

research snapshot

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Telling Secrets: The Impact of Audience on Knowledge Mobilization

What is this research about?

This research raises questions regarding the implications and challenges of sharing knowledge with diverse audiences in two on-going research projects: 1) a northern Quebec First Nation community involved in iron-ore mining amongst other activities and 2) a rural Ontario community involved in nuclear research and waste management. In the context of these two projects, the researchers focused on sharing knowledge with three audience groups: community, industry, and academy. The community audience refers to the people who have their primary residences and families there, who work or go out to work on some regular basis, and who generally participate in civic concerns as members of that group within a defined geographical area. The industry audience refers to the company or corporation that is the economic driver drawing on resources of the local geographic area. It includes members of the community who work for the company or corporation as well as people who do not reside directly in the community, such as CEOs, Boards of Directors, investors, and a host of other interested and controlling parties from government regulators and policy makers to consultants and stock market analysts. The academy audience refers to the university. The researchers raise the question of how audiences should/do inform and shape the findings of research completed by public scholars. The community, industry, and academic audiences have diverse knowledge wants and needs. Consequently, to make information sharing meaningful for all groups,

What you need to know:

A general understanding of audience as consisting of diverse groups including community, industry, and academy is needed to engage with this work. The researchers will provide an overview of their research projects and then proceed to discuss questions on information sharing related to their work.

different approaches will be needed. The researchers ask: What are their responsibilities for sharing information with these diverse audiences?

What did the researchers do?

Within the context of the two ongoing research projects (see above section), the researchers are exploring the question of sharing information with community, industry, and academic audiences. The first project involves working with the Naskapi Nation of Kawachikamach, non-Naskapi teachers, and the mining industry to develop relevant and meaningful school curriculum focused on environmental sustainability, mining, and community well-being. The Naskapi Nation holds a significant interest in the nearby New Millennium iron mine, which employs many Naskapi people. A major strength of this community is the strong presence of the Naskapi language. The community is 95.6% fluent and English is a second language for many community members. In the past, mining companies have not had reciprocal relationships with this community. With regard to the curriculum project, New Millennium has

provided some initial funding and researchers have shared progress reports with the company (after being approved by the school and community-based advisory committee). At this point, there has been no interference from the mining company with any of the directions the researchers are taking.

The second project investigates the ways three generations of one family of nuclear workers experience and negotiate living nearby and working at a nuclear research and development facility. For over 60 years, Chalk River Laboratories (CRL) has been the main source of employment for local communities, offering steady work, comprehensive health benefits and pensions, and higher than average wages. Much secrecy has surrounded the nuclear industry. In fact, employees of CRL take an oath of secrecy. Prior to the 1990s Canada's nuclear elites often dismissed public input. This history of secrecy, silence, and support within the local community and CRL context has created and continues to create tensions in information sharing. This project has not received funding from the industry and the researcher is not obligated to report to the industry.

What did the researchers find?

The two research projects are ongoing. Initial work in these communities has raised the following information sharing issues for the researchers:

- Influence of funding sources (e.g. industry) on research outcomes and/or process (e.g. access to industry site and employees);
- Possible consequences of findings on community members' jobs and relationships with the industry;
- Accessibility and applicability of findings for diverse learning needs of community audience (e.g. translated reports, oral reports, clear language);
- Sharing uncomfortable information about the industry with a supportive community (a number of community members are employees and longstanding supporters of the industry);
- Influence of past relationships between the community and industry (e.g. influence of a history

of secrecy and silence on audiences' engagement in information sharing);

How can you use this research?

Scholars using knowledge mobilization in their research projects may find this paper helpful, as it raises questions related to sharing information and encourages researchers to consider the implications and effectiveness of their knowledge sharing practices. Beginning to respond to some of the questions posed by this work will contribute to theorizing on knowledge mobilization.

About the Researchers

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Knowledge Mobilization at York

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