

WPRC

WINNIPEG POVERTY REDUCTION COUNCIL

A City Where Everyone Belongs



2011

Report to the Community

WPRC MISSION

The mission of the Winnipeg Poverty Reduction Council is to help significantly reduce poverty in Winnipeg in hopes of creating

“A City Where Everyone Belongs”.

The photos in our report are from two events we were proud to be a part of:

- 1) The first You Can Do It Awards that we presented with our partners on June 23, 2011 at R.B. Russell School.
- 2) The Poverty Reduction Partnership Forum that we delivered with partners on Nov. 4-5, 2010.



Report to the Community Spring 2011

Poverty is a serious issue because it affects the quality of life and prospects of children, families, and neighbourhoods. In addition, poverty is also a root cause of other issues including youth dropping out of school, joblessness, crime and violence, poor physical and mental health, and neighbourhood decline.

In 2007 when the Winnipeg Poverty Reduction Council was formed, organizations in all sectors of our community were dealing with the effects of poverty or trying to address poverty in some way. Despite their efforts, it was clear that no single organization or sector could successfully address poverty on its own. United Way of Winnipeg recognized that a community-wide, integrated, and cross-sectoral approach was required to reduce poverty and asked a group of community leaders from the public, private, and not-for-profit sectors to establish the Winnipeg Poverty Reduction Council (WPRC).

Since then, the WPRC has been working to advance its mission to help reduce poverty significantly in Winnipeg in the hope of creating A City Where Everyone Belongs. In this, our first report to the community, the WPRC is pleased to explain our role and highlight some of our early achievements.

The WPRC's Role

The WPRC engages leaders from all sectors in establishing a comprehensive, sustained effort to reduce poverty. The WPRC understands that Winnipeg already has many groups and organizations working to reduce poverty and we do not intend to duplicate their work. Instead, we see our role as collaborating with these groups and organizations and demonstrating leadership in the following areas:

- taking a fresh and broad look at the issue of poverty in our city,
- assessing the strengths and challenges of existing approaches,
- creating and implementing a plan to build existing strategies to scale, fill gaps in approaches, and leverage resources, commitment, and action from all sectors,
- using influence to change attitudes about poverty and reduce the stigma of poverty,
- setting goals and measuring results, and
- engaging and reporting to the community.

Our Framework for Action

The WPRC devoted its first year to learning about poverty in Winnipeg. We commissioned research, met with community organizations and groups that work to reduce poverty, learned about the experiences of poverty reduction groups in other Canadian cities, and considered the insights gained by people who have studied poverty and social policy for many years. We also consulted with a group of advisors who have lived experience with poverty.

This initial research led to development of a framework for action that the council adopted in December 2008. The framework identifies eight priorities to focus the WPRC during its first years:

1. **Early childhood development** – ensuring that our youngest children get the best possible start in life,
2. **Early education** – providing support for elementary and middle schools in low-income, high-risk neighbourhoods,
3. **Post-secondary education** – improving post-secondary educational opportunities for low-income youth,
4. **Social infrastructure** – improving and enriching recreational and cultural opportunities for children and youth living in low-income, high-risk neighbourhoods,
5. **Asset building and wealth creation initiatives** – facilitating home ownership, supporting savings for adult learning and children's education, and encouraging personal savings for retirement income,
6. **Affordable housing** – supporting new housing initiatives and the maintenance of existing housing,
7. **Disability income and quality of life benefits** – providing a minimum standard of living and improved quality of life for people with mental and physical disabilities, and
8. **Public education and engagement** – reducing the stigmatization and discrimination associated with living in poverty and engaging Winnipeggers in the work of the WPRC to create A City Where Everyone Belongs.

Clearly, the framework for action is ambitious. It serves as a long-term guide that will evolve as the WPRC gains experience and as circumstances in Winnipeg change.

To get started implementing the framework, the WPRC formed working groups to focus on the first five priorities relating to childhood development, early and post-secondary education, social infrastructure, and asset building. Recently we formed another group to begin work on the sixth priority, affordable housing.

Early Achievements

The working groups have confirmed the WPRC's role as a hub that connects independent groups that are already working to address poverty and helps to leverage their work to create innovative, successful approaches to poverty reduction. Some of our early achievements are highlighted below.

Business-education partnerships: During a meeting with principals and staff from inner city schools, the WPRC learned about a successful partnership between Norquay School and Lafarge Canada Inc. whereby Lafarge and its employees contribute their time, money, resources and expertise to support school projects and mentor students. The principals were interested in forming similar partnerships for their own schools.

In consultation with the principals and in partnership with the Winnipeg School Division, the WPRC organized an information session on business-education partnerships that engaged forty-five people from eleven businesses and crown corporations/agencies, three foundations, several community organizations, and five inner city schools. The information session generated such a positive response that the WPRC was able to secure funding for a coordinator who will soon start working with schools and businesses to formalize business-education partnerships starting with schools in the inner city.

You Can Do It Awards: The WPRC partnered with the Winnipeg School Division, Manitoba Advanced Education, and The Winnipeg Foundation to establish the You Can Do It Awards Program in six inner city schools: Children of the Earth, David Livingstone, Niji Mahkwa, Norquay, R.B. Russell, and William Whyte. Together the schools have over 1,000 students in grades 5 to 12 and each student is eligible to participate in the program.

School staff will select students to receive awards based on specific criteria related to future promise and students' demonstrated potential to be nurtured and supported toward post-secondary education and/or training.

In June 2011, more than 200 students received a \$1,000 award that is payable upon entrance to any college or university in Manitoba and can be used for tuition and related costs such as student fees and books. A student who receives a reward each year from grade 5 to 12 will accumulate \$8,000 toward a post-secondary education.

Manitoba Advanced Education and The Winnipeg Foundation have committed a total of \$944,000 over five years to finance two-thirds of the awards. The WPRC secured private funding to contribute to the 2011 awards. We are now seeking private donors to contribute \$94,400 toward awards in 2012 and subsequent years.

Asset Building Bursary: The WPRC partnered with Red River College and the Manitoba Scholarship and Bursary Incentive Program to develop a pilot project that will involve ten low-income individuals in saving \$1,000 toward an education at Red River. These savings will earn a \$5,000 match from the private sector and MSBI. This program will be ready to launch when another \$5,000 is secured from private and corporate donors.

Employer-based Asset Building: The WPRC has worked with SEED Winnipeg to research and develop an employer-based asset building program that is based on successful programs in the United States. Participating employers will offer low-income employees an opportunity to receive money-management training, establish a savings goal, and open a savings account. When an employee reaches the savings goal, the employer will provide a matching contribution (usually on a three to one basis), and the employee will use the total amount for a specified purpose such as furnishings, home improvements, or tuition.

The program is ready to be tested and the WPRC is looking for employers to host and sponsor the pilot.

Early Achievements

Government initiatives: The WPRC has encouraged government to remove policy barriers that make it difficult for individuals and families to transition out of poverty and to ensure that government programs provide the supports people need to transition out of poverty. The provincial government's Manitoba Saves Program and ALL Aboard Poverty Reduction Strategy are positive steps toward these objectives.

Public education and engagement: The framework for action's eighth priority calls on the WPRC to focus on “reducing the stigmatization and discrimination associated with living in poverty and engaging Winnipeggers in the work of the WPRC”. While there is much more work required to advance this priority, the WPRC has made some progress.

Speak Up Winnipeg: In 2009, the WPRC worked with United Way of Winnipeg and Make Poverty History Manitoba to host a special roundtable on poverty that was part of the Speak Up Winnipeg planning process that the City of Winnipeg used to develop the new Plan Winnipeg. The roundtable attracted seventy participants – more than any of the other Speak Up Winnipeg roundtables.

2010 Poverty Reduction Partnership Forum: In November 2010, the WPRC held a 1½-day forum to engage Winnipeggers in poverty reduction and inspire them to take action to reduce poverty. Forum participants learned about positive poverty reduction initiatives in Winnipeg, identified gaps in the initiatives, and considered partnerships and cross-sectoral initiatives to fill the gaps.

The forum attracted over 200 people including community leaders from all sectors and people with lived experience of poverty. Forum participants reported that they not only learned about some of the work being done to reduce poverty in Winnipeg but also appreciated the opportunity to network, build a sense of community, and share ideas.

This networking has already resulted in some positive outcomes. Following the forum, individuals donated over \$11,000 to The Winnipeg Foundation for the You Can Do It Awards, RBC contributed \$10,000 to the North End Hockey Program, and the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce began looking for ways to advance business-education partnerships in schools across the city.

The Poverty Reduction Partnership Forum affirmed the WPRC's role as a leader and demonstrated our ability to engage Winnipeggers from all sectors in learning about and taking action to reduce poverty in our city.

Report to the Community: This report to the community is our first and more will follow when we have progress to report, information to share about promising poverty reduction initiatives, and opportunities for Winnipeggers to become involved in making Winnipeg A City Where Everyone Belongs.

Looking Ahead

The Winnipeg Poverty Reduction Council is successfully convening groups and working with all sectors. We are also educating various stakeholders about existing initiatives and issues, influencing decision-makers, and leveraging resources for poverty reduction. In doing this work over the past few years we have gained experience, increased our understanding, and confirmed that poverty is a complex issue with no single, simple solution.

The council continues to see its role as exploring new and existing initiatives, helping these initiatives grow or sustain themselves, and contributing to a big-picture vision for the city. Over the coming months we will be focusing on the big-picture vision and looking for ways to engage more individuals, groups, and organizations in working together in a variety of ways to reduce poverty significantly in our city.

As the WPRC's co-chairs, we are proud to sign this report and to thank the WPRC's current and former members, volunteers, funders, sponsors, and staff. We also thank the many organizations – particularly United Way – that helped the WPRC become established and continue to support our work.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Charles Loewen'.

Charles Loewen, co-chair



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Strini Reddy'.

Strini Reddy, co-chair

WPRC Members and Volunteers

The WPRC's members and volunteers contribute a range of knowledge and experience from government, education, health, business, and not-for-profit organizations.

Council members

Charles Loewen, co-chair (business background)
Strini Reddy, co-chair (education and non-profit background)
Bill Balan - University of Winnipeg
Jan Belanger - Great-West Life
Denis Bracken - University of Manitoba
Jim Carr founding co-chair - Business Council of Manitoba
Cindy Coker, founding co-chair - SEED Winnipeg
Grant Doak - Province of Manitoba
Cynthia Foreman - Government of Canada, Manitoba Federal Council
Stephanie Forsyth – Red River College
Margo Goodhand - Winnipeg Free Press
Heather Grant-Jury – United Food and Commercial Workers Training Centre
Wayne Helgason - Social Planning Council of Winnipeg
Edward Kennedy - The North West Company
Lambros Kyriakakos - African Communities of Manitoba Inc (ACOMI)
Crystal Laborero – Tribal Wi-Chi-Way-Win Capital Corp.
Susan Lewis - United Way of Winnipeg
Audrey McIlraith – Province of Manitoba
David Northcott - Winnipeg Harvest
Brian Postl - University of Manitoba (Faculty of Medicine)
Kevin Rebeck - Manitoba Federation of Labour
Diane Roussin - Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre
Clive Wightman - City of Winnipeg
Arlene Wilgosh - Winnipeg Regional Health Authority (WRHA)

WPRC Steering Committee

Charles Loewen, co-chair (business background)
Strini Reddy, co-chair (education and non-profit background)
Susan Lewis - United Way of Winnipeg

Asset Building Working Group

Cynthia Foreman, co-chair - Government of Canada, Manitoba Federal Council
Kevin Rebeck, co-chair - Manitoba Federation of Labour
Jenn Bogoch - community representative
Cindy Coker - SEED Winnipeg
Grant Doak - Province of Manitoba
Susan Lewis - United Way of Winnipeg
David Northcott - Winnipeg Harvest



Community Advisors

- Shayla Elizabeth
- Ida Flett
- Lonny Fraser
- Greta Hanslip
- Rhoda Mamakeesic
- Tiffany Mamakeesic
- Valerie Wolbert

Housing Task Force

- Margo Goodhand, chair - Winnipeg Free Press
- Jenn Bogoch - community representative
- Cindy Coker - SEED Winnipeg
- Cynthia Foreman - Government of Canada,
Manitoba Federal Council
- Stephanie Forsyth – Red River College
- Susan Lewis - United Way of Winnipeg
- Charles Loewen - business background
- David Northcott - Winnipeg Harvest
- Arlene Wilgosh - Winnipeg Regional Health Authority

Poverty Reduction Partnership Forum Planning Committee

- Jan Belanger - Great-West Life
- Denis Bracken - University of Manitoba
- Jim Carr - Business Council of Manitoba
- Wayne Helgason - Social Planning Council of Winnipeg
- Charles Loewen - business background
- Audrey McIlraith – Province of Manitoba
- David Northcott - Winnipeg Harvest
- Brian Postl - University of Manitoba (Faculty of Medicine)

Recreation and Culture Working Group

- Wayne Helgason, co-chair - Social Planning Council of Winnipeg
- Jan Schmalenberg - co-chair, Winnipeg Regional Health Authority
- Abdi Ahmed - Immigrant and Refugee Community
Organization of Manitoba
- Michael Champagne - Ndinawemaaganag Endaawaad
- Kristine Hayward - Winnipeg In Motion
- Jeff Hnatiuk - Sport Manitoba Inc.
- Damon Johnston - Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg
- Mike Owen - Boys and Girls Clubs of Winnipeg
- Brian Postl - University of Manitoba (Faculty of Medicine)
- Dan Prokopchuk - City of Winnipeg
- Louise Simbandumwe - SEED Winnipeg

WPRC Members and Volunteers

Strengthening the Core Working Group (formerly Early Childhood and Education)

Bill Balan, co-chair - University of Winnipeg
Denis Bracken, co-chair - University of Manitoba
Dave Angus - Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce
Jodene Baccus - University of Winnipeg
Karen Beck - City of Winnipeg
Jim Carr - Business Council of Manitoba
Pauline Clarke - Winnipeg School Division
Darrell Cole - Career Trek
Brian Cyncora - Winnipeg Police Service
Marti Ford - Red River College of Applied Arts, Science and Technology
Rick Frost - The Winnipeg Foundation
Brent Guinn - Winnipeg School Division
Sande Harlos - Winnipeg Regional Health Authority
Kimberly Huebner - Province of Manitoba
Deepak Joshi - City of Winnipeg
Joe Kronstal - Service Canada
Lambros Kyriakakos - African Communities of Manitoba Inc.
Kathy Mallett - CEDA (Community Education Development Association)
Tina Moody - Healthy Child Manitoba
Sonia Prevost-Derbecker –Province of Manitoba
Jennifer Rattray - University of Winnipeg
Strini Reddy - education and non-profit background
Dr. Noralou P. Roos - University of Manitoba
Jan Sanderson - Healthy Child Manitoba
Rob Santos - Healthy Child Manitoba
Karrienne Scott - Meyers Norris Penny
Cory Shangreaux - Investors Group
Julie Smerchanski - Winnipeg School Division
Louis Sorin - Winnipeg Regional Health Authority
Harvey Stevens - Healthy Child Manitoba
Rhonda Taylor - Frontier College
Holly Toupin -Royal Bank of Canada
Connie Walker - United Way of Winnipeg
Clive Wightman - City of Winnipeg
Joanne Zuk - Province of Manitoba



WPRC Funders and Sponsors

Funders

City of Winnipeg
Government of Canada
Government of Manitoba
United Way Winnipeg
J.W. McConnell Family Foundation
(Vibrant Communities)

Sponsors of the 2011 Partnership Forum

Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg
Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs
Great-West Life
Investor's Group
Manitoba Government Employees Union
Manitoba Federation of Labour
Royal Bank of Canada
Social Planning Council of Winnipeg
The North West Company
The Winnipeg Foundation
United Food and Commercial Workers
United Way Winnipeg
The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce
Winnipeg Regional Health Authority
AMR Planning and Consulting





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A City Where Everyone Belongs

About WPRC

As we are all aware, many of Winnipeg's most challenging social issues are rooted in poverty. To answer this challenge, a group of community leaders from across the city formed the Winnipeg Poverty Reduction Council (WPRC) in 2007.

The WPRC was established based on the understanding that no single group or organization can successfully address poverty on its own. The time has come for action and real change. The WPRC is committed to addressing long term solutions to poverty through community-wide, integrated, and cross-sectoral initiatives.

Contact WPRC

For more information about WPRC, please visit our website at www.wprc.ca.

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