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# *The Promise of Investment in Community-Led Renewal*

**State of the Inner City Report: 2005**

## **Part II: A View From the Neighbourhoods**

CANADIAN CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES-MANITOBA





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**November 2005**

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**Cover photos:**

Spence resident Ruth Erb, the Lord Selkirk Developments, and Wabung Abinoonjiiag. Photos by Erika Wiebe.



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## Acknowledgements

This is the second part of a two-part State of the Inner City Report and is a close examination of three inner-city neighbourhoods. Part One, *Policy Considerations*, deals with a wide range of public policy issues, particularly housing, employment, and education, is published separately. It can be obtained by contacting the CCPA-Manitoba office, or website, at the [www.policyalternatives.ca](http://www.policyalternatives.ca).

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THE UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG



Community Project Fund



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# The Promise of Investment in Community-Led Renewal

## State of the Inner City Report: 2005

### Part II A View from the Neighbourhoods

This is Part II of the 2005/06 *State of the Inner City Report*. Part I focuses on policy issues, in particular housing, employment development and education in the inner city, and is available at the address and website shown in this document. Part II is a comparative analysis of three inner-city neighbourhoods—Spence, Centennial and Lord Selkirk Park.

This is the first time a *State of the Inner City Report* has been published in Winnipeg. Why a report on the state of the inner city?

There are several reasons for our doing this. First, we want to bring to wider public attention the many developments, both negative and positive, that are taking place in Winnipeg's inner city, and by doing so prompt a wide-ranging public conversation about the inner city. The more aware the public is, the more likely we all are to benefit from good public policy.

Second, we want to share with each other the knowledge of, and to celebrate, those strategies and interventions that are working well in the inner city. There are many problems; we will identify some of them in this report. But there are also a great many remarkably innovative and effective initiatives that have been developed right here in Winnipeg's inner city and that hold out enormous

promise for positive social and economic change. Our hope is that this report will enable a sharing of what we are all learning in the difficult but often rewarding struggles in Winnipeg's inner city.

Third, we want to identify gaps in the work that is being done in the inner city. Are there things that should be done but are not now being done? Are there problems that are going unmet and that could benefit from particular interventions? Most of us working in the inner city believe that solutions have to be holistic, as opposed to being piecemeal. It is our hope that the state of the inner city reports can assist in developing effective and holistic strategies.

Finally, we want to contribute to the making of better public policy in Winnipeg's inner city. We want to enable a better targeting of public expenditures, by identifying what works well and what does not. The needs are great; but the solutions are being developed right in the inner city. The solutions, for the most part, are community-based solutions. Better public policy is needed to strengthen these highly effective 'home-made' solutions, to fill the gaps that are as yet unfilled, and to move us forward in Winnipeg's inner city on a larger and more ambitious scale and in a more effective fashion than has been the case to date.

One of the important conclusions that arises out of this *State of the Inner City: View From the Neighbourhoods Report* is that where two conditions prevail, progress is being made. Where strong and effective community-based and community-controlled organizations emerge, and where these community-based organizations (CBOs) are adequately funded, positive change begins to occur.

This in itself is an important finding, particularly because it enables us to operate from a sense of hope. Many people in the inner city have been ground down over a long period of time, and they live largely without a sense of hope for a better future. Creating opportunities for such people, and providing supports to them in their attempts to seize those opportunities, will turn many lives around. This is a difficult process when people are without hope. Yet the central message that we want to convey is that, despite the many problems, there is hope for a better future in the inner city, and we can see that this is so in those instances when strong CBOs are established and when they are adequately funded. Much of the content of this first *State of the Inner City: View From the Neighbourhoods Report* will be evidence of this finding.

Finally, by way of introduction, we want to express our thanks to the many inner-city people who agreed to be interviewed for this *Report*. Most of what we have written in this *View From the Neighbourhoods Report* is based on the voices of people living and working in the inner-city neighbourhoods that we examine. In all of the work that we do in the inner city, we consider it to be important that people who live and work in the inner city have an opportunity to be heard. Too often they are silenced. A deep understanding of the problems and solutions in the inner city requires, we believe, that we listen carefully to what inner-city people themselves say the problems are, and what inner-city people themselves say the solutions ought to be. We have tried to do that in

this first *View From the Neighbourhoods Report*.

The *Report* examines each of the three inner-city neighbourhoods in turn, and then draws some conclusions and offers some recommendations. We want to emphasize that this *State of the Inner City: View From the Neighbourhoods Report* leads us to conclude that solutions to inner-city problems are available. They have emerged and are emerging out of the hard and creative work of inner-city people themselves. These solutions are equally applicable, it should be noted, in other non-inner-city parts of Winnipeg, where inner-city conditions can and do exist. What is needed now is our collective commitment as a society to pursuing and supporting those solutions consistently and emphatically over an extended period of time. It is our hope that in future issues of the *View From the Neighbourhoods Report*, we can describe the many gains that have been made.

### **Inner-city neighbourhoods**

Winnipeg's inner city is not homogenous. It is comprised of many individual neighbourhoods, each with its own particular character, each a bit different from the other. To some extent, inner city strategies are neighbourhood-based, and they have to be tailored to the particular character and the particular strengths and needs of each neighbourhood. This is work that, if it is to be effective, has to be taken on by people in the neighbourhood themselves, preferably organized in a community-based organization (CBO), or CBOs, of some kind.

We have chosen to highlight three inner-city neighbourhoods: Spence, Centennial, and Lord Selkirk Park. Spence and Centennial neighbourhoods are south of the CPR tracks—the great barrier separating the North End from the rest of Winnipeg's inner city—while Lord Selkirk Park is immediately north of the CPR tracks (see map).

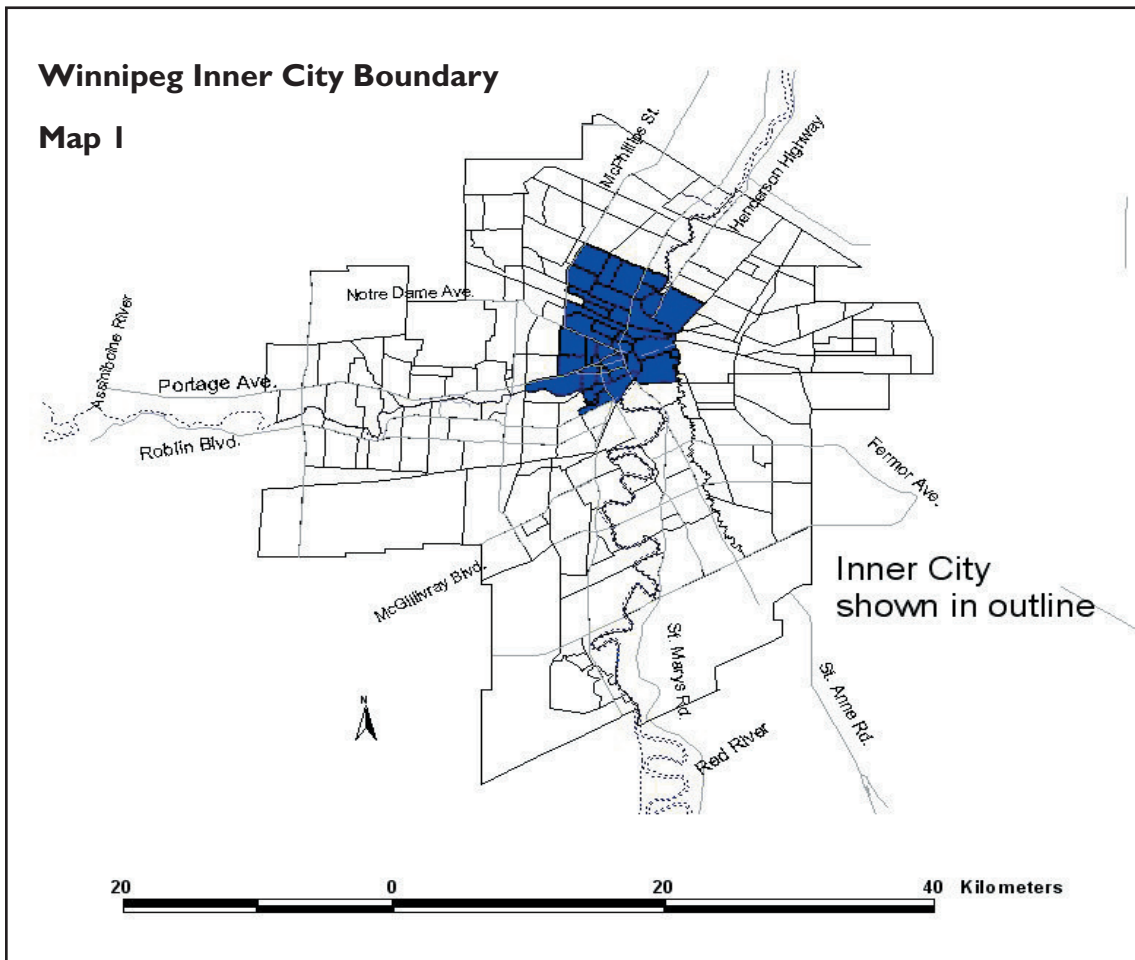
Spence is a neighbourhood in which significant progress is being made, and not coincidentally,



## The Inner City

When we refer to the 'inner city' we mean the geographic area originally defined by the 1980s Core Area Initiatives: bounded on the north by Carruthers Ave. west of the Red River and Munroe Ave. east of the Red River; on the west by McPhillips St., Ingersoll St. and Raglan Road; on the south by McMillan Ave. and Marion St.; and on the east by Raleigh At., the Seine River and Archibald (see map below). There are other areas of the

city that have inner city characteristics—in fact, they are growing. But we consider it important to focus on the geographic inner city because it is here that we find both a particularly intense concentration of poverty-induced social and economic problems, and also a myriad of innovative, community-based, anti-poverty strategies that deserve greater support and that constitute the basis of a long-term solution to inner city difficulties.

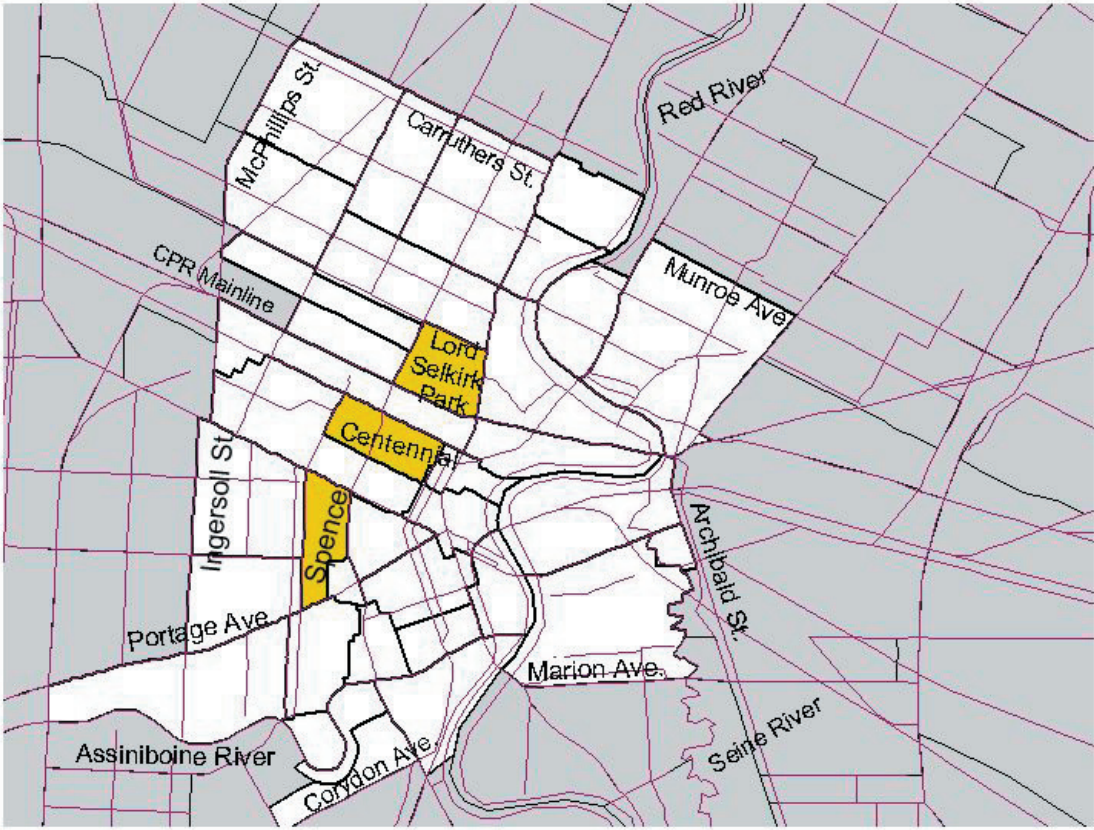


a neighbourhood which has a number of solid CBOs and a community-development corporation—in particular the Spence Neighbourhood Association—and which has been the beneficiary in recent years of reasonable levels of public funding. Spence demonstrates clearly that where these two conditions are met, slow but steady progress begins to be made.

Centennial neighbourhood has recently been targeted for funding by the Winnipeg Foundation (WF), which has chosen to invest, out of the contribution made to the WF by the Moffat family, a total of \$500,000 per year for five years. Work is nicely underway in what is known as the Centennial Neighbourhood Project, focused initially and appropriately on mobilizing the involvement of

## Location of Spence, Centennial & Lord Selkirk Park Neighbourhoods

Map 2



members of the community. At the end of the five years we ought to be able to test our hypothesis: that the existence of a strong and effective CBO or CBOs and the presence of adequate funding can begin to turn a neighbourhood around.

Lord Selkirk Park lies north of the tracks, west of Main St., south of Selkirk Ave and east of Salter Ave. This neighbourhood is dominated by the large, 1960s-style public housing development, called the Lord Selkirk Park Housing Development and known in the area as 'the Development', or 'the D.' A great many social service agencies are active in Lord Selkirk Park, and some outstanding programs and people are at work there, but Lord Selkirk Park remains a deeply-troubled neighbourhood. The problem, we will argue, is the housing development itself: what it does to the character of the neighbourhood, and how it accentuates the worst of the problems that plague the inner city.

Our method in preparing the *View From the Neighbourhoods Report* has been to conduct interviews in each of the neighbourhoods. Four interviewers, each of them people who live or have lived in these neighbourhoods and who know them well, were hired using funding made available by the University of Winnipeg Innovative Projects Fund. In Spence and Centennial neighbourhoods, Cassandra Costa and Charity Fadun conducted the interviews. In Lord Selkirk Park, Claudette Michel and Donna Moose conducted the interviews. Each of these women proved to be excellent interviewers. For each neighbourhood, we met initially with people who work in and are intimately familiar with the neighbourhood to identify a list of people to interview.

In Spence and Centennial neighbourhoods we wanted to interview a cross-section of people, including young and old, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, people who live in and people who work in the neighbourhood, people who are active in neighbourhood revitalization efforts and people who are not, people who run businesses, work

in social agencies, or are not in the paid labour force at all. In Lord Selkirk Park we interviewed people who are active in the neighbourhood in social service agencies or community-based organizations.

In each of Spence and Lord Selkirk Park we conducted 20 interviews; in Centennial we conducted 15 interviews. Each interview followed the same pattern: we asked respondents about the extent and form of their involvement in the neighbourhood. Then we asked them: what are the major neighbourhood strengths; what are the major problems; what kinds of initiatives seem to be working well; what kinds of initiatives do not seem to be working well; and what would you yourself like to see done in the neighbourhood to improve the lives of the people who live here. Interviews lasted from 45 to 90 minutes, and each was tape recorded. The University of Winnipeg Senate Ethics Committee approved the interview format and the project as a whole. Our analysis of each of our three neighbourhoods is based largely on these interviews, supplemented by some publicly available, neighbourhood-based quantitative data, and by some earlier studies done by the CCPA-Mb.

An important contradiction that characterizes each of the three neighbourhoods is the presence of both deeply-rooted problems, and innovative and effective community-based solutions. Our emphasis in what follows is on the solutions, on what is positive in these neighbourhoods. Our work leads us to believe that if as a society we were to build on what is positive in the inner city, if we were to build on the strengths and on what we know is working, more progress could be made. However, we do not gloss over the problems.

One problem in particular is sufficiently serious that it deserves, we believe, special emphasis. We refer to the problem of violence, and its intimate connection with the drug trade and gangs. The interconnected web of drugs, gangs and violence, and the resulting feelings of insecurity experienced

by many people in the inner city, is an obstacle to the good work that is being done and that needs to be done.

This problem appears to be worst in Lord Selkirk Park, although it is present and seen to be a serious problem in Spence and Centennial as well. Seniors, we are told, are afraid to go outdoors in some areas; gangs exert extraordinary control in some parts of the inner city, and are recruiting young people who live in desperately poor conditions at an exceptionally young age. Many adults and many children are afraid of neighbourhood youth and in some cases parents are afraid of their

children. This is a problem that we cannot afford to ignore any longer. Nor will putting such young people in jail solve anything at all. The penal system is filled with gang members and violence, and is, for the most part, a part of the problem, not the solution. We need to create more opportunities for young inner-city people, many of whom now believe that there is no future for them in mainstream society.

A major part of the problem is the large incomes that can be earned in the drug trade by inner city youth who feel that they have no other opportunities for building a future. The amounts of money

**Table I**

Selected Indicators, by Neighbourhood: Spence, Centennial, and Lord Selkirk Park.

Selected Indicators	Spence	Centennial	Lord Selkirk Park	Inner City
Percentage population change 1991 - 2001	-23.0%	-13.0%	4.3%	-7.0%
Population under 15 years of age	22.3%	28.1%	33.5%	18.3%
Population over 65 years of age	9.1%	10.1%	19.0%	13.5%
Aboriginal population as % of total	32.0%	49.5%	54.3%	19.2%
Recent immigrant pop'n as % of total (arrived Canada within last ten years)	14.9%	7.5%	2.6%	7.6%
Lone-parent families (both sexes) as % of all families	40.4%	43.9%	47.7%	29.6%
Less than high school education (Adults 20 years of age and over)	41.8%	57.9%	67.9%	36.0%
Adult unemployment rate	13.6%	17.2%	23.4%	9.0%
Youth (15-24) unemployment rate	7.8%	31.8%	45.5%	13.0%
Adult labour force participation rate	56.7%	49.3%	35.8%	63.0%
Youth (15-24) labour force participation rate	49.0%	43.1%	44.0%	66.4%
Median household income \$	\$16,515	\$15,991	\$14,696	\$26,362
Household poverty rate	67.0%	68.4%	87.8%	44.1%
Child poverty rate ( under 18 years)	73.5%	66.9%	83.0%	50.4%
% owned-occupied households	18.2%	21.2%	9.6%	36.3%
Average gross rent \$	\$345	\$330	\$338	\$490
Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census. Basic Profile, Community Data Network. Calculations performed by D.W. Lezubski				

now involved in Winnipeg's street drug trade are so large that the Hell's Angels have in recent years moved into the city to control the trade from the top. The street gangs do their dirty work, and take the bulk of the risks. The involvement of organized crime in the illegal drug trade means, as many people in our three neighbourhoods told us, that they themselves cannot solve this problem at the neighbourhood level. It is a national problem—the Hell's Angels are now present all across Canada, and exert astonishing control of the flow of illegal drugs into the country through Canada's major ports at Halifax, Montreal and Vancouver (Sher and Marsden, 2004, pp.179-194)—and an international problem, in that the illegal movement of drugs and the global arms trade are the two leading forms of global trade. At the neighbourhood level, this is a problem that has to be addressed by ensuring that young inner-city people have real opportunities to earn a living in a legitimate and productive way.

What follows is our characterization of each of three inner-city neighbourhoods. We believe that there is much to be learned from the approach that we have adopted, both because it relies heavily on the voices of people who live and work in each of the neighbourhoods, and because it compares the experience of neighbourhoods in different circumstances.

Table 1 sets out some socio-economic and demographic indicators for each of the three neighbourhoods, and for the inner city as a whole. They show that Spence, Centennial and Lord Selkirk Park are neighbourhoods with 'inner city characteristics'—such as high rates of poverty and unemployment, low levels of income and of labour force participation. The data suggest that, while all three neighbourhoods have severe inner-city characteristics, Lord Selkirk Park is in worse shape, for example, an appalling near-90% of households have incomes below the Statistics Canada Low-Income Cut-Offs (LICO). Spence and Centennial are, relatively speaking, in better

shape, although in both neighbourhoods approximately two in every three households have incomes below the LICO. Our qualitative, interview-based analysis confirms this ranking, but much more importantly, enables us to see a great deal in these neighbourhoods that is positive, and that is missed with the quantitative approach.

## A. Spence Neighbourhood

A large proportion of the 20 people interviewed in Spence neighbourhood told us that they think the neighbourhood has improved significantly in recent years, and most feel positively about living there.

Two things in particular were noted by many of those interviewed: the much greater involvement in the community by Spence residents, and the important role being played by a number of community-based organizations (CBOs), most notably but not only the Spence Neighbourhood Association, a community development corporation established in 1997. One interviewee said this:

I certainly have observed far more engagement of both residents and those that are actively working and volunteering in the neighbourhood in the decision-making and in knowing one another, and feeling a sense of pride in the neighbourhood and identity in the neighbourhood. Ten years ago my awareness was that if I talked with people about their hopes and dreams it was to leave the neighbourhood. Now it's to stay and be part of the neighbourhood changes.

Another person, a long-time community development worker in Spence, also referred to the increase in community participation, saying:

...there's been a huge change in Spence when it comes to community organization and community development work and community participation.... That would be one of the major strengths in Spence.

The Spence Neighbourhood Association (SNA) is a community development corporation established in 1997 by a small group of Spence residents who were concerned about the deteriorating condition of the neighbourhood. The SNA now has an annual budget of approximately \$500,000, a staff of approximately six full-time equivalent positions, and receives core funding from the Province of Manitoba's Neighbourhoods Alive! program and, on a three year basis, from United Way of Winnipeg. Additional funding comes from several sources, including the Winnipeg Foundation, National Crime Prevention, the City of Winnipeg Housing Fund, and Neighbourhood Housing Assistance, which is another Neighbourhoods Alive! program. The non-profit community development corporation has office space at the Magnus Eliason Recreation Centre on Langside, right in the middle of the neighbourhood. It has a Board of Directors that meets monthly, and is comprised of eight residents elected from each of the areas into which the neighbourhood is divided for organizational purposes, plus four at-large members elected on the basis of their particular expertise. Board meetings and special meetings are generally well-attended—on issues of importance to the neighbourhood 50-60 people can be expected to show up. This is the case even though promoting community involvement in neighbourhoods where poverty is prevalent is difficult. The SNA promotes neighbourhood clean-ups, provides small amounts of funding for neighbourhood projects which are decided by people in each neighbourhood area, and goes to peoples' homes to welcome them to

the neighbourhood and invite their involvement when they move to Spence. It has established working committees on matters of importance to the community—housing, safety, and community economic development, for example.

The results have been impressive: the creation of seven community gardens and additional small green spaces which serve to draw neighbourhood people together, the funding of outdoor lighting for houses to improve safety, and of fencing to improve the neighbourhood's appearance, to note just a few examples. Housing improvements have perhaps been the most visible and most important change. There has been a very significant improvement in the neighbourhood's housing stock: over 100 houses renovated over the past five years by three housing organizations—Lazarus Housing, the Winnipeg Housing and Renewal Corporation, and the Winnipeg Real Estate Board's Housing Opportunities Partnership (HOP)—with which SNA has worked. Fourteen infill houses have been built over the past three years (including the first two accessible infill houses to be built in the inner city), with another 10 planned this coming year; and 30-35 small housing grants per year for each of the past 4 years, a total of \$50,000-60,000 per year, supporting improvements in rental and privately-owned housing. The change in the physical appearance of the neighbourhood is obvious.

Most neighbourhood people that we interviewed for this study, and for a previous study (Silver, Hay and Gorzen, 2004), feel that the neighbourhood has improved significantly in the past five years, thanks in large part, although not only, to the work of the SNA and community based organizations with which it works cooperatively. As we will see later, a crucial difference between what is happening in Spence and what is happening in Lord Selkirk Park is that in Spence, a community development corporation has managed to promote resident involvement, and has managed to adopt a more comprehensive approach to neighbourhood revitalization.

The SNA has been able to do this, among other reasons, because the provincial government has provided core funding.

Three people mentioned that they believe that the SNA is at risk of becoming overly bureaucratic and formalized in its style of operating, and that this is keeping some people away. This is a danger to be avoided: the strength of a community development corporation lies in its face-to-face contacts with neighbourhood residents. If the SNA were to become just another bureaucratic organization operating according to rigid rules and regulations, it would lose its effectiveness. This is a fine balance: the SNA handles significant amounts of money, and employs staff, so that a certain formalization of work is essential to ensure accountability. The real strength of the SNA is in its capacity to mobilize the residents of the community, which requires informal, personalized, face-to-face techniques. As one long-time community worker put it: "They have managed, somehow over the years, this broad-based community participation which is outstanding. When I think back to the Redboine-Ellice Community Council and how we struggled to keep ten people coming to meetings", whereas the SNA is "...consistently having 30-40 people come to at least their big meetings."

Until recently, the high proportion of Aboriginal people resident in Spence were less involved in the community than non-Aboriginal residents. However, two years ago Aboriginal residents established the Inner-City Aboriginal Neighbours. I-CAN has mobilized large numbers of Aboriginal people with regular general membership meetings, neighbourhood feasts and various cultural activities. The group has established a neighbourhood softball team, the IC Arrows, which has been very successful in promoting Aboriginal peoples' involvement. I-CAN also organizes a day at the beach each summer for neighbourhood children, families and individuals; has sponsored pow-wow and drumming lessons, Ojibwa classes, computer classes and baby-sitting classes; has organized sev-

eral dry socials and nights out with bowling and billiards; works with the University of Winnipeg Aboriginal Students' Association to sponsor an annual pow-wow at UW's Duckworth Centre; and is in the process of planning a large Aboriginal language conference. I-CAN now has over 120 members, and a 12-person elected Board that reports to the SNA Board.

I-CAN operates in conjunction with, but at arms' length from, the SNA, and members make their own decisions about activities. One person said about I-CAN that it is "...a very important group, it's the first time really in Spence that I can remember that there's a group specifically run by and for Aboriginal people in the community, and so it's important that it's supported". There is a similar Aboriginal residents group in West Broadway, and this is a model that may be worth replicating in other inner city neighbourhoods.

The growing strength of Spence neighbourhood is in part the result of the rich array of small, community-based organizations, each of which provides a service of some kind, and most of which create opportunities for resident involvement. Among those mentioned more than once by those interviewed, in addition to the SNA and I-CAN, are the following: the West Central Women's Resource Centre, which provides a range of opportunities for many neighbourhood women and sells small amounts of food and household supplies to help residents get through difficult times; the St. Matthews-Maryland Community Ministry "...which is just so much more than a church...you just go to St. Matthews, you'll find something..."; the community newspaper, West Central Streets—"I don't know any other neighbourhood that's got such a good community newspaper..."; New Life Ministries, run by Reverend Harry Lehotsky, which in addition to having done a great deal of housing renovation has just rehabilitated the Ellice Café and Theatre, adding another important dimension to the life of the neighbourhood; and the Ellice Street Fes-

tival, which also serves to draw neighbourhood residents together.

Some of these organizations—the West Central Women's Resource Centre and St. Matthews-Maryland Community Ministry are good examples—create a range of opportunities for entry-level work and volunteer experience. Many people in Spence, and elsewhere in the inner city, have no experience whatever in the paid labour force. They lack confidence in their abilities. They lack self-esteem. In the case of many Aboriginal people, this is in large part the consequence of the effects of colonization (see sidebar, p. 23). A volunteer opportunity at the West Central Women's Resource Centre, working in their drop-in centre or their Community Cupboard can provide valuable work experience, and can build the confidence and self-esteem that is needed to make it into the labour market. One young mother told us that: "When I was working [volunteering] at the Women's Centre, it made me feel like I was doing something to contribute back, you know, because they have the Community Cupboard there, they have different services for people to volunteer and everything..." In this way, these CBOs play a particularly important, though often largely invisible, capacity-building role in the neighbourhood.

The housing renovation work undertaken primarily by the Spence Neighbourhood Association and New Life Ministries has made a significant contribution to improving the neighbourhood. One community worker said the following:

When we started here there were some couples trying to sell their houses, they couldn't give the houses away, and houses are now selling, not at the same kind of rate you'd be able to sell a house in Wolseley but certainly for a reasonable amount of money.

In addition, most of the boarded-up houses have been renovated, and most of the vacant lots have either been turned into community gar-



dens—another important community building mechanism mentioned by many interviewees—or in-fill housing. One older woman who has lived in Spence for many years pointed to three houses in her immediate vicinity that used to be crack houses, with people coming and going at all hours of the day and night, needles on the ground in the morning, and drug busts by police on a regular basis. Now all of those houses have been renovated and are occupied by families. As she told us, the area has “...changed an awful lot...” since about the mid-1990s—“...early 90s it was terrible.”

At the same time, however, the rise in housing prices has led to rent increases, and some people are beginning to be pushed out of Spence, unable to find affordable rental accommodation. One community worker said about the housing work done to date in Spence that:

...it has a very positive side to it, but it's having a really negative impact as well because...it has reduced the number of rental units that are in the neighbourhood [because some multi-occupant rooming houses have been renovated and purchased by single families]...and rents are being pushed up. We're seeing numbers of people being pushed out of the neighbourhood or having a tremendously difficult time staying, so there is the danger I think at this time of gentrifying the neighbourhood and displacing the very people that really for the first time are beginning to build some capacity.

This is a problem also facing the adjoining West Broadway neighbourhood, where a significant displacement of lower-income residents has occurred. The solution is, in part, the provision of affordable rental housing for low-income residents, which will require a shift in the funding priorities of governments who have been focused to date on home ownership, as opposed to rental solutions. We report on this at greater length in the Housing section of Part I of the *State of the*

*Inner City Report.*

Safety is a problem in Spence, as elsewhere in the inner city, although almost everyone who has been in Spence for a number of years told us that safety was improving. One interviewee put the dilemma regarding the issue of safety well. She said:

Safety is often a theme that is raised when you talk about inner city neighbourhoods,

### **Slum landlords**

Housing difficulties are exacerbated both by the continued presence in the neighbourhood of slum landlords who do little or nothing by way of repair and maintenance, and by the appallingly low level of social assistance, which force people into inadequate accommodation.

One mother of four is paying \$600 per month for a four-bedroom house. She is on social assistance, and her housing allowance is \$485 per month. “And that’s including utilities”, she told us. So she uses money that would otherwise be used to purchase food, to pay her rent and utilities. And in January, 2005, because the house is so poorly insulated, her heating bill was \$700. She couldn’t afford to pay it, and eventually she was cut off, left with no heat nor hot water. Appeals to the landlord were futile. The building was run by a management company, and owned by someone who, this woman informed us, owns many slum houses.

including Spence—personal safety. It's kind of hard to talk about it in one sense because...on the one hand you don't want to exacerbate the issue by exaggerating it as the mainstream media tends to do. You know there's so many stereotypes about this community from outside of the community that are just wrong, way off base. On the other hand, there are some issues in this community.

And these include the combination mentioned earlier of drugs, gangs and violence. One resident, active in the community, told us that "I think the gangs are the biggest enemy...people can't live in a community..." if they don't feel safe. A young man in his early 20s and active in the community said:

The main thing that I've seen change and grow is the drug trade, you know, always been there, but the last few years...there's been a heavy increase of youth hanging out, and we know what they're doing, but how do you stop it? The biggest problem is seeing this, but how do we tackle it?...People who want to take a stand and stop this stuff are scared at the same time to put their own personal well-being or their families' well-being at risk of retaliation.

The drug trade, along with the gang violence associated with it and the street sex trade, is controlled by forces beyond the neighbourhood. One well-informed resident of Spence told us that these things are:

...controlled by much larger systems than our community, they're controlled by international systems that have lots of money. We've been told that 70 percent or more of the drug selling is controlled by Hell's Angels, we know that...the Bandidos gang are moving into our community, we know that there are some very violent, more local

groups that are battling things out...

Another woman, a long-time resident active in the community, told us that "...most inner city residents are law-abiding citizens and unfortunately it's a few of them that help to create the negative perception of the neighbourhood, and what I'm talking about is gang activity and other forms of violence that occur...We all know where that comes from. We all know that it comes from way higher up, these are only, like, the small fry..."

A related problem identified by many of our respondents is the presence on the main thoroughfares and adjoining streets of a good deal of street-level prostitution. This creates problems in the neighbourhood. One young mother told us that:

...this is a huge, huge issue for me...so many, many times I have been propositioned. I was eight months pregnant with my daughter and I was propositioned....there are condoms everywhere. I have already two or three times had to take dirty condoms out of my kids' hands because they found them on the street when we were walking. And with prostitution comes sexual abuse, comes pimping, comes drugs, comes scuzzy men with lots of money who think they can come and trash our inner city and never look it up again.\*

One way of thinking of these issues is to see the inner city as an area from which resources are being extracted by more powerful forces. This is the case with slum housing. Landlords who live elsewhere buy up inexpensive inner-city housing as revenue properties, spend as little as possible on maintenance and repairs, and extract resources in the form of rents from low-income people who are

\* For an important and original analysis of the street sex trade and street sexual exploitation, see Maya Seshia, "The Unheard Speak Out". (Winnipeg: CCPA-Manitoba, November 205)

forced, often, to live in sub-standard housing. The same is the case with the drug trade. The money to be made in this business is substantial, and in the inner city there are many young people who feel they have no other opportunities, and who can be recruited to do the low-level, risky work of retailing the product. They are able to earn more than they could at a minimum wage job, but the real profits flow out of the neighbourhood to organized crime, and the money is laundered and not reinvested locally. The inner city pays the price in the form of dilapidated housing and drug-related problems; the bulk of the profits flow elsewhere.

At the heart of the problem is poverty. This is articulated clearly by some of our interviewees. One told us that: "A lot of people are living in poverty....People struggle a lot and suffer a lot because of that." Another added: "I don't think we can solve the problems until we deal with poverty." This, she believes, requires support from beyond the neighbourhood level. For example, she added: "...at the very minimum...increase the minimum wage so that people would actually be able to live on it." Numerous people in each of the three neighbourhoods made mention of the appallingly low levels of the minimum wage. Not only does this add to the ranks of the working poor; it also creates little incentive for young people to work, and makes the profits to be earned in the illicit drug trade seem that much more appealing. The fewer the opportunities that are available to young people, the more vulnerable they are to the 'opportunities' offered by the gangs.

Add to this the fact that there are almost no recreational facilities for young people in Spence. One young man, actively involved in directing community youth programs, including the staging of occasional basketball tournaments at the Magnus Eliason Recreation Centre (MERC) on Langside, told us that "...there's not a single sports team...in our neighbourhood. MERC does not have an organized sports team." Two people

who run businesses in the neighbourhood and have done so for many years, said the same. They pointed specifically to the shortage of recreational opportunities for youth as an area where more expenditures are warranted. One said: "...there's a lack of recreational programs for children in this neighbourhood and that is a key factor to dealing with some of these social issues that are happening right now." He suggested the need to develop sports teams: "We don't have any teams here, you know."

The provincial government's Lighthouse Crime Prevention Initiative offers programming for immigrant and refugee youth in Spence neighbourhood out of the University of Winnipeg recreation centre and the Magnus Eliason Recreation Centre. This Lighthouse Project was set up in response to growing numbers of refugees, particularly but not only from Somalia and Sudan, locating in Spence and other inner-city neighbourhoods.

A recent study (Madariaga-Vignudo and Miladinovska-Blazevska, 2005) found that 75% of 907 refugees recently-arrived in Winnipeg located in the inner city. Of these, 281—just over 40%—reside in Spence neighbourhood. Many of these children and youth have been in refugee camps for years, have experienced unspeakable horrors, and are now facing considerable adjustment problems in all three neighbourhoods. Several people interviewed described very disturbing cases of racism directed at refugees, and particularly at newcomers from Africa, and also some evidence that refugee youth are being affected by, and becoming involved in, gang activity. This is an issue that will require increased attention in the immediate future. The Lighthouse project is a step in the right direction.

If violence is a problem, and it is—although seemingly less now in Spence than was the case seven or eight years ago, when residents began to mobilize to improve the neighbourhood—then its roots are in the poverty and lack of opportunities facing young people daily. Job opportunities

are few, and entry-level wages are so low that many young people believe that work in the paid labour force makes no economic sense. The Spence Neighbourhood Association is attempting to respond to this need by means of a Jobs for Youth program, but it is a very small initiative. Recreational facilities are wholly inadequate, leaving too many young people with time on their hands and nothing to do. These are among the broader forces that confront the neighbourhood, and make the task of neighbourhood revitalization so difficult.

Our approach, however, is to advocate building on the assets, the strengths, of inner-city neighbourhoods. This is consistent with what is called asset-based community development. A major asset in Spence neighbourhood, but one which for many long years has *not* been used to the benefit of the neighbourhood, is the University of Winnipeg. The U of W, located on the southeast corner of Spence neighbourhood, has recently taken steps to contribute to the neighbourhood's revitalization efforts. The Wii Chii Waa Ka Nak Learning Centre is a collaborative project involving the U of W, the Southeast Resource Development Council and a number of Aboriginal organizations. Located on Ellice Ave., across from the University's Athletic Centre, Wii Chii Waa Ka Nak—'partners' in Ojibway—will include innovative programming such as the Urban Aboriginal Artifact Internship Program, in which Aboriginal youth will work with elders, curators and the U of W's historical Aboriginal artifacts, to promote knowledge of Aboriginal cultures. It will also include a Community Learning Commons, with 18 computers available for community use, plus other programming to be initiated by the inner city community, and will house the University's new Aboriginal Self-Governance program. The U of W is also running several educational enrichment programs for inner city children, including an Arts Camp, a 'summer enrichment' program, a science outreach and enrichment program, and

a free basketball camp for inner city youth run by the U of W Wesman basketball team. The 'asset-based' approach to community development builds on inner-city neighbourhoods' assets. The UW has a wealth of resources which, if properly mobilized, could contribute significantly to inner city revitalization. That process seems now to be nicely underway. The University of Winnipeg Students' Association (UWSA) is also actively involved in reaching out to the Spence neighbourhood in a positive way. As one person in Spence told us: "There are many hopeful signs of a positive partnership" between the U of W, the UWSA and Spence neighbourhood.

In the face of high rates of poverty that make community work difficult, inner-city neighbourhoods like Spence are mobilizing residents and organizing in community-based organizations to re-build their neighbourhoods from the grassroots up. Spence has become, as one couple put it, an 'interesting' place to live. "If you're going to live in Manitoba, this I think has got to be the most interesting place. And most cosmopolitan." The sense of neighbourhood revitalization is apparent, and is taking place at many levels. One Aboriginal family, for example, holds a regular fish-fry for their immediate neighbours—"anyone who wants to come"—as a conscious effort to bring people together and create a sense of community. An Aboriginal woman stresses the importance for neighbourhood revitalization of "getting to know the human being in each house... rather than just putting labels on them." This is happening throughout the neighbourhood, the product in part of a new sense of hope. In Spence, a good deal of progress is being made, despite the many obstacles and despite the fact that much is left to do. The neighbourhood is evidence that change for the better in Winnipeg's inner city, while difficult and slow, is possible.

## B. Centennial Neighbourhood

Centennial neighbourhood, located immediately south of the CPR tracks, is long from east to west, and narrow from north to south. The eastern boundary is Princess St.; the western boundary is Sherbrook St. The northern boundary is the CPR rail yards; the southern boundary is William Ave. The neighbourhood is bisected by Isabel St., which runs north-south from William to Logan. It is surrounded both by commercial activity, especially on Princess St. and William Ave., and by large institutions—the downtown campus of Red River College and City Hall on the eastern edge of the neighbourhood, and the Health Science Centre on the south-west corner. The eastern end of the neighbourhood has good access to downtown, and particularly to the Exchange District. The neighbourhood is ethnically very diverse, with a large Aboriginal population and significant numbers of people of Filipino, Chinese and South-East Asian descent, and, in the western end of Centennial, growing numbers of recent African immigrants and refugees. As can be seen in Table 1, Centennial is a very low-income neighbourhood with relatively high levels of unemployment and a high proportion of households—more than two-thirds—with incomes below the Statistics Canada Low-Income Cut-Offs. It is also a neighbourhood described by one resident as having “lots of character,” but many of whose residents feel that they are neglected by the powers that be, and that their neighbourhood is seen by outsiders as a “lost cause.”

The Winnipeg Foundation has decided to invest \$500,000 per year for each of five years in what is called the Centennial Neighbourhood Project. This is a significant sum of money targeted at one

relatively small neighbourhood, and is a new and very important kind of initiative for the Winnipeg Foundation.

The issue of funding is addressed later in this Report, but it is worth a couple of brief comments here. Community-based organizations need stable funding. It has repeatedly been observed, in Winnipeg and elsewhere, that far too much of the funding for inner city CBOs is project-based, with the result that these organizations spend a wildly disproportionate amount of their time scrambling for funding. What is needed is long-term, stable, core funding. The Winnipeg Foundation's Centennial Neighbourhood Project is a step in the right direction. The provincial government's Neighbourhoods Alive! program, recently expanded to include more neighbourhoods, provides core funding to community development corporations like the SNA and the North End Community Renewal Corporation. United Way of Winnipeg also does mostly core funding. These funders are to be congratulated; more such funding—stable, long-term, core funding—is needed.

The Centennial Neighbourhood Project, headquartered in Dufferin School, an elementary school on Alexander off Isabel, seeks to involve the residents in enhancing the socio-economic circumstances of the area in order to improve the educational prospects of neighbourhood children. The five-year Centennial Neighbourhood Project was launched in the Fall of 2003. Since the launch organizers have gone door-to-door in the neighbourhood to invite residents' involvement. They have organized neighbourhood barbecues, established a neighbourhood newspaper, created a Resource Centre in Dufferin School that is open

to area residents and has become a centre of resident activity. Most recently, elections were held for the Centennial Community Improvement Association, a resident-based Board which will make decisions about the direction of neighbourhood revitalization. As mentioned later, elections to the CCIA Board were very well attended.

One of the things that we wanted to determine in our interviews was what impact, if any, the project may be having, in the eyes of neighbourhood residents. As we will show, most people that we interviewed feel that the CNP is already making a difference in Centennial.

The gang issue, and related problems of drugs and violence, certainly emerged from our interviews as a major problem in Centennial. We were told that “there’s a lot of gang activity here,” and that “it’s gotten progressively worse every year.” Many expressed concerns about the effects of gang activity on children in the area. One community worker told us that:

...we’ve got hard-core gang members who are not going to leave the gangs, and that’s the reality of it, so we’re not focusing on trying to get these guys out of the gangs, we’re focusing on trying to prevent new recruits, trying to prevent their kids from growing up wanting to be like Dad, and that’s a hard task.

He offered an example of why this is a hard task:

There’s a young boy who goes to Dufferin School here whose parents are pretty good people but they have an older son who’s in his 20s who is a hard-core gang member and this little Grade 6 kid idolizes his brother, always talking to his buddies about how his brother’s giving him 50 bucks, 100 bucks....This kid just idolizes his brother and all the guys with the colours on. He’s walking like that, he’s talking like that.

The problem of gang activity has become inter-generational. But its origins, this community worker argues, are in the fact that for many gang members, when they joined a gang, “...their choices were limited.” The solution lies in making more choices available for children and youth in Centennial now, and that is a part of what the Centennial Neighbourhood Project seeks to do.

These gangs create so much fear that many people are afraid even to open their doors. One long-time resident told us that “people don’t trust the police.”

The police don’t have a lot of confidence in the people around the area, and the people don’t have any confidence in the police. And the people are caught between the gangs and the police.

Another life-long resident of the area added:

In this community the police are the last people that people want to see, because our experience is when the police come to your door, they’re goose-stepping, they’re kicking the door in, they’re pushing Grandma around, throwing the kids out of the way to get at ‘the criminal.’ A lot of the adults in this neighbourhood hate the cops, they see the cops, they have, shall we say, derogatory things to say. The kids hear it, that’s what they grow up with, so they’re naturally antagonistic toward the police, and that’s not good.

People in the neighbourhood want a police presence, but what they want is a return to community policing, and in particular to the presence of a cop on the beat, who is in the neighbourhood long enough to get to know people, and for people to get to know her or him. People in the neighbourhood have been told that they already have community policing, but they insist that they do not, and that the community police officer is rarely seen in the neighbourhood.

We're trying to create a better, positive relationship [with the police]. And part of it is we want community police. And now the police are telling us, we've got it. No we don't! We have it in theory but we don't have community policing the way it was intended to be. We want a community police officer who is going to want to be a part of this community. We don't need a police officer who is just worried about making arrests so he can get promoted. If you're not willing to stay in this community for five or six years, pass us up, please, go on, because we need someone who's going to be here for five or six years, to make a commitment to us, who will work with us to improve the community, work with us to prevent crime.

Several long-time residents mentioned that there used to be community policing in Centennial, and they want a return to that approach to policing.

There are major problems both with gangs and crime and violence, and with the police response to those phenomena, and it is equally clear that many in the neighbourhood have a clear conception of, and a desire for, an alternative form of policing—community policing with a beat cop.

Several respondents also expressed concerns about the lack of sports and recreational programming for youth, and in particular teens. Part of the problem is the fear created by the gangs. A mother of teenagers told us that Freight House, a large recreation facility in the middle of Centennial on Isabel, "...used to have lots of sports programs going on there but they can't get people to come and coach there. They're scared of the area." She sends her sons out of the neighbourhood to play hockey. "That's how I keep my kids out of trouble, I have them in sports, and I have to go outside the community to get them in sports." Another part of the problem is cost. A youth worker said, about youth from 13 to 20 years of age: "We seem to lose that youth....We do have sports programs

for them. But again, sports programs, for example hockey...it's getting so expensive a single parent on social assistance can't afford to send a kid to hockey." He added:

...it's been declining for the last 8-9 years. When I first came here twenty years ago maybe we had about six teams, seven teams of our own, community centre teams. Now, last year we had one, and it was an area association team—I think we had three kids on that team.... Sports, especially hockey, it's gone way down. They can't afford it anymore. They can't afford the registration, they can't afford the equipment.

The relative lack of opportunities for playing organized sports is a major issue in inner-city neighbourhoods like Centennial and Spence. There are not enough children and youth playing organized sports, and this is but one example of the lack of opportunities facing those young people who make the choice to join a gang. In Centennial neighbourhood, complaints about the condition of housing and about the landlords who own the housing are frequent (see sidebar).

The biggest landlord in the neighbourhood is Manitoba Housing, which manages 432 of the 955 dwellings in Centennial, or approximately 45%. A community worker said that: "Manitoba Housing is ...seen as the biggest slum landlord in this community, and that is not good for a board of the government to look like that, but that is the reality." A long-time resident in the neighbourhood, who is a homeowner and not a Manitoba Housing tenant, added: "My understanding, speaking with some of the other area residents, is that Manitoba Housing needs to be addressed. A lot of the complaints from the residents aren't getting heard."

A Manitoba Housing tenant provided numerous examples of shoddy service by Manitoba Housing as regards repairs, and the run-down condition of the house she rents. She said: "...

they need to fix their houses as well. They're not very well insulated and in the winter time I keep my heat on most of the time because most of the heat goes out through the doors...and the floors are always cold."

However, the Centennial Neighbourhood Project is beginning to deal with housing issues. A community worker told us that: "...we're trying to create a working relationship with Manitoba Housing to say let's improve this, but it's a partnership, it's not just Manitoba Housing, it's the community and Manitoba Housing. We gotta work together." This important effort, and the cooperative 'involving the community' approach that it represents, is typical of many initiated by the Centennial Neighbourhood Project through the recently-created neighbourhood association,

the Centennial Community Improvement Association.

The Centennial Neighbourhood Project has also taken steps to develop training and employment initiatives. The most significant to date may be the Teaching Assistant program. Six Centennial neighbourhood residents were selected to train to be Teaching Assistants, with part of the program run by the Urban Circle Training Centre, and practicums being done at Dufferin School. Candidates were identified by CNP staff going door to door in the neighbourhood, in itself an essential part of an effective community development strategy.

One person that we interviewed, a young Aboriginal woman with two children, 3 and 5 years of age, was one of those selected for the Teaching Assistant program. She told us that she used to be too shy to meet people in the neighbourhood and had felt isolated. Now she has successfully completed the TA program, is actively involved in the community, and spoke to us with a quiet self-confidence about how the Centennial Neighbourhood Project and the Dufferin Resource Centre had enabled her to meet people and to become involved in the community. She has enrolled in the University of Winnipeg's inner-city Education program at the Winnipeg Education Centre, and is training to be a teacher.

This, we believe, is an important and inspiring example of the vast human talent that exists in Winnipeg's inner city, and which needs only opportunities and supports to be unleashed. This woman told us that "There's lots of people here who have experience. It's just that they need a chance, job opportunities..." Others that we interviewed said the same. They identified the need for training opportunities that lead to jobs, and several mentioned training in the trades. "Why send somebody to a training program when there's no job at the end....? Send them to something where you know there's a job that's going to be there, that's the key." The neighbourhood, and the

### **Residents on Housing in Centennial Neighbourhood**

A lot of the housing is very dilapidated... very run down.

It's really not fit for people to live, the winters are bad, they're probably freezing to death, they're falling apart, not maintained, you've got landlords that probably live someplace outside the area...overcrowding...

It's about housing because I've noticed a lot of houses are being run down...the slum landlords are getting in here...houses are being boarded up regularly

A lot of people in our community are so transient because there are slum landlords and the quality of housing is so bad that people are moving...



inner city generally, is in need of more programs that can meet this need.

The most significant aspect of the work done to date by the Centennial Neighbourhood Project may well be the extent to which residents in Centennial are involved in working to improve their neighbourhood. A number of neighbourhood barbecues and collective community clean-ups have been organized, in an effort to involve people. Staff with the CNP have gone door-to-door to meet with people to identify their concerns and invite their involvement. A community newspaper, *The Centennial Press*, has been started—a first for the neighbourhood and another means of informing and involving people. And Dufferin School has played a major role in promoting the involvement of local residents. One long-time resident said: “There’s some good things, like the school, Dufferin School, it’s become a major, major force in our community.” A new Family Resource Centre at Dufferin School has become a centre of community activity, and a place where people can meet and get to know their neighbours and discuss neighbourhood issues.

Dufferin School’s gymnasium was full to capacity in the winter of 2005 when Centennial residents turned out to elect the first Board of Directors of the Centennial Community Improvement Association. The sheer numbers of those in attendance to elect a neighbourhood Board is evidence of the very great gains that the Centennial Neighbourhood Project is making in mobilizing the community. Housing is one of the first issues that they are tackling. The newly-created Centennial Community Improvement Association (CCIA), the elected neighbourhood council that will be the decision-making body for the Centennial Neighbourhood Project, has developed a plan that includes a target of twenty-five new or renovated houses in the neighbourhood each year for five years. Small grants are being made available to homeowners for home improvements. The staff of the CCIA are advocat-

ing on behalf of Manitoba Housing tenants and working to improve relations between Manitoba Housing and its tenants. An innovative strategy for the creation of ‘pocket units’—single-room housing with non-shared bathroom facilities—is underway in the neighbourhood. The idea behind the housing strategies was expressed clearly by one of the community workers: “...it will start with housing. Simply because if we can get decent affordable housing that people are wanting to stay in then they’re not so transient. That in turn, hopefully, has a positive impact on the children’s education.” And creating the conditions that will enable improvements in children’s education is the major goal of the Centennial Neighbourhood Project.

The result has been the beginnings of a new sense of hope in the neighbourhood. Many of the people that we interviewed told us that there is a positive, albeit still tentative, feeling in the neighbourhood that good things may be starting to happen. “People are starting to get informed, starting to come to the school....People are getting more aware of what’s going on. People are getting more involved.” And “I think the biggest effect that I’ve seen is that people are starting to notice that some people actually care, and it’s starting to bring out others. It’s not happening as fast as we would like, but then when you consider how long this neighbourhood has been the way it is....”

It would be a mistake to overstate the changes made to date in Centennial neighbourhood. The problems are still daunting. Nevertheless, our interviews suggest that the Centennial Neighbourhood Project is beginning to make some gains, by promoting resident involvement, renovating and otherwise improving neighbourhood housing, working to create employment, using the neighbourhood school as a centre for community organizing, taking the time to meet with people and to secure their involvement. Although it is still much too early to reach any definitive conclusions about the Centennial Neighbourhood

Project, these are grounds for cautious optimism, and they suggest that core, multi-year funding can produce positive results even in very low-income inner-city neighbourhoods.

## C. Lord Selkirk Park

Lord Selkirk Park neighbourhood, located just north of the CPR yards between the tracks and Selkirk Ave., and between north Main and Salter, is dominated by the 1960s-style public housing project known in the area as the 'Development', or the 'D.' The 'D,' in turn, is dominated to far too large an extent by the destructive combination of drugs, gangs and violence. There is a great deal of good work being done in and around the 'D,' and no shortage of highly-dedicated and skilled people doing the work, but at the moment little progress is being made and a new approach is needed.

Seniors, for example, feel very vulnerable. One woman who works closely with seniors told us that:

A lot of seniors just don't want to leave their homes. They feel vulnerable...and they feel targeted....There's a lot of gang activity in this particular neighbourhood..., and they ...make life very difficult for most people who live in the area.

The tower building in the 'D' is a seniors' complex, but Manitoba Housing allows non-seniors to rent there as well, and the result is the presence of drug-dealing, gang activity and violence right in the building. Many seniors, we are told, are afraid even to leave their apartment unit. One senior said to us, when we asked what the major problems in the neighbourhood are: "Well, especially here it's drugs, that's number one...There's more drugs in this thing here than I think half of the pharmaceutical companies in the country, especially here in the Development, eh? There's coke, there's crack, marijuana, everything....I live in the Towers here, and I know people in there that are dealing

drugs." This is made worse by the strong sense of social exclusion experienced by many of the mostly-Aboriginal seniors. Many "...have a great deal of difficulty negotiating the system, and have quite an unwillingness to ask somebody for help with that." In at least one case reported to us, some women seniors were placed by Manitoba Housing not in the seniors' complex but in the Northern Hotel—a very rough hotel on north Main a short block from the 'D'—where "their housing conditions were absolutely appalling."

Children, too, are adversely affected by the drugs, gangs and violence. One youth worker told us that:

In the last two years I've watched kids who were doing well with their lives just go straight down hill because they got hooked on drugs with these drug dealers, they give 'em free drugs and they're gone. It's really sad, it's very hard to sleep some nights when you don't know whether those kids are gonna be alive the next day.

Nor is home a refuge for some of these children. The same youth worker continued:

Some of these kids don't have a home to go to. They have an address, but it's not a home for them, they just don't want to go home. We had some kids sleeping in vans here, 40 below, broke into a van that was parked for the winter and slept in there for three days. They just didn't want to go home, because all there is alcohol and violence there.

The gangs are a central part of this tragedy. "High, high influence of gang members in here.

Drug-dealers. Big. I'd say maybe 40 percent or more.... it's just, in almost every one of those row houses there's a drug-dealer in there. Now, they're working on cleaning them out, but it's still happening."

A woman who works in an agency adjoining the 'D' described a 7 or 8 year old boy who had come to her program—which is not a youth program—and said: "Can you help me, I don't want to join the gangs, they're always after me...." He became one of the kids who was lost to the gangs. "The boy, he's now 18, he's right into the gang thing. You feel so frustrated!"

Violence against women is common: domestic violence; the violence of the street sex trade. In many cases the term 'street sex trade' is completely inappropriate because those involved are children, some as young as 12 years old. They are more accurately thought of as sexually exploited. "And a lot of the really young ones are from the Dufferin-Lord Selkirk Park area."

It's a vicious circle: children and youth are the victims; youth are often the victimizers. Safety is, for many in the Lord Selkirk Park neighbourhood, the number one concern. One woman said:

Safety is a huge one. It's a huge challenge. People don't feel safe. They're afraid. They're afraid of teenagers. They're afraid of our youth. People are afraid of their own kids, they're afraid of their own partners, they're not safe in their own home."

Given this environment, people's involvement in solving the problems of the neighbourhood is low. When asked what is not working well in the neighbourhood, one respondent said: "Getting the community involved." She described it as a cycle: "...with drug addiction leading to crime that becomes inter-generational, which then seems to lead to people really not being involved in their community. It seems to all be part of a very large, very unhealthy cycle for people." And people become trapped. They are controlled by outside

forces, and cannot see a way out. The problem becomes "...when you're stuck in that mode of being controlled by whatever it is, whether it's the system, or a person, or the neighbourhood, or the gangs....When you're in it, you can't see differently," you can't see a way out, an alternative to your present circumstances. Hope is lost; despair sets in; and change is exceptionally difficult.

A major part of the problem is the ongoing effects of the colonization of Aboriginal people. The 'D' is largely Aboriginal. Aboriginal people have long been subjected to the process of colonization (see sidebar), with its false assumptions about Aboriginal inferiority and its promotion of shame about all things Aboriginal. Many Aboriginal people have internalized those false beliefs, and carry a personal sense of inferiority and shame about being Aboriginal.

Some people working in the 'D' see this clearly. "It's about the youth learning who they are, to learn their history, to know who they are, to stand in their truth so that there is no more shame in who you are as a human being, just because you're brown." But many do not understand this truth. Many do not see it. "The community itself doesn't realize that. Never mind that White people don't know; our *own* people don't know what happened to them...That's why we're in the state we're in...Children don't have a sense of knowing who they are...they don't know where they came from, their parents don't know who they are or where they came from." The damage done to Aboriginal people over many long years has been colossal, and the results are acted out in the 'D' on a daily basis.

The intense poverty that grips the 'D' is at the heart of this problem. One person, when asked what the major problems of the neighbourhood are, said this:

Poverty, poverty, poverty, poverty, and poverty, are the major problems. Racism, violence against women, violence against

## **Aboriginal People and Colonization**

A central part of Canada's history is the colonization of Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people have been dispossessed of their lands, pushed onto reserves and isolated from the dominant culture and institutions of Canada, subjected to the colonial control of the Indian Act and the domination of the Indian Agent, forced into residential schools. At the heart of the process of colonization was the deliberate attempt to destroy Aboriginal peoples' economic and political systems and their cultures and religions, and to replace them with European institutions and values. This strategy was, and for many Canadians still is, justified on the false grounds that European institutions and cultural and religious values were and are superior to those of Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal people themselves may come to believe the all-pervasive notion that they are inferior. This is common among oppressed people. As Metis scholar Howard Adams put it, many Aboriginal people "have internalized a colonized consciousness." The results, according to Aboriginal sociologist Michael Hart, are devastating:

Once Aboriginal persons internalize the colonization processes, we feel confused and powerless...We may implode with overwhelming feelings of sadness or explode with feelings of anger. Some try to escape this state through alcohol, drugs and/or other forms of self-abuse. (Hart, 2002, p. 27)

A vicious cycle is created: the assumption of Aboriginal peoples' cultural inferiority, initially advanced as a means to justify the European domination of North America, becomes internalized by Aboriginal people themselves; in response, many Aboriginal people lash out in self-abusive ways; such behaviour then reinforces in the minds of the non-Aboriginal majority the assumptions of Aboriginal inferiority that lie at the heart of the colonial ideology. The more:

Aboriginal people move further into internalizing the colonization processes, the more we degrade who we are as Aboriginal people. All of these internalized processes only serve the colonizers, who then are able to sit back and say 'see, we were right'. In colonizers' eyes, the usurpation is justified. (Hart, 2002, p. 28)

It is not possible to exaggerate the importance of the internal damage and pain that many Aboriginal people carry as a consequence of the effects of colonization.

girls. Gangs. Drug dealers. Addiction. And poverty.

Two metaphors occur repeatedly in the comments of those we interviewed. One is the notion of a complex web—a web of poverty, racism, drugs, gangs, and 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 caught, 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. “That’s what’s happening here. These people don’t have a clue that they can change. They think they just have to accept what’s coming to them, accept that poverty...You need to change the mind-set.”

The problem is now deeply-entrenched in the ‘D.’ We asked those we interviewed what initiatives seem to be working well in the neighbourhood. Many responded negatively, even despairingly:

...right now I don’t see anything. I don’t see anything at all.

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

...I don’t know of any program that works well here.

When asked what is not working well, one respondent said:

I think the Development is not working well!

There are some strengths in the neighbourhood. There are strengths in all neighbourhoods. Perhaps most importantly, there are many outstanding community-based organizations working in

and around the neighbourhood, and a very high proportion of staff in these CBOs are people who are exceptionally dedicated to work in the community. Some of those mentioned by our respondents are:

- Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre
- CEDA
- Indian Metis Friendship Centre
- Wabung Abinoojiag
- North End Women’s Resource Centre
- Native Women’s Transition Centre
- Ndinawe
- Mt. Carmel Clinic
- Sage House
- Kekinan Centre
- Lord Selkirk Park Aboriginal Women’s Group Youth Alliance Program
- Neechi Foods
- Ndaawin

One respondent said these and others are “just wonderful organizations.” Another person described them as doing “tremendous work,” providing “great programming for youth,” and doing “wonderful community development work.” Yet another said there are “just wonderful agencies that are out there.” Schools in the area were described similarly: “the Principals and other staff at the schools are wonderful.” And the School Resource Officer Program, in which police officers are placed in a number of North End schools to build positive police-youth relations—the funding for which was almost cut by the Mayor—was described as “...a really great way for children in our schools to build trust with the police, and vice versa.” The same is the case for the community

beat officer whose area includes the 'D.'

In addition, the small core of people in the 'D' who are actively involved in trying to build a stronger community was mentioned repeatedly.

There's a small core of people who will not leave the neighbourhood for anything. They're very dedicated. They have a strong network with each other, and they do whatever they can to improve their community.... they are incredibly dedicated.

In addition, a good deal of the work being done in the 'D,' especially but not only the youth work, has a strong Aboriginal cultural component—a necessary response to the damage done by colonization. One exceptionally dedicated youth worker told us that: "It's through our culture...hearing the traditions of the First Nations people and the spiritual path, that's how we're going to heal the whole community." Many young people respond very well to being introduced to a knowledge of their culture. Parents may as well. An elder told us that: "I've had kids come over from the projects, you know, Lord Selkirk, and after about three or four sweats their Moms would start coming with them...."

Why then, with such dedicated people and strong community-based organizations, do the problems in the 'D' seem so deeply entrenched, so intractable?

The answer is that the 'D' is what one respondent accurately called an "artificial community." Most communities are comprised of people who *choose* to move and to stay in a particular neighbourhood or area. Such is not the case in the 'D.' Most people living in the 'D' have not chosen to move there: they have been placed there by 'the system'—by some agency in the social service system. And they have been placed there because their lives are particularly troubled. One respondent said: "I think it's a real problem when people at the lowest point in their lives are *forced* to live together in a very small area." And for those in

the 'D' who do manage to get their lives together, they quickly leave: "those individuals, when they get their life back together, their vision is not to stay in that community, their long-term goal is to move out and to move to a place where their children will benefit from the advantages of living in a different community."

The result is that the large majority of those who are there at any given time are people in trouble: "once they're doing better they leave, and are replaced by other people who are also struggling, and there's never anybody there for any length [of time] who's successful." The problems of poverty—the interconnected web or cycle of problems—which are fairly highly concentrated in the inner city generally, are *intensely* concentrated in this one small area. The effects of high levels of concentration of poverty have been clearly documented, most notably in the works of William Julius Wilson (1987; 1996). As one respondent said: "If you've got a group of people who *don't* have a vested interest in the community, do not have a long-term commitment, then how do you build a neighbourhood out of that?"

Another added: "They tend to get lumped in this neighbourhood because, really, there's no place else for them to go." When they get things together they leave, "so that the transiency in that neighbourhood is really high...you'll get a good organization together, a group of residents that are making good things happen, and then people move out of the neighbourhood and they're gone, and you start from scratch again, so it's one step forward, two steps back a lot of the time."

### **What is the solution? Is there a solution?**

It is our view that the 'D' as such needs to be systematically dismantled over a ten-year period, and re-structured into mixed-income housing. The need to get rid of the 'D' was a view repeatedly expressed in response to our asking: "What in your opinion needs to be done to improve the lives of the people in the neighbourhood?"

## Creating Opportunities for Gang Members

A four-year old program in Winnipeg's North End uses an innovative approach to creating employment opportunities for gang members. And it's working.

Ogijiita Pimatiswin Kinamatwin (OPK) began when some gang members approached the North End Housing Project about finding work for members who were getting out of jail or wanting to leave the street.

Now ten young men, mostly in their 20s, work with two trained carpenters and the project coordinator, Larry Morrissette, in renovating houses in their North End neighbourhoods. They learn the practical skills of housing renovation; they learn about such life skills as financial management; and they learn about and practice their Aboriginal cultures.

Many of these young men are finding jobs. Some are returning to school. None are returning to prison. Many other young men in similar circumstances are coming to OPK and asking for the opportunity to work.

Nor are these the easiest cases. They are hard-core gang members. Many have spent much of their young lives in penal institutions, in a lot of cases having been locked up off and on since the age of 12 or 15 years. They have few opportunities in the mainstream economy. As Morrissette describes it: "A lot of these young men are marginalized. They don't go apply for welfare. They don't go look for help in any way. They just sort of, you know, have created their own economy."

Why is OPK successful? Says Morrissette:

We have two carpenters who are themselves ex-offenders, it's all Aboriginal, and so there's a good peer support and a good sort of support where they have role models that have been through the same thing that they've been through, so our guys don't give these carpenters a hard time because they know that they've walked the same path as them. And I think that is a part of the success of the program. A lot of the people are from the area, have experienced the same things they have, the poverty, oppression, unemployment, all those things.

But maybe the program is too expensive? Morrissette says not:

Not if you look at it in terms of how much it costs to lock somebody up. You have to look at how much it costs to lock somebody up, and if they're with a partner, they go on welfare, how much it costs the Province to pay for the family. Then you have to look at marriage break-up, you have to look at addictions, all these things that come about... I think the program is cheap in relation to all of that.

This is the kind of initiative—designed and run by the Aboriginal community themselves—that needs public support. Gang members are saying they want to work. They have been so marginalized that they need special strategies to move them into the labour market. We need to replicate such programs, and invest stable and long-term funding in creating opportunities for all our youth.



I would get rid of the Lord Selkirk Park as an entity. It's not, I don't think the way it's set up there's any way to make it work.

I'd like to just bulldoze this whole fucking place down, I hate it, I hate it, I hate what it's doing to families here.

All across North America this is exactly what is happening: 1960s-era public housing projects, deeply-troubled in the same way as the 'D,' are being re-structured, with parts being knocked down, replaced by mixed-income housing, and shared street grids replacing the 'no streets, open-space' design that was used for all of them, including the 'D.' Mixed income housing will serve to alleviate the exceptionally high degree of concentration of poverty that characterized the 'D.' The return to a shared street grid will re-integrate it into the surrounding neighbourhood, removing some of the social stigma of the 'D.' This will make possible a more normal level of surveillance in the neighbourhood, thus increasing levels of safety.

These are necessary but not sufficient conditions for solving the problems of the 'D.' At the same time as the physical re-structuring, during the ten-year transition, intense community development and community organizing work needs to take place. Currently, residents are not engaged, are not involved in building solutions to their own problems. Many of the community organizations are doing wonderful and necessary work, but not much of it is old-fashioned, face-to-face community organizing, and that is what is needed now. One respondent said: "It literally means going door-to-door and saying, 'can I come in for a cup of tea.'" Another said: "Building relationships is key....working one-on-one with people and getting to know the neighbourhood and the residents is a huge first step." And it is likely that most of the community leaders who will be identified in this way will be women. As one respondent said: "I see women doing it. Because women are the

leaders of our community. Go to any organization, most of the leaders are women."

In addition, a real solution to the problems of the 'D' has to be holistic and long-term. As one person put it, we need "...a key stakeholders' multi-year plan to support community-based initiatives." Some steps in this direction have already been taken.

But the solution has to be long-term. Over and over again we were told that a major problem in the 'D' is the prevalence of short-term funding for pilot projects. This does not work, it makes matters worse. People gradually become involved with a project, and begin to work to make change, and then the funding is terminated and the project is over. Getting them involved the next time is that much more difficult. As one person told us:

You're not going to do it in two years, and you're not going to do it in three, it's going to take a long, long time, you have to bring those people out...you got to develop a relationship with them, they've got to start to feel a sense of safety with you. It takes a long time.

Another said: "Sometimes when you've been let down and rejected by so many people in your life, it takes a long time before you build trust in people." Another added, referring specifically to youth programs that come and go: "they see that, and that stuff goes on in their own lives and their homes," and so just adds to the sense of abandonment, and the lack of anything stable in their lives. He emphasized repeatedly the need for consistency over time, as opposed to the current emphasis on short-term funding. Said another: "The funding people get is so short term. What's happening in the inner city didn't happen overnight, it took many, many years." "Lots of starts and stops. So nothing, again, long-term."

This has to do in part with how governments approach the community-based work that is being done in the inner city. Governments are the pri-

mary funders, and the frequently-expressed view is that they are too committed to small, disjointed, short-term projects, as opposed to holistic and longer-term strategies.

It's all well and good for government to say, well, put a plan together and develop a program and we'll provide some funding but it's not going to be long-term.... And you know, all levels of government do this—to a community that's having a hard time just making it through the day without a crisis in their homes. And I'm not overstating it. I think I'm understating it.

But this reliance upon short-term funding, this failure to provide long-term funding over a sustained period of time, is short-sighted.

The government has got to quit playing games with organizations, whether it's mine or any other organization out there trying... to bring programming to the Aboriginal communities. They save in the long run... because if they don't pay now they're going to be paying later.... whether it's on welfare, in the courts, prison, hospitals.

There is frustration that governments are not dealing with inner-city problems seriously. One woman told us that governments have to stop demanding that inner city programs become 'sustainable'. Most cannot become sustainable, ever, and it is the role of government to use our collectively-generated tax dollars to solve the kinds of problems facing the inner city generally, and Lord Selkirk Park particularly. Another woman said: "If we were in the real world of real money and real politicians who cared they would say, OK, let's set something up."

The North End Community Renewal Corporation, like the Spence Neighbourhood Association, is a non-profit community development corporation. Established in 1998 by a coalition of inner-city community-based organizations,

the NECRC has its headquarters on Selkirk Ave., with a mandate to serve the North End community from the CPR tracks to Carruthers Ave., and from McPhillips St. to the Red River. Now a \$1.2 million per year operation with a staff of 20, the NECRC was established in order to move efforts to revitalize the North End beyond a host of isolated programs, to a more systematic and comprehensive approach. The NECRC adheres to the Canadian Community Economic Development Network (CCED-Net) philosophy that "... what distinguishes the most successful community economic development groups is that they take the form of 'development systems' as contrasted to 'projects.'" The non-profit organization is community-based, with a 16 member Board of Directors comprised of a broad range of community representatives—business, residents, Aboriginal organizations, community service organizations, religious and labour organizations. The NECRC has played a central role in efforts to revitalize Selkirk Ave—once the thriving commercial heart of the historic North End, but in recent years home to large numbers of boarded-up buildings. Selkirk Ave is now slowly but definitely beginning to turn around, thanks in no small measure to the efforts of NECRC. The community development corporation has also played a central role in creating residents' associations in several North End neighbourhoods, increasing resident involvement in those neighbourhoods, promoting employment, housing and business development in the North End, and encouraging service delivery organizations to work more closely together. Again, the role that can be played by a non-profit community development corporation with a *strong community base* and a mandate to promote a more *comprehensive approach* to neighbourhood revitalization, is very significant. The fact that the NECRC receives *core funding* from the provincial government's Neighbourhoods Alive! program is a crucial variable in explaining its success to date.

The North End Community Renewal Corpora-

tion is working to put together a holistic ten-year, comprehensive plan to turn Lord Selkirk around. Although struggling to find the long-term funding to ensure that they can work consistently over ten years, they have already started to work. They have pulled together the various agencies to increase the extent to which they are working together, have hired an organizer to work in the development, and are developing a resource centre in the 'D' to serve as an organizing centre, similar to what the Centennial Neighbourhood Project has done at Dufferin School. Many of the people whom we interviewed said that they were excited about this work, and want to be involved. This is a genuine opportunity for this troubled neighbourhood.

It is important, we think, to acknowledge that a great deal of money has already gone into the 'D' over the years, and much of it has been well-spent. But the very *structure* of the 'D' is the barrier preventing solutions.

...the three levels of government have in fact over the last 20 years provided a lot, put a lot, of money into that neighbourhood, whether it was from the Core Area Initiative or through the Winnipeg Development Agreement...that was well-spent money... But the community doesn't have a memory of that.

The community does not have a memory of that because of its structure, because people come in at the lowest point in their lives and leave when they get their lives together, so that what exists in the 'D' is an "artificial community" that people do not want to be a part of. The structure of that community makes community organizing exceptionally difficult, perhaps impossible, and money poured into the community does not solve the problems of the community as a whole.

It would have been in a lot worse shape if it hadn't been for a lot of resources, but I'm

not sure whether that is in the long run the best thing that could have happened, you know....I think we keep trying to do the same thing over and over which is supporting that neighbourhood with more funds and more programs, and maybe we need not to have that neighbourhood, the way it's set up, or we accept the fact that it's not a traditional neighbourhood, it's a neighbourhood that will always be in transition.

This is the dilemma in Lord Selkirk Park. The neighbourhood is structured such that even large amounts of money do not generate solutions. That is why the necessary condition for a long-term solution is the large-scale, physical re-structuring of the neighbourhood. A commitment to doing that, over a ten-year period, would in itself not solve the problems. But it would make solutions possible. These structural changes need to be coupled with a holistic and long-term strategy aimed at coordinating the efforts of all the agencies and CBOs working in the neighbourhood around a long-term plan, and with a commitment to face-to-face community organizing aimed at generating the involvement of residents and creating a sense of hope for a better future.

There is hope for a better future in the 'D,' but it demands action. The North End Community Renewal Corporation is prepared to take the lead in coordinating that action. Many in the area are anxious to support their efforts. There is a vision for a better future. It now needs the long-term funding support, and political will, to make it happen.

## D. Three Inner-city neighbourhoods: Discussion and Recommendations

Spence, Centennial and Lord Selkirk Park each have common strengths and problems, but each is quite different from the other.

In Spence residents appear to be on their way to turning the neighbourhood around. There are still many problems to deal with, and these should not be underestimated, but progress has been made in recent years, the consequence largely of the creation of the Spence Neighbourhood Association and the provision to the SNA of reasonable levels of funding—including core funding from the provincial Neighbourhoods Alive! program. The improvements in Spence are visible, and were attested to by almost everyone with whom we spoke.

Centennial neighbourhood is just starting down the path that Spence has been travelling for a decade: mobilizing neighbourhood residents and establishing community-based organizations through which the residents can work collectively to solve problems. These steps have been made possible by Winnipeg Foundation funding, as well as Neighbourhoods Alive! funding. Residents told us that they are beginning to see positive signs of change, and that a new sense of hope may be emerging in the neighbourhood. The importance of core funding to community-based organizations is clearly demonstrated, we believe, by the cases of Spence and Centennial.

Lord Selkirk Park, by contrast, continues to struggle. A good deal of money has gone into the neighbourhood in past years, and a great deal of outstanding work has been done by service agencies in the neighbourhood, but the lasting results have been few. Residents are not engaged.

The very character of the housing development appears to contribute to the problem. The North End Community Renewal Corporation has a plan to begin to turn the neighbourhood around over a ten-year period, but has not yet received the funding to make this happen. Based on the evidence in Spence and Centennial, this is a project that ought to be funded.

Since the implementation of the first Core Area Initiative nearly 25 years ago, there has been considerable funding of inner-city projects and programs, and a great deal of experimentation and innovation. The results have been impressive. Many outstanding community development practitioners have emerged. They comprise a talented and now very experienced stratum of leaders in inner-city community development. Many outstanding programs and institutions have been created, and they are now building capacity and making change on an ongoing basis. Much has been learned.

We know, for example, that solutions come from the community. We know that there are no quick or easy solutions, but that if community-based organizations are able to keep working consistently over time, then change for the better happens, slowly but surely. We know that community-based solutions work best when people in the community are involved, when they participate in deciding upon what is to be done and how, and when they themselves are hired to do the work when employment opportunities arise.

We know too that developments in some inner-city neighbourhoods in the past decade have stepped the process of inner-city revitalization

up a notch. The creation of community development corporations which promote both resident involvement, and a more comprehensive approach to neighbourhood development, together with the provincial government's—and to a lesser extent other funders'—decision to provide core funding to these CDCs, is beginning to show positive results in those neighbourhoods and areas where CDCs have been operating for five years or more.

Upon examining the three neighbourhoods, what we have seen is that when we apply what has been learned over the past 25 years, the effects—the beginnings of positive change—can be seen quite quickly. People begin to get involved. They seize opportunities that are created. A new mood emerges. Hope replaces resignation and cynicism.

This can be dangerous: if funding is pulled from a program that is working well, the result can be a deeper cynicism about the possibilities of change. Consistent core funding over a long period of time for community-based and community-controlled organizations, and the use of such organizations to create real opportunities—jobs, education—is the basis of a solution.

Multi-year funding of CBOs is still far from the norm, but there are small steps being taken in that direction. The provincial government, primarily through Neighbourhoods Alive!, has provided core, multi-year funding to inner city community development corporations, like the Spence Neighbourhood Association and the North End Community Renewal Corporation, and others. United Way of Winnipeg is now providing some multi-year funding, as is the Winnipeg Foundation in Centennial neighbourhood. This is a development which, although still somewhat tentative, is very much to be applauded and encouraged.

The opposite trend, as exemplified by the City of Winnipeg's threatened withdrawal of funding for inner-city housing and the officers in the schools program, is still very much a problem that

holds back inner city revitalization.

More broadly, the currently trendy notion that CBOs should be able to become 'sustainable'—that is, should be able to support themselves financially—is simply unrealistic and wrong-headed. A 2003 Canadian Council on Social Development report, *Funding Matters* (Scott, 2003), observed that: "the capacity of the non-profit and voluntary sector to fulfill its important role in Canadian society is being undermined and eroded by new funding strategies that are intended to increase accountability, self-sufficiency and competition." The buzzword is 'sustainability.' But the very nature of the work that inner city CBOs do requires ongoing *government* support. It is the responsibility of governments and other funders to fund the CBOs that have demonstrated success, and to do so on a multi-year basis, and when they do so, we *all* benefit.

We have learned, over a quarter century of inner city practice, a great deal about what works. We need to build on that. When we do, when we build on the strengths that we have created through hard-earned experience, we begin to make positive changes.

What is needed now is more funding for the solutions that work: more stable, core, long-term funding.

In addition, we were told repeatedly that poverty is a major problem in Winnipeg's inner city. Although poverty is about more than just low incomes, it is indeed about low incomes. Many inner-city peoples' incomes are so low—the result of low wages and the declining real value of social assistance rates—that they must take extraordinary measures to survive. Inner city incomes are so low that many people are being trapped in poverty. Significant increases in the minimum wage and in social assistance rates are an essential part of an inner city revitalization strategy.

What we can expect if we invest in inner-city neighbourhoods in these ways over the long term is the creation, in time, of healthy mixed-income

neighbourhoods in which people feel safe to walk the streets, in which schools are centres of community activity, in which recreational and employment opportunities are available for all, and particularly for youth, and in which there is a ready supply of comfortable and affordable housing, including rental housing, to meet all needs.

More specific recommendations about revitalizing Winnipeg's inner city can be found in the final section of *Part I* of the *State of the Inner City Report*.

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