

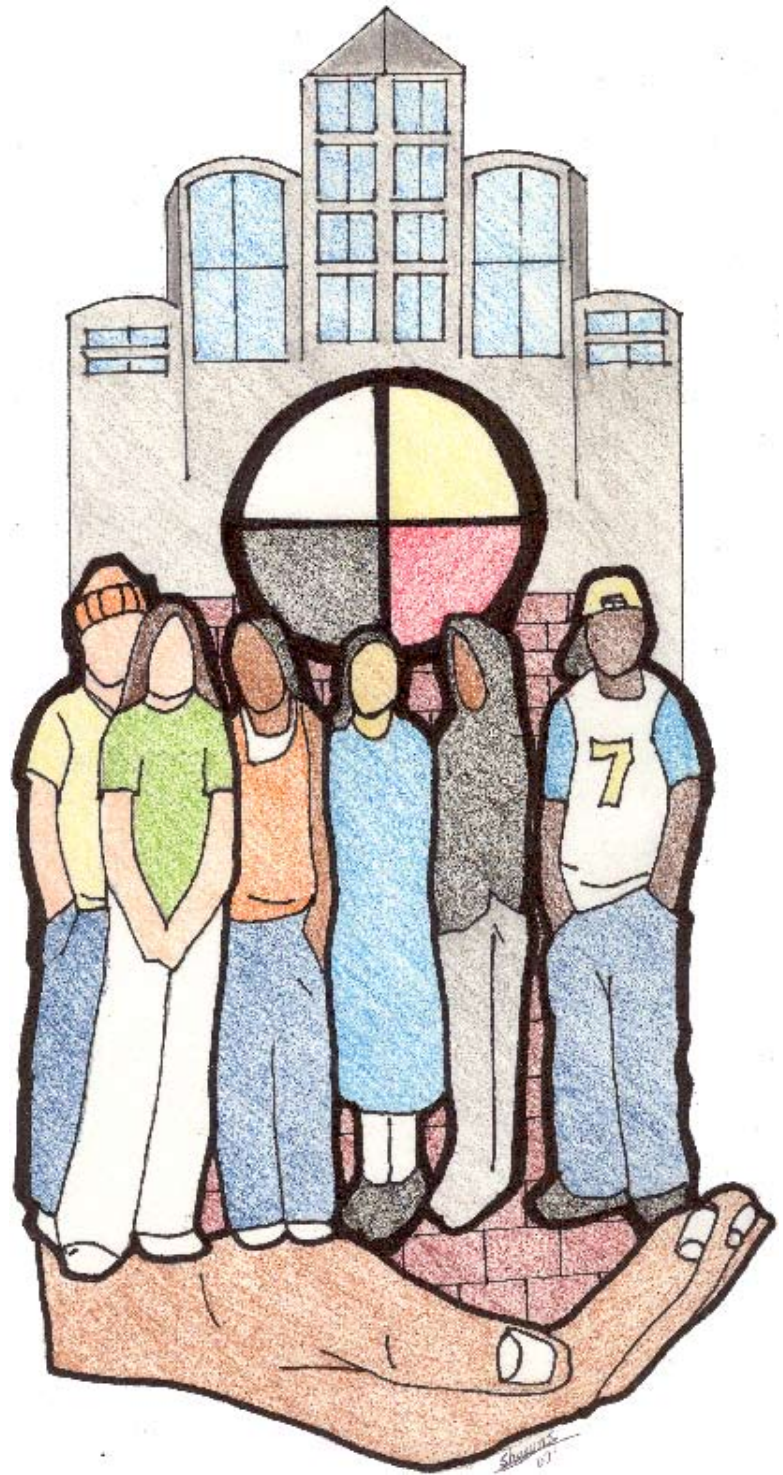


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CANADIAN CENTRE
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MANITOBA OFFICE

*Step by Step:
Stories of
Change in
Winnipeg's
Inner City*

**State of the Inner City
Report: 2007**



Cover Artwork: by Shawn Sigurdson
Ndinawe Youth Transitional School

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State of the Inner City Report: 2007

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CANADIAN CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES-MB
309-323 Portage Ave.
Winnipeg, MB • Canada R3B 2C1
ph: (204) 927-3200 fax: (204) 927-3201
ccpamb@policyalternatives.ca
www.policyalternatives.ca



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Introduction

We are pleased to present the third annual *State of the Inner City Report*. These reports are unique publications, in at least two ways. First, they consist of original research undertaken in Winnipeg's inner city, and are intended both to shed light on inner-city conditions, and to contribute to positive changes in public policy. We believe that the *State of the Inner City Reports* are contributing to the achievement of both of these goals.

Second, the entire project is undertaken in a collaborative and community-based fashion. A participatory action research (PAR) methodology is typically used: researchers from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives-Manitoba (CCPA-Mb) and the universities work together with inner-city residents and community workers to design and conduct the research. The result has been the development of a genuinely close working relationship between inner-city residents and community workers, and academic and other researchers, coordinated by the CCPA-Mb. This kind of collaboration is rare; its emergence here in Winnipeg produces useful and often insightful research results.

The first section of the *State of the Inner City Report 2007* examines recent and very positive developments in Lord Selkirk Park in Winnipeg's North End. We first reported on Lord Selkirk Park in the *State of the Inner City Report 2005*, and said then that it is one of Winnipeg's lowest-income neighbourhoods. Almost 90 percent of households there had incomes below the Statistics

Canada Low-Income Cut Off in 2001. Many people interviewed in 2005 expressed concerns about the presence in Lord Selkirk Park of gangs, drugs and violence.

We are pleased to be able to report that considerable progress is now being made, driven and coordinated largely by the North End Community Renewal Corporation. A Community Advisory Committee brought all the community-based organizations and service delivery agencies in and near the neighbourhood around a single table, improving levels of communication and cooperation and making new initiatives possible. A Resource Centre opened in February 2006, and has become a centre of community-based activity. In September, 2007, an adult learning centre opened, offering the mature grade 12 diploma to neighbourhood residents. And plans are now well underway for the establishment of a childcare/family resource centre complete with parenting programs, pre-school programs, and potentially, the on-site delivery of the Red River College early childhood education program. There is an energy, and the emergence of a new mood of optimism, at Lord Selkirk Park, and the *State of the Inner City Report 2007* describes the process and the philosophy behind it.

Our second section reveals clearly the benefits of these and related community-based initiatives, not only in personal gains for inner-city residents, but also in terms of the costs and benefits to society at large. Poverty is expensive; we all benefit economi-

cally and otherwise, when effective anti-poverty programs are implemented.

This section reports on a very careful and detailed study of the costs incurred, by individuals and society, when young women enter the street sex trade. The study included detailed interviews with a large number of sex-trade workers. It gathered information about their health, education, and labour market activity. It concluded that not only does involvement in the sex trade impose a terrible personal toll on individuals—adverse health effects, violence, fear—but also that it imposes large costs on society as a whole. These costs are so substantial that, when considered in the context of a relatively small program aimed at deterring young girls in Lord Selkirk Park from entering the sex trade, the study was able to conclude that if the program dissuaded fewer than two of these girls from being lured into the sex trade, then it would pay for itself.

The important public policy conclusion to be drawn is that policy directions over the past 25 years in the western world—cutting back on government programs, and on the taxes needed to fund such programs—does not make good economic sense. It makes better economic sense for governments to invest in well-designed community-based anti-poverty initiatives.

The third section of this year's *State of the Inner City Report* reinforces this conclusion, and does so in a particularly creative fashion. Many community-based organizations (CBOs) believe that the work they do in Winnipeg's inner city produces benefits that are hard to see, and are missed by program evaluators. They argue that because of their efforts, many inner-city people are making small but important gains that are "flying below the radar" of evaluators. To test this hypothesis, CCPA-Mb has worked closely with the members of Community-Led Organizations United Together (CLOUT), a coalition of eight inner-city CBOs. Working collaboratively, CLOUT and CCPA-Mb developed a methodology aimed at

elucidating the experience of inner-city people who are the recipients of CLOUT members' services, and at identifying subtle yet important gains. A total of 89 program participants were interviewed. The interviewers were low-income inner-city residents who were trained for the job. Over and over again, those interviewed reported on important gains that they are making as the result of their involvement with a CLOUT member organization.

Again, the reasonable conclusion to be drawn from such research is that government investment in the kinds of CBOs that are so prominent in Winnipeg's inner city improves peoples' lives. Further evidence of this is that those inner-city residents who were hired and trained as interviewers in this project also benefitted. One woman described it this way:

I really don't mind if you put my real name on the final report. Our people have been silent for way too long...without a name or a face, which is known as an identity.

I'm starting to know my culture and my identity, so without a name or a face, I am not complete or whole. I feel our government and/or other agencies could and will know the real facts. I feel too, we as a people need to speak up, and let our voices be heard. I am speaking up for people who don't have a voice or they're afraid to speak up. I am giving you permission, to put my real name on the final report. I want to thank you for giving me the chance to speak up, I have learned so much about human beings, including myself.

One theme runs through all three sections of *The State of the Inner City Report 2007*: that government investment in CBOs makes good economic sense. It changes peoples' lives for the better; that, in turn, produces benefits for society at large.

Building a Community of Opportunity and Hope:

The Lord Selkirk Park Housing Developments

This year Lord Selkirk Park is celebrating its 40th 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. For good reason, the North End Community Renewal Corporation is calling Lord Selkirk Park a “neighbourhood of opportunity.”

Lord Selkirk Park was built in 1967 as part of a nation-wide process of urban renewal. As was the case for large inner-city public housing projects throughout North America, the first residents of Lord Selkirk were pleased with their new accommodations. The housing was of good quality and was affordable. A sense of community emerged. But over the years these public housing projects developed bad reputations, becoming home to highly concentrated poverty. In many cities in North America they are now being torn down.

A different approach is being adopted at Lord Selkirk Park. Rather than being torn down, it is in the first stages of what will be a multi-year process of transformation from within.

This section of the *State of the Inner City Report 2007* examines the changes underway at Lord Selkirk Park, and the philosophy behind them.

First it is important to consider the character of the serious poverty-related problems that have emerged in recent decades. The next section of-

fers a brief description of those problems and is followed by a return to the strategy that is now underway in Lord Selkirk Park.

Poverty in Winnipeg’s Inner City and in Lord Selkirk Park

The poverty that is pervasive in Winnipeg’s inner city today is a particularly damaging form. It is not just about shortage of income. It is a poverty that is spatially concentrated—that is, there are neighbourhoods in Winnipeg’s inner city where very high proportions of the population are poor. And it is a racialized form of poverty—that is, it is closely linked to the deep and lasting effects of racism, and in the case of Aboriginal people, of colonization. It damages individuals, families and communities by eroding their self-esteem, self-confidence, and sense of self-worth. It can remove peoples’ sense of hope for a better future. People become trapped, feel controlled by outside forces, and cannot see a way out. Despair sets in; hope is lost; change becomes exceptionally difficult. This kind of damage can give rise to negative forms of behaviour that then worsen problems, setting in motion a cycle of poverty that can reproduce itself across generations. Spatially concentrated racialized poverty is now deeply entrenched in Winnipeg’s inner city, and is resistant to any and all attempts at a “quick fix.”

A particularly clear example of this form of poverty and its adverse effects can be seen in the North End's Lord Selkirk Park public housing developments. Located in the area bounded by Dufferin, King, Stella and Robinson, a block west of North Main and two blocks south of Selkirk Avenue, Lord Selkirk Park—called by many in the area “the Developments”—has all of the indicators of, and problems associated with, spatially concentrated racialized poverty. Census Canada data for 2001 show that

- 87.8 percent of households, almost nine in every ten, had incomes below the Low-Income Cut Off, sometimes called the poverty line
- just over two-thirds of adults 20 years of age and older had less than a high school education
- just under half of all households were lone-parent families
- just over half of all individuals were Aboriginal (CCPA-Mb 2005, 6).

Based on interviews with tenants and workers in the area, the 2005 *State of the Inner City Report* made the following observations:

Two metaphors occur repeatedly in the comments of those interviewed. 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 2005 *State of the Inner City Report* cited some people who work with Lord Selkirk area service delivery agencies who thought nothing could

be done to save the Developments. “I would get rid of the Lord Selkirk Park as an entity...I don't think the way it's set up there's any way to make it work”, said one, and “I'd like to just bulldoze this whole fucking place down, I hate it...I hate what it's doing to families here”, added another (CCPA-Mb 2005, 27).

And yet, positive change is now underway at Lord Selkirk Park. What has created this new sense of hope and optimism? This is an important question to answer: if those in Lord Selkirk Park can overcome the particularly damaging form of poverty described above, it can be overcome anywhere in Winnipeg's inner city.

What follows is a description of recent efforts in Lord Selkirk Park, starting with a particular way of thinking about the Developments.

Thinking About the Developments

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 moves beyond the notion that 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 child-care, 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.

As the result of an intense year of effort by many in the community, an adult learning centre opened September 7, 2007, located right in the Developments at Turtle Island Neighbourhood Centre, and it is offering the mature Grade 12 diploma. It is tailored to the circumstances and needs of people in the Developments.

But let us go back a bit, to see how the foundation for this achievement was laid.

Starting to Build A Neighbourhood of Opportunity

The current round of changes in Lord Selkirk Park began about 1997 when a Lord Selkirk Park Neighbourhood Council was established to develop a strategic plan for the area. Following a process of public consultation and public meetings, a strategic plan was adopted in mid-1998. Two important themes run through that plan: one was the need for organizations and individuals in the neighbourhood to work in partnership rather than isolation; the other was the need for residents to be involved in the decision-making process, in keeping with the principles of community development. A key feature of the strategic plan was a proposal to develop a Neighbourhood Resource Centre in the Developments.

In 2002 the North End Community Renewal Corporation sent in a community organizer to lay the groundwork for a community revitalization strategy, as part of a comprehensive community initiative (CCI) for which funding had been received. A CCI seeks to work at community revitalization in a way that is holistic, and that involves all of the community. The organizer found that the efforts of the thirty or more community-based organizations (CBOs) and agencies working in the area were not well coordinated. As a result of his and other peoples' efforts, these CBOs and agencies came together to form a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) in April 2004. The CAC quickly identified the creation of Lord Selkirk Park Tenant Resource Centre, as called for in the earlier Strategic Plan, as an important next step. In early 2006 the Lord Selkirk Park Resource Centre opened its doors in a unit in the Developments. These two initial steps, the formation of the Community Advisory Committee and of the Resource Centre, can be described quickly, but in fact their establishment took many hours of hard and patient effort by tenants and workers in the area.

The Lord Selkirk Park Resource Centre has been a roaring success. Staffed by two Aboriginal women with historic and family links to the Developments, the place is now a hotbed of activity. Many residents drop by regularly to use the free laundry facilities or the clothing exchange, or to sit and talk over a cup of tea. This breaks down the isolation experienced by many, and contributes to building a sense of community. People in the area made it known that they would like to be able to have access to a counselor about various personal problems. Mount Carmel Clinic made a qualified Aboriginal counselor available on a half-time basis to work out of the Resource Centre, and many have taken advantage of her availability. A “best yard contest” was organized in each of the past two years, with topsoil and bedding plants made available free of charge for tenants to use in their yards, and this has been a huge success. People have taken advantage of the opportunity and have felt good about being able to make their homes look better. This too builds a sense of community, and also a sense of pride in one’s home.

These have been important steps. They have created not only a greater sense of community, but also a sense of momentum in the neighbourhood. Tangible things are happening. The Resource Centre has become an organizing hub in the Developments, acting as the catalyst in initiating various activities, and working closely with the Community Advisory Committee. There is more activity, and it is better coordinated. This is the foundation upon which the development of an adult learning centre was built.

The Adult Learning Centre

In-depth interviews with 20 women in the Developments in 2006 (Silver 2007), and with 12 women and 11 men in the Developments in 2007 (Michell and Wark 2007), identified interest among many in achieving their Grade 12. This led the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) to consider the possibility of adult

education. The particular barriers identified by those interviewed—difficulties with transport and childcare especially—led a Committee of the CAC to consider the need to locate the adult education facility right in Lord Selkirk Park. Because Manitoba has developed the highly successful adult learning centre model for adult education, the Committee set its sights on the establishment of an adult learning centre.

Adult learning centres have been shown to be effective in working with precisely the kinds of people who live in the Developments. As shown above, more than 50 percent of residents in the Developments in 2001 were Aboriginal, almost 50 percent were single parents, and almost all were low income. The 2006 Census of Canada data, when available, will show that this remains the case. A study by Silver, Klyne and Simard (2004), based on interviews with 75 Aboriginal learners in adult learning centres in Manitoba, found that Aboriginal adults feel comfortable and welcome in ALCs, and that many are achieving their mature Grade 12. The ALCs are effective because they offer a holistic approach to education, in a warm and welcoming environment that is non-hierarchical, supportive, respectful and personalized, and in which teachers “go the extra mile” for their students. An adult learning centre does not look nor operate like a traditional school; it is an approach to education that is specifically tailored to the circumstances and needs of low-income adults.

Its being located right in the Developments is an essential feature of the adult learning centre. It is an example of tailoring the project to the needs and realities of the community. There is a wealth of evidence that for a variety of reasons—no least of which is the pervasive racism and stereotyping to which many public-housing residents are subjected—the residents of public housing projects are often reluctant to move far away from home. This is a feature of public-housing projects in other urban centres. A recent study

(Silver 2007) of women in Lord Selkirk Park found that this is the case in the Developments as well: there are many barriers, tangible and intangible, that serve to confine many in Lord Selkirk Park to that small geographic space and immediate environs. Therefore it is essential that the adult learning centre be located at Lord Selkirk Park. As the result of negotiations with the City of Winnipeg, facilitated by a City of Winnipeg community development worker who has been a part of this project from the beginning, the ALC is now housed in two rooms in Turtle Island Neighbourhood Centre, thus removing barriers related to transport.

Another part of tailoring the project to the realities of the community is the creation of an Aboriginal-friendly environment. In interviews, residents said repeatedly that they consider this important. It has been shown that the absence of an Aboriginal-friendly environment is an important reason that Aboriginal students leave inner-city high schools before completion (Silver, Mallett, Green and Simard 2002), and that those adult learning centres that provide an Aboriginal-friendly environment do especially well (Silver, Klyne and Simard 2004). Therefore money has been included in the budget to have an Aboriginal elder on site on a part-time basis; a Native Studies course will be a central part of the curriculum; the Aboriginal counselor provided by Mount Carmel Clinic will be available to students; and the adult learning centre will be named in a naming ceremony by the Elder in residence. These important elements of the strategy are examples of how the adult learning centre will be tailored to meet the circumstances and needs of these particular adult learners.

Another part of the tailoring of the program to the circumstances and day-to-day realities of Lord Selkirk Park residents are the hours of operation. Classes run from 9:30-11:30 AM, and 1:30-3:30 PM. This will enable adult learners who are parents to walk their children to David Livingstone

School or a nearby childcare centre in the morning, and then come to class; to take their children home for lunch; and to pick them up after school in the afternoon, without missing any class time. The ALC hours are not standard school hours; rather, they are tailored to fit the reality of Lord Selkirk Park parents, and to remove an important barrier to education.

This kind of adult learning centre, located right in the Developments and tailored to the needs of the people who live there, will be a major factor in revitalizing the community. It will lead to:

- an increase in the number of people who will complete their Grade 12;
- an improvement in the sense of self-confidence and self-esteem felt by those attending the ALC;
- employment for many of those who graduate or improve their educational standing short of graduating;
- a retention of community resources, since many will stay in the neighbourhood once they get their Grade 12 and get jobs, because there is a cap on the rent at Lord Selkirk Park, and good quality, affordable rental housing is in short supply in Winnipeg;
- improved school performance by the children of adults attending the ALC—there is a wealth of evidence in support of this contention;
- the emergence of a culture of achievement and possibilities for a better life in the community;
- the likelihood that people attending the ALC will network and act collectively in pursuit of their interests, to their and the neighbourhood's benefit;
- and an improvement in the safety and security in the Developments as a new sense of purpose and of hope emerges.

The Adult Learning Centre As Part of a Holistic Strategy

The ALC is a central part of the Comprehensive Community Initiative (CCI) now being undertaken in Lord Selkirk Park by the North End Community Renewal Corporation. A major part of the reason it is believed the ALC will succeed is that it will benefit from the rich array of supports made possible by the CCI, and the many neighbourhood organizations already involved as part of the Community Advisory Committee. In other words, the adult learning centre is not an isolated, stand-alone project, but rather is a central part of a holistic strategy that involves the community as a whole and the supports the community can provide.

What follows is an “image” of what the ALC project as a whole—the ALC as part of a holistic strategy that involves the community—will look like. The project can be imagined in terms of concentric circles of support. At the heart of the circles is the ALC, physically located in Lord Selkirk Park. That the ALC is right in the Developments is an essential feature of this strategy. The first concentric circle is an essential and indispensable support—childcare. The second concentric circle represents the kinds of supports that have made Pathways to Education in Toronto’s Regent Park such an enormous success. Those working in Lord Selkirk Park have borrowed the approach used by Pathways. Pathways will be described below. The third concentric circle represents the very rich array of supports that can be provided by the community-based organizations and agencies that operate in and around Lord Selkirk Park and that are already involved in the CCI as part of the Community Advisory Committee. In short, what is being built is not only an adult learning centre, but a holistic approach to neighbourhood revitalization at the heart of which is an adult learning centre that is supported in a host of tangible and beneficial ways by the community.

This ‘image’ of the Lord Selkirk Park Adult Learning Centre with all of its supports is depicted in Figure 1.

The First, Indispensable Circle of Support: Childcare

In-depth interviews with residents of Lord Selkirk Park have made it clear that their attendance at an adult learning centre is dependent upon the availability of childcare. A very high proportion of residents of the Developments are single parents of young children. Without childcare, they cannot attend an ALC. For them, the provision of adequate childcare is not just a desirable support; it is an essential and indispensable support, without which the project as a whole cannot succeed.

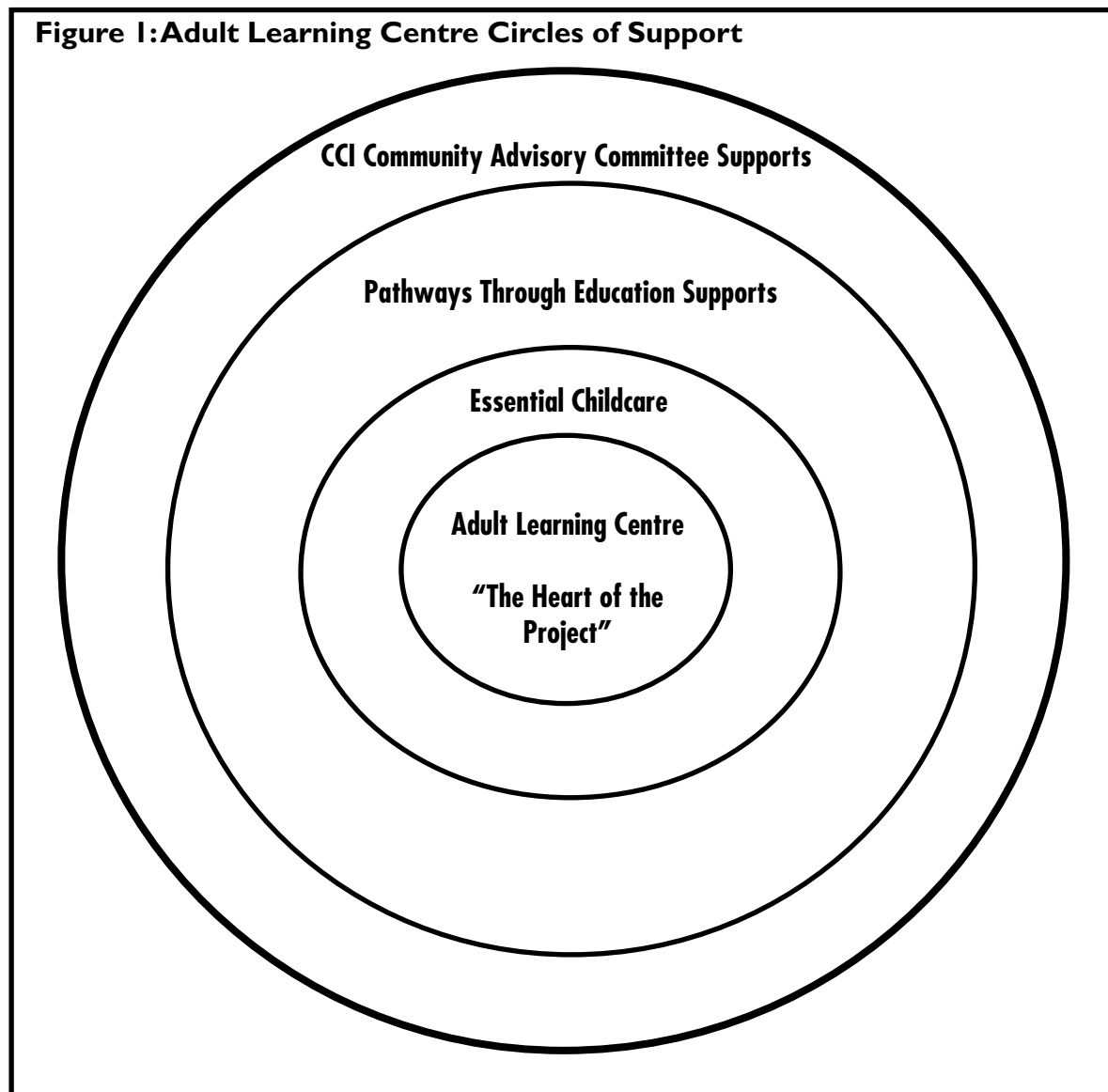
The regional childcare coordinator has been a part of this project from the beginning, and she has worked to secure spaces in existing, neighbourhood childcare centres for the children of the adult learners. This means that parents will be able to ensure that their children get safely to and from school and daycare, and attend classes at the adult learning centre. Complex lives become manageable when the ALC and childcare facilities are located right in the Developments, and the ALC tailors its hours to peoples’ real lives.

As a next step in this process, work has started to create a new childcare centre right in the Developments. Manitoba Housing has agreed to make six units available, and the North End Community Renewal Corporation (NECRC) is working with them and the regional childcare coordinator to make this happen. The new childcare centre will support parents attending the adult learning centre, and it will also develop and house parenting, pre-school and other programs. It will also create approximately 15 new jobs, and these will be filled on the basis of a commitment to hiring locally and culturally appropriately. The only slightly longer term goal is to build into the new childcare/parenting centre an Early Childhood Education program, delivered on-site by Red River College as

is already done at the SISTARS project in North Point Douglas (CCPA-Mb 2006). Once again, this will mean educational opportunities delivered on-site, and tailored to the circumstances and needs of the residents of Lord Selkirk Park, and it will mean further local job creation

The potential of this educational initiative is revealed in a comment made by one of the North Point Douglas women involved in the SISTARS project in the *State of the Inner City Report 2006* (CCPA-Mb 2006: 22):

We identified that there was a need for daycares, and a couple of women started planning instead of complaining. The women decided to do something about it. So we did a survey. They decided to attend school and at the same time provide daycare space for their kids so they could go to school. So after the ladies complete their course, they'll be able to work in the daycare. Priority will be given to residents of North Point Douglas... Red River [College] has agreed to help by embedding a campus space in the form of



a classroom....Our students are just finishing their first year now and we started with 25 students and we still have 22 so that's a very high ratio. On January 23 [2006] we held a major meeting with funders and members of government and government departments and six of those women stood up in front of all those people and talked about the project and their place in it.

This makes clear that many inner-city people want educational opportunities, and will take advantage of these opportunities when the education is delivered in the community, and when essential supports are provided. And it suggests the kind of growth in self-confidence and self-esteem that can occur when such opportunities are made available. This is essential in overcoming the form of poverty that exists in Winnipeg's inner city.

To support this work in Lord Selkirk Park the NECRC was successful in its application to the tri-level Winnipeg Partnership Agreement for funding to hire an overall project coordinator for a year. The coordinator spent most of the summer going door-to-door in the Developments, supported by two practicum students in the CED Training Intermediary program—who are as a consequence gaining valuable organizing experience—to identify students for the ALC and to ascertain their particular needs. This is an especially important part of these efforts, because this kind of community organizing involves residents in a face-to-face way, facilitates their inclusion, and adds to the community-based character of the initiative. In the fall, the coordinator will also work with the community committee in putting in place the new childcare centre and Early Childhood Education program, and a similar kind of organizing component will be built into the effort. The coordinator has also played a central role in ensuring that the myriad of details that required attention to get the adult learning centre up and running, were all attended to. Her efforts, and those of the coordinators of the Lord Selkirk Park

Resource Centre, have been indispensable in this overall project.

The Second Circle of Support: Drawing Upon the Experience of Pathways to Education in Toronto's Regent Park

Evidence that an education strategy can be successful in a large, stigmatized, inner-city public housing project with a troubled history can be found in Toronto's Regent Park, where the Pathways to Education program has experienced remarkable success. Efforts in Lord Selkirk Park have been inspired by the Pathways experience, and have borrowed some of its principles and applied them to the only slightly different context of an adult learning centre.

Pathways to Education has operated in Regent Park, Canada's largest and oldest public-housing project, since 2001. It has had dramatic results. Prior to 2001, high-school students from Regent Park had a graduation rate much lower than the Toronto average and few attended university. A culture of educational failure prevailed. Young people assumed that because they were raised in Regent Park, they would not succeed in school. Today, high-school students from Regent Park have a graduation rate that is higher than the Toronto average. Absenteeism and dropout rates have declined by approximately 70 percent. A large number of students in the first graduating class since Pathways started have successfully applied to post-secondary education. The culture of the community has changed: high-school-age students in Regent Park now believe that they can succeed educationally. As the founder of the program puts it: "The kids have changed inside, so they now expect and believe that they can do something". This dramatic shift is attributable to the work done by Pathways. Pathways has been transformative.

Pathways to Education is successful because of the supports it provides to the 700-plus Regent

Park high-school students enrolled in the program. Pathways features four kinds of supports:

- tutoring in academic subjects—all tutors are volunteers, many of them university students, and are trained and supported by a Tutor Coordinator
- mentoring in the more social and life-skill aspects of education, including problem-solving and communications skills, leadership development, and career orientation
- financial supports, in the form of free bus passes to every Regent Park high-school student, plus \$1000 deposited in a savings account for every year of high school that a student successfully completes, to be used upon completion of Grade 12 for any kind of post-secondary education;
- a Student-Parent Support Worker program that creates a liaison between students, schools and families, and assists students and parents to be more engaged with their high school.

The idea of intensive supports has been borrowed from Pathways. The provision of monthly bus passes to the 700-plus Regent Park students is an exceptionally costly part of their program, but it is considered essential because there is no high school at or near Regent Park. Low-income students need financial assistance to get to school. Bringing the school to Lord Selkirk Park provides that support. Tutoring is also being provided in academic subjects. Many adults in Lord Selkirk Park have only Grade 9 or 10, have been out of school for some time, and are lacking in confidence in their academic abilities. Arrangements have been made to recruit tutors from the University of Winnipeg, and to work with Frontier College, which has been organizing adult education in difficult surroundings in Canada for over a century, to do so. Tutors may also be drawn from the inner-city social work and education programs at the Winnipeg Education Centre (WEC), located nearby on Selkirk Avenue. A third source of

tutor volunteers may be Children of the Earth and R.B. Russell, high schools located close to Lord Selkirk Park. Discussions with staff there might lead to the creation of service credits for students doing academic tutoring. This tutoring strategy offers benefits both to those attending the ALC, and those who work as tutors.

A support that is not specifically provided by Pathways, but is logically consistent with their approach, is literacy training. Some potential ALC learners in Lord Selkirk Park are likely to have low levels of literacy, and not be quite ready for high school credits. Therefore, a two times per week evening literacy program running out of David Livingstone School has been started. This will serve as a bridge to the ALC for some Lord Selkirk Park residents, and make a more comprehensive range of educational opportunities available to residents.

A large proportion of potential adult learners in Lord Selkirk Park are going to be people facing multiple barriers to the successful completion of Grade 12. They need supports of various kinds. The Pathways to Education experience is a telling example of what can be achieved in settings like Lord Selkirk Park when supports are made available to students with barriers.

The Third Circle of Support: the Community Advisory Committee of the Lord Selkirk Park Comprehensive Community Initiative

The North End Community Renewal Corporation has been successful in securing funding for a Comprehensive Community Initiative (CCI) in Lord Selkirk Park. A Community Advisory Committee has been established and is operating in conjunction with the CCI. The CAC includes representatives of a wide range of agencies and community-based organizations that work in or near the Developments. These organizations can provide a wide range of supports to learners at the adult learning centre. For example, an Aboriginal

counselor is available at the Lord Selkirk Park Resource Centre to students at the adult learning centre thanks to Mount Carmel Clinic. Space is available for the adult learning centre thanks to the City of Winnipeg and the efforts of its area community development worker, who has been part of the Community Advisory Committee from the beginning. The Graffiti Art Gallery runs an after-school art program in Turtle Island, and is represented on the Community Advisory Committee. The University of Winnipeg Wesmen basketball team is running a Wednesday evening basketball program for youth in the Developments.

Ma Mawi works in the area providing culturally appropriate supports to families. Wabnung Abinoonjjiag also provides culturally appropriate support to women and families, as does nearby Ndinawe Youth Resource Centre for young men and women. All are represented on the Community Advisory Committee. The Lord Selkirk Park Resource Centre and its two-person staff is a hub for organizing and coordinating these efforts, and are supported by a coordinator funded by the Winnipeg Partnership Agreement for at least the next year. The Community Advisory Committee brings all of these organizations together on a monthly basis. The net result is a web of supports for adult learners, and the creation of an environment where learning opportunities are available and where learning is possible, even given peoples' difficult circumstances.

Conclusions

The broadly based effort now underway in Lord Selkirk Park is important because it is beginning to turn a neighbourhood that many had previously regarded as hopeless, into a neighbourhood of opportunity where hope is emerging.

This is attributable in part to a particular way of thinking about the Developments. This way of thinking is characterized by

- a focus on the assets and strengths in the community, more than the deficits

- a starting assumption that however difficult their circumstances may be, people have capacities that they can and will develop, given opportunities and supports
- the promotion of opportunities that are specifically tailored to the circumstances and needs and desires of residents, and of the supports needed to take advantage of those opportunities
- a recognition of the need to provide culturally appropriate supports to the greatest extent possible
- a comprehensive approach, in which people and organizations work cooperatively, rather than in isolated and disconnected silos.

Further, there is a strategic element to this way of thinking, and a focus on the need to be transformative. A strategic approach attempts to go beyond service delivery and isolated programs, to think in more holistic terms. And it attempts to shift to a more active mode, to think about change, or transformation. The objective is to create the opportunities and supports that will enable individuals to overcome the lack of self-esteem and self-confidence, the lack of hope, that characterizes inner-city poverty in Winnipeg, and to begin to build their own capacities, their own skills, and thus a new sense of self-confidence and hope.

As is shown elsewhere in this *State of the Inner City Report 2007*, a creative and thorough attempt to identify the outcomes realized by the community-based organizations that comprise CLOUT shows clearly the kinds of gains that inner-city people will make when culturally-appropriate opportunities and supports are made available to them. What is emerging in Winnipeg's inner city as a whole is a "laddered" approach to community development. People can begin to develop their confidence in small ways at first, then more opportunities are made available with appropriate supports, and still more gains are made. People begin in this way to transform themselves. Educational opportunities broadly

defined, with culturally appropriate supports, are at the heart of this transformational strategy. The adult learning centre at Lord Selkirk Park is yet another part of this laddered approach to capacity-building and personal transformation, as will be the Early Childhood Education initiative planned for the near future.

And with this strategy, community-building is occurring. The goal is not only individual, but community transformation. In the case of Lord Selkirk Park, the hope is that many of those who benefit from the adult learning centre and eventually the Early Childhood Education program will choose to stay in the Developments because the housing is affordable and comfortable, at a time when good-quality, affordable housing is in short supply. The character of the community will change as a result, with a growing proportion of those living in the Developments being in the labour force. As the educational levels and labour force attachment of residents rises, a wide range of benefits will accrue to their families and the community. Lord Selkirk Park will become a place where people want to live, not leave; a community less of poverty and despair than of opportunity and hope.

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Costing an Ounce of Prevention: The Fiscal Benefits of Investing in Inner-City Preventive Strategies

Which is better from an economic point of view: spending money to prevent problems, or holding down expenditures on prevention and bearing the costs of problems after they arise? One way of answering this question is to attempt to determine the costs—to individuals and to society as a whole—of particular social problems, and then to compare those costs with the costs of prevention. In research done on the costs to themselves and to society of young women entering the street sex trade, it has been found that it makes better economic sense to invest in prevention.

A few years ago, a research study was done on the fiscal impact of youth involvement in the street sex trade¹. Detailed calculations were made of some of the economic costs incurred as the result of young, and primarily Aboriginal, women having engaged in the sex trade during their adolescence and early adult years.

In one aspect of this work, calculations were made of the private costs to the individual involved in the street sex trade, in particular, the costs related to the employment effects in the mainstream labour market after a person leaves the sex trade. In other words, did individuals earn

lower incomes after leaving the street sex trade, than the incomes earned by those who were not lured into such activities? In a second aspect of this research, calculations were made of some of the costs incurred by various government and non-profit agencies from the individual's use of public services. In other words, what costs did governments and government-funded agencies incur as the result of peoples' involvement in the street sex trade?

Is It Exploitation or Do People Choose This Work?

Many analysts have argued extensively about the “language” surrounding the issue of prostitution. To begin, it is important to be aware that people's engagement in the sex trade is “sexual exploitation”, since in every way imaginable this is typically how it first arises. Nevertheless, the topic of prostitution is fiercely debated by advocacy groups and government policy-makers alike. Is it sexual exploitation? Is it delinquency or a public nuisance that needs to be controlled in some neighborhoods? Is it a job no different than any other occupation in which people have the right to earn money with their own body? A substantive literature tends to classify prostitution based on age. It is known that the majority of sex workers begin their engagement in the sex trade as adolescents, which clearly suggests child victimization. On the other hand, many take the attitude

¹ Though the “street-level” sex trade is emphasized here, the majority of participants had worked in different venues within the trade, for example, massage parlors, bawdy houses, strip clubs, and escort agencies.

that this activity is a vocational choice starting at age eighteen, as opposed to exploitation.

The recently released and controversial report of the House of Commons Subcommittee on Solicitation Laws has shown that this issue is a “political no-winner”. Opinions will always be divided. It can be argued that there is an element of choice at some level, though often mediated by poverty and cultural oppression. But no matter how one views this issue, it does represent the work that some people do for a period in their lives, which takes them away from their schooling and other work in the mainstream. Ultimately, this leaves many former sex-trade workers vulnerable to a lifetime of poverty. In what follows, the terms “prostitution” or “sex-trade work/workers” are used interchangeably.

The human costs of sexual exploitation take a terrible toll on people and the community. These are the key costs on which we should primarily be focused.

A Costing Method

Economic evaluation can provide policy makers with very useful supplementary information. This broader form of economic evaluation can take the form of an “economic cost-based policy framework”. This costing method can be applied to just about any inner-city social issue including adult-learning and training programs for marginalized people, child welfare issues, youth involvement in the sex trade or gangs, and child-care programs. The story being told here is how one goes about costing inner-city social problems, and determining whether their cost is so high that it might be preferable from an economic point of view to invest in prevention.

Let us consider the case of an economic cost analysis linked to the evaluation of a pilot prevention program, called Ndaawin, which was located in the Lord Selkirk Park area in the North End of Winnipeg. The evaluation was conducted by Resolve, a family violence research centre at the

University of Manitoba. The pilot project and evaluation were funded by the National Crime Prevention Strategy. One of Ndaawin’s many activities was to provide a drop-in club for children who are at high risk of engaging in (more likely, being lured into) the sex trade.

In this project, some long-run cost-avoidance figures were calculated. It was primarily Aboriginal youth who had participated in the Ndaawin program. The program may have dissuaded some of them from entering the sex trade, and/or from getting involved in gangs, drugs and other associated activities. The idea behind the costing exercise is that if the young people are prevented from engaging in these kinds of activities as the result of their involvement with Ndaawin, there may be some fiscal savings in the long run, for example, cost savings from avoidance of the justice system. Quite possibly, the youth involved in the Ndaawin program and thereby dissuaded from entering the street sex trade, may have fewer conflicts with the law, and may incur lower health costs. Moreover, they may have higher lifelong earnings from completing their formal education or at least avoiding a disconnection from their schooling at a young age. In the long run, the youth may have stronger labour market attachments and self-sufficiency.

The problem with this kind of costing analysis is that one can not really predict, with any level of accuracy, the hypothetical course of events in the future for youth who are prevented from entering the sex trade. It is very difficult to predict future outcomes for the youth, in terms of health outcomes, employment outcomes, and their future use of public services. The question is: how does one go about costing such social issues?

Economic cost evaluations of government-funded programs or pilot projects typically pose these challenges, because prevention programs yield most of their benefits far into the future. The Ndaawin study did not have the financial

resources to track the children over a longer period of time. This had been done some years ago in the United States with the Perry Pre-School project, in which researchers evaluated treatment and control groups of high risk children through to their mid-twenties. One objective of that study was to assess the impact on public resources and the individual's future employment outcomes. In fact, the analysts reported lifelong positive effects from the intervention. In other words, the cost savings to the public as the result of the Perry Pre-School program far outweighed the original costs of investment in this preventive strategy.

But when appropriate sources of future data are not available, cost-avoidance techniques can be used in economic costing analysis. In the case of the Ndaawin project, this was done by taking former sex workers' experiences from sex-trade involvement, and costing out various types of public service utilization. Interviews with them made it possible to gather information about the actual outcomes of, and costs associated with, their involvement in the sex trade. This information could then be used to calculate some of the potential cost savings to society when children are diverted from the sex trade. This was the reason for collecting a unique data set of information from former sex-trade workers.

Interviewing Former Sex-trade Workers to Determine Costs

In-person interviews were conducted with sixty-two former sex-trade workers who are primarily Aboriginal women. The participants self-selected into the study. The sample is believed to be reflective of the characteristics of the local sex trade. All participants answered a questionnaire that included information on general demographics, plus questions relating to income and earnings from mainstream sources; work history data in the mainstream; training and education; and the role of health-related issues—physical and mental-health issues—in their transition into the

mainstream work force after leaving the sex trade. A substantive sociological literature suggested that an earlier involvement in prostitution could lead to a permanent disconnection from the formal labour market.

Since one study objective was to capture data on the demand for public services, a sub-sample of case study informants participated in an in-depth interview about sex-trade workers' use of public services. This permitted the estimation of a series of fiscal costs concerning the demand for public services over the period of engagement in sex work and following a transition into mainstream society. This is called a "lifecycle approach", since there is evidence that sex-trade workers begin their engagement in prostitution during adolescence and, in many cases, these activities continue into adulthood. This involvement also occurs during the prime years for the formation of labour market attachments. So, if as a result of their involvement in the street sex trade, women do not form labour market attachments—that is, they do not get a start in the world of mainstream work-life—then there will be fiscal costs down the road. For example, their lifetime earnings will be reduced, and therefore they will pay fewer taxes. Further, they are likely to be poor, and thus to incur societal costs. However, such fiscal costs are only one part of the story.

Private Costs Arising From Involvement in the Street Sex Trade

The first part of the data analysis considered whether or not a young person involved in the sex trade incurs a private cost concerning the lifelong employment-related effects after rejoining mainstream society. This issue is significant because many studies have found that entry into the sex trade occurs in the adolescent years (around age 15). If the average amount of time spent in the trade is 5 to 12 years and a final exit occurs in the mid-to-late twenties, this raises the question: what does a person do for the next 35 to 40 years of her

work life? It is a crucially important issue, since one key feature of our economic structure is that a lack of employment or even self-employment earnings, for the average person, is typically associated with living in poverty. This is particularly the case for women and their children. It is well-established that being connected to the workforce, typically starting at a young age, matters to the future standard of living and quality of life for the majority of people.

The study findings are that sex-trade workers in this sample left prostitution with low levels of education and training, as well as a low attachment to the formal labour market. The study's participants face several employment-related challenges, in large part due to chronic sex-trade-related physical and mental-health conditions. Consequently, they incurred substantial private costs in terms of losses from income-earning activities in the formal labour market after exiting the sex trade. These general findings are consistent with the sociological literature, which suggests that there are certain consistencies such as the likelihood of illicit drug use and running high risks of contracting serious health conditions.

It is not the intent here to stereotype transitioned sex-trade workers as doomed to ill-health and living in poverty. Many former sex workers are gainfully employed and self-sufficient in the mainstream. Likewise, many are engaged in meaningful initiatives—volunteer and paid—in the community by helping those who are contemplating an exit from the sex trade. The key point concerns the daily reality of a substantial number of former sex-trade workers who struggle with the ongoing stressors of addiction and much personal pain from the earlier events in their lives, which were in all likelihood preventable.

Some of the sex-trade-related health issues that afflicted former sex-trade workers in this study, which include:

- Ongoing addictions-related issues: 75.8 per cent of the participants reported being

vulnerable to relapse where it concerns addictions

- Depression: 35.5 per cent
- Hepatitis viruses (in particular, Hepatitis C): 29.0 per cent
- Emotional trauma and anxiety attacks: 58.1 per cent
- Chronic fatigue: 6.5 per cent
- HIV/AIDS: 4.8 per cent
- Learning disabilities, attributed by the participant to heavy drug use: 4.8 per cent

These afflictions have devastating health impacts that affect workforce participation patterns after leaving the sex trade. In fact, it was calculated that, collectively, the study participants will have lost an estimated 844 full-time equivalent years in the formal labour force after exiting the sex trade. This is despite the fact that the majority of the respondents had developed some attachments to the labour market prior to entry into the sex trade. Other findings include:

- 27 per cent of the respondents reported being in the labour force, but most of them earned on average at least \$2.50 per hour less than similarly employed women (primarily Aboriginal women). Much of this difference was related to lower levels of formal training, fewer years of experience in the workforce, less time worked for a particular employer, the disconnect from formal schooling (for example, lack of Grade 12 and other post-secondary schooling), and persisting health issues and addictions after leaving the sex trade. After exiting, many individuals join the ranks of the 'working poor'. They have low academic attainment (average 8.7 years of formal schooling), which is reflected in reduced lifetime earnings.
- 23 per cent of the participants had a long-term disability (from serious illness) preventing future participation in the labour market.

- 34 per cent of participants had serious work limitations due to ongoing physical and mental-health problems. They reported they were only able to work part-time or casually due to a post-traumatic stress disorder, or chronic illnesses.
- The fiscal consequences of labour market earnings losses are very often a lifetime dependence on income assistance and other public services. This is a known formula for lifetime poverty and personal despair.
- \$5.3-million (in 2003 dollars) of lifetime earnings was lost to the study's respondents. There was further loss to the government from reduced tax revenues.

Could Early Involvement in the Street Sex Trade Be Seen As A Rational Economic Choice?

Some critics have argued that the sex trade is no different than perhaps Sidney Crosby or any other athlete earning a higher income earlier in their career when they are physically healthy enough to handle the strain of professional sports. Later on, such individuals can choose to have more leisure time, since they live off their invested earnings. The perspective is that individuals are rational self-interested agents who will make the mental calculation of weighing the costs and benefits over a lifetime from having made this earlier career decision. In other words, those entering the sex trade make the same calculation as in a human capital investment decision (for example, the decision to attend university). This viewpoint is a choice-based theory focusing on individual decision-making processes. How does this view influence policy in terms of prevention programs? Involvement in the sex trade becomes a private issue mostly, and the state is used to monitor public-health and child-abuse issues. Essentially, adults are entitled to do what they want with their bodies.

However, the findings from the Ndaawin study refute this theory. The study's participants indeed had an earnings premium from sex-trade activities. However, substantial costs were deducted from these earnings. For example, if we take 100 per cent of the interviewed sex-trade worker's gross earnings, on average, we have to deduct 37.2 per cent, which was handed over to pimps, dependent partners, escort agency owners, and drivers. Another 46.6 per cent went to illicit drugs or alcohol. A further 8.5 per cent was attributed to lost earnings that followed violent incidents, from arrests and incarcerations, as well as participation in addictions treatment programs. On average, the study's participants were left with less than 8 per cent of gross earnings as their residual net income. This is hardly investable earnings to maintain her in the Sidney Crosby lifestyle in future!

There are few if any private financial benefits, and many private costs, associated with involvement in the street sex trade.

Public Costs Arising From Involvement in the Street Sex Trade

But engagement in the sex trade is much more than a private individual dilemma. It is a larger social and economic issue. The study provides substantial evidence that prevention programs such as Ndaawin are cost-effective from a fiscal perspective because, once an individual engages in the sex trade, the lifelong fiscal costs (these are government-funded costs) are substantial.

Three of these costs are: costs to the justice system, costs of drugs/alcohol addictions and treatment, and health costs. In other words, if a young person gets involved in the street sex trade, that involvement will lead to higher societal costs related to the justice system, drug and alcohol addiction and treatment, and health care. If, by contrast, a young person is prevented from entering the street sex trade, by a program like Ndaawin for example, then these costs are 'saved'.

Employment Aspirations Sideline by Involvement in the Street Sex Trade

In one aspect of the Ndaawin study, the respondents' work experiences and job aspirations before and after their involvement in the sex trade were examined. A key finding is that, in spite of often-difficult childhood circumstances, prior to involvement in the sex trade these individuals had plenty of aspirations about their future working lives. The majority, as adolescents, had acquired some work experience in the formal labour market. However, after exiting the street sex trade and transitioning into mainstream society, many respondents' aspirations had been downscaled substantially. The former sex-trade workers said that the reasons for their lower expectations were the addictions and violence that they had sustained over the years of involvement in the sex trade. The majority of the participants had concluded that they needed to be realistic about setting future goals.

The study estimated that 69.3 per cent (43/62) of respondents, as youth, had paid employment at part-time jobs during the school year or had received work experience at a summer job, before becoming involved in the sex trade. If babysitting jobs

are added to this figure, it is 77.4 per cent (48/62). Typically, babysitting or paper carrier was the youth's first work experience. Subsequent jobs included the following:

- server and/or dishwasher in a restaurant;
- customer service at a fast food restaurant or donut shop;
- inventory clerk;
- telemarketing;
- door-to-door delivery of flyers;
- cashier at a department store or grocery store;
- gas station attendant;
- job at a bingo hall;
- attendant at a billiard's parlor;
- summer job painting houses and fences;
- summer job as a landscaping helper;
- mowed lawns and other yard work;
- worked at an amusement park;
- cooked for farmers in the area during harvest each year;
- paid to drive elderly citizens to their medical appointments;
- cleaned houses and/or exterior maintenance work;
- sold roses outside the local liquor store;
- worked at a sewing factory;

- collected pop bottles, which were subsequently cashed in for money;
- sold chocolate bars door-to-door.

Collectively, the participants had accumulated 268.5 months of full-time work (average: 4.3 months each) and 303 months of part-time work (average: 4.9 months each) before becoming involved in the sex trade. This provides some evidence that the majority of respondents were accumulating work experience that might have enabled them to fully integrate into the mainstream labour market as adults. Put differently, there appeared to be a strong work ethic among the respondents during their early adolescent years.

The respondents were also asked to think back to any dream jobs for the future, that they may have aspired to when younger (around age 11-12 or before entry into the sex trade). During their youth, 85.5 per cent of respondents had aspired to work at the following jobs:

- writer, journalist;
- professions, such as teacher, nurse and lawyer;
- psychologist; social worker; counselor;
- landscaper;
- manage a clothing store;
- mechanic;
- childcare worker; work with the elderly or physically challenged;
- mother;
- costume designer;
- artist; cartoonist; graphic artist;
- flight attendant; pilot;
- police officer;
- financial administrator;

- radio announcer; broadcasting career;
- banker;
- secretary;
- musician.

The majority of respondents (88.5 per cent) could articulate the education requirements needed to accomplish these goals, for example, a Bachelor of Social Work, Bachelor of Education, and a business administration or graphics arts course at a community college.

Hence, the interviews conducted as part of the Ndaawin study produced substantial evidence that the youth had plenty of work aspirations, combined with employment experiences, in the earlier part of their lives. However, after a period of engaging in prostitution, their aspirations were lowered, they lost significant opportunities to gain employment experience and/or education and training, and in the long run, they incurred large personal costs in terms of lost earnings compared to other similar women in society. Moreover, if we consider the possibility that these individuals may have achieved their youthful aspirations had they received more appropriate levels of support from the community in the earlier part of their lives, the measured earnings losses calculated in the study substantially understate the true economic impact of sex-trade involvement.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

There is a very high probability that the sex-trade worker will have many conflicts with the law. Therefore significant justice system costs are incurred. This includes police, courts, legal-aid services, costs of incarceration in remand or a correctional facility, youth detention, and community supervision (probation services). Findings from the interviews done for the Ndaawin study indicate that most of the justice system costs were incurred during the period of engagement in the sex trade. Following transition into the mainstream, justice-related costs declined substantially, and were mostly related to legal matters, such as clearing up outstanding charges in other provinces. Thus, there is the potential for huge cost savings in the area of justice by helping at-risk or vulnerable children to avoid engaging in the sex trade.

DRUGS AND ADDICTIONS

One significant finding of the Ndaawin study was that 14.5 per cent of participants had not used drugs or alcohol before the initial entry into the sex trade. Another 53.2 per cent of the participants said that they used alcohol or some of the lighter drugs (less addictive), such as marijuana, before engaging in the sex trade, but it was typically casual use (for example, during the weekends and/or at parties). Indeed, we need to keep in mind that around half of Canadian youths report using alcohol or drugs. Another 33 per cent of participants believed that they developed an addiction before entry into the sex trade. But they mostly used alcohol.

However, once involved in prostitution, the use of substances progressed in most cases to an addiction to more harmful and expensive drugs including intravenous drug use (injecting heroin and cocaine); crystal meth; smoking crack/rock cocaine; acid; mushrooms, and solvents. Several respondents commented that the nature of the work and the lifestyle almost guaranteed the

increased use of substances and alcohol and exacerbated addictions.

Addictions are a huge barrier to transitioning into mainstream society, and then prolong the transition process. As described earlier, almost 76 per cent of participants reported that they have ongoing addictions-related issues which, in many cases, prevented them from reaching their educational goals or employment plans. Addictions are a major factor in slowing down the exit process.

The exit process entails immeasurable amounts of public resources for the treatment of drug and alcohol addictions, other therapies (counseling), income assistance and housing support. Keeping in mind that this is in no way a comment on “deservingness” of services, the publicly funded resources expended to support individuals are quite extensive. These costs are saved by successful prevention programs.

DIRECT HEALTH COSTS

Costs are incurred for treatments, including addictions and mental-health services; hospital emergency centers; doctors’ and surgeons’ fees; prescription drugs; dental costs from heavy drug use and poor health habits; and costs of treatment for hepatitis or HIV AIDS. Frequently, the participants required medical attention related to the physical and sexual violence intrinsic to sex-trade work; these people are attacked, kicked, slapped, and punched in the face; the participants sustained cracked ribs, a broken jaw, major head trauma, broken wrist, ankle, toes, and dislocated fingers; and they often need stitches for lacerations. Sex-trade work can be very dangerous and stressful.

Does Prevention Pay?

A final question is this does prevention pay. Taking a lifecycle perspective in terms of fiscal costs and a cost-avoidance approach to economic evaluation, can the government recoup its current funding to a prevention and intervention strategy, such as Ndaawin, which is designed to dissuade entry into the lifestyle of a sex worker? The fiscal

cost estimates of this study revealed that the total financial investment in Ndaawin is recouped by the government if fewer than two youth who participated in the children's club are prevented from becoming involved in prostitution (the average is 1.6 youth). If the program even only had a minor impact on reducing participation in the sex trade, it paid off. There is anecdotal evidence based on informal discussions with the program staff over the evaluation period that more than two children may have been dissuaded from entering the trade.

Further, calculations revealed that the current value of the social assistance paid out to former sex-trade workers who have serious illnesses, which prevent them from participating in the workforce, would cover a further six years of funding to a prevention strategy. Likewise, preventing the affliction of the HIV/AIDS and the Hepatitis C virus on sex workers in Winnipeg could potentially pay for 17 years of Ndaawin's services to the community (based on estimated averages).

This study has significant consequences for how we approach public policy, in terms of designing programs so that individuals can reach their full potential in spite of what is often a difficult childhood.

What Should We Conclude From the Ndaawin Study?

This study illustrates that it makes good financial sense to invest in prevention, since it is cost-effective. In fact, investment in prevention should be seen as an economic-development issue. The economic cost-based framework used in the Ndaawin study illustrates that engagement in the sex trade is hardly a private issue only since the public also incurs significant costs. And the costs estimated above are likely the tip of the iceberg, since they do not even touch on the intergenerational effects of exploitation.

Besides the diversion from prostitution, the Ndaawin intervention may have spawned mul-

iple lifelong benefits for youth, such as how to avoid sexual abuse, how to stay away from gangs and drugs, how to deal with inter-personal conflicts, and information about alternatives to prostitution. These types of early interventions help to build children's self-esteem and to connect them with their culture, which may well lead to improved lifetime productivity from higher education and earnings and reduced conflicts with the law.

In this sense, prevention services provide great value to society. Given the fact that there are hundreds of youth sex-trade workers in Winnipeg, these cost assessments have implications of paramount importance for evaluating the priorities of public policy on investments in prevention programs.

A Child Welfare Example of the Benefits of Investment in Prevention

The child-welfare system provides another example of how investing in prevention programs directed at high risk youth, in particular in Aboriginal communities, makes good financial sense for governments. Another recent study calculated the potential fiscal savings from doing preventive work in the child-welfare system. The estimates revealed that putting money into preventing children from coming into formal foster care is easily transformed into long-run fiscal savings. These estimates were calculated for a First Nations child and family services agency. In the early 1990s, the agency struck an agreement with the federal government (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, or INAC) concerning its funding arrangement. A block-funding deal permitted greater flexibility for allocating the agency's funding to a multitude of family wellness initiatives relating to the development of preventive services and family preservation strategies. The financial outcome was that the agency incurred long-run savings by offering alternative programs that prevent medium-to-low-risk children from entering formal foster care,

typically a costly method of managing service delivery in the child-welfare system. The agency's services heavily emphasize Aboriginal teachings and cultural connections.

By using a cost-benefit perspective, this study demonstrated that the agency's service model provides several examples of innovative social interventions that fulfill a dual role. Its programs not only benefit families by maintaining children in their home through a continuum of flexible and intensive abuse preventive services, but also produce cost efficiency and effectiveness gains. The study illustrated that the cost-effectiveness of only a handful of the agency's preventive strategies yields a savings in the range of millions of dollars to the agency itself, and these preventive strategies also produce a wide array of fiscal savings to other government departments, such as housing and social assistance, for example. By focusing on prevention, this agency was able to do much more with less. More importantly, the children were kept safe.

Furthermore, the same agency managed another success story—an adult-education and life-skills training program, called Vision Seekers. The program operates on a number of levels in order to meet a variety of learning needs in the community. It offers a graduated life-skills course, which is a prerequisite to other adult education, such as a mature-student diploma program and a community-centered therapy program. It offers a career-trek program to young adolescents and their parents, all from a holistic Aboriginal family and community-healing perspective. Due to its intensive family healing and cultural component and human-development approach, the program is much more integrated and comprehensive than other curriculum-based adult-education services,

There is considerable evidence that this intervention is not only effective in wrapping around the needs of its community residents, but it is also a model of efficiency in terms of the impact on

fiscal resources. One main underlying principle within such programming is that individuals will become gainfully employed and self-supporting over the remainder of their work lives. The monetary benefit to government and other funding bodies is that fewer residents in the community will likely be reliant on income assistance, and fewer children will enter formal care. Sobriety rates are also known to have improved in the community. The savings in social assistance and other government-funded supports was estimated at \$25-million dollars over five years of operation. A benefit-to-cost ratio of 16.5 (\$16.50 returned to society for each \$1 spent) appears to have been returned to society from the initial investment in the Vision Seekers strategy. The evidence arising from careful economic analysis is that taking the prevention path produces substantial savings to governments and to society in general.

A Childcare Example of the Financial Benefits of Public Investment

Recently, the Manitoba Child Care Coalition released a series of studies on the availability of childcare spaces in Thompson, St.-Pierre-Jolys and Parkland. The Coalition commissioned some cost calculations for these studies. Data were available on the number of full-time and part-time childcare spaces in the three Manitoba communities. The goal of the economic analysis was to work backwards from childcare spaces to childcare-using households or families for both the full-time and part-time spaces, to determine the economic benefits for the families arising from the availability of childcare spaces. For the full-time childcare spaces only, estimates were made of the number of parents associated with these spaces, and the parents' incomes from paid employment in the labour market.

The estimates made it clear that adequate childcare availability allows hundreds of parents (in three small communities only), particularly mothers, to participate in the labour market

and to earn millions of dollars, thus reducing the chances that they will be reliant on various forms of government assistance. For this reason alone, government investments in day care spaces, particularly in low-income areas, can be thought of as preventive work. When women have strong attachments to the workforce, the fiscal savings to the government are substantive enough to justify the investments in childcare spaces. In other words, everyone—and women especially—benefits from the increased availability of childcare spaces.

Concluding remarks

This section of the *State of the Inner City Report* has presented evidence related to a fiscal cost-based policy framework as applied to various inner-city social issues. The evidence makes it clear that it makes good financial sense to focus on prevention. A lack of preventive programs eventually places a heavier financial burden of unavoidable costs on institutions and poverty-assistance schemes, the justice system and corrections, subsidized housing, and medical services. This adds to an already strained fiscal infrastructure at a time when there are many competing demands for society's resources. Thus, prevention is cost-effective.

Additionally, there are innumerable young people in the inner city who deserve opportunities for a decent education and job skills. These are known to offset the social conditions that make youth vulnerable to being recruited into gangs and drug use. Preventive programs may nurture significant attachments to the labour market, as well as further encouraging at-risk youth to stay connected to their schooling.

Piecemeal funding to small-scale youth employment strategies does not quite do it. For example, poorly funded programs that help a handful of kids here and there, while appreciated, are inadequate to the enormity of the task. Truly preventive and authentically-funded programming may

help to avoid the well-known cycle of taking one step forward—but two steps back.

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Is Participation Having an Impact?

In the early stages of planning for the 2005 *State of the Inner City Report*, the State of the Inner City (SIC) steering committee expressed an interest in developing a means of measuring the difficult to measure outcomes of participation in community-based programs. In 2006, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives Manitoba (CCPA-Mb) embarked on a journey with eight inner-city organizations to begin to explore the meaning of 'successful outcomes' for participants of community-based programs. Participants include individuals who are users of the services and programs of the community organizations studied. In some cases, they are also volunteers. This is a story of that journey, as much as it is an attempt to better understand how to more accurately measure program outcomes for individuals struggling with multiple barriers in their daily lives.

The Challenge of Measuring Outcomes

Funding institutions appear to be pre-occupied with measuring outcomes, and the experience of our partner Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) is that they do so in a narrow manner. (Community-based organizations are non-profit organizations providing services to residents and others within the scope of the organization's mandate.) This is frustrating for CBO representatives, many of whom have gone through a long and painful process of decolonization. Governments and

other program funders seem to be less interested in how lives are being affected *qualitatively* and how participation in community-based programs might affect the lives of not only participants, but their families, neighbourhoods and the broader community. This apparent lack of institutional interest in qualitatively understanding the outcomes of participation is in part based on the reality that such effects are difficult to measure. However, it must also be acknowledged that the underlying objectives of funding institutions may be different than the objectives of the community-based organizations participating in this project.

The CBOs that guide this project have a transformative vision. Many believe that fundamental change requires that we first address the damage of colonization and oppression. While funding institutions, in particular governments, wish to see individuals adapt to the existing social and economic structures, our community partners are interested in fundamental changes in these structures.

While change of this magnitude may seem far from reach as inner-city residents continue to struggle to overcome multiple challenges, there is a general sense for those who work on the front lines that real progress is being made by individuals and families in the inner city. However, much of this progress is not recognized because of how 'success' is measured.

As we proceeded through collaboration on the 2006 *State of the Inner City Report*, we began to explore how we might better understand what impact participation is having on individuals, families, neighbourhoods and communities. The purpose of this paper is to document and reflect on this journey and to share the findings of our interviews with 91 inner-city program participants.

How Do We Measure Progress in Winnipeg's Inner City?: A Participatory Approach to Understanding Outcomes

This research topic was identified by a consortium of inner-city community organizations that work primarily with Aboriginal individuals and families. Their interest in this research is in part a response to the ongoing pressure that they are under to demonstrate the effectiveness of their programs through quantifiable program outcomes.

The project used a Participatory Action Research approach that brought together several community-based organizations.

Transformation through Participatory Action Research

Participatory Action Research (PAR) has been described as “systematic inquiry, with the collaboration of those affected by the issue being studied, for purposes of education and taking action or effecting social change” (Mora and Diaz 2004). PAR is not limited to work with marginalized and oppressed communities; however this is where it finds its roots (Gatenby and Humphries 2000; Khanlou and Peter 2005). It has become a model used by many researchers and practitioners working with oppressed and marginalized groups through a transformative framework, as it is more inclusive and includes the objective of conducting research that builds capacity and affects social change. It differs considerably from other forms of research in that it requires mutual

trust among researchers, organizations, and community people and the time it takes to nurture such relationships. PAR differs fundamentally from traditional research as it is research that studies problems identified by the community, and research findings are disseminated widely and in accessible forms. In full-participation PAR, the community will also determine the methodology that it believes will best suit the needs and objectives of the research project.

Consistent with the aims of PAR, we have developed a model that involves a significant community role in all aspects of the research—from planning to dissemination and utilization of findings (Mora and Diaz 2004). The project grew initially out of the mutual trust that had been developed through joint participation in earlier work, including the *State of the Inner City Report*, and led to the formation of a community-based ‘research team that gathered to discuss potential research relevant to the needs of the community. The team includes the members of a coalition of eight inner-city organizations called Community-Led Organizations United Together (CLOUT) and researchers associated with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives-Manitoba. (Appendix One has a description of the eight CLOUT organizations.) It should be noted that the eight CLOUT representatives are all women and most are Aboriginal. Some of these women grew up and continue to live in the neighbourhoods where they now work. The organizations that they represent provide services primarily, although not exclusively, to Aboriginal residents. Some have very consciously developed their programming through an anti-oppressive theoretical framework and they integrate a strong cultural component into their programs. Teaching participants about the effects of colonization and oppression is integrated into many of the programs offered and the impact of this model became evident in many of the interviews.

Colonization, Oppression and Unrealistic Expectations

Early in the research process, the research team agreed that a research framework would need to recognize the historical context of the Aboriginal experience. Healing the damage caused by colonization and oppression is slow and painful work. Further, oppression through systemic racism, sexism and classism is ongoing, therefore healing occurs within a context of recurring injury. Education and awareness of systemic forces is an essential first step toward individual empowerment and emancipation. This notion was reinforced during the project repeatedly, for interviewees as well as community researchers.

Oppression and racism can have long and lasting effects. In his description of the effects of oppression, Freire (2006, 63) notes: "So often do they hear that they are good for nothing, know nothing and are incapable of learning anything—that they are sick, lazy and unproductive—that in the end they become convinced of their own unfit-ness." Hart, as cited in Silver (2006, 28) describes the deep damage caused by internalized colonization: "Aboriginal people start to believe that we are incapable of learning and that the colonizers' degrading images and beliefs about Aboriginal people and our ways of being are true."

For Aboriginal inner-city organizations, reversing the damage of colonization is a first step in the transformation process. It requires that program participants be provided with an opportunity to learn about oppression and colonization so that they can proudly reclaim their Aboriginal identity and move forward. But the journey for many is long and outcomes are not always easy to measure. Therefore it has been essential that the research project, from design through to analysis, is rooted in an understanding of the profound effects of colonization. To ensure that community researchers, the majority of whom were Aboriginal, had an understanding of this context, a well-respected Aboriginal teacher agreed to assist us in our train-

ing. We believe that his teachings contributed to the quality of interviews and provided knowledge to community researchers consistent with our capacity-building objectives.

Systemic Racism? Nancy's experience

Nancy joined the project as a community researcher. She very recently opened up an account at a local credit union. This in itself was a new and empowering experience for her and she looked forward to being able to cash her first paycheque. However, the experience was marred by the response she received from a teller, who asked her what seemed to be inappropriate questions about the nature of the work she was doing in exchange for the cheque she was cashing. There seemed to be some question, even though Nancy had appropriate identification and the cheque was clearly addressed to her, whether the cheque was legitimately obtained. The excitement of cashing her very first paycheque became an unpleasant experience. Nancy shared this experience with the non-Aboriginal research coordinator, who was horrified and immediately felt that the reaction of the teller was racially motivated. When this was shared with Nancy's mentor, the response was sad acceptance. "...we go through this almost daily." In response to the suggestion that a complaint be filed: "I suppose so, but if we complained each time we experience racism, we would be spending our entire lives complaining."

Research Design

In keeping with PAR, the research design required careful attention to process, instrument design, and data analysis. Our aim was to ensure that the research process remained true to the inclusive, empowering, and transformative objectives of the research team. Research processes that are designed to address exclusion of oppressed communities by actively and fully involving them in the process, can contribute to transformative objectives.

In their participatory research approach, Keys et al. (2003) consider the controlling relationships that marginalized individuals often experience. The program participants that we interviewed exemplify this experience. Many are living their lives under the watchful eye of representatives of the state, including child welfare authorities, the criminal justice system, and social assistance authorities. These systems have significant power over their daily lives. This has implications for research because establishing trust becomes more complicated, yet it is essential if participants are to feel safe to fully share their stories and be empowered through the process. This is addressed to some extent in this project by broadening involvement of the community in the research process, building egalitarian relationships with participants through ongoing collaboration, training and hiring community researchers, sharing findings in various forms, and requesting feedback from research participants.

A Methodology Emerges

In keeping with PAR, community research partners must be involved in the decision of selecting a methodology that fits best with their research objectives. The role of the ‘outside researcher’ is to provide information about various methods and tools and to assist them in the process. PAR can involve quantitative and qualitative methods or a combination of both, but consideration should be given to choosing methodology and methods

that will engage community residents—to be trained and hired where possible—in the data gathering process and analysis. This is important as it provides a capacity-building component that can have lasting benefit for the community (Mora and Diaz 2004).

Identifying the Issues

In the process of identifying research areas that might be of interest to CBOs, several discussions took place around the use of indicators in measuring progress in the inner city. The question ‘how do we measure?’ evolved into a discussion around ‘what are we measuring’ and ‘who determines what needs to be measured?’ For inner-city organizations working with marginalized community members, the question of what we are measuring, how and why is critical. Inner-city CBOs are constantly under pressure to demonstrate to funding institutions how their programs are having an impact on participants’ lives. For the most part, funders are looking for quantitative measures that can demonstrate the number of participants who have become employed, returned to school etc. Organizations argue that these kinds of expectations are often unrealistic given the deep and damaging effects of colonization and oppression.

It is worth noting that much of the work of CBOs is required *because* of the damage and neglect caused by the very institutions that fund them. It is ironic that institutions continue to expect CBOs to demonstrate their effectiveness on mainstream institutional terms. Members of the research team are also acutely aware that much of what they are able to do is *in spite* of public policies and programs that they view as inadequate at best and damaging at worst. While they can do their best to help individuals adapt, increase awareness, and advocate for their ‘clients’, the reality that housing is sorely lacking, social assistance incomes are inadequate, and access to good jobs, childcare, and training is limited, is largely out of their control. And unless public policy shifts con-

siderably to address these issues, improvements in the economic and social well-being of the people that they serve will remain marginal.

Raising individual awareness of structural forces, so that individuals will better understand their oppression, is integral to CLOUT programs and this research project. It is a critical first step toward social transformation. As noted by Freire (2006), “critical and liberating dialogue presupposes action.”

Defining Measures

The research team sees value in both quantitative and qualitative measures, therefore both are integrated into the research design. However, community partners have clearly articulated that they feel it is most important to understand outcomes through individual stories. Consensus emerged through the early planning process to develop a means to measure progress through the voices of program participants. The research team feels very strongly that participants, through their own voices, have valuable insights to share through their stories. Their perceptions of what participation means to them, their families, their neighbourhoods and their broader communities, is critical to the measurement of whether progress is being made.

Using a methodology that provides participants with an opportunity to have voice through stories is consistent with indigenous research. As noted by Tuhiwai Smith (2006, 127), “Community action approaches [to research] assume that people know and can reflect on their own lives...” This is particularly important given the significant level of Aboriginal participation in this research.

The measurement tool has evolved within the context of a decolonization framework. Outcomes are not measured simply by individual adaptation to please funders. The process itself is part of the outcome. As noted by one inner-city development worker, “the process is the product, I think, like it’s a journey not a destination” (Silver 2006, 150).

This poses a challenge for institutions seeking linear, quantifiable outcomes. But by increasing awareness of the deep effects of colonization, CBOs hope that funders will learn to recognize that reversing the damage of colonization requires that mainstream institutions adapt their policies, programs, and methods of measurement to better reflect the needs of colonized peoples.

The Importance of Stories

Transformative research should emphasize the value of narratives (Westwood 1991). Participants involved should be offered not only a voice, “but a speaking position through the narrative mode” (Westwood 1991, 4). PAR that limits methodology to quantitative measures will miss an important opportunity to provide a potentially empowering experience for interviewees, and the depth of knowledge that emerges from hearing the voices of the ‘researched’ will be lost. Story telling, or ‘narrative’ research gives us insight into the meaning that people give to their experiences. It can therefore be a useful methodology in community-based PAR where the knowledge of the community being researched is central to the process.

The SIC community partners agree with this perspective, and have clearly articulated that both quantitative and qualitative measures are critical to understanding the complicated context of their participants’ lives. They emphasize that there is power in the stories that need to be told. As articulated by one of the members:

...funders just want to know how many women we are providing service to and the outcomes of that service. What they don’t take into consideration is the broader effects of these women’s healing—the changes that result for their children, their families and the broader community.

For example, what may appear as small progress for an individual participant can have consider-

able impact for a new generation of Aboriginal children. As noted by one participant, getting in touch with native culture has not only changed the way that she lives, but it has changed the way that she parents her children. She feels strongly that a destructive cycle has been broken and this will have lasting benefits for her children. This is an extremely important outcome but it is very challenging to measure.

The Interview Instrument

Given the desire for a mixed-method design, the research team developed a semi-structured instrument that integrates measures of social well-being with narrative, to capture the stories that are central to understanding participant perceptions of outcomes. A series of questions to measure social well-being and to help to better understand structural and institutional barriers for participants were also integrated into the process.

One objective of this research is to identify opportunities for policy change; therefore the measures of social well-being that we have incorporated can be helpful to identify where government intervention may be strengthened. As noted by John Helliwell, “policy interventions should be routinely accompanied by prior and subsequent measures of well-being.” He argues that “a fairly small set of questions can provide useful assessments of the level and distribution of well-being, and of the types of social capital and institutions that support it” (Helliwell 2005, 19).

The interview guide has four parts: Part A gathers demographic information and Part B includes the indicator questions, which asks respondents to rate themselves based on 14 measures of social well-being. Part C of the guide is an open-ended question to capture individual stories about the impact of participation, and Part D is an open-ended question to identify gaps in services. While our initial intent was to use the 14 measures in Part B for interviews with both adults and youth, we later decided to eliminate

some categories in our interviews with youth as we found that they were not responding to questions and they became much more engaged when asked to tell their story in their own words.

For this project, the research team was interested in the narrators’ perception of what participation in the program has meant to them and the impact on their families, the neighbourhood and the broader community. We also wanted to know if individual participation has contributed to a greater understanding of the effects of colonization and systemic oppression and whether this knowledge has had any impact on participant perceptions of self and hope for the future. There was considerable discussion with community partners as to how to best understand participants’ understanding of the roots of their oppression. In the end we agreed not to ask this question explicitly as it might be intimidating for those in the early stages of their journey. We agreed that participants’ stories would give an understanding of oppression and colonization.

Selection of Interviewees

It was felt to be important to draw a sample of interviewees who had various durations of participation in programs. After obtaining ethics approval through the University of Winnipeg, individuals in each of the eight organizations were interviewed. An attempt was made to have a mix of participants that included those engaged for various periods of time. Each interviewee was provided with an orientation to the research project to ensure that they were fully informed of the research objectives and what the final research would be used for. Interviewees were presented with an opportunity to review the findings before the research report was finalized; however, few indicated an interest in being engaged in this manner.

Participants

A total of 91 individuals were interviewed, with 21 males and 60 females. Just over half (51

percent) of participants identified as Aboriginal, and 16 percent as Métis, with the remaining 33 percent distributed over many other ethnic backgrounds, including Caucasian, Russian and African. Thirteen of those interviewed who gave their ages were under the age of 18. In these cases, a parent or guardian provided consent. Sixteen of those interviewed were between 18-24, 23 were between 25-35, and 28 were over 35. The average age of participants was 30.1 years. Seven of those interviewed reported having one or more children in foster care, while 12 currently have one or more children living at home. Seven participants have some children at home and some in care, and six have children living with family, partners or independently. While 17 other interviewees also had children, they did not specify where their children lived.

Method of Analysis

Given the scope of the research project—91 interviews—and limited resources, it was not feasible to analyze the data through the preferred “line by line” method (Fraser, 2004). Further, the mixed-method design required some quantitative analysis of the measures of social well-being included in the interview instrument. With the assistance of a qualitative research program, (NVivo), narrative data were analyzed by identifying key themes, and responses to social well-being measures were grouped and quantified. We acknowledge that using this approach has limitations since breaking down the data in this manner takes away from the richness that can be found in reflecting on the full story.

Using a categorical content method of analysis, each question and response was examined in the context of whether it helped to answer the primary research question— is participation having an impact? Key themes were identified and examined for their impact on the individual participant as well as their family, their neighbourhood and the broader community, to help us to better

understand implications for broader structural change.

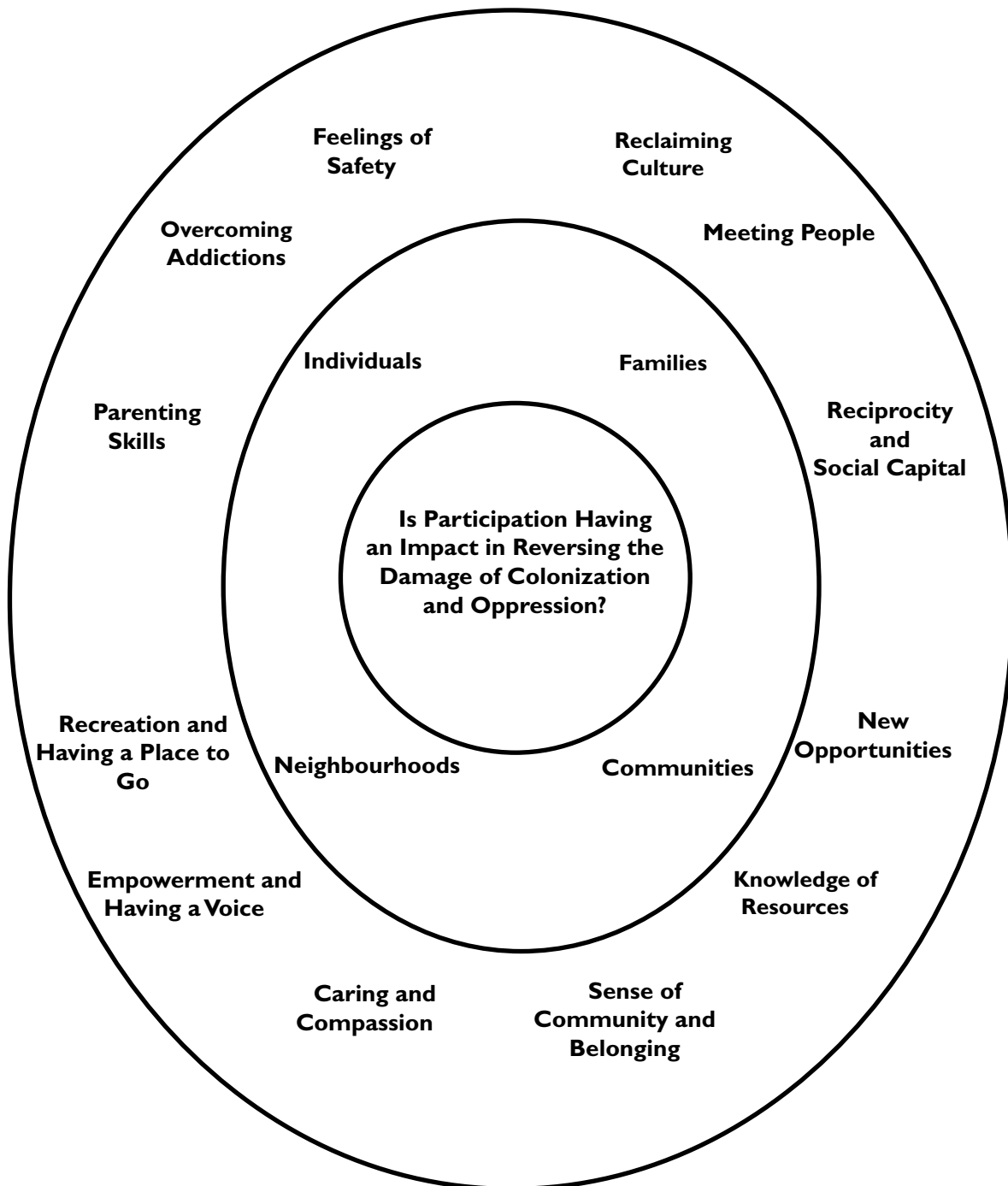
Analyzing the Data through an Anti-Oppressive ‘Lens’

Because our community partners emphasize program design and delivery embedded in decolonization and anti-oppressive frameworks, our analysis takes shape through this lens. As earlier explained, the individual and community journey of healing from the damage of colonization and the reclaiming of Aboriginal identity is a long and often painful journey. This is a central challenge for organizations that integrate decolonization methods in their practice, because this slow and not always linear process is difficult for funders to understand. Mainstream measurement tools are designed for quick and tangible results. Self-sufficiency and essentially an embracing of Euro-centric, middle-class values are the ultimate mainstream goals.

While the central research question is “Is participation in CLOUT programs having an impact?” the goal is to develop a much deeper understanding of the impact. We also want to know if and how participation is having an impact on reversing the damage that has been caused by colonization and oppression and whether program participants, their families, neighbourhoods and the broader community, are better able to move forward as a result of their participation. As noted, the damage caused by colonization and oppression runs deep and can have profound effects on self-esteem, sense of self-worth, self-confidence and hope. This breakdown at the individual level leads to a collective weakening of social capital. Reversing the damage is slow but essential to self-empowerment, emancipation, and community transformation.

Within this basic framework of analysis, we are interested in the various ways in which participation is having an impact on individuals, families, neighbourhoods and communities

Diagram I: Analytical Framework



with the overall objective of transformation. See Diagram One for the analytical framework.

Challenges and Design Limitations Considered

While PAR and the use of narrative have many advantages as a means of doing research with transformative goals, there are also limitations that were considered. Because PAR has multiple purposes—systematic research that is also community-owned and empowering—it can be a more complicated process with riskier outcomes. For example, the objective to increase capacity and transfer knowledge through the process can result in the use of interviewers who are inexperienced. This created some challenges. There was ongoing need to support and mentor interviewers to ensure that they were sensitive to interviewees and were encouraging them to share information that would be useful for analysis, while not being overly intrusive. The interview dynamics were somewhat inconsistent.

There was definite improvement in the quality of interviews as researchers became comfortable and increasingly knowledgeable of the process. There was a need to add new researchers midstream, as two individuals quit partway through and two individuals chose not to participate at all after the initial training. It should be noted that the two trainees who chose not to participate did so because of a fear that it would disrupt their receipt of social assistance. Since their involvement in this project would be very short term, they felt that the risk of losing their main source of income was not worth their continued involvement.

While there would have been definite advantages to having had experienced interviewers, we strongly believe that the trade-off was critical to the projects' aims. We believe that using insider community researchers, even when inexperienced, was beneficial. Interviewees may have shared information with an insider that they would not have felt comfortable sharing with an outsider.

There was also an important capacity-building objective being met through the hiring and training of community researchers.

A final reflection is whether the research project meets the transformative objectives of community partners— is it contributing to significant social change? It can be argued that the focus of this research project is in reaction to the demands of funding institutions and its aims are narrowly directed and hardly transformative. While this is in part true, it has potential for transformation on at least three levels.

1. By demonstrating that progress can be much more broadly measured than is currently favoured, there is potential for funding institutions to understand and accept the resistance expressed by CBOs. The fact that CBOs are questioning the measurement instruments used by funding institutions and are taking steps to demonstrate their resistance by developing their own measurement models, in our opinion, shows that transformation is already taking place.
2. Training and hiring community researchers to conduct interviews and assist with data analysis provides an important opportunity to raise awareness and develop capacity, in these communities, potentially leading to further interest in PAR and/or anti-oppressive practice.
3. Providing interviewees with an opportunity to 'name their world' has the potential to be an empowering experience that can lead to praxis (Freire, 2006).

Research Findings – The Impacts of Participation

The interview guide was designed to first gather specific information through a series of questions that would help to determine how participation in CBOs is contributing to individual perceptions of overall health and well-being. The final questions gave individuals an opportunity to provide their own assessment through sharing their story as they chose to do so. Overall, this approach seemed to work well, and resulted in the collection of information with great richness and depth. There was some repetition in responses once the project reached the narrative component. However, this is not seen as problematic as it gives individuals an opportunity to emphasize areas that they feel are most important to them.

Responses have been grouped according to the major themes that emerged during analysis. These themes were shared by many of the participants and illustrate the impact of the CBOs on their lives and their dreams for the future.

Empowerment and Having a Voice

Interviewees provided several implicit examples of how their participation has been empowering. The participants were at different stages in their lives and in their journeys of empowerment. However, CBOs played a part at each of these stages.

Several respondents said that there had been an increase in their knowledge of where to go for help and in their confidence to ask for help. As noted by one respondent; “I first came here for help. I didn’t have any money, I couldn’t get nothing from social services...and then they [organization staff] started giving me information...and I just kept coming back.”

Taking the first step of a journey by facing problems is difficult and frightening. It takes courage to be willing to participate and deal with personal issues. This was the experience of

one woman, who gradually found the strength to cope:

I found out about [the CBO] through my friend...and she took me up there and I just listened and I was scared to go back, I didn’t want to go back because it was a place where you really heard other people’s feelings and felt your own. There’s no running away from it, you have to sit in there. I was running away from my problems, and that place made me look at my problems, because it’s okay to open your baggage and smell it for a while and move on.

She realized the impact that events in her past, such as having parents with substance abuse issues, still had on her, and on her own children. The organization gave her the confidence to face her past and realize that “you know that you have a struggle and that you know it’s okay. Many other people can get over it, so can you—and they really made that clear.” This was a common experience among participants; their interactions with staff and other people with similar experiences gave them the strength and support to face their issues.

Organizations gave some participants the desire to seek help and to help themselves, which they recognized as an important step. One respondent said that since participating in programs at a community-based organization she has learned where to go for help and is no longer afraid to ask. She attributes this to Aboriginal teachings... “humility is one of the hardest sacred teachings to practice, and I have no problem practicing humility and that [includes], knowing when to ask for help.” This respondent also attributed Aboriginal teachings through the organization with giving her strength to leave her abusive relationship. “They never said ‘leave him, leave him’ but they just said...‘are you interested in breaking those cycles?...everybody has a choice.’” Sharing and learning from other participants and program staff

contributes significantly to participants' journeys of personal empowerment.

The journey toward greater empowerment can be long. As one respondent said; "it was baby steps at first, that turned into running. [Now] we're getting to those marathons. We're getting up there and I'm happy." Others described the process of change:

My self-esteem has changed. I'm more talkative. I'm more outgoing. I'm more reachable...I know where to look for things if I need help, if I don't there's always somebody here that will help me.

First year I started [the program] I was also quiet, shy and then now that I get to know people more and more, I'm starting to be confident about myself.

For one woman, this long journey finally led her to leave an abusive partner:

They have a big role on my life...showing me the different programming, and...hearing other ladies' stories, and hearing their situation, basically let me know that I'm not alone out there, you know. That other ladies are going through this. And giving me the tools and...information that I need...to put my foot down and say, "this is not right you know? Get out." And that's what I did.

Learning to take care of herself and gaining access to the tools and experiences of others helped her to move forward. Self-care was an important part of another participant's life:

First of all what I learned from this [program] is first of all, mother, to look after yourself, and gradually I look after myself. To look after physical, mental, emotional and spiritual have to balance in me...now I look after myself. There's some changes—the way I look, I feel good about myself—and this way

it seems that my son has changed over the past year or something here and I seem to have a better relationship with my family and they tell me I'm a good person now and I see the result...I don't feel angry anymore. I'm not hateful. I'm not mean anymore. I don't pass out, I don't swear now. I can help others, I can walk with them.

Another participant felt that "participating here would be you know, knowing that you made a difference that same day. Making a difference every day. Learning something new everyday... the most I can do is try and make it so there's more youth off the street and so they're doing something with their lives not just getting into gangs, drugs." As another participant said "I feel like I gotta give something back. I took a lot, so I gotta give back a lot...I could tell you there's guys that come in here, just same thing as me...They don't know what to do. And I tell them, this is what you do."

One woman described finding her voice through the program "I want to help people like myself that have gone through whatever I went through...If I see somebody is yelling at their wife...I fight for the child and I fight for the woman. I'm not abusive, I'm not a wrestler. I'm not like that. I'm not abusive at all, but I will tell."

Small changes in participants' lives are difficult to measure, but still have an important impact. Some of the ways participants described these changes included becoming more outgoing, or that participating "makes me feel good." Others said they had more self-esteem, more confidence, were happier, could "open up a little bit more" and were talking more. One participant described this change; "Before I came here I was a very weak person and like I said I realized I wasn't going to achieve anything. Now I'm doing good and I have goals set for myself." Another participant described how the organization made her feel:

I feel it's a home in here. I feel free, relaxed, welcome. I don't see anyone smirking at me or looking down on me.

While these changes are hard to define, they lead participants to make concrete changes in their life plans: "They don't let you slack off...They just teach you to think, actually feel motivated to do something." Since becoming involved at a CBO, this respondent became interested in returning to school and is now considering Adult Education courses. Another joined a program at Red River College as a part of his new "academic adventure." Other participants gained skills and experience they felt would help them in the future and encouraged them to be more involved in the community:

[My family and I] always have something to do now. If we're bored we get out of the house and come here and volunteer...I'd have to say it changed me a lot. When I first started coming here I had no experience whatsoever. I had no job. Now that I'm here there's so much things I can do now... Participating in programs like this makes a big difference because you know, it helps you gain more knowledge and somewhat find yourself...Move up you know.

One woman came because she was having trouble as a single mother with children who were becoming involved in drugs and crime. She describes the gradual process of empowerment and change that she experienced through the program:

I started coming back weekly and the more I came back I noticed the more I was able to cope with my children, I was able to talk with them in a way that there's no yelling. And my children could see the difference in my when I started at [the CBO]. So, we are able to communicate, my children, we started having good communication and

they...I noticed a change in them also. They were starting to settle down. My daughter would stay home with me on weekends. My youngest daughter started seeing her older sister doing that so she started staying home with me and then next thing you know we were able to communicate and we were able to be a family again.

Another participant spoke of the struggles that face refugees coming to Winnipeg from war-torn countries and his determination to empower others as he was empowered:

When I look around me, I realize that most of refugees, in particular African refugees, they are almost lost. Most of them used to live in refugee camps and the atrocity of war and everything. They don't, they didn't even get a chance to attend school and they come here illiterate...Those people don't have skills and they are everywhere in the inner city with a bad situation and sometimes dealing drugs. So when I see that situation it makes me very unhappy...So by coming to [the CBO], it's a way of me to contribute in some way to the awareness and amelioration of these people because there are a lot of opportunities. We can turn that situation if we know exactly who they were overseas, what kind of situation they faced before coming here. So I have in mind to develop this concept and maybe one day I will get the opportunity to make more about that and find out, change a little bit the way of dealing with these people when they first of all come to Canada or to Winnipeg.

Reclaiming Culture

The importance of Aboriginal teachings and spirituality was raised by participants throughout the interview process. Many noted that they have become increasingly informed about Aboriginal

culture and spiritual teachings as a result of participating in programs in their community. Many indicated that embracing Aboriginal teachings was having a positive impact on all aspects of their health.

Many respondents talked about using alcohol and drugs to cope with stress in the past and attributed their spirituality and Aboriginal teachings as giving them an alternative means of coping with stress. One respondent said; “My spiritual health has improved. I’m getting more in touch with the native culture.” This respondent noted that this change is having an impact on herself and also her children: “I’ve been practicing the seven sacred teachings a lot, and learning more about the culture and learning traditional ways. And that’s how I’m bringing up my children... I’m their number one teacher right now.” She credited a CBO for her exposure to Aboriginal spirituality, through her participation in sharing circles and sweat lodges at the organization. This gave her the ability to pass these traditions on to her children:

I’m gonna get my kids into the pow-wow group through Ma Mawi. My son wants to learn the drumming and the singing. My daughter wants to learn the dancing...I’m gonna put my children on that spiritual healing path, so that they can be successful in the future.

The above example is indicative of the transformative potential of programming built from a foundation of decolonization. For this individual, participation has not only helped her, but it has exposed her children to experiences that will shape their identities as Aboriginal people.

Several respondents clearly articulated that they feel very strongly that the programs they participate in are very important to them and they have contributed greatly to their spiritual and mental well-being. From an anti-oppressive/decolonization perspective, it is important that respondents

articulated the important role that the CBOs have had in their journey of discovering their cultural and spiritual roots. Many are just beginning to take great pride in their Aboriginal identity.

For Aboriginal participants, community organizations gave them the opportunity to connect with Aboriginal culture, spirituality and language that had been taken away from them or that they had never been exposed to. This is an important step in leading the way to the start of the decolonization process. Aboriginal participants expressed the importance of their traditional culture in helping them to regain pride, confidence and balance in their lives.

The meeting rooms are just full. When they have going for sweats...Tradition’s becoming more part of our life than anything. Then we’ll get this back. It’s something that shouldn’t have been taken away in the first place.

One participant explained his perception of the impacts of colonization and the meaning of the decolonization process.

[Decolonization has] got to start at home actually. People got to become more aware of it. People in the area they don’t even know what the work means. I took workshops, I know what it’s about. A lot of people don’t even know the residential school example. That’s why we have so many problems with kids and the violence. Lack of respect, not proper upbringing up home. No idea of their own culture. Something that’s got to be worked on more. They have to take the first step themselves, say they want to learn more about things. We’re just stuck in the violence and broken homes, foster kids, kids running amuck.

Some participants were able to use what they learned in organizations to pass these teachings on

to their own children; an important component that was missing from their own childhoods.

Like [the CBO] gave me the code of honour, and, they gave me these individual pieces of paper, and there's seven things, and I pin them on my wall. And every morning after we smudge, we go over those seven teachings, those seven code of honours. We go over the seven sacred teachings, me and my kids. I teach them about the animals, what does the animals bring to the culture. I teach them about Mother Earth, respecting Mother Earth, you know. Even saying hello to the tree, saying hello to the grass, touching it, you know...and just teaching them love.

[The CBO] was good because they respected your culture and they were into their culture and you learned about the native people because I never knew anything about it and I loved it. I love it—and what I want to do is go back to [the organization and listen to people and be a volunteer and help people.

If I had those things when I was small I would have been participating to learn more about tradition. We didn't have those things when I was a kid. Now it's brought out more, within the last 20 years...[it's part of] the healing process, yeah. Giving back their tradition instead of taking it away from them. They should have gave it back long ago. Why would they take something that wasn't theirs to take in the first place?

Organizations that offer Aboriginal cultural activities can be an important part of the decolonization process for the community. As one woman said: "I keep going back to [the CBO] because they have so many good things there, like the pipe ceremony on Monday mornings,

the smudging every morning, their traditional day on Thursdays. And being here there's a lot of programs and if you can apply yourself to them, it works, and it makes it a big difference if you follow it."

Once they had been introduced to Aboriginal traditions, many participants continued along the spiritual path on their own. "I like the spirituality and that's just bringing me back, taking that step towards that, because I was never a traditional, like into the tradition. I never used to do that, I used to think that I could not do that on my own but now that I got that little spirit involved in my head I know that I can move on."

There was a correlation between the length of time that participants had been practicing traditional Aboriginal culture and spirituality and their emotional and spiritual health. Participants who were just learning about their culture and tradition were more likely to rate their emotional and spiritual health as poor or average. The more they became involved, the better they felt about their spiritual health.

I've become more spiritually aware of myself and my background. I'm involved in ceremonies and stuff. I'm at a point where, say I was five years ago, I'm a long ways from that point until now. I've talked to different elders and I've talked to different spiritual advisors and been involved in ceremonies.

My spiritual health has improved. I'm getting more in touch with the native culture. I went to a sweat a few months ago.

For one participant, becoming more connected to Aboriginal teachings gave her newfound knowledge and strength to combat the racism she faced as a Métis woman. She told us her story: "The only thing I think about nowadays is tradition. Going to ceremonies and doing things. I'm not full-blooded native but I still have native in me so why not? I still get looked down on. I still

get racial comments.” She described an incident when five non-Aboriginal men surrounded her and called her racial slurs. She told us her response:

And I said...I’m Métis and you should be ashamed of how you’re talking to me, I said it was our people that saved your ass. I said if it wasn’t for us you wouldn’t even have a city to live in and I said we fought for you guys and my father fought for you people so you should be very upset about how your attitude is.’ And [they] didn’t think I was going to say nothing, they thought I was just going to be like a little shy, scared person, intimidating me. And I spoke up!...Don’t talk down to me. I stood up. I’m not scared.

Meeting People

Many people began attending an organization or program because they knew someone who went there, or they wanted to meet others. By meeting others they gradually become more interested and involved in the community. One participant describes this process:

It has changed because it did start off with that flyer that went out and it was a simple phone call. An invitation to come down and listen—and going back on that evening, putting a pot of coffee on, sitting on our deck that we just had built and enjoying a really nice evening, having a coffee and discussing what we had heard that evening. When the next meeting was set up we decided, yeah, let’s go, let’s go and see what we hear. And we never stopped going and we met a lot of community, which we both desired.

Another participant had a similar experience:

When I first started going it was more support for [my cousin]. I would go with her because she always wanted me to go

with her. And then, just got to know all the other girls and all the rest of the girls and all these activities, even games and stuff. It’s fun getting to know them and having to do all these little things together and then her, she stopped going and I though...I just kept going.

When asked what it was that kept them coming back, some of the responses included:

- Friendly people.
- Who I’m going to meet. That’s what I look forward to is meeting new people.
- Again the biggest thing I find is it’s given the opportunity to meet people. It’s been wonderful.
- Have fun and make new friends...it just changes when you wake up in the morning you feel better.
- Interacting, just being around people.
- Mostly the community brings me back here.
- People that I know come here and it’s like a meeting place.
- I really don’t like being alone and there’s always somebody around. I can always talk to someone or just go sit with them and have a smoke, I’m never alone.

From these responses, it is clear that meeting other people helps to break the isolation that people face when they do not know their neighbors or anyone else in the community. They saw community organizations as a meeting place, somewhere that they felt safe to be around others, interact and socialize in a comfortable setting. Meeting people made them feel good, relaxed, sociable, active and less stressed. This can be the first step in creating a sense of community and belonging that connects people to others.

After meeting people and creating ties and relationships, many participants developed the incentive they needed to continue participating in an organization.

Well what got me coming to [the organization] was when I first moved here my cousin took me there and it was really fun so I kept going back and since then I've made a lot of my friends and it's really fun.

You get to go on outings. My sister's the one who first brought me here...It's a fun place to go I guess.

One woman heard about the organization through a friend, and then stayed "because I like the people and I like meeting new people." Another noted that: "It's hard to find a community that's really there for you and your family, and I've picked up some trustful friends."

For some participants, the people they met made a major difference in their lives and decision-making. As they met people who had a positive influence on them, these relationships prevented them from becoming involved in gangs, crime or other activities that would have a negative impact on their lives.

I just like coming here, I like the people... if I wasn't coming here I'd probably be, I probably wouldn't have my kids or I'd probably end up giving them up or something. 'Cause there's someone, people, people are here to talk to."

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 and like, I don't know, I really enjoyed going to [the organization] and I experienced a lot of things over there and it made my life, better I guess, because I seen a lot of my friends that didn't hang out [at the organization] and I see how their lives are and I guess I just chose to not, take that path and to follow my friends at [the organization].

Positive influence from friends made at CBOs led to positive life changes for many participants. One young person got involved due to his friends, and met people who were connected to the drama and acting community. This introduced him to people with the same interests as him.

I think it's something that I was definitely interested in and for someone who's ambitious enough and they want to get involved and want contacts, it's the perfect place to go, like I wouldn't have met a lot of the people I've met in the past year and I wouldn't have been involved with the drama community.

Some participants felt that the people they met introduced them to new ways of thinking and living. One woman began going to an organization to do laundry, but ended up participating in many of the programs and meeting others.

[Participating here has made a difference it's really broadened my horizons a lot being here and seeing different lifestyles and meeting different ethnic groups all that's always been very interesting to me and... it's just a godsend that the place exists especially when you have like little or no family support...

Another participant had a similar experience meeting new groups of people:

I try and respect people as much as I can you know, because I would like them to respect me in the same way...It taught me to, how to like a different kind of person. They have different flavor, have a different way of being respected. It opens my horizons a little bit more.

For one youth, making new friends made her feel more connected with the community as a whole. Participating and getting to know

people gave her a different perspective on the community:

I think I have a better outlook on our community. Before I didn't know anybody so my view of youth in our community was actually not very good. But now that I've got to know some of the youth, I understand you know, like it's more than I see. It's all layers and stuff. They have issues that they're dealing with. They don't know how to deal with them, so they act out in this way that makes them look bad but they're not really bad, they're just trying to deal with their problems right?

Although many people said they came to the CBOs simply to meet people, it is clear that many became more involved in organizations through these ties and connections. New friends and staff encouraged them to try programs or take chances that they had not taken before. For some, positive influences helped keep them away from crime and drug involvement. Some began to feel better about themselves and more connected as a result of the relationships they made. In some cases, they met people who they then built connections with outside the organizations.

New Opportunities

For many participants, becoming involved in an organization opened new doors to them and created opportunities that they had not previously been exposed to. Participants were given the opportunity to try activities and experiences they were unfamiliar with, and provided volunteer services that gave them new skills. This gave many the chance to give back to the organization by taking on such tasks as cooking and working at drop-ins. Some participants mentioned the direct job experience that organizations gave them. For others, opportunities arose in many facets of their lives:

Ever since I've been involved with this organization, it's opened doors for relationships, employment, offers...It's been wonderful.

[I]t helps you gain more knowledge and somewhat find yourself, or maybe I should work here, some people will come here and they'll apply for a job they like it so much. I figure once I get enough schooling I can be a volunteer coordinator or something you know.

[The organization has] given me a lot...It gave me confidence, it gave me opportunities, like now I talk to you so that's pretty good. Opportunities to learn something, to do something. To share.

It's going to give me opportunities—open doors...I was volunteering there doing a little everything. Helped me get my hands on for when I go for my Child Support Youth Worker...Gave me a lot of opportunities—got my volunteer opportunity. Helped with a couple of my addictions.

One participant was involved in a program that enabled her to save money and matched her contributions on a three-to-one basis. With the money she saved, she was able to buy furniture for her children. "So at the end of six months, I got a thousand dollars to spend on my home, and all I invested in six months, is like, 42 dollars a month, and in the end, I got a thousand bucks, you know. Buy a bedroom suite. Buy my son a nice little car bed, 'cause that's what he wants."

One participant who had been involved with a CBO since youth reflected on the doors that had opened to her: "I actually learned a lot growing up there. I've learned responsibilities and I've learned how to be a leader and a role model. I really learned a lot growing up there actually and

I think that's why I'm a better person today just from growing up at [the CBO]."

Some CBOs gave youth a concrete opportunity to become involved in arts and drama. The youth shared the benefits they received from these programs:

So I got a little bit of exposure and recognition and...I know, it can connect me with a lot that I need if I have nowhere else to go... yeah, so I really appreciate the fact that it's there and I really hope that more people like me can go and be inspired and meet new people and just get involved with what they want to do.

I went to [the organization] because my brother told me that the radio heard him and offered him a record deal and he actually has produced the album at [the organization]

The opportunities created by CBOs gave participants the chance to set and achieve goals that they would not be able to reach otherwise. Meeting these goals gave them confidence and pride, and motivated many to have dreams and plans for the future.

Knowledge of Resources

As participants built their knowledge of their communities and became more involved in CBOs, they learned about the resources that were available to them. This is important for many of them to improve their quality of life, to know what kind of help they can get and to be able to access it.

I walk down the street now and I'm proud because of the fact that I noticed that hole in the ground is getting fixed because of me and [a CBO staff member]. We both worked together on that and got something done, and I know that got done this quick

because I'm employed by this and I'm part of this community that's getting stronger, and same...I met a lot of people that do have connections with who are the right people to go to and everything like that.

CBOs are able to connect the participants with resources they need and other organizations or individuals who can help them. This keeps people connected in the community and ensures that they are getting the assistance they need to live healthier lives. The help offered by organizations was crucial for many participants:

Like certain people let me know where to go, like go to [an CBO] they'll help you, to ask for help. It made a difference; I'd probably be out the same place I was before.

There's a lot of resources like for housing and jobs, clothing department if you need clothing. Sometimes they have meals set out or snacks if you're hungry...Just supports here. Look for apartments. Relax, watch T. V. Put my baby in childcare.

Me and my family started coming to [the CBO] when my wife became pregnant. We needed support with clothing, internet and family activities and stuff like that. Through the [CBO] we got what we were looking for most definitely.

I'll come back here because the computers, I used the computers sometimes and...a year later I started volunteering in the store...ever since then I've been getting more and more involved.

One participant felt that as a single father, there was a lot for him to learn, and he needed parenting resources. As he said "[there is] a lot to know when you have kids, so you have to learn methods you gotta learn how you gonna get by.

You know I learned a lot over here; where to go you know, it helps out even just being here today if it's a wash, to talk to people, it helped me out knowing...where to go."

Knowing where resources are located provided emotional support and peace of mind to many participants. As well, participants who had good experiences with organizations felt more prepared to seek out and use other community resources. Their experiences gave them confidence, which is a key factor in being ready to ask for help.

It made a huge difference. After that I searched for more programming and more self help groups, supports, community supports, volunteering, it was just a ripple effect for me, everything just kept going.

When I first came here I didn't know too much...about the programs here or who the people were and over the years, who runs what program. What programs that I might need to use. I've also developed some kind of, I have more self esteem. It's helped me in the long run.

One participant went to a CBO because he was facing abuse from his partner and did not know how to deal with the situation. The organization was able to provide him with the resources, information, and support to deal with the many challenges of leaving an abusive partner, gaining custody of children, and healing from emotional and physical abuse. Through the CBO, he gained access to all the resources he needed, from emergency supplies of food and diapers, to advocacy with CFS and police. This approach helped him to get out of his abusive situation.

Parenting Skills

Many participants were parents, and many spoke of wanting support and resources from CBOs to become better parents and caregivers. As one participant said, "I did it for my children

but mostly for me, just to be able to learn an extra couple things." For those who had experienced violence and neglect in their own childhoods, CBOs could provide them with healthy methods of parenting that they had not received from their own caregivers. One participant, a grandmother who was now caring for her grandchildren, spoke from her own experience:

I wish they would have had [a parenting program] when I was raising my kids you know, we had no role models. It was so different back then...I had no means of teaching [my kids] so I became a very bad mom because I wasn't sending my kids to church so I'd yell, scream and beat them, but if there would have been something like that...there was nothing...I've become stronger.

Some participants attended CBOs as a family, with both parents and children, which gave them the opportunity to have positive interactions with their children and with other parents. As one participant said; "We're getting the help we needed and getting a better understanding of how to be a better family." Other shared their families' experiences:

Family activities, we come to family swim at least once a week...We would have never done that if it wasn't for this place either, me and my wife we wouldn't of...That helped us in that retrospect and it also helped [my partner] get more confident with herself too after having a baby...going swimming with other families, it was really good support.

Even my boys like going there. I tell them we're going to go the [CBO], we're going to go to mom's program and they get all excited...Things for us to do with our kids. To better relationships and bonds and stuff like that.

Another participant was brought to an organization by a friend because he was partying all the time and was not taking care of his kids.

I came to the [CBO] just to try out the parenting program out there. Then I actually liked it and so I started going...Helps me understand more about my kids and how to deal with them more, than just yelling all the time...[my kids are] the ones that keep on wanting to go back, they like it there... Their attitudes changed...it's not so bad. My son's not fighting so much.

A year after he first came, he was voluntarily involved with the program and improving his parenting skills.

Some participants directly credited CBOs with enabling them to keep custody of their children, due to their participation in parenting programs.

I had to come here because they apprehended my baby at first...so I came here to get my baby back and so that I could get visits with my kids with, like supervision I guess, so that they can see that I am a good parent and that I'm not what they think I am. And, I don't know what keeps me coming back. I just stay here because I know that if I leave then I might as well say goodbye to my kids.

Reciprocity and Social Capital

After being with an organization, receiving care and support, many participants started on the path to healing, and began to feel a strong desire to give back to the CBOs and to their communities. Many participants volunteer—formally and informally—in their neighbourhoods. They felt strongly that they have benefited significantly from the community-based programs but they are also giving back. As noted by one respondent “I feel like I gotta give something back...what I

get out of them—free service—I give back free service—to give back to other people that can use it too.”

Another participant emphasized the power of this reciprocity “...I always have something to give, and I also have something to receive, because I'm sitting in a group, I get to listen to other stories, other situations, so that we know that, I'm not alone in this world. I'm not the only one going through these situations, and it's very spiritually moving for me...” For this participant, the experience is intrinsically linked to her Aboriginal identity; “In the native culture, everything happens in a circle...that's how we are. So, if I can give to someone, and receive at the same time, from their experiences, their stories, then we're just traveling in a circle.”

Participants talked about the experience of getting help and they also take great pride in the fact that they are now able to give back.

They're all part of this, because if they didn't do what they did...I necessarily wouldn't have this...I don't think how many lives they realized they really did reach and enrich and everything like that, so if they need to hear it I'm going to tell them it.

I understand that [parents] have a lot of fear...they don't have a voice in the community, so I'm able to help other community family members. Especially single mothers. You know, I understand what they're going through and I'm able to share my stories. My own struggles.

Often participants spoke of helping in ways that would give back to the CBOs they had received help from. They shared with us some of the ways they were able to contribute their skills and abilities to these organizations:

I've met a lot of people here. Sometimes I listen to their problems. I'm a good listener.

I keep coming back because the people around here are good people and some of them need help and I help them out whenever I can...And if any of the staff here ask me to do something, I'll help them out with that.

Like the times I was there by myself, there was nothing do to so I'd help around there, help out in the kitchen. I think I was in there for two hours washing dishes! She was so grateful that I helped her.

I wanted to support parents. Support that parents who are in the same situation, like what I go through...I was a single parent and I would like to help them better educate their children. Those young mothers who come here, and help them and also to be aware of the effects of violence on kids—teenagers.

One participant was especially interested in becoming a mentor for youth in his community. He described the feeling that this reciprocity gave him:

[The CBO] gave people the opportunity from the area to get some work experience working with kids and it just gives you a sense of being needed. Kids, that's the future. To show these kids that it's possible for them to do anything they put their mind to. A lot of the kids, they show respect, they tell me they like me. It's a nice feeling.

Caring and Compassion

One of the important benefits that CBOs offer is the care and compassion of staff. For many participants who did not have family and friends in their communities, staff provided them with essential support:

They're trusting. They're really, really caring and they understand. They don't judge anybody. They don't judge you.

Like I said, it kept me off the streets and it gave me a place to come and talk with someone if I had a problem and people here understand me and that and I like all the staff and that and everyone here.

I feel support here because I can ask for bedding—they'll give me. If I need something extras like juices or something like that. They'll help me.

[The CBO staff person], she's been available for me, and I've sat and stayed longer and she's talked to me and I've walked away encouraged because she's just like, you know, just encouraged me: 'Yeah, school's tough but you're going to be okay. Don't be so hard on yourself.'

One participant described the impact that the caring of the staff had on her life:

This is twice now that I like I gave up on this place because of shame and started doing drugs and then my ex took my little girl from me and it was because of [this CBO] that they helped me get her back...So no matter what, this place makes me feel like even if I slip here and there then I'm still human and that I'm still okay and that I'm not that bad of a person...they're slowly trying to teach me that they'll always be there for me and just knowing that it gives me the power to come and talk to them and to admit to them when I do fail...I always know that they're going to smile and that they're going to make me feel okay when I leave. So I would like say that you know thank God for this place 'cause

if it wasn't, I don't know if I would have my daughter today.

CBO staff contributed their energy and support to many participants. As one woman noted; "I still have the feeling of [a staff person] in here. She just cared so much about women, you could really feel it...And she gave her all, so yeah, it was terrific." Feeling unconditional support was important to many participants; "they want to see you live a good life and what I liked about [the CBO] is that they had childcare and they just opened arms and they didn't care who you were."

Another participant described the gradual process of building a trusting relationship between staff and community members. As she said: "Reaching out, just coming for that cup of coffee. May be a selfish motive in the beginning but eventually they'll find themselves and they'll start giving back and that's what [a staff person] brings to this program and the ladies here, you see them, talking laughing."

Overcoming Addictions

For some participants, CBOs can inspired them to take the first step or the next step toward overcoming addictions. Participants were able to combat the shame and stigma associated with addictions, and to meet others who were also struggling.

[The CBO provides] healing, and support, and...[I get to] hear other stories. They have guest speakers that come and teach us about the culture, or they come and tell their story, of...[their] drug and alcohol abuse in the past and what made them change their lives around, what made them realize that this is not the life they want to, to have.

CBOs had a direct impact on participants by preventing them from developing addictions, or from going back to old addictions. As one participant said; "If it wasn't for this place, I'd be

on drugs and that and it's actually got me away from that, my family sees that, that it got me away from drugs and that, and ultimately that affects them."

I'm not out causing trouble. Sober. Doing better. Better for my kids, not choosing drugs and alcohol over my kids anymore. I wish I would have turned back time with my son, but all is done. People grow out of things. Some do anyways.

I've gotten older and there's nothing to do and I started coming here more often and, it just keeps me away from the drugs and all that.

I'm just grateful for the program itself. I'm glad I came to [the CBO] because if it wasn't for [the CBO] for all I know I'd be still out there. Maybe gone back to my old lifestyle, my old addictions. Because I see a lot of that happening to parents and they can't find the support they need, because they get so frustrated they give up and they go back to their own addictions, so I'm just grateful for [the CBO].

Some participants came to the CBO while they were heavily involved with their addictions. For some, the process of getting help is very gradual.

...when I found out about the program I was just so happy, it just seemed like everything fit for what I needed, and the first time I took it was in the North End...I was racing, I was coming off of drugs, I was a big needle dope user, pretty messed up relationships, a lot of criminal activity, people I was associating with, my lifestyle it was just a mess. I had lost my kids to CFS.

When I first came here I was very involved in my addiction. Drinking, drugging. I came here because I tried to make up for lost time and be with my grandson and I found out that they had places for kids here.

One participant went back to a CBO to complete a program that she had been unable to complete the first time she attended.

It works, and it makes it a big difference if you follow it, because I've been following it and the counselors, you know if I'm having a bad day, they say, "Well, look at the way you were when you came in and look at you now. You've changed. You've done a lot of progress."

Feelings of Safety

Many participants felt that having resources and CBOs in their communities made those communities safer. As well, getting involved and knowing people in the community made individuals feel safe. One woman told the story of how CBOs have had an impact, especially on youth in her community.

"They picked the exact right time to come in to our community...I think by them coming in they've saved and helped, like, save our community, getting more involvement...we have a lot of gang activity...now you get all these projects coming in and taking on these youngsters. It's really nice to see because these children are getting saved and it all has to do with that flyer. Because if it didn't come, they'd probably be up in Headingley, Stony, Juvii...So, it's done so much for our community. It worked in our community. It could work in anybody's community

Other participants felt that CBOs were a "safe place" to come, somewhere where there was "always a place for me". For some youth who had

no fixed living situation, CBOs provided the safest place to stay.

Like when I used to go to [the CBO] I was around 14 and I knew they were open to me because I used to run away and that's the place I went and felt safe.

I really like coming here. I feel safe here. Outside the property you still can't say anything to the person like...you got to watch yourself. They're fighting right outside over drugs...It's supposed to be a safe place for everybody.

I love meeting people in my community. I like to know everybody in my community. I think that's better because then you get to know everybody and I think you feel safer when you know everyone in your community.

Recreation and Having a Place to Go

Often CBOs provide people with recreational activities or simply a place to go. This can be the first step for people to become involved in an organization, and more opportunities often arise for them after they first drop in. While some participants did not elaborate on the impact of having a place to go, it affected their quality of life. This was reflected most often with participants who were youth.

If I wasn't here I'd be on the street. I would have no place to go, so it's been an improvement on my life that I can come to this place, that I can go to other places that I know that I'm welcome. That I feel welcome and that I know I'm needed. If I wasn't needed I wouldn't have nothing to do. I need to feel needed every day.

I heard they had a drum set here...Drums, all the music stuff upstairs, pool, watch TV...

[the staff are] Pretty awesome... I have a place to go.

Well, when I was little, I was bored so I came for the crafts and the games and the T. V. and I come for the support and help now these days and for the food store, it's pretty cheap. It helps me budget with my cheques I get from assistance, food buy club, something.

I first heard about this place when I moved into the shelter on Flora and every Tuesday we have to come here and make supper so I started coming here and my friends started to come here...because it's fun and the staff are cool and I can talk to them. I like the computers and play pool and watch some T.V...my behaviour is better than before...I used to be, be really bad and now I come here I'm not, I'm not other places where I shouldn't be.

I was playing this game on computer and I heard that this place had it, had computers so I started coming here playing with other kids on it, got them into it, been here ever since and then this program started up and I'm still here...I come here every day.

Sense of Community and Belonging

Through continued participation in CBOs, participants began to form a sense of community, of belonging to a group. As one participant noted: "...if you don't believe in your community then you're not going to have any dreams, you're not going to have any future, anything like that. You're just going to be wandering... We're happy. I really like it here. I don't *like* it here—I *love* it here and that to be honest, not to be cheesy sounding or you know, phony, I really do. I believe in this... We made it our home. We made our community

part of our home, so we're happy and pleased and excited."

Other participants shared the ways in which their participation in CBOs made them feel like a community:

Well, because a lot of my friends were involved in these programs and then I began to make more friends with the youth that were there and I found that they were all like really funky and neat and a lot of fun to be with right? So, I really want to be involved in my community because I just like to know people, it's fun to pass by people when I'm with friends who know lots of people and they say "Hey" to every person who walks by and I think "I wish that was me."

Just going out and meeting people and being part of the community that's what brings me up. It's a sense of belonging, it's just a sense of knowing that people are out there. As it stands right now I'm just basically around the area. People know who I am and what I'm capable of doing volunteer wise. So it's improved a lot over the last two years.

CBOs create a sense of community in the people who go there, and are an integral part of the community. As one participant said; "If this place ever disappeared, this community would go to shit. I'm saying that straight out. .. Because without [CBOs]...our community would be lost."

Another participant shared the story of how her community and the CBO had grown together; "[My sister was] the one that first came here with me. She goes 'Come on, I'm going to show you this really great place that's going to be great for the community.' And it is. That was eight years ago. This place had nothing when we first came here. There was nothing here. There was only one little office...A lot has changed. And she was one of the first volunteers here."

The sense of community and belonging in organizations made many participants feel that they were as comfortable there as though it was their own home or family. Participants made statements such as:

- This is like home.
- A sense of belonging, like a little family, like all those women just seemed to connect.
- It is my second home.
- I feel it's a home in here. I feel free, relaxed, welcome...they know me.
- I don't have no family, but to me it feels like family here and without this place I don't think I would have made it.
- I just feel right in here, I guess. Like a second home.

One participant summed up what belonging to a community can contribute to life:

...we can't live outside of the human community and I have to be part of the community. I have to give my contribution and...I can do it by being a part of a community and to be partnered with people who are dealing with how to change and how to ameliorate a neighbourhood and how to make people more self-supporting and by doing that, I am, I will be creating safe neighbourhoods where I can live myself safely. I don't have enough money to choose maybe a place outside of downtown, I am still going to live there, but if the situation doesn't change I will be part of victims. So by involving the program I would like to make the environment around me more agreeable, more attractive. More friendly, instead of scared.

Research Findings – Gaps in Services in the Community

In the final question in our interview guide, we asked the participants to identify any gaps in service that they saw in their communities.

While 13 participants did not feel there were gaps in services in their communities, the majority of participants identified gaps and offered recommendations for how these gaps could be addressed. The identified gaps included:

- the need for youth services
- supports for families and parenting
- resources for marginalized groups
- improvements in the justice system
- a lack of understanding on the part of social assistance and Child and Family Services
- the need for improved staffing and training for CBOs
- supports for Aboriginal culture and languages
- the need for more inclusive program criteria
- lack of outreach and communication,
- lack of community safety

Other gaps recognized by participants included the need to take greater care of the environment, hold community clean-ups, combat racism in the community and in systems, better housing, more commitment and consistency from program participants, not wasting food in organizations, having better food, having organization staff share their life experiences with participants, providing people with transportation costs or food vouchers when they come to a CBO, encouraging people to volunteer and contribute to the CBO if they use its services, and creating more spiritually-based groups.

Conclusions – Is Participation Having an Impact?

The Broad Benefits of Participation

Participants very clearly articulated how participating in the various community-based programs has contributed to their individual well-being. But the broader benefit of participation also becomes apparent through the majority of interviews. Many of those interviewed moved from ‘client’ to ‘volunteer’ and take great pride in the fact that they are now able to help others in their community. Others spoke of the benefits to their children, as they become better parents. Many spoke of the importance of interacting with people who share similar circumstances and the relief that comes from feeling like they are not alone in their troubles.

Many of the participants indicated that government systems—primarily welfare and child welfare—create significant stress in their lives. This would suggest that structural change remains a challenge. However, there seems to be a growing awareness among many program participants that the failure of systems to adequately respond to their needs does not mean that they as individuals are failures but rather that these systems are failing them. This awareness, and the willingness of participants to speak about systemic issues, is encouraging.

Many of those interviewed said that they continue to struggle with inflexible and insensitive government systems and that their participation in programs has helped them to better understand systemic problems and get help in maneuvering through various government agencies. Nonetheless, there is little indication that attitudes are changing on a broader community level and/or that structural change is near. For most, the journey is currently focused on individual healing and building relationships. For many of the Aboriginal participants, reclaiming their identities and understanding their culture is where they are

most focused. For youth, staying safe and building positive relationships is important. These are all critical first steps toward broader social change.

How Do We Measure Success?

The primary purpose of this research is to understand how we might better measure the outcomes of participation to more accurately reflect individual, family, neighbourhood and broader community benefits. Using a PAR framework—engaging CBOs and program participants in design and implementation—we aimed to develop a better understanding by interviewing program participants.

As discussed in the previous pages, individuals participating in community-based programs articulate positive experiences that contribute to their lives and the lives of their families and communities, in many powerful ways. Their stories offer important lessons for the way that we measure effectiveness. They also provide important lessons for CBOs as they examine and refine the programming that they provide.

Indicators Emerging From the Research

Our research reveals that one of the most important outcomes of participation in CBOs is the development of social capital. Social capital is the development of relationships and networks between people. As noted by Onyx and Bullen (1999), where high levels of social capital exist, people are more likely to feel they are part of the community; feel useful and able to make a real contribution to the community; participate in local community networks and organizations; come together in time of crisis; and welcome strangers and participate as a group. This is also consistent with Freire’s notion of dialogue and communication as a first step toward empowerment and transformation.

The experiences articulated by program participants interviewed provide insight into the impact that community-based programs have on the development of social capital in the inner

city. This is critical for marginalized individuals and communities with high levels of poverty and transience. Measuring social capital can provide important information about individual growth and community change. Participants' reports of 'volunteering and giving back,' 'feeling connected,' 'making friends,' and 'becoming actively involved in the community,' are measures of social capital and provide evidence of an increase in social capital for individuals who have previously felt isolated and alone.

In most cases, individual participants clearly articulated their reason for participating in programs. Many initially participated for material reasons such as having access to food, clothing and a welcoming and safe place to 'hang out.' However many of these individuals later found emotional and spiritual supports to have a great deal of impact on their lives. Including indicators that will measure the incremental benefits of participation can provide useful learning for policy and program design.

Analysis of the interviews showed that participation in culturally based programming was an extremely powerful indicator of increased sense of self and hope for the future. Individuals who felt a strong connection to their culture reported feeling that their lives had improved significantly as a result of 'reclaiming their culture', were better people, better parents, and had much to contribute to the community. This is an important first step in the process of decolonization and the impact of culturally based programming can provide useful insight for further program development.

Most of the participants interviewed do not work for wages. However many talked a great deal about their 'work'—raising children and volunteering both formally and informally. Many reported having moved forward from 'users' of services to acting as mentors to new participants. Our research shows that many program participants see their involvement as part of a longer journey toward greater community involvement and

independence. Moving from 'client' to 'helper' is an important step and demonstrates progress for individuals and communities.

The impact of structural barriers for people living in poverty cannot be minimized. Interviewees almost always identified 'government systems' as one of the top three causes of stress. Many individuals attributed the CBOs with helping them to learn how to more effectively deal with these systems to get what they need. Such learning is critical and should be included as an indicator of success.

The majority of respondents very clearly articulated at least one important dream for the future. In most cases these dreams were very practical. For example, at least 14 respondents had children in foster care and their dreams for the future centered on reunification with their children. For those whose children are not permanent wards, they reported working very hard to do whatever necessary to get their children back in their care. For them, being reunited with their children is the ultimate indicator of their successful participation in community programs.

Many of the youth interviewed indicated that a major reason for participating in projects is to keep them safe from gangs and keep them out of trouble. If program participation does nothing more than keep children safe and out of the justice system, then an important service is being provided to individuals and the broader community.

Addiction was raised as a concern for many respondents. Some reported that their programs participation was helping to keep them off of drugs and alcohol. Others openly reported their ongoing struggle with their addictions and were thankful for the non-judgmental support and encouragement they received from program staff. Overcoming addictions can be a long process and setbacks are not uncommon. The role of CBOs in providing a safe and supportive healing environ-

ment for individuals struggling with addictions is an important community service.

Many of the individuals interviewed had few family supports and therefore relied on the workers at community-based programs, as well as government agencies, to take on this role. As noted by one respondent:

...I've had a lot of support at [the CBO]. My parents deceased when I was eight so I...ran around. My workers helped me out a lot. I'm very like, bad, so they straightened me out. I like the supports, I like the workers sometimes I don't want to lose them. They get me into programs because my two daughters are in CFS so I want to get them back, so I just went through all these programs, I didn't like at first, and the more I learned things from it, and now I'm doing all this support stuff. But I think back to my old ways, I kind of miss it and I don't know why. Like I'm still young and I feel like I'm forty and I'm doing all these things for people and homecare. I've come a long way with where I was before. I used to be an F student and now I'm an A student. Just finished getting my grade 12. See a bunch of my old friends. No, I don't like that. I go to church sometimes and it scares me. I do it for my kids mostly. I've done a lot for myself but I do it for my kids mostly. The workers have helped me get through everything, so, I like the support. I never used to get it because I was too, f'd up... and, [the worker] would [not give up on her] "No, I'm not going to give up on her. I'm not going to give up on ' her." A lot of workers did [support her] and the same workers that I have still aren't even supposed to be helping me out but they are, because they were my workers before I was eighteen. I get a lot of support. I enjoy it.

We must not underestimate the need for unconditional support and guidance of family and

for those who do not have this, CBOs and agency social workers can be an important proxy.

It is also important to understand the different roles of different organizations. Many of those interviewed reported participating in two or more programs. This should not be seen as an overlap in services. Individuals often 'ladder' from one program to another as they progress through their individual journeys. Many have multiple issues and require services from more than one organization to help them cope. The network of CBOs provides complementary services and all make an important contribution to the very complicated lives of their 'clients'.

Building Community Capacity through PAR - the Importance of Community Researchers

The *State of the Inner City Report* is committed to training and hiring community researchers. Eight community researchers were hired and trained to conduct interviews for this study. Once interviews were completed we decided to interview a sample of the researchers to hear their thoughts on the project. We were interested in understanding whether they felt they benefited from participating as a community researcher and what their thoughts were on the project in general. A sample of three of the eight interviewees was selected. While this component was added late in the project and time did not allow for us to interview all eight researchers, we learned that hiring and training community researchers is critical to our community capacity-building aims.

Nancy

Nancy is a 39-year-old Aboriginal woman. Nancy told us that she quit drinking on September 4th, 1996 when she was told that if she did not do so, she would die. Adopted by a non-Aboriginal American family during the 1960s large-scale adoption of Aboriginal children by

non-Aboriginal families (often referred to as the Sixties Scoop), Nancy was sent back in 1985 when she was 17 years old and was placed in the Manitoba Adolescent Treatment Centre. Nancy had four children, all of whom were raised by foster parents. Her daughter committed suicide one year ago and since then Nancy has focused on her own healing.

During an interview that took place at the Aboriginal Visioning Centre on Selkirk Ave., Nancy was asked whether she felt that her participation as a community researcher benefited her at all. Nancy lowered her eyes and reflected for several minutes before responding. She then looked into the interviewers' eyes and said: "Participating in this project gave me my voice back". When asked to elaborate she went on to say that she was initially very anxious about participating and almost dropped out. But she was encouraged by her mentor at Native Women's Transition Centre and CCPA researchers and so she continued on. Nancy told us that she had very low self-esteem and did not have the confidence that she could do this work or any work. Although Nancy had been engaged in volunteer activities in her community, she had never been 'employed' for wages. Nancy bravely continued through the project in spite of her initial hesitation. She told us that she became stronger and more confident with each interview. We witnessed her improvement through each interview we listened to.

Nancy expressed being thankful for the support and encouragement she received and she said that she now feels that she has the confidence to try other things. Nancy has since begun work—paid work—as a support worker at the Native Women's Transition Centre.

Carey

After the birth of her son, Carey worked on a casual basis at Wolseley Family Place for four years. She credits Wolseley family place for providing her with some early training. She moved

on from there to pursue her education and work in other communities. Carey became involved in the project through the Native Women's Transition Centre, where she is a participant in the Centre's mentoring program.

Carey conducted interviews at Wolseley Family Place, where she has also participated in programs. Carey has participated in other community-based research projects and she told us that she feels she learns a lot from doing so. "I really enjoy doing these kind of research projects because it gives me a chance to hear other peoples' stories and also their opinions because I guess a lot of people don't get that opportunity very often...to voice their opinions or be able to have it actually used for something."

When asked if there was something in particular that stood out for her, she said that it was the emphasis on need for greater supports for youth. Carey also noted that there was a desire for more "Aboriginal places they could go for cultural stuff." A further issue she observed was the fearfulness of repercussions from Employment and Income Assistance. Even after reading through the consent form and learning that interviews would be confidential, one of the women she interviewed was hesitant to share too much information "...because she was on social assistance, she was afraid to...I don't think I got as much as I could have out of her because she was hesitant to share". When asked if there was anything in particular that stood out for her or "surprised her", Carey referred to an interview with a refugee woman. "...Her story was...scary I guess...Yeah, where she came from and what she had to go through...that was the first time [I had talked to a refugee]...you hear about it on the news but when you're actually talking to a person telling their story, it's different".

In terms of hopes for the project and her participation, Carey would like to be able to use the experience as a reference for future employment, and she hopes that the information will be used. "...The information is important

and instead of looking at numbers all the time...I think people's stories have a bigger impact on... it should have a bigger impact on...how policies and stuff are made."

Lorraine

Lorraine is a long time inner-city resident and has volunteered at Rossbrook House for several years. She told us that she was honoured when Sister Maria asked her to participate as a community researcher for the project. Lorraine told us that she had already believed that Rossbrook House was providing a valuable service but hearing what the kids had to say about Rossbrook was sometimes quite surprising. Lorraine felt that she developed some important skills. It was sometimes challenging to get the children to open up and elaborate on their answers, but when they did, they had some very important things to say. Lorraine told us that she appreciated getting to know the children she interviewed better. She now has a better understanding of the extensive challenges that they have.

A lot of them don't have any place to go. I talked to one that was staying at his grandma's but there is no room for him so he hangs out at Rossbrook basically 24/7 when he can...and a lot of them because of the home life, they...I remember going to work and having kids sitting at the door because they've been outside since early morning, parents are doing drugs, they haven't ate since the day before. All they want...'can I have a piece of bread?'... and it's sad.

Lorraine plans to continue to participate as a volunteer at Rossbrook House and elsewhere in her community. Lorraine is interested in continuing to be involved in this and future community-based research projects.

Final Thoughts

A critical lesson for governments and funding agencies is that 'success' has many meanings. Those of us who had the opportunity to participate in this project learned much about the very subjective nature of measuring outcomes. The size, scope and design of this project presented many challenges. While the hiring and training of community researchers added an additional layer of complexity, it was a critical component of our project if we were to remain true to our capacity-building objectives. The benefits far outweighed the costs.

In respect for the many program participants and community researchers that contributed their time and shared their stories with us, we conclude with a quote from one of our community researchers, which we believe captures the essence of what this project has been all about.

When asked if she wanted to provide a pseudonym to ensure her anonymity in the final report, Nancy, a community researcher and program participant, responded as follows. We feel that Nancy's words very powerfully articulate why our PAR model is critical to conducting research in the inner city.

I really don't mind if you put my real name on the final report. Our people have been silent for way too long...without a name or a face, which is known as an identity.

I'm starting to know my culture and my identity, so without a name or a face, I am not complete or whole. I feel our government and/or other agencies could and will know the real facts. I feel too, we as a people need to speak up, and let our voices be heard. I am speaking up for people who don't have a voice or they're afraid to speak up. I am giving you permission to put my real name on the final report. I want to thank you for giving me the chance to speak up, I have

learned so much about human beings, including myself.

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Appendix One

Member Organizations of CLOUT

Andrews Street Family Centre

Provides a focal point in the community where families work to meet their own needs. United Way supports three programs at ASFC. (1) The Pritchard Place Drop-in Centre, which offers a safe and positive alternative to street life for vulnerable children and youth in the inner city. (2) Parents Helping Parents program provides outreach and practical support to families and their children. (3) Volunteer Program strengthens and utilizes the skills of community residents.

Community Education Development Association

Supports efforts to increase the capacity of residents in the North End of Winnipeg to develop, strengthen and sustain their communities. CEDA serves as a resource to organize and facilitate action; to promote the development of skills and resources necessary to help neighbourhoods and communities realize their potential. CEDA also runs the Youth Opportunity Program at two North End high schools.

Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre

Is designed as a bridge between the community and the “systems” that interact with it. Ma Mawi works to create preventative, supportive services and resources for Aboriginal families living in Winnipeg: of, by and for Aboriginal people. Ma Mawi’s work is based on a recognition and understanding of the importance of extended family systems. Using a community-based approach, Ma Mawi puts emphasis on working with the strengths and capacities of people they serve, creating opportunities for leadership and strong community involvement. United Way supports capacity-building opportunities for

members of the community in the Volunteer Program, Youth Program and Community Training and Learning.

Native Women’s Transition Centre

Offers a safe home as it addresses the needs of Aboriginal women and children who have been victimized and need assistance to make healthy lifestyle changes. All services are delivered within the context of Aboriginal culture and traditions. United Way supports programs that address family violence and related issues, build supportive networks and develop healthy coping skills. United Way also provides time-limited support for Completing the Circle, a mentorship program that supports women as they leave the Transition Centre and move back into the community.

Ndiniwemaaganag Endaawad

Provides 24-hour shelter and basic necessities for Aboriginal children/youth who are runaways or are presently living on the street. Offers culturally-appropriate services, including residential support and outreach for children/youth at risk of exploitation and abuse. United Way supports an initiative that builds the organizational capacity of the agency to fulfill its expanding community role. United Way also supports a volunteer program in the Youth Resource Centre, which seeks to give both adults and local youth employment-related experience and a way of giving to the community.

North End Women’s Resource Centre

Assists women to gain control over their lives, break the cycle of poverty, and achieve more independence. The Centre offers individual and group counselling, learning and volunteer opportunities, skill development to local women, along with crisis counselling, and referrals. The Centre also has a drop-in area for women and their children, runs a second-hand clothing shop, and operates an employment preparation program.

Rossbrook House

Provides a 24-hour, safe alternative to the streets 365 days a year. At Rossbrook, young people can meet their needs for socialization, recreation, personal development and crisis intervention. Programs empower youth and build self-esteem through a variety of educational, cultural and pre-employment activities. An innovative music program, now in its fourth year, is nurturing the artistic capacities of many youth.

Wolseley Family Place

Is a community-based family resource centre that focuses on building supportive relationships. Services and programs include parent/child education, child care and development education, health and safety issues, as well as food and nutrition sessions. With time-limited support from United Way, Wolseley Family Place operates the Food Connection project. Participants are also provided with supported, on-site employment that involves preparation, service and sale of food.