projects. Women also highlighted the increased independence and control they felt in their home lives. However, one of the major difficulties associated with the organization was that several women were unable to participate due to their husbands' disapproval. This case study also illuminated the societal inequalities that affect the development process. It was noted that the positive effects of the collective were not felt equally among participants due to their socio-economic status and the resources they had available to them. This hindrance to capability growth in those who need it most is a problem that is present throughout several of these case studies. Those with greater resources could pursue the 'empowerment' offered through the cooperative more easily than those with more limited resources. However, it was also noted that the improved situations of cooperative members would often spill over to those around them through the dissemination of information, skills, and techniques.

The next case, a study of women's participation in self-help and microfinance groups in Nepal, had interesting results in terms of women's capabilities (Atteraya et al. 2016). Nepal has a highly stratified society based on caste and ethnicity, with those in the 'lower' castes and indigenous peoples experiencing much higher rates of poverty. The study found that women living in poverty were far less likely to participate in either of these groups. Women with greater capabilities in terms of wealth, time, and autonomy were far more likely to participate. This illustrates a possible limitation associated with women's participation in CDOs: that those who need capability growth the most may not be equipped to pursue it (Atteraya et al. 2016).

The characteristics displayed by these groups show how effective CDOs can be in a rural context. The groups were led by local women who understood the issues facing women in their communities and who upheld feminist ideologies (Handy et al. 2006). They aimed to address the problems that directly contribute to women's struggles in order to achieve long-term change. Finally, they looked to combine transformative social change with the personal growth of the women involved in their groups.

In the Maharashtra region of India, the exclusion of women from developmental dialogue led to the creation of many feminist-based, small-scale NGOs (Handy et al. 2006). A review of several of these organizations and their founders found that they shared many characteristics that led to their success. The leaders typically had a feminist ideology and pursued the goals of their NGO rather than focusing on earnings and independence. This was likely possible because most of the women were well educated, from middle- to upper-income families, and upper caste

(Handy et al. 2006). Their increased capabilities allowed them to explore the different functions they could carry out within development (Global Ethics: Capabilities Approach n.d., Sen 1999).

The organizations were primarily focused on issues that were deeply relevant to the culture of the region (e.g., unpaid employment, violence against women, etc.). This was because the groups were created by and for women of the Maharashtra region (Handy et al. 2006). The women were able to identify what problems the women in their region were facing and effectively target those problems due to their personal attachment to and understanding of the region. The leaders of these groups emphasized the personal growth and independence of those under their leadership, allowing them to become change-makers in their own right. This was achieved through inclusive leadership styles that emphasized the social aspect of the organizations' work (Handy et al. 2006).

To summarize, women's involvement in community-based, women-centred organizations can improve capability growth in a multitude of ways. This has been shown in CDOs located all over the world with a variety of goals and modes of service delivery, much like those used for sampling in this research. These groups and their characteristics can be sharply contrasted with attempts at participatory development from larger-scale organizations. However, the impact of participation in CDOs on women's capabilities has been shown to be not only positive, but also neutral and even negative. The positive impacts include increased socio-economic power, greater autonomy in the home, and developed skills in areas like leadership, farming, and collective bargaining. The neutral and negative impacts stemmed largely from a difficulty in accessing the benefits of participation. Several of the organizations discussed above were most beneficial to

women who already had some degree of socio-economic capital, leaving out the women who need capability growth the most. However, the women from lower socio-economic classes who were able to access the benefits of their CDO did display capability growth in several of the areas already discussed.

### **Women and CDOs in Northern, Rural Canada**

The effects of CDOs have been mainly noted in developing nations. However, remotely located northern women face many similar difficulties, albeit in highly differing contexts (Status of Women Canada 2012). A distinct difficulty in the provision of and access to services and infrastructure causes northern women's health status to suffer when compared to that of their Southern counterparts (Leipert 2005; Schmidt 2008; Status of Women Canada 2012). Can women's participating in CDOs in northern BC communities impact capabilities like it does internationally? If so, how? These questions will be explored by examining the participation of women in CDOs in northern BC.

### ***Women in Northern British Columbia***

Many rural, northern communities and the services available within them are dependent on a single resource industry (Leipert & Reutter 2005; Marchak 1983). Services, employment, politics, and social life all revolve around a generally male-focused industry. This makes it difficult for women to find employment and gain access to services, mainly health services, that are specific to their needs (Leipert & Reutter 2005).

A lack of involvement in the workforce and community also hinders northern women's political involvement (Schmidt 2008). Those who are working are often employed in less

lucrative and desirable employment than their rural male or urban female counterparts (Leipert & Reutter 2005; Status of Women Canada 2012). Women living in remote, rural places face higher rates of reported violence, lower-paid employment, and lower educational levels than their urban counterparts (Status of Women Canada 2012). Women have also identified the remote location and severe weather in northern BC as having an adverse effect on their mental and physical health (Leipert & Reutter 2005). Additionally, women often find it challenging to find a community of peers in the North, particularly if they are considered 'outsiders' in terms of race or culture (Leipert & Reutter 2005). It is also important to note that these effects are often compounded for Indigenous women, particularly those living in remote reserves (Status of Women Canada 2012).

### ***CDOs and Northern British Columbia***

With these difficulties in view, it is vital to understand how women of remote, northern communities have created organizations to bring about development. Historically, northern BC's women have formed organizations to meet their needs through collective effort (Ellis 2002). This coming together of women who were, and are, not supported by larger bodies within the community shows how vital these groups can be to the women of that community. However, there is a distinct lack of literature available on these groups or the women who form them.

The lack of literature available about northern women's experiences highlights the need for this research (Schmidt 2008). Understanding the history of women's involvement, participatory development, the broader context and effects of CDOs, and the difficulties faced by women living in the North helps to frame the issue at hand. Taking into account the global context of

women-run and centred organizations, similar effects could be felt in northern BC. This research will attempt to describe and assess the experiences of women involved in community organizations within this northern context.

### **Gaps and Goals**

In my review of the literature, I have found several gaps in knowledge in areas I find of particular interest:

- i. There is a definite lack of literature available on northern women, particularly on their experiences of participating in development initiatives or CDOs (Schmidt 2008). Therefore, this project aims to expand the academic understanding of women's development in northern British Columbia.
- ii. The practice of participatory development can be extremely beneficial in the pursuit of capability growth. However, all too often, participation is treated as a conceptual ideal rather than practically applied to all levels of the development process. This research looks to identify how the practical participation in CDOs might increase capability growth of women.
- iii. Finally, this research will look to connect the concepts of women's participation in CDOs and capability growth within the context of northern BC.

### **Chapter 3- Research Design**

The research design of this work stems from a theoretical framework based on Sen's(1999) capabilities approach, Nussbaum's (2000) expansion thereof, and their connection to participatory development. That framework provides the foundation for Feminist Methodologies, and Indigenous Methodologies. These methodologies combine with the theoretical framework to inform both the data-set collection and analysis methods for this research.

#### **Theoretical Framework**

##### ***Sen's Capabilities Approach***

The capabilities approach connects the growth of people's real ability to do a thing to their development. It asserts that as people's ability to pursue a life they value increases, so does their quality of life (Global Ethics: Capabilities Approach n.d.; Sen 1999). Its adaptable nature allows for a cross-cultural analysis of quality of life (Global Ethics: Capabilities Approach n.d.). The capabilities approach serves as the foundation of this research and informs each of its levels. Here I will assess the history of this theory and its relevance to this research.

The capabilities approach originated with Amartya Sen (1999) and was expanded upon by Nussbaum (2000). While the capabilities approach is widely and thoroughly explored throughout literature beyond Sen and Nussbaum (Anand et al. 2005; Robeyns 2017; etc.), here I will be focusing mainly on their work in order to manage the scope of this study. The theory, as defined by Sen, centres on the idea that people need to have the ability to pursue the life they want. Sen (1999) defines development as, "require[ing] the removal of major sources of



unfreedom: poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or over activity of repressive states.” (p. 3). The pursuit of this freedom is dependent on capabilities, which denote whether or not a person can tangibly achieve a given thing, regardless of whether they choose to or not. As Sen (1999) states, “Capability is thus a kind of freedom: the substantive freedom to achieve alternative functioning combinations (or, less formally put, the freedom to achieve various lifestyles)” (p. 75).

The theory uses the term 'function' or 'functioning' to describe what people do with the capabilities they have (Global Ethics: Capabilities Approach n.d.; Sen 1999). While many people may have similar capabilities, the functions they choose to pursue could be completely different. To put this in the context of this research, if two women were to attend the same workshop on grant writing, one of them might use the knowledge to advance her career while the other might use it to get more funding for an organization she is involved in. Both of these women gained the same capability by attending the workshop, but they chose to convert the capability into different functions.

The conversion of capabilities into functions is another central component of this theory. While the two women referenced above both attended the same workshop, how they change the capabilities they gained into functions is largely dependent on their circumstances (Global Ethics: Capabilities Approach n.d.). If one of the women were a single, working mother to young children, for example, her chosen functions would likely be different from those of a woman who has an employed partner. Conversely, these two women could partake in the same function

(grant-writing for a non-profit, for example) while living with completely different capabilities. Sen (1999) outlines the following five factors that affect the conversion of capabilities into functions:

1. Personal Heterogeneities

This factor accounts for the diverse personal needs that people with several of the same capabilities may experience. To follow the above example, if one of the women had a physical disability, her ability to convert the capabilities gained at the workshop into a function may be different from that of her counterpart.

2. Environmental Diversities

Next, the factor of the environment and its variants has potential to impact functionings. As an example from northern BC, the environmental factor of winter has a huge impact on the functionings of those in the region. Many people who have the capability of mobility with a vehicle may not be able to use that capability, converting it into a function, due to the weather. This illustrates how the environment directly impacts the conversion of capabilities into functions.

3. Variation in Social Climate

Another factor cited by Sen (1999) is that of social climate. This accounts for differing social factors such as: access to and quality of public education, prevalence of violence and crime, and other factors that may impact a community. Due to these factors, two people from different communities with the same set of capabilities may not be able to convert those capabilities into functions in the same manner.

#### 4. Differences in Relational Perspectives

In addition to social climate, the relative perspectives of one's community also impact their functionings. As Sen (1999) explains,

...being relatively poor in a rich community can prevent a person from achieving some elementary "functionings" (such as taking part in the life of the community) even though her income, in absolute terms, may be much higher than the level of income at which members of poorer communities can function with great ease and success. (p. 71)

#### 5. Distribution within the Family

Lastly, the distribution of wealth and/or power within the family unit also affects the functionalities of members. Even if two families have the same capabilities, the way that they are divided within each family might vary widely. In this way, two women with relatively similar circumstances from an outside perspective may, in reality, perform vastly different functions.

**Nussbaum's Expansion.** Nussbaum (2000) adapted and expanded upon Sen's (1999) approach in several areas. For the sake of this research, I will be focusing on Nussbaum's (2000) list of capabilities, which is as follows:

1. Life
2. Bodily Health
3. Bodily Integrity
4. Senses, Imagination and Thought
5. Emotions
6. Practical Reason
7. Affiliation

- a. Able to live with and show concern for others, empathize with (and show compassion for) others and the capability of justice and friendship.
    - b. Able to have self-respect and not be humiliated by others, that is, being treated with dignity and equal worth.
  - 8. Other Species – Able to have concern for and live with other animals, plants and the environment at large.
  - 9. Play
  - 10. Control over One's Environment
    - a. Political
    - b. Material
- (Global Ethics: Capabilities Approach n.d.; Nussbaum 2000)

This list illustrates the different capabilities which are vital to what Nussbaum views as a fulfilling life. For the purposes of this research, I will be focusing on the capabilities that emerge from the discussions of skills and learning in the interviews.

**Why the Capabilities Approach?** There is much overlap between the capabilities approach and other similar theories, such as empowerment theory (Zimmerman 2000). In fact, much of the foundational literature and examples used throughout this thesis use the language of empowerment. Kabeer (2012) defines empowerment as “the processes of change through which those who have been denied the capacity to exercise choice gain this capacity” (p. 217). Much like the capabilities approach, empowerment emphasizes choice as an essential part of the development process (Kabeer 1999). Empowerment is also highly dependent on context (Zimmerman 2000). Similar to the logic behind Sen’s conversion factors, empowerment is not expressed the same way for everyone. As Zimmerman (2000) states, “The behaviours necessary for a 16-year-old mother to become empowered are different from the behaviours for a recently widowed middle-aged man” (p. 45). So, if there are other theories, like empowerment, which

could apply in the context of this research, why was the capabilities approach chosen as the theoretical framework? The capabilities approach has been selected because of the following features:

i. The capabilities approach emphasizes the freedom of increased capability as both the means and the goal of development (Anyidoho 2010; Sen 1999 ). As Nussbaum (1999) states,

The basic intuition from which the capability approach begins, in the political arena, is that human abilities exert a moral claim that they be developed. Human beings are creatures such that, provided with the right educational and material support, they can become fully capable of these human functions. (p.236)

The development of capabilities is central to development and its assessment and, as a tool for measurement, is popular among larger development organizations (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP] n.d.). Improving these capabilities is what should be pursued by development projects but these capabilities also aid in that pursuit.

ii. This approach aids in assessment due to the specificity of the list of capabilities Nussbaum provides. Nussbaum expanded on Sen's work with a list of capabilities to add clarity to the assessment of this theory. She outlines the importance of this list thus:

The intuitive idea behind the approach is twofold: first, that certain functions are particularly central in human life, in the sense that their presence or absence is typically understood to be a mark of the presence or absence of human life and second – this is what Marx found in Aristotle – that there is something that it is to do these functions in a truly human way, not a merely animal way. (Nussbaum 2000, p. 71-72)

As stated above, this list (emphasized by Nussbaum as not necessarily final or unalterable) looks to highlight what capabilities are necessary to human life and dignity. These capabilities allow for some specificity in terms of analysis within this research. This will be further explored in chapters 4 and 5 as the relevant capabilities emerge from the data.

iii. This approach recognizes the various barriers to women's capabilities in northern BC.

Women in the North (and rural women internationally) face a unique set of difficulties (Status of Women Canada 2012). These difficulties, referred to as conversion factors by Sen (1999), can act as both a barrier to and a motivator for involvement in development. They are illustrated in the set of capabilities (Nussbaum 2000) chosen to help shape this research. The capabilities approach aids with overcoming this difficulty due to its applicability to a wide set of circumstances and communities (Robeyns 2017). This specifically applies to the theory of intersectionality that is explored further under 'Feminist Methodologies' (van der Hoogte & Kingma 2004).

### ***Participatory Development***

The second portion of the theoretical framework of this research is participatory development. This research posits that increased participation in development leads to capability growth. In order to clearly understand this, it is important to distinguish between participatory development as a theory and participation as an action. Participatory development represents the larger theoretical shift away from top-down development structures and towards more inclusive practices at every stage (Anyidoho 2010; Rahnema 2010). As was covered in the literature review, this standard is often named but not fully upheld (Rahnema 2010). Participation, as an

action, is the involvement in development of the people it affects, particularly of marginalized groups (Cornwall 2003). This research is mainly concerned with the physical act of participation, what it looks like, and how it affects development rather than the more theoretical idea of participatory development.

In the context of this research, the theoretical framework of participatory development aided in determining which CDOs were selected for sampling and study, based on their participatory nature. Most importantly, participatory development and the action of participation were central in the emphasis on women's experiences in the interview questions. This focus allows us to better understand what the actual participation of interviewees looks like and better connect that participation to capability growth.

## **Methodologies**

Two methodologies, informed by the capabilities approach and participatory development, have been used to direct the methods of this research. They were selected in order to ensure a well-rounded perspective on the context, subjects, and data involved in this project. Utilizing diverse methodologies will help to avoid the biases that come with utilizing a singular point of view in any project. Additionally, these methodologies have influenced the methods, ethics, data collection, and data analysis of this research.

These specific methodologies were chosen because of the context of the research, women in development in northern British Columbia, which is intrinsically linked to both feminist and Indigenous perspectives. Both methodologies challenge the power dynamics of research and focus on highlighting those who have, historically, been excluded from the research process.

These methodologies will ensure that this project continues that challenge and uplifts the voices of women participating in CDOs in northern BC. Here, I will further explore how these two methodologies have affected this research.

### ***Feminist Methodologies***

Feminist methodologies look to bring the power dynamics of oppression and discrimination to light (Darian-Smith & McCarty, 2017). The research aims to expose why women's inclusion in development is so vital and how their exclusion has been a hindrance to capability growth. Therefore, the use of feminist methodologies has been invaluable throughout this research in order to highlight the historical exclusion of women from economic and developmental activity (Sandwell 1999).

The theory of intersectionality, understanding how different aspects of a person's identity and social location interact to create increased social, political, and economic disadvantage, is also central to this research (van der Hoogte & Kingma 2004). The term was brought forward by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 (although it had been present before then) and sought to avoid reducing people and their struggles to a single aspect of their identity (Phoenix & Pattynama 2006). Instead, those who employ this theory endeavour to understand how the many facets of a person's life can affect them and, in this case, their development.

Within this analysis, intersectionality has been employed to aid in understanding two central concepts. First, it is important to understand how women's lives are affected by their northern, rural location. Why have they felt it important to become involved in development? What facets of their lives in the North have contributed to that decision? Second, the things that



make participation difficult for many women must also be acknowledged. Women who may not have access to transportation or who have a steady income (from their own employment or their partners) are unlikely to have the same capabilities as those in different situations. These two concepts, inspired by both intersectionality and Sen's (1999) conversion factors, are employed to keep the broader view of this research in focus throughout the analysis process.

While feminist methodologies do not universally prescribe any specific methods, they influenced both the methods of data collection and analysis in this research (Wickramasinghe 2009). In terms of collection, a feminist approach necessitated highlighting the voices of individual women through interviews. However, understanding women's participation in CDOs in northern BC requires more nuance than simply allowing their voices to be heard. It is important also to be critical of the research process itself to ensure its benefit to women (Bodwitch 2014; Gorelick 1991). With this in mind, my reading on intersectionality led me to address the broader scope of women's participation in development through a global perspective in the literature review and to observe the process of development in my participant observation. Next, feminist methodologies aided in selecting constant comparison analysis as a method of contextualizing data within the broader scope of this research. With this method of analysis I was able to understand the data as it related to the wider narrative of women in development, lending a more nuanced perspective to the analysis.

### ***Indigenous Methodologies***

Indigenous methodologies aim to decolonize the Euro-centric view of research (Darian-Smith & McCarty, 2017). This research endeavours to acknowledge the impact of colonialism

and Western scholarship on the North while also incorporating Indigenous knowledge and scholarship within its process (Tuhiwai-Smith 1999). While not all of the participants in this study are Indigenous, the lives and stories of Indigenous women and settler-Indigenous relations are central to understanding the historical and socio-cultural context of northern BC. Additionally, several of the organizations that participants are involved in are either Indigenous groups or are tied to Indigenous groups.

Indigenous methodologies influence this research in several ways. Interviews with organizational members ensure that the voices of local and Indigenous women are heard, electronic surveys help a broad range of women, including Indigenous women, to share their opinion, and participant observation locates me as an ally in the research process (Tuhiwai-Smith 1999). Additionally, the focus of interviews on participant opinion and experience locates them as the centre of the research and allows for participant ownership of the narrative (Kovach 2009).

The largest impact that Indigenous methodologies have had on this research is in the ethical considerations. Through my reading on Indigenous methodologies, I learned of the importance of an intentional ethical framework in order to avoid exploitative research (Kovach 2009). In the context of this project, these ethical considerations are focused on research that gives ownership of the research to participants. This was done through participant checking of transcripts and of the final draft of the thesis.

## **Methods**

The methods of this research centre on understanding the participation of women in CDOs and the impact of that participation on their capabilities. In pursuit of this understanding,

the data collection methods of electronic surveys, participant observation, and interviews were chosen. Then the data analysis methods of constant comparison analysis, word count and keywords in context were employed in order to sort the interview data and analyze the experiences of interviewees.

## **Data Collection**

### ***Electronic Survey***

An electronic survey (Appendix A) was used in order to gain a broader insight into women's views on participation, and development. Additionally, the results of the survey helped inform the direction of the later stages of research. This was carried out through a preliminary analysis of the responses to the survey, which was opened on 17/05/19. This analysis was used to determine if any changes or omissions should be made to the interview questions. After assessing the answers to the survey, it was determined that the listed interview questions were sufficient.

The survey was advertised through the Women North Network and accessed online through UNBC Survey Monkey. I received six responses. While this method does not allow for the same nuance and connection of a face-to-face interview, it aided in reaching participants in locations that were not visited for participant observation or interviews. Though the resultant data set was small, it did help to confirm the direction of the interviews (Van Selm & Jankowski, 2006). Due to the format of the survey, it is not included in the word count or keyword in context analysis methods. However, the short answer portions were included in the constant comparison analysis. This helped in understanding how the analysis of the interviews fit within the context of

this research. Last, these interviews aided in the identification of several preliminary themes, such as frustrations and difficulties.

### ***Participant Observation***

Participant Observation, recorded through field notes, has been used to inform the collection and analysis of the other data sets in this research. This method and form were chosen to gain experiential knowledge of the workings of a women-run and -focused organization (Luker 2008). Observation was carried out during my employment with the Northern Feminist Institute for Research and Evaluation (Northern FIRE) at UNBC from May until October 2019.

I was employed in order to compile and create a resource guide for northern BC women facing domestic and/or sexual violence. The guide is to exist in several forms: online, in a physical copy, and as an interactive online map. Throughout my work on this guide, I have been involved in several meetings with Northern FIRE that have given me insight into its workings and how the lives of the women on the board are affected. These observations will be further explored in Chapter 4: Results.

### ***Interviews***

Interviews (Appendix B) were used to gather the bulk of data and examine the perspectives of women involved in northern BC CDOs. They were informed by and explored the capabilities outlined earlier and, thus, focused on women's views and opinions of their experiences. Additionally, interviews help to counteract the personal bias involved with Participant Observation by identifying what stakeholders view as important information (Luker

2008). Before undertaking the interviews, I completed the Tri-Council TCPS online tutorial and received approval from the Research Ethics Board.

These interviews studied women involved in a northern BC CDO for a minimum of three months in order to gain an understanding of how women feel their participation in CDOs has impacted their capabilities. Twelve interviews were conducted between 23/07/19 and 10/08/19, in Prince George (5), Quesnel (1), Terrace (3), and Smithers (3). These interviews were semi-structured and focused on the experiences of women participating in CDOs or development work, and if that work could foster capability growth.

## **Recruitment and Sampling**

### ***Interviewee Demographics***

Interviewees ranged in age from young adults to seniors. The women interviewed were engaged in various forms of work and came from diverse educational backgrounds. Five of the twelve participants are currently retired and participating in their respective organizations in unpaid, volunteer positions. Of the other seven, six are employed in a development or social service organization in various roles and the last is employed in a separate field and volunteers at her organization of choice. This distinction between volunteer and employees emerged as a point of interest throughout this research and will be explored in the data analysis. I met with those employed by their organizations in their own offices. Those who did not have their own offices either came to my office at UNBC or, in the case of Smithers, met with me in a local radio station located in a repurposed train car. All participants were adults either professionally or voluntarily involved in community development organizations.

Participants for both the electronic survey and the interviews were recruited through the Women North Network listserv (in connection with Northern FIRE) using the materials in Appendix C. Additional recruitment for interviews was done through snowball sampling among participants.

### ***Organizations for Participant Observation and Sampling.***

In the context of this study, Northern FIRE is the central organization from which other CDOs were contacted. Additionally, it served as the source of Participant Observation throughout my employment with the organization. Northern FIRE's focus is on the research and understanding of women's health status (Northern FIRE 2018). While the organizations themselves are not the focus of this research, they are an excellent point from which women who are involved in community-based development can be contacted. Northern FIRE maintains connections with many CDOs, several of which belong to Northern FIRE's Women North Network, a listserv uniting women and CDOs across BC. Due to the insular nature of small communities, the specific organizations, aside from Northern FIRE, will not be named to preserve the privacy of research participants. While the details of some organizational goals and activities will be discussed, the focus is primarily on the activities of interview participants within their respective organizations.

### ***Northern FIRE.***

The organizations are not the core focus of this research, but they are formed by the women who are, and the organizations' goals and objectives can therefore highlight what those women think is important. While I will not be discussing the details of all of the organizations

used for sampling in this research, I felt a discussion of the objectives of one organization could help to illuminate the value they can hold in the North. Northern FIRE was used not for sampling from but rather as a tool for gathering participant observation data and, through its member listserv, Women North Network, as a means of recruiting for the surveys and interviews. Northern FIRE's leadership team is comprised of UNBC professors, and its objectives are as follow:

- achieve greater equality for women living in northern, rural, and remote communities,
- raise awareness about these women's experiences with the health care system,
- create a women-centred approach to examine the determinants of health,
- facilitate meaningful research that addresses northern women's needs,
- connect researchers who are interested in northern women's health issues together,
- engage and mentor students and community-based researchers,
- disseminate information, resources and knowledge, and
- collaborate with community agencies and women from the North on relevant research projects.

*(Women North Network / Northern FIRE | University of Northern British Columbia. (n.d.).*

*Retrieved April 8, 2018, from <https://www.unbc.ca/northern-fire>)*

### ***Additional Organizations***

The recruiting process for this research relied heavily on the help of Northern FIRE. Members of Northern FIRE identified possible organizations from which interview candidates might be recruited, and I was permitted to use the Women North Network to make a call for participants in both the survey and interviews. Participants are from several communities around BC and are involved in CDOs in many different capacities. As previously stated, in order to maintain some anonymity and privacy for participants, the organizations will not be named. However, their goals and activities, as they relate to interviewee participation, will be explored. The groups themselves are varied in size, goals, and location. The foci of the groups ranged

from highly specific (childcare and early childhood education) to more general (traditional women's organizations or resource centres). As emerged throughout this research, these organizations must facilitate many needs within their communities. There was not a clear differentiation between addressing women's needs and addressing the communities' needs.. To account for this, I interviewed several women who are not involved in strictly women-centred development organizations as was the original focus of this research. Instead, I allowed participants to identify themselves as women participating in development through their interest in being interviewed and worked from there. So, while most participants are involved in women-centred organizations, 3-4 women are currently employed at organizations that do not serve women's needs specifically, such as a First Nations band. However, all the organizations had aspects which focused on improving development and/or connecting women to aid. They were located in Prince George, Smithers, Terrace, and Quesnel and ranged in size and resources from a handful of members operating out of each other's homes to dozens of employees in an office setting.

### **Data Analysis**

The techniques used for analyzing the gathered data have been selected to ensure the most thorough, comprehensive conclusions. They were chosen to ensure triangulation, validity, and a nuanced understanding of the data. These methods are constant comparison analysis, word count, keywords in context and thematic analysis. The results of this analysis are discussed further in Chapter 4: Results. The analysis of the data was carried out in the following manner:



1. Categories (Life in the North, Participation, and Capability Growth) were selected based on the research objectives, interview questions, and preliminary research.
2. The interview results were sorted into one or more of those three categories.
3. Word count analysis was performed on each category separately to highlight what participants were discussing.
4. Keywords in context analysis was performed on each of the most frequently used words to analyze how participants were talking about their participation and to form the themes discussed within each category.
5. Constant comparison analysis was used throughout the process to relate the data back to the focus of the research questions and objectives.
6. Thematic analysis was carried out to supplement the results from the above methods, focusing particularly on capability growth.

First, the following categories were pre-selected based on the objectives and interview questions of this research and then honed based on the areas highlighted in the foundational data of the survey and participant observation.

**Life in the North.** This category was selected to cover what participants had to say about their experiences in BC. Specifically, this category covers aspects of life that are either not directly linked to their participation in development or that were focused on their views of their community. This category aids in addressing the first objective of this research, which is to describe the experiences of women living in British Columbia.

**Participation.** The next category covers women's actual participation in CDOs. It highlights the roles, responsibilities, and experiences of participants at their respective organization(s). This category addresses the first objective of this research, which is to describe the experiences of women living in British Columbia. Additionally, it incorporates the third objective, which is to contribute to the global literature on community development organizations.

**Capability Growth.** The final category into which the data were grouped is that of capability growth. This category will include participants' views on how their community, clients, other participants, and they themselves have changed due to their participation in development. This category directly addresses the research questions as well as the second objective through its focus on the sustainability of development.

After the interview data was divided into the categories above based on the objectives and interview topics, the word count method was employed separately on each category to assess what participants had to say about those three areas. Next, the keywords in context method was used to understand the context of the high frequency words in each category, to identify the major themes of the data, and understand the participation and capability growth of interviewees. Throughout the categorization and analysis process, constant comparison analysis was used to formulate and enhance the themes of the data and understand the emerging results in the context of participatory development and the capabilities approach. These three methods were chosen in order to focus the data and understand it within the context of this research.

### ***Constant Comparison Analysis***

Constant comparison analysis is a method that focuses on finding the major themes of a given text through coding. It can be either inductive, allowing themes to emerge from the text, or deductive, searching for preselected themes and has been employed in both methods throughout this research (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). During initial categorization, this method was used to form preliminary themes to guide the more detailed analysis of the keywords in context methods. Additionally, during both the word count and keywords in context methods, constant comparison analysis was used to understand how the emerging results fit into the larger narrative of the data and the research.

### ***Word Count Method***

The word count method (Appendix C) helps to identify the critical words within a given set of data (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). The program MAXQDA was used for this method. The keywords in the research questions (participation, development) were not counted to avoid skewing the analysis. A standard global stop list was used to exclude irrelevant words (such as ‘and’ or ‘the’), and from the resultant list the most used words within each category were selected for further analysis,

### ***Keywords in Context***

This method supports the constant comparison analysis and word count method by putting critical terms into context within the interview (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). Within this research, this method was used to identify the major themes of the data and understand how the participation of interviewees in development affects their capabilities. This was done by

analysing the fifteen most frequent words within each category within their context. Throughout this analysis, the words, along with relevant quotes, were sorted into both the preliminary themes identified with constant comparison analysis and into new themes as they emerged from the data. The program MAXQDA was purchased and used for this method of data analysis.

### ***Thematic Analysis***

Thematic analysis is used to identify and describe the ideas present within a set of data (Guest et al. 2012). This method was added into this project during the process of edits with the committee in order to more richly explore the themes emerging from the data, particularly Capability Growth. It was carried out through several rounds of coding, the first few being a general coding and the last few focused on capability growth. Due to the similarity of the methods, there was a significant amount of overlap between the results produced from this method and the ones previously used. Therefore, only the results focused on capability growth that either emerged from or was more pronounced in this analysis will be recorded in a separate section in Chapter 4.

### **Ethics**

#### ***Conflict of Interest***

There is a small risk of a potential conflict of interest as I was engaged in an administrative role with Northern FIRE, for which I was paid, in both 2018 and 2019. These positions both served to enhance the resources of Northern FIRE and did not conflict with my research. The second position, where I gathered data on resources for women facing domestic

and sexual violence in BC, enhanced my understanding of BC and the different organizations in which interviewees were involved.

Dr. Jacqueline Holler (my supervisor) is a member of the Northern FIRE leadership team but was not interviewed for this project. Because evaluating Northern FIRE's effectiveness or operations is not a component of this project, no conflict of interest arose. My employment was administrative and had limited impact on my relationship with the leadership team or my understanding of the organization.

***Possible Risks for Participants.***

The main risk involved with this research was maintaining the privacy of the participants. Due to the nature of smaller, remote communities it is likely that, throughout the process of the interview, information would come up that could identify participants. In order to mitigate any personal risk involved with being identified, I have taken several measures to protect participants' privacy. First, I have not included the names or identifying details of the organizations women were involved in aside from the city or town in which they are located. Interviewees have been given pseudonyms and electronic survey participants are numbered in order to preserve anonymity. Any identifying information within quotes in the Data Analysis section has been replaced with an ellipsis or with a general replacement term such as [CDO] to replace a specific organizational name.

Next, I ensured that participants have power over what data appears within this research by having them check both the transcripts of their interview and the final draft of the thesis for any information that may identify them or with which they are uncomfortable. Before the

interviews took place, I explained this process to the participants and made sure they had a copy of the Information Sheet and Consent Form (Appendix D). Consent forms were given to participants pre-involvement, and they were free to withdraw their consent throughout if necessary. Electronic Survey participants gave consent via check boxes on an information page before being able to proceed with the electronic survey. In case of any emotional difficulties brought up by the interview, I also included a list of counselling resources within in the information sheet.

In terms of confidentiality within the organizations themselves, it was unavoidable that some participants would know who was being interviewed. In fact, it was through interviews that I was introduced to other participants from the same organization in more than one instance. Although the interviews did not enter any discussions of specific interpersonal disputes or difficulties, I have been careful to leave any specific quotes or information out of the discussion that could be perceived as personal. This issue was additionally addressed through the participant checking of the final draft.

All data is stored on an encrypted drive (to be destroyed six months after the successful defence of the thesis) and on my personal, password-protected computer. Transcripts and other data were transferred using password-protected, secure files.

### ***Benefits***

The research aims to increase the understanding of women's lives in BC. One of the major aims of this research is to ensure that the voices of northern women are being heard in research on development. A deeper understanding of northern women's involvement in and

importance to development through interviews and surveys will help to further this goal.

Participants may benefit:

- (1) through the interview itself, which implies that women and CDOs are significant voices in northern communities and northern development, which has too seldom been the case;
- (2) by contributing to research and knowledge about women's participation in community development organizations in northern BC. There is very little research available on this subject. Thus, this research will be helping to fill a gap in collective knowledge; and
- (3) potentially, by using the findings of this research to improve the experiences and capacity of CDO members in BC. To achieve this, the research results will be shared both with participants and through the Women North Network for women involved in development to read.

Additionally, I will send my results and recommendations to the Parliamentary Secretary for Gender Equality, Mitzi Dean. Illuminating the role of women in BC through research may also lead to policy changes in favour of women's organizations.

### ***Distribution***

This research was presented as a proposal and before data collection occurred during Research Week 2019 at UNBC and at a Northern FIRE Symposium in March of 2019. Before the thesis defence, participants had a chance to review the final draft, and they will be invited to attend the defence (electronically). After the thesis defence, an email will be sent to participants

through the Women North Network showing how to access the final thesis. Finally, the thesis will be published on the Northern FIRE and Women North Network websites as well as individually emailed to participants.

The theoretical framework, methodologies, data collection, and data analysis of this research all serve to understand women's perspective on their own development. The theoretical frameworks of the capabilities approach and participatory development lay a foundation based on the increased capability of women through development to meet their own needs as well as those of their community. Feminist and Indigenous methodologies build a structure of perspective and intersectionality upon the theoretical framework. Next, the methods of data collection further serve to reveal the perspectives of participants through several angles.

Finally, the methods of data analysis use the foundation and structure of the theoretical framework and methodologies to examine the data from several angles. These different forms of examination build upon each other to create an understanding of what is important to participants and how they talk about their participation in development. All of these components are further supported by the measures taken to ensure an ethical approach to this research.



## **Chapter 4- Results**

The data for this research were split into two for the purpose of analysis. First, the foundational data of the electronic survey and the participant observation were used to help shape the research and contextualize the rest of the data. Then, the interview data for this research were grouped into categories based on the research question and objectives. Next, the word count method was applied to those categories to focus the analysis on what words the women were using to speak about their participation. Following this, the keywords in context method was employed to contextualize those words and understand the perspective and experiences of interviewees. The data were then organized into the themes that emerged within each category throughout the data analysis. Throughout the data analysis, constant comparison analysis was used as a checking system, to analyze how the results fit within the broader narrative of this research. Finally, a thematic analysis was carried out to enhance the results. First, I will explore the results of the foundational data and their impact on the analysis of interview data before moving on to the analysis of the interview data.

### **Electronic Surveys**

The data gathered from the electronic surveys helped to fine-tune the general themes as well as create the categories for data analysis. The examples outlined below aided in focusing the interview questions, shaping the categories and themes for data analysis, and reinforcing/honing the ideas developed through the literature review. Participants will be referred to by pseudonyms.

The information I gained from the surveys points towards participation in CDOs having a positive impact on women and their communities. Five of the respondents (the last responding

neutrally instead of positively) indicated that the experiences and outcomes of their involvement had a positive impact on their life and community. This provided me with reinforcement of the positive impacts found in the global examples explored in the literature review, and highlights the potential value of such groups in BC.

Most of the respondents indicated that being connected to others was a motivator for both initial and continued involvement. All six respondents replied positively to the statement, “I feel a part of a community as a result of my participation in this organization.” One respondent emphasized this point, “It is validating work and provides a sense of belonging” (Jess). The value placed on social connection is also present throughout the interview data. The positive correlation between participation in CDOs and social connection within the electronic survey data, as well as in the literature through Sen (1999) and Nussbaum (2000), has highlighted how vital a healthy social environment is to development.

Finally, four of the six survey respondents indicated an increase in a variety of skills due to their participation. One respondent described participation as “[a]lmost a basic ‘kindergarten’ of activist skills: we addressed municipal, provincial, and federal level politics -- organized all candidate debates, letter writing campaigns, public education and awareness,” (Taylor) and said, “My participation has really enhanced my life -- meeting new people, gaining skills, furthering my education,” (Milly). The growth and development of capabilities is central to this research. The data from these surveys indicates that participation in CDOs does aid in capability growth, helping to solidify the direction of this research, particularly in terms of objectives and analysis.

## **Participant Observation**

My observations throughout my participant observation with Northern FIRE can be divided into two categories: Meetings and Personal Research.

**Meetings.** Throughout my employment with Northern FIRE, I sat in on several meetings of the organization. While the detailed content of the meetings may not be pertinent to this research, the methods, views, and goals of these gatherings gave insight into the workings of women's organizations. My initial impression was one of general busyness. All of the board members have a multitude of roles and responsibilities in a variety of organizations. Whether it was serving on organizational boards, attending and organizing symposiums, writing grants, advocating, or conducting research, none of the Northern FIRE members are “just” professors.

Next, I noted a focus on addressing issues from a variety of perspectives. This presented in two different ways: first, through the multiple lenses of expertise that each member brought to the table and, second, by a refusal to “take the easy road” when it came to addressing issues.

The first was displayed through the discussions of the various activities the group was undertaking. Due to the varied knowledge and experience of each member, they were able to discuss issues with nuances of understanding from many different angles. For example, within in one meeting the points of discussion included: writing a grant application for an upcoming conference, organizing said symposium, attending a seniors’ housing symposium, and another conference concerning precarious employment. The second was displayed in the method of approaching these extremely varied issues. While all very busy, the board members examined each issue carefully and made sure the best methods and people were employed for each task.

Finally, there are two attitudes I found of particular note within the group. First, there was a distinct frustration at outside mechanisms that did not share the group's attention to detail and commitment to pursuing issues holistically. Within the discussion, there seemed to be frustration directed at the failure of institutions to include experts in decision-making processes, or to give due attention to the nuanced problems women face. Secondly, I noted an air of camaraderie and support amongst the board members. Members' focus on each other's wellbeing was demonstrated in friendly conversation, celebration of accomplishments, and concern. For example, on more than one occasion board members reminded one another to take time off to rest or expressed concern about each other's sleep schedule. The genuine desire to support one another in their various pursuits, as well as a concern for each other's health and happiness, was evident throughout meetings.

**Resource-Guide Research.** Throughout my employment with Northern FIRE, I was able to thoroughly examine the resources available to women in BC. While that particular data compilation was focused on women facing violence, I found that many of the organizations served several needs for women within their community. There are two major takeaways that I gained from this aspect of my time employed with Northern FIRE.

First, the remote nature of BC's communities is a huge barrier to women's getting support when facing violence. Systematically mapping the organizations and services available to women experiencing violence taught me how truly, physically distant many women are from help. So many small communities do not have the support network for women that larger communities have. In several smaller communities, such as Atlin and Fraser Lake, the only

resource for women facing violence is the RCMP and/or the local First Nations' band office. Even communities that have some services may not have the encompassing services required to meet the various needs of women. These issues compound for communities not located within a reasonable distance of a larger centre.

Second, I noted that most, if not all, of the women's organizations whose information I collected served many needs within the community. This is particularly true in smaller communities that may have only one such organization. Suddenly, that group has to serve as many needs as possible. For example, Burns Lake has a branch of the Elizabeth Fry society and the RCMP Victim Services to serve women facing violence. These two organizations must serve all the needs of women who are escaping violence in the large geographic area surrounding Burns Lake and neighbouring communities (RCMP 2015). Contrast this with Prince George, which, just to name a few of the available services, has several different shelters (both long and short term), specialized mental and physical health clinics, and multicultural services. This specific characteristic reminded me of the Northern FIRE board members, trying to fill in as many gaps and meet as many needs as possible.

The survey of information about resources available to women facing violence in BC was invaluable to this research. The lack of available resources for women is a huge hindrance to the development of capabilities (Robeyns 2005). Those resources and organizations that are available are stretched by the necessity of covering the many needs across wide geographical areas. The women who are not able to access these resources are left without this specific type of support to pursue capability growth. That is not to say they have no capability growth, only that

they do not have access to some of the benefits explored within this data. For example, while attending an information session on a virtual law clinic being developed for BC, I learned that in Prince George, there were no family lawyers taking on legal aid cases at that time. This meant that women looking for legal advice about their family situation would have to either travel outside of Prince George or pay out of pocket for a lawyer's services. This hinders women's access to freedom, safety, and several other capabilities. It is also important to note that the information session I was attending directly addresses this problem through the potential provision of secure, video-conferenced legal aid for women in remote locations, further highlighting the importance of community action.

To conclude this discussion of the foundational data, I would like to identify a few key ways that my expectations for the interviews and their results changed due to the participant observation and electronic survey data. The key change in perspective is that I made sure to account for women who are unpaid volunteers in, rather than employed by, CDOs when going into my interviews, and to make sure the questions would be relevant to the women. Due to the negative experiences of one of the survey participants and the frustrations expressed by Northern FIRE members, I also made sure to account for "Frustrations and Issues" within the themes to allow space for nuance and to honour how difficult it can be to participate in development.

The foundational research was essential to increasing nuance and depth of understanding with which I approached the interviews and data analysis. As detailed above, my perspectives on women's participation in CDOs were developed through a greater understanding of what this

participation could look like during my participation with Northern FIRE and how they might speak about that participation through the electronic surveys.

## **Interview Data Analysis**

### ***Categories***

The words selected through the word count method and used in the keywords in context method, as shown in Table 1 below, are divided by category (Life in the North, Participation, and Capabilities) based on the research objectives and subjects discussed in the interviews, then further broken down and analysed within those categories. These words were selected based on the frequency of their use (the top fifteen in frequency within each category) and a standard stop list was used to exclude filler words (for example: and, he, she, etc.). Words were then analyzed in their categories and divided into themes within those categories. This analysis is used alongside constant comparison analysis in order to get a full picture of how participation in CDOs affects the capabilities of women. The coding categories are organized by how they apply to the research question and objectives, and then are broken down further into themes to reflect women's discussion of the subject. Finally, the names mentioned here are all pseudonyms to preserve the privacy of interviewees.

Rank	Life in the North	Participation	Capability Growth	All Categories
1	Work/working	Women/ women's/ woman	Work/ working	Women/ women's/woman
2	Community	Work/ working	Women/ women's/ woman	Work/ working
3	Woman/women's/ woman	Group/ groups	Group/ groups	Community
4	Need/ needed/ needs	Need/ needs/ needed	Learned/ learning	Program/ programs
5	Support/ supportive	Community	Support/ supportive	Feel
6	Help	Program/ programs	Feel	Need
7	Education	Involved	Involved	Organization/ organizations
8	Organization/ organizations	Support/ supports	Program/ programs	Group
9	Program/ programs	Feel	Organization/ organizations	Help
10	Health	Organization/ organizations	Community	Involved
11	Family	Help	Need	Support
12	Feel	Family	Opportunity/ opportunities	Learned/ learning
13	Friends/ friendships	Learning	Training	Institute
14	Girls	Clients	Help/ helpful/ helping	Training
15	Housing	Teach/ taught/ teaching	Skills	Family

*Table 1: Word Count Analysis Results*

### ***Analysis***

**Life in the North.** This category was selected to address the first objective of this research, to describe the experiences of women participating in CDOs in northern BC and, briefly the impact the North has on their capabilities. It does so by exploring the terms in the table below, which were the most used words within this category, and the context in which they were used. The table also shows how many times each word was used within this category and how many interview participants used the word.



<b>Word</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>No. of Interviews in which word appears</b>
Work/working	36	9
Community	30	7
Woman/women's/ woman	27	7
Need/ needed/ needs	24	8
Support/ supportive	13	3
Help	12	6
Education	11	2
Organization/ organizations	11	6
Program/ programs	10	5
Health	9	2
Family	8	4
Feel	7	3
Friends/ friendships	7	4
Girls	7	2
Housing	7	4
Indigenous	7	2
School	7	3

*Table 2: Life in the North Word Count Results*

Interviewees highlighted both positives and negatives when it came to their lives in the North. When asked about life in northern BC, many women spoke about access to nature as a positive. On the negative side, winter weather came up as a major difficulty. The personal history of each participant was another major point of discussion. This section covered several of the high-frequency words (Education/ school, programs, organizations, work/ working) and enriched my understanding of the participants, who came from diverse backgrounds. Interviewees came from a range of educational and vocational backgrounds, including nurses, counsellors, the service industry, social work, and more. However, for reasons of privacy, I will not be exploring this section in full detail. The details of interviewees' careers that are pertinent to this research will be further explored in the Participation section below.

While these observations were essential for the interview process to understand general attitudes, the analysis will focus on the aspects of northern life that apply more directly to the research question. I explore the category of Life in the North through the themes that emerged from the analysis: positive aspects of community, the struggles of the North, and growth and change.

***Positive Aspects of Community.*** The high frequency words used by interviewees within this theme are: community, feel, friends, help, need, organizations, and work. In both the word count of the data and the keywords in context assessment, women identified 'community' as a word and concept of importance. In terms of northern life, women spoke about community as both the town or city that they live in and the people around them. Community, in terms of people, was highlighted as a reason for why they choose to live in the North, as typified in this quote from research participant, Greta: “people in the North are the most independent, dependable people you know. And it's because of the people and the way they share information and that sort of thing that makes the North so unique.”

Many participants, both in terms of professional development work and more informal action, cited the strong sense of a collaborative community they experience in the North. Participants in volunteer work spoke about many different actions that their organizations took within the community to improve different aspects of life. Participants in such activities, like Greta, described the community attitude: “everybody is sort of on the same page. When the community needs something everybody bands together.” From health centres to letter-writing campaigns, the research participants involved in a wide variety of activities that require

collaboration throughout their community. More detail concerning the actual participation of the interviewees will be covered in the Participation category below.

Women also spoke about their personal experiences in the North in a positive light. Several women talked about the slower pace of life as central to their reason for living in the North. Karen, who had lived in several larger cities, said, “I think what I love is, I don’t feel the kind of anxious energy that I felt in the city.” In addition to this, Trisha spoke about having a group of close-knit friends as having a positive impact on their lives, “but when you’re in small communities your friends become your family which is good.” These two quotations, and other similar points brought up in the interviews, point to the growth of capabilities, such as Nussbaum’s (2000) capability indicators of affiliation and bodily health, in a manner particular to the North. Connected to Sen’s (1999) concept of conversion factors and the effect that one’s environment can have on capabilities and functions, interviewees like Karen and Trisha have identified a distinct characteristic of the North that encourages capability and function growth. The slower pace of life and interconnectedness of the community promote greater capabilities in terms of affiliation and the conversion of those capabilities into functions.

Finally, several women highlighted access to services as a positive component of northern life. As Marge outlines here, “I think it has most facilities that anybody needs. You know, we have the university and the college and the symphony, live professional-type plays.” However, it is important to note that these women were largely from Prince George and were involved in CDOs through volunteer work. As will be highlighted in the next section, participants from smaller communities who are employed in development organizations feel that

several services are lacking within their communities. This difference in perspective highlights the importance of conversion factors when examining capabilities (Sen 1999). The distinct relational perspectives of the interviews show how one subject, in this case services, greatly affects capabilities and their conversion into functions.

***The Struggles of the North.*** The high frequency terms used by interviewees within this theme are: community, feel, housing, organizations, support, and women/ women's/ woman. The description of a community that lends a hand to neighbours was prevalent throughout the interviews. However, participants like Katrina, involved in organizations focused on women facing violence, also spoke about the struggle of knowing certain difficult truths about people and places around them within a smaller population:

...having that close-knit community can be a good thing but also a bad thing. So knowing that someone in power or your neighbour or somebody like that has done something so terrible to someone that they said they loved can be really hard to hear.

Those participants who work directly with vulnerable women in their community highlighted the general attitudes of the people around them in a negative sense, as discussed by Karen and Katrina here:

I would notice, in terms of the client base here, I see a lot of systemic trauma around racism, colonization, a lot of legacy of residential schools up here. And a lot of misunderstanding from the general public, a lot of people have no understanding of the history of colonization in this area and so don't have a lot of compassion for folks who are struggling. (Karen)

...when the transitional housing was being [built] like they had to have open houses and stuff like that... and so many people in the community were against it. And it was, it was disheartening and again being involved with the -- and everything, hearing people's views around homosexuality and gender diversity and all of that, it's again really disheartening because I feel like I've done so much work and put so much positivity into the community and to still hear that those people shouldn't have housing, and those people shouldn't have their rights to dress the way they want to... like it's really hard. (Katrina)

The positive and negative aspects of community discussed here are interesting in terms of development because they display the dichotomy of views of living in a smaller community. Capabilities are not dispersed across the community equally due to variables like colonialism as detailed by Karen. While this is not necessarily unique to small communities, it does point to a difficulty for women participating in development within any community.

Additionally, the conversion of capabilities into functions is affected negatively by the social difference highlighted in both of these quotes. The participants who identified these difficulties also spoke about the positive aspects of living in a smaller town. Thus, even those who see the struggles of living in a smaller town also acknowledge that it has its merits and, in fact, choose to live there rather than in a larger centre.

Women who were professionally involved in their organization also spoke about the struggle of having too few resources to meet the needs of women in the community. Women

outside of Prince George, in particular, expressed that they were the only person or group giving free services of their kind within the community. Karen, for example, offered the only free trauma counselling in her community. This issue was also displayed in my compilation of resources for women facing violence during my employment with Northern FIRE. Furthermore, while others expressed gratitude at having the freedom to take as much time with their clients as possible, Katrina spoke about not having the same level of service infrastructure available:

I think just ‘cause, back to those resources, we don’t have as much as a city does... like Vancouver like you can walk down the street and have those wraparound services whereas here you might have a couple of different agencies that you can go to and like a couple of different supports and try to get those wraparound services for yourself but it’s not all just a one-stop-shop location like bigger centres tend to have.

On a more individual level, women discussed the lack of services and resources as a source of anxiety in terms of employment, health, and personal safety. Greta discussed this in terms of safety, “A woman here in the North, if she’s raped, she’s at a disadvantage. There’s no forensic nurse up here. Going into court without that. You’re screwed ‘cause you were screwed.” Karen spoke about a lack of medical care as a source of stress: “I’ve had parents who were sick and they lived in bigger cities and the support was beautiful and I don’t know what that would look like here.” Finally, some participants, like Mae, highlighted a difference in opportunity between the North and larger southern centres: “but generally I think women have, I hate to say it, but I honestly feel they have more benefits down south, um, as far as scholastically, as far as job.” This difference in resources between the north and south of the province, and the negative

impact it has on the health of northern women, has been documented (Status of Women Canada 2012) and noted by the interview participants in the research. It is vital that this deficit of resources be made up so that women's health, and other capabilities can improve.

***Growth and Change.*** Finally, I would like to acknowledge the growth over time that is noted by interviewees in northern communities. This was noted by Mae who has lived in the North for a long time and has watched her community change: "I really, really, appreciate how the university has changed the attitude of [Prince George]; it was an extremely narrow-minded, homophobic city before the university actually came so that's what I think." The social growth and change of northern communities lead to greater opportunities for capability growth among the people, particularly marginalized populations, living there and is invaluable to development. To use Mae's example, the presence of the University of Northern British Columbia in Prince George has made higher education more accessible for northern BC. The majority of UNBC students are, and have consistently been, from northern BC (UNBC 2019). Most of these students could have gone further afield for university, but the fact that so many are from the region shows the desirability of having the university in Prince George. The increased accessibility of education certainly points to a positive change in the North.

This growth was also connected to the Indigenous people of northern BC. Of particular note to Roxanne was the changing visibility of Indigenous people within the communities:

When I first arrived here, Indigenous people were almost invisible within the normal civic society and now there's, you know there's the First Nations woman who's a bank teller at [bank], there's Indigenous people who are cashiers at [store]. You see them more

and I don't take credit for that, I'm just saying, um, things are changing so that Indigenous people can move forward in their lives and out of poverty and get jobs.

These changes and growth noted by participants are vital to understanding northern BC. There is far more nuance throughout northern BC to be found and examined than is currently present in literature.

**Conclusions.** The thoughts and feelings expressed throughout the discussion of life in northern BC are evidently conflicting. The impacts of northern living on the capabilities of women have been displayed in several ways throughout this discussion. Women felt that the small size of their communities was an advantage when it came to lifestyle, improving their social connectedness and mental health. However, that same point was cited as a disadvantage in terms of services and social progressiveness. Interviewees acknowledged the struggles of social opinions within northern communities while also celebrating the positive changes seen throughout the years. The capabilities of women in the north, and the conversion of those capabilities into functions, are directly affected by the northern, rural nature of their homes.

**Participation.** This category focuses on the actual participation of women in their organizations. It was important for this research that women could express what their involvement looks like and how it affects their lives. Within this category, themes emerged around Participation, Organizational Goals, Motivation, and Frustration and Issues.



<b>Word</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>No. of Interviews in which word appears</b>
Women/ women's/ woman	129	12
Work/ working	103	10
Group/ groups	57	9
Need/ needs/ needed	50	11
Community	46	8
Program/ programs	46	9
Involved	36	10
Support/ supports	35	9
Feel	34	7
Organization/ organizations	33	9
Help	32	10
Family	17	3
Learning	15	8
Clients	14	2
Teach/ taught/ teaching	14	5
Counselling	13	2

*Table 3: Participation Word Count Results*

**Participation.** To begin, I will explore some of the various roles and activities that interviewees described concerning their participation. As was touched on in the Interviewee Demographics section of the previous chapter, half (6) of the participants were engaged in paid employment with a CDO while the other half were involved in a volunteer or participant capacity.

Interviewees participating in development as volunteers carried out this involvement in several different manners. Three of the participants are involved in the same women's group that centres on social connection and various community improvements. These participants (Greta, Nicole, and Lillian) have fulfilled different managerial roles within the organization throughout their participation. As Nicole explained, "I have been a president, I have been secretary (I'm hoping second secretary), we help each out because it seems daunting for one person to do that

task, so get together and help them.” Lillian added, “I don’t know I might, our secretary has retired, resigned and I don’t know, I’m mulling that over, I don’t have a lot of time. Pretty busy. We’ll see. I’m kind of the cheering squad I guess, let’s do this, let’s do that.”

This group has carried out several different projects within the community. As an example of political participation, Greta told the story of a very persistent protest against the governmental prevention of cattle sale in her community:

Well the [CDO], myself, I had a really good photocopier and we wrote 5 different letters for the different kind of people we had in the [community], and I printed them off in the evening. The next day, women took them out to all the different ranches and everything else, got 'em signed, brought 'em back, we had lined up 5 fax machines and we started faxing the government offices. Pretty soon, after a couple 3 hours, there was a person came to the store and said is there any way you can get ahold of the others and tell them to stop, that the sale can go ahead. And I said why? Well I hired the people to pick the faxes off the floor, but they can’t keep up. Their phones are ringing off the hook.

In addition to projects, the women participating in this group undertake several smaller, social activities to help out community members, as detailed here by Nicole:

We do quite a few things for our community. ... Our group also makes all the little knit or crochets – the little hats for the babies at the hospital once they're born. We help out our community members that have lost their homes. We built [made] quilts for them; we visit our sick members, our sick neighbours, we provide support, we like to try to meet new members of the community.

Other interviewees participating in CDOs as volunteers were involved in several different groups, each with a few groups in common. These groups are largely involved in fundraising for disadvantaged groups, both within the community and internationally, as well as in educational gatherings for their members. As described here by Marge: “In the [CDO] we raise money for scholarships and bursaries so we have two here and two at [educational institution]. And we support school breakfast programs, especially the inner-city schools.” These groups involve the development of several capabilities both for the participants and the beneficiaries of their efforts.

Finally, Kim was involved in her chosen CDO as a client during and following the process of escaping an abusive relationship. Throughout her time with the organization she has been involved in counseling and various trainings. In our interview, Kim expressed a passion for advocacy for women who have been in a situation similar to hers: “When I’m done counseling. I would like to become an advocate for victims and I would like to volunteer there and I also like to donate things there. That’s my passion now actually.” Kim’s journey is one of the most direct examples of capability growth displayed in the interviews. Through her participation in training, counseling, and support groups, Kim has gained skills (such as public speaking) that she has chosen to convert into the function of helping other women facing her same problems.

Next, it was of particular interest to me to compare how women involved in volunteer work spoke about their participation. Whereas those who were professionally involved used language more familiar to me (in terms of development goals and methods), those who were involved on a volunteer basis used a different vernacular. They spoke about development using the language of relationship and everyday needs rather than the language of those more

acquainted with the field of development or social service on a wider scale. As is shown in the quote below, the focus of Lillian was on the individual experiences of women in her community:

Women are strong, they don't give up, they tend to their families, they tend to each other, some of them work, work outside of the home, some of them are at home, but they still work, they garden, they do canning, they you know, support their families, and each other.

The focus on individual experiences among women of the community was displayed in several of the interviews with participants involved as volunteers. This shows how participants who do not necessarily have the same training as a professional can still identify what is important within their community. It is vital to centre the knowledge of women, like these participants, within development because they understand their own experiences best and can best identify their community's needs (Mohanty 1988).

Next, I would like to explore what participation looks like for the interviewees who are employed in development. The six interviewees who fall within this category work at four different organizations. Two of these organizations are women-specific while the other two are more generally community focused with women-focused programs. The interviewees fulfill a variety of roles in their respective organizations: trauma counsellor, early child educator, computer services coordinator, grant writer and project developer, executive director, and victim's court worker. While this list covers the 'official' roles of these women, it is important to note that several of the interviewees are, or have been, involved in some capacity with one or

more organizations, both professionally and as volunteers, aside from the one with which they were employed at the time of the interview.

Each of the interviewees, as is evident in their job titles alone, fulfills vastly different roles within their respective organizations. The fact that all these roles contribute toward development in northern BC is extremely interesting in terms of capabilities and functionings, which will be explored more in depth within the next category. Here, I will describe a few of the varied roles of the interviewees to illustrate the diversity of women's participation in development.

One example is Trisha, who is an early childhood educator. Her role, while focused on children, also extends to helping families with navigating different governmental processes, referring families to other community resources, and facilitating professional development for herself and other educators. Her participation impacts her own capabilities, her coworkers' capabilities, and the capabilities of families within her community.

The next interviewee whose participation I will explore is Katrina. Katrina works as a community-based victim's court worker. This role is hugely impactful, especially considering that Katrina is the only one in her community. Furthermore, Katrina, much like other participants, participates in several different organizations and is also involved in her local women's resource and Pride societies. Even when examining the participation of one person, there is a prominent diversity of roles, responsibilities, and actions evidenced.

Another example is Joan, the computer services coordinator for a community organization, focusing on meeting many different needs and facilitating development in many

areas. She has been involved in the organization in several different roles since she began working there in the 1990s. At this time, she is the computer services manager, but she has run computer literacy programs for elders and women, as well as educational assistance programs. Joan's participation in her organization has led to the development of her own skills, in her own words: "So I think I've come leaps and bounds in my learning and not just in the technology but also in humanity." However, her participation has also had an impact on the capabilities of others, through the different programs she has facilitated.

All three of these interviewees highlight the diversity of participation in development and CDOs in northern BC. It is impossible to quantify the exact impact on the community that these women have. Additionally, we cannot too narrowly define what participation looks like for women and must be willing to examine it from many perspectives.

***Organizational Goals and Values.*** The terms used by interviewees within this theme are: program(s), community, need, family, feel, help, organizations, support, and women/ women's/ woman. The goals of the organizations each participant is involved with are varied (although there is a fair amount of overlap). Several organizations have a focus on building a social community, particularly those that interviewees participate in as volunteers rather than employees. These organizations act as both a social group, and a base for advocacy, development, and activism within the community. The following quote from Greta encompasses such ideals:

Whatever the community really needs, the [CDO] is there to help, whether it's right now, senior housing is a big thing on the [community] there just isn't any in the [community]

but they're getting closer, they've got the land, they've got plans, they've got estimates, now it's just a matter of gathering funds together. (Greta)

Participants who are involved in development in a professional sense had a more rigid outline of what their organizational and individual goals were. As explored in the previous theme, they covered a wide array of services from teaching computer classes, to support work, to trauma counselling. Several of the organizations targeted women's needs specifically, while those who were more generally focused had women-specific programs.

Interviewees who were employed in development also expressed satisfaction when it came to their freedom to pursue their objectives in a manner that works best for them, and for participants. They emphasized that they cannot force people to grow and change but, instead, had to leave room for people to go at their own pace. This is shown in the quote from Joan below:

We would have some individuals that would come into the program, and then they'd drop out, and they'd come back, and they'd drop out. We never ever turn anybody away; we always give another chance because there's always that hope that this is the time. And we've actually seen it where this is the time when they finally did it, and they finally went on to do sometimes positive, but they had to build up the courage, or they had to build their self-esteem or whatever they had to work on to get to the next step.

This concept connects to the focus on addressing problems holistically that I first noted in my participant observation with Northern FIRE. The persistent pursuit of development at a human level, without overly focusing on efficiency, speaks to the ability of these women (and their participation) to have a lasting impact on their community.

In addition to goals, the organizations in which participants were involved displayed the value of openness and inclusivity, as described by Roxanne: “So sometimes we have women only programs but we also have the family place. So family being all genders.” Trisha noted that “people feel comfortable attending and joining in.” This openness makes it easier for disadvantaged or socially isolated community members to participate in the organization and develop their capabilities.

Finally, the research participants spoke, both directly and indirectly, about an organizational focus on the felt needs of the community. The term ‘needs’ can be contextualized as both a goal and a value of the various organizations discussed. It is a goal in that, within more formal organizations, assessing the needs of the community is intentionally pursued, as highlighted by Roxanne: “ [the] women’s centre [was] doing a needs assessment for what women need in the community and childcare just really showed up as a women’s issue.” Furthermore, as highlighted through the discussion of characteristics of CDOs in Chapter 2, understanding and focusing on the felt needs of the community is central to effective participatory development.

***Motivation.*** The next theme within the category of women’s participation in CDOs is what motivates their involvement. Within this theme, the following words will be explored: help, women/ women’s/ woman, works, community, clients, feel, group, and support. Nearly all of the women, including Katrina, described their motivation as a desire to help the women in their community, “and so events like [advocacy event] where women feel empowered and all of those things, it’s really important to me.” While they spoke about this motivation in different contexts,



depending on the goals of their organization, they all displayed a similar focus on women's wellbeing. For example, interviewees like Nicole, Greta, and Lillian, who are involved in a traditional women's organization, spoke more about the social health and wellbeing of women in their community. In contrast, but still concerned with improving the lives of women, interviewees working directly with women facing violence expressed more concern over their clients' physical and emotional wellbeing. As Karen explains, "I would say the majority of my work is just safety, stabilization and relationship." While it may seem an obvious reason for participation, acknowledging the focus on women's wellbeing and needs is central to understand women's participation in CDOs in northern BC.

Additionally, connected to the identified motivator of helping women was the desire to help the community itself. Women spoke about the importance of being involved in the town or community as a central value they hold, as outlined by Joan: "because I'm very community-minded and I think a community... if you have, you give and if you receive, you help someone else." This value connects to both the previous section of Life in the North, through the value placed on a close community, and is a direct motivator for participation in community-focused groups like CDOs. As will be furthered explored under the next category, community engagement and support are highly valued by participants, and have a direct impact on the continuation and growth of CDOs.

Another major motivator to be involved in CDOs identified by participants was the connection with other members of the group. This was particularly evident in the women who participate as volunteers rather than employees. The following quote from Nicole sums up this

concept: “Just the camaraderie of the women, the friendships, I don’t know, I think that means a lot.” With the potential isolation of living in a northern, rural community, it is vital for women to find a network of support and friendship. The value of these groups is evident in the fact that they serve as a support network for participants, as well as a way to address community needs.

***Frustrations and issues.*** Interviewees and survey participants outlined several frustrations about their involvement in development organizations. This was mirrored in my participant observation and the electronic surveys. These frustrations emerged with the following terms: community, feel, group, need, organization, and work. Several participants identified a lack of active volunteers as a barrier to accomplishing goals. Greta emphasized the importance of active members: “There’s nothing that will kill an organization faster than having a membership and not using it. I will keep on being involved with the [CDO].” Mae was more direct in her feelings regarding involvement: “I think I get very annoyed with people who don’t volunteer in their community.” Additionally, frustrations surrounding the level to which other members engaged in the organizations were brought up by interviewees like Mabel: “often times in any group there are a smaller number of people who volunteer to do the jobs and that can be a challenge.”

Another difficulty associated with participation is how varied and overwhelming the work can be. As I discovered through my participant observation, many of these organizations serve several purposes within the community. For participants, meeting the many and varied needs of the community can lead to their being involved in tasks for which they were not necessarily trained, and causes disruptions in their usual tasks. As Trisha described, “So you may

have your day planned in your mind, but it doesn't work." And, finally, Mae outlines the frustrations felt by many participants concerning the need to be searching for funding at all times:

I have a high success rate on the grants that I write for, but it's so, it can be quite wearying, and very time-consuming. I know you'll hear that from other people, but just parts of it you wish just weren't so, but there they are. So that's probably the biggest thing, you know in terms of what I don't like, is having to always be looking for money.

As previously noted, these frustrations largely centre on the difficulties encountered while carrying out development work rather than on other members of the groups. While some frustrations were expressed at some interpersonal issues, they were qualified as normal for a group of people working together. The bulk of these frustrations were focused on barriers to the work, in whatever form that takes for each participant. More barriers will be explored within the category of Capability Growth.

***Counselling.*** Finally, the concept of counselling emerged as an important part of participation for two of the interviewees. While many women did not speak about counselling at all, I have included it because of its importance to those who did speak about it and its appearance in the word count analysis. Karen and Kim identified counselling as vital to their personal growth and continued participation, as well vital to the growth of other community members. Karen, who is a counsellor, explained this: "in my own experience, in my family's experience, in my work experience, it [counselling] can change the course of your life. Your life doesn't have to be as hard as it is right now."

This concept straddled the line between participation and, the next theme, capability growth. For Kim, counselling was a major part of why she is involved in her organization and has motivated her further participation: "That's my passion now, actually."

**Conclusions.** The participation of women in development in northern BC takes many different forms. As detailed throughout this category, women are involved in a variety of positions from counsellor to computer services coordinator, in organizations with a wide array of goals. While interviewees did express some frustrations with their participation, they also displayed a focus on helping improve the lives of the women in their community. The different types of participation outlined by interviewees help to illustrate the many different ways that women can develop their capabilities and convert those capabilities into functions. As will be explored in the next category, Capability Growth, interviewees' capabilities have been affected in numerous ways due to their participation in development.

**Capability Growth.** This final category is the core of what this research seeks to learn. How does participating in CDOs in northern British Columbia affect the capabilities of women? Capability growth will also be explored within the thematic analysis portion of this chapter.

Firstly, in this section, I will more directly address this major question through the themes of: Formal Training, Informal Learning, Community Engagement, and Barriers to Growth.

<b>Word</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>No. of Interviews in which word appears</b>
Work/ working	53	9
Women/women's/woman	41	12
Group/ groups	25	7
Learned/ learning	22	8
Support/ supportive	19	7
Feel	18	8
Involved	17	6
Program/ programs	17	6
Organization/ organizations	12	6
Community	11	8
Need	11	6
Opportunity/ opportunities	11	5
Training	10	3
Help/ helpful/ helping	9	6
Skills	9	6
Friends/ friendships	8	6

*Table 4: Capability Growth Word Count Results*

**Formal Training.** This theme explores women's view of how they have grown and changed due to their participation in development work. This growth could come from several sources. First I will explore the participants' formal pursuit of training.

For interviewees like Karen, Trisha, Roxanne, Katrina, Mae, and Joan, who are employed in their organizations, training is an essential part of their involvement. The provision of training ensures that the participants are able to provide the best services they can within their field by ensuring they are up to date with concepts and methods, leading to the most effective capability growth for both themselves and others. Karen highlighted the different things that the leadership of her organization has done to facilitate professional development “and support me and kind of give me feedback that’s supportive and help me get training. They’re really good on that stuff.

They send us to conferences.” Trisha spoke about the professional development requirements for her field and how she helps to facilitate training sessions for herself and her coworkers. Additionally, Roxanne is responsible for providing training sessions for the employees of her organization,

but I really try to make sure that there are opportunities other than childcare development, you know things like, suicide awareness, just various things that help me, in my direct role, maybe just being in this building, is good to have. And I try to bring in a couple things in the works in the moment, custom training...

Joan and Mae have provided training for clients, rather than for their organization’s members. Joan, as mentioned previously, has facilitated computer literacy and educational programs. Mae is currently responsible for training other organizations to effectively apply for grants and funding. Both of these roles aid in the capability growth of those people who receive the training.

The women involved as volunteers in their respective organizations also receive formal training, although it is more generally focused than the career-specific training of those who are employed in development. For example, Greta, Lillian and Nicole, who are involved in the same group, all described various skills like quilting or canning that they have learned through their participation. Whether it is computer skills, canning, or new techniques for counselling or childcare, all of these forms of training have direct impacts on the capabilities of participants. The skills gained in these trainings can be used in a variety of functions, depending on the choices and conversion factors affecting the participant. However, not all capability growth is as direct as a formal training session.

***Informal Learning.*** Interviewees also spoke about more informal methods of gaining a new skill or understanding. For instance, Joan commented that:

So, I think I've come leaps and bounds in my learning and not just in the technology but also in humanity because when I first started, again, there was a lot of naivety, I was a little naïve. I didn't see the big picture around the world; I didn't understand why people did what they did, why things were the way they were. And I've learned a lot about people and about myself and definitely grown as a human.

Of particular note within informal learning is the capability of communication. Nearly all of the participants highlighted communication as an important skill they have gained, whether it be interpersonal or public speaking. When asked if she had learned anything during her participation, Mae replied, “Oh my lord yes, yes, to keep my mouth shut. To step back and listen.” Trisha outlined different types of communication when asked the same question: “Being able to communicate through email. It really is a skill. That I can present and stand in front of 20 people, 30 people, and I can give a presentation, and not feel as nervous.” This capability of communication falls into Nussbaum’s (2000) capabilities of senses, imagination, and thought, as well as affiliation. These two capabilities highlight the importance of being able to use one’s mind to creatively solve problems and the need to interact with others.

***Community Engagement and Connection.*** This section will explore community, both as a place and as a group of people, and its connection to capabilities. Despite the common view in development rhetoric of the community as a pre-existing cohesive unit, the realities of communities can be quite the opposite (Anyidoho 2010). Therefore, a community that is unified

in pursuit of a developmental goal must be built through engagement (Anyidoho 2010). Through the capability of control over one's environment, Nussbaum (2000) details the necessity of political participation. It is vital to capability growth that one has choice and control both politically, and in one's own life. Therefore, increased connection, both politically and interpersonally, can be beneficial for organizations and participants in them.

This connection was expressed in several ways throughout the interviews. First, women talked about the place of their organizations within the community. Katrina described the connection of her organization to her community: "They're quite well known in the community and people feel validated and respected as soon as they walk in the door." This positive relationship is essential to the success of development within CDOs. This place of respect and safety allows a healthy relationship to develop between organization members and the community.

Next, the development of programs that address the needs of the community helps to connect the organizations and participants to the community. For example, Karen detailed her involvement with developing a sexual assault response team for her community:

Say a recent sexual assault survivor presents at the hospital, we would get called down and then we would offer support and then follow-up. And so we're working on that, trying to understand the hospital better and have the police work, really working with those guys to make this process seamless.

As Karen explained, a sexual assault response team involves working with several different agencies within the community. This collaboration connects the organization with the



community even further. Both this official connection and the interpersonal connection of these organizations and their participants to the community are essential to the effectiveness of their work and the development of the capabilities of affiliation and control over one's environment.

***Barriers to Growth.*** The first major barrier to capability growth that emerged from the data analysis was, as previously mentioned, the issue of membership. For example, when asked about recruitment of new membership to their organizations, women responded in various ways. Trisha displayed humour at the lack of interest from friends: "I've asked [*laughter*]. People are always... yeah... some of the women I know, they won't have anything to do with it or they're already involved so asking is kind of a moot point." Others, like Roxanne, were more positive about getting other people involved: "I was the person reporting to the board, as a non-profit, you need a board, they give oversight. Not everybody wants to serve on a board. Not everybody knows what we do, you have to go out and actively recruit, I try to think of skills they have for the board, and recruit." Participants spoke about both the lack of current members and the difficulty in gaining new members. For example, Marge stated that: "The [organization name] group is very small; I don't know how much longer that can persist."

The view most generally shared throughout the research, therefore, was the need for more women to be actively involved, particularly younger women, as discussed here by Nicole: "We're a small branch and our members either get old and pass on and it's just we're finding it really hard to recruit younger members." The development of capabilities, and converting those capabilities into functions, relies on the social environment a person inhabits (Sen 1999). Without other people to interact and grow with, as Nussbaum (1999, 2000) explores with the

capability of affiliation, capability growth becomes very difficult. The problem of membership is one that must be overcome in order for these organizations to continue work within their community.

The next barrier to capability growth that emerged from the data was overworking, paired with underfunding. This subject was discussed as almost a given by many of the participants, including Roxanne: “and then as I got working here all I do is work. So I work [*laughter*]... I work here so this is my life.” This overworking was also connected to the constant need to get and maintain funding. The fact that these women are highlighting being overworked as a major component of their involvement is worrisome. If the women involved in these communities burn out due to overwork (which, itself, is exacerbated by underfunding), then the future capability growth of the community will be severely impacted.

Mae, who aids other organizations in grant writing, described this need: “a lot of these organizations are writing them off the side of their desks along with 10 other jobs.” Spending the already limited time that participants seem to have on finding funding for the organizations they are in hinders development and capability growth. Both the issues of overworking and underfunding are related to the longevity of development that, although beyond the scope of this research, is an essential component of continued capability growth.

### **Thematic Analysis**

Thematic analysis was integrated into this research during the editing process in order to more fully explore the areas of the data that the committee and I felt were not highlighted with the previous methods. To this end, the thematic analysis was carried out on all of the data but,

due to a large amount of overlap with previous sections, this analysis will focus on capability growth. While specific capabilities have been touched on throughout the data analysis thus far, here I will look at how a few of Nussbaum's (1999, 2000) capabilities presented within the interviews. The capabilities discussed here are presented separately but there is much overlap between them in terms of their development in and impact on participants' lives. These specific capabilities were chosen because they were the most evident within the data and best highlight what interviewees are getting from their participation. The capabilities that will be discussed here are: Affiliation; Practical reason; Senses, imagination, and thought; and Emotions. Throughout this discussion of capabilities I will also explore how functions present in the data.

### ***Affiliation***

Nussbaum (1999; 2000) describes the capability of affiliation as having a respectful, uplifting community surrounding a person. Nussbaum (1999) highlighted affiliation and practical reason as capabilities of particular importance, "since they both organize and suffuse all the others, making their pursuit truly human" (p. 236). As is evident in the interviews, participants also count their connections with others, particularly women, as central to their experiences in their respective organizations.

Mabel displayed this focus on connection through what she saw as the most valuable parts of her participation: "the most important thing is the friendships but education runs a second, a close second." Nicole spoke about the people she has met due to her participation; "I've gained lots of friendships, and met women from all over BC now." Later on, she expanded

on the importance of meeting these people: “Just the camaraderie of the women, the friendships, I don’t know, I think that means a lot.”

Developing connections to other community members has also helped participants to expand their capabilities in other ways. As Lillian describes, “The ladies are very supportive, I get pushed myself to do stuff I wouldn’t normally do.” Or as Mae believes,

Because really there’s far and few things that I’ve participated in my life that I haven’t learned something. It might not be earthshattering things, but you always just from today meeting you, I’ve met you, now you’re part of my life, you’re asking me to broaden my thoughts, that’s the thing.

Mae and Lillian’s participation in their organizations has helped them to make connections with others. Because of this, they are able to use the development of their capability of affiliation to perform different functions in their lives. Lillian learns new skills and has developed confidence in areas that she may not have explored otherwise. Mae, in the example she used above, has her thoughts broadened even from our short interaction. She, as a personal philosophy, chooses to take capabilities like affiliation and convert them into a positive function in her life.

A focus on building relationship was also displayed in the organizations that operate as community service providers. Roxanne described how important it was to take time with clients in order to build relationship:

when someone comes from our door, which we had 5 minutes before you arrived, looking for help for housing, which is not our expertise, rather than gesturing them out the door, we give them a cup of tea and sit down, and we’ll make the phone call with

them, make sure they get to the right place, rather than just handing them a slip of paper and saying good luck. That is partly because we've built those relationships in the background.

This relationship building helps to ensure that clients will feel safe when asking for help and to improve the relationship between the organization and the community. This safety allows for the best environment for capability growth and encourages a positive conversion of those capabilities into functions. As Karen said about her clients,

nothing, nothing, nothing makes me happier in the world than when someone I'm working with says, "I think I'm struggling less." That is just, when someone has struggled for a long time, and they're just like "I feel better," "I just haven't had this anxiety for a long time," or "I'm able to have a relationship." It's just so special and it's free.

The clients that Karen is describing here have been able to take the skills they have learned due to their interaction with Karen and convert them into a more stable emotional state.

Next, developing the capability of affiliation in participants led to their increased compassion for and awareness of the people of their communities. As Trisha explains below, her feelings towards disadvantaged members of her community became much more understanding due to her participation in her organization.

I think, as I like yeah, aged through here, I have a more open attitude to people. Y'know to their financial plights really. You see such huge difference in status, and I think younger, my attitude would have been "well why can't you work, what's wrong with

you?” As opposed to “really? What’s happening in your life that you’re at this stage?” I think I can question things a little bit more. And look at it with different eyes. And with different viewpoints.

Kim also connected affiliation to increased understanding and compassion,

I have learned to, when you support people you support them without judgement, without criticizing and without giving advice. You know, you love, love them and you listen to their story and if you have a suggestion where they could go for help you could possibly make that. Like I, that’s new to me because I’ve always been judged my entire life and so I did it too because that’s all I knew but it’s not a very nice way to live.

Marge correlated her increased awareness of the issues in her community with a desire to become more active in her organization and others like it: “Well, I think I’ve just become more aware of what’s going on. And then, of course, naturally get involved.” These descriptions of increased empathy and awareness highlight how developing capabilities can lead to conversions into so many different functions, such as participation in community activities, and a more understanding approach to others. These interviewees show that their increased affiliation with other organizational participants, both on a client and member basis, has encouraged them to become more aware of what is going on in their community and more motivated to help.

### ***Practical Reason; and Senses, Imagination, and Thought***

These two capabilities centre on a person’s ability to use their mental faculties to make decisions about their life. Practical reason focuses on, “Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one’s life (which entails protection

for the liberty of conscience)” (Nussbaum 1999, p. 235). Senses, imagination, and thought cover a person’s ability to use those faculties to express themselves in areas like religion, literacy, art, etc. (Nussbaum 1999). Both of these capabilities were expressed throughout the participants’ discussion of their roles and activities within their respective organizations. They will be discussed together here due to the overlap in how they presented throughout the interviews.

Both of these capabilities were present in women’s reasons for becoming and/or staying involved in their organizations. Mae spoke about the struggle she went through after retirement,

I lasted about six months, probably about three months after I got back, but I was off about eight months when it started getting really bad that I realized that I was starting to get in trouble being at home. I’m not a homebody per se. I was when my kids were little but not now, that’s not something I want for my life so I started thinking well I have two choices. One day I thought, “Well I’ll shoot myself or I’ll find a job.” So then I started doing the preparation for getting, you know, getting all the resumés and all that done.

As she outlined, Mae’s career (in several different social service and development-focused organizations) is a major factor in the satisfaction she finds in her life. This, along with her involvement in a variety of organizations as a volunteer, shows how enriching participation in development can be in women’s lives. This conversion of Mae’s practical reason, senses, imagination, and thoughts into a passion for community work once again displays how effective participation in CDOs and other small organizations can be for improving the capabilities of both participants and the community around them. Mae has developed countless capabilities in herself and others throughout her career.

Other interviewees described the satisfaction they find in their participation. Katrina highlighted this satisfaction in the context of her clients: “Yeah like I said I love being that support person and being that person who can advocate for other people or with other people.” Marge, on the other hand, displayed this satisfaction in her work with other participants: “Well, I like working with other people, and I like um, having a goal and now when we achieve the goal it’s rewarding.” The use of these women’s skills, creativity, and intelligence to meet the goals of their organization and help their community develops these capabilities in their lives. This development then allows them to convert those increased capabilities into functions in order to better their own lives and those of other people in their communities.

Another factor of participation that impacted these two capabilities is skills development. Participants spoke about many different skills that they gained due to their involvement. The organization in which Lillian is involved helps participants to develop several life skills for enjoyment and practicality: “I don’t know, they encourage me to have a garden, they were having a jewel making workshop, okay fine I’m going to go there, we had a painting [the CDO], had a painting, paint-a-thon, or whatever it was.” These skills fall under the capability of senses, imagination and thought. Through learning and using skills like quilting, painting, and jewel making, these women are expanding their creativity and using their skills, as Nussbaum (1999) says, in a “truly human” way. That is to say they are taking skills they have gained to express themselves and to create pleasurable experiences in their lives (Nussbaum 1999).



## *Emotions*

The capability of emotions describes one's ability to experience the full range of human emotion without fear or anxiety. It requires that the types of experiences that support the human connection to emotional development be fostered (Nussbaum 1999). Emotion, as a capability, is present throughout the interviews. As discussed in the earlier sections of this analysis, interviewees felt pride in their work, sympathy for people in their community, camaraderie with their peers, and confidence in their own abilities. Here I will explore a few of those emotions in order to understand how this capability is impacted due to participation.

Participants displayed an increased confidence in their own abilities. Kim, for example, described how her experience as a client of her organization impacted her confidence,

I have come out of my shell. If you would have asked me to do this four years ago I wouldn't have been here. So it just builds your confidence. It's a wonderful feeling to actually be able to contribute something.

Other participants, like Nicole, noted the growth of confidence among other participants in their organization, "Once we did a workshop which was kind of fun, just seeing women you know they're, maybe how starting off kind of unconfident, how it just opens up their confidence." Kim also highlighted the changes she saw in other participants:

I was like the old lady of the group and all these young women and it was amazing to see their strength at the age they are at. Like they've come a long ways from what they've endured as well. So it's very encouraging.

This focus on other participants also ties back into the capability of affiliation. The collective nature of many of these organizations necessitates teamwork and connection to others. This was a point of pride for several interviewees, who spoke with satisfaction about the success they have perceived in those who have become involved with their organizations.

The pride that several of the participants displayed in their work reflects both the increased confidence discussed above, and the satisfaction discussed within the capability of senses, imagination, and thought. As Mae explains here, the growth of participants brings a great amount of joy and pride into her life:

When I taught, I designed a program here with the [organization], I taught it for 6 years, for employment for youth that have reading disabilities, alcohol, drugs, coming out of jail, so they were in my class. I had 15 for 3 months and I moved them forward and, Jenny, you have no idea of the glory that I have when they phone me and say, “will you come to my graduation?” and I’ve had 11 of them in the time. So, you know what, it’s a huge accomplishment. And the other ones, they’re just happy and they’re married and they got a job.

Roxanne described her pride in the work of the other members of her organization, and her own facilitation of that work: “But here one of the things I’m proud of is leaving staff to do their best so they can take credit for their projects.” Besides “leaving staff to do their best,” Roxanne also facilitates training for those staff to ensure they have the capabilities to succeed in their work.

The capabilities that emerged from the thematic analysis have been extremely helpful in understanding how participation in a community organization can help to improve the

capabilities of women in the North. The capability of affiliation was shown in how improved connection to others, particularly other women, is valuable to participants. Next, the capabilities of practical reason and senses, imagination, and thought highlighted the growth of participants in terms of their creativity, skills, and problem-solving abilities. Lastly, the capability of emotion was developed through participation in the increasing confidence of interviewees.

In order to contextualize the findings explained above, I will explore them as answers to the original question of this research: How does participating in CDOs in northern British Columbia affect the capabilities of women?

Throughout the process of gathering data for this research, the positive impact of participation in CDOs on capabilities became increasingly clear to me. Participants spoke about growth in terms of both specific skills and general attitudes and abilities. In terms of skills, participants identified things like proposal writing, advocacy, and team leading as well as skills not directly related to development such as knitting. Here, I will assess a few of the capabilities present throughout the interview data. While some of these were directly addressed in the thematic analysis, the others are drawn from the initial rounds of analysis.

**Bodily Health.** This capability is one of the most directly addressed within participation in CDOs. Interviewees' participation is often initially driven by either a felt health need within themselves or a perceived health need within their community. Discussing services ranging from health centres to sexual assault response teams, interviewees highlighted how they are directly involved in increasing access, both for themselves and their community, to essential services.

Secondly, participation in CDOs also increases one's awareness of the services available in the community. Several participants spoke about services that helped them in a time of need that they would not have been aware of without their participation. This, combined with creating more services, such as the sexual assault response team or educational scholarships discussed by Karen and Marge, has a positive impact on the capability of bodily health for participants and other members of their communities.

Finally, the bodily health of the participants themselves can be directly affected through their participation. For example, Kim's participation led her to leave a dangerous living situation for her own safety. Additionally, several of the interviewees provide help to others who are trying to leave situations similar to Kim's. This direct impact, along with the creation of more services, illustrates how women's participation in CDOs can positively impact their own bodily health and that of their community.

**Affiliation.** The first way that the capability of affiliation is impacted through participation is through creating connections among participants. In a rural, remote location, the value of forging close friendships cannot be overstated. As highlighted in the discussion of women throughout the interviews, friendship and social connection are a major motivator for participation.

Next, this capability is expressed in the compassion for others that has motivated many of the participants to become, and stay, involved in development. This was also expressed through the focus on women as a motivation for involvement. Finally, the capability of affiliation can be found in an increased feeling of respect from the community for participants. This respect can be

found in the trusting relationship between the community and the organizations in which interviewees participate. This capability was also shown to be converted into several functions such as increased involvement, greater compassion for others, and changed worldviews.

**Practical Reason.** The capability of practical reason was evident throughout the data. Its development was clear in the use of skills and problem solving that interviewees described. Participants spoke about the development of skills like communication, technological understanding, training, and so on. These skills, which require problem-solving and reason to utilize, show how interviewees have developed their practical reason through their participation in CDOs. This increased practical reason was also shown to be converted into a variety of functions. For example, Joan's development of computer skills due to her employment at her organization led her to teach computer literacy to several different groups of community members. Through her increased practical reason, Joan was able to perform a function that had a positive impact on the capabilities of others.

**Senses, Imagination and Thought.** The capability of senses, imagination, and thought was found in the data in the participants' expression of their own stories. This capability covers one's ability to use reason and imagination to express oneself and affect one's life. Tangibly, it has been expressed in the data through the various creative skills participants gained through their participation. Workshops on things like knitting, or computer literacy, or career-specific training all aid in the expression of imagination and reason in participants' lives. Skills like public speaking, creativity, communication, and leadership, while not formally taught, are also vital to this capability and were expressed throughout the interviews.

**Control Over One's Environment.** The capability of control over one's environment covers both political involvement and material control. The political component of this capability was evident in women's discussion of their involvement in activism and advocacy. Participants described political activity such as a very persistent (and effective) letter writing campaign to protect community services, advocacy for survivors of assault, rallies, and marches. Additionally, the place of the organizations within the community, as service providers, helps to develop this capability within participants (for example, the connections with other groups formed through joint action). Next, the material component of this capability covers personal property and employment. Several participants, such as Roxanne and Mae, talked about how increased skills led to employment or career opportunities for them.

**Emotions.** The development of this capability is a common thread throughout the interviews. Participants spoke with passion, joy, and pride about their work with various organizations. These feelings were particularly evident when discussing the people whose lives have been changed for the better due to their efforts. These feelings are a direct motivator for participation for many of the interviewees. This motivation highlights how important the emotional aspect of participation is to its continuation.

All of the capabilities discussed here show the impacts of participation in CDOs on women's capabilities in northern BC. The growth of these capabilities highlights what an invaluable tool for development women's participation in CDOs can be for northern communities. Therefore, throughout the final chapter, I will discuss how and why more policy and research should be focused on such groups and the women who participate in them.

## **Chapter 5-Discussion**

### **Summary of Findings**

#### ***Overview of the Research***

This research focuses on the experiences of women involved in small development organizations in northern British Columbia. It endeavoured to answer the following question and objectives.

How does participating in CDOs in northern British Columbia affect the capabilities of women?

Objectives.

- i. Describe the experience of women working in community-based development in northern British Columbia
- ii. Analyze these experiences in relation to capability growth
- iii. Contribute to the literature on rural CDOs globally.

This question and objectives were addressed in a data collection consisting of participant observation, electronic surveys, and interviews. The participant observation took place throughout my employment within Northern FIRE, which also helped me to advertise for the electronic surveys and interviews. The interviews (12) were conducted between July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2019 and August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019, in Prince George (5), Quesnel (1), Terrace (3), and Smithers (3).

The methods and analysis of this research were informed mainly by the Capabilities Approach and Participatory Development, and secondarily, by Feminist and Indigenous methodologies. The data were analyzed using constant comparison analysis, word count method, keywords in context, and thematic analysis. The various components of this research have

worked together to highlight how women view their participation, how that participation affects their lives, and, in turn, how it affects their capabilities.

### ***Summary of Findings***

The initial findings of this research centre around three themes: Life in the North, Participation, and Capability Growth. The findings from the thematic analysis will be summarized separately below.

**Life in the North.** This theme explored the experience of participants in regards to living in northern BC. Most women pointed out both positives and negatives in this area. Participants discussed the strong sense of community, and connection that they feel in a smaller town. They also highlighted the ability of their community to come together to pursue a goal as a positive component of northern life. However, this same closeness of community was also discussed as a difficulty, especially as it pertains to interpersonal difficulties, as well as acceptance of change. Finally, women, particularly those who participate in development in a professional capacity, also point to a lack of comprehensive services as a major issue.

**Participation.** This theme encompassed the different aspects of women's participation in their respective organizations. Of particular interest were the motivations for participation cited by participants. Both the ideals of helping women in their community and finding a community through their participation were explored as motivation for participants. Next, the frustration and difficulties of the interviewees were addressed. While a few of the interviewees brought up regular interpersonal difficulties, more of the concerns were focused on lack of community involvement and funding. Finally, what participation actually looks like in the lives of the



participants was addressed. About half of the research participants are professionally engaged with their organizations, while the other half are involved as volunteers. They engage in a variety of activities and roles within their organizations, ranging from trauma counsellor, to computer service director, to a volunteer board member, amongst others.

**Capability Growth.** This final theme focuses on the concept of capability growth, which is central to this research. Participants talked about different skills that they have gained due to their participation. Interviewees highlighted their new abilities, gained through both designated training and more informally throughout their time with the organizations, as beneficial to their continued involvement in development. The conversion of those capabilities into functions was also evident throughout the data.

**Thematic Analysis.** The thematic analysis of the data was conducted separately from the other methods of analysis in order to more fully explore capability growth as a theme. This method of analysis illuminated four capabilities that were particularly interesting within this section of data: Affiliation; Practical reason; Senses, imagination, and thought; and Emotions. These four capabilities, and how they are converted into functions, were highlighted throughout the interviews.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The study was limited by several factors. First, the importance of maintaining a limited scope for the project necessitated that certain avenues (colonialism, resource industry, sustainability, etc.) of analyzing and understanding women's experiences in northern BC had to be excluded.

The limitations associated with funding, distance, and learning on the job had a marked effect on this project. Given limited funding and the remote nature of many communities in northern BC, it became necessary to focus research on communities that I could access. Although the electronic survey overcame this difficulty somewhat, responses were limited (6). I did not pursue more responses past this because, based on the survey responses already gathered, I was confident in my interview questions as they were. Additionally, the phrasing and short-answer format of the survey did not allow for the same level of detail as the interviews. For these reasons, I chose to focus on the interviews and their results. While the interview data were extremely rich, my own inexperience in research led to certain tasks' taking more time than they may have in the hands of another researcher. For that reason, it was important to limit the scope and volume of the data so that what data there were could be given proper attention. Finally, the initial methods of analysis chosen for this study did not produce results as rich as the supervisory committee and I would have liked. An attempt was made to quantify the results somewhat with the word count analysis. However, this ended up limiting the connections to be drawn between participation and capabilities. While a quantitative analysis of capability growth in this situation could be interesting in terms of results, it would limit the exploration of participants' individual experiences in development. As this research is focused on women's own view of their experiences, participation, and capability growth it became necessary to analyze the data with a more traditional qualitative approach. For this reason, a thematic analysis was carried out separately from the initial methods of analysis.

## **Significance of the Study**

This research examined the impact of participation in community development organizations on women's capabilities in northern British Columbia. Through the gathering of data from women who identified themselves as involved in development, this research answered its question, met its objectives, and contributed to literature in several areas. First, it contributed to the more general knowledge of women in northern British Columbia. Women have been historically excluded from the studies of this region, which largely focus on the resource-extraction industry. This research contributes first-hand descriptions of how women view their lives in northern BC and, through those accounts, adds to the literature in this area. Secondly, this study adds to the literature on women's participation in community development organizations. The examples of women's participation in community development organizations that were explored in the literature review were extremely beneficial to this research. However, there is little research about similar organizations, and the women who participate in them, located in northern BC or even northern Canada. This study highlights the experiences of the participants within their respective organizations and, through this, adds significantly to the literature on the subject. Finally, this research examines the impact of women's participation in CDOs in northern BC on their capabilities. Understanding how participation affects women's capabilities highlights what organizations are doing right and what they can expand upon. The findings of this study and its contribution to literature underscore the importance of women's participation in CDOs. With this importance in mind, I will outline several recommendations for both policy and future research.

## **Recommendations**

The first recommendation for governmental bodies concerning this research is to increase the amount of support, both monetary and otherwise, for small community organizations across the province, particularly in rural, northern regions. As was cited by participants, funding is a major barrier to aiding their community more fully. An increase in financial support for these organizations, which are attuned to the unique needs of their community, would create exponential change for women across the region. In the results of this research, it is evident that there is a lack of encompassing and specialized services for women in the North. As highlighted by interviewees like Katrina, the smaller communities really only have a small handful of organizations that serve a wide variety of needs. Additionally, as Mae explained, a lot of small organizations are writing applications for funding on top of all their other work. This adds stress and takes away valuable time from the organization's goals. Mae's job at the time of the interviews was to help organizations with the grant writing process both in terms of what to apply for and how to create a successful application. Having more people like Mae would be a great first step in making funding easier to access. Next, I recommend long-term funding initiatives for community organizations so that they are able to spend less time scrambling for funding and more time serving their community.

Another area of necessary support is learning resources for northern communities. There are several resources available in BC for women looking for training in leadership, ending violence, employment services etc. However the vast majority of these resources are located in Vancouver or the south of the province (Work BC: Women n.d.). Online services are an

excellent resource, and organizations like the Ending Violence Association of BC have resources available online as well as in-person training in women's safety practices. However, I recommend a more regionally focused training that applies more directly to the resources available in the communities of northern BC.

Second, it is necessary to formally legitimize the expertise of the women involved in these organizations. As is evidenced by this research, these groups, and the women who run them, are privy to aspects of the community that an outside body may not be. Therefore, it is vital that governing bodies uplift the voices and experiences of these women throughout the decision-making process in governmental policy development. This would help ensure needs-based policy creation for development in northern BC. This could be done through a formalized, governmental board representing the interests of women participating in development organizations at the different levels of government. Of particular note to this research, a regional board representing women's organizations could be extremely beneficial to northern BC. As previously mentioned, the bulk of resources available to women are located in the south of the province. This board would help the organizations providing resources for women in the north have more voice at a political level and more collaboration amongst themselves.

I also recommend focused investment into research on CDOs both regionally and globally, particularly those that are remotely and rurally located. Increased study of how these organizations can address the felt needs of communities and create compounding development in their communities is central to increased financial support for these groups. Finally, it is, once again, essential that the experiences and voices of the women who are carrying out development

in their communities are leading this research. These women are the ones who understand their communities and are already working to improve them. Therefore, in order for further research to be effective, these women must be central throughout the process.

### ***Recommendations for Future Research***

**Research into the different forms of women's community-based organizations in northern BC.** Throughout this study, the diverse range of organizations serving women and their communities across northern BC struck me. I believe a survey of these organizations, including less formal groups and groups generally classified as social clubs, could reveal a lot about what the needs of women, and their communities, in the region really are. There should be a focus on the differences, both in nature and number, found between the organization's original mandate and the actual roles they play in the community. Highlighting that discrepancy could help to show what supplementary resources the organizations and communities need.

**Burnout in community development.** I found, throughout the participant observation, survey, and interviews of this research, that many women were involved in several different groups. Additionally, those women seemed to be (willingly) nearly run off their feet due to that involvement. I would be very interested in a study that examined the motivations of such women and the effects their involvement has on their personal and professional lives. I believe such a study, with the aim of understanding and reducing burnout, could be very beneficial for women in development.

**Generational development.** Lastly, a study of how development moves from generation to generation through small development organizations would be beneficial. Many of the women

involved in this research expressed concern about a lack of younger members in their organizations. Due to limitations of time and finances, this research could not address intergenerational interaction in development. I believe a comprehensive study of how the ideals of development are passed from generation to generation through small organizations could shed light on this interaction. It would also help to explain how we could ensure that development continues to expand beyond a single generation.

Throughout the process of this research I have been reminded again and again of the incredible things that the efforts of a small group of women can do for a community. These efforts, particularly in rural, remote communities, are vital for the wellbeing and capabilities of women in northern BC. Governing bodies must make the active decision to celebrate the valuable work of those women participating in CDOs across the region through adequate funding and support.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A- Electronic Survey

A Culture of Change: The impact of participation in small-scale, woman-centred development organizations on women's capabilities in Northern British Columbia

#1

COMPLETE

Collector: Web Link 1 (Web Link)  
Started: Thursday, May 09, 2019 2:29:30 PM  
Last Modified: Thursday, May 09, 2019 2:30:23 PM  
Time Spent: 00:00:53

Page 1: Please read the following information carefully.

**Q1 CONSENT:** Please select your choice below. Clicking **Agree** on the "agree" button below indicates that: You have read the above information, you voluntarily agree to participate and you are at least 18 years of age. If you do not wish to participate in the research study, please decline participation by clicking on the "disagree" button.

Page 2: Please answer the following questions to the best of your abilities

**Q2 Your Name:** Respondent skipped this question

**Q3 Your Community of Residence:** Respondent skipped this question

**Q4 Name(s) of Organization(s) you are involved with** Respondent skipped this question

**Q5 How long have you been involved with the organization(s)?** Respondent skipped this question

Page 3: Please indicate to what level you agree or disagree with the following statements.

**Q6 Women living in smaller, Northern communities face difficulties not felt in larger urban centers** Respondent skipped this question

**Q7 I feel that my work in this organization is focused on needs relevant to my community.** Respondent skipped this question

**Q8 I feel involved in the organization (projects, decision-making etc.)** Respondent skipped this question

**Q9 My participation in this organization has given me new skills.** Respondent skipped this question

**A Culture of Change: The impact of participation in small-scale, woman-centred development organizations on women's capabilities in Northern British Columbia**

<b>Q10</b> I feel more able to address my own needs after being involved in this organization.	Respondent skipped this question
--	----------------------------------

<b>Q11</b> I feel more able to address my community's needs after being involved in this organization.	Respondent skipped this question
--	----------------------------------

<b>Q12</b> I plan on being involved in future development projects/organizations.	Respondent skipped this question
---	----------------------------------

<b>Q13</b> Being involved in this organization has improved my life.	Respondent skipped this question
--	----------------------------------

<b>Q14</b> Being involved in this organization has improved the lives of women in my community.	Respondent skipped this question
---	----------------------------------

<b>Q15</b> I feel more respected within my community due to my participation in this group.	Respondent skipped this question
---	----------------------------------

<b>Q16</b> I feel a part of a community as a result of my participation in this organization.	Respondent skipped this question
---	----------------------------------

Page 4: Please answer the following questions to the best of your abilities

<b>Q17</b> Why did you become involved with this organization?	Respondent skipped this question
--	----------------------------------

<b>Q18</b> Please summarize the organization's work/goals:	Respondent skipped this question
--	----------------------------------

<b>Q19</b> What does your participation in this organization look like? What are your specific roles in the group? How much time do you spend on organization activities per month?	Respondent skipped this question
---	----------------------------------

<b>Q20</b> How has participation in this and/or other women's organizations affected you? Has your life changed? If so, explain.	Respondent skipped this question
--	----------------------------------

<b>Q21</b> Do you feel you've gained any skills from your participation in this group? If so, what?	Respondent skipped this question
---	----------------------------------

<b>Q22</b> Do you see yourself continuing your involvement with the organization(s)? Why or why not?	Respondent skipped this question
--	----------------------------------

## Appendix B- Interview Questions

1. The North
  - a. Name, Occupation, How long have you lived in (Town)?
    - Tell me about some of the things you like about living in the North. What do you find challenging about it?
    - How do you feel your experience differs from someone living in the South or a larger city?
2. Participation
  - a. When did you decide to become involved with this organization? Can you describe what you do with this group?
    - What motivated you? Why then and not another time? Why this issue and not another?
    - How long have you been involved with this organization?
    - What role do you play in the organization? What projects have you been involved in?
  - b. Thinking about your participation in this group, how do you feel life has changed for women in your community?
    - What tangible things have changed?
    - Has there been a social change for you and other women in this group? If so, what?
    - Has your view of your community changed? How?
3. Sustainability and Capabilities
  - a. Do you feel you've gained anything due to your participation? Have you lost anything?
    - Do you feel you've gained any skills from your participation in this group? If so, what?
    - What do you like about being involved with this organization? What are some things you find challenging about it?
    - What is the most important thing this group has done for you?
  - b. Do you see yourself continuing your involvement with this group? Why or why not?
    - Have you recruited anyone else to join?
    - Have you become more or less involved over time? Why?
    - What do you think people should know about your involvement in this group?

### Appendix C- Word Count Results- All Documents

Rank	Word	Frequency	Documents
1	Women/ women's/woman	181	12
2	Work/ working	175	12
3	Community	78	10
4	Program/ programs	62	11
5	Feel	55	11
6	Need	48	12
7	Organization/ organizations	48	10
8	Group	46	9
9	Help	44	12
10	Involved	39	11
11	Support	36	9
12	Learned/ learning	35	10
13	Institute	27	3
14	Training	27	4
15	Family	25	5

## Appendix D Consent Form



### Interview Information Letter / Consent Form

**A Culture of Change:** The impact of participation in small-scale, woman-centred development organizations on women's capabilities in Northern British Columbia

**Project Lead:** *Jenny Mwendu Lind*  
*MA Candidate International Studies (Development)*  
University of Northern British Columbia  
Prince George, BC V2N 4Z9  
*jlind@unbc.ca*

**Project Supervisor:** *Dr. Jacqueline Holler*  
*holler@unbc.ca*

#### **Purpose of Project**

The study is attempting to understand the unique experiences of women involved in community-based organizations in order to add to the understanding of women and development in Northern BC and influence policy-makers. You are being asked to participate in the study because of your involvement in such organizations. Participation and consent are entirely voluntary and can be withdrawn at any time.

#### **What will happen during the project?**

If you say yes you will participate in a semi-structured interview (approximately one hour) about your participation with the organization to gain insight into your feelings on the topic and/or will be observed doing your work with the organization. With your consent, the interview will be recorded for transcription purposes.

#### **Is there any way this project could harm you?**

We do not anticipate that any part of the study will risk harming or upsetting you. That being said, the following concerns may arise. Here are the ways we can mitigate these possible issues:

##### **i. Emotional Distress**

You will be free to not answer any question or to terminate your involvement and consent at any point during the research should you feel upset or uncomfortable. Counselling resources are listed at the end of this information sheet.

##### **ii. Interpersonal relations**

Due to the social nature of development work, certain tensions may be addressed within the course of our discussion. Any issues of an interpersonal nature will be only be discussed with explicit

consent and no personal details will be published. However, if you feel that your involvement puts you in a difficult position then you are free to refuse or withdraw consent at any point.

**Will you benefit from this study?**

While we do not claim that you may be directly affected by the study, we believe that the contribution to development knowledge will benefit organizations like the one you are involved in. The study aims to increase our understanding of women and development organizations in Northern BC in the following ways:

- (1) Through the interview itself, which implies that women and WCDOS are significant voices in northern communities and northern development, which has too seldom been the case;
- (2) By contributing to research and knowledge about women and their organizations in Northern British Columbia. There is a relatively small amount of research on women's organizations in Northern BC. Thus, this research will be helping to fill a gap in collective knowledge; and
- (3) Potentially, by using the findings of this research to improve the experiences and capacity of WCDO members in Northern BC. To achieve this the research results will be shared with both participants and through the Women North Network for women who involved in development to read

**How will your identity and information be protected?**

For transcript purposes only, interviews will be recorded (audio). The audio and transcripts will be stored as password encrypted files on a personal computer and an external hard drive with passwords known only to the researchers. Audio will be kept for a period of six months after the thesis defence at which point the hard drive will be destroyed. Once interviews are transcribed they will be sent to you for review using a secure link for download and transfer. At that time you may make any changes or omissions you feel necessary and return it to the researchers. Your name and information will not be included in the transcripts or final research unless you explicitly ask to be identified.

**Will you be paid for your time?**

We will not be offering any financial or in-kind compensation for participating in this study.

**Study results**

The results of this study will be presented in a graduate thesis and may be published at a later date. If you wish to receive the results of this study, they will be distributed to organization leaders and published on the Women North Network and Northern FIRE websites. Individual participants may receive a copy by accessing either of these sites or by request from [jlind@unbc.ca](mailto:jlind@unbc.ca).

**Questions or Concerns about the Project**

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Project Lead or project supervisor whose details are available at the beginning of this form.

If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, contact the UNBC Office of Research at 250-960-6735 or by e-mail at [reb@unbc.ca](mailto:reb@unbc.ca).

**Counselling Resources**

If anything in this process brings up trauma or emotional distress for you, please contact your local counselling service:

Fort Nelson: 5315 Liard St, Fort Nelson, BC V0C 1R0  
250-774-8105

Burns Lake: 741 Centre Street, Burns Lake, BC V0J 1E0  
250-692-2412

Terrace: 3412 Kalum St., Terrace, BC V8G 0G5  
250-631-4202

Fort St. James: 140 Stuart Drive West, Fort St. James, BC V0J 1P0  
250-996-8411

Haida Gwaii: Crisis Centre Help Line  
1-866-872-0113

Prince George: Northern Community Counselling Centre Society  
1811 Victoria St #206, Prince George, BC V2L 2L6  
250 562 4140  
[counsellingccc@gmail.com](mailto:counsellingccc@gmail.com)

**Participant Consent and Withdrawal**

Your involvement in this study is entirely voluntary and, as such, you may halt the process at any time. If at any time after the study you wish to withdraw your consent, please contact the researcher and/or the project supervisor and all of your information will be removed from the study.

**CONSENT**

I consent to be (please indicate by checking the initialling box):

- ☐ Interviewed
- ☐ Observed

I have read or been read the information presented in the information letter about the project:

YES

NO

I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my participation in this project and to receive additional details I requested.

YES

NO

I understand that if I agree to participate in this project, I may withdraw from the project at any time up until the report completion, with no consequences of any kind. I have been given a copy of this form.



YES NO

I agree to be recorded.

YES NO

I agree that my name can be used.

YES NO

Follow-up information (e.g. transcription) can be sent to me at the following e-mail or mailing address:

YES NO

Signature (**or note of verbal consent**):

---

Name of Participant (Printed):

---

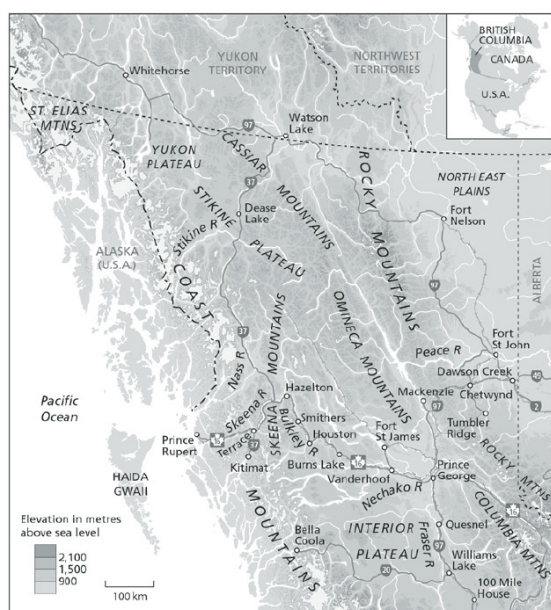
Date:

---

## Appendix E- Maps of northern British Columbia



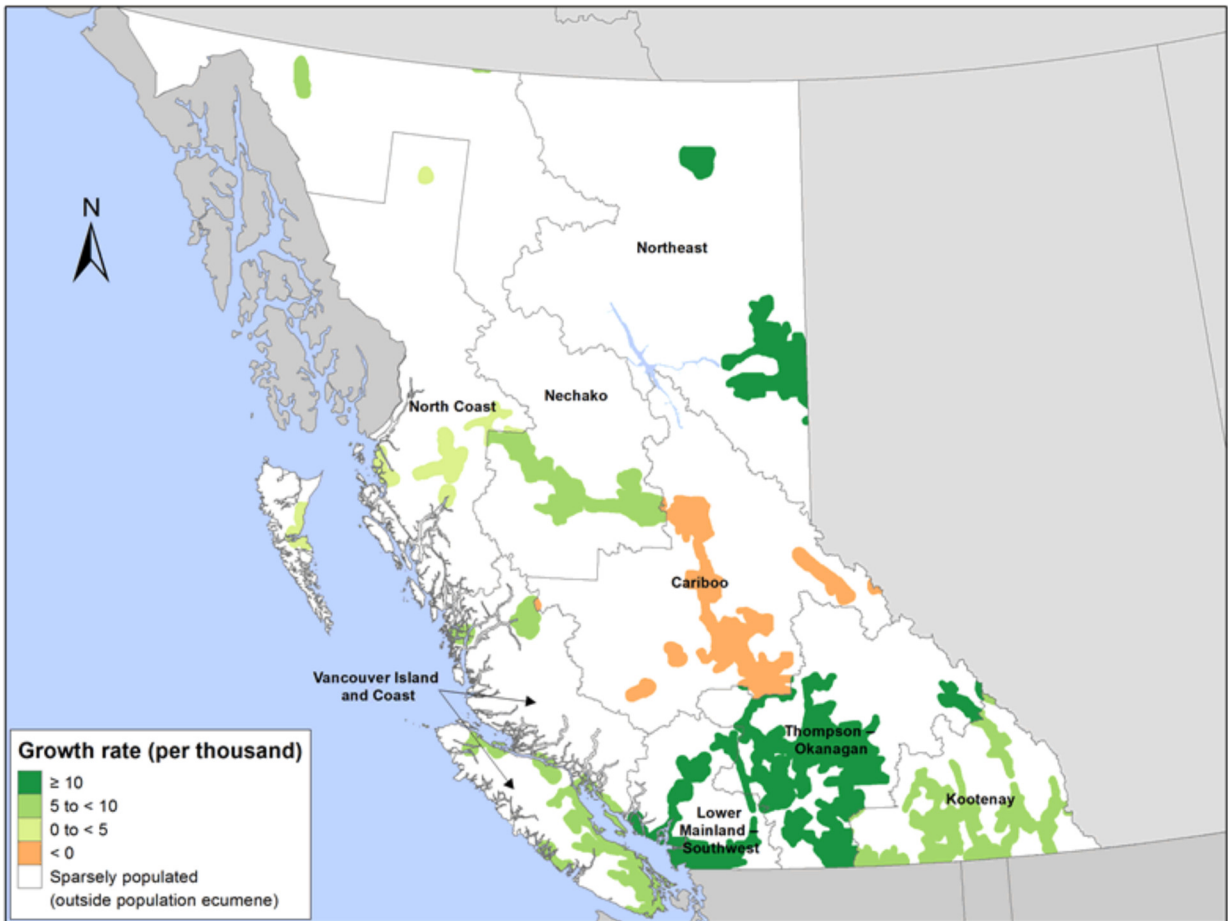
(Northern British Columbia | Super, Natural BC. (n.d.).)



(Young 2015a p. 42)

Map 2.5

Population growth rates between July 1, 2013 and June 30, 2014 by economic region (ER), British Columbia



Source: Statistics Canada, Demography Division

(Statistics Canada 2015)