



Fast

# FACTS

CANADIAN CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES - MANITOBA

Dec 13, 2016

## Reconciliation Lives Here: State of the Inner City Report 2016

**T**his year's *State of the Inner City Report* tackles arguably the most important issue of our time: healing and reconciling Canada's relationship with Indigenous peoples. A year and a half after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) 94 Calls to Action were released, this research documents community-based efforts in inner city Winnipeg to implement these recommendations and more broadly break cycles of racism and colonization.

Leaders interviewed in this research said the release of the TRC 94 Calls to Action gives their work validation and inspiration. As one participant describes:

*I think a consciousness has emerged. There has been a leap of understanding in the community, and in societies across Canada. I feel it. No longer can people pretend that they do not know, saying stereotypical things. It has given people courage (even though) we know racism is alive and well.*

Breaking down barriers and building relationships is not new to community development work in the inner city, as previous State of the Inner City Reports have documented (2012, 2013, 2015). Residents, community-based organizations and grassroots efforts in Winnipeg's inner city have already been performing significant acts of reconciliation for decades. However, they may not necessarily define it as such. Grassroots efforts are understandably resistant to models of reconciliation they perceive as coming from outside the community and instead have developed innovative approaches based in local knowledge and responsive to local needs.

"Winnipeg's inner city is leading the country in processes of reconciliation" says Niigaan Sinclair, lead author and acting head of the Department of Native Studies at the University of Manitoba.

The report looks at reconciliation within the framework of *The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)*, the TRC 10 Principles and the 94 Calls to Action addressed specifically to governments, churches and sectors of Canadian society.

This research is particularly important in Manitoba, which has the highest proportion of Indigenous people in Canada at 16.7% (compared to the national average of 4.3%). There is a concentration of Indigenous peoples in Winnipeg's inner city; 21.1% of residents are Indigenous compared with 8.7% of the non-inner city residents.

As last year's State of the Inner City Report found, important gains in income, education and employment rates have been made. However the inner city lags behind the rest of Winnipeg in these important indicators, particularly the Indigenous population.

A key aspect of reconciliation is supporting Indigenous organizations to lead the way in improving social and economic circumstances. Many community-based organizations are doing this important work on shoe-string budgets. Reconciliation work takes time and resources, particularly for Indigenous organizations with high demands and fewer resources than non-Indigenous organizations. This is

there is an alternative.

CCPA-MB  
205-765 Main St.  
Winnipeg, MB  
R2W 3N5

phone

(204) 927-3200

email

[ccpamb@policyalternatives.ca](mailto:ccpamb@policyalternatives.ca)

website

[www.policyalternatives.ca/  
manitoba](http://www.policyalternatives.ca/manitoba)

blog

[www.policyfix.ca](http://www.policyfix.ca)

twitter

@ccpamb

continued..

described in this quote from one leader:

*...there has to be a way to fund community groups to do that service because that is what is making a new way of thinking. We do that out of a desire to work toward reconciliation but it is not remunerated and if there is one thing we need, we need more resources, we are managing but we are working 70 or 80 hour weeks because the work of healing and reconciliation is all encompassing.*

Leaders and helpers in the inner city know there is a long way to go before reconciliation can be achieved, however within their own spheres of influence they are undertaking practices and developing policies that embody healthy relationships and undermine Canada's historical hierarchies with Indigenous peoples.

Grassroots groups such as Aboriginal Youth Opportunities! (AYO!), the Bear Clan and 13 Fires are doing tangible peace-building work through Meet Me at the Bell Tower, safety patrols or hosting dialogues on racism. For example AYO! just celebrated five years of Meet Me at the Bell Tower, described as:

*A weekly anti-violence community celebration (that) inclusively brings people together. Its purpose today, in 2016, is to build community with the subtext of preventing violence. Building community first is the big objective, with a sub-objective to promote north end people, businesses and groups and facilitate relationship-building. Final thing is intergenerational classroom, (we want to) show how we believe people and family should interact. Demonstrate typical north end family/ village model and aim to create that every week for people to see.*

Local voluntary movements are catalyzing anti-racism efforts unfunded by governments but with donations from the community. Groups identify a need for funding, but wish to still have independence to define the terms of their efforts. Consultations directly with these movements is needed to identify how funders and financing could be made available.

With community-based organizations, the TRC 94 Calls to Action are embodied in an increased effort to educate the public,

staff, funders and newcomers, done with few new resources. Providing educational opportunities to young Indigenous people is a priority as well as increasing Indigenous representation at all levels. Local Indigenous organizations are at the forefront of developing new models for decision-making guided by Elders that incorporate traditional ways of knowing and cultural teachings - all essential for healing and creating new paths forward. Community-based groups are building key alliances, striving for equitable funding for Indigenous groups and funding to amplify successful culturally-based healing efforts.

The tremendous efforts in Winnipeg's inner city should be acknowledged, particularly as Mayor Brian Bowman declared 2016 the "Year of Reconciliation".

Leaders and helpers wish to have a seat at the table with government decision-makers in order to redress power imbalances imbedded in colonization. Research found that there is a need for more engagement from all levels of government with community-based and grassroots movements on reconciliation. Community holds important knowledge and experience that is advancing Winnipeg's journey toward reconciliation. This could be greatly enhanced by meaningful partnerships with all levels of government and adequate resourcing of important work on-the-ground to advance the 94 TRC Calls to Action and UNDRIP.

*Niigaan Sinclair is an Associate Professor and Acting Head of the Department of Native Studies at the University of Manitoba. Tamara Margaret Dicks is Oji-Cree/ Cree Metis/ English, a member of the Peguis First Nation on Treaty One Territory and a doctoral student. Timothy Maton is a PhD student. Both Dicks and Maton are students in the Department of Native Studies at the University of Manitoba.*

*Miigwetch, Tansi, Ekosani, Merci and thank you to the funders of the report: Assiniboine Credit Union, Neighbourhoods Alive!, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council through the Manitoba Research Alliance, and United Way of Winnipeg.*

References available upon request.

CCPA-MB  
205-765 Main St.  
Winnipeg, MB  
R2W 3N5

phone  
(204) 927-3200

email  
ccpamb@policyalternatives.ca

website  
www.policyalternatives.ca/  
manitoba

blog  
www.policyfix.ca

twitter  
@ccpamb