



Fast

FACTS

CANADIAN CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES - MANITOBA

December 16, 2014

Community, Research and Social Change: the 10th annual State of the Inner City Report

The State of the Inner City Report is an annual research collaboration between the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives Manitoba and community organizations based in the inner city of Winnipeg. This year marks its tenth year anniversary. Since the beginning, the State of the Inner City Reports have celebrated community-based development and advanced progressive policy alternatives put forward by those working and living directly in the community.

Winnipeg's inner city has a long history of struggle with poverty and a comprehensive, geographically focused response emerged. A series of multi-year tripartite government agreements in the inner city stimulated creative and successful community-based development projects. The State of the Inner City Report series emerged from an impetus to highlight the achievements of community-based development.

"Its more than a collection of stories," by one of the founders of the State of the Inner City Report, Shauna MacKinnon, highlights the objectives and accomplishments of the Report series. The Report celebrates community-based development efforts to improve quality of life in the inner city. The Report itself is informed by community development philosophy and documents the strengths of the inner city while building

local research capacity. At the same time, the State of the Inner City Report identifies service gaps and policy shortcomings and provides policy alternatives identified by people with experience in the neighbourhood.

The second paper in this year's Report advances these objectives based on a research priority identified by inner city leaders. "It takes a community to support a family", is about the role of community-based organizations (CBOs) in supporting families involved in the child welfare system and struggling with poverty. The number of children in care in Manitoba continues to rise, and Aboriginal children are severely over-represented. The root causes are complex - families struggle with inter-generational trauma caused by the impact of colonization along with the retreat of the social welfare state, lack of social housing and low income.

The Phoenix Sinclair Inquiry, Achieving the Best for All Our Children, released a year ago highlights the importance of community-based supports for child and family health and well-being. The approach used by CBOs can be described as anti-oppressive; they see the problems faced by families as

there is an alternative.

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

phone

(204) 927-3200

email

ccpamb@policyalternatives.ca

website

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

blog

www.policyfix.ca

twitter

@ccpamb



continued..

rooted in the socio-political structure of society, and as a result of lack of access to power and resources. Therefore families must be at the centre, leading their healing process, surrounded by wrap-around supports and a strong social safety net.

Given the high proportion of Aboriginal children in care, it follows logically that the Aboriginal community should be given resources to respond to the needs of children and families. However, many CBOs feel that the devolution of the child welfare system has not yet led to Aboriginal self-determination. The prevailing paradigm of the child welfare system is one of protection, which focuses on risks to children and individual deficits of families. CBOs identify that an alternative approach that builds on family strengths and assets is needed and CBOs are well placed to provide holistic prevention services based on relationships of trust supporting families to build natural, peer support networks.

Through interviews with community leaders, the paper recommends that on top of implementing the recommendations of *The Legacy of Phoenix Sinclair: Achieving the Best for All Our Children*, a number of additional efforts should be employed to build partnerships, understanding and supports for children, youth and families. These efforts must involve regular communication and meaningful collaboration between CBOs, government, child welfare authorities and child welfare agencies. Intermediary organizations like the CFS Community Network should be adequately funded to support direct service CBOs interacting with the child welfare system. Anti-oppressive training should be provided to all who work with vulnerable families. Families need access to social housing to create stability and reduce the stress of making ends meet. After ten years of research with members of the inner city community, we have

been honoured to witness the benefits of community-led development. We are grateful to our many community partners on this journey with us and acknowledge it is our collective strength and perseverance in the face of poverty and colonization that keeps us motivated to do research for positive social change.

Molly McCracken is the director of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives – Manitoba

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

phone
(204) 927-3200

email
ccpamb@policyalternatives.ca

website
www.policyalternatives.ca/
manitoba

blog
www.policyfix.ca

twitter
@ccpamb



Fast Facts are produced and distributed free via email. They can be reproduced as an OpEd or opinion piece without obtaining further permission, provided they are not edited, and full credit is given to both the author and the source, CCPA-MB. Please contact CCPA-MB today to begin your free subscription.