

# Manitoba Practicing Planner

## Case-In-Point

### Taking the Pulse of Practice



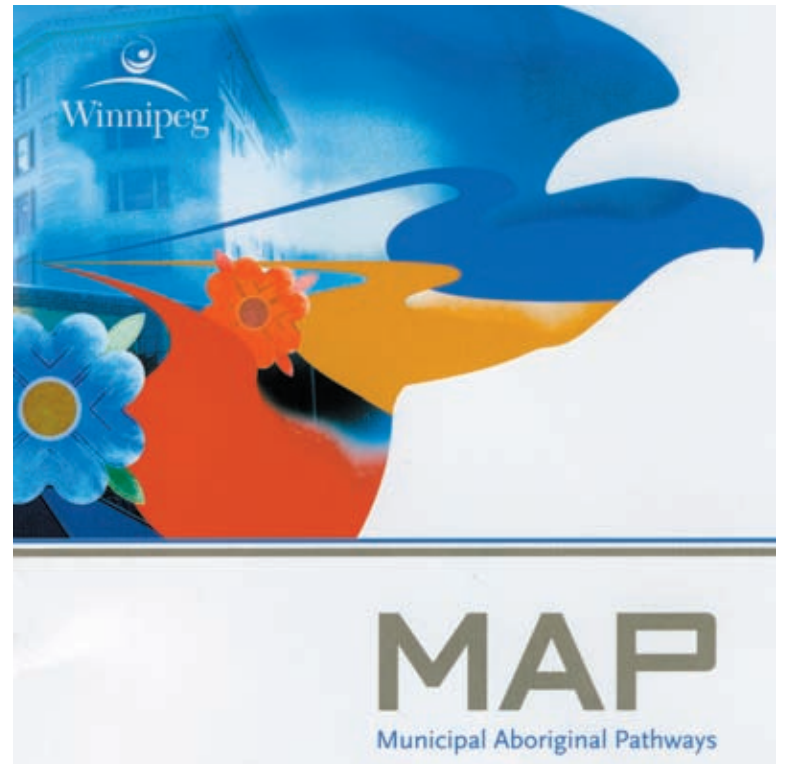
### *On the Cutting Edge of Inclusive Planning*

#### Planning Inclusively With Urban Aboriginal Peoples in Winnipeg:

#### *“First Steps: Municipal Aboriginal Pathways”*

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It has become undeniable that Aboriginal peoples are a part of cities in Canada, especially cities in the Western Provinces, where their numbers are growing faster than any cultural group (Peters, 2005). Winnipeg is a key urban location for Aboriginal peoples in Canada with 55,000 residents calling it home in 2003(United Way, 2004). The transition to city life has not always been easy for the diverse Aboriginal peoples in urban centres and governments are becoming increasingly aware that there is a need to plan relations with these urban citizens.

***First Steps, Municipal Aboriginal Pathways*** (MAP) was, literally, a first step towards inclusive collaborative planning with urban Aboriginal peoples in a large Canadian urban centre. MAP outlines a strategy that the City of Winnipeg can undertake in partnership with diverse Aboriginal groups towards improving the conditions that Aboriginal peoples will experience in Winnipeg. MAP employs a policy framework that incorporates: guiding principles such as co-operation, trust, value, sustainability and

flexibility; and pathways to reach goals such as employment, safety, economic development, quality of life, outreach and education.

The City of Winnipeg’s **First Steps: Municipal Aboriginal Pathways** is on the cutting edge of inclusive planning with Aboriginal peoples in Canada. This case-in-point will examine the inclusiveness and effectiveness of the collaborative planning process that was undertaken during the formation of MAP and the ongoing process of deliberation that has occurred since.

*“It is important to acknowledge that Aboriginal people are an increasingly important human resource to the City of Winnipeg. This is a relatively young group who must be encouraged to become our employees and leaders of the future”*

*Mayor’s Task Force on Diversity*  
(City of Winnipeg, 2003)



Aboriginal people are involved in all facets of city life

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## **Background & Context:**

The genesis of First Steps: Municipal Aboriginal Pathways came from a political source within the local Winnipeg government. Then City Councillor Dan Vandal, a member of the Métis community of Winnipeg, felt that the City of Winnipeg lacked a specific agenda for urban Aboriginal people (Allum, 2006). The Mayor at the time was fully on board with Councillor Vandal and believed that MAP was an opportunity to build trust within the Aboriginal community in Winnipeg (Gerbas, 2006; Vandal, 2006). The combination of political will and the knowledge that the urban Aboriginal population in Winnipeg has a key role to play in the future of this city led to the realization that there was a need to address this situation. At the time MAP was a unique expression of relationship building between the Aboriginal community and a large Canadian city. MAP was approved by council unanimously, which, according to James Allum (2006) and Dan Vandal (2006), provided the administration with authority to bring forth new initiatives and to be creative when tackling issues as they arise .

The City of Winnipeg held a public meeting on September 6th of 2003 to discuss the draft of MAP with interested citizens. It was held at R.B. Russel school and had somewhere between 200-300 participants from the Aboriginal community and the broader Winnipeg community (Gerbas, 2006; Vandal, 2006; Allum, 2006). Eyewitnesses stated that there was a good mix of local community members and Aboriginal organizations. This MAP forum served as a relationship building exercise for the City of Winnipeg and the Aboriginal community and as a stage for community members to be heard.

There were also a series of ongoing key stakeholder meetings held between City of Winnipeg representatives and various Aboriginal organizations for the purpose of discussion about the program pieces of MAP.

First Steps: Municipal Aboriginal Pathways was intended to be an action oriented policy document. It was intended to continue on into the future and evolve into what

best served the City of Winnipeg and the Aboriginal community. The City of Winnipeg administration, more specifically the Chief Administrative Office (CAO) Secretariat is obliged to report on the progress of MAP in 2006. The CAO Secretariat should also be providing an outline for "next steps" for MAP to take it into the period of 2006-2010 (Allum, 2006)

### Key Players:

- Councillor Dan Vandal – Felt that there was a lack of a clear agenda within the City of Winnipeg for urban Aboriginal peoples (Allum, 2006);
- Councilor Jenny Gerbas – Played key role in the process of community consultation;
- Glen Murray – provided political leadership by championing MAP.

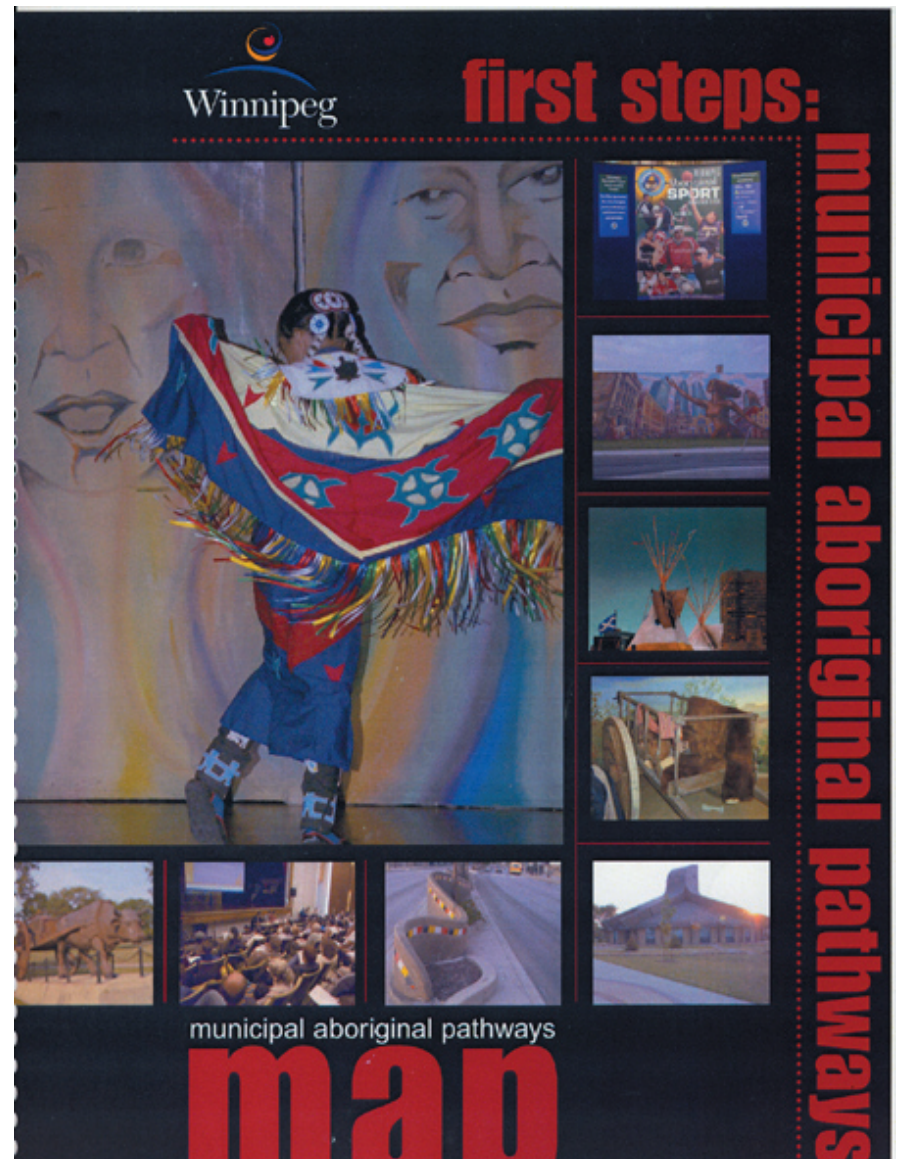


The word “Pathways” was used to describe what the City of Winnipeg could do in the form of programming to improve conditions for the Aboriginal community and to improve relations between the City of Winnipeg and the Aboriginal community (see Pathways).

**PATHWAYS**

<p><b>Employment:</b> The City of Winnipeg will undertake initiatives to enhance the participation of Aboriginal people in both the civic and community workforce.</p> <p><b>Strategic Initiatives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Aboriginal Internships</li> <li>▪ Youth in Community Services Program</li> <li>▪ Aboriginal Employment Network</li> </ul> <p><b>Safety:</b> The City of Winnipeg will build on current public safety programs and services to promote the personal and collective security of Winnipeg's Aboriginal community</p> <p><b>Strategic Initiatives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Aboriginal Youth Ambassador Program</li> <li>▪ Aboriginal Liaison Office</li> <li>▪ National Law Enforcement Aboriginal and Diversity Network</li> </ul> <p><b>Economic Development:</b> The City of Winnipeg will utilize municipal tools to develop partnerships that promote economic development projects.</p> <p><b>Strategic Initiatives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Aboriginal Economic Development Partnerships</li> <li>▪ Municipal Services and Development Agreements</li> <li>▪ Aboriginal Culture and Heritage Tourism</li> </ul>	<p><b>Quality of Life:</b> The City of Winnipeg will enhance programming and services to support Aboriginal recreational and wellness activities.</p> <p><b>Strategic Initiatives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Multi-Purpose Community Facility</li> <li>▪ Winnipeg Aboriginal Sport Achievement Centre</li> <li>▪ Aboriginal Housing</li> </ul> <p><b>Outreach and Education:</b> The City of Winnipeg will develop outreach and education initiatives that promote cross-cultural understanding and improve access to information about civic services.</p> <p><b>Strategic Initiatives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Aboriginal Pathways Community Consultation</li> <li>▪ Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Training</li> <li>▪ Urban Aboriginal Transition Network</li> </ul>
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(Source: First Steps: Municipal Aboriginal Pathways, 2003)



- public comment and participation in the planning phase of the project;
- Partnership Processes – characterized by delegation of authority and plan making power to representative members of the affected community or interested parties.

## Case Study:

### Collaborative Planning Context:

It has been argued that participation of the public in the planning process is central to the contemporary planning paradigm and that this form of process is an effective tool against poverty in modern cities (Lowry, Adler and Neal, 1997). This is especially important to an Aboriginal population that has been marginalized and ignored in the past and whose voice is growing in the political arena in Winnipeg.

Lowry, Adler and Neal (1997) outline what they claim are the four distinct types of participation processes:

- Ad Hoc Processes – this type of process is characterized by a facilitator being brought in to deflect expected criticism over a controversial project;
- Appendage Processes – characterized by the public getting a chance to comment on an already planned project about to go into action. There are no promises made to change the finished product based on the reaction of the public;
- Integrated Processes – characterized by

In the case of the public meeting in 2003 held by the City of Winnipeg to discuss that draft of MAP with the community, First Steps: Municipal Aboriginal Pathways clearly falls under the appendage process type. This is because MAP was first developed and then presented to the community for their comment. Former city councillor Dan Vandal (2006) stated that the purpose of the public meeting was basically to listen to people about their opinions of what the city should be responsible for in regards to Aboriginal peoples. He claimed that what came forth was the idea that the city can best effect urban Aboriginal issues by investing in programming related to land development and recreation. Lastly, he noted that the responses that were shared by the community at the public meeting were put through a "civic lens" to determine what was within the City's ability to do.

The ongoing collaboration between the City and key Aboriginal organizations that

has been occurring and the action oriented evolving nature of the program exhibits more of an integrated process. This distinction is important because as Rocha (1997) points out “it is not simply participating that is important in the empowerment equation ... What is crucial is the role the individual is allowed to occupy and how much decision making power she or he actually possesses.” Rocha further notes that empowerment of people to solve their problems is a powerful tool to use in community development.

The inclusiveness of the ongoing consultation process was somewhat in doubt because of the nature of those that were invited. These consultations, which focused on the nature of the programming pieces that the city would undertake, included interested Aboriginal organizations and were done under the radar (Allum, 2006), potentially leaving the average community member’s concerns unexpressed.

What the City of Winnipeg has done for the Aboriginal community in Winnipeg is what Evelyn Peters (2005) calls “specific municipal responses,” some of which are outlined in the outcomes section of this report. At the level of the administration MAP has produced cultural awareness and created representation in employment at the City. However, the question remains if this is an adequate level of participation and inclusion.

The City of Winnipeg has also worked with First Nations bands to make urban reserves in Winnipeg a possibility for future collaboration by committing to signing municipal services and development agreements.

### **Innovation:**

The area that MAP proved to be truly innovative and on the cutting edge is related to jurisdiction. Responsibility for Aboriginal peoples in Canada is a Federal government responsibility. However, urban Aboriginal peoples are often overlooked by the Federal

government. The City of Winnipeg certainly was under no obligation to develop and urban Aboriginal agenda. This shows a lot of commitment on the part of the City to improve the lot of Aboriginal peoples living in Winnipeg.

### **Outcomes:**

There were many outcomes that came from the programs created through MAP. James Allum (2006) stated that 13 of 15 pathways had seen progress. Some examples of positive outcomes that came from MAP are:

- 6 to 7 interns and 35 to 40 Aboriginal youth employed by the City of Winnipeg;
- Economic development partnerships (Winnipeg Partnership Agreement);
- Aboriginal cultural awareness training for city staff;
- Multi-purpose community facility in the works;
- City of Winnipeg’s Aboriginal newcomers guide.

Examples of collaborative partnerships that the City of Winnipeg is engaged in with or for the betterment of the Aboriginal community:

- E.A.G.L.E. Urban Transition Centre;
- Winnipeg Aboriginal Sport Achievement Camp
- Winnipeg Partnership Agreement (providing support to the Aboriginal community)

While there were many highlights of MAP some initiatives stalled such as the intention to create youth ambassadors or the plans for Aboriginal culture and heritage tourism.

One clear positive outcome that came from the process of putting together MAP, and one that cannot be underestimated, is what Councillor Gerbasi (2006) stated: "the city government really connected with its Aboriginal people." The goal of building trust between the city and the Aboriginal community was a success, something to build on.

***“This is a great day. It is so exciting, it’s a new beginning!”***

Evaluation form comment from MAP Public meeting  
Sept 6, 2003  
(City of Winnipeg, 2003)

## **Conclusion:**

While it was admirable of the City of Winnipeg to take the lead on making this city a better place for Aboriginal peoples with a unique forward thinking planning framework such as MAP, it does not go far enough. Self determination is a very important topic to many Aboriginal peoples in Canada and it is important for those that live in urban centres as well. Therefore, future planning activities with Winnipeg's urban Aboriginal population should consider following a truly collaborative process by giving affected community members active roles in the planning process. These community members can then engage in partnerships with city officials with the goal of relationship building between the city and Aboriginal peoples, and a better life for all.

This is not to say that MAP was a bad or negative experience for the Aboriginal community in Winnipeg. It was a representation of what the City of Winnipeg could do at that time given financial constraints and limited resources. In doing that it showed considerable political will aimed at improving the conditions for Aboriginal peoples in Winnipeg.

This critic is merely stating that it is time to take the next step by providing urban Aboriginal peoples with the ability to be self determining. By no means an easy task!

## **Planning Lesson Learnt:**

I think that the City of Winnipeg learned a valuable lesson about the ability of Aboriginal peoples to make meaningful change in their community and that working together and building relationships is the clear pathway to better urban living for all Winnipeggers. The Aboriginal community learned that city politicians and administrators recognize the importance that they represent to the future of this city. What can planners learn from this case-in-point? Planners can take from this that sometimes less than fully collaborative planning is a small step in the right direction when attempting to build relationships with a certain population, in this case the Aboriginal population of Winnipeg.

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