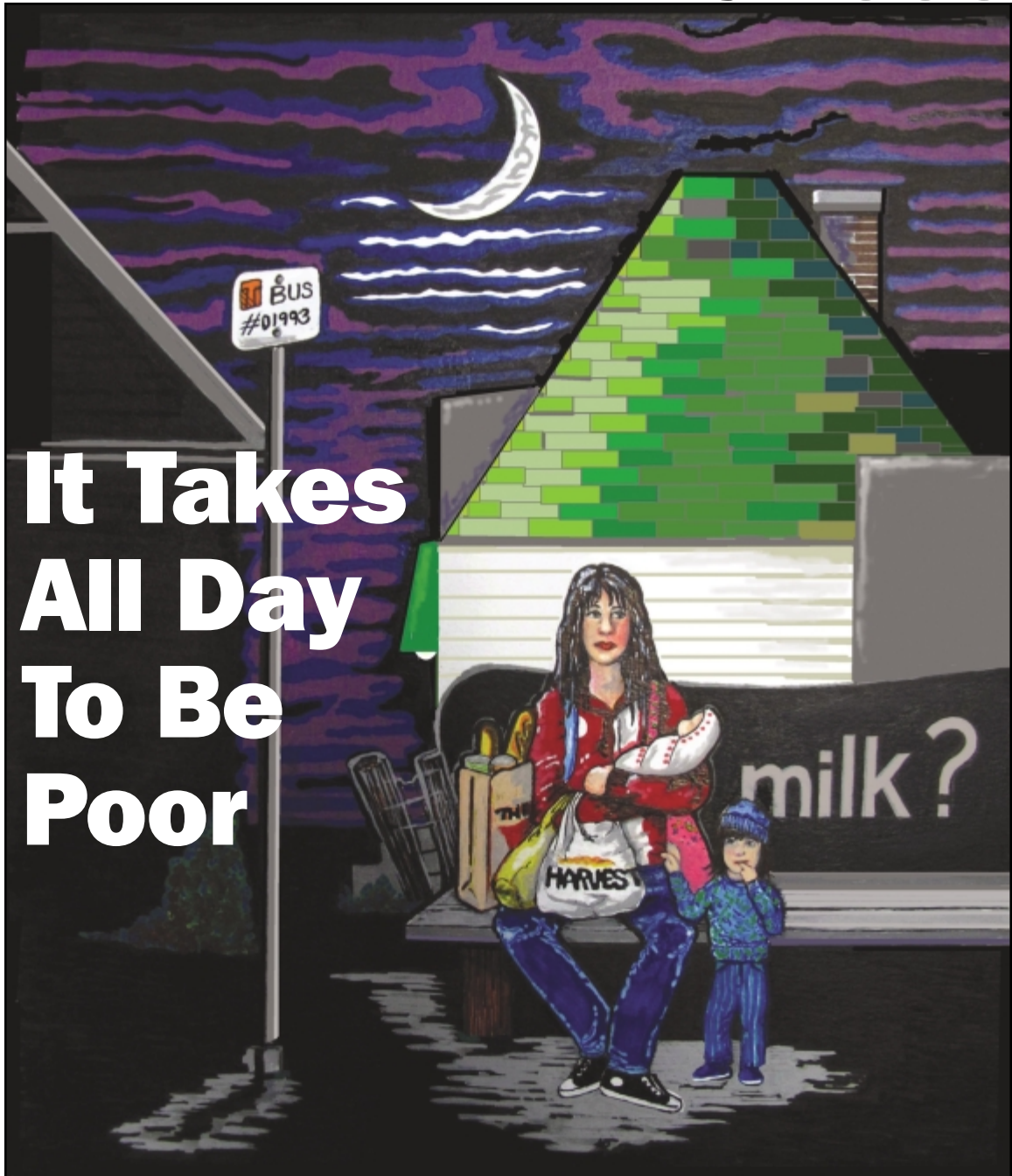


# State of the Inner City 2009



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The member organizations of Community Led Organizations United Together (CLOUT—see Appendix B for a list of coalition members). Special thanks to Josie Hill, Executive Director of Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre for introducing the idea for this year's research—"It takes all day to be poor".

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In addition to the community diarists, a community youth worker (who asked that she and her organization be kept anonymous to protect the individuals they work with) was asked to journal from a youth-advocacy perspective to offer some context to our adult view of youth in poverty. We owe gratitude for her unique and insightful contributions, both to this work and to the well-being of the many youths she encounters.

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**Cover:** *It Takes All Day To Be Poor*, brush pen on illustration board, 10"x13" by Laurie Green. Laurie is an eclectic visual artist from Winnipeg. She has Public Art on top of Poster Boards in the Exchange District and is part of a mural project on the rear of Red Road Lodge. She participates and volunteers at Artbeat Studio and Art from the Heart.



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*This report is available free of charge from the CCPA website at <http://www.policyalternatives.ca>. Printed copies may be ordered through the Manitoba Office for a \$10 fee.*

# State of the Inner City Report 2009

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## Preface

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*If a person is low-income or they are poor, they generally have a whole list of problems, from not having a decent education to not having decent housing, to not having any connection to their neighbourhood... [and] not having the self-esteem or the capacity to say 'I deserve a decent life'. (State of the Inner City Report, 2006:19).*

*When you are poor you have no choices. I hate having no choices.... Having choices gives you self-respect, dignity, self-esteem, self-control and confidence.... (Excerpt from 'Joe's' story, CCPA, July, 2009)*

Poor people know that the effects of poverty reach far beyond the wallet. Poor people, especially those experiencing long-term and intergenerational poverty, often come to believe that there is little hope for a better future. And for many, this is a reasonable assessment. Research shows that the longer people live in poverty, the less likely they will escape it (Lang 2007). As noted by Raphael “the power of poor people appears to be virtually non-existent. [People are poor because] “they have been unable to have their needs met” and they have little power to influence public policy. (2007: 99).

While poverty is often measured in quantitative terms, Raphael’s description of poverty suggests that we need a much broader definition. We prefer to define poverty as “people’s inability to participate in the customary life of society... their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average individual or family that they are, in effect, excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities” (Levitas: 2003).

This year’s *State of the Inner City Report* provides that much-needed broader perspective on poverty, as well as a more statistical update on the changing face of poverty in the inner city. We also have an offering of hope in our revisit to the Lord Selkirk Park housing project.

Since poverty is the reality of many people living in the inner city, our community partner, Community Led Organizations United Together (CLOUT: see Appendix B for a list of coalition members), suggested that we provide readers with a better understanding of what life is like for these people. As CLOUT member and Mamawi Executive Director Josie Hill points out, many people spend their days navigating through a complex and often unsympathetic web of institutions they depend on for survival. For these people, Josie notes, “it takes all day to be poor”. To illustrate the complexity of people’s lives, we asked seven individuals living in poverty to document their experiences getting through their days, weeks and months on a low-income budget. Their stories form the centre piece of this year’s *State of the Inner City Report* in the first section, titled “It Takes All Day to Be Poor”.

In the second section we provide an analysis of census data that shows how the inner city has fared over a ten-year period. On this front, we have good and bad news. The good news is that there has been some improvement. The bad news is that many people in Winnipeg, and particularly people living in the inner city, continue to be poor.

On a more positive note, in section three we show how the community and government

can work together to make things change for the better. This is what has happened in Lord Selkirk Park. When we first began our journey with the *State of the Inner City Report* in 2005, people in the Lord Selkirk Park neighbourhood told us their feelings about the development: "I'd like to just bulldoze this whole fricking place down, I hate it, I hate it, I hate what it's doing to families here: (CCPA-MB 2005:24 & 27).

Today they are saying something very different. Lord Selkirk Park is transforming into a community of hope thanks to the collabora-

tive hard work of community organizations, the provincial government, schools, and individuals living in the neighbourhood.

Our past five years of participatory research has taught us a lot about inner-city life. It is much more than a community with problems. The inner city is a vibrant place full of culture and diversity. While it is true that the people who live and work in the inner city are faced with many challenges, they live up to those challenges in creative ways. This year's report explains how that creativity helps residents cope with the day-to-day grind of being poor.

# It Takes All Day to Be Poor

by Jil Brody, with CLOUT and Angelica, Allen, Claudette, Janette, Sabrina, Hannah and Taryn

*I wonder if it might have been different  
if we weren't as poor as we were.  
(Angelica)*

## Introduction

“What most people just don’t get,” she stated, “is that it takes all day to be poor.” Those words, spoken by one of CLOUT’s member representatives, have taken on a life of their own. Its simple, but profound message is that we need to take the time to examine the details of being poor, not just the superficial images that prop up stereotypes. Details force us to wonder if we could handle their situation any better and to recognize the myriad of support we tap into every day to maintain our privileged standard of living, support that most of us take for granted. We needed a way to chronicle those details, and so, “It Take All Day to Be Poor,” the journalling research project, was born.

The CCPA—MB, in conjunction with CLOUT members, received approval from the University of Winnipeg Research Ethics Committee, and the investigation began. CLOUT organizations took care to ensure that the seven diarists (or co-researchers) in this project were as representational as possible of those living in impoverished situations in Winnipeg. All participants self-identified as living in poverty. All were on some type of financial assistance, with one participant in transition to the work force. CLOUT member organizations selected two men, five women and one youth (19 years old). The oldest participant is 58 years old. Four participants are of First Nations ancestry, one a Canadian visible minority (Black), and one

a new Canadian (also a visible minority). Two participants live with chronic illnesses/disabilities. One participant is married and has three children; one is a single parent of one child; another, a new mother living common-law. Another participant is pregnant, has two toddlers and lives with her boyfriend, while another lives with her husband. One participant lives with a pregnant teen-aged daughter, and one lives alone. While educational levels vary, each of the participants was able to keep a written journal.

These courageous individuals agreed to take on what would be an arduous four-month commitment: journalling on a regular basis about their daily lives... the ordinary and extraordinary; the challenges and accomplishments; the joys and disappointments; the thoughts and feelings about living poor in a society that lives rich; a society that thinks of the poor as not only having less but also as ‘being less,’ if that society thinks of them at all. The diarists wanted us to know they are responsible, motivated, honest, hard-working people. They wanted us to know about their circumstances and how they felt about living in poverty. In the end, they wrote hundreds of pages in their journals, covered a range of topics not possible to include in this summary, and shared many intimate experiences that we should be humbled by.

The seven diarists met with the project facilitator at the beginning of the study to dis-

cuss a list of topics, including the consequences of stereotypes on their lives and how this project could be a vehicle to use to dismiss these stereotypes. They were asked to journal on a weekly to daily basis over a period of four months about what it is like to live *their* lives, the events of *their* days, *their*

thoughts, feelings, hopes and dreams. Journal entries were collected on a weekly basis by the facilitator.

Qualitative content analysis was performed on the journal entries and on tape recorded interviews (conducted with five participants) using QSR NVivo 8 computer software.

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## It Takes All Day to Be Poor

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### **It's Not About. . . No It's All About Pride: Janette's Perspective**

*"When I used to see commercials on TV where the guy opens a can of food and the roof comes off his house, I get it, because that's how it feels,"* Janette, the single mother of a young, healthy son, writes in her journal. At another point in time, she writes about how she narrowly escaped eviction after shorting her rent so that she could buy some food. Only the intervention of a worker from a local service organization kept a roof over her and her son's heads. Janette's transition from social assistance back into the workforce over the past half-year or so has been anything but smooth and easy.

Janette was born in Winnipeg, describes herself as Black, and was raised by her grandparents along with 11 other children, 10 who were her uncles and aunts and one her cousin who is more like a brother. *"My mother was sick,"* Janette journals. *"She had epilepsy and she had violent seizures where they put her in Selkirk. They thought she was crazy."* She supposes growing up she lived in *"financial poverty"* but says she felt no lack for anything. Today, however, Janette writes a different story.

For example, one morning she writes this in her journal:

*Great, no sleep last night. All I did was think about paying my rent, and my son. For a 10 year old little boy he takes on things like a man. Talking about getting a job to help me/us out. Nothing seems to come easy to us. Here I'm stressed out about wanting to work and can't seem to get a break.*

The break that Janette is looking for is a full-time, permanent job that will support her and her son with at least a decent standard of living; cable television would be a luxury. When

she began journalling, Janette had an open file with Workers' Compensation. As of this writing, that case is still unresolved, but at least she did find another, albeit temporary, minimum-wage job, again without benefits. Unfortunately, this position ended shortly after the journalling project ended. Again, she is dealing with Social Assistance workers whom she finds difficult, and this is not the first time she has been through the welfare turnstiles. *"You must understand,"* a journal entry begins not long after she started her second position:

*...being on welfare's degrading. All by itself, who wants their employer to know that they're on welfare. This [case] worker is one of the worst. No "good job" or "congratulations" — nothing. Just "when's your first cheque" and that she would look into child care for me (to see if I was entitled to it). Yes, I am entitled to child care because there are no day cares open at 6:30 am anywhere in the city or province. [which is when I have to leave for work]. So I almost went to steal a pair of pants from a store but thought hell no, what if I get caught. No job. I'm just blown away. You'd think welfare would help just so I could get a full-time job. No.*

Janette will not and cannot give up, though. She must persevere. She has two futures to think of:

*[My son] and I decided to go for walks just to get out and try to forget about things at home and we talk about things we want. Both our futures—I want to get back into the work force or get more education. All I want for my son is for him to finish his school, not to worry about adult stuff and enjoy being a kid."* This is an intense theme that runs thick throughout Janette's journal: *"I love that kid so much, always thinking about me first when he should be a kid."*

Janette, frustrated and disenchanted as she seems to be with taking one baby step forward and three giant steps back, maintains a strength and optimism that is peppered into her journaling. She writes:

*So I've decided not to get worked up instead get working. Tomorrow I've decided to make as many cold calls that I can and to just survive. No one will keep me down and out, as long as I don't let them.*

She had not had a promising day. And it is not as if her short-term plans are unrealistic:

*I'm going to try to save the \$35 a week I make at [a local service organization] in order to enjoy myself. How you ask? I'd like to take a course at Urban Circle, but you need funding, so if I could save half [and] maybe get a loan for the other half, my son and I could move out of this area after I finished the course and wouldn't have to rely on Welfare. Welfare gives us \$387 for rent, my rent is \$525. So \$138 comes out of our food budget. We haven't had cable or a phone for over a year. So *when* I do get myself together, and move on I'd like to help people to get on their feet.*

In the meantime, Janette is interested in doing nearly anything to earn a decent pay cheque, as this entry explains:

*It's not about, no, it's all about pride. I want my son to work for a living, not sit on welfare... and live off of welfare that way. Be proud, work for what you want. Growing up... I didn't ever know what welfare was. There's no pride being on it and they (workers) seem to think everyone on welfare is lazy. Not true! I'd pick up garbage or do almost anything just for a pay cheque with my name on it. Show my son with some hard work he could have the world.*

## **A Way and Means of Life: Claudette's Perspective**

*I'm one of those people that has to be self-made. I can't depend on no one because I wasn't raised that way. I was 15 years [old] when I hit the streets of Winnipeg. I wasn't old enough to get a decent job so I cleaned old people's houses. I wasn't very good. But they would offer me room and board, just to keep me safe. After I had my son I had to leave the reserve, because of all the drinking my parents did. My father was very verbally abusive and I had several emotional breakdowns. So I started drinking too. I had to cope somehow!*

This is part of Claudette's self-introduction early in her diary:

*Claudette, 45 years old now, was born on the Fisher River Reserve, and ran away from home when she was 13, soon after becoming pregnant. She ended up back at home, but only for another nine months. After the stint in Winnipeg mentioned above, she lived and worked in various cities east of Winnipeg, resettled here at age 23, got married, and had her second child.*

*Today, Claudette lives with her husband, Frank. Claudette has several illnesses that make it difficult for her to work, while Frank cannot work at all. They are dependent on income from social assistance and disability assistance.*

Claudette is a most voracious diarist. She writes almost daily over the four months of the project and at great length about many of her daily challenges. She keeps meticulous charts of her spending and income. Because Claudette's accounts are so detailed, it is impossible to account for all of the themes in this discussion and, therefore, only one is presented here. In presenting her feelings about playing bingo, Claudette's writing reveals much about her attitude towards living in poverty:



*Sometimes I think all these things are designed to keep us down in the dirt. Poverty is a vicious cycle. If I win I'm no better off, because what I win is deducted from the welfare cheque. It's the same thing if I were to work. I may get to keep \$200.00 but anything over is deducted. Oh! Well I have \$10.44. Maybe I'll win tonight.*

In this journal entry, Claudette is talking about bingo and referring to the social-assistance policy that requires recipients to declare any and all money received in addition to assistance, be it from employment, as a gift, or lottery and gambling winnings. She is focused on bingo—and on winning. The central theme in Claudette's journal, the main topic of nearly every entry, is bingo. Winning is not just a dream for her, it is a goal. It is her way out of poverty. A means to an end, not the end, as her journal entries will reveal. And, lest she be judged an addict, Claudette attempts to address this issue in a rational manner.

Fairly early in the project, Claudette begins approaching the subject of whether her bingo habit is healthy or not when she writes, *"I hope you don't think my journal is a bingo journal. Because bingo is a ways and means of life here in the North End. I won \$30.00 dollars last night, that's how I got my teabags, wieners and buns and mustard, these things are extras I can't afford on Frank's and my welfare. Things other people take for granted. I haven't had a cup of tea in two months! You won't believe how good that tea tasted! Now that I have \$5.00 from the money Lynne gave me and \$5.44 from my bingo win."* This is the first but not the only time Claudette addresses the "ways and means of life" idea and how bingo winnings buy her what her welfare money cannot.

However, it is not until mid-project that she directly addresses the possibility that she is addicted to gambling, bingo in particular. She writes:

*Now, I wonder if you people will think I have a bingo addiction and try to cut me off welfare or [make me] go to Gamblers Anonymous. I stopped drinking in 2001 without any help from AA. So I turned to bingo and you have to be sober to play....*

*I know you think it's just trading one addiction for another. At least I don't get terrible sick. I don't remember how many times I landed in the hospital. I am glad that's behind me. When I was drinking I never sat down and won a hundred [dollars]. Now once in awhile I do. Even though I spend the money, I still make some of it back. Frank's so scared we'll end up on vouchers. Because of my bingo playing. That's why he asked me to quit. It sure gets boring in the evenings. I don't know what to do with myself. How am I ever going to get self-sufficient if I can't win?*

Claudette's journal reveals that, while there are weeks that she does not go to a bingo hall every day, or even every second or third day, she does want to gamble every day, and it is difficult for her to stay away. It is not just the money that draws her, although that may be the strongest attraction, winning being her only feasible way out of poverty, as she often muses. An example of her thinking, while one may disagree, is pure in that her only dream is being independent of financial support, as this 'essay' exemplifies:

*Topic: Bingo As A Ways and Means of Life*

*When I say that, I mean people can make their living off bingo. One good bingo win can set you up for life or close to it. It's a form of investing your money. EXAMPLE: you play \$20 and all the pots are high; you win one pot, let's just say \$1,500. You have made \$1,480 on \$20. I would say that's a damn good return. Now you bank half of that if you got no bills, that's \$740 to spend however you live. Or you put it back into bingo so the money circulates to help the community where the bingo is held.*

*I don't mean the whole \$740 either, it depends on what your spending habits are like.*

*Another thing, you can bank the whole amount and keep adding to it. Maybe you want to purchase a big ticket item. There you go, you have what you wanted.*

*Now if you win a really big pot, say the Runaway Train at McPhillips St. Station, which is close to \$50,000, you still put half of that away, pay off any existing bills, and still have a surplus. That's what I mean by my words, ways and means. That's exactly how I would do it, but I haven't even come close to having any big pots come my way. You live on your surplus and keep the money in the bank.*

*When I first started playing bingo I wasn't on welfare. I used to win \$1,500 almost every month. I wasn't old enough to have a bank account or to be on welfare. That money at least kept me fed and put clothes on my back. Everyone thought I was stealing or hooking for my money. Meanwhile, people I trusted were always trying to take me for my money. Then I got mad and quit bingo for close to 20 years (almost starved). Now I'm just coasting along waiting patiently for a big win. When I say 'almost starved' I mean I had no income, period! This was before I was eighteen. I tried to keep a bit of money for myself but I was hounded to no end. What can you do? I was told by an old 'bingo player' Don't give up! Hang in there, your turn is coming.*

*I believe it.*

Claudette's bingo tab is as high as her hopes for winning, but unfortunately her hopes remain higher than her financial winnings. On several occasions, she mentions winning, \$20, or \$60, but never the sought after figure that will end her impoverishment. Most often,

Claudette writes various versions of 'I lost.' "I was able to go to afternoon bingo. It was a bust anyway." "Well 'of course' I didn't win!" "Well I didn't win at the Station so I lost \$20." "I can see I've spent \$73 on bingo this week." "What I spend on bingo is borrowed money." "I didn't win but I have groceries and that's the important thing." "Of course I didn't win." "I do not dwell on the money I lose in the bingo hall, because I know it will be back." "I didn't win of course and nothing went, so I'll have to scrape up enough for Tuesday bingo." At best, at the end of the day, Claudette is no further ahead and no further behind.

As mentioned earlier, Claudette has a dream for herself, which she hopes to realize through a big bingo win. She writes that, "You know what bingo means to me? It means financial freedom if I win really big. I'd be off welfare. We can take care of ourselves. It would be a whole new world." In one entry, she acknowledges that she is a dreamer, writing, "Did you know that bingo players are dreamers? They always hope every day that the big win is gonna happen! Not! And their dreams come crashing down around them? I guess you can say I am a realistic person. But I am also an optimistic person. And if it can happen to my friends it can happen to me!"

Time spent playing bingo, or waiting for the lottery numbers to be called, affords a measure of hope in people's lives and dulls the pain and stress of poverty. After all, winning the lottery is a simple and effective solution, a miracle in an otherwise hopeless situation. And lest we judge the poor for being drawn to gambling, how many middle-class people dream of winning the "big one" and transforming their lives into something more meaningful? Given what is at stake for Claudette, we can hardly blame her for dreaming of that miracle.

## **Night and Day/Day and Night: Angelica's Perspective**

"Not only does it take all day to be poor," writes Angelica, "it takes all night." She is busy with her journal as she spends yet another night unable to sleep. She writes (and talks) about the non-stop physical pain and discomfort she feels. She writes about her financial worries at this point in her life. While not yet 60 years old, one can easily believe from her journal that she is perhaps decades older. She writes about the trauma of her childhood. She writes about her confusion and the anguish she feels over the events that make up her life.

Angelica is Ojibwa, or, as she adds: "*if anybody wants to be specific, then I'll tell them, okay, Scotts and English on my mother's side.*" Her father was a "*half-breed.*" She grew up on her grandfather's trap line in the bush, belonging neither to the reserve nor the town people. She lived with her parents and siblings, and her earliest memories are happy ones. "*I was poor but I didn't know I was poor because my parents loved me,*" she writes.

Then Angelica found out she *was* poor. She writes, "*When I turned 6 yrs of age and had to go to school... and learned to speak English—read and write in English after living in my own Ojibwa community—life changed—I learned about racism, being called names—fighting off bigger boys who thought it was fun to beat up poor Indians, dirty girls not having any clothes to change into; it was wash and wear or else my sister would take my clean clothes and put them on. I'd have to go to school in what I could find—embarrassed and sad. Sad cuz I didn't have clothes.*"

Later entries provide more memories of Angelica growing up impoverished: "*As I little girl I remember eating salt and pepper sandwiches with my sister. Mom and Dad were gone and we were hungry. We were too little to use a can opener and stove and afraid to try. We were lucky to have water to drink.*"

*There were other times we went hungry. One fall and winter our dad was in hospital for depression and mom did her best to feed us. It was a long winter of hunger and hard work helping mom get water, cutting wood, chopping it, setting snares at night and checking first thing at daylight. I've never ate rabbit since. It had such an impact on my life and even now when I remember how poor we were my insides get a feeling of confusion and sort of a twisted emotion I can't define.*

As Angelica's style as a diarist and narrator is free flowing as opposed to chronological, it is difficult (and possibly unnecessary) to distinguish between the trauma of her childhood and that suffered later in her life. She writes of times when:

*I hurt too much in my mind. I'd get beat up by my mom when she was upset and angry. I'd forget to be vigilant and out of reach, because if she was hunting for one reason or another I'd get beat up, and I'd see my sister giggling at me and sticking out her tongue. She'd set me up and, as tired as I was, sometimes I'd forget to be careful and the first punch or slap could catch me off guard. There have been several incidents [like this] that came out in psychotherapy [that I have required because I suffer] from PTSD [post traumatic stress disorder]."*

Angelica steps towards disclosure in her journal when she writes:

*What I ripped out [of this journal] had to do with sexual assaults—re-reading my scribbling and my sister's rape brought back vivid memories and I can't go there at this time. I heard she's coming to Winnipeg and I don't...."*

In another entry she writes:

*I went thru hell of a particular kind because of the disclosing of being molested by him. I wound up going by ambulance to the 4<sup>th</sup> floor psych ward in Kenora for 'help' in dealing*

*with how my sisters verbally accused me of lying, and my reaction after hearing the song 'Luka' on the radio, reliving and remembering his touching me—I almost went crazy myself and if I hadn't had the courage to see my own doctor (who also treated the rest of my family)—Holy shit it was awful—That's how PTSD affected me.*

When she was 18, in 1969, Angelica “married into an upper-middle class uh Swedish American family.” After nearly 20 years of marriage and with two children, her relationship with her husband dissolved. There was not much lost between her and her in-laws, who had disliked her on sight. She returned to Canada, and after a bitter legal battle in the U.S., gained custody of her daughter, who was 11 years old at that time.

During her married years in Illinois, Angelica lived very comfortably in a financial sense. In all likelihood, one of her greatest discomforts came from:

*...culture shock. Um, the houses that I saw were houses that I'd see like in House and Garden, Home and Garden magazines and stuff like that. And then, the way that they dressed. Uh, the way that they ate. Um, my husband's dad was a meat and potatoes man. That and he hated stew... I was used to cooking soup and stew and stuff like that for 8 to 10 people, so imagine to my surprise my husband never ate my cooking. He hated stew and I'm cooking for 8 to 10 people. There was a lot of wasted food.”*

It was 2004 before Angelica resettled in Winnipeg; she needed to be close to doctors and other health support services.

In addition to being afflicted with PTSD and other psychiatric disorders, Angelica writes about a number of her debilitating physical illnesses—spinal stenosis, fibromyalgia, rheumatoid arthritis, diabetes, heart disease, incontinence (she often wears diapers, which give her rashes), and undiagnosed digestive distress that causes her to vomit—and how they connect to her experience of poverty. A selection of her journal entries tells us that:

*they run hand in hand, so to speak. It's every day, sometimes it's bloody tough when you need to feed yourself properly to reduce the severity of symptoms [and it] is the time you've run out of soft food that you can swallow.” Further, poverty “can also bring back memories of hunger, thirst, being so alone, shame I'm broke. Sometimes I've cried because of the other illness that I have.*

Angelica's life stories belie her age. She is younger than she writes. She is in her middle years, yet we can see her easily as an elder.

One last journal entry to be shared. Angelica writes that “My feeling on being poor is that of surviving the best way I can. Sharing what I have when I can.”

## **In Canada For Better or For Worse: Uzochi's Perspective**

Uzochi, a self-described new Canadian, is from the Ibo (Igbo) community in Nigeria. Uzochi writes stories that reflect the real-life experiences of real-life immigrants. This story tells of the challenges that two new immigrants, Amina and Hearts face as they try to adjust to life in Canada.

*"Old Age Education", that was what Amina called it. Then she added, "I am not finding it funny at all" and sighed. Hearts, her course mate looked more exhausted than Amina. Both were at a college in Winnipeg studying to obtain a certification in Health Care Aide that will enable them secure jobs above minimum wage.*

*"Amina", Hearts whispered, "don't forget, tough times never last, but tough people do", quoting the title of a popular book he read before coming to Canada. They looked at each other, and then laughed loud, attracting the attention of the other students in the class. That had become a good way of relieving their tension and stress, especially after each of their weekly tests.*

*Amina and Hearts are newcomers, Amina arrived in Canada in 2007 while Hearts and his family arrived in Winnipeg in 2008. Both were skilled workers, immigrants who were reasonably above average in their countries. Amina had a first degree in Social Sciences and accumulated years of experience as Administrative Assistant. For about 6 months, she could not get any job in her field of study and job experience. She was always turned down for not having Canadian experience.*

*Each month, the financial conditions in her family worsened. Rent and other bills must be paid. Eventually she secured a job as a Support Worker with a little above minimum wage. After about a year in this job, she decided to*

*study for a Certificate in Nursing Assistant as a means of obtaining a better paying job.*

*Hearts on the other hand was able to get a warehouse job on his resume, retaining only that information [on the resume] which may not pose a threat in getting the job [by showing him as overqualified]. He holds a first degree in one of the Social Sciences and a Masters degree in International Affairs and Diplomacy. He had to expunge these information after learning 'you are over-qualified' twice.*

*It was not an easy job working the warehouse for Hearts, doing the jobs that are physically demanding which he has not used to. For the last four year prior to coming to Canada, Hearts worked with a not-for-profit organization as the Executive Secretary, implementing community-based sustainable projects. Hearts was not poor in his country, and he decided that by the time he had spent three years in Canada he would be above poverty line. He was determined, and set targets for himself.*

*Hearts was moody most of the day in school today. He rarely laughed even when everyone in the class did. The closest course mate, Amina, noticed and repeatedly tried to make Hearts to cheer up. The result was for short period. He seemed very much pre-occupied with his own thoughts rather than with what was going on in the classroom. Now he is back home and flipping through his personal record book.*

*Darling, today is May 13. We will be a year old in Canada in less than one week", the wife happily called out to Hearts. "Yea", he responded, not trying to show his frustration. Yes, Hearts did remember, and in fact, that was the main reason for his mood today.*

*Hearts remembered that by the time they landed at Toronto almost a year ago, he had about US\$9,800. He thought of what and where the money had gone to, [a lot of it to*

*new clothing and transportation] which he was [forced] to buy because of the family and quickly approaching winter. He remembered how on many occasions he had to walk to take a bus because the taxi he called could not take all the five family members; how he was spending about \$250 monthly for bus passes for the family. He recalled how residential accommodation took a good chunk of that money in the first few months before moving into government subsidized housing.*

*...Alright, Hearts continued to review areas where he spent his income, apart from feeding. Then he remembered medication. The change of environment, the stress of long air and land travel had its toll on the health of Hearts, spouse and children. Their health/medical card gave them access for medical treatment, but they had to pay quite substantially for the prescribed drugs. Good enough, he will claim part of it when filing for any refund that will be given to him. On and on Hearts continued to recall until his wife called out to let him know dinner was ready. He got up, and for the first time of the day, laughed out loud to himself. "Maybe I am responsible for the present financial situation I find myself", he concluded, as he took his seat to enjoy the special soup the wife had set before him.*

Uzochi's stories contain an air of authenticity gleaned from his own life experience. He experienced both poverty and financial comfort in his homeland before coming to Winnipeg as a provincial nominee; he is university educated, with an undergraduate degree in political science and a Master's degree in international affairs and diplomacy. It was this education that enabled him to escape the poverty that surrounded him in Nigeria:

*In the past years I've experienced and I've lived a life no word can describe as within the poverty level because of the circumstances I've found myself in. The Ibos had, the Nigerians had a civil war. So we had a war and suffered*

*great casualties. And I was also a victim in the sense that I lost my parents and I came out from the war just about 8, 9 years. So I found myself living with relations, living with my granny most of the time. And it wasn't quite easy. Ah, so I found myself again struggling most of the time to make ends meet. In poverty situations. [One thing I found out, that] I consider to be very helpful in overcoming poverty is education. Education is very important in assisting people to face the challenges of poverty. When somebody's trained and educated it gives that person a broader view, an enlightened view about the world and things to do. This does not really mean that this person cannot be poor, no. And some people are educated and yet they are still victims of poverty. That's where I was privileged to be educated and it has really helped me.... It was in the past about 4 years before I came to Canada [that my businesses became very successful]. And that was when we, I got out of poverty because by the time I came to Canada, I came in with what I consider good money.*

Like his character Hearts, Uzochi was in school throughout the journaling project, although he had originally anticipated finding a professional job in his field, like other professional new Canadians. He writes:

*When people are coming, yeah, we come with expectations, and those expectations are quite good. Like, if you have expectations to get a good job, it's a good expectation, at least you're not expecting yourself to come here and be lazy. You want to get a job and contribute to the economy. And that's something good.*

Imagine the irony then:

*How come I got this offer to serve in a non-profit organization Board? Well, the organization advertised for a position, a top position to be filled and I applied for the job. I was invited for interview, interviewed and two weeks later*

*was told: 'The members of the interview panel were highly impressed about your wealth of experience and performance. But we will not be giving you the job.' And then the suggestion about accepting to be nominated to the Board. That was the letter I got today. Now tell me: If I was not good enough for the position of Executive Director, how come I am good for the position of a Board member? Where my wealth of experience could be tapped. Maybe, am not presentable to be the ED, but good enough to work behind the scene. Lots of thoughts. I appreciated the gesture, but turned it down.*

The disappointment of employment rejection was not the first barrier that presented itself to Uzochi:

*I needed to look for accommodations so that my family can join me. This turned out to be the very first challenge I encountered. When I first came to Winnipeg, I did not know anybody and had to stay at the Hostelling International, which provided transitional accommodation for a maximum of two weeks. It was a time of pressure, hunting for an apartment was not an easy one. A few ones I found and accepted to lease, they could not give me the place because I had no job—despite the fact that I had some reasonable amount of money that could cover the rent for six months. In the end, I had to contact my sister-in-law at Ottawa who readily co-signed for me. It was a part lease for four months and quite high for a new immigrant. My wife and children needed to join me quickly.... To make matters worse, our landlord announced an increase in rent to \$821 monthly. This increased our determination to find cheaper housing accommodation for the family.... By the time we eventually left that place, we have spent a lot of the money we came to Canada with on rent.*

Uzochi writes about his decision to immigrate to Manitoba:

*I came in here as a provincial nominee, a skilled worker. Ah, I chose Manitoba basically because their system of accepting my grant was quite liberal, it was quite easy for me to qualify to come to Manitoba. And again, on coming, I've seen that the economy is much much better. For instance, a couple of weeks ago, I met someone from Alberta saying that the economy there presents great challenges and no jobs. So he has to take his family down to Winnipeg. So Winnipeg is not doing badly, Manitoba is not doing badly. So I'm glad that I'm here. And coming here, I was, the government has never promised or sponsored anybody, yeah but if you are qualified they will give you the opportunity of sponsoring yourself and coming, and so I got provided the means to be here. So I am grateful.*

Two striking themes found in Uzochi's journals are information and service provisioning for newcomers, and the melding of personal and impersonal factors affecting the transition out of poverty.

Uzochi has many positive things to say about the services he has received from the government and service organizations both. One day he writes:

*The various not-for-profit organizations rendering one service or the other also contribute a lot towards reducing the effects of poverty and adjustment on new immigrants. These services make it easier for them to acquire necessary skills and become employable, provide vital information and other services. In fact, we [a group in discussion] concluded that if these services were not in existence, a good number of immigrants may go back, especially the professionals.*

In that same discussion, mention is also made of:

*the various assistance to new immigrants [that] are really helping a lot in making their*

*transition bearable. The various benefits administered by Canada Revenue Agency... and the others make some money available to those parents relieves a lot of the pressure upon them.*

Uzochi also provides helpful policy direction throughout his journal. This entry summarizes his imperative:

*The poverty policy implications of the discussion is that the government should ensure that these services are sustained and even broadened. This also brings out the need of intermittent research and opinion surveys to determine new areas of need. More efforts should be made to encourage new immigrants to go into self-employment. Some of them are gifted in business and only require encouragement and boldness to get started in Canada. I believe there are programs along this line already in existence but they require visibility.*

If he voices a complaint, it is that information about services and programs is all but invisible and must be made more readily available and accessible to all newcomers.

Finally, Uzochi writes intensely on the personal and impersonal aspects of his own experience of combating poverty. For example, he describes witnessing the arrival of a new family, and the description sounds suspiciously similar to what he might have experienced, had he and his wife and children arrived together:

*The taxi pulled up in front of the apartment, they were just about coming out when the second cab stopped behind the first. The drivers came out, followed by the passengers—two adults and three teenagers. Their luggages were quickly brought out, and the cabs drove off.*

*From the fifth floor, I look out the window and intuitively I counted their luggages—2 big ones, 2 small ones, 2 small bags, and that was all. They were new Canadians (immigrants) just arrived. Then the fact hit me as a baseball that hits its target.*

*They are here with only 2 boxes and that represents all they have. All they acquired in life could be accommodated in those 2 boxes, perhaps, with the cash they had on them. That is how they arrived in Winnipeg, MB, to start life afresh in Canada—Yes to begin from the very beginning. That is the picture of most new Canadians.*

*Think about it, they had to come with as much as they could be allowed. For the airways, it is a maximum of two luggages per passenger. They may have sold some of the things they really cherished which they could not bring with them to Canada. They may have given away some valuables, too.*

In leaving the journal of Uzochi, this selection provides a final demonstration of his determination to move through his current impoverished position to thrive as a new Canadian:

*Can one then say that it is possible to be better off with good/appropriate information? If I refuse to be informed I may be deformed by poverty. Information about the services available for immigrants/refugees and other people struggling to get out of poverty cycle [is critical].... Then how I deal with daily challenges, obstacles, hindrances or even opposition will determine how far I can go in my plan to resettle successfully in Canada.*



## **Maybe You Should Stop Having Babies: Taryn's Perspective**

Taryn deals with a lot, even though at first read her brief journal entries do not seem to note much more than visits with family and waiting in waiting rooms for this appointment or that. She is a young mother of two toddlers and is pregnant with her third child. She lives with her common-law partner and is a stay at home mother. Despite being a woman of few words, her stress creeps out. She writes:

*Ya every end of the month I go through this with my [Income Assistance] worker. The last time I talked to her, she wanted my common-law to get fulltime work, but I said he can't because I need help with my two babies, plus I'm pregnant again, and she said, 'Maybe you should stop having babies then'" and she said the government is not paying me to sit around. I told her that's not what we do, I have two programs, my kids go to daycare, I have doctors' appointments to go to, I can't take my kids all the time, by myself, and no one wants to watch my kids all the time, and the days we don't do anything, my common-law goes to work but sometimes he doesn't get sent out, and that's not our fault.*

There are other similar entries in her journal, including this one:

*I just found out that I can't get a cheque from my worker till a lady from Smiths phones her and tells her how many hours he put in for April. I'm so damn upset right now, now I have to go down there and argue and fight for this cheque, that's how hard and difficult she's making it for my family and I.*

Taryn, often with her children in tow, seems to spend hours—and precious household money on bus transportation—negotiating the same issues each month, only to yet again not have enough money to make ends meet.

*"I finally got my cheque by the end of the day. And now I'm broke all over again."* Over each of the four months of the study, Taryn had to have a discussion with her income assistance worker, and not one cheque was delivered to her on time.

Taryn's journal entries also reflect the importance of a local community service organization, which is located within walking distance of her home. She writes about being able to both give and receive there. She volunteers with activities such as preparing and serving lunches to other community members, and she sometimes receives honorariums/pay and bus tickets in return for doing odd jobs. She also participates in programs offered by the organization and sometimes just goes to the centre to "hang out." For Taryn, whose social life seems to focus necessarily on her young family, the centre seems to offer a convenient source of support.

The dominant theme in Taryn's writing is certainly connected to family—raising her babies, thinking about the baby she is carrying, visiting family, having family visit, missing family, welcoming family, planning family birthdays, celebrating family birthdays, family appointments, nuclear family, extended family, in-law family, family barbeques and other feasts, borrowing money from family, lending money to family, playing bingo with family, going to church with family. Family.

One day in the life of Taryn:

*Today is another slow day. I have to go downtown. I told my daughter I'll put some more money in her account and my uncle he wants to try his luck at bingo, not me, I'm just gunna stay at home today. I went to bingo last night, won \$30, 'yay'. Oh and I bought myself a couple of shirts the other day, I never get to do that.*

## **Poor, Poorer, Poorest: Allan's Perspective**

*I would like to see more people get involved with helping out others. Because we have to help everyone out that needs help. I know that all of us are the same.*

Allan comes from a large family; he is one of 11 children. He grew up in a small Manitoba town, knows where his parents were born, and other than that says he knows little about his family. He knows that he is Polish or Ukrainian on one side and that his other grandfather is Aboriginal; nothing more. Recently, an Elder encouraged him to seek out his Aboriginal roots; he is taking this under serious consideration. Today, with his parents deceased, he is not in regular contact with his siblings.

Allan believes he did not grow up in poverty, but there seems to be some question in his mind as to how to define poverty. This is a theme that runs through his journal, as he refers to the impoverished as 'they' and 'them' when, in fact, during this project he received Income Assistance, a certain indication of below poverty-level income. (Additionally, Allan, like all the diarists, self-identified as living in poverty prior to starting his journaling.) In an individual interview, when asked whether or not he grew up in poverty, he said:

*Not really, because my dad ran his own company, so there was always food in the fridge. We were always dressed. But I know my mom bought hand-me-downs. She was a second-hand lady. We very rarely got brand new clothes... We had black and white TVs, old couches for 20 years, but my dad still had money. He just didn't want to do things for us, that just didn't make sense to me and I couldn't invite friends over because I sometimes I was shy and embarrassed about it. But, like, running out of food and stuff, that was never a factor. We always had it." After a*

*pause Allan added, "Sometimes I thought we were poor, we lived like it, and we had poor stuff and whatever. Food was just... we always had clothes on our backs, so...."*

Later in the interview he made vague reference to "alcoholism" in his home when he was growing up.

At 42 years of age, Allan is 'Dad' to six children between the ages of 16 years and 4 months. He is estranged from the children's mother. His 16-year old daughter, who is pregnant, lives with him; the other children are in care, and he is diligently working with Child and Family Services (CFS) so that they can all be together. Allan is hopeful that his ongoing recovery from alcoholism — during this project he self-admitted to a residential treatment program, his third admission, as a sign of good faith to CFS — will not only mean the children come home to stay, but also that he can leave his days of living in poverty behind. It should be noted that he is not the biological father of all the children, but has been in their lives so long that he and they feel that he is their dad.

As Allan explains in his journal, it was his addiction that led to his impoverishment:

*I did have the experience of living in poverty but the reason I was there was because I was drinking lots.... It was the drinking. I wasn't poor, like I always worked before I got on Assistance. Like, I had a good life. But it was the drinking and sometimes I woke up and had no food. I had to go to the food banks. Or I was wearing the same clothes for months on end. And I was sick of it, even friends noticed it. I admit it, I was in poverty and I lived like that for two years. And it was hard. Really hard.*

Being on Income Assistance and living in dire straits is not Allan's idea of a free ride or living on easy street. While he expresses compassion and concern for every poor person he encounters during his days and will do what-

ever he can to help, he has firm ideas on what will and will not help those in need: *"I know if I ever ran the government system, I would not be issuing no cheques for these people [with addictions]. I'd be issuing clothing vouchers, food vouchers, and get someone to help [people] get this food, get these clothes, instead of [giving people] money. Because the money situation, it's one hand to the other [to buy alcohol or drugs]."* On another day, Allan writes: *"Ah, money's just, money's just harmful sometimes to people,"* especially if one's addicted to a substance or has not been taught how to properly budget one's meager dollars.

Throughout his journal, Allan attempts to solidify his philosophy towards poverty. One day he writes: *"I think if you are poor, you are poor because you just don't spend your money right."* On another he pens: *"But they did not ask to be poor. That's just the way it is."* On yet another day, he thinks: *"They did not ask to be that way; that's just part of life."* A fourth entry reads: *"I know friends that have good jobs and still have a hard time making it from payday to payday."*

From start to finish, Allan's journal entries express a kind and simple attitude about the people he meets that are clearly from his descriptions the homeless and destitute. From the way he describes this interaction, it is not difficult to imagine that Allan himself has been the victim of name calling:

*I'm just saying like I got if I got I good job I wouldn't judge the people that are in poverty. That's just the way they are. They weren't born that way, it's just the way of life. And people, like you see a lot of it, [people saying] 'just a bum,' 'look at this white bum,' or whatever, that shouldn't go on. They didn't ask to be where they are. Like I have friends that are living in poverty and poor, you know. I give them what I can. If I don't got, then I'll try to lead them to somewhere where they can get it.*

## **The Words of an Adult-Child: Sabrina's Perspective**

*I was born on August 3, 1989. I have a little brother named Paul. He's only 11 months younger than me. His b-day is July 15, 1990... When I turned 11, I got put as a permanent ward of CFS [Child and Family Services].... My family is messed up. I had a horrible childhood. But whatever.*

So writes Sabrina in her final journal entry. At 19 (she turns 20 during the project) she is the youngest diarist in "It Takes All Day to Be Poor." She may only be at the threshold of adulthood, but Sabrina has been dealing with poverty on adult terms for some time now. She has an infant son, and a common-law partner, and is just shy of graduating from high school. During the four months she journalled, she tries to return to school but finds being a student and a new mother overwhelming. Good fortune that a local organization, RaY (Resource Assistance for Youth), offers her all sorts of useful tools, from problem-solving tips and advice to odd jobs that add to her household income.

Sabrina writes often about how her partner looks for employment, while the family relies on Income Assistance; financial worries are a major theme in her journal. One day she writes:

*We got \$500—something this month (from Welfare and GST) and already we have only \$110 left. I did get another GST check (\$115) so I guess we have \$225 left for the rest of this month. That still seems like we won't make it until next month. If it weren't for the GST cheques I got, we'd be broke already. We really have to learn how to budget!"*

With this on her mind, then, Sabrina must have felt pleased when she finished this entry:

*I hope \$20 will be enough to buy some of the things we need this week.*

1. Baby wipes (I have a coupon for \$1.50 off)  
\$4 - 1.5 = \$2.50
2. Garbage bags (get at Dollarama) \$1.12
3. Toilet paper (Dollarama) \$1.12
4. Milk (\$5.50 at corner store)
5. Margarine (\$3 at corner store)  
\$13.24

*Yeah, we have enough! Maybe, I can get myself a chocolate bar, too! 65 cents at Dollarama!*

Another day, she writes with less enthusiasm; *"Last week welfare sent me another cheque of \$145 and now we're down to our last \$20."* Yet another day she writes about a distressing financial realization: *"Recently I became aware that I would have gotten more money for my baby and myself if I didn't go common-law with my boyfriend, which is kind of weird, cuz now we're a family of 3 yet we get less than if it were just the two of us. I don't understand that."*

Sabrina's most striking journal comment about the challenges of negotiating life on a very limited income is this: *"Next month we're getting Cade circumcised. It'll cost us \$150 for this 'cosmetic' surgery. So that's going to be the first thing we're buying with that check. I don't think we'll be able to afford it, but Andy assures me that we will make it through the next month without that \$150."*

At this point, it is worth remarking that Baby Cade figures prominently throughout Sabrina's journal, as would be expected in the diary of a new, first-time mom. She frets about shots and doctor's visits, is concerned over coughs and sniffles, and worries when he cries too much. She is angry when her boyfriend does not help out with household responsibilities. Because the majority of Sabrina's journaled concerns about Cade appear to be more connected to other issues, they are not included as a major journal theme, except when he is connected to a theme relevant to *"It Takes All Day to Be Poor."*

It is perhaps mid-way through the project that Sabrina's journaling opens into more personal aspects of her life. The first indication of this change is the entry that begins: *"Some random guy told me that I am 'still exceptionally sexy.' That made me feel nice, I guess. I don't really understand that statement, but he said the word 'sexy' so I guess it was something good. Gag."* This reflection leaves us with a sense of Sabrina's young age. But it doesn't last. She continues with: *"Yesterday, I was put on Celexa, an antidepressant. I don't like how it made me feel. I felt like I took a clorazepam [used to treat panic/anxiety disorders]. I don't want to take it anymore. It causes me to feel weird, and not be able to function the right way for Cade. I am depressed though. I dunno."* Sabrina never writes directly about the cause(s) of her depression or whether she continues to take Celexa again.

Andy gets a job, which Sabrina writes about as less-than-stellar news. One journal entry notes that: *"Now that Andy has a job, we'll be off welfare and our rent will go up to \$700 a month [from \$500]!"* and another states that: *"Andy took Monday off to try and get his driver's license. But he found out that he can't because of past offences. He owes Autopac \$2,000! So, since he can't get his license, he might lose his job. Or at least won't be able to use the bobcat at work anymore."*

About the same time, mid-point through the project, Sabrina introduces her social life into her journaling: *"Andy was drinking. I decided to get a babysitter for Cade so I could go out and have fun. So we went and drank with our old friend, Theo, and his girlfriend, Jacquie at Andy's buddy, Rocky's place. It was fun. We had a fire going and socialized until 2 am! ... Yesterday, we met up with Theo & Jacquie in the Village. We took Cade to the park, sat in the grass. Then we went to see the fireworks. Cade was asleep the whole time. It was fun."*

Shortly after, Sabrina reveals that Andy is smoking marijuana and that she does not like

either this fact or how Andy has been treating her. She writes: *"I honestly don't like how Andy treats me. He acts like he's royalty or something. All because he makes the money, and I'm dependent on him. I don't know. Maybe I just expect more outta him. I don't know what to say. All I know is that it really bothers me that he's like this. I noticed that he acts more like 'this' when he smokes weed. I wish he'd slo [sic] down on it."*

By now, her journal entries make it fairly clear that Sabrina's personal challenges—being a new, young mother in an up-and-down relationship—are compounded by her financial constraints. Unfortunately, she cracks. With amazing honesty, she writes:

*I can't believe what I just did. I totally relapsed.*

*Andy took Cade with him to see Andy's brother, out of the city. I decided to stay home. I really wanted some time to relax & clean the house. For some reason I thought that I'd get the house done faster if I used some meth. When I got that thought, I instantly started hurting really bad for it. So I called some people and waited a good two hours for one of them to show up. The whole time waiting, I didn't think about what would happen after I did it. I just really wanted to do it. I should have thought of Cade. Of how he would feel seeing Mommy all sketchy. Or of Andy...I don't know.*

*After I did it, I went home to clean. I did a pretty good job too. At about 8:30 Andy calls to tell me that he & Cade are coming home because Cade was missing me a lot. So I got stuck. I was high and cleaning and I wished*

*they wouldn't come home. I said sure, come home. I told Andy that I have to talk to him when he gets in. I was going to confess to him that I had relapsed and that I am now high. So when he got home I told him. He got mad. But, strangely, not super mad, like I had predicted... Andy also told me that our relationship was over. Which is fine by me. I'm pretty sure he's going to move out soon.*

*Cade knew I was different. Andy brought him inside, Cade looked at me with a weird look in his eyes. I tried to get him to smile, but he wouldn't. He was crying a lot when they got back. I wonder if he's getting sick or something.*

*I feel so bad. I shouldn't have used. I hope Cade will forgive me. I hope Andy'll forgive me too. I don't think he will ever forgive me.*

*Andy took Cade to his friend, Theo's place. Which was the best thing to do. He doesn't want me around Cade when I'm all messed up. I didn't want to be around him either when I'm like this.*

*I am not going to do Meth again. I am a mother. I am a role model. I don't want Cade to follow in my footsteps. I have to be strong for Cade. I love him so much. He is the only person I want in my life.*

This account was Sabrina's second-to-last journal entry. Other than penning a brief autobiography, she writes this good-bye to the project: *"I guess this is my last entry. Things are going better than they were last time I wrote. I haven't used again."*

## **Advocating for the Sabrinas: Hannah's Perspective**

*It's hard to be poor.*

*It's hard to be young and poor.*

*It's hard to be young, poor, jobless, homeless, pregnant and not have a support network to lean back on.*

Winnipeg's population of impoverished youth is huge. Hannah knows this and more; she works with and for, not only youth living in poverty, but those who live on the streets, the homeless. As an advocate for 'our future,' it is of paramount importance that her voice is included along with Sabrina's, giving context and texture to the additional stressors of living young, living poor. We cannot continue to walk away from youth who walk outside of our 'norm.' Here, then, is Hannah's journal in its entirety:

*May 7, 2009*

*Sometimes it's really frustrating to be the advocate you know? We're supposed to have all the answers and we're supposed to be able to make the system (that doesn't always work) work. But when some woman brings in an 11 year old boy who she found crying on the street who told her he'd been out all night, it breaks your heart. And then you sit him down and talk to him and figure out that he got in trouble at school yesterday for having a lighter in class, so he went to the bathroom and took off. He didn't go home. He didn't go back today. He couldn't stop crying and we're stuck with the dilemma of, well, he doesn't like healthy food but needs it, vs. he loves junk food and needs to eat something. So we sit him down and stuff him with sugar and cheezies while warning him that the police are going to come and put him in their car and they might look big and scary, but they're there to help him and he's not going to be in trouble. Meanwhile my mind is racing,: Is he being beat up at home? Was he too scared to go home and get in*

*trouble with his parents? Where did he sleep last night? How many perverts were eyeing him last night? Did something awful happen? We know the police drive around the city. We have patrols in downtown, West End, all over. Parents who lose their kids are supposed to call Missing Persons who call CFS [Child and Family Services] and everyone is supposed to be looking for them. But when we call Missing Persons, the poor boy has to sit here with strangers looking at him, wondering what's going on ,while he tries to nap on the couch waiting for over an hour for anyone to show up for him. And when they show up, the first question is do you have a weapon? If you hadn't heard that you might have thought they gave him a little hug, but they checked him for weapons before they took him home. He's 11. He's terrified. He spent a good 24 hours on his own. That is the kind of thing that should not be able to happen.*

*May 8, 2009*

*How many times are you lied to in a day? I'm lied to over and over, and that can really screw a person up. And screw up relationships. Because you don't want to be the one who is head-in-the-clouds-naive-and-super-easy-to-dupe, but you also don't want to be the hard ass whose heart is made of mustard and never believes a thing you say. And there are so many reasons they lie to us. Some youth lie about eating, saying they did when they haven't had a real meal in ages, to protect their parents. They don't want to be taken away by CFS. Some lie about drug use: 'I'm clean! I haven't used in 2 years!' They're sometimes high while they're saying it, sometimes they just slipped a little on the weekend but don't want anyone to rat them out to their parole officer, to the addictions worker who they desperately want to impress with sobriety, to CFS who might take their baby away. About crimes, the ones they committed and the ones they saw their buddies commit. There are so*

many things they believe they have to lie about to protect themselves. It's so hard for these youth to trust anyone when so many of the people they've trusted have let them down. Some of them trusted their parents to take care of them and their parents weren't up to the task. Some trusted the police to keep them safe, and some police officers have beaten these youth, have felt them up and down, have made the youth feel like they're being targeted as criminals rather than being helped as citizens. They trusted their caretakers to rent them a place that could keep them safe and then their caretaker broke in while he was high, assaulted them, took their belongings, and kicked them out in the middle of the night. That's the opposite of taking care, that's causing serious harm. So what do I do? It's so hard to gain trust from people who've been let down by everyone they've given a shot. So I work slowly. I say 'hi.' And on the day that they come in and remember my name, my heart jumps a little. Then I can feel it starting to grow. I ask them, 'What's new. What's the plan for today?' And build it up from there.

May 11, 2009

Are you a number or an individual? I guess that depends on where you are, who you are, and what you need. If you're a low income person trying to access EIA [Employment and Income Assistance], you're a number. And, according to the youth I work with, you have to show up at your appointment armed with lies and lines from their policy manual if you're going to get anywhere. If you're at the hospital, you might be the moron who slashed his wrists and needs to be taught a lesson, or maybe you're the guy who was told how to 'get it right' next time so the doctor wouldn't have to treat you again. If you're at the food bank you're either single, married or parent of x number of kids and you're getting the corresponding food allowance. No matter which person you are at Winnipeg Harvest, you're

the person who still didn't get enough to feed yourself and you're still hungry. Chances are that no matter what you're trying to access, if you're 18 or over, you've aged out of some service or another and you were left feeling a little lost. You realize pretty quickly when you're advocating that you may be able to understand why some policies and procedures are put in place, but you also understand that they don't work for everyone and they don't always work very well. Sometimes they do the opposite of working well, sometimes they work against you. And that's some of the frustration you deal with as an advocate.

May 16, 2009

I just spent two days at a conference on missing and exploited children. I spent one day learning about internet luring and internet pornography of mainly young teen-aged children. Which is awful, but all [of the same] information I had learned in school and through the course of my work. There is nothing more frustrating than sitting in a Winnipeg conference room learning about teens from the UK who have been exploited on the internet, knowing that it gets much worse. Knowing that there are youth in Winnipeg who are sold by their boyfriends to their dealers to cover drug debts. Who are locked in rooms, apartments or basements and used sexually and beaten physically for non-compliance. Who are addicted to drugs, which seriously compounds their risks for exploitation and their vulnerabilities. Who give blow jobs for \$2 because they are desperate. Who are boys. Who believe they are in control of their exploitation when, in reality, they are too young to make the decisions necessary to be in control.

May 16, 2009

Today there was a mugging just around the corner from our center. Some teeny tiny 20 year old woman was beat up by a couple. All I

heard was that the guy was Aboriginal, had a moustache, was young. No details about his girlfriend. My boss asked me if I had any idea who did it, I had a hunch who it might have been. Don't get me wrong. I'm not in the business of making assumptions about what the youth have and have not been up to and I love them regardless. But things can get a little messy when we end up having to advocate for youth we don't even know and that means we are questioning (and sometimes confronting) the youth we do work with. Because sometimes they have done the wrong thing. And sometimes we feel torn.

May 22, 2009

You should go get a job. If I told you that, you'd probably tell me you already have one. Or you're working on it. Or you have too many other responsibilities in your day. Or you're sick and you can't work. You'd probably give me some type of response that I would accept as reasonable and I would drop the subject. But our youth are told to get a job all day every day by everyone and their dog. Their welfare workers tell them they are going to be cut off assistance if they don't apply for 40 jobs or so. The cops tell them they need to get their shit together and get a job like everyone else. Some of them really are working on it. But 'working on it' for a street youth might be something entirely different than it would for us. If I tell you I'm in school you'd be ok with me being unemployed. If a street youth has grade 8 education but can't go back to school yet because of an addiction or familial responsibilities or mental health concerns, for some reason we can't get our head around the fact that it's not so easy to just go. Some of them have way too many responsibilities in their day. To get the job you have to give up spending your day finding food, clothing, going to meetings for addictions, looking for a place to live, fighting with welfare to get assistance. And you have to wait until your first pay

cheque before you can get those things for yourself. But you were never taught how to budget, and your pay cheque wasn't very big anyway, and it's gone before you can take care of everything. Some of the youth are sick. They don't work and they can't. They might be able to do some lawn mowing or clean some windows but they won't make enough money to take care of themselves, and welfare only allows you to keep an extra \$200 on top of what they give you before they start deducting from your cheque. So working more than that isn't worth it anyway. But aren't these all reasonable explanations for why they don't work? Can't we just accept that sometimes? And if we can't, why are we going to yell at them instead of helping them get there?

May 28, 2009

What would you do if you knew the mom next door was using? And that her child isn't 16 and able to take care of herself, not 8, not 4 but almost 1 [year old]? And that mom trusts you to have her back and to help her get ahead? Trusts that you won't do anything to hurt her, her family, her lifestyle? But you have to call CFS. It's an awful feeling when you've spent years building that trust and building up that relationship and all of a sudden you have to do the opposite of what you'd always told her you'd do. And really, we are still trying to help her. We're trying to protect her child so she doesn't have to deal with the consequences of causing harm to her baby. And that child has their own interests that it is our job to protect. We're trying to get the child out of the picture of her daily life so that she has the space and time and energy to focus on her needs and her addiction and to just deal. What clients sometimes are unable to see is the difference between actions that are spurred from love and actions that are motivated by malice. They have fights with their friends, their friends rat them out. Or call CFS on them. Or trash their place. We see they are struggling; we call them on it so



*that we can help. That's the difference. But to the person who is on the receiving end of it all, that difference is so tiny, it might as well not exist.*

*June 3, 2009*

*Sometimes I feel like a hypocrite. I tell people not to fight when I know that they have to. I tell them to walk away when I know they'll be followed if they do. It's not like a fight is something.... that they can physically either walk into or skirt around. It's something that arises from emotions in the heat of the moment, and often the youth I work with lack the skills to mediate their conflicts without them escalating to the point where someone is being kicked, punched, pushed, stabbed, beat in the head with a tire iron. Black eyes, bruises, busted knuckles, missing teeth, goose eggs; they're all everyday sights around here. If I were jumped by 5 people and beat to a pulp I'd be in the hospital, probably bawling, I'd probably call my mom. But our youth often shrug it off, go home to bed, get up, change their clothes or wear the bloody ones if they don't have anything else to wear, get up and come to the centre. Because they trust us, and when they go to the hospital they are judged, yelled at, [and] don't get treated.*

*June 6, 2009*

*I don't even know if I can explain how rewarding it feels to have a job where I get to play with the cutest babies in the world, wash the blood out of a girl's hair, drive some travellers to the Perimeter [Highway] so they can hitchhike out of town to avoid being arrested and having their dogs taken away, help someone get their first photo id, hear someone tell me that they thought about what I'd said and decided not to sell a knife to a 14 year old kid, be able to feed someone who is stressed because he has no food at home to feed his sick girlfriend or son, all in one day.*

*June 10, 2009*

*What do you do when the police aren't on your side? Travellers are like the Canadian version of gypsies. For the most part, they're all young. They travel on trains and by hitchhiking. They live outside of our rules and squeegee, panhandle and do odd jobs for money. They often have dogs, tattoos, big packs with all their belongings in them. They live outside a good chunk of the time. Most of them are incredibly intelligent, respectful toward people who treat them well. But a lot of people don't treat them very well at all. Some people pick fights with them; good luck because these guys usually have some type of weapon and fighting is nothing new to them. Some people just yell at them, refuse them service, kick them out. But what do you do when it's the police who are egging you on? Provoking and antagonizing you? That's what happened to a few of our travellers. They called to let us know that a police officer had been harassing them repeatedly every day telling them they're going to screw up, he's going to arrest them, they're going to lose their dogs (which are like their best friends, children, body guards and life line combined). So they've moved on. We packed them into the car and drove them to the Perimeter where they could catch a ride out of here. That shouldn't have to be the answer. But when the bad guys are the police and the good guys are dirty, sometimes smelly youth who refuse to live by 'our' rules, there isn't a whole lot you can do.*

*June 14, 2009*

*Sometimes they don't want what we want. Sometimes they don't want the lives we imagine they could have, they don't want the homes we imagine they could live in; they don't want the sobriety we know they could attain or the relationships we know they deserve. And when they don't want those things, it can be so difficult. Like yesterday a girl comes in cursing because she still doesn't*

have a bed and her worker hasn't found her one yet. I asked her, 'honestly, what have you been doing yourself to try to find one?' and she said 'nothing'. So I looked on the internet, found some beds that were being given away for free and told her that we could help her get it, I just wanted her to send the email. But sending that email was so oppositional to anything she wanted to do. In sum, it never happened. And we can't do it all for them. There's a certain point where you're not helping anymore, you're hand holding. And there's another point where you're not hand-holding anymore, you're just doing it for them. And that's not ok. They don't learn anything that way. So no emails were sent. No beds were received. A girl slept on the floor of her apartment yet again last night.

June 19, 2009

A girl comes in crying and sprawls herself out on our couch. She won't talk. She's been coming here for a few years now and we know her, and we care about her, and we want to help, but she won't talk. And yes, we're service providers. But there's a really thin line there between providing services and feeling protective and feeling like a parent. So I sat beside her and rubbed her back. 'If I can guess what's wrong will you tell me if I'm right?' she nodded yes. So I started guessing. Racking my brain to think of all the possibilities. This girl has just lost her job. She is going to be homeless at the end of the month. She just found out she's pregnant. Her boyfriend is angry at her for losing her job. She has no real relationship with her parents to speak of. No close friends. So I start guessing: boyfriend? no. finding a place? and that was it. Second guess. She said she's just so frustrated because she was fired so she isn't eligible for EI [Employment Insurance] or EIA [Employment and Income Assistance]. She can't find a job because she's so overwhelmed with trying to find a place to live. She can't find a place to live without a job

and money. Nobody wants to rent to her because she has a poor rental history from when she was unstable, addicted, and being evicted every time you turned around. And what can I tell her? There's always a shelter, but she's doing so well. And she can see herself sliding backwards into homelessness and she's trying to stop herself from falling, with her heels dug into the ground and fighting the whole way. She even broke down and called her mom, asking if she could come stay there until she found a place and her mom said 'I don't want to talk to you. At all,' and hung up. It's hard to be poor. It's hard to be young and poor. It's hard to be young, poor, jobless, homeless, pregnant and not have a support network to lean back on.

July 3, 2009

Other agencies don't always get it. They 'work on it' while we WORK ON IT. A 16 year old ends up at RaY homeless with no guardian, not only from out of city but out of province as well, on the afternoon before Canada Day. He had been staying at Manitoba Youth Services but they told him his 3 days were up. On the day before Canada Day. Do CFS workers get Canada Day off? Yep. But we call CFS because this is definitely their jurisdiction, and get voicemails and ringing phones that don't get answered. Did you call it? Because we did. They don't want to take new cases on the day before a holiday. So my coworker presses '0' for emergency. Tells them the situation. Tells them [emergency services operator] they [CFS] need to open a file for him, they need to open it now. The CFS worker concedes, says she will open a file, get him into Ndinawe (the only other shelter that youth under 18 can access in this city) for a maximum of 2 weeks, get him onto independent living, get him into a place, then asks, 'What have you done for him?' to which my coworker replies 'I got his file in your hands.' People underestimate the value of advocacy every day. Without it, this 16 year

*old boy would be sleeping outside. And would have no income. Would be completely vulnerable to beatings, police, other street persons, violence, predators, drugs, infections, you name it. So the kid is reasonably safe. But our housing guy is on holiday. The rest of us can fill in to some degree but he has all the connections and he's not here. This morning, my coworker says, 'it's too bad housing's on holiday and can't hook that kid up right away,' so I ask what about CFS? What are they doing? He said, 'They're working on it. They just want us to work on it too'. Which translates to, 'They're probably doing the minimum amount of work, and they're doing it slowly.' We could do it better, faster, and with a more positive and loving attitude I'm sure.*

*July 21, 2009*

*What happens if someone comes to you and they're on the run?' I got that question today from a 15 year old in a group home where I went to talk about anger management. Let alone that she's probably way beyond learning how to recognize her triggers and take control of her anger in a positive way before she gets into trouble for making poor choices. 'It*

*depends on who you are and who you're running from' was the answer. Because if you're a minor, and you're running from your guardian, group home, parents or CFS, we have to make the call. You're not old enough to take proper care of yourself and before you argue with me, you're not old enough to rent a place, to get on welfare, to go to food bank, or to work, which means you're not old enough yet to take care of yourself. If you're on the run from the cops, it's their job to catch you; it's not my job to turn you in. But it's a tricky question you know? We want to be role models, have your back, teach you positive life skills, help you learn how to make a better life for yourself. We will try to teach you responsibility and about consequences by encouraging you to turn yourself in. But jail isn't going to teach you any more than we are, so that one's up to you.*

*And it's hard to be the advocate and see you making poor choices for yourself.*

*To see you neglecting your welfare, or your children's (born or unborn) welfare.*

*It's hard to see you struggle, or spiral but sometimes all we can do is watch and hope.*

## **Take a second look**

It costs us nothing to take a second look at how we perceive the world of poverty and its inhabitants. As illustrated by the diarists in *It Takes All Day to Be Poor*, how we form our viewpoints is a tricky business, as is how we come to occupy our own social status. There are no one-size-fits-all explanations or solutions for how we become poor or how we escape being poor. Becoming poor is often a matter of bad luck, but escaping poverty is rarely a matter of good luck. Escape comes from the concentrated efforts of individuals and society as a whole.

It is the hope of all who participated in this project that by giving voice to their experiences, we will all better understand how complex and insidious poverty is. Who of us could cope better than any of these brave people? Who of us should care?

That is perhaps the only easy question: we all should.

This section colours and contextualizes the lives of six inner-city residents, allowing us to put faces and names to “the poor”. We see the broad spectrum of people who are affected by poverty. Their stories tell of the tremendous obstacles they face, and are permeated with their humanity and good will.

The facts and figures in the following section are necessary to add to our understanding of how poverty is changing in the inner city. But at the same time, we can forget the numbers represent real people with feelings, fears, hopes and dreams. We hope that you will carry the image of at least one of the diarists in your mind as you continue reading. Then multiply that image by the all-too-high numbers we present. We think you will agree that the result is staggering and unacceptable.

# Tracking Poverty in Winnipeg's Inner City, 1996–2006

by **Shauna MacKinnon**

There are many ways to measure progress in a community. Tracking poverty rates over time is one way. While poverty is a much more complex story than statistical data can tell, measuring poverty over time by comparing such data can help us to track trends. For governments that have been bold enough to set targets, this can be particularly important as it helps them to measure their progress.

Census data are a tool to measure changes in poverty. Census data are collected every five years in Canada. Using data from the Community Social Data Strategy (CSDS) and past local data networks, we are able to provide an overview of the poverty story in Winnipeg's inner city.

The CSDS is a consortium of local data user networks that provides a gateway through which municipalities and community-based organizations access social data from Statistics Canada and other sources. Led by the Canadian Council on Social Development, the CSDS obtains and disseminates a wide variety of social data at a preferred rate, allowing CSDS partners to share the costs and benefits of this vital information. CSDS data are important because they mine the census data and provide us with deeper insights.

## Poverty indicators

While Canada does not have an official poverty line, the Statistics Canada Low-Income Cut Off (LICO) is most often the measure used. The LICO is an income threshold below which a family will likely devote a substantially larger share of its income on food, shelter and clothing than would the average family. Using data from the 1992 Family Expen-

ditures Survey as a base, and then factoring in Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation rates, Statistics Canada calculates both before and after-tax cut-offs for various family and community sizes resulting in 35 cut-offs. Another absolute measure—the Market Basket Measure (MBM) was introduced in 2003 by the Canadian government. It takes into account a broader range of essential goods and services but the net result is not much different than the LICO. We use LICO data in this State of the Inner City Report because it is available to us through the consortium.

## Inner City boundaries

When we refer to the inner city we mean the geographic area originally defined by the 1980s Core Area Initiative. It is bounded on the north by Caruthers Ave. west of the Red River and Munroe Ave. east of the Red River; on the west by McPhillips St., Ingersoll St. and Raglan Road; on the south McMillan Ave. and Marion St.; and on the east by Raleigh St., the Seine River and Archibald St.

Census Canada uses the boundaries shown in Map A (Appendix A). The highlighted areas in the centre of the map indicate inner city neighbourhoods, some of which are featured in our tables.

The boundaries for the neighbourhoods in Map A are defined in Appendix A.

It is also worth noting the boundaries used by the Government of Manitoba's Neighbourhoods Alive! (NA!) initiative. NA! is a provincial government initiative that provides funding to targeted neighbourhoods in the inner-city of Winnipeg as well as Brandon, Dauphin,

Flin Flon, Portage la Prairie, Selkirk Thompson and The Pas. The following map outlines where Neighbourhoods Alive! funding is focused in Winnipeg.

It helps to know where support has been targeted because that support has made it possible for neighbourhood renewal corporations (NRCs) to facilitate some important initiatives in these neighbourhoods. NRCs and other organizations form a network of services and supports that do important work on the ground. Some of these community-based organizations (CBOs), like the Community Education Development Association, Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre, Native Women's transition centre, North End Women's Centre, Rossbrook and others have been at work in the inner city for a very long time. Others, like the Aboriginal Visioning Centre, and Daniel McIntyre/ St. Matthews Community Association are newer. These organizations receive support through a variety of funders including the City of Winnipeg, the Province of Manitoba, the Government of Canada, United Way of Winnipeg, The Winnipeg Foundation and others. The contribution that

these community-based organizations make cannot be overstated.

Testimonials from people who we have interviewed over the past five years through our State of the Inner City report provide insight into how important organizations are to inner-city residents:

*...thank God for this place [without it] I don't know if I would have my daughter today*

*...It's helped me to see [how] to live my life away from drugs and alcohol....*

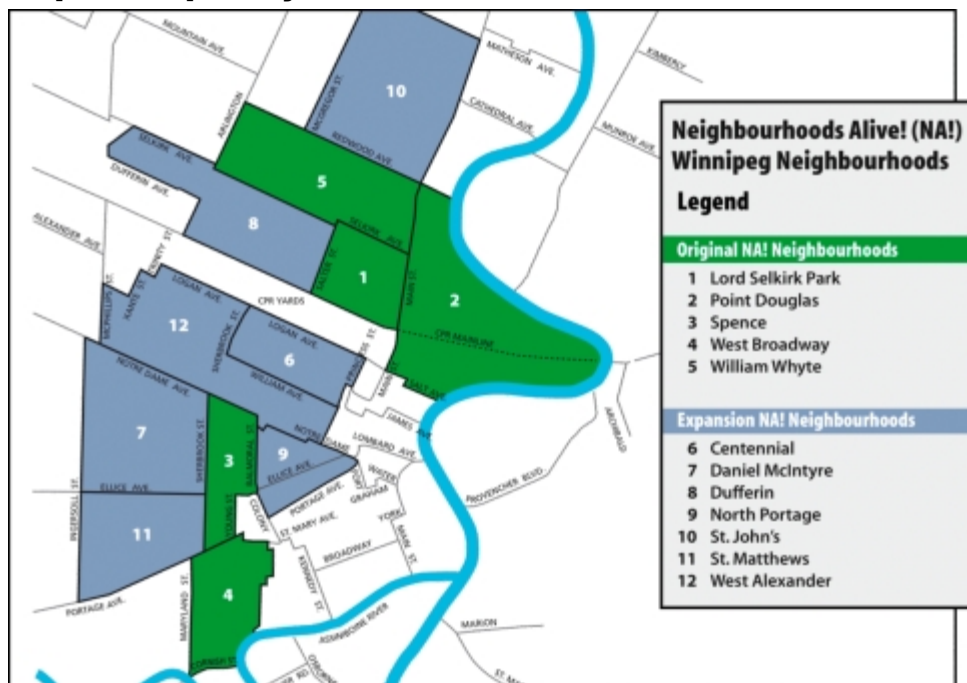
*...I felt so welcome when I came there and I got to know everyone right away and it kept me away from getting into trouble....*

*...I love it....*

*...so, I guess for me, [the CBO] was a lifesaver for my family.*

This is a sample of what we have heard over the past five years from the hundreds of people we have interviewed for our State of the Inner City Reports. As we describe further in this report, many people living in the inner-city have very complicated lives rooted in poverty and oppression. For these people, CBOs make a world of difference.

**Map B: NA! priority districts**



## Inner-city population and poverty over time

CCPA Manitoba began the process of measuring poverty in Winnipeg's inner city in the publication *Solutions that Work: fighting poverty in Winnipeg* (Silver: 2000). At that time we had census data that showed how significantly the inner city had changed over the 30-year period between 1966 and 1996. During that time, Winnipeg's census metropolitan area (CMA) population grew by 31.20 percent, while the inner city population declined by 25.5 percent. The inner-city share of Winnipeg's population dropped from 28.7 percent in 1966 to 16.3 percent in 1996 (Silver, 2000, p, 27-31).

We also showed that poverty had increased significantly. The poverty rate in Winnipeg increased from 20.6 percent in 1971 to 28.4 percent in 1996. Inner-city poverty increased from 32.6 percent to 50.8 percent in that same time period.

The situation for the Aboriginal population had also worsened. In 1971, 57.1 percent of Aboriginal households lived in poverty. This number increased to 64.7 percent in 1996. Data for Aboriginal households in the inner city were not available until 1986 however at that time the rate was 67.2 percent, increasing to 80.3 percent in 1996.

So what has happened since 1996?

Census data from 2001 and 2006 show a slight change in the trend in terms of population.

As shown in Table 1, the population in the Winnipeg CMA grew by 4.1 percent from 1996 to 2006 while the inner-city population increased by 11.8 percent. In 2006 the inner-city population was approximately one percent higher as percentage of the Winnipeg CMA population than it was in 1996. So, it appears that more people are living in the inner city. This is an interesting trend that can likely be attributed to a variety of factors. One explanation is that increasing house prices in Winnipeg is prompting people to move to the inner-city where housing is comparatively affordable. As has been documented in previous CCPA reports, this has been particularly true for neighbourhoods like West Broadway and Spence. The result has been mixed. It is positive that these neighbourhoods are increasingly becoming mixed-income neighbourhoods; on the other hand, when higher-income people move in it pushes up housing prices, thus forcing some low-income people to move elsewhere, a process typically called gentrification.

## Poverty in Winnipeg

It should be noted that while we are focusing on poverty in the inner city of Winnipeg, poverty can be found across Manitoba. Aboriginal people, persons with disabilities, women, and new immigrants are over-represented among the poor.

Geographically, poverty is most severe in First Nations communities and in urban centres. In

**Table 1: Winnipeg and Inner-City Population, 1996–2006**

	Winnipeg CMA	Winnipeg CMA % increase 1996-2006	Inner city	Inner city % increase 1996-2006	Inner city as % of CMA
1966	508,760	4.1%	145,910	11.8%	28.70%
1996	667,210		108,695		16.30%
2001	671,274		119,670		17.8%
2006	694,670		121,615		17.5%

Sources: 1966, 1996 - Silver, 2000, pg. 30; 2001, 2006 - Statistics Canada Census

Winnipeg, poverty can be found in pockets throughout the city however much of it is spatially concentrated in Winnipeg's inner city.

The poverty situation in Winnipeg as well as in the inner city has improved somewhat. As seen in Table 2, the percentage of households living in poverty has decreased since 1996 in the inner city and in Winnipeg as a whole. However the rate of poverty continues to be much higher in the inner-city at 39.6 percent compared with 20 percent in Winnipeg

In addition to the spatialized nature of poverty described above, there is also a very clear distinction in income when comparing Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations.

Aboriginal people make up approximately 10 percent of Winnipeg's population yet constitute 25 percent of those living in poverty. Aboriginal women are consistently poorer than Aboriginal men (PCWHCE: 2009). In 2006, Aboriginal children were almost three times more likely to be poor than non-Aboriginal

children. Aboriginal children under six years of age living in Winnipeg had a poverty rate (based on before-tax LICO) of 65 percent compared to 23 percent for non-Aboriginal children less than six years.

As seen in Table 3, Aboriginal poverty in Winnipeg is double that of the non-Aboriginal population. The poverty rate for Aboriginal people in the inner city is more than three times that of the non-Aboriginal Winnipeg rate.

While we do not have 2006 census data to show Aboriginal household poverty comparable to that in Table 4A, we do have data showing the percentage of Aboriginal persons in inner-city households in poverty compared to non-Aboriginal persons in the inner-city living in poverty (before and after tax). It is notable, as shown in Table 4B, that the after-tax percentage of inner-city households living in poverty (37.4 percent) was higher than the before-tax poverty rate. While it seems odd that the after-tax percentage is higher than the

**Table 2: Household Poverty Rate Trends: Winnipeg and Winnipeg Inner City, 1996–2006**

Year	Households in poverty Winnipeg	Households in poverty inner city
1996	24.25%*	48.25%
2001	20.29%	40.49%
2006	20.20%	39.60%

Sources: 1996 - Silver, 2000 p. 39; 2001, 2006 - Statistics Canada Census

\*the definition of this census table has changed therefore the 1996 percentages shown are somewhat different than those used in previous calculation. We have used the new calculations for 1996 to remain consistent.

**Table 3: Aboriginal and Overall Household Poverty Rates (before tax): Winnipeg and Winnipeg Inner City, 1996–2006**

	Households in poverty in Winnipeg	Aboriginal households in poverty	Aboriginal poverty compared with non-Aboriginal	Aboriginal households in poverty inner city
1996	28.4%	64.7%	2.27%	80.3%
2001	24.7%	53.7%	2.17%	71.3%
2006	20.2%	46.0%	2.27%	65.0%

Sources: 1996 - Silver, 2000 p. 40; 2001, 2006 - Statistics Canada Census



before-tax percentage, the data are based on a small sample size—making the difference statistically insignificant.

Other data that tell a story of spatialized poverty in Winnipeg are shown in Tables 5 and 6 (next page). There is an over representation of people with low-incomes in the inner city compared with the City of Winnipeg, in all categories. Not surprising then is the difference in average income between the inner city and Winnipeg as a whole. As seen in Table 7 (next page), the average income in Winnipeg is 50 percent higher than in the inner city. It should also be noted that this difference is higher when looking at specific inner-city neighbourhoods. Incomes in the inner city are also skewed upward as small pockets of high-

income earners in downtown Winnipeg and places like Armstrong Point are included in the inner-city boundary.

Income disparity and demographic differences are most pronounced when comparing neighbourhoods in Winnipeg's inner city with those in the suburbs, and in particular suburbs in the south side of the city. For example, according to 2006 census data, 56 percent of Point Douglas economic families had incomes below the poverty line, compared with 4 percent in Seine River and 6 percent in Fort Whyte. The unemployment rate in Point Douglas was almost 3 times that in Seine River and Fort Whyte in 2006. Point Douglas is also home to a much larger Aboriginal population (36 percent) and almost

**Table 4A: Aboriginal Poverty Rates:  
Winnipeg Inner City Households, 1996–2001**

	<b>Aboriginal households as % of all inner-city households</b>	<b>Aboriginal households as % of inner-city households in poverty (before tax)</b>	<b>Aboriginal households as % of inner-city households in poverty (after tax)</b>
1996	13.9%	22.0%	NA
2001	15.0%	24.3%	NA

Sources: 1996 - Silver, 2000 p. 40; 2001 - Statistics Canada Census

**Table 4B: Aboriginal Poverty Rates:  
Winnipeg Inner City Persons in Private Households**

	<b>Aboriginal persons as % of all inner-city persons</b>	<b>Aboriginal persons as % of all inner-city persons in poverty (before tax)</b>	<b>Aboriginal persons as % of inner-city persons in poverty (after tax)</b>
2006	21.0%	34.4%	37.4%

Sources: Statistics Canada Census 2006

**Table 5: Incidence of Low Income:  
Winnipeg and Winnipeg Inner City, 2006**

<b>Percentage incidence of low income</b>	<b>Inner City</b>		<b>City of Winnipeg</b>	
	<b>Before tax</b>	<b>After tax</b>	<b>Before tax</b>	<b>After tax</b>
Total economic families	32.5%	25.8%	14.9%	11.1%
Female lone parent	60.9%	52.9%	42.0%	33.6%
Total private households	39.6%	32.5%	20.2%	15.7%
Children under 6 years	62.6%	54.3%	31.7%	25.9%

Sources: Statistics Canada Census 2006

half of Point Douglas families are sole parent headed—a striking difference from the demographics and household structures of the two suburban neighbourhoods.

Homeownership is often used as an indicator of stability. This is not to suggest that owning a home is always the best option. In his research on the benefits of homeownership for low-income households, Hajer (2009) notes that while it is often promoted as a goal for low-income families, the statistical evidence to support the argument that homeownership leads to improved self-esteem, happiness and health is not strong. Hajer concludes that for

many low-income families, “homeownership may not be the best solution as the higher costs can lead to greater financial strain in the short-run. For families that are time and credit constrained, this can lead to significant stress and hardship (p.5)”. Nonetheless, it is useful to look at housing tenure when comparing neighbourhoods. As shown in Table 8, there is a drastic difference between inner-city and non-inner city neighbourhoods. Fully 72 percent of households in non- inner city neighbourhoods own their homes compared with 39.1 percent of those in the inner- city. In some neighbourhoods like Centennial most residents rent their homes.

**Table 6: Household Income: Winnipeg and Winnipeg Inner City, 2006**

	Inner city	City of Winnipeg
Average household income	\$40,900.	\$63,023
Median household income	\$31,773	\$49,790

Source: Statistics Canada Census 2006

**Table 7: Selected Social and Economic Indicators for Specified Geographical Areas, 2006**

Indicator	Manitoba	Winnipeg	Point Douglas	Seine River	Fort Whyte
Population	1,148,400	633,451	20,560	23,095	29,480
Lone-parent families	17.0%	19.5%	44.5%	11.8%	6.8%
Aboriginal identity	15.5%	10.1%	36.2%	5.9%	2.7%
Unemployment rate	5.5%	5.2%	14.1%	3.6%	3.7%
Median total income pop. 15+	\$24,194	\$26,015	\$14,982	\$33,362	\$35,339
Incidence of low income (economic families before tax)	12.0%	15.0%	56.0%	4.0%	6.0%
Incidence of low income (unattached persons 15+)	38.0%	43.0%	67.0%	28.0%	29.0%
Median income all economic families	\$60,754	\$65,016	\$31,351	\$83,585	\$99,528
Median income couple economic families	\$66,686	\$72,337	\$38,820	\$87,859	\$102,547
Median income female lone parent families	\$32,883	\$34,960	\$22,128	\$51,305	\$62,801

Source: Manitoba Bureau of Statistics and Statistics Canada, Census 2006

Important indicators of poverty are unemployment and labour force participation rates. This is not to suggest that employment is always a ticket out of poverty. In fact many low-income families earn their primary income through employment. In 2004, 17.4 percent of the Manitoba labour force earned under \$9.00 per hour (Just Income Coalition, 2005, p. 54). Nonetheless, examining employment and participation rates over time tells us that there were improvements between 1996-2006 in the Winnipeg CMA and in the inner city. While unemployment rates for both men and women in the inner city remain higher than Winnipeg generally, they have dropped significantly. And while labour force participation rates for both men and women in the inner city remain lower than Winnipeg generally, they have risen significantly—in fact labour force participation rates for women were as high in the inner city as in Winnipeg overall by 2005. It is notable however that the unemployment rate has dropped more significantly for males in

both the inner city and in Winnipeg. The unemployment rate for women in Winnipeg was less than that of males in 1996 (7.3 vs. 8.5) however in 2006, the rate for males was lower at 4.9 percent compared with 5.1 percent for females. In the inner city a similar dynamic is observed. The rate for males was a striking 17.8 percent in 1996 but down to 7.8 percent in 2006. The rate for women in the inner city also sat at 7.8 percent in 2006 however the decrease was less significant, dropping from 12.4 percent in 1996. Labour-market participation rates for women continue to be much lower than men's in Winnipeg and in the inner-city, which may partially explain why their unemployment rate is lower than men's.

While labour force trends in the inner-city appear positive, closer analysis is required to determine whether gains have been made for long-time low-income inner city residents and to what extent gains are a reflection of factors like gentrification.

**Table 8: Dwelling tenure, Ownership Versus Rental, 2006**

Tenure	Inner-city households	Non Inner city	Lord Selkirk park	Centennial
Owned	39.1%	72.3%	10.6%	21.3%
Rented	60.9%	27.7%	89.4%	78.7%

Source: Statistics Canada Census, 2006

**Table 9A: Labour-force Characteristics: 15 years and over, 1996–2006  
Adult Unemployment and Labour-force Participation by Gender**

	Winnipeg CMA Unemployment Rate: Male	Participation Rate: Male	Inner city Unemployment Rate: Male	Participation Rate: Male
1996	8.5%	74.0%	17.8%	66.3%
2001	6.0%	75.0%	10.0%	71.0%
2006	4.9%	73.8%	7.8%	70.4%
	Unemployment Rate: Female	Participation Rate: Female	Unemployment Rate: Female	Participation Rate: Female
1996	7.3%	60.9%	12.4%	50.9%
2001	5.0%	56.0%	8.0%	56.0%
2006	5.1%	58.7%	7.8%	58.7%

Sources: 1996 - Silver, 2000 p. 34; 2001, 2006 - Statistics Canada Census

Table 9B shows us that unemployment rate and labour-force participation rates for both male and female youth in the inner city have also improved. But unemployment rates are still too high, and labour-force participation rates too low.

Education is critical to securing well-paid employment. As shown in Table 10, education attainment is lower among inner-city youth between the ages of 25 and 35 years and the percentage of individuals in low income is highest among those with the lowest education attainment. Also of note is the higher concentration of low-income people between 25 and 35 years residing in the inner city.

More recently we have seen an increase in the number of new immigrants settling in the inner city compared with those settling in non-inner city neighbourhoods. As shown in Table 11, prior to 1991, there was an equal distribution of immigrants, as percentage of the total population, in both the inner city and non-inner city. This has changed since 1991 but in particular, since 2001. Between 2001

and 2006, the percentage of new immigrants settling in the inner-city was double the number settling in non-inner city neighbourhoods. Further analysis is required to determine the nature of this dynamic but the affordability of housing in the inner-city compared with that in non-inner city neighbourhoods is likely an appeal for new immigrants with limited incomes. Many of the new immigrants settling in the inner city are refugee families from war-torn countries. In the Central Park neighbourhood for example, it is estimated that some 90 percent of families are refugees from African countries (MacKinnon and Stephens, 2007).

As shown in the previous pages, poverty is spatially concentrated in the inner city of Winnipeg, and it is racialized. Spatialized poverty is of particular concern because in addition to the obvious barriers that result from insufficient income, it creates a situation where everyone one comes into contact with is poor. This concentrated and intense poverty was described in our 2005 State of the Inner City Report as follows:

**Table 9B: Youth Unemployment and Labour-force Participation Rate by Gender: 15-24 Years of Age, 1996-2006**

	<b>Winnipeg CD</b>		<b>Inner City</b>	
	<b>Unemployment</b>	<b>Participation</b>	<b>Unemployment</b>	<b>Participation</b>
1996	14.30%	67.60%	18.90%	59.30%
2001	14.52%	61.06%	18.34%	61.45%
2006	11.10%	69.50%	11.90%	64.10%
	<b>Unemployment Rate: Male</b>	<b>Participation Rate: Male</b>	<b>Unemployment Rate: Male</b>	<b>Participation Rate: Male</b>
1996	15.40%	69.20%	21.80%	61.50%
2001	16.51%	62.21%	24.00%	62.50%
2006	11.90%	69.70%	12.80%	67.40%
	<b>Unemployment Rate: Female</b>	<b>Participation Rate: Female</b>	<b>Unemployment Rate: Female</b>	<b>Participation Rate: Female</b>
1996	13.20%	66.00%	16.20%	57.20%
2001	12.98%	60.13%	13.83%	60.65%
2006	10.30%	69.30%	11.00%	61.10%

Sources: 1996 - Silver, 2000 p. 35; 2001, 2006 - Statistics Canada Census

One is the notion of a complex web—a web of poverty, racism, drugs, gangs, violence. The other is the notion of a cycle—people caught in a cycle of inter-related problems. Both suggest the idea of people who are trapped, immobilized, unable to escape, destined to struggle with forces against which they cannot win, from which they cannot extricate themselves. The result is despair, resignation, anger, hopelessness, which then reinforce the cycle, and wrap them tighter in the web (CCPA-Mb 2005: 24).

The web of despair described is particularly damaging. It is deeply rooted and the solutions are as complex as the causes. This form of poverty often manifests itself in negative forms of behaviour—crime, violence, family dissolution, for example. Some may come to see the behaviour, and the culture of which it is a part, as the cause of spatially concentrated, racialized poverty (Lewis 1968). But the causes of this poverty are structural and those caught

up in it often make behavioural responses and cultural adaptations to their socio-economic circumstances. If we change their socio-economic circumstances, their patterns of behaviour will change. As described by Wilson (1987: 14):

As economic and social opportunities change, new behavioural solutions originate and develop into patterns, later to be complemented and upheld by norms. If new situations appear, both the patterns of behaviour and the norms eventually undergo change. “Some behavioural norms are more persistent than others”, wrote Herbert Gans in 1968, “but over the long run, all of the norms and aspirations by which people live are nonpersistent: they rise and fall with changes in situations”.

The details in this section remind us that versions of the stories from section one are being repeated over and over in the inner city. And

**Table 10: Education Attainment and Low Income: 25–35 Years of Age, 2006**

Total in labour force (employed/unemployed)	56,000	Non inner city Percentage low income	20,490	Inner city Percentage low income
Total low income	7,725	13.8%	7,335	35.0%
No certificate	5,970	55.0%	3,140	59.0%
High School or equivalent	16,940	19.0%	5,835	38.0%
PSE certificate or degree	4,103	12.0%	11,515	35.0%

Source: Statistics Canada Census, 2006

**Table 11: Immigrant Population: Inner City and Non-inner City**

Immigration period	Percentage of Inner City	Percentage of Non Inner City
before 1991	11.96%	11.33%
1991-1995	2.42%	1.59%
1996-2000	2.18%	1.57%
2001-2006	6.65%	3.15%
Immigrant population 2006	23.21%	17.64%

Source: Statistics Canada Census

although the numbers show us that we've begun to turn things around, we cannot be complacent, particularly in the current precarious economic situation. If we turn our backs on this vulnerable population because of the recession, we will lose all the ground gained and have to start over. Not only should we continue our efforts, now is the perfect time to intensify them. If we were to implement a well-financed comprehensive poverty-reduction plan, we would stimulate the economy

while improving people's lives. People like Angelica, Uzochi, Allan, Taryn, Janette and Claudette.

For those who would think that the combined efforts of government and community-based organizations don't work—think again. The following section shows us exactly how it works. Yes, it works slowly. Yes, it takes great effort. But it works. Person by person, family by family, we can turn neighbourhoods around.

# Lord Selkirk Park: Rebuilding from Within

by Jim Silver

This is the third time we have reported on developments in Lord Selkirk Park, having previously done so in the 2005 and the 2007 *State of the Inner City Reports*. In 2005 our report was largely negative, even bleak; in 2007 signs of improvement were apparent, and in 2009 the “rebuilding from within” strategy is well underway in Lord Selkirk Park. Serious problems remain and current efforts will have to be sustained and expanded over a long period yet. But Lord Selkirk Park is now firmly headed in the right direction.

## Context: What is Lord Selkirk Park?

Lord Selkirk Park is a 314-unit public housing complex in Winnipeg’s low-income North End. It has characteristics typical of large public housing complexes, as revealed in part by selected indicators in the following table, which shows that the high incidence of poverty in Winnipeg’s inner city is particularly accentuated in Lord Selkirk Park. The table also shows the high levels of unemployment,

low levels of labour-force participation and low levels of formal educational attainment in Lord Selkirk Park, relative both to Winnipeg and the rest of the inner city.

## What was said about Lord Selkirk Park in 2005?

In the 2005 *State of the Inner City Report* we made positive comments about many community-based organizations (CBOs) and people working in Lord Selkirk Park, but the overall tone of the report was negative. We reported that “little progress is being made and a new approach is needed” (CCPA-Mb 2005: 21). One person, who works in Lord Selkirk Park, when asked what the problems in the community are, replied:

*Poverty, poverty, poverty, and poverty are the major problems. Racism, violence against women, violence against girls. Gangs. Drug dealers. Addiction. And poverty (CCPA-Mb 2005: 22 & 24).*

**Table 12: Poverty and Related Indicators in North End Winnipeg’s Lord Selkirk Park, Relative to Winnipeg, and Winnipeg’s Inner City, 2006**

Selected Indicator	Lord Selkirk Park	Inner City	Winnipeg
Households below Statistics Canada before-tax LICO (rate of poverty)	82.3%	39.6%	20.2%
Median household income	\$15,552	\$31,773	\$49,790
Unemployment rate (15 years & over)	18.7%	7.8%	5.2%
Youth (ages 15-24) unemployment rate	25.0%	11.9%	11.1%
Labour force participation rate, 25 years & over	39.5%	64.5%	67.7%
Youth (15-24) labour force participation rate	37.7%	64.1%	69.5%
No certificate, diploma or degree, 15 years & over	58.7%	29.9%	23.1%
Lone-parent families, both sexes, as % of all families	60.5%	32.1%	19.5%
Aboriginal population as % of total	66.7%	21.0%	10.2%

Source: Statistics Canada Census

We asked people working in Lord Selkirk Park, often called the Developments, what things seemed to be working well. We got some very discouraging answers:

*Right now, I don't see anything. I don't see anything at all.*

*Not much seems to work. There's a lot of failures.*

*I think the Developments is not working well.*

Some went so far as to say:

*I would get rid of the Lord Selkirk Park as an entity.*

And:

*I'd like to just bulldoze this whole fricking place down, I hate it, I hate it. I hate what it's doing to families here. (CCPA-Mb 2005: 24 & 27).*

## **The State of the Inner City Report 2007**

Two years later, the *State of the Inner City Report 2007* had a different tone.

*This year Lord Selkirk Park is celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and a sense of change is in the air. Exciting initiatives now underway hold out the prospect of community transformation. A new sense of hope is emerging (CCPA-Mb 2007: 3).*

The changed mood was partly the result of a different way of thinking about the Developments, as suggested in the following passage:

*Rather than seeing the Developments through a "deficit lens", that is, focusing on the problems in the community, efforts now underway make use of an "asset lens", identifying the strengths and assets of the community. This shift in thinking about the Developments is important. It is the starting point for positive change. All communities, no matter how*

*difficult their circumstances, have strengths, and these can be built upon to promote positive change. Lord Selkirk Park is no exception.*

*This asset-based way of thinking leads to abandoning the notion that, because of the problems, Lord Selkirk Park should be bulldozed. Rather, the starting assumption is that public housing is not the problem. On the contrary, public housing is a significant part of the solution. It is part of the solution because it offers good-quality, low-income rental housing at a time when that is in perilously short supply. The good-quality, affordable housing at Lord Selkirk Park needs to be seen and understood as an asset.*

*Second, it is known from community organizing, from day-to-day contacts, and from more formal interviewing of people in the Developments, that many who live there are living strong and stable lives, and want more opportunities for themselves and their children and grandchildren. Many have specifically made it known that they would like to improve their education (Michell and Wark 2007; Silver 2007). But at the moment they are not able to further their education because the barriers to their doing so are too great. Many are single parents, and the problems of transport and childcare, given their low incomes, are too difficult to surmount. So steps have been taken to think about how to meet their desire to further their education, and how to overcome the barriers they face.*

*This has led to thinking about creating **opportunities** for people in the Developments, and of **tailoring** those opportunities to their particular circumstances and needs, and of putting in place the **supports** that would enable them to take advantage of these opportunities. The way of thinking driving these changes involves promoting tailored opportunities and supports, and building a "learning environment" — one that supports learning.*



*The goal is to make Lord Selkirk Park a place where low-income people want to **live**, rather than a place that they want to **leave**. People who want to take advantage of the specially tailored opportunities and supports available at the Developments will, in time, create an engaged and vibrant community, a place of opportunity and hope, rather than what so many now see as a place of poverty and despair (CCPA-Mb., 2007:4, 5).*

By 2007 this way of thinking had led to the creation of a Community Advisory Committee, the Lord Selkirk Park Resource Centre and an Adult Learning Centre, located in the middle of Lord Selkirk Park, that opened its doors September 7, 2007, offering the mature grade 12 certificate.

### **What is Happening in Lord Selkirk Park Today?**

Large, inner-city public housing projects are typically cast in a very negative light. An example of this can be found in the reaction of outsiders to recent negative incidents in Gilbert Park, another large North End public housing complex. Those events have led some to write public housing and their residents off as hopeless cases, as “ghettos”, as danger zones that breed crime and disorder and ought to be bulldozed.

A better way of viewing public housing is to emphasize strengths and to build on these. That is what the North End Community Renewal Corporation (NECRC) has been doing in Lord Selkirk Park for the past four years. From a conceptual starting point that sees the good-quality, low-cost housing and the people who live there as assets, NECRC has been working on a strategy they call “Rebuilding from Within”. It emphasizes creating opportunities and providing supports that enable residents to develop their capabilities.

Gains to date have been impressive. The first

step was to create a Community Advisory Committee (CAC), comprised of all government and community-based service delivery agencies in the area that meets monthly to share information about Lord Selkirk Park. Monthly meetings now attract between 30 and 40 people, including growing numbers of residents. An independent evaluation of the CAC in 2008 reported that a new and more positive mood could now be seen in Lord Selkirk Park, and that this was at least partly attributable to the work of the CAC.

In February, 2006, the Lord Selkirk Park Resource Centre was created because residents said that they wanted a place where they could meet. The Resource Centre is staffed by two Aboriginal women, and offers a drop-in service, free laundry and phone, and crisis and employment counseling. It attracts large and growing numbers of residents, and is the catalyst for many new initiatives in Lord Selkirk Park. The Resource Centre is another successful initiative.

### **Educational Initiatives**

In early September, 2007, an Adult Learning Centre opened its doors. Many residents had made it clear that they wanted more educational opportunities, but said that difficulties with transportation and childcare, plus the fact that they were adults and not teens, meant that the regular high school system was not meeting their needs. Following negotiations with the provincial government an Adult Learning Centre was established, located in Turtle Island Neighbourhood Centre in the middle of the Developments and thus easily accessible by foot. It is now called Kaakiyow Li Moond Likol, a Michif name meaning All-People’s School. Kaakiyow has two teachers and a support/outreach worker, offers the mature grade 12 diploma, doubled its enrolment from 15 to 28 in its second year, 2008/09, and in June 2009, at the end of its second full

year, celebrated the graduation of its first 7 students. Today there are 34 adult learners enrolled in Kaakiyow, and the school is permanently funded by the Province of Manitoba, and thus not subject to the impermanence that comes with project funding. Kaakiyow is a major new initiative, now well-established and well-used in Lord Selkirk Park.

Numerous other educational initiatives are underway.

An adult literacy program operates three half-days per week out of David Livingstone School and prepares adults whose writing skills need upgrading for entry into Kaakiyow, or into the labour force upon completion of the GED.

A university-level program in Community Recreation and Active Living (CRAL), run jointly by the University of Manitoba and University of Winnipeg, offered its first course in May-June 2009 to a group of 14 North End Aboriginal residents. The second course will have been completed by December 2009. Courses are offered on-site in the North End, another example of taking education to the people, rather than trying to send the people to distant educational facilities. Students who would not otherwise have attended University are doing well in the program, and have the option of completing a University degree, or entering the workforce. The City is supporting CRAL, hoping to hire more Aboriginal people trained in sport and recreation for work in North End community centres.

Also in 2009 Pathways to Education Canada began operations in Winnipeg's North End, administered by CEDA, a long-established inner-city CBO. Pathways is a remarkably successful high-school support program that started in Toronto's Regent Park in 2000. It has dramatically cut high-school drop-out rates and increased high-school graduation rates in that public housing complex, previously in-

famous for poor educational outcomes and high levels of crime. It was through work being done in Lord Selkirk Park that Pathways came to Winnipeg, and based on the experience in Toronto's Regent Park (<<http://www.pathwaystoeducation.ca/results.html>>), it is likely to begin to solve the serious problem of very low high school graduation rates in the North End (Brownell et al 2008: 243-244; Brownell et al 2004: 5).

Provincial funding to create a 47 space Childcare/Resource Centre in Lord Selkirk Park was finalized in October, 2009. Sixteen of the spaces will be infant spaces-residents have said this is the greatest need. The existing Lord Selkirk Park Resource Centre will be integrated into the childcare centre, creating a "hub" model that will be the centre of ongoing revitalization initiatives. More children will benefit from early childhood education, and their parents will be able to earn their grade 12 at Kaakiyow—shortage of childcare spaces was identified by residents as an important barrier to education (Michell and Wark 2007).

### **Job Creation and Local Hiring**

The overall strategy is to increase educational opportunities for residents of Lord Selkirk Park, and also to create more jobs. The establishment of the Childcare/Resource Centre is expected to create about 24 jobs, the firm commitment is to hire locally, and local people with the appropriate credentials are already submitting resumes.

The provincial government's investment

#### ***New job opportunities for residents in Lord Selkirk Park***

- *Lord Selkirk Park Childcare/Resource Centre—24 jobs.*
- *Renovation of existing housing units—20 jobs.*
- *Kaakiyow—those earning grade 12 diploma more likely to get decent jobs.*
- *CRAL—those earning university diploma more likely to get good jobs, especially with City of Winnipeg.*

### ***Some recent educational initiatives in Lord Selkirk Park***

- *Lord Selkirk Park adult literacy program-academic upgrading.*
- *Kaakiyow Li Moond Likol-mature grade 12 diploma.*
- *Pathways to Education-high school support program.*
- *CRAL-university-level diploma in recreation & active living.*
- *ECE-early childhood education at the soon-to-be-built childcare/resource centre.*
- *CSI-summer learning retention program for elementary students.*

of fiscal stimulus money in renovations of public housing units, and their commitment to hiring locally, has meant that Lord Selkirk Park is now buzzing with the sound of construction work being done by local people, about 20 from Lord Selkirk Park, who have jumped at the chance to work.

Those graduating from Kaakiyow with their grade 12 diploma are much more likely to be able to find employment, or to pursue further education leading

to employment, and those North End Aboriginal residents, many of them young people, who are taking university-level CRAL courses are much more likely to find employment, and to do so in North End community centres.

The net result will be that more people in Lord Selkirk Park will be in school or in the labour force, or both; more youngsters in public housing will be succeeding in school because their parents are going to school and because they have the support of Pathways to Education; and more adults will be improving their literacy skills (see sidebars).

### **Resident Engagement**

Resident involvement in this work has been limited to date, despite significant efforts, and this is an important limitation. Good community development means resident engagement, but resident engagement takes time and patience, especially in low-income neighbourhoods like Lord Selkirk Park, and especially

when residents have been jaded by the stops and starts of programs created by inconsistent project funding. NECRC has regularly surveyed residents door-to-door and held community gatherings; the Resource Centre, Kaakiyow and soon-to-be-built Childcare/Resource Centre are the direct consequence of what residents have told us they want and need in the community. But securing their actual direct involvement has been more difficult.

However, at a recent community gathering to seek feedback and input, 10 residents approached the North End Community Renewal Corporation wanting to constitute a Residents' Planning Group to provide more systematic guidance and direction for the revitalization efforts. That residents have come forward in this way is evidence that the gains made to date are creating a new mood of optimism. This is a significant step forward. The Coordinator of the Lord Selkirk Park Resource Centre is now working with this group of residents to build their skills and capacities and promote their direct involvement in the revitalization initiatives. It is hoped that this will be the beginning of a greater resident engagement in this work.

This emergent resident engagement, and the constant communication to date with residents about what initiatives are to be undertaken, is consistent with one of the Principles set out in the Lord Selkirk Park Five-Year Plan:

*Any re-building of Lord Selkirk Park must be based on the full involvement of the members of the community. The imposition of a plan from the outside would not work. The full involvement of people in Lord Selkirk Park in developing and implementing the Five-Year Plan is in itself an important part of the means by which their capacities and capabilities will be further developed (NECRC 2008).*

## **Conclusion**

Far from being a “ghetto”, as recent critics of public housing have charged, Lord Selkirk Park is becoming a hotbed of transformative educational and employment initiatives.

Lord Selkirk Park cannot be turned around overnight, and there will be setbacks along the

way. But creating educational and employment opportunities and the supports needed to take advantage of them is building in Lord Selkirk Park not the “ghetto” seen by uninformed observers, but rather a community of opportunity and hope in which residents are struggling, with steadily growing success, to build a better future.

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## Final thoughts on the state of the inner city, 2009

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As we complete this year's *State of the Inner City Report*, we are left with mixed thoughts. The statistics as described in section two show that progress has been made, but they also show that we have a long way to go. This is especially true when we look at the racial and spatial nature of poverty that continues to create overwhelming barriers for Aboriginal peoples, new immigrants, persons with disabilities and others over-represented in the poverty statistics.

The stories described by the seven individuals who bravely shared their lives with us through their journals provide important in-

sight into the struggles of the many individuals and families who continue to live in poverty. The idea that escaping poverty is an easy thing to do is clearly not one that comes from anyone who has lived in poverty.

We hope readers remember these stories whenever they hear or read poverty statistics. We hope they will celebrate when faceless numbers show improvement, and protest if they show decline.

And finally, the story of Lord Selkirk Park shows us that positive change is possible when community and government work together.

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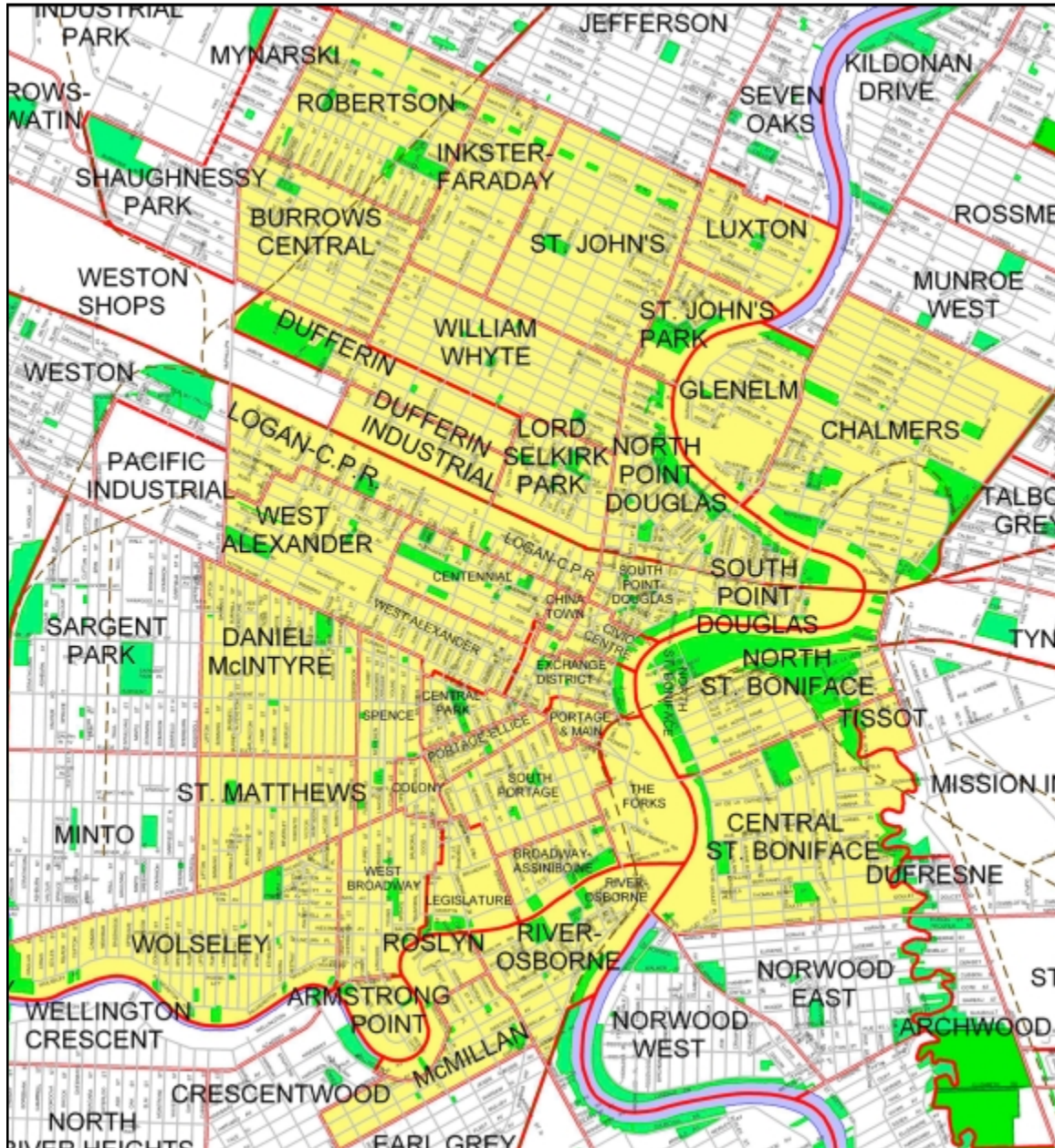
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# Appendix A

## Winnipeg Inner-city Boundaries

Map A: Inner-city Districts



**Inner City—Western Boundary**—from Ingersoll St. at Portage Ave., North to Notre Dame Ave., North on McPhillips St., East on Logan CPR, North on Arlington St., West on Dufferin Ave., North on McPhillips St. to Carruthers Ave.

**Inner City—Northern Boundary**—from Carruthers Ave. at McPhillips St., East to Main St., North to Mattheson Ave E. South on the Red River and across the Red River and North on Henderson Hwy., East on Munroe Ave. to Raleigh St.

**Inner City—Eastern Boundary**—from Raleigh St. at Munroe Ave., South to Archibald St. to the Seine River and South to Marion St.

**Inner City—Southern Boundary**—From Marion St. and the Seine River, West , across the Red River to Osborne St., North to Corydon Ave., West on Corydon Ave., then North on Stafford St. , East on Grosvenor Ave., West on Wellington Cres. and North to the Assiniboine River. West along the Assiniboine River to Lindsay St., and North to Portage Ave.

### **Winnipeg's Inner-city Neighbourhood Boundaries**

**Robertson**—From Landsdowne Ave. at McPhillips St., East to Arlington St., South on Arlington St. to Mountain Ave., West on Mountain Ave. to McPhillips St.

**Inkster Faraday**—From Carruthers Ave. at Arlington St. to McGregor St., South at McGregor St. to Redwood Ave., West at Redwood Ave. to Arlington St.

**St. John's**—Carruthers Ave. at McGregor St., East on Carruthers Ave. to Main St., South on Main St. to Redwood Ave., East on Redwood Ave. to McGregor St.

**Luxton**—Matheson Ave. E at Main St., East to the Red River, South along the Red River to Cathedral Ave., West on Cathedral Ave. to Main St.

**St. John's Park**—Cathedral Ave. at Main St., East on Cathedral Ave. to the Red River, South along the Red River to Redwood Ave., West on Redwood Ave. to Main St.

**Glenelm**—Harbison Ave. W at the Red River, East to Henderson Hwy., South to the Red River.

**Chalmers**—Munroe Ave. at Henderson Hwy., East to Raleigh St., South to the Red River, West along the Red River to Henderson Hwy.

**North Point Douglas**—Redwood Ave. at Main St., East on Redwood Ave. to the Red River, South along the Red River to Point Douglas Ave., West along Point Douglas Ave. to Main St.

**William Whyte**—Redwood Ave. at Arlington St, East along Redwood Ave. to Main St., South on Main St. to Selkirk Ave., West on Selkirk Ave. to Arlington Ave.

**Burrows Central**—Mountain Ave. at McPhillips St., East on Mountain Ave. to Arlington St., South on Arlington St., West on Selkirk Ave. to McPhillips St.

**Dufferin**—Selkirk Ave. at McPhillips St., East on Selkirk Ave. to Salter St., South on Salter St. to Dufferin Ave., West on Dufferin Ave. to McPhillips St.

**Dufferin Industrial**—Selkirk Ave., at Arlington St., East on Selkirk Ave. to Salter St., South on Salter St. to the CPR Railway, West along the railway to Arlington St.



**Lord Selkirk Park**—Selkirk Ave. at Salter St., Eastbound to Main St., South on Main St. to the CPR Railway, West along the railway to Salter St.

**South Point Douglas**—Point Douglas Rd. at Main St., heading East to the Red River, South along the Red River to Alexandria Ave., West to Logan Ave. and North to Main St.

**Logan-CPR**—From the Railway lines at McPhillips St., East along the railway lines to Main St., South on Main St. to Logan Ave., East on Logan Ave. to Trinity St., South to Alexander Ave., South on Xante St. to Elgin Ave., West to McPhillips St.

**West Alexander**—From Elgin Ave. to Xante St., North to Alexander Ave., East to Trinity St., North to Logan Ave., East on Logan Ave. to Sherbrooke St., South to William Ave., East on William Ave. to Princess St., South to Notre Dame Ave., West on Notre Dame Ave. to McPhillips St.

**Centennial**—Logan Ave. at Sherbrook St., West to Princess St., South on Princess St. to William Ave., West to Sherbrook St.

**China Town**—Logan Ave. at Princess St., East to Main St., South on Main St. to Ross Ave., West on Ross to Princess St.

**Civic Centre**—Logan Ave. at Main St., East to Galt Ave., East to Waterfront Dr., South to James Ave., West to Lilly St., South to Market Ave., West to Main St., South to William Ave., West to Princess Ave., North to Ross Ave.

**North St. Boniface**—Red River at Boul. Provencher, North along the Red River to Point Douglas Ave., East to Rue Archibald, South to Boul. Provencher.

**Tissot**—Boul. Provencher at the Seine River, East to Rue. Archibald, South to Plinguet St., West to the Seine River.

**Central St. Boniface**—Boul. Provencher at the Red River to the Seine River, South along the Seine River to Marion St., West on Marion St. to the Red River.

**The Forks**—York Ave. at Main St., East to Waterfront Dr., North and East to the Railway tracks at Lombard Ave., South along the Red River to Gibraltar Tr., West to Main St., North to York Ave.

**Portage & Main**—Portage Ave. at Main St., North to Lombard Ave., East to the railway tracks, South to Water Ave., West to Main St., South to Graham Ave., West to Fort St., North to Portage Ave. at Main St.

**Portage- Ellice**—Ellice Ave. at Colony St., North on Balmoral St. to Notre Dame Ave., East to Portage Ave., West on Portage Ave. to Colony St., North to Ellice Ave.

**Central Park**—Notre Dame Ave. at Balmoral St., East to Ellice Ave., West to Balmoral St.

**Spence**- Notre Dame Ave. at Sherbrook St., East to Balmoral St., South to Ellice Ave., West to Spence St., South to Portage Ave., West to Sherbrook St., North to Notre Dame Ave.

**Daniel McIntyre**—Notre Dame Ave. at Ingersoll St., East to Sherbrook St., South to Ellice Ave., West to Ingersoll St.

**St Matthews**—Ellice Ave. at Ingersoll St., East to Sherbrook St., South to Portage Ave., West to Ingersoll St.

**Wolseley**—Portage Ave. at Empress St. E., East to Maryland St., South to the Assiniboine River, along the Assiniboine River to Empress St. E.

**West Broadway**—Portage Ave. at Maryland St., East to Spence St., South to St. Mary Ave., East to Colony St., South to the Assiniboine River, West to Cornish Ave., West to Maryland St.

**Colony**—Ellice Ave. at Young St., East to Colony St., South to Memorial St., South to St. Mary Ave., West to Young St.

**Legislature**—St. Mary Ave. at Colony St., East to Vaughn St., South to York Ave., East to Kenney St., South to the Assiniboine River.

**South Portage**—Portage Ave. at Memorial St., East to Fort St., South to Graham Ave., East to Main St., North to Water Ave., South along the railroad tracks to York Ave., West to Main St., South to Broadway, West to Kenney St., North to York Ave., North on Vaughn St., West on St Mary Ave., North at Memorial St.

**Broadway-Assiniboine**—Broadway at Kennedy St., East to Main St., South to the Assiniboine River, West to Kennedy St.

**River Osborne**—Assiniboine River at Osborne St., East to the Red River, South to McMillan Ave., South to Osborne St., North to the Assiniboine River.

**Mc Millan**—Grosvenor Ave. at Stafford St., East to Wellington Dr., East to River Ave., South at Osborne St., West to Corydon Ave. and West to Stafford St.

**Roslyn**—Assiniboine River at Grosvner Ave. and Wellington Cres., East to Osborne St., South to River Ave., South at Wellington Cres. to Grosvernor Ave.

**Armstrong Point**—Assiniboine River at Cornish Ave., East to Assiniboine River.

## **Appendix B**

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### **CLOUT coalition members**

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- Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre
- Rossbrook House
- Mount Carmel Clinic
- Ndinawemaaganag Endaawad (Ndiniwe)
- Prairie Women's Centre of Health Excellence
- Andrews Street Family Centre
- Community Education Development Association
- Native Women's Transition Centre
- North End Women's Centre
- Wolseley Family Place