

CHAPTER 11

Complex Poverty and Home-grown Solutions in Two Prairie Cities

Jim Silver

The kind of real poverty that once existed in Canada (and that can be found elsewhere in the world today) has been largely defeated.

Winnipeg Free Press, lead editorial, September 15, 2007

A central argument of this chapter is that the above claim is false. What the *Free Press* calls “real poverty” exists in western Canadian cities like Winnipeg and Saskatoon. It takes a particular form—spatially concentrated racialized poverty—that is about much more than a shortage of income and that is deeply entrenched and resistant to quick or easy solutions. This chapter will argue, secondly, that despite the complexity and tenacity of this form of poverty, out of its midst are emerging community-based solutions that are innovative and effective, that embody a ‘passion for action’, and that have significant potential for overcoming poverty.

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These community-based solutions will be described, with examples. Third, the chapter will argue that in order for these community-based solutions to become truly transformative in communities plagued by spatially concentrated racialized poverty, additional policy measures are needed. The chapter concludes by offering some thoughts on what these might be.

That high rates of poverty and of racism and the ongoing impact of colonization correlate strongly with matters related to child welfare has been well documented. Ross and Roberts (1999, p. 3) examined the correlation between family income and 27 different elements of child development, and found that for each of the 27 variables, “children living in families with lower incomes are found to be at a greater risk of experiencing negative outcomes and poor living conditions than those in higher-income families.” In a similar study, focused on children and youth in Saskatchewan, Schissel (1997, p. 1) found that “... living in poverty reduces the emotional well-being of children and youth, places their physical and emotional health at risk, and impairs their satisfaction with and success in the educational system.” With respect to educational outcomes, the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy (Brownell et al., 2004) found that 81 percent of students in high socio-economic neighbourhoods in Winnipeg graduated from grade 12, while 37 percent of students in low socio-economic neighbourhoods graduated from grade 12, and only 22 percent of students from the north end of Winnipeg’s inner city—where poverty and the city’s Aboriginal population are particularly concentrated—graduated from grade 12. Low educational attainment, in turn, correlates strongly with future poverty, thus feeding a vicious cycle from which children suffer in a variety of ways. Studies of child abuse, for example, have found a strong correlation between poverty and inadequate housing, and reported incidence of child abuse and neglect (Trocmé, Fallon, MacLaurin & Neves, 2005), and the combination of poverty, racism and the ongoing impact of colonization produces similar outcomes for Aboriginal children (Blackstock & Trocmé, 2005). Poverty and racism, and community-based strategies for their alleviation (Blackstock and Trocmé, 2005), are central concerns for those working in child welfare.

A PARTICULARLY DAMAGING FORM OF POVERTY

While it will be a central feature of the argument of this chapter that the poverty that is characteristic of Prairie cities is about much more than

a shortage of income, nevertheless the shortage of income is an important aspect of poverty, and in many respects it has been getting worse. A study of poverty in Winnipeg's inner city using 1996 Census of Canada data found, for example, that just over 50 percent of households had incomes below the Statistics Canada Low-Income Cut Off (LICO), and that just over 80 percent of Aboriginal households, an astonishing four in every five of such households, had incomes below the LICO, and that in some inner-city school catchment areas more than 80 percent of parents with school-age children had incomes below the LICO (Lezubski, Silver, & Black, 2000, pp. 38-40). The study found further that a very high proportion of those with incomes below the LICO were *far* below the LICO. That continues to be the case. The gap between the average incomes of those below the LICO, and the LICO itself, was \$10,000 in Manitoba and \$8,100 in Saskatchewan in 2004 (Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, 2006). More recently, social assistance rates have plummeted far below the LICO. In 2005 single employable recipients of social assistance received an amount equivalent to 25 percent of the LICO in Manitoba, and 37 percent of the LICO in Saskatchewan; a couple with two children on social assistance received 53 percent and 58 percent of the LICO in Manitoba and Saskatchewan respectively (National Council of Welfare, 2006). Further, welfare incomes declined in real terms between 1989 and 2005 in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and reached historic lows in Manitoba in the period 2000-2005 (National Council of Welfare, 2006), while in Saskatchewan the shift to Transitional Employment Assistance (TEA) for most social assistance recipients has produced even lower levels of support than is provided by social assistance (Hunter & Donovan, 2005). Many people in Prairie cities face a shortage of income. In a market-based economy this is a *huge* problem; in a wealthy country like Canada it is unconscionable.

But we need to go beyond such data to understand the complex form of poverty—the spatially concentrated racialized poverty—that now prevails in Prairie cities, as exemplified by the cases of Winnipeg and Saskatoon.

This poverty is spatially concentrated in that certain neighbourhoods, typically inner-city neighbourhoods, have a particularly high concentration of low-income households. For example, in Saskatoon's core neighbourhoods in 2001, 21 percent of families had incomes below \$20,000, compared to 9 percent for Saskatoon as a whole; the average

income was \$32,475 compared to \$62,451 for Saskatoon as a whole; 21 percent of families were one-parent families, compared to 11 percent for Saskatoon as a whole; and 13 percent of individuals had less than grade 9, compared to 6 percent for Saskatoon as a whole. The same pattern prevailed in Winnipeg's inner city: 24 percent had incomes below \$20,000, compared to almost 15 percent for Winnipeg as a whole; the average income was \$42,477 compared to \$63,657 for Winnipeg as a whole; 30 percent of families were lone-parent families compared to 19 percent for Winnipeg as a whole; and just over 12 percent of individuals had less than grade 9, compared to almost 8 percent for Winnipeg as a whole (Silver, 2008). These data suggest that poverty and related conditions are spatially concentrated. While the degree of concentration is not as great as in many American urban centres, the spatial concentration of poverty has been found to produce a host of particularly negative effects (Wilson, 1987).

A high degree of residential mobility may add to these negative effects. There is a great deal of mobility within the urban Aboriginal population, both back and forth between urban and rural communities (Clatworthy, 2000, 1996), and within urban settings (Skelton, 2002). High rates of residential mobility have been found in inner-city neighbourhoods in Winnipeg. A 1995 study by Manitoba Health (1995), for example, found that:

Migrancy (frequent movers) is a particular problem for inner city children In a 1992 review of inner city schools, the lowest migrancy rate (proportion of children moving per year in the school population) was 40.6 percent. The highest rate was 84.7 percent Some children have been in 13 schools by 11 years of age In a nine-month period in 1992/93, there were 3,058 single-parent family moves out of a possible 3,553. (pp. 107-108)

In addition, this spatially concentrated poverty is racialized poverty in that a high proportion of those who are poor are Aboriginal. In Saskatoon's core neighbourhoods almost 26 percent of the population self-identify as Aboriginal, compared to almost 10 percent in Saskatoon as a whole, while in Winnipeg the comparative percentages are just over 19 percent compared to just over 8 percent (Silver, 2008). A 2005

evaluation of five Winnipeg inner-city neighbourhoods found that Aboriginal people comprised from 27.5 to 54.9 percent of the population, and that Aboriginal people plus visible minorities comprised a majority in four of the five inner-city neighbourhoods, from 51.5 percent to 66 percent, and were 42.5 percent in the fifth neighbourhood (Distasio, Dudley, Johnson, & Sargent, 2005, p. 23). Much the same is the case in Saskatoon's core neighbourhoods. In Pleasant Hill and Riversdale, two of the five core neighbourhoods, 48.4 percent and 43.5 percent of the population respectively were Aboriginal (Anderson, 2005, pp. 15, 19).

The result is that Prairie cities like Winnipeg and Saskatoon are segregated. This is something rarely talked about openly, rarely acknowledged, and perhaps not recognized by many. These cities are, however, both spatially and socially segregated. People can live their entire lives in the suburbs and rarely see Aboriginal people. Many non-Aboriginal people will never have socialized with Aboriginal people; most Aboriginal people will never have been invited to a social function in a non-Aboriginal home. Many students at the University of Winnipeg where I teach have never physically set foot in the inner city, and many are fearful of going into the inner city. A recent study (Berdahl, 2007, p. 17) found that in six major western Canadian cities, including Winnipeg and Saskatoon, "Most residents feel that there are unsafe parts of their cities; when asked to rate their agreement with the statement, 'There are parts of the city I am scared to set foot in', 7 in 10 strongly or somewhat agreed."

How did this happen? How have Prairie cities like Winnipeg and Saskatoon come to take this form?

THE EMERGENCE OF SPATIALLY CONCENTRATED RACIALIZED POVERTY

The form and character of the poverty that prevails in Prairie cities has taken shape over decades and can be seen to be the product of four broad socio-economic forces: suburbanization, de-industrialization, in-migration, and colonization.

Starting early in the post-Second World War period, those who could afford to do so moved from locations close to the geographic centre of cities, where houses were the oldest, to the suburbs, where new and larger houses were being built on much larger lots. This process of **suburbanization** was a continent-wide phenomenon (Jackson, 1985). As people

moved to the suburbs, businesses followed. Inner cities were ‘hollowed out.’ This process of suburbanization was fueled by massive government subsidies, in the form of the construction of highways and bridges and other infrastructure to service the new communities, and government support for mortgages for the buyers of new homes. By contrast, relatively little public investment was directed at the hollowed-out inner cities (Silver, 2006b). The result was that those who stayed behind in inner cities were disproportionately those who could not afford to move to the suburbs, and their older homes and neighbourhoods suffered a relative lack of government investment. As people moved out of inner cities, demand for housing fell, driving prices down. Many older homes, their values in decline, were bought by absentee landlords, at least some of whom used them as revenue properties—investing little in maintenance and repair, and cramming in as many renters as possible, often in the form of rooming houses. Thus inner cities became areas of cheap housing, which then attracted those with lower incomes in search of housing that they could afford, thus contributing to the spatial concentration of poverty.

Starting in the late 1960s a second broad socio-economic force affected urban centres—the process of **de-industrialization**, a central part of what has come to be called ‘globalization.’ Global economic forces have promoted a massive shift in the character of the labour market, that is, in the kinds of jobs available to people in industrial countries generally, and more specifically for our purposes, in Prairie cities. There has been a steady attrition of mass-production industries—factories, industrial jobs symbolized by the assembly line. This is a process that continues today—witness the continued loss of jobs in southern Ontario’s auto industry. These were the kinds of jobs that someone with a high school education or less could raise a family on. They were jobs that were unionized, offered steady employment, were full-time and included benefits. These kinds of jobs have been replaced by jobs in the service sector that are disproportionately low-wage, part-time, non-union jobs with neither benefits nor security. They are typically *not* the kinds of jobs that one can support a family on. The result for inner cities has been that not only have many jobs relocated to the suburbs, but also those that are left in inner cities are disproportionately ‘contingent’ jobs (Teeples, 2000; Broad, 2006). This has had a huge impact on young people with limited education and has been an important factor in the creation of the persistent and complex form of poverty found especially in inner cities.

The third broad socio-economic force contributing to the form of poverty that now exists in Prairie inner cities has been the very large **in-migration** of Aboriginal people from rural and northern communities to urban centres, starting in the 1960s. In Winnipeg, for example, there were 1,082 Aboriginal people in 1961; in 2006 there were 63,380, almost a 60-fold increase. During that time Winnipeg's total population grew from 476,543 to 694,668, which is less than a 1.5-fold increase. In Saskatoon there were 207 Aboriginal people in 1961; in 2006 there were 21,535, more than a 100-fold increase. During the same period Saskatoon's total population grew from 95,564 to 233,923, which is almost a 2.5-fold increase (Peters, n.d.; Statistics Canada, 2008). The vast majority of these in-migrants located in inner-city neighbourhoods, at first because rents were lowest there, as the result of suburbanization and the age of the housing stock, and as time passed because other Aboriginal people were already located there. However, they arrived just as the good jobs were leaving: for the suburbs, as part of the process of suburbanization; or out of the country altogether, as part of the process of de-industrialization. The kinds of jobs that had sustained in-migrants before them were rapidly disappearing, replaced by low-wage service sector jobs. At the same time, these newcomers faced a wall of racism and job discrimination. Newspaper accounts of the time make this very evident (Silver, 2006b, pp. 19-20); formal interviews with Aboriginal people repeatedly cite incidents of job-related discrimination (Silver, 2006a, pp. 62-64).

The fourth historic force contributing to the form and character of inner-city poverty in Prairie cities has been the historic legacy and enduring impact of **colonization**. This process can be described as follows. Canadians of European descent pushed Aboriginal people off their Prairie lands in the late nineteenth century, forcing them onto reserves that were typically geographically and culturally marginalized from the European-based Canadian culture that quickly became dominant. Aboriginal peoples' means of economic livelihood, which had sustained them for millennia, were destroyed, as were their political systems. On their reserves they were controlled by the *Indian Act* and the Indian Agent, who replaced their own forms of political organization. Attempts were made by the Canadian state to eliminate Aboriginal cultures and forms of spirituality—in some cases these were outlawed—although Aboriginal people have waged a constant 'below the radar' war of resistance aimed at keeping alive their historic cultural and spiritual ways of being. Aboriginal

people were denied political rights—for example, the right of assembly and the right to vote. Perhaps most importantly, many Aboriginal children were seized by the agents of the state and forced into residential schools, where thousands died and where sickness and various forms of abuse were common (Milloy, 1999; Miller, 1996; Grant, 1996). All of these things together constitute a deliberate and systematic attempt to destroy Aboriginal cultures and ways of being. Aboriginal children in residential schools, for example, were denied the right to speak their languages and were taught to be ashamed of being Aboriginal.

These measures, this colonization, was predicated upon the *false* assumption that Aboriginal people and their cultures were inferior to European peoples and cultures. This assumption is, quite simply, not true. But many Aboriginal people themselves came to believe this false claim. They internalized this false belief in their inferiority. Many continue to do so (Adams, 1999; Hart, 2002). This manifests itself in a host of ways: a lack of self-esteem and of self-confidence; a sense of worthlessness; a lack of hope for the future. It is exceptionally difficult to navigate a complex and harshly competitive society without a sense of self-worth, without a sense of hope and optimism about the future. Colonization has eroded that positive psychological sense; it has done and continues to do deep psychological damage to Aboriginal people. This damage is less a function of personal failings than of broad structural and historical forces that can be described by use of the term colonization. And this damage is constantly reinforced by the ongoing impact of racism in its various forms and the difficulty in finding well-paid employment.

In summary, we can say that the particular form of poverty that prevails in Prairie cities is the product of the four broad socio-economic forces described in the paragraphs above. Aboriginal people began to move into Prairie cities in considerable numbers in the 1960s. Many were damaged by colonization and were consequently lacking in self-esteem and self-confidence, which was reinforced upon their arrival in urban centres by the wall of racism that they encountered. Having little money, they settled in inner-city locations, where housing was cheaper because of its age and because of suburbanization. They arrived just as the good jobs were leaving—as part of the process of suburbanization, or because of de-industrialization. The absence of good jobs, and the job discrimination they faced in attempting to find work, made it extremely difficult

to get out of poverty, and in some cases that poverty has been reproduced across generations. Because this poverty has come to be spatially concentrated, many people only know others who are poor; because the poverty has in some cases been reproduced across generations, in some cases family members have always been poor. The kind of poverty that this has produced has recently been described by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives-Manitoba by the use of two metaphors:

One is the notion of a complex web—a web of poverty, racism, drugs, gangs, violence. The other is the notion of a cycle—people caught in a cycle of inter-related problems. Both suggest the idea of people who are trapped, immobilized, unable to escape, destined to struggle with forces against which they cannot win, from which they cannot extricate themselves. The result is despair, resignation, anger, hopelessness, which then reinforce the cycle, and wrap them tighter in the web (CCPA-Mb, 2005, p. 24).

This is a particularly damaging form of poverty. It is deeply-rooted. There are no simple, nor quick, nor unidimensional solutions. This is a form of poverty that is about much more than a shortage of income. It is complex; it wraps people in a web, a cycle, that reproduces their problems and makes their escape extremely difficult.

A NEW FORM OF DEVELOPMENT

In response to this spatially concentrated racialized poverty, a new form of 'development' has emerged in Winnipeg's inner city in the past 30 years, and in Saskatoon's core neighbourhoods in the last 10 years. Similar forms of development may have emerged in other Prairie cities as well. In Winnipeg and Saskatoon this new form of development has emerged in largely spontaneous, or unplanned, fashion. It is largely a 'bottom-up' form of development and is 'indigenous' to the inner city; that is, it has for the most part been created by and is driven by inner-city people as opposed to outside 'experts.' It is less a product of theory than it is a pragmatic, locally-based response to the harsh and complex form of poverty that has taken deep root in Winnipeg's inner city and Saskatoon's core neighbourhoods.

This form of development, or of community development, has manifested itself in a multiplicity of relatively small community-based organizations (CBOs). These CBOs, together with the highly skilled inner-city people who are their leaders, constitute an essential “infrastructure” for fighting spatially concentrated racialized poverty. These CBOs are, for the most part, creative and innovative. They have maintained a form of operation that keeps them in close touch with inner-city people. These skilled, creative CBOs, and the people who lead and work in them, are the living embodiment of the phrase “passion for action.”

These CBOs have taken a wide variety of forms. They include community development corporations, or neighbourhood renewal corporations, as they are called in Winnipeg. Examples are the North End Community Renewal Corporation, the Spence Neighbourhood Association and the West Broadway Development Corporation in Winnipeg’s inner city, and Quint Development Corporation in Saskatoon’s core neighbourhoods. They include women’s organizations, like the North End Women’s Resource Centre and the North Point Douglas Women’s Centre and the West Central Women’s Resource Centre; and family and youth centres such as the Andrews Street Family Centre, Rossbrook House and Wolseley Family Place. There is a wide range of alternative, inner-city educational initiatives: adult learning centres (located throughout Manitoba and not just in Winnipeg’s inner city); community schools (which exist also in Saskatoon’s core neighbourhoods); community development and community economic development training initiatives; and the University of Winnipeg’s new Urban and Inner-City Studies degree program. These are but the tip of the iceberg of a rich array of such CBOs.

In Winnipeg’s inner city in particular there has emerged alongside of, and often working in cooperation with, the kinds of CBOs mentioned above, a distinctly Aboriginal form of community development, represented by some 70 Aboriginal CBOs in the city, most in the inner city. Many of these practice a “holistic” form of community development that can be described briefly as follows (for a fuller description, see Silver, 2006a, ch. 5). First, Aboriginal community development starts with the individual, and the need to heal—to heal from the ongoing damage of colonization and racism. This is the starting point because healthy communities cannot be built unless individuals are healthy. But individuals cannot heal and be made healthy unless there are strong and healthy

communities in which to do so, and so an Aboriginal form of community development focuses on building such communities, and does so especially by incorporating into their work a knowledge and appreciation of Aboriginal cultures. This in turn cannot be done unless there are Aboriginal organizations in place, by which is meant organizations created by, and run by and for, Aboriginal people themselves, and run in a fashion consistent with Aboriginal cultural values. Finally, this Aboriginal form of community development is rooted in an ideological understanding of the impact of colonization, and the need to de-colonize. De-colonizing means making Aboriginal people who suffer from the complex form of poverty described above aware that the root of their problems is less their own personal failings than it is the broad historical forces described by the term colonization. Knowing that this is the case is not intended to produce victims who feel sorry for themselves because of the historical injustices to which they were subjected. Rather, it is intended to liberate them, by making them aware that they are not the problem, and that they can make their way in life, and do so as Aboriginal people who are aware of their history and culture and who are proud of who they are. Among the many Aboriginal organizations working in this way, or some variant of this way, are, for example: the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre; the Native Women's Transition Centre; and the Urban Circle Training Centre. In Saskatoon the Saskatchewan Native Theatre Company operates in a similar fashion. These are remarkably creative and effective organizations, led by a cadre of Aboriginal people most of whom were raised poor and who experienced many poverty- and racism-related difficulties, but who have become what I have elsewhere described as "organic intellectuals" (Silver, 2006a)—people deeply knowledgeable about who they are and about how they came to be constructed as they have been by broad historical forces.

The inner cities of Winnipeg and Saskatoon have been, in recent decades, "social laboratories" (Diamantopoulos & Findlay, 2007; Silver, 2008), in which people poor in income but rich in imagination and creativity and passion for action, have built the infrastructure that has the capacity to make a major contribution to the alleviation and elimination of the kind of poverty that prevails in Prairie cities.

Governments have played a key role in supporting the emergence of this community-based anti-poverty infrastructure. In Winnipeg, for

example, there have been four tri-level (civic, provincial and federal) urban development agreements since 1980, and despite many weaknesses (Urban Futures Group, 1990; Silver, 2002), these have contributed much of the start-up money for these bottom-up initiatives. Such government support has been necessary because the private sector has largely abandoned these inner cities. It is fair to say that the market has failed inner cities and that creative inner-city people, supported financially by some governments, have emerged to fill the void.

**NEECHI COMMUNITY
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
PRINCIPLES**

1. Use of locally produced goods and services.
2. Production of goods and services for local use.
3. Local re-investment of profits.
4. Long-term employment of local residents.
5. Local skill development.
6. Local decision-making.
7. Promotion of public health.
8. Improvement of the physical environment.
9. Promotion of neighbourhood stability.
10. Promotion of human dignity.
11. Mutual aid support among organizations adhering to these principles.

Source: Neechi, 1993.

A large proportion of the CBOs described above operate according to a set of principles often called the Neechi Principles—the principles were systematized by workers at an Aboriginal worker co-op grocery store called Neechi Foods in Winnipeg's inner city (see sidebar). These principles include, among others, the notions of hiring, purchasing and investing locally (Rothney, 1991; Silver & Loxley, 2007).

The principles are sometimes expressed in the form of the 'leaky bucket' metaphor: a great deal of money goes into the inner city in various forms, but most of it leaks out again—in the form of rent paid to absentee landlords or grocery bills paid at suburban supermarkets, for example—and so the inner city does

not get the full benefit of the money that comes in and just as quickly leaks out. Thus a community economic development strategy involves plugging the holes in the leaky bucket: hiring local people wherever possible and training them if necessary; renovating inner-city housing and making it available to inner-city residents; hiring and training inner-city people to do the renovating; and building inner-city grocery stores that enable people to shop locally and that incorporate local hiring. These principles are remarkably widely spread in Winnipeg's inner city and Saskatoon's core neighbourhoods. They are clearly the guiding force

behind, for example, Saskatoon's Station 20 West, an ambitious and creative example of community economic development.

Other principles that are widely used, although perhaps not as consciously articulated as the Neechi Principles, are the following: creating *opportunities* for inner-city people, as opposed to providing charity; providing *supports* to inner-city people to enable them to take advantage of those opportunities; *tailoring* those opportunities and supports to the day-to-day experiences of the people who will be using them, a notion predicated upon the assumption that many of the standardized, 'one-size-fits-all' systems do not work for the particular circumstances of inner-city people; and *laddering* those opportunities, so that people can move one step at a time, gaining their confidence as they go.

WHAT ELSE IS NEEDED?

As valuable and impressive and innovative and effective as these CBOs and people are, spatially concentrated racialized poverty persists and, in fact, worsens. This is the perplexing contradiction: a great deal that is creative and positive is being done and is proving effective, but for every step taken forward another is taken back. The depth and tenacity of this form of poverty are such that all the good efforts described above are not enough to be transformative—not enough, that is, to transform inner-city communities and their people in positive ways of their choosing. Thus the question becomes: what more is needed to enable the good work that is now being done to *become transformative*?

What follows are some thoughts on this dilemma.

First, we need more of the same. We have to persist, over time, with these innovative, community-based efforts. Spatially concentrated racialized poverty has emerged and taken root over many decades. The problems are now deeply entrenched, multi-faceted and complex. Their character is such that they *cannot* be solved quickly. The efforts described above have to be persisted in over a long period of time—time measured in decades—if success is to be achieved. That being said, we have some evidence that these efforts do make a difference. In Winnipeg's Spence neighbourhood, for example, where the Spence Neighbourhood Association has been working for approximately a decade, the differences are visible and tangible—renovated housing, community gardens, new youth programs, for example—and the long-term population decline has recently been reversed (Lewys, 2007).

But also, we need to persist over a long period of time because of the nature of the development being described here. This form of development builds on the strengths of inner-city people. It has a capacity-building character. It is rooted in the belief that people can solve their own problems, given opportunities that are tailored, supported and laddered, and given a deep experiential knowledge of the barriers such people face. This takes time. People mired in decades of racialized poverty, having experienced the damage that comes with racialized poverty, cannot *instantly* take charge of their lives. But this strategy only works if inner-city people themselves, and not outside ‘experts,’ are the agents of their development. In other words, there are no quick fixes. The form of development described above builds cumulatively, as people develop confidence and skills—a process that of necessity takes time and persistence.

Second, the role of the state is central to the success or otherwise of this form of development. Governments have, for the most part, funded this form of development to date. This has included the tri-level (federal/provincial/municipal) urban development agreements in Winnipeg since 1980; the currently very successful Neighbourhoods Alive! program, which funds inner-city revitalization in Manitoba urban centres, and its counterpart, the Neighbourhood Development Organization Initiative in Saskatchewan; and recent large financial commitments to inner-city initiatives in Saskatoon (Government of Saskatchewan, September 4, 2007). This form of development is dependent upon government support, and this should not be seen negatively, any more than we see government support for healthcare or education negatively.

But this government funding has been limited. Dollars invested in inner cities have been modest, relative to the huge scale and deep complexity of the problems. This has been the case even in provinces governed in recent years by New Democratic Party (NDP) governments, which might have been thought to be more sympathetic to low-income inner-city people. While it is undoubtedly true that NDP governments have invested more in community-based inner-city organizations than other governments would have done, they have not invested enough to be transformative (Silver, 2008). What is more, these governments continue to cut taxes, thus removing resources that could otherwise be invested in the inner city. For example, one study has estimated that by 2010, combined tax cuts by Gary Doer’s NDP government in Manitoba

will amount to \$900 million, and that a family of four earning \$20,000 per year will have saved \$150 per year as a result of the cuts, while a family of four earning \$100,000 per year will have saved \$1,700 per year (MacKinnon & Hudson, 2007). Similarly, in Saskatchewan, income tax rates were cut by close to one-third between 2000 and 2006, and as in Manitoba, those earning higher incomes benefitted more than those earning lower incomes (Hunter & Douglas, 2006). These tax cuts remove money from the public sector that might otherwise have been invested in the work of inner-city CBOs, putting it instead into the private hands of higher-income individuals, where it will not benefit the inner city.

Finally, with respect to government investment in inner-city/core neighbourhoods, those investments that have been made have *not* been undertaken in a deliberate, systematic and strategic fashion. Instead, they have, for the most part, been responses to competing requests from a multiplicity of CBOs for limited funds, and thus have been partial, ad hoc and too limited. What is needed is a shift in thinking about public investment in inner cities, to a more proactive, more strategic way of thinking and a way of thinking more focused on being transformative.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

What follows are four suggestions that arise from the argument developed above, that would, I believe, contribute to moving us gradually toward the goal of eliminating spatially concentrated racialized poverty in Prairie cities like Winnipeg and Saskatoon. Although these suggestions are not especially radical, to implement them would require a shift in public attitudes and government policies. While Canada is not moving in this direction at the moment—witness the March 2008 decision by the new Saskatchewan government of Premier Brad Wall to cancel \$8 million of previously committed funding to Station 20 West in Saskatoon's core neighbourhoods, a decision that, if not reversed, will deepen the complex poverty that prevails in these neighbourhoods—shifts of this magnitude and more *have* happened often in the past and are distinctly possible in the future.

First, governments must stop cutting taxes, and citizens must individually and collectively insist that they stop cutting taxes. The tax cut approach is a powerful, Right-wing strategy aimed at significantly

weakening the role of government and turning still more decisions over to the market. Continued tax cuts will make it impossible to do the work that needs to be done to solve the problem of spatially concentrated racialized poverty. At the Passion for Action conference from which this book arose, the then Minister of Social Services was asked a question, the preamble to which was that we have often heard positive statements before from government ministers, but when are we going to see real action to tackle these poverty-related problems? The Minister responded by saying that the government was trying, and he knows more is needed, but there are limits to what they can do because "it comes down to funding" (author's notes, September 13, 2007). He said that the provincial government does not have enough money to do all that needs to be done. But the more accurate answer would have been: "It comes down to priorities, and we have chosen to cut taxes that benefit higher-income individuals rather than investing seriously in a strategy aimed at transforming spatially concentrated racialized poverty." Continued tax cuts will make such a strategy impossible and should therefore be opposed.

Second, I take for granted and therefore have said little about, the need for higher minimum wages, higher social assistance rates, and national, universal social programs such as a national childcare program. The provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan have recently begun to move in a more positive direction on minimum wages and deserve full credit for the steps they have taken in that regard. Saskatchewan's minimum wage will move in stages, starting in January 2008, to the level of the LICO by 2010, and will then be indexed to the growth of the Consumer Price Index, while Manitoba has made gains in recent years in the provision of childcare spaces. But social assistance rates remain woefully inadequate, the housing allowance component in particular is completely inadequate, and childcare spaces do not come close to meeting the need, although Manitoba has taken important steps in that regard (Silver, 2008). Higher minimum wages and the provision of childcare, for example, are important components in creating *opportunities* for people to solve their own problems and in providing the *supports* needed to enable them to seize those opportunities.

Third, we need to confront the problem of racism in a more direct fashion. Poverty in Canada is racialized. This has been set out extremely clearly by Grace-Edward Galabuzi (2006) in his important book, *Canada's*

Economic Apartheid: The Social Exclusion of Racialized Groups in the New Century. This is the reality in Prairie cities like Winnipeg and Saskatoon: the poverty is spatially concentrated and racialized. Poverty will be misunderstood, and therefore anti-poverty strategies will be less effective, if we do not acknowledge the intimate ties between poverty and racism.

Finally, we need to invest more, and to do so consistently over time and in a more deliberate and strategic fashion, in the infrastructure of community-based organizations that has grown up to combat spatially concentrated racialized poverty. These CBOs are close to the people with whom they work and are highly creative and effective. A patient, long-term strategy by which governments work closely with and invest heavily in these CBOs will produce the kinds of changes that inner-city people say they want.

Can we solve the problem of spatially concentrated racialized poverty? Yes, we can. Can we do so quickly? No, we cannot. Can we do so using the broad government policy framework of the past 25 years that features significant reductions in the role of governments? No, we cannot. To solve the problem of spatially concentrated racialized poverty we need reforms that are, by today's standards, somewhat radical: stop cutting taxes; invest in national social programs; acknowledge and combat racism; and invest patiently, consistently, and systematically over time, in the infrastructure of community-based organizations that can produce transformative change.

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