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**The Inner Cities of Saskatoon and Winnipeg:  
A New and Distinctive Form  
of Development**

**by Jim Silver**

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# The Inner Cities of Saskatoon and Winnipeg: A New and Distinctive Form of Development

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by **Jim Silver**

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In the inner city of Winnipeg in recent decades, and in the core neighbourhoods of Saskatoon in the past decade, a distinctive form of 'development' has been emerging. It is driven neither by the market, nor the state, but is community-led; it is not just community development, nor community economic development, nor social enterprise, but includes all three. It is a unique form of development that has emerged largely spontaneously from the harsh realities of urban poverty in inner-city neighbourhoods, and that has been driven for the most part by inner-city residents themselves. Out of this process there has been created in Winnipeg's inner city, and is emerging in Saskatoon's core neighbourhoods, an 'infrastructure' of community-based organizations with a particular way of working, guided by a distinctive and commonly-held philosophy. This infrastructure holds considerable promise for resolving the complex and now deeply entrenched problems arising from spatially concentrated racialized poverty, if it can continue to be patiently nurtured, and if it can be linked to an expanded and revised role for the state.

Winnipeg and Saskatoon are western Canadian cities sharing similar historical trajectories and socio-economic and demographic characteristics. These include, in recent decades, the emergence of large inner cities characterized by spatially concentrated racialized poverty. This particularly intense form of poverty is described in what follows by means of selected socio-economic indicators. It is

argued that among the consequences of this form of poverty are low levels of educational attainment, poor health outcomes and, in many cases, low levels of self-esteem and self-confidence, with the result that the poverty has been reproduced across generations, and is now deeply entrenched. It is argued further that this form of poverty is the result not of individual failings, but of broad socio-economic and demographic forces over which core/inner-city neighbourhoods and their residents have little if any control, but which concentrate their adverse effects disproportionately in such neighbourhoods. The presence in both Manitoba and Saskatchewan of NDP governments has had some, but relatively little, impact on this concentrated poverty, in large part, it is argued, because these governments have exerted relatively little effort to try to solve such poverty.

In response to such government failings, and in response to their relative abandonment by the forces of the market, and by people and businesses who have relocated to the suburbs, these economically and socially marginalized spaces have become, in effect, 'laboratories', in which locally-based creativity and innovation have flourished, largely from the bottom up. The result has been the development of a multiplicity of community-based organizations (CBOs) that have developed a distinctive, community-led culture or ideology that guides their work and adds to their efficacy. These CBOs have become, in effect, a community-based 'infrastructure' that is the necessary but not suffi-

cient condition for largely eradicating core/inner-city poverty. Skilled and effective though the parts of this community-based infrastructure are, their efforts alone are not enough to turn the tide of a deeply-entrenched, spatially concentrated and racialized poverty. For every step forward that they take, they are pushed back a step by the powerful socioeconomic and demographic forces that have created and that perpetuate this intense form of poverty. To turn the tide will require, among other measures, an expanded and modified role for govern-

ments in supporting and building upon this community-based infrastructure.

In this paper I examine and compare the inner cities of Saskatoon and Winnipeg, considering the types of problems that prevail, and especially the community-based approaches to their solution that have emerged. I argue that many of these community-based approaches embody a remarkable creativity that could be the basis for very significant change in these inner cities, were governments to provide the supports that are warranted by these organizations' creativity and effectiveness.

## The Historical Development of Saskatoon and Winnipeg

### Winnipeg

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Eastern European and British immigrants poured into Winnipeg's North End to form the new industrial working class that fueled Winnipeg's great turn-of-the-century economic boom. They crowded into hastily constructed, poor quality houses built on smaller-than-normal lots and often disconnected from sewer and water lines and with inadequate provision for recreational spaces, an arrangement that produced profits for developers and cramped living conditions for workers. Winnipeg's famous North End was a living contradiction: economic hardship and difficult living conditions on the one hand; yet a thriving, multi-lingual and richly diverse cultural and social life on the other. The high proportion of Eastern European and Jewish residents of the North End—the 'Foreign Quarter', as it came to be called—were subjected to a harsh and bitter form of racism by the culturally dominant and largely Anglo-Scots establishment of the city's south end, to whom the North End's rich cultural and social life was virtually unknown. Among Winnipeg's elite, the segregation promoted not only ignorance and lack of respect, but also the callous attitudes that were expressed in public policies that ignored the needs of the North End:

"Sheltered in their lavish homes in Armstrong's Point, Fort Rouge and Wellington Crescent, and engaged in a social and business life centred around the Manitoba Club, the Board of Trade and the St. Charles Country Club, the governing elite's callous stance was often the result of ignorance... for the most part they gave little serious thought to the social problems in their midst" (Artibise, 1977, p.54).

In the post-Second World War period those who could afford to do so began to leave the North End for the greener and more spacious suburbs, beginning a long period of inner-city population decline that continues to this day. As people moved out, businesses followed, and the North End's already low housing prices declined further. Many were purchased by landlords who invested little in maintenance and repair. Home-ownership gave way to rental, while decades of under-investment by governments in the stigmatized North End added to the cumulative process of decline.

In the 1960s Aboriginal people began to move to urban centres, first in relatively small numbers, then in growing waves (see Table One).

They located in the increasingly hollowed-out North End and inner city where relatively inexpensive rental hous-

**Table One: Aboriginal People, Winnipeg and Saskatoon, 1951-2001**

	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	% of total CMA population, 2001
Winnipeg	210	1082	4940	16,570	35,150	55,970	8.1 %
Saskatoon	48	207	1070	4350	11,920	20,455	9.1%

Source: Evelyn Peters. *Atlas of Aboriginal Peoples*. <<http://gjsmap.usask.ca/website/Web%5FAtlas/AOUAP/cities.htm>> (accessed June 22, 2007).

ing was to be found. Successive generations of Aboriginal migrants from rural and northern communities were drawn to those parts of the city where housing was relatively cheap and others like them had already located. Largely ill-prepared for urban industrial and commercial life—residential schools offered little education or training—Aboriginal migrants to the city, as had Eastern European and Jewish immigrants before them, faced a wall of racism and employment discrimination. They found some measure of comfort in living in neighbourhoods with large Aboriginal populations.

Aboriginal people began to arrive in Winnipeg's North End and inner city just as suburbanization was relocating large numbers of people, and businesses with them, to the suburbs, and as an increasingly global economy was relocating to other parts of the world the heavy industry in which previous generations of immigrants had found jobs and eked out a working class living. This, together with the entrenched racism and employment discrimination that they faced, led to poverty for many, and in some cases inter-generational poverty. Today, Aboriginal people are disproportionately located in Winnipeg's inner city, and disproportionately represented among the city's poor, and the inner city and its residents continue to be stigmatized and ostracized by the dominant culture. Poverty is largely racialized, and Winnipeg truly is a divided city—spatially, culturally, socially and economically.

### **Saskatoon**

Saskatoon's historical development bears many similarities to that of Winnipeg. While Winnipeg became the central wholesale supplier for a vast territory from the Lakehead to the Rockies,

Saskatoon became a smaller-scale supplier to, and service centre for, northern Saskatchewan's farming communities, and like Winnipeg enjoyed a major, pre-First World War, wheat-based economic boom—"the fastest growing city in the world", as Saskatoon proclaimed itself" (Kerr and Hanson, 1982, p. x)—although unlike Winnipeg Saskatoon was relatively unsuccessful in promoting industrial development. Winnipeg was an industrial centre, and its radical politics was of the industrial working class; Saskatoon was "a farmers' city", home to a "farm-based radical politics" (Kerr and Hanson, 1982, p. xiii). But the two prairie cities were similar in that, in each, the railways divided the city: the more well-to-do residents located on the east side of the South Saskatchewan River where the Temperance Colonization Society had first put down roots in 1881; the downtown business section located on the west bank of the Saskatchewan River; and the rail lines west of the downtown formed the dividing line between the business and commercial section of the city, and the working class neighbourhoods west of the rail lines. These working class neighbourhoods, the oldest in the city, were located back of the rail lines and the business district, and became known as the West End.

The West End became, and still is, to Saskatoon, what the North End became, and still is, to Winnipeg. Immigrant workers—although a higher proportion than in Winnipeg were of British descent—located in the small houses and 25-foot lots of Saskatoon's West End. As in Winnipeg's North End, they were subjected to an often virulent form of racism and discrimination (Kerr and Hanson, 1982, p. 130). In the pre-First World War period housing prices for working families were high—rents were double those



in Winnipeg—the consequence in part of the greed of those who sought to make their fortunes in housing (Kerr and Hanson, 1982, pp. 125, 128). The West End became economically, culturally and socially divided from the rest of the city, and remains so to this day.

In the post-war period, those who could afford to do so left for the larger homes and larger lots of the suburbs. Those left behind were disproportionately those least financially able to move. In the wake of the exodus, housing prices declined, and many were bought up by absentee landlords who rented them out as revenue properties and allowed their condition to further deteriorate. The ratio of renters to homeowners grew. When the 1960s brought growing numbers of Aboriginal people from northern communities to urban centres, many of them ill-equipped for modern life by virtue of the lack of educational and employment opportunities in the north, they disproportionately located in the West End where cheap rental accommodations were to be had. Gradually, the West End became home to a concentrated population of those who were poor, and were disproportionately Aboriginal. The stigmatization long attached to the West End deepened; the opportunities available to those who lived there diminished.

In the past 30 years, Winnipeg's inner city and Saskatoon's core neighbourhoods have suffered further decline as the consequence not only of continued suburbanization and housing deterioration, but also of broad socio-economic forces over which inner-city/core neighbourhood residents have had little if any control. These have included: globalization, de-industrialization and associated dramatic shifts in the structure of the labour market, that have had the overall

effect of removing many of the kinds of jobs by which relatively less well-educated people could earn a wage to support a family, and replacing them with service sector jobs that are typically poorly paid, part-time and without union protections and benefits; the severe economic recessions of the early 1980s and early-mid 1990s, that accentuated the effects of structural change; and the relative withdrawal of governments, especially since the 1990s, from various forms of social expenditures as part of the long ideological shift that is often characterized as neo-liberalism.

### **The Experience Under NDP Governments**

To what extent have recent NDP governments in Manitoba and Saskatchewan been able to protect their provinces from the effects of these powerful forces? In particular, how have the poor—and especially those who experience the spatially concentrated racialized poverty of Winnipeg's inner city and Saskatoon's core neighbourhoods—fared under recent NDP governments?

First, consider the governing strategy adopted by these governments. The Manitoba strategy has been laid out in a particularly clear fashion by Donne Flanagan (2003), a former senior advisor to Premier Gary Doer. It is a strategy that he describes as 'inoculation'. The government attempts to 'inoculate' itself against its traditional opponents—especially the corporate and business community and higher-income individuals. Inoculation is a medical procedure by which a person is injected with a small dosage of a disease in order to ward off the full development of the disease. The political version involves responding to the demands of the business community to the

extent sufficient to buy their political acquiescence, if not their support. What this means in practical terms for recent Doer-led governments is that the needs of their traditional opponents, particularly for tax cuts, are met first; only after those needs have been satisfied are the needs of their traditional supporters—including those in lower-income neighbourhoods—attended to.

In Saskatchewan, a similar strategy has been used. Former Premier Roy Romanow moved his NDP governments toward the ideological centre, and his successor Lorne Calvert stayed the course. As in Manitoba, Calvert's governments responded to challenges from the Right by making concessions. Healthy government revenues enabled his governments to do so in various ways—tax cuts in particular—while still maintaining enough social expenditure to differentiate his governments from the ideologically Right-wing and largely rural-based Saskatchewan Party (Conway 2006).

We can see the outcome of these governing strategies by examining selected comparative economic data. First, NDP governments in both Manitoba and Saskatchewan have been cutting taxes, thus removing revenues that might otherwise be available for social investments, and these tax cuts have benefitted higher-income households far more than lower-income households.

The *Manitoba Alternative Budget 2006* estimated that NDP governments in Manitoba have cut personal and property taxes by \$391 million since 1999 (CCPA-Mb 2006), with a further cut of \$35.3 million in 2007 (Manitoba 2007, *Budget Paper C*), while business taxes have been cut by \$128 million since 1999, with a further cut of \$24.9 million announced

in the 2007 provincial budget (CCPA-Mb. 2006a; Manitoba 2007, *Budget Paper C*). One recent estimate suggests that by 2010, combined tax cuts by Doer-led governments will approximate \$900 million (MacKinnon and Hudson 2007). Tax cuts have saved \$150 per year for a family of four earning \$20,000 per year; they have saved \$1700 per year—more than ten times as much—for a family of four earning \$100,000 per year (MacKinnon and Hudson 2007).

The record of Calvert governments in Saskatchewan was similar. Between 2000 and 2006, income tax rates were cut by close to one-third, and as is the case in Manitoba, the higher one's income, the greater the benefit from the cuts (CCPA-Sask. 5, 5, 2006). The Calvert government, in its 2007/08 Budget, committed to cutting the provincial sales tax from 7 to 5 percent, at an estimated cost of \$340 million (Saskatchewan 2007); pledged to eliminate the Corporate Capital Tax which, it has been estimated, would remove an additional \$480 million from government coffers (Saskatchewan 2007; CCPA-Sask 2006); and responded positively to the Saskatchewan Business Tax Review Committee's recommendation to reduce the Corporate Income Tax rate from 17 to 12 percent—it is expected to reach the 12 percent target by July 2008 (Saskatchewan 2007). These tax cuts, directly benefitting business, were undertaken despite evidence that Saskatchewan's business costs, including taxes, are already among the lowest in North America (CCPA-Sask. Dec 2005).

A similar pattern—ensuring that corporate needs are met—prevailed respecting natural resource royalties. The Saskatchewan Department of Industry and Resources has reported that for natural resources, it has a “competitive royalty

structure developed in partnership with industry” (Saskatchewan, Industry and Resources, May 3, 2007). Between 1982 and 1991 Conservative governments in Saskatchewan reduced oil and gas royalties dramatically. During the 1991 provincial election the NDP pledged to reverse this policy, but they chose not to do so. It has recently been estimated that maintaining the Conservative government’s lowered oil and gas royalty rates cost the Saskatchewan government some \$2 billion in 2003 alone (CCPA-Sask 2005). Royalties on potash, uranium and coal have also fallen in recent years under NDP governments. In Manitoba, the Fraser Institute has described the provincial government as having the “best policy environment in the world for mining investment” (Manitoba March 6, 2007).

The approach of both Manitoba and Saskatchewan NDP governments to these two policy areas, taxation and natural resource royalties, is consistent with Flanagan’s description of the ‘inoculation’ strategy—give traditional opponents much of what they ask for, in order to mute their opposition.

We can contrast this relative largesse to the business community and higher-income households, with the expenditures of both Manitoba and Saskatchewan NDP governments on those at the other end of the income scale—social assistance recipients. In Saskatchewan in 2005 a single employable recipient of social assistance received an amount equivalent to 37 percent of the Statistics Canada Low-Income Cut Off (LICO), often called the poverty line, while a couple with two children received 58 percent of the LICO. In Manitoba in 2005 a single employable recipient of social assistance received 25 percent of the LICO; a couple with two

children received 53 percent of the LICO (National Council of Welfare 2006). In Manitoba, welfare incomes for single employable recipients fell by 33.2 percent between 1989 and 2005, and for a couple with two children by 16.7 percent, in constant 2005 dollars. Over the same period in Saskatchewan, welfare incomes in real terms declined by 5.5 percent for single employable recipients and by 15 percent for couples with two children. In Manitoba, historic lows in real terms for social assistance rates in various categories were reached between 2000 and 2005, under NDP governments (National Council of Welfare 2006). As of 2007, shelter assistance rates had not been increased since 1993, although the Manitoba Rent Increase Guideline has authorized landlords to increase rents by 21 percent over that period (Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, September 2007). In Saskatchewan, a new program called Transitional Employment Assistance (TEA) was recently introduced, by the NDP government, intended originally for social assistance recipients deemed to be employable. Now most social assistance recipients are on TEA, which provides even lower levels of assistance (CCPA-Sask, 4, 3, 2005). Social assistance recipients have fared poorly under *all* provincial governments in recent years; NDP governments in Manitoba and Saskatchewan have been no exception.

These provincial NDP governments have, however, made a difference for lower-income earners in other ways that are significant, although in each case one could view the cup as being half-full or half-empty. At the time of writing, in late 2007, Manitoba had the highest minimum wage among provinces, along with BC, Alberta (as of September 2007), Ontario and Quebec, at \$8.00 per hour, and Saskatchewan was close behind at \$7.95

per hour (the territories were higher: NWT, \$8.25; Yukon, \$8.37; Nunavut, \$8.50), and in both Manitoba and Saskatchewan the minimum wage in real terms has increased since 2002. This must be seen as positive in relative terms, from a low-income earner's point of view. However, when measured in real terms Manitoba's minimum wage today is at precisely its 1981 level (Social Planning Council of Winnipeg 2006), so that the gains of recent years can be seen as simply regaining ground lost prior to 2002. More positively, Saskatchewan recently announced plans to increase the minimum wage in stages, starting in January 2008, to the level of the pre-tax Low Income Cut Off (LICO) by 2010, and then to link it to the growth of the Consumer Price Index. This is an important step forward for low-income wage earners in Saskatchewan, and reflects the intention in Ontario to increase the minimum wage to \$10.25 per hour in 2010—close to the level needed to bring a single wage earner to the LICO (Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, October 10, 2007). Manitoba has yet to announce a similar intention.

In childcare, by contrast, Manitoba has moved well ahead of Saskatchewan. In Saskatchewan in 2004, approximately 5 percent of children under 12 years of age had access to regulated child care, the lowest percentage in the country; in Manitoba in 2004 approximately 14 percent of children under 12 years had access to regulated child care, fourth best in Canada (Friendly 2005). By comparison, 30 percent of children under 12 years have access to regulated childcare in Yukon and Quebec. As of 2004, Manitoba was providing a lot more regulated child care spaces than Saskatchewan, and spending a lot more—Saskatchewan spends less on

childcare than any province except Alberta. Manitoba's performance is strong by comparison with Saskatchewan; it pales in comparison to Quebec.

Although details are still sparse, the new Rewarding Work program recently announced by the Manitoba NDP government *may* move in a direction opposite to the trend in recent years for social assistance recipients, and opposite to Saskatchewan's TEA. According to its 2007 *Budget Paper E*, the government claims that it wishes to use part of the province's prosperity to help those on income assistance. The new plan includes more money under the Manitoba Child Benefit that will reduce the 'welfare wall' (penalties faced by those attempting to transition to work); a further provincial benefit to complement the new federal tax benefit for families transitioning to work; extra payment to cover costs related to working, such as transportation; and help for longer-term training, including Vocational Rehabilitation Services, high school completion and the Rural Jobs Project (Manitoba 2007, *Budget Paper E*). Further changes have been announced to extend health benefits to those social assistance recipients making the transition to work, allowing recipients to save for emergencies, and loan rebates for those single parents once they complete college or university (Welch, April 11, 2007). By contrast, the 2007/08 Budget offered no increase for shelter allowances, making it very difficult for those on social assistance to keep up with rent increases, particularly since the shelter allowance component of welfare benefits has been frozen since 1992, while rents have risen 20 percent in real terms during that period (MacKinnon and Hudson 2007).

These data suggest that NDP governments in both Manitoba and Saskatchewan, consistent with Flanagan's 'inoculation' metaphor, have exerted more budgetary effort in meeting the demands of business and higher-income individuals, than in meeting the needs of those at the bottom of the income scale, including those living in Winnipeg's inner city and Saskatoon's core neighbourhoods, where racialized poverty is spatially concentrated. As will be shown later, funding for the community-based forms of inner-city/core neighbourhood development that are the focus of this paper has improved somewhat in recent years, especially in Manitoba, but not enough to enable change in these neighbourhoods that is transformative.

### **The Inner Cities of Winnipeg and Saskatoon**

In 2001, the year for which the latest relevant Census Canada data are available, Saskatoon's core neighbourhoods and Winnipeg's inner city were in significantly worse circumstances than in Saskatoon and Winnipeg as a whole, as measured by a variety of indicators (see Table Two).

As Table Two makes clear, poverty and related indicators are spatially concen-

trated in Saskatoon's core neighbourhoods and Winnipeg's inner-city neighbourhoods, and there is evidence that this spatially concentrated poverty is racialized. In most inner-city neighbourhoods, there is a very high proportion of Aboriginal people and visible minorities. In five inner-city neighbourhoods examined in a 2005 evaluation of Manitoba's Neighbourhoods Alive! program it was found that Aboriginal people constituted from 27.5 to 54.9 percent of neighbourhood populations, and that Aboriginal people plus visible minorities comprised a majority in four of the five neighbourhoods—from 51.5 to 66.0 percent—and were 42.5 percent in the fifth neighbourhood (Distasio et al, 2005, p.23). A similar pattern prevails in Saskatoon's core neighbourhoods: "In two west side inner-city neighbourhoods [Pleasant Hill and Riversdale], which are among the poorest in the city, close to half the population were Aboriginal in 2001", at 48.4 and 43.5 percent respectively (Anderson 2005, pp. 15 and 19).

This spatial concentration of racialized poverty in core/inner-city neighbourhoods is in addition to the fact that poverty levels in Manitoba and Saskatchewan as a whole are higher than other provinces, and are 'deep', that is, the gap between the average income of those with

**Table Two: Winnipeg's Inner-City and Saskatoon's Core Neighbourhoods, Versus Winnipeg and Saskatoon as a Whole, Selected Indicators, 2001**

	<b>Winnipeg Inner City</b>	<b>Winnipeg</b>	<b>Saskatoon Core Neighbourhoods</b>	<b>Saskatoon</b>
Average family income	\$42,477	\$63,657	\$32,475	\$62,451
Family income below \$20,000	24.3 %	14.7 %	21.0 %	9.0 %
Percent less than grade 9	12.4 %	7.8 %	13.2 %	6.0 %
Percent one-parent households	29.5 %	18.5 %	21.0 %	11.0 %
Percent rental	63.7 %	36.4 %	49.0 %	38.0 %
Percent Aboriginal	19.2 %	8.6 %	25.9 %	9.8 %

Source: Canada. *Census of Canada* 2001.

incomes below the LICO, and the LICO itself, is large—\$10,000 in Manitoba and \$8100 in Saskatchewan (Social Planning Council of Winnipeg 2006).

Children growing up in poor families, often called child poverty, is especially prevalent in both provinces. Between 1990 and 2004 Manitoba had the highest child poverty rate of all provinces six times out of sixteen. It was among the three worst provinces every year except 2004. In 1990 the child poverty rate peaked at 30 percent, the worst in Canada; in both 1995 and 1999 the rate was 25 percent, the second worst in Canada; by 2004, when the national average was 17.7 percent—almost one in every six children—Manitoba’s rate of child poverty had dropped to 19.2 percent—almost one in five and the fourth worst in Canada. In 2004, Saskatchewan’s rate of child poverty was worse, at 20 percent (Social Planning Council of Winnipeg 2006). Manitoba has, however, improved conditions somewhat for children in lone-parent families. In 2004, Manitoba’s rate of poverty for lone-parent families, at 47.6 percent, was third lowest in Canada, better than the Canadian average of 52.1 percent, and considerably better than Saskatchewan at 57.3 percent. It is possible that the ten percentage point spread between Manitoba and Saskatchewan is the result of the fact that Saskatchewan continues to claw back a portion of the Canada Child Tax Benefit, while Manitoba does not (CCPA-Sask, Nov. 2006). In either case, the rates of poverty continue to be shockingly high.

High rates of child poverty matter because, as Ross and Roberts (1999, p.36) have shown, children who grow up in poor families are, on average, less likely to do well in life than are children who grow up in non-poor families. The Ca-

nadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) has described the lasting effects of child poverty as follows:

“child poverty is associated with poor health and hygiene, a lack of a nutritious diet, absenteeism from school and low scholastic achievement, behavioural and mental problems, low housing standards, and in later years few employment opportunities and a persistently low economic status” (CCSD 1994, p.1).

The correlation between poverty and levels of educational attainment has been shown to be particularly strong in Winnipeg, where a recent study by the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy concluded that while 81 percent of students living in high socio-economic status (SES) areas graduated high school within five years of leaving grade 9, only 37 percent of students living in low SES areas did so (Brownell et al 2004, p.5). Thus the higher the incidence of poverty in a geographic area, the lower the level of educational attainment by young people in that area. We know too that the lower the level of educational attainment, the higher is the risk of poverty (Silver 2007, Figure 7.3, p. 195), and in this fashion poverty is reproduced across generations, making child poverty a particularly serious problem.

We know too that the incidence of poverty and rates of unemployment are higher, and levels of educational attainment are lower, for Aboriginal people than for the population as a whole (Mendelson 2004; Silver 2006a); that Aboriginal people are disproportionately concentrated in core/inner-city neighbourhoods (see Table Two); and that the Aboriginal population is younger and growing faster than the populations as a

whole, creating a form of spatially-concentrated racialized poverty in those neighbourhoods that threatens to grow worse with time. Issues related to poverty and employment levels in the Aboriginal populations of Saskatchewan and Manitoba are such that Mendelson (2004 pp. 35 and 38), in his study of Aboriginal people in Canada's labour market, was led by the evidence to observe that:

“To no small degree, the Aboriginal children who are today in Manitoba and Saskatchewan homes, child care centres and schools represent the economic future of the two provinces”, and “The increasing importance of the Aboriginal workforce to Manitoba and Saskatchewan cannot be exaggerated. There is likely no single more critical economic factor for these provinces”.

This observation makes the tax cuts that disproportionately benefit business and those at higher-income levels, and the relative lack of public investment directed at those at lower-income levels, as described above, particularly difficult to support.

These various data show that the incidence of poverty and associated problems is high in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, is particularly high among Aboriginal peoples, and in Saskatoon and Winnipeg is spatially concentrated in—although by no means confined to—those cities' core/inner-city neighbourhoods. The problem of spatially concentrated

racialized poverty in these neighbourhoods has grown over a long period of time, and is a function of broad socioeconomic and demographic forces. Poverty in Canada as a whole has been persistently high since at least 1980, and reached particularly alarming levels in the mid-1990s (Silver 2007, pp. 182-183). The presence of NDP governments in Saskatchewan and Manitoba in recent years has not had a dramatic effect on these trends, at least partly because of the governance strategies consciously and deliberately adopted by NDP governments in both provinces, of responding much more positively to the demands of business and higher-income individuals, especially for tax cuts, than to the persistent needs of those at the bottom of the income scale.

In the face of these developments there has emerged in Winnipeg's inner city and Saskatoon's core neighbourhoods, in a manner that is in some respects an example of Polanyi's (1944) famous 'double movement', a community-based and largely spontaneous response to the spatially concentrated racialized poverty that has been allowed to take root there. These efforts have created a community-based infrastructure that is increasingly sophisticated and that comprises the necessary but not sufficient condition for successfully combating poverty in these neighbourhoods. It represents, it might be argued, a new and distinctive form of 'development'. We turn now to an examination of this remarkable community-based phenomenon.

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## A Distinctive Form of Development in Inner-City/Core Neighbourhoods in Winnipeg and Saskatoon

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### a. Winnipeg's Inner City

As indicated in Table Two, Winnipeg's inner city, when seen through a 'deficit lens' — ie., when the focus is on those things that are negative — confronts many difficulties. Rates of poverty are high; average incomes and average levels of education are low; drugs, gangs and violence are a concern frequently expressed by inner-city residents (CCPA-Mb 2006; CCPA-Mb 2005; Comack and Silver 2006).

Yet there are remarkable strengths in Winnipeg's inner city. These include a wide range of vibrant and effective community-based organizations (CBOs) — family and youth centres, women's centres, community-based housing organizations, alternative educational initiatives, community economic development initiatives, community-based employment development organizations, neighbourhood renewal corporations, and others. Most of these community-based organizations are relatively small, and while they tend to be under-funded and under-staffed, they are creative and innovative, flexible and effective in what they do. They comprise, in their totality, a fairly well-developed infrastructure of CBOs practicing a distinctive form of 'development'.

These CBOs have emerged at various times over the past 30 years in a relatively spontaneous fashion, typically the result of the foresight and organizational skills of an individual or small group of inner-city people. They emerged at a time when the long post-war economic boom had come to an end, de-industrialization was beginning, and governments were starting to cut spending on social services, at least in relative terms. They have emerged not for the purpose of generating profits, but of meeting the various needs of inner-city residents. In most cases they continue to operate in a way that keeps them and their staff and managers very close to the inner-city/core neighbourhood residents with whom they work.

#### *Neechi CED Principles*

- *use of locally produced goods and services;*
- *production of goods and services for local use;*
- *local re-investment of profits;*
- *long-term employment of local residents;*
- *local skills development;*
- *local decision making;*
- *promotion of public health;*
- *improvement of the physical environment;*
- *promotion of neighbourhood stability;*
- *promotion of human dignity; and*
- *mutual aid support among organizations adhering to these principles.*

The great majority of these CBOs practice a form of development defined by the principles developed a decade or so ago by Neechi Foods, an Aboriginal-run, worker co-op grocery store in Winnipeg's North End (See sidebar). These principles, especially hiring, purchasing and investing locally, are sufficiently widely held in Winnipeg's inner city that the philosophy they embody is virtually hegemonic — ie., it has become the 'common sense' of inner-city development practice. Winnipeg's inner city can boast a remarkable number



and variety of community-based organizations operating in a fashion consistent with this philosophy.

Family and youth centres tend to be neighbourhood-based, and to operate in a community-building and capacity-building fashion. Most share a common set of values and principles that are consistent with the Neechi principles; eight of them (see sidebar) have worked together since 2003 as CLOUT (Community Led Organizations United Together), and they describe themselves as being community-led, neighbourhood-based and offering capacity-building and preventive solutions at the individual, family and community levels. They seek to create partnerships for "...building communities from the grassroots up and reducing the need for costly crisis oriented services" (CLOUT, 2004). The gains that individuals and families make as a result of these efforts are often such that they cannot be identified by standard economic indicators, but they are significant nevertheless, as demonstrated remarkably clearly in an important and innovative new study included in Winnipeg's *State of the Inner City Report 2007* (CCPA-Mb 2007).

Women's centres like the North End Women's Resource Centre and the North Point Douglas Women's Centre work with women and families in a similar fashion, offering programs and services intended "...to assist women to gain control over their lives; to break the cycles of violence, poverty, isolation or dependency..." (CLOUT, 2004), and aimed at building self-

confidence, self-esteem and women's capacities. The North Point Douglas Women's Centre has worked with SISTARS (Sisters Initiating Steps Towards a Renewed Society) to create a 40 space childcare program at which 25 neighbourhood women are taking the Red River College (RRC) Early Childhood Education program, and doing so in their own neighbourhood. Rather than send women to RRC, RRC has come to them, at their invitation. As the *State of the Inner City Report 2006* put it: "This is a creative response to real community needs, done in classic community economic development fashion and driven primarily by women" (CCPA-Mb 2006, p. 22). It is also a good example of the emergence of increasingly creative forms of alternative educational initiatives, tailored specifically to the 'non-suburban' realities of inner-city residents.

Since the federal government's ill-considered abandonment of social housing in 1993, CBOs have developed considerable skills in neighbourhood-based housing development (Skelton, 1998). The typical strategy to date has been to purchase structurally-sound but run-down houses in low-income inner-city neighbourhoods at a low price; renovate them, using local labour to the extent possible; and then sell them back to neighbourhood residents at a price made affordable by government subsidies. The North End Housing Project concentrated their efforts on a particular street, Alfred Avenue, and work by Deane (2006) shows that this effort improved housing prices in the immediate area more

#### ***CLOUT Members***

*Andrews Street Family Centre*

*Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre*

*Community Education*

*Development Association*

*Native Women's*

*Transition Centre*

*North End Women's*

*Resource Centre*

*Ndinawenmaaganag*

*Endaawad*

*Rossbrook House*

*Wolseley Family Place*

than the average, and prompted existing homeowners to make much-needed repairs because the higher prices made it possible for them to recoup their investment. The North End Housing Project has renovated/built more than 150 houses in Winnipeg's North End in the past decade. A similar strategy used by the West Broadway Development Corporation, focusing initially on Langside Street—previously known by some in the neighbourhood as 'gangside' street—prompted a turnaround in the neighbourhood featuring much increased private investment that, unfortunately, had the perverse effect of promoting significant displacement of low-income people and generating fears of gentrification (Silver 2006c). Housing improvements in Spence neighbourhood, led especially by the Spence Neighbourhood Association, have contributed recently to stemming the long outflow of people from Spence to the suburbs (Lewys, March 25, 2007).

Housing initiatives have been related to the practice of community economic development (CED) in various ways, and a range of community-based organizations is in place to promote and support CED. The North End Housing Project, for example, has been closely associated with Inner City Renovations, which hires locally in the inner city to undertake housing renovation and construction projects, and with Ogijiita Pimatiswin Kinamatwin (OPK), which trains street gang members in construction skills. SEED Winnipeg runs, supports and finances a variety of grassroots CED initiatives, for both organizations and individuals, as do LITE (Local Initiatives Toward Employment), the Assiniboine Credit Union and others.

Community-based employment development organizations have created 'store-

front' operations in inner-city neighbourhoods that have become skilled at working with hard-to-employ individuals. They typically provide resume-writing and interview skills and assist with job search efforts. Some, like Opportunities for Employment, have developed innovative funding arrangements—they are paid a fixed amount by the province for every person moved from social assistance to a job held for six months. House of Opportunities is in the process of developing a casual labour capacity to serve as a means of developing life and work skills and bridging people to full-time jobs if they choose. A recent analysis of employment development efforts in Winnipeg's inner city (Loewen et al 2005) concluded that these CBOs are highly skilled on the 'supply' side, that is working with potential employees to prepare them for the labour market, but less effective on the 'demand' side, that is, establishing partnerships with potential employers.

Considerable gains have been made in Winnipeg's inner city in establishing and running alternative forms of formal education, and especially adult education. Adult Learning Centres emerged just over a decade ago in a spontaneous and unplanned fashion, and have become very effective at moving adults, and especially Aboriginal adults, to grade 12 graduation (Silver 2006a, Chapter 3). They use a personalized, non-hierarchical and holistic approach to adult education that has produced considerable numbers of graduates, many of whom then move into the workforce, and some of whom go on to post-secondary education. It is likely that the majority of these are people who would not have done so in the absence of the Adult Learning Centre option. Gains are also being made in the development of 'community school-

ing' at the elementary level in inner-city schools. One example among several is Dufferin School in Centennial neighbourhood, which serves as the 'hub' of the Centennial Neighbourhood Project, a localized neighbourhood revitalization strategy that is funded by the Winnipeg Foundation, and that has initiated a wide range of innovative initiatives specifically tailored to the inner city realities of neighbourhood children (Matthews 2007).

A significant development in Winnipeg's inner city has been the establishment, in the mid-late 1990s, toward the end of the deep recession at that time, of three neighbourhood renewal corporations (NRCs)—West Broadway Development Corporation (WBDC), Spence Neighbourhood Association (SNA), and the North End Community Renewal Corporation (NECRC). The first two emerged largely as the result of neighbourhood resident initiatives; NECRC was driven by community development workers who saw the need for a more strategic approach. WBDC and SNA work in specific inner-city neighbourhoods; NECRC works in eleven North End neighbourhoods. The NRCs have focused primarily on housing renovation, with considerable success, but have also worked hard—albeit with varying degrees of success—to ensure ongoing resident involvement, and have worked at improving neighbourhood safety and security, neighbourhood physical appearance, and the image of their often-stereotyped/stigmatized inner-city neighbourhoods. The NRCs have been quite successful at assembling funds for their work and focusing their efforts in such a way as to make a tangible and visible difference in their neighbourhoods, and they have developed considerable expertise in various aspects of community development. Their emergence has in fact enabled inner-city

neighbourhoods to scale up neighbourhood revitalization efforts.

The funding of these inner-city community development efforts is contradictory. On the one hand, it is universally argued by those doing the work that they are forced to spend far too high a proportion of their time raising funds, and that far too much of their funding is project funding, when what they really need is core funding (Silver 2002). The Neighbourhood Renewal Corporations benefit from core funding from the provincial Neighbourhoods Alive! program, but still spend a disproportionate amount of time fund-raising for many of their activities. This is a genuinely serious problem that requires a solution.

On the other hand gains have been made as regards funding. Funders are increasingly in tune with the community-led approach practiced by the kinds of CBOs described above. Winnipeg's inner city benefitted relatively early in the inner-city revitalization process as the result of the Core Area Initiative (CAI), the \$100 million, tri-level (federal, provincial, civic) funding strategy implemented in 1981, and followed by the Core Area Initiative II, the Winnipeg Development Agreement, and now the Winnipeg Partnership Agreement (WPA).

Although the early tri-level funding programs were flawed by their over-emphasis on bricks and mortar and relative lack of community participation (Urban Futures Group 1990), they did fund some CBOs that were as a consequence able to take root and that are now among the community-led, inner-city leaders. The latest version, the \$75 million Winnipeg Partnership Agreement, has an urban Aboriginal and a Neighbourhoods component among the four com-

ponents, and despite some problems, these components have community advisory committees that play a serious role in determining the allocation of funds to inner-city projects.

Neighbourhoods Alive! (NA!) is a provincial program that funds inner-city neighbourhood revitalization efforts in Winnipeg, Brandon and Thompson. NA! uses a 'community-led model', described in a recent evaluation of the program as a "...partnership between the Neighbourhood Renewal Corporations (NRCs) and Neighbourhoods Alive! with the NRCs being the instrument for bringing the community together and NA! providing the tools to support a community-led approach to neighbourhood revitalization in Winnipeg, Brandon and Thompson" (Distasio et al 2005, p.5). In its very positive evaluation of the work of NA! the University of Winnipeg's Institute of Urban Studies observed that "residents in the [neighbourhoods served by the] five NRCs [three in Winnipeg's inner city, one each in Brandon and Thompson] provided 150 examples of positive change in the neighbourhoods ranging from housing improvement to beautification projects", and that "since its inception NA! has funded the renovations and construction of nearly 900 housing units", as well as producing many other benefits (Distasio et al 2005 p. 6). There can be no doubt that the partnership between neighbourhood renewal corporations and Neighbourhoods Alive!, using the community-led model, has produced *many* positive benefits in the neighbourhoods affected.

Similarly, United Way of Winnipeg has increasingly moved to the funding of community-based initiatives, and even the Winnipeg Foundation, a long-established philanthropic institution in Win-

nipeg, has experimented recently with an investment of \$500,000 per year for each of five years in a single inner-city neighbourhood, Centennial neighbourhood, enabling the emergence of the Centennial Neighbourhood Project, which uses Dufferin School as its hub. There is still not enough funding to make inner-city efforts transformative, and too much of the funding is project rather than core funding, but nevertheless gains are being made.

The contradictory aspect of the funding of community-based, inner-city initiatives is not only that so much of the funding is project-based. It is also that even to the extent that governments may fund these CBOs they are at the same time, as described earlier, offering large tax concessions to businesses and higher-income individuals, thus removing funds that might otherwise be available for funding inner-city CBOs, and are holding social assistance and minimum wages to levels below the poverty line. Thus despite the best efforts of the CBOs, their work is not yet transformative.

Finally, an important research capacity has been developed in Winnipeg's inner city, and this has contributed further to inner-city gains. The Social Planning Council of Winnipeg has long done inner-city research, and continues to publish, for example, the annual *Child Poverty Report Card*. The University of Winnipeg's Institute of Urban Studies was successful in 2001 in securing a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) grant under SSHRC's CURA (Community-University Research Alliance) program. The IUS created WIRA, the Winnipeg Inner-City Research Alliance, and although now completed, a significant and useful body of inner-city research resulted (<http://ius.uwinnipeg.ca/>

wira\_overview.html). Much of this research has a community-based character to it: WIRA established a community advisory committee; and much of the research was participatory in character, engaging the inner-city community in various ways.

Perhaps most significantly, the Manitoba branch of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives has emerged as a major producer of inner-city research, almost all of it strongly participatory in character. CCPA-Mb headed up the successful SSHRC-funded Manitoba Research Alliance on Community Economic Development in the New Economy, which produced some 40 studies, many of them with an inner-city focus, plus four books with a strong inner-city orientation (Loxley 2007; Loxley, Silver and Sexsmith 2007; Loxley forthcoming; Silver 2006a). This same research alliance, headed by the CCPA-Mb., has more recently, in 2007, secured a second, large, five-year SSHRC grant aimed at identifying transformative community-based strategies in inner-city and Aboriginal communities in Manitoba. CCPA-Mb also works closely with inner-city CBOs such as CLOUT in producing, in each of 2005, 2006 and 2007, and intended to be annually, the unique *State of the Inner City Report* (CCPA-Mb 2005; 2006; 2007). To the extent that this research is being conducted in close collaboration with inner-city community-based organizations, it adds yet another useful dimension to the large body of effective community-led development work being undertaken in Winnipeg's inner city.

The result is that Winnipeg's inner city can be seen and thought of in contradictory terms. On the one hand, the inner city is a vast and sprawling swath of the city that is home to hardship and despair,

and to drugs, gangs and violence. On the other hand, the inner city can be seen, equally legitimately, as home to a remarkable array of home-grown community-based organizations that are innovative, creative and effective, and that make Winnipeg a national leader in tackling inner-city problems.

Why does Winnipeg's inner city have such a wealth of CBOs? Loxley (2007) has set out a number of reasons, including but not only the following: the Neechi Principles are widely-held and provide a common philosophy by which inner-city CBOs operate; Winnipeg has a long tradition of progressive political activity, going back to the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike and earlier, and this has in recent years been manifest in the continued engagement of "...a fairly large number of remarkable people involved in promoting CED"; the willingness of these people to "engage nationally, with people across the country, in promoting the philosophy and practice of CED", and their "eagerness to learn from what others have done across Canada and internationally"; the "supportive academic environment" for such work that has emerged especially in the last decade; the fact that funding—although never adequate—has been considerable, in the form of the four tri-level urban development agreements mentioned above, the long-term commitment of Assiniboine Credit Union to inner-city initiatives, the increased involvement in recent years of United Way of Winnipeg and the Winnipeg Foundation in funding inner-city community development efforts, and since 2000 the effective provincial Neighbourhoods Alive! program; and the cumulative impact of the creation over time of a "strong institutional base" of community-based organizations, programs and funding mechanisms. To these

should be added the many alternative educational initiatives that have contributed to creating such skilled and community-based leadership. These include the Metis Economic Development Training Program run for the Manitoba Metis Federation, and the Budget and Financial Analyst Training Program for the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, both in the mid-1980s (Rothney 1991); the university-level inner-city Social Work and Education programs at the Winnipeg Education Centre, which have graduated a disproportionate number of the current inner-city community leadership; the University of Manitoba Access program, which has added significantly to the numbers of Aboriginal people with university degrees; highly effective alternative educational institutions that have designed effective programs tailored specifically to the needs of inner-city residents, such as the Urban Circle Training Centre; and more recently the CD/CED Training Intermediary, which offers a ladder and largely community-based approach to education in community development and community economic development. To these can now be added the University of Winnipeg's Urban and Inner-City Studies program, which adds a degree component to this ladder process. The result has been the emergence in the inner city of a layer of highly skilled and dedicated community development practitioners now occupying leadership positions in many of the CBOs. Loxley (2007) concludes by arguing that:

"There is, therefore, a strong cultural foundation of CED in the city, underpinned by a widely held view of the need for and importance of collective action to improve social well being.... It is quite pragmatic, building on what works, working with the establishment where it helps and

doing what it takes to get things done, but all generally within the framework of the Neechi principles".

Operating as a part of but in important ways as a separate 'stream' of this inner-city community revitalization process has been the work of CBOs that are specifically Aboriginal—that have been created by, and are run by and for, Aboriginal people. This is a largely unheralded success story in Winnipeg's inner city, where a specifically urban *Aboriginal* form of inner-city development has emerged in the past 30 years.

An understanding of this specifically urban Aboriginal form of inner-city development requires an appreciation of the damage that has been, and continues to be, caused to Aboriginal people by colonization. By colonization Aboriginal people typically mean the following: people of European descent seized the land on which Aboriginal people had lived for millennia; pushed Aboriginal people onto small patches of land where they were spatially marginalized from the dominant European-based culture; destroyed Aboriginal peoples' traditional economic and political systems; subjected them to the indignities of the *Indian Act* and Indian Agent; attempted to destroy their cultures and their spirituality, in some cases making illegal their spiritual practices; legally circumscribed their physical movements and their right to assemble and to act politically; and perhaps worst, seized many of their children and forcibly confined them to residential schools where communicable diseases were rampant and death rates appallingly high, where abuses of various kinds were committed, and where the purpose was to strip Aboriginal children of their cultures and their identities by removing them from their families and communi-

ties, and thus deliberately destroying normal forms of socialization (Grant 1996; Miller 1996; Milloy 1999). All of this was done for the purpose of assimilation, and was premised on the *false* grounds that Aboriginal peoples and cultures were and are inferior to European-based peoples and cultures. Unfortunately, many Aboriginal people have absorbed and internalized that false belief, and the result for them has been the erosion of their sense of identity, and their sense of self-confidence and self-esteem (Adams 1999; Hart 2002). Many have lashed out in anger, in destructive and/or self-destructive ways. Their pain is reinforced by the poverty and racism that they continue to endure to this day. Aboriginal people are to a large extent marginalized and excluded from the dominant culture and institutions of today's Canada, and the consequences are reflected in data about rates of poverty and unemployment, and incidence of incarceration in penal institutions and child and family service institutions (Findlay and Weir 2004).

Yet out of this terrible historical experience, Aboriginal people living in Winnipeg's inner city have fashioned their own, indigenous form of 'holistic' development. By 'holistic' they mean that form of inner-city development that works at the individual, community, organizational and ideological levels.

An Aboriginal form of inner-city development starts with the individual, and the importance of 'healing' from the damage caused by colonization, and by the ongoing poverty and racism that are so pervasive in Winnipeg's inner city. People cannot effectively engage in their communities if they are damaged within themselves, and so a major part of an inner-city Aboriginal form of development involves a healing process for indi-

viduals. Community-based Aboriginal organizations have emerged that are highly skilled at this work.

But healing is not only an individualistic process; in order to heal, Aboriginal people need to live in strong and healthy communities. And for Aboriginal communities to be healthy requires the development of a knowledge and an appreciation of Aboriginal cultures. There has in recent years been a flowering of Aboriginal cultural practices in Winnipeg's inner city, as elsewhere, and this serves the purpose of re-instilling in Aboriginal people the sense of pride in being Aboriginal that was and continues to be ripped from them by colonization, and by poverty and racism. Most urban Aboriginal CBOs work, to a greater or lesser extent, in a way that is consistent with or at least honours traditional Aboriginal values of sharing and community.

For individuals to heal and for communities to grow strong, organizations have to be created, and the building by Aboriginal people themselves of urban Aboriginal community-based organizations in Winnipeg's inner city over the past 30 years is one of the great, yet to date largely untold, Aboriginal success stories. The Indian and Metis Friendship Centre historically played an important and catalytic role in this process. Today it is believed that there are some 70 Aboriginal organizations—created by, and run by and for, Aboriginal people—in Winnipeg, and most of them work in Winnipeg's inner city. Many have created highly effective and unique ways of doing their work. They have been innovative and creative, and for the most part are effective and well managed. They include, among many others: the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre, a prevention-oriented family and youth services agency

that employs some 200 Aboriginal people; the Native Women's Transition Centre, that has developed sophisticated methods, rooted in traditional Aboriginal cultures, of working with women and families affected by various forms of abuse; and the Urban Circle Training Centre, an Aboriginal adult education institution that has developed a pedagogy rooted in the need for adult Aboriginal students to understand colonization, and then to engage in a process of de-colonization.

Finally, as an essential element in this holistic Aboriginal form of inner-city development, the process has to have a strong ideological character, but not ideological in the sense that this concept would traditionally be understood. The 'ideology' is the intellectual understanding, by Aboriginal people themselves, of the centrality to their life experiences of the process of colonization, and of the need to decolonize. There are in Winnipeg's inner city many Aboriginal people fully aware of what colonization is and has been, and what its impact is and has been. These people I have elsewhere called 'organic intellectuals' (Silver 2006a): they are the urban Aboriginal people able to make sense of the urban Aboriginal experience, able to imagine a different future for Aboriginal people, rooted in the need to heal from the damage of colonization, and rooted also in a new appreciation of traditional Aboriginal values, all of which is implemented via creative, community-based Aboriginal organizations.

These community-based organizations, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, have emerged in Winnipeg's inner city over a period of years in a largely unplanned fashion, with all the strengths and weaknesses associated with such an

emergence. They emerged in response to real needs in inner-city communities. They developed not for narrow, selfish reasons, but to meet the needs of others. These CBOs, for the most part, accept people and work with them starting from where people are, however difficult the circumstances. They work to develop peoples' trust, and then to develop their capacities. In some cases developing peoples' capacities means taking very small steps from a minimal base (CCPA-Mb, 2007). They operate, for the most part, on the belief that people themselves know best what they need, and that people themselves ought to be involved in developing the strategies to meet their needs. But they start not with some idealized sense of where people 'ought' to be—a middle class, suburban stereotype—but rather from where people *actually* are; in many cases damaged and diminished by years and even generations of poverty and indignity and loss of self-esteem and hope. This form of development is grounded in an understanding and appreciation of the horrific human damage so often caused by spatially concentrated racialized poverty.

It is linked to, or finds expression in, the principles of community economic development fashioned by Neechi Foods, an inner-city, Aboriginal-run, worker co-op grocery store. These principles are sufficiently widely held and practiced among inner-city CBOs that they are virtually hegemonic—that is, they have virtually become the 'common sense' way of doing things (Silver 2000, Ch. 5). This widely-held philosophy—including its particular Aboriginal variant—has become the 'glue' that connects inner-city CBOs, enabling them to partner in various permutations and combinations to respond quickly and flexibly to emerging needs. The process of building these



CBOs has been the context in which a cadre of highly-skilled, community-based leaders, many of them in and of the inner-city community, has emerged to play an important leadership role—but providing leadership that is still, for the most part, connected to the harsh daily experiences of inner-city residents. It represents, in its totality, a distinctive form of development.

### **b. Saskatoon's Core Neighbourhoods**

The demographic and socio-economic characteristics of Saskatoon's core West End neighbourhoods are strikingly similar to those of Winnipeg's inner city (see Table Two). So too are the community-based responses that have emerged, in similarly spontaneous fashion, in Saskatoon's core neighbourhoods. From a brief examination of the work of two important community-based organizations in Saskatoon's core neighbourhoods, Quint Development Corporation and CHEP, we can see that the *form* and *philosophy* of development that has begun to take shape in the past decade in Saskatoon's core neighbourhoods is strikingly similar to that which has been emerging in Winnipeg's inner city in the past three decades. Particular expressions of this approach are different; the form and philosophy are largely the same.

Quint is a community development corporation similar in many respects to the neighbourhood renewal corporations in Winnipeg's inner city. Its style of work and the philosophy that guides it are strikingly similar to what is practiced in Winnipeg's inner city, although, as is to be expected, some particular initiatives are different than what exists in Winnipeg's inner city, suggesting the benefits of the shared learning extolled by Loxley

(2007) and mentioned above. Formed in the mid-1990s, the impetus for Quint's formation arose from core neighbourhood residents, many then involved in one or other of five separate neighbourhood associations, who saw the need for a more coordinated approach to core neighbourhood revitalization. As Len Usiskin, current Manager of Quint, puts it: "Quint formed organically and grew out of a history of community residents working together over the ten years prior" (personal communication, September 25, 2007). In the mid-1990s, arising out of this history of core neighbourhood activism, several community meetings were organized and they generated an enthusiastic response, and Quint—Latin for five—was formed to promote development in the five core neighbourhoods.

Three things stand out in the story of Quint's formation. First, it emerged from the community, and neighbourhood women were disproportionately represented among its leaders. The overwhelming importance of women in Winnipeg inner-city development efforts has been noted before (Silver 2006a). Second, there was government support, especially in the person of Paul Wilkinson, then the Director of the Community Development Unit of the provincial Department of Social Services, and a long-time proponent of community economic development. Wilkinson, with others, was able to serve as a bridge between the community's efforts to establish a new community-based organization, and the support required from government. Third, when Quint moved quickly into a strategy for making housing available to low-income core neighbourhood residents, two local credit unions, St. Mary's Credit Union and FirstSask Credit Union, were convinced to provide mortgages, despite the unusual circumstances.

Unusual from a lender's point of view was not only the fact that the prospective homeowners were low-income residents of the core neighbourhoods, but also that Quint organizes the housing strategy around co-op principles. Residents apply for Quint's Neighbourhood Home Ownership Program (NHOP), and successful applicants become part of a housing co-op. Each co-op is comprised of the residents of ten different stand-alone homes; the co-op is responsible for each and all of the mortgages. The power of this model is its collective supportive character and its educational capacity. Co-op members meet on a regular basis, under the tutelage of the Quint Housing Coordinator, and in the course of running the co-op they come to learn from each other about the complexities and problems associated with being a homeowner. After five years, members of the co-op can apply for individual title to their home.

Laverne Szejvold, Housing Coordinator at Quint, describes the emotional ups and downs, what she calls the "roller coaster ride", of this learning process. "Around the middle of their [five-year] term with the co-op was when people were... coming really to the realization that this was *their* house... and one co-op member said, 'you know, it's taken me this long to not jump every time there was a knock at my door thinking that the landlord's coming to kick me out', so there's that 'click'" (Szejvold March 13, 2007).

As of 2007, 110 households have been in Quint's Neighbourhood Home Ownership Program. To date, more than 40 families have taken title to their homes, and the number is expected to grow to 50 by the end of 2007 (Szejvold March 13, 2007). The result is improved housing in the core neighbourhoods, the greater stability that is thought to come with home-

ownership as opposed to rental, and the sense of community pride that comes with tangible neighbourhood improvements (Quint, n.d.). Also, those who have been successful in getting into a Quint house via the NHOP have experienced significant, positive changes in their lives. For example, of the ten families in Quint's first co-op, seven were on social assistance when they moved in. When they took title to their homes five years later only one remained on social assistance—the others were working (Usiskin March 13, 2007). Such evidence supports the view that good quality affordable housing can become the base from which low-income, inner-city residents are able to build a better life; conversely, the lack of good quality affordable housing makes it difficult to create the household stability necessary to make other positive life changes.

In addition, the credit unions that provided the initial mortgages have generated for themselves, out of Saskatoon's core neighbourhoods, a new line of business for which not a single mortgage payment has been missed. The mutually beneficial relationship that can be developed between community-based organizations working in core/inner-city neighbourhoods, and more mainstream institutions like these credit unions, is notable and instructive.

The co-op character of the model has become a crucible for collective learning and mutual support, which then becomes the basis not only for increased residential stability but, equally importantly, improved self-confidence as skills are developed. This model, because of its collective learning capacity, appears to have significant advantages that are not available in the more individualistic, rent-to-own approach common in Winnipeg's inner city. It is a good example of the creative,

specifically tailored, alternative educational strategies that are a central aspect of this emergent form of development.

Quint has also recently moved into the provision of rental housing, with the acquisition of two apartment buildings with a total of 40 units. This step was taken because, successful though the Neighbourhood Home Ownership Program is, Quint has found that *most* core neighbourhood residents do not qualify for the ownership program. Thus rental is their next housing option. There is a large demand for good quality, affordable rental housing. This is the case nationwide (see, for example, Carter and Polevychok 2004; Hulchanski and Shapcott 2004; Hulchanski 2002; Kent 2002). It has been worsened lately by rapidly rising housing prices in Saskatoon: up by 53.7 percent in July 2007 relative to July 2006, compared to an average 13 percent nationwide increase over the same period (*National Post*, August 18, 2007, p. FP6). The average price of a home in Saskatoon in July 2007 was \$245,152, leading developers to turn rental units into condos, thus worsening an already severe rental shortage problem. For example, "In July (2007), tenants in one Saskatoon apartment building were told they had 30 days to get out because the 42 units were going to be converted into condos" (*National Post*, August 18, 2007, p. FP6).

Yet Quint's rental strategy, essential though it is, is proving challenging. Many core neighbourhood residents have needs that go well beyond the provision of affordable, adequate housing. But the funding available for rental development is not only limited, it includes only capital costs—not program funding to enable Quint to develop a more holistic approach to rental housing. As Usiskin puts it: "I

cannot over-emphasize... that the provision of affordable housing is necessary but not sufficient—there needs to be investment in social supports" as well (personal communication, September 25, 2007). Quint has attempted to form a tenants' association, and has provided a unit for childcare and another for a resource room where the tenant's association can meet and computers are available for tenants' use. But the tenants' association has been poorly attended; some tenants—or their families or friends—prove difficult; and Quint is struggling to develop a coherent and progressive policy regarding evictions, and in particular attempting to develop an 'eviction-avoidance' strategy. As Usiskin (March 13, 2007) describes it, core neighbourhood tenants may bring a particular mind-set to their rental housing, one that makes it difficult to be a progressive landlord. And the lack of funding available for the social investments needed to support a rental housing strategy in core/inner-city neighbourhoods characterized by spatially concentrated racialized poverty is a significant obstacle.

The rental strategy is an important learning process for Quint. However effective the ownership strategy may be, in the foreseeable future it will meet the needs of only a minority of core residents. Good quality affordable rental housing is an *essential* element of an overall, inner-city housing strategy, and Quint is moving along an important path in pursuing this goal. Quint is also demonstrating, in doing so, that the core neighbourhoods and the inner city are 'social laboratories' where, as a function of necessity, new and important strategies and techniques and skills are constantly being learned and developed (Diamantopoulos and Findlay 2007).

Quint has some related experience arising from their operating a house for young single men, and another for single mothers attempting to finish high school. The latter, Pleasant Hill Place, was designed to meet the needs of single mothers who it was thought lacked only stable housing to enable them to complete high school. The societal benefits of their doing so would be substantial, given the strong inverse correlation between levels of educational attainment and incidence of poverty, and the well-known adverse effects of poverty on children, as described earlier. Pleasant Hill Place offers individual bedrooms for mothers and their children, plus common eating and living spaces and on-site social and tutoring supports. The idea has been that stable housing arrangements plus the collective and supervised learning supports would enable these young women to graduate high school and move on to jobs or post-secondary education. The strategy was a *preventive* one. Unfortunately, because of the absence of other alternatives, the facility became “housing of last resort” for young women with multiple problems, a demographic for which it was not designed. This is precisely what happened with large inner city public housing projects throughout North America—they were hugely successful at first when they provided good quality affordable housing to a mixed population that included a large proportion of low-income working class households, but troubles arose as they increasingly became “housing of last resort” for those with multiple problems for whom there were no other housing options (Silver 2006b). The problem in such cases is not the public housing *per se*; the problem is the spatial concentration of multifaceted poverty with all its negative consequences (Wilson 1987).

The conclusion to be drawn is not that various forms of publicly-funded housing are a problem; on the contrary, they are a necessary part of the solution. Rather, housing *alone* will not solve deep-seated, core neighbourhood/inner-city problems. The housing has to be supplemented by social supports specifically tailored to the type of housing and the characteristics of its inhabitants. The co-op character of the home ownership strategy works exceptionally well; Pleasant Hill Place is well-designed for a *particular* demographic; and Quint’s rental housing—an important and essential component of an overall core neighbourhood housing strategy—needs more enriched supports and strategies yet to be fully worked out.

At least two important conclusions can be drawn from this brief and admittedly partial consideration of Quint’s neighbourhood-based housing work. First, Quint’s emergence was the product of a grassroots initiative combined with support from government and other, more mainstream institutions—credit unions in particular. This relationship—grassroots initiative, supported and financed by government and other institutions—is crucial for the success of this form of development. Second, Quint’s housing work exemplifies the extent to which this form of inner-city development takes place in a ‘social laboratory’. There is no formula; the work relies upon creativity and innovation guided by a common philosophy; initiatives have to be specifically tailored to the particular needs and circumstances of those who endure the harsh effects of spatially concentrated racialized poverty.

CHEP, another Saskatoon CBO, has emerged in the core around the perceived need for the provision of good quality,

affordable and accessible food. Originally established to meet the food needs of core neighbourhood children, CHEP is now a \$1 million operation with a staff of 12 and numerous volunteers, running a variety of food-related programs. Especially important is the Good Food Box program, which is effectively an alternative food delivery system for core neighbourhood residents (Archibald March 13, 2007). Particularly notable is the value system that guides CHEP's work. CHEP's philosophy is "that food is a basic human right" (CHEP 2006 *Annual Report*). Good quality food should be available to core neighbourhood residents in a fashion that affords choice and dignity. In this way CHEP differentiates itself from the food bank model, which has a more charity than community development character. CHEP purchases food in bulk, thus realizing cost savings, and delivers it to core neighbourhood depots where it is accessible to residents long since abandoned by supermarkets as part of the process of suburbanization—"...in the last 20 years the 5 Saskatoon core neighbourhoods have seen a dramatic... loss of grocery stores... with some of the communities not having a single grocery store within their boundaries" (Canadian CED-Net Newsletter, June 2007). As much as possible, food is purchased from cooperating local farmers, who thus also benefit. Core neighbourhood residents can purchase good quality food in accessible locations at affordable prices, with subsidies available where needed. Choice and dignity replace charity as the defining principles of this approach to food. CHEP continues to make good quality food available to core neighbourhood children—through partnerships with schools—and to educate around issues of food security.

Quint and CHEP together have built

development strategies around two of life's most basic necessities, food and housing, and have done so in a way consistent with the philosophy that characterizes community-based work in Winnipeg's inner city. Quint and CHEP, together with others, are now embarked upon an ambitious social enterprise project called Station 20 West, itself driven by the metaphor, familiar in Winnipeg's inner city, of the 'rusty bucket'. Station 20 West, located in the heart of the core neighbourhoods, will include a grocery store, 55 units of affordable housing, a childcare centre, a dental unit and community health clinic, a public library, offices for CBOs like Quint and CHEP, and a green/public space with a stage. These are all necessities currently relatively unavailable in Saskatoon's core neighbourhoods. As a result, money that comes into the core neighbourhoods 'leaks' out again, as it would from a 'rusty bucket', in the form of expenses paid to absentee landlords who live outside the West End, or grocery stores located outside the West End. By developing these facilities and services right in the core neighbourhoods, the dollars that would otherwise have 'leaked' out can be kept in the core, to the benefit of residents. Dollars spent at the Station 20 West grocery store, for example, can be used to hire locally, creating employment opportunities for 75–80 core neighbourhood residents and adding to the stability of the neighbourhood.

Although driven by the relatively clear and simple, and thus powerful, rusty bucket metaphor, the implementation of a project as large as Station 20 West is complex. This is a big undertaking for core neighbourhood CBOs. It involves complex legal, financial and managerial issues, and multiple partnerships. The City has been supportive in making available

and preparing for use the land on which Station 20 West will be located, and the Province recently invested \$8 million in the project. This project represents a boldness and vision that is laudatory. It will be important that the size and complexity of the project does not detract CBOs from what is distinctive about this emergent form of development—its ongoing connection with the residents of the core neighbourhoods. Community development corporations elsewhere, in the USA for example, have been known to become separated from their core constituency when they take on increasingly complex projects (Stoecker 1997; Marquez 1993).

Other CBOs have emerged in Saskatoon's core neighbourhoods, but they are fewer in number and do not yet form, in their totality, the kind of community-based infrastructure that is present in Winnipeg's inner city. Quint runs an employment development (ED) organization called Core Neighbourhoods at Work. This appears to be an effective program, "...because every year we just keep exceeding our target in terms of funders' goals" (Usiskin March 13 2007). But significantly, it is the only employment development centre physically located in the core neighbourhoods, so that however effective it may be, the overall core neighbourhood employment development network is less well-developed than in Winnipeg.

A considerable strength of the ED network in Winnipeg's inner city is the presence of several 'storefront'-type operations in easily accessible, inner-city locations, operated in a friendly, non-bureaucratic fashion such that inner-city residents feel welcome and comfortable. These sites become the easily accessible 'gateway' to employment for many inner-city residents (Loewen et al 2005).

Core Neighbourhood Youth Co-op, formed in 1996, is located in Saskatoon's inner city, and includes core neighbourhood youth ages 14 to 19 in co-op and environmental economic activities, thus creating opportunities for paid employment while teaching valuable skills, both technical and social (Canadian CED Network 2006; Tupone 2003).

The Saskatchewan Native Theatre Company is an independent Aboriginal CBO located physically in the core neighbourhoods that runs a variety of theatre programs for Aboriginal youth. These include: Circle of Voices, a skill development program for Aboriginal youth at risk; Performers' Playhouse, a five-day Aboriginal Youth Theatre Camp for those aged 8 to 15 years; a three-year professional theatre arts training program called Ensemble Theatre Arts Program; and an Outreach program that involves Aboriginal youth doing various forms of theatre productions in communities throughout Saskatchewan—as a means of developing Aboriginal peoples' capacities. It is a central part of the mandate of the SNTC "to embrace the knowledge, wisdom and teachings of our elders as the essential foundation of SNTC's programming" (<http://www.sntc.ca/mainpage.shtml>, accessed June 7, 2007). Thus SNTC, as are so many Aboriginal CBOs in Winnipeg's inner city, is rooted in an understanding of the adverse effects of colonization, and of the need to decolonize, and of the central role of the promotion of Aboriginal cultures in doing so. The work of the SNTC is transformative. An actor in the Circle of Voices production, *Crystal Clear*—a play about the damage caused by crystal meth and the hope for survival that can be found in traditional Aboriginal cultures—has said that "Being part of the Circle of Voices program has been a life

changing experience". Another young woman said: "Thanks SNTC. Living a drug and alcohol-free life was hard at first, but now I enjoy every single day. My life has totally changed" (<http://www.sntc.ca/mainpage.shtml>, accessed June 7, 2007). These results bear a striking resemblance to those achieved by Winnipeg's Urban Circle Training Centre, an Aboriginal adult education program rooted in a similar belief in the transformative powers of traditional Aboriginal teachings (Silver 2006 a).

These few examples of core neighbourhood and inner-city CBOs in Saskatoon

and Winnipeg suggest not only that a new and distinctive form of 'development' is emerging in both places, but also that those working in Saskatoon and Winnipeg have much to learn from each other. The relative shortage of funding available to core neighbourhood and inner-city CBOs has meant that the sharing of experiences and related learning across jurisdictions that could become an important part of the forward movement of this new form of development has not occurred to the extent that would be mutually advantageous. This is a problem that ought to be rectified.

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## Conclusions

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Something distinctive has happened in the past three decades in Winnipeg's inner city, and in the past decade in Saskatoon's core neighbourhoods. It has happened largely spontaneously in response to high levels of spatially concentrated racialized poverty. From the increasingly impoverished circumstances created by the flight from these core/inner-city neighbourhoods of people, businesses, jobs and government investments, there has emerged at various times and in a largely unplanned and 'bottom-up' fashion and in large part as the consequence of the efforts of inner-city people themselves, a multi-faceted variety of community-based initiatives, each in response to one aspect or other of growing poverty. These community-based organizations—and the growing body of highly-skilled people, most from the inner-city/core neighbourhoods, who created and run them—have come to constitute an essential 'infrastructure' for combating spatially concentrated racialized poverty. It represents a new and different way of thinking about, and seeking to promote, 'development'.

This form of 'development' has specific characteristics. It is indigenous: it has emerged from within core/inner-city neighbourhoods, rather than being imported from without; it has been created and is led in large part by inner-city residents themselves, as opposed to outside 'experts'; and it has been the product less of abstract theory, than of pragmatic, locally-developed responses to harsh, inner-city realities. This form of 'development' has been implemented in large part via community-based organizations which, while increasingly skilled and

sophisticated, have remained largely connected to inner-city residents. It is an asset-based approach—it seeks to identify and to build upon community strengths. It is a capacity-building approach—it seeks to support core/inner-city residents, starting from wherever they may be in their lives and taking however long it may take, in developing the capacities needed to begin to solve their own problems. These bottom-up, community-based organizations and initiatives have, in the course of doing their work, developed a common philosophy, or set of principles, that have explicitly or implicitly guided their work. In Winnipeg these are often referred to as the Neechi CED Principles, although some CBOs that have never heard of the Neechi Principles still, in effect, use a version of them. These same principles are evident in the form of development emerging in the past decade in Saskatoon's core. This common philosophy appears to have emerged largely because it is the most practical way of responding to these difficult challenges, although partly as well because of the cross-fertilization of ideas—for example, Len Usiskin, Manager of Quint, is a former graduate student of John Loxley at the University of Manitoba, and would have been exposed to the Neechi Principles, the 'rusty bucket' metaphor and CED more generally as it has emerged in Winnipeg's inner city and in much of Loxley's work. To the extent that this is the case, it is a good example of the merits of an increased degree of cross-jurisdictional learning, in both directions, as mentioned above. This philosophy is in both cities rooted in the belief that the re-building of core/inner-city neighbourhoods must be effected



from within, and must build on the strengths and assets that are present in all neighbourhoods, however impoverished they may be, and must engage low-income people themselves to work toward solving their own problems in ways of their own choosing.

This distinctive form of development is tailored to the specific, non-suburban realities of spatially concentrated racialized poverty. Its emergence has been sufficiently creative and innovative that it seems legitimate to think of the abandoned core/inner-city neighbourhoods as 'social laboratories', or continuous learning environments in which inner-city people have struggled and continue to struggle to learn how to solve practical problems, because few if any satisfactory formulas for doing so exist. In the case of Saskatoon's core neighbourhoods, Diamantopoulos and Findlay (2007 p.5) argue that in the past decade a "...new alternative logic of development took root in organizational practice", and that "...lead organizations, like the Quint Development Corporation, emerged with decisively new mandates and innovative organizational forms". They argue further that, as in Winnipeg's inner city, "this movement for change has transformed the Core into a kind of popular social laboratory", with the result that "it has been a decade marked by adaptation and innovation". The result is that a community-based infrastructure is now, to a greater or lesser extent, in place in Winnipeg's inner city, and is emerging in Saskatoon's core neighbourhoods, rooted in a widely-held philosophy and driving an alternative and impressive form of 'development'.

Despite this remarkable phenomenon, the magnitude of the problem as a whole continues to overwhelm the efforts of

this community-based infrastructure. For every step taken forward as the result of this community-based approach, another is taken backward as the consequence of the broad structural forces that have created and continue to fuel the problems. It is a central argument of this paper that the community-based infrastructure and distinctive form of development that have emerged in these inner cities are a necessary but not sufficient condition for overcoming the spatially concentrated racialized poverty of inner-city/core neighbourhoods. What else is needed?

First, more of the same is needed. This new form of development needs to be persisted in consistently over time. The problems of spatially concentrated racialized poverty have developed over many decades; they are now deeply entrenched, multifaceted and complex; and they cannot be solved quickly. Moreover, the indigenous form of development described in this paper logically requires time. It builds upon indigenous resources, local strengths, the capacities of core/inner-city people themselves. These capacities are limited—that is a part of the problem—and take time to nurture. Yet they *must* be nurtured, because a defining characteristic of this form of development is that inner-city/core neighbourhood people themselves must be provided the opportunities and supports to be able to take charge of their own lives, realize their own human potential, and re-build their own communities. There are no quick fixes with this approach. It is built cumulatively, as people slowly develop their confidence and skills, and it requires persistence over time, especially for those many in need of healing from the damage of colonization and persistent poverty and racism. Thus it is accurate to say that, however creative this indigenous form of development may be,

it has not yet fully matured, and can only do so with time, and with the patience and persistence that inner-city practitioners, themselves knowledgeable about the harsh realities of inner-city poverty, bring to the work.

Second, a new and expanded role by the state is needed. While governments in both provinces have invested in this new form of development, they have for the most part *responded*, in a partial, ad hoc and too-limited fashion, to the requests of community-based organizations for funding. And the instability of the funding, so much of which is project-based, is inconsistent with the depth and complexity of the problems, and the need therefore for patient, long-term and strategic solutions. At no point do governments appear to have thought about these investments in a systemic and strategic fashion. At no point—Manitoba’s Neighbourhoods Alive! is a notable exception; Saskatoon’s Station 20 West may also be—have governments opted to work hand-in-hand with those who comprise this community-based infrastructure to fashion a more coordinated, strategic and transformative approach to the spatially concentrated racialized poverty of these neighbourhoods. A more deliberate and strategic approach is needed. To their credit, NDP governments in Saskatchewan and especially Manitoba have moved in a relatively positive direction in funding and otherwise supporting community-based, core/inner-city efforts. Nevertheless, such support comes generally in the form of disconnected and ad hoc responses to requests from individual CBOs. While this enables governments to say that they support these community-based efforts, it is not a coherent and strategic approach to solving the problem of spatially concentrated racialized poverty. Govern-

ments do not have a *strategy* for working with the sophisticated community-based infrastructure that has emerged spontaneously in Winnipeg’s inner city and Saskatoon’s core neighbourhoods to transform these neighbourhoods into vibrant, healthy communities in which people can realize their full human potential. Why has this not happened?

The explanation is, at least in part, that governments have to want to solve a problem, and have to believe that the problem is capable of being solved, if they are to act (Stone, Henig, Jones and Pierannunzi 2001). There is no evidence of this in Saskatoon nor in Winnipeg, nor more generally in Canada. Across Canada poverty levels, although fluctuating with economic cycles, have remained persistently and astonishingly high—at 16 percent, or almost one in six Canadians in 1980, still at 16 percent in 2003 (Silver 2007, pp. 182-183.). Food banks, for much of the post-war period an unknown and even unthinkable phenomenon in Canada, emerged in the early 1980s as a consequence of the severe economic recession of that time, and the associated erosion of the social safety net (Riches 1986). By 1989, 378,000 Canadians were using food banks; in March 2006, 753,458 people in Canada used food banks (Canadian Association of Food Banks 2006)—more than the entire population of Winnipeg and far more than the population of Saskatoon. Canadians now take the existence of food banks for granted, as a ‘natural’ part of our social surroundings. It seems that there has emerged in Canada a belief in the inevitability, the ‘natural-ness’, of food banks, and of the deep and persistent poverty which is their cause. In the case of Saskatoon, for example, it has recently been argued that “poverty came to be seen as the natural and inevitable outcome of

poor choices and personal shortcomings, well beyond the reach of reasonable public policy. Action against poverty now appeared futile...". (Diamantopoulos and Findlay 2007, p. 9).

This problem is worsened by the governance strategies adopted by NDP governments in both provinces. A priority is placed on meeting the demands of business and higher-income individuals—those who have traditionally opposed NDP governments—in order to mute their opposition. Relatively little is left—certainly not enough is left—to combat spatially concentrated racialized poverty, nor is doing so a priority. The logic of the governance strategy makes a deliberate and strategic anti-poverty strategy an after-thought. Such a strategy, pursued deliberately and strategically and persistently over time, in concert with the community-based infrastructure and the distinctive form of development that has emerged in these inner-city/core neighbourhoods, would have cumulative and, eventually, dramatic results. Spatially concentrated racialized poverty could be defeated. But it requires governments choosing to do so, and given the opposition that doing so would provoke, this would take courage.

We are left in a contradictory situation. A remarkable community-based infra-

structure is in place, capable, given an expanded and modified role played by governments, of being the means of delivering a dramatic reduction in core/inner-city poverty over a 20 year period. It represents a new and distinctive form of development. The benefits of doing so would be immense, and not just for those living in such neighbourhoods. Yet it is not at all clear that governments are prepared to make such changes. Even ostensibly social democratic governments, in office in Manitoba and Saskatchewan for close to a decade (Manitoba) and more (Saskatchewan), have taken, at best, only minimal steps in the necessary direction, concentrating instead on meeting the financial demands of those with more political power and higher incomes. This approach has been successful in securing, until recently in Saskatchewan, frequent re-election; the cost has been a deepening and worsening of this particular form of poverty in Winnipeg's inner city and Saskatoon's core neighbourhoods. The community-based infrastructure making possible a long-term solution to this poverty is in place; some gains have been made as the result of ad hoc forms of government support; an expanded and revised role by governments would trigger the solution if persisted in over time; yet governments, and the populations that elect them, have so far chosen not to take the necessary steps.

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