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**Segregated City:
A Century of Poverty in Winnipeg**

By Jim Silver

Poverty has been a constant presence in Winnipeg throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first centuries. No adequate understanding of historical or contemporary Winnipeg is possible without understanding the remarkable persistence, on a large scale, of this damaging and often soul-destroying phenomenon. Winnipeg has been about railways and industry, about boosterism, about remarkable local cultural achievements, about organized labour and its conflicts with employers, about a bewildering variety of political ideologies...and about poverty, deep and unrelenting poverty. Yet relentless though it has been, the character of poverty has changed in the past quarter-century, and not necessarily for the better. One could say about poverty in Winnipeg over the past century that: 'it's the same, but it's different'.

In this chapter I examine the constant but changing character of poverty in Winnipeg throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. I describe the poverty of the first half of the twentieth century, concentrated disproportionately among Eastern European immigrants in Winnipeg's North End. I describe the dramatic post-Second World War changes in Winnipeg, and especially the suburbanization that emptied the North End and broader inner city of many of the descendants of those Eastern European immigrants, and the post-1960s changes to the labour market that modified the character of poverty, contributing to its becoming, it will be argued, deeper and more complex. And I describe the transformation of poverty in the last quarter of the twentieth century and beyond, into the entrenched and complex form in which it now manifests itself, and which has become such a prominent feature of Winnipeg's socio-economic, demographic and spatial landscapes.

I will argue both that many of the characteristics of poverty in Winnipeg today are the same as they were 100 years ago, and that poverty today is different in important respects. Poverty in Winnipeg continues disproportionately to be spatially concentrated in Winnipeg's North End and broader inner city; it continues to be associated with, indeed, inextricably bound to, a deeply-rooted albeit seldom-acknowledged racism; it continues to be associated with and plagued by inadequate housing; it continues to be associated with the stigmatization, stereotyping and social exclusion of those who are poor; and it continues to be associated with, and continues to be an important causal factor of, high rates of poor health, lower than average rates of educational attainment, and various forms of street crime.

Yet there are differences between the poverty of yesteryear and that of today. I will argue that the following are among the most important.

First, the poverty of early twentieth century Winnipeg was overwhelmingly a poverty of the working poor: it was a working class phenomenon. Today, because of dramatic global economic shifts, a much higher proportion of those in poverty are the jobless poor: largely outside of and in many cases with little or no experience of the paid labour market.

Second, in the case of a very high proportion of the poor early in the twentieth century, two-parent families were intact, and ethnic cultures were a source of strength and pride. Today, a much higher proportion of those who are poor are in families and communities that are, for various reasons, less strong and resilient than was the case in the past, and in many cases the historical cultures of those families and communities have been seriously damaged. In the case of Aboriginal people, this is the result of the historic and contemporary process of colonization.

Third, the presence of a disproportionate number of Aboriginal people among today's poor is evidence both that the racialization of poverty persists, and that its character has changed. The assimilation of Aboriginal people into the dominant culture is a much different issue than the rapid, post-Second World War assimilation of the descendants of early Eastern European immigrants. In short, in the absence of significant changes, the path taken out of poverty by the descendants of early Eastern European immigrants from the North End may not be as open to the high proportion of today's Winnipeg poor who are Aboriginal.

Fourth, while poor health, relatively low levels of educational attainment and relatively high levels of street crime continue to characterize Winnipeg's North End and broader inner city, the character and consequences of the street crime, while still causally connected to poverty, have changed in significant ways.

Fifth, I will attempt to make the case that while poverty always has damaging psychological and emotional effects, and even 'spiritual' effects, that is, it affects the human spirit, and that such was certainly the case in the early twentieth century, the damage caused by today's poverty is qualitatively different, and perhaps even more debilitating.

Part One: Poverty in Early Winnipeg

Historic Winnipeg was built around the railways and related industries. The CPR yards were among the world's largest; "dozens of trains passed through every day, belching smoke and cinders" (Blanchard, 2005. p. 10). The rail yards cut the city in half. North of the yards became the North End, the 'Foreign Quarter', home to tens of thousands of immigrants, many from Eastern Europe—speaking Ukrainian, Yiddish, Polish, Russian, Hungarian, German---who poured into the booming city after 1896.

Living conditions were hard. Developers, seeing easy profits, hastily erected cheaply-built houses north and immediately south of the tracks. More than half were not connected to the city's water supply system. Infant mortality in the North End was 248.6

per 1000 births in 1913, more than double the rate in the West and South ends (Artibise, 1977, p.66). Typhoid and smallpox were concentrated in the North End; in 1904 and 1905 Winnipeg had more cases of, and more deaths from, typhoid than any city in North America (Artibise, 1977, p. 104).

In the early twentieth century poverty-level wages were common in the North End. J.S. Woodsworth, then Director of All Peoples' Mission on Stella Ave., conducted a study in 1913 showing that "a normal standard of living" in Winnipeg required an income of at least \$1200 per year. Few in the North End earned that much: "large numbers of workmen are receiving under \$600 per year, many under \$500, half of what is necessary"(Artibise, 1975, p.187).

Housing was inadequate, and overcrowding was common. The 1908-09 *Annual Report* of All Peoples' Mission described an area of Euclid Street in the North End where "in 41 houses there were 120 'families', consisting of 837 people living in 286 rooms", more than 20 people per house (quoted in Artibise, 1979, p. 196). With overcrowding came unsanitary conditions and health problems, made the worse by undernourishment related largely to low wages. Artibise (1975, p. 16) describes the North End of the pre-1914 era as characterized by: "Overcrowded houses and tenements, lack of sanitary installations, dirty back-yards, muddy, foul-smelling streets, and poor lighting conditions". Woodsworth himself described an inner-city dwelling as follows: "Shack---one table and a lean-to. Furniture---two beds, a bunk, stove, bench, two chairs, table, barrel of sauerkraut. Everything very dirty. Two families lived here. Women were dirty, unkempt, bare-footed, half-clothed. Children wore only print-slips" (Woodsworth, 1911, p. 70).

Typically such conditions were blamed on the moral failings of the poor. In their 1908-09 *Annual Report* All Peoples' Mission decried the fact that children were growing up in over-crowded homes "where the environment is anything but helpful", and added as an example a mother dying of consumption. Her condition was attributed not to inadequate housing and low wages, but to "a life of drunkenness and sin" (in Artibise, 1979, p. 195). The Associated Charities Bureau wrote in 1912 that "...the large majority of applications for relief are caused by thriftlessness, mismanagement, unemployment due to incompetence, intemperance, immorality, desertion of the family and domestic quarrels". For this reason, the Associated Charities Bureau concluded, any social assistance should be minimal, because to do otherwise would "simply make it easier for the parents to shirk their responsibilities or lead a dissolute life" (Artibise, 1975, p.188).

The real issue was less moral failings than poverty-level wages. Most North End residents were working, many for the railways and associated industries, others as builders, or in factories and small shops and stores, many in seasonal jobs subject to regular layoffs. Blanchard (2005, p. 47) describes "the floating population of workers who spent summers working on railroad construction or on farms who were often unemployed in winter". The winter of 1911-12, for example, was especially difficult:

"By the middle of February, the situation of many seasonal workmen

in the city was desperate. Unemployed since the beginning of the cold weather, their savings gone, they had problems feeding themselves and their families. The hopelessness these men felt as they went out every day in search of work was appalling”.

Perhaps this is a part of the reason that so many children worked for wages. Gray (1970, p. 118) observed that “child labour was a fact of life in Winnipeg and it was the normal thing for boys when they reached ten years of age to be on the look-out for odd jobs, not to earn spending money but to supplement the family income”. Today, by contrast, many North End youth, and especially Aboriginal youth, are *not* getting jobs in their teen years. They are *not* a part of the working class, but rather are largely disconnected from the paid labour force, and are thus heading down a path to a different form of poverty.

Winnipeg then, as now, was deeply segregated, a city divided, with the North End cut off from the rest of the city by the vast CPR yards, and distinguished from the rest of the city by its ‘foreign’ character. A 1912 publication described the North End as “practically a district apart from the city”, and added that “those who located north of the tracks were not of a desirable character” (in Artibise, 1975, p. 160). Winnipeg remains, it will be argued later, a spatially and socially segregated city.

The segregation was, then and now, a product of poverty and extreme inequality. John Marlyn’s 1957 novel, *Under the Ribs of Death*, describes the North End of the early twentieth century as “a mean and dirty clutter...a howling chaos...a heap seething with unwashed children, sick men in grey underwear, vast sweating women in vaster petticoats”. The lead character, Sandor Hunyadi, a Hungarian immigrant living in the North End, visits Crescentwood, the south end home of the Anglo-Saxon ‘elite’ who dominated the economic, social and political life of the city.

“In a daze he walked down the street. The boulevards ran wide and spacious to the very doors of the houses. And these houses were like palaces, great and stately, surrounded by their own private parks and gardens. On every side there was something to wonder at” (Marlyn, 1957, pp. 64-65. See also Gray, 1970, pp. 119-20).

Little wonder that Artibise (1975, p. 160), in his social history of Winnipeg, should conclude that: “Winnipeg in 1914 was a severely divided city, both geographically and socially”.

In his novel of two Cree brothers from northern Manitoba who find their way to the Winnipeg of the late 1960s-early 1970s, Tomson Highway (1998, p. 105) similarly describes a socially and spatially divided city. On north Main Street young Jeremiah Okimasis describes what he sees:

“Strands of country music---tinny, tawdry, emaciated---oozed through the cracks under the filthy doorways. The doors opened and closed, opened and closed. From their dark maws stumbled men and women, all dark of

skin, of hair, of eye, like Jeremiah, all drunk senseless, unlike Jeremiah. Had the music student not looked upon this scene somewhere before? On a great chart with tunnels and caves and forbidden pleasures? He leaned forward to see if he could catch a glimpse, beyond the swinging doors, of horned creatures with three-pronged forks, laughing as they pitched Indian after Indian into the flames”.

And juxtaposed to this hell on earth that was North End Winnipeg for newly-arrived Aboriginal people in the 1960s, Highway describes the very different establishment, the Centennial Concert Hall, attended by the more well-off of the city’s non-Aboriginal population, as “a palace afloat on a nighttime sea, glimmering tantalizingly: the four-storey façade of glass and concrete, giant chandeliers, crimson carpet, swirling silver lettering over its entrance”. The chapter closes with the violent death of a young Aboriginal woman, “Evelyn Rose McCrae, long-lost daughter of Mistik Lake”, at the hands of a car-full of young White men. Her horribly violated body was found the next day “in a ditch on the city’s out-skirts” (Highway, pp. 106-07). Today, there are an estimated 500 missing Aboriginal women across Canada (Amnesty International 2004), and a significant but unknown number missing in Winnipeg (Native Women’s Association of Canada).

Early in the twentieth century, those in the city’s south end reacted scornfully and even hatefully to the Eastern European, working class immigrants of the North End.

“the Slavs were the despised ‘men in sheepskin coats’, ‘dumb hunkies’, ‘bohunks’, ‘garlic-eaters’, ‘Polacks’, ‘drunkards’— and on and on; the Germans were the much hated enemies of the last war; and finally, the Jews faced extreme anti-Semitism, ranging from ethnic slurs, housing covenants which excluded them from certain parts of the city and a quota system which kept their children out of the medical school at University of Manitoba, to actual violence against their persons and property” (Mochoruk, 2000, pp. 5-6).

Such attitudes reinforced the spatial and social segregation of the North End in early twentieth century Winnipeg, as they do today. Ignorance and scorn directed at the Other are a constant and cruel feature of Winnipeg’s history.

Yet, the North End in the first half of the twentieth century was home to much that was positive. Selkirk Avenue boasted a dazzling variety of stores and shops, whose owners typically spoke several Eastern European languages and made credit available to their North End customers when needed. In 1925 on Selkirk Avenue, in the five blocks between Salter and Parr, there were 128 businesses. (Today on those blocks there are just over 40 if one does not count the pawn shops, thrift stores, tattoo shops and money marts). On most street corners were small grocery stores, above or behind which lived their owners. Most of these are now gone. On Main Street, between Flora and Stella, across from today’s Lord Selkirk Park housing developments, was a thriving public market: “That whole area was just one big market place. The farmers would come with their trucks and wagons and they’d line them up. You could go there before winter...buy

your carrots and cucumbers, tomatoes” (Quoted in August, 2000, p. 9). It too is now gone.

Selkirk Avenue was the heart of the North End. It

“... was a [hive] of activity. Saturday night was a way of life. People would take their families. The big event was looking at the stores and shopping and chewing sunflower seeds. And they didn’t necessarily come in to buy merchandise.... Money they didn’t have. Everybody was in the same boat. So a walk down the street with an ice cream cone and a bag of sunflower seeds and walking into a store like Oretzki’s was definitely a way to spend an evening” (quoted in August, 2005, p.20).

This scene is a far cry from the media-induced consumerism that characterizes all of Canada today, and that reaches deep into today’s North End, creating a desire for consumption that cannot be satisfied with “an ice cream cone and a bag of sunflower seeds” on a Saturday night, and that, in the absence of employment opportunities, is a major factor in today’s problems of gangs, drugs and violence, which are disproportionately concentrated in the North End and broader inner city.

What is especially significant about the North End early in the century is that, poor as people were, most were working, and in a wide variety of jobs:

“The streets south of Selkirk Avenue were inhabited by working class and lower-middle class families. On Flora Avenue between King and Salter, among other people, there lived three labourers, several caretakers, two clerks, a warehouseman, and a peddler. There were also tradesmen, some with shops on Main: a blacksmith, a printer, a tinsmith, a plumber, and a harness maker. There were three tailors, one of whom, Hyman Gunn, was a manufacturer employing other tailors in his factory on Logan....On Stella Avenue, the street south of Flora, lived people with a similar mixture of occupations: six labourers, eight clerks, and a number of tradesmen” (Blanchard, 2005, p.205).

Today this neighbourhood is called Lord Selkirk Park, and 2001 Census of Canada data show that 87.8 percent of residents, almost nine in ten, have incomes below the Statistics Canada Low-Income Cut-Off, revealing the persistence of poverty in the area over a 100 year period. Especially revealing, however, is that in 2001 almost one in four residents of the area were unemployed, four times the rate for Winnipeg as a whole, and the labour force participation rate was just over one in three residents, half the rate for Winnipeg as a whole (Census of Canada 2001). This reveals not only that poverty has persisted in this North End neighbourhood, but also that the relationship of the poor to the labour market has changed dramatically. There are still many who are among the working poor today (Just Incomes Coalition 2005), but a much higher proportion of the poor in Winnipeg’s North End and broader inner city today are detached from the labour market, and are not a part of the working class. This is the case also for young people, in particular young Aboriginal people (Lezubski, Silver and Black, 2000). This structural reality has

important cultural consequences, not the least of which is high rates of gang and illegal drug activity, and of violence.

There was a serious drinking problem in Winnipeg early in the twentieth century, and a crime problem as well. But it was of a different scale and character than today. Gray (1970, pp. 8-10) observes that early in the twentieth century “Winnipeg was as crime-ridden a city as there was in Canada, and liquor was at the bottom of it all”. It was, he asserts, “one of the most drunken cities in the country,” with rates of drinking convictions double those for Ontario and Quebec. Particularly between the CNR station at Main Street and Broadway, and the CPR station at Main and Higgins, there was a long line of bars and drinking hotels, and “the greatest assemblage of pimps, pickpockets, confidence men, thugs, and sneak thieves in the country....Pickpockets were such a menace that the police department had a special detail which concentrated on ‘dips’”. Yet the violence that Gray describes, particularly among youth in the North End, involved, for the most part, fist-fights in school yards, plus the occasional serious adult beating related to drunkenness, plus, as today, high rates of domestic abuse. But the street violence rooted in the poverty of early twentieth century Winnipeg bears little resemblance to the gangs, drugs and violence of today.

In the first half of the twentieth century, the North End was a thriving cultural centre, with a remarkably wide range of social, cultural and educational organizations built largely by ethnic associations. There were newspapers published in many European languages, churches and synagogues, music and drama societies, literary associations, sports clubs, a wide range of alternative schools which kept alive traditional cultures and languages. There were frequent public speeches, dramatic productions, and musical events. Gray (1970, p. 127) recalls that “there was a music teacher in every block in the North End to give the Jewish, Ukrainian, and Polish kids massive degrees of musical instruction weekly”. A thriving co-operative sector emerged, meeting the needs of many North End residents (Mochoruk 2000). Labour temples were constructed, mutual aid societies created. And radical politics of a bewildering variety of kinds (Smith, 1990, especially Chapter 1) emerged out of the socially and culturally thriving, yet economically disadvantaged, North End.

The result was a real sense of pride about being a North Ender. As Roz Usisken (p.18) has described it:

“ Contrary to middle class, dominant stereotypes which depicted the East European immigrant as ‘uncultured’, as suffering from cultural deprivation, many of the North End inhabitants brought with them to the new country an extensive cultural heritage of ancient traditions...[from which] they derived a dignity denied them by the dominant society”.

Usisken’s observation draws attention to one of the very important differences between the poverty of then and now. Today, disproportionate numbers of the poor are Aboriginal people in Winnipeg’s North End and broader inner city. Their poverty is deepened and made more complex by the fact that Canadian governments deliberately set about to

destroy their cultures, and justified doing so on the grounds, the *false* grounds, that Aboriginal people and their cultures were and are inferior to European.

Many Aboriginal people have internalized this false belief. “Aboriginal people start to believe that we are incapable of learning and that the colonizers’ degrading images and beliefs about Aboriginal people and our ways of being are true” (Hart, 2002, p. 27). The result is a deep sense of despair and hopelessness. “Once Aboriginal persons internalize the colonization processes, we feel confused and powerless....We may implode with overwhelming feelings of sadness or explode with feelings of anger. Some try to escape this state through alcohol, drugs and/or other forms of self-abuse” (Hart, 2002, p.27).

In Beatrice Culleton’s emotional novel, set, like Tomson Highway’s, in the late 1960s-early 1970s, the same anti-Aboriginal racism and brutal violence is depicted, ending with the suicide of April Raintree’s Metis sister Cheryl. It is not just that her violent end, and the violence visited more generally upon April and Cheryl Raintree, is the product of the complex and racialized poverty and social exclusion that characterize late twentieth and early twenty-first century Winnipeg. It is also that Aboriginal people, treated with scorn and disdain by the dominant culture, are made to feel shame about their being Aboriginal. April Raintree and Jeremiah Okimasis both seek to abandon that part of their identity, but ultimately cannot. They are Aboriginal. The path open to Sandor Hunyadi, the young Hungarian man from North End Winnipeg earlier in the century, who was able to change identity simply by changing his name, is not open to those who are Aboriginal.

This historic way out of the North End, the acculturation and assimilation chosen by and open to so many descendants of Eastern European immigrants after the Second World War, is now not available to many Aboriginal people. Their appearance alone, that is, the fact that they continue to be visibly Aboriginal, rules out such an option. As Sugrue (1996, p. 9) observes in his historical analysis of the emergence of a new kind of poverty in late twentieth-century Detroit: “To be fully American was to be white”. To be other than white, to be African-American or Aboriginal, for example, makes the assimilationist route taken by Sandor Hunyadi and other Eastern European immigrants out of the North End exceptionally difficult. This reality is accentuated today because jobs with which a family can be supported are in dramatically shorter supply due to changes in the global labour market.

The resulting sense of entrapment, of there being no legitimate route out of poverty, can manifest itself in the kinds of violent scenes described so graphically by Highway and Culleton, and more recently and even more harshly in Sabrina Bernardo’s 2007 inner-city Winnipeg novel, *Inner City Girl Like Me*. The dignity that early twentieth-century Eastern European immigrants derived, as described by Usiskin, from “an extensive cultural heritage of ancient traditions”, is much less available to Aboriginal people today, the result in large part of the deliberate efforts of the Canadian state---via the residential schools and various prohibitions on language retention and cultural and spiritual practices (Milloy, 1999)---to destroy their cultures, to systematically remove *their* “extensive cultural heritage of ancient traditions”.

Most of the North End cultural richness of the early twentieth century was unknown to the largely Anglo-Saxon south end of the city; so too is the highly effective rebuilding of Aboriginal cultures currently underway in today's North End. Most appropriately, and necessarily, a major part of an anti-poverty strategy in Winnipeg's North End today is the re-building, by Aboriginal people, of a knowledge of and sense of pride in their historic cultures. Yet these initiatives, like the rich cultural practices of Eastern Europeans in the early 20th century, remain largely unknown beyond the inner city.

Then, as now, the segregation resulted in ignorance, and lack of tolerance. As Artibise (1975, p.173) has described it: "Many Winnipeggers never lived in mixed neighborhoods and thus failed to develop the tolerance which must exist in such areas....many residents escaped the demands of respect for different goals and values". Elsewhere, Artibise (1979, p. 10) observed that "Winnipeg's commercial elite had little interaction with other segments of the Winnipeg community". Among Winnipeg's elite, the segregation led not only to ignorance and lack of respect, but also to 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).

Those in positions of authority looked upon the residents of the North End with condescension and disdain, and "spent only a small fraction of their budgets on such community services as sanitation, health departments or welfare" (Artibise, 1981, p. 216). This was, as Artibise (1979, p. 15) has argued, the result of the "failure of Winnipeg's leadership to develop a mature social conscience". Many are the echoes from the past that can still be heard in the present.

Part Two: Post-Second World War Changes in the North End

After the Second World War large numbers of the descendants of Eastern European immigrants left the North End—part of the continent-wide process of suburbanization (Jackson 1985). Between 1951 and 1961 Jews in the North End declined by half, from 12,389 to 6536, and Ukrainians by 10 percent (Artibise, 1977, p.174). While just over two percent of Jews in Winnipeg lived in the suburbs in 1941, by 1961 just over 44 percent did so—most in West Kildonan, River Heights or Tuxedo (Rosenberg, 1961). This process continued for decades, as those who could afford it left for the suburbs. From 1941 to 2001, while the population of Winnipeg grew from 300,000 to 674,000, that of the inner city declined from 153,700 to 93,800---from 51.2 percent to 13.9 percent of Winnipeg's total population (Lezubski, Silver and Black, 2000, p.30).

This spatial and social movement was made possible, in part, because the discrimination experienced earlier by those of Eastern European descent was beginning to dissipate. Discrimination did not disappear in the post-Second World War era; it was simply re-

directed to the next group who moved into the city at the bottom rung of the socio-economic ladder and who, like the Eastern Europeans of the early part of the century, looked and behaved differently. Nevertheless, Artibise (1977, p.174) has observed that “...during the 1950s large numbers of non-Anglo-Saxons acquired a relative degree of affluence and were accorded by the charter group increasing degrees of respect and tolerance”. Occupations like medicine and law, largely closed to non-Anglo-Saxons throughout the first part of the century, were opened, creating opportunities that were eagerly seized, and many of the North End’s most skilled and talented sons and daughters left for the bigger spaces and newer homes of the suburbs.

As they moved, businesses followed. The North End and broader inner city was ‘hollowed out’. This process was fueled by massive government subsidies for the construction of highways and bridges and other infrastructure to service the new suburban communities, and government support for mortgages for buyers of new homes. By contrast, relatively little public investment was directed at the hollowed out North End (Artibise, 1981, p. 216). The result was that those who stayed behind were disproportionately those who could not afford to move to the suburbs; their older homes and neighbourhoods suffered a relative lack of government investment.

As people moved out of the North End, 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 (see Table Two below). 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 further spatial concentration of poverty.

Simultaneously, the thriving commercial life of the North End atrophied. Children chose not to take over the small corner grocery stores that their parents had owned, and in the back or on the top of which many had lived. It is not hard to see why. Even before the post-war exodus, life as a small North End shop-keeper was difficult. Most were poor: too many small stores; not enough local purchasing power; too much corporate competition.

“Lots of stores closed. See, we used to have a lot of corner grocery stores...What really influenced the change were the big stores, you know, the Safeways. That’s what made the big change. And then of course the malls started. That’s what really tore everything apart, that’s what broke up the type of community life that you had in the area. The little corner groceries closed down— couldn’t compete. They couldn’t compete” (quoted in August, 2004, pp.36-37).

The loss of large numbers of skilled, working age people, and the demise of small-business commercial life, took its toll on the rich social and cultural life of the North End. It too, began to atrophy:

“The Halls began to suffer and the organizations suffered as well. There was a Jewish synagogue right over here on McGregor and Magnus, where there is [now] a filling station. And there was a Jewish school right next door. That’s gone. People moved and so the churches...began to disappear” (quoted in August, 2004, p.39).

The drama and music societies, literary associations and sports clubs, the public speeches, ethnic newspapers and radical politics, all atrophied. The North End changed, and changed dramatically.

Other changes, also the products of broad socio-economic forces, followed in rapid succession. In the late 1960s-early 1970s the process of de-industrialization, a central part of what is now commonly called globalization, began to create a massive shift in the character of the labour market, that is, in the kinds of jobs available to people, in Winnipeg as elsewhere. Industrial jobs---in factories, packinghouses, warehouses, for example---on which people with relatively low levels of formal education could raise a family, began to disappear, not only to the suburbs but out of the country entirely. This is a process still underway. These jobs have increasingly been replaced by service sector jobs, in retail or fast food restaurants, for example, that are today often called ‘contingent’ jobs (Teepie 2000; Broad 2006), because they are frequently part-time, low-waged, and without benefits, security or union protections. By 2007, for the first time, retail jobs outnumbered industrial jobs in Canada, a process long underway and not yet over (Statistics Canada, August 27, 2008). Large numbers of these are jobs that cannot support a family. This changing character of the labour market has had a dramatic effect on the character of poverty, in Winnipeg and elsewhere (Wilson 1987; 1996).

At precisely the time that suburbanization and globalization were removing jobs and people from the North End and inner city of Winnipeg, “hollowing out” the inner city, Aboriginal people began to move in growing numbers from rural and northern communities to urban centres, especially in western Canada. Table One shows the rapid growth in the numbers of Aboriginal people in Winnipeg, starting in the 1960s. In 1971 Aboriginal people represented just over one percent of Winnipeg’s population; by 2006 they comprised ten percent of Winnipeg’s total population.

Table One
Aboriginal People Resident in Winnipeg, 1951-2006

1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	1996	2001	2006
210	1082	4940	16,575	35,150	45,750	55,755	68,380

Source: Census of Canada, various dates. (These numbers are not strictly comparable due to changing Census definitions. Figures for 1991 and later are for those who self-identify as Aboriginal).

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. At the same time, Aboriginal newcomers---like the Eastern European newcomers of the early 20th century---faced a wall of racism and job discrimination.

Newspaper accounts of the time make this evident. Interviews and conversations with Aboriginal people repeatedly cite incidents of job-related discrimination (Silver 2006b). In the early 21st century, a very different employment opportunity structure faces young people with limited levels of formal education. For young Aboriginal people in particular, de-industrialization plus employment discrimination has been a devastating combination. This structural reality has been a crucial causal factor in the rise, in Winnipeg's inner city as elsewhere, of the gangs, drugs and street-level violence that are an important new feature of persistent poverty in Winnipeg.

This harsh urban reality was worsened by many newcomers' exposure to slum landlords. For example, a 1959 report by the City Welfare Department described a small number of slum landlords accumulating large profits, while incurring repeated housing violations. The report showed what the four landlords—called A, B, C and D in the *Winnipeg Tribune* account—paid in taxes, and earned in rent, and the numbers of buildings they rented out (see Table Two).

Table Two
Taxes Paid and Rent Received by Four
North End Winnipeg Slum Landlords
1959

	<u>Taxes paid</u>	<u>rent received</u>	<u>Ratio: rent to taxes</u>	<u>buildings</u>
A.	\$ 7442	\$75,405	10 to 1	13
B.	3597	35,124	10 to 1	21
C.	7675	70,890	9 to 1	18
D.	2048	29,282	15 to 1	29

Source: *Winnipeg Tribune*, October 14, 1959.

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These four landlords took in rent that was ten times or more the annual taxes paid on their many properties. But their rental revenues were not invested in the maintenance of their properties. In 1958 they incurred 388 violations of the Health Act. From 1955 to 1958 they had a total of 1497 such violations, including: 117 for defective walls, floors and ceilings; 86 for bed bugs; 66 for insufficient plumbing; 54 for cockroaches; 38 for insufficient heat; and 10 for rats. As far as housing was concerned, little had changed since early in the century.

These newcomers were also the targets of racial abuse, as evidenced by a *Winnipeg Tribune* (August 25, 1962) story about Jarvis Avenue, previously near the heart of the Jewish North End and by the 1960s and 1970s home to many newly-arriving Aboriginal people. Manley Steiman, City of Winnipeg Health Inspector, "cites Jarvis Ave. itself as being, undoubtedly, the worst street in the entire city" (Yauk, 1973, pp. 45-46). Many houses on Jarvis had been little more than shacks from the beginning of the century; many lots, small as they were, had two or more dwellings squeezed onto them. The *Tribune* story began: "The police, with ponderous legal irony, call it Jarvis Boulevard.

Others, with more bitterness, have named it Tomahawk Row”. In September, 1962, the *Tribune* described a Winnipeg Police Commission report.

The Report...says the area has been a ‘problem’ for many years. It adds it has become worse recently with the arrival ‘of more persons of Indian racial origin. The district now appears to have become an Indian and Metis community’Some 27 single and multiple dwellings are completely occupied by persons of Indian origin....The report says over 100 persons, mostly Indians, have been arrested in the area so far this year (*Winnipeg Tribune*, September 1962).

As had been the case throughout the twentieth century, the most recently-arrived, non-Anglo Saxon inhabitants of Winnipeg’s North End were blamed for the area’s poverty. Recall the Associated Charities Bureau writing in 1912, referring not to Aboriginal newcomers but to Eastern European immigrants, about their “ thriftlessness, mismanagement, unemployment due to incompetence, intemperance, immorality, desertion of the family and domestic quarrels” (p. 3 above). Throughout the twentieth century, and continuing to this day, the response to poverty in Winnipeg has been to blame the victim, the Other. The response has been and continues to be to blame those who have most recently arrived in the city and who as a consequence are located socio-economically on the bottom rung of the ladder, and whose appearance and behaviour are different. The poor, whether Eastern European immigrants or Aboriginal people or otherwise, have been constructed simplistically and stereotypically. As Sugrue (1996, p. 9) has described this, referring to the case of Detroit: “To the majority of untutored white observers, visible poverty, overcrowding, and deteriorating houses were signs of individual moral deficiencies, not manifestations of structural inequalities”. Causality is attributed to personal characteristics, and to the ‘otherness’, and the ‘racial-ness’, of the poor. To do otherwise would be to open the door to the possibility that the cause might be the capitalist system, or the class-based policies of the state, or both. It has always been safer and easier to rely upon stereotypes.

The 1962 report described by the *Winnipeg Tribune* is typical in condemning an entire group, and in making no attempt to *explain* the observed behaviour of some members of the group. No mention is made of the racism that Aboriginal people faced upon arrival in Winnipeg. No mention is made of the activities of avaricious slum landlords. No mention is made of the devastating impact of colonization upon Aboriginal people---that they were stripped of their historic lands, that their economic and political systems were destroyed, that they were pushed onto often distant reserves, subjected to the control of the *Indian Act* and the Indian Agent, and denied the right to practice their spirituality and their cultures. Perhaps most importantly, no mention was made of the fact that 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. Aboriginal children in residential schools, for example, were denied the right to speak their languages, and were taught to be ashamed of being Aboriginal.

Together, these things done to Aboriginal people are what they now call colonization, and this process of colonization has had devastating effects, that constitute a major part of the explanation for the poverty so many Aboriginal people now experience. None of this was included in the *Winnipeg Tribune* article. The easier and more common approach to such matters is to blame the victim, as was done earlier in the century when it was Eastern European immigrants---the ‘bohunks’, ‘dumb hunkies’, ‘drunkards’ of the time (p. 5 above)---who struggled with poverty and were subjected to vile and vicious forms of racism.

The common practice, the norm, is to denigrate the histories and cultures of those on the bottom rung of the ladder, whoever they may be at a given time, and to attribute their being on the bottom rung to their cultural and personal failings. Winnipeg has a long and dishonourable history of subjecting the inhabitants of the North End to this kind of racist construction of poverty and its causes.

Part Three: Poverty in Winnipeg Today

3.1 The Problems

Poverty persists in Winnipeg’s inner city today. Indeed, poverty has become, if anything, deeper and more complex. This can be described with numbers, as below, and these numbers, most relating to income, reveal a serious problem. But the poverty in Winnipeg today is about much more than a shortage of income.

Poverty in today’s Winnipeg has been described as “spatially concentrated racialized poverty” (Silver 2008). It is spatially concentrated in that a much higher proportion of those who live in Winnipeg’s inner city, including the North End, are poor, than is the case for Winnipeg as a whole, and this spatial concentration grew in the two decades from 1981 to 2001 (Carter, January 2005, p.3). It is racialized in that a much higher proportion of Aboriginal people are poor, than is the case for the population as a whole (Lezubski, Silver and Black, 2000). 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).

Table Three shows poverty rates and related indicators in Winnipeg, Winnipeg’s inner city, and Lord Selkirk Park, based on 2001 Census Canada data. It reveals that poverty is concentrated in the inner city, and is particularly concentrated in Lord Selkirk Park, where a high proportion of residents are Aboriginal.

Table Three
Poverty and Related Indicators 2001:
Winnipeg; Winnipeg Inner City; Lord Selkirk Park

Selected Indicator	Lord Selkirk Park	Inner-city	Winnipeg
Population under 15 years of Age	33.5%	18.3%	19.1%
Population Over 65 Years of Age	19.0%	13.5%	13.5%
Aboriginal Population as % of Total	54.3%	19.2%	8.6%
Lone-Parent Families (both sexes as % of all families)	47.7%	29.6%	18.5%
Less than high school (Adults 20 years of age or older)	67.9%	36.0%	28.2%
Adult Unemployment Rate	23.4%	9.0%	5.7%
Youth (15-24) Unemployment Rate	45.5%	13.0%	10.9%
Adult Labour Force Participation	35.8%	63.0%	68.1%
Youth (15-24) labour force Participation Rate	44%	66.4%	71.3%
Median household Income \$	\$14,696	\$26,362	\$43,383
Household Poverty Rate	87.8%	44.1%	24.7%

Source: Census of Canada

Children growing up in poor families, often called child poverty, is especially prevalent in Winnipeg. 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 (Social Planning Council of Winnipeg 2006).

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 Canadian Council on Social Development (1994, p. 1) 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”

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, and only 22 percent in the North End (Brownell et al 2004, pp.5-6). 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 future poverty (Silver 2007, Figure 7.3, p. 195), and in this fashion poverty is reproduced across generations, making child poverty a particularly serious problem. It is notable in this regard that in 1911, a *Globe and Mail* survey found that literacy rates were lower in Winnipeg than in any other Canadian city of the time (Miller, 1997, p. 148). The close association between poverty and lowered educational attainment has persisted across the decades.

So too have the health inequities described above (pp. 2-3). The Manitoba Centre for Health Policy (Brownell et al. 2003) recently reported that residents in Winnipeg’s North End and broader inner city had poorer health---a higher incidence of death from heart disease, respiratory disease, cancer and injury, for example---than residents in the rest of Winnipeg, and that this was related to lower average incomes and higher rates of unemployment in low-income neighbourhoods. A wealth of studies in Canada, the US and the UK confirm that today, as in the past, “Lower socioeconomic status is associated with poorer health outcomes”.

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 inner-city neighbourhoods (see Table Three); and that the Aboriginal population is younger and growing faster than the population as a whole (Hull 2008), creating a form of spatially concentrated racialized poverty in those neighbourhoods that threatens to grow worse with time. A study using 1996 Census of Canada data (Lezubski, Silver and Black 2000, p. 39) found that just over 50 percent of all inner-city Winnipeg households had incomes below the Statistics Canada Low-Income Cut Off (LICO), and just over 80 percent, or four in every five, of Aboriginal households in Winnipeg’s inner city had incomes below the LICO. 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”.

These various data show that the incidence of poverty and associated problems is high in Manitoba, is particularly high among Aboriginal peoples, and in Winnipeg is spatially concentrated in, although by no means confined to, 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 socio-economic and demographic forces. Poverty in Canada as a whole has been persistently high since at least 1980, and reached particularly high levels in the mid-1990s, and although it has since declined somewhat, poverty in Canada is still at the level it was in 1980, almost three decades ago (Silver 2007, pp. 182-183).

The problem of poverty in Winnipeg’s inner city is, however, about more than a shortage of income, as important as that is. Many of the poor in Winnipeg’s inner city today are detached from the labour market, and from the mainstream national and global economy. This creates a different kind of poverty than that of early twentieth century North End Winnipeg. Then, poverty affected most of the working class, and was simply a given for most workers and their families; now, a much higher proportion of those who are poor are *not* a part of the working class. It is therefore a different *kind* of poverty. As Wilson (1998, p.2) has argued, referring to the case of American inner cities:

A neighbourhood in which people are poor, but employed, is much different from a neighbourhood in which people are poor and jobless.... many of today’s problems in America’s inner-city ghetto neighbourhoods---crime, family dissolution, welfare, low levels of social organization, and so on---are in major measures related to the disappearance of work.

This relative joblessness creates what Wacquant (2007, pp. 66 and 68) describes as a “new regime of marginality”, characterized by the emergence of spatially delineated “zones for the urban outcasts”, where a deep sense of hopelessness sets in.

Early in the twentieth century the North End poor were the underpaid and exploited working class, and as such were an integral part of the economy of the time. This gave them some power, as evidenced for example by the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike. For many in the inner city today, this is not the case. They are disconnected from the mainstream economy and relatively powerless as a consequence. As former Attorney-General of Manitoba Roland Penner has described it: “The poor are not just the rich without money. The poor are powerless....That’s what poverty is all about. It’s about powerlessness; about the inability to change the course of one’s life” (quoted in Smith, 2007).

It is this powerlessness that is the problem, or a major part of the problem, with the late twentieth-early twenty first century poverty of Winnipeg’s inner city. The poor are, and

feel themselves to be, powerless, unable to change the course of their lives. They are, and feel, trapped. Many of the young among them act out, often in violent and/or self-destructive ways. Many among them feel a lack of self-esteem and of self-confidence; a sense of worthlessness; a lack of hope for the future—a hopelessness. 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, racism, de-industrialization and related phenomena have eroded that positive psychological sense; they have done and continue to do deep psychological damage, especially but not only to Aboriginal people.

This damage is less a function of personal failings, than of broad structural and historical forces. This damage is constantly reinforced by the social and spatial segregation of the poor, and by the repeated recourse to a ‘blame the poor’ form of public discourse, what Wacquant (1999, p. 1664) has described as a “discourse of demonization”.

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).

3.2 Grassroots Responses

Yet in the case of Winnipeg’s inner city this depiction is only partially true. Alongside the despair, the deep sense of hopelessness that so characterizes much of Winnipeg inner-city poverty today, there has emerged a remarkable array of community-based organizations (CBOs) that are creative and effective in combating poverty. Although different in some important respects, they have emerged in much the same empowering, self-help fashion as the vibrant, ethnic-based organizations that breathed such vibrancy into the North End of the early twentieth century. It is not only the existence and form of poverty in Winnipeg today, but the responses of the poor themselves, about which we can say, “it’s the same, but it’s different”.

Today’s response to inner-city poverty, building gradually as it has over the past thirty years even while poverty has deepened and morphed into its new and more complex form, is a bottom-up, ‘home-made’ community development that takes the form of a multiplicity of relatively small community-based organizations. These CBOs are creative and innovative. The work they do is, for the most part, designed and driven by inner-city people, not outside ‘experts’. In this respect this community development is similar to the vast array of cultural organizations that so enriched the early twentieth century North

End. As was the case then, this work goes largely unseen by those outside the inner city, made invisible by the lenses created by stereotypes and stigma, by ignorance and condescension.

These CBOs include neighbourhood renewal corporations, such as the North End Community Renewal Corporation, the Spence Neighbourhood Association and the West Broadway Development Corporation; women's organizations, like the North End Women's Resource Centre, the North Point Douglas Women's Centre and the West Central Women's Resource Centre; family and youth centres such as the Andrews Street Family Centre, Rossbrook House and Wolseley Family Place. These are but the tip of the iceberg of a rich array of such CBOs.

Working alongside and often in cooperation are distinctly Aboriginal CBOs. Most practice a "holistic" community development that takes some version of the following form (for a fuller description see Silver, 2006a, ch. 5). First, Aboriginal community development starts with the individual, and the need to heal from the ongoing damage of colonization and racism; healthy communities require that individuals be healthy and whole. Second, individuals cannot heal without strong and healthy communities, and so this holistic community development focuses simultaneously on building Aboriginal communities, especially by developing a knowledge and appreciation of Aboriginal cultures. Third, this approach requires Aboriginal organizations---created by, and run by and for, Aboriginal people themselves, in a fashion consistent with Aboriginal cultural values. Finally, all of this is rooted in an ideological understanding of the impact of colonization, and the need to de-colonize.

By de-colonizing is meant, 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. De-colonization means learning to see the causal factors that lie beneath the simplistic, blame-the-victim stereotypes that have always been such a central part of Winnipeg's dominant culture. Knowing this is not intended to produce victims; it is intended to liberate and empower, by making Aboriginal people aware that they themselves are not the problem; it is intended to make a knowledge and appreciation of their rich Aboriginal heritage a source of individual and collective strength and pride. Examples of the many Aboriginal organizations working in this way, or some variant of this way, include: the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre, Ndinawemaaganag Endawaad, Ka Ni Kanichihk, the Native Women's Transition Centre, and the Urban Circle Training Centre. 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 has been elsewhere described as "organic intellectuals" (Silver, 2006a). By this term is meant people who are deeply knowledgeable about who they are, about how they came to be constructed as they have been by broad historical forces, and about how to build for positive change.

Governments have played an important role in contributing to the funding of these inner-city CBOs. 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 part of the start-up money for the bottom-up initiatives described above, and the current provincial government's Neighbourhoods Alive! program funds inner-city revitalization efforts, and is effective and successful.

3.3 The Limits of Grassroots Responses

Yet the kind and amount of government support that is necessary if today's inner-city poverty is to be defeated is not there. The poverty in Winnipeg's inner city is deeply entrenched, complex, and thoroughly resistant to short-term or uni-dimensional solutions. Its defeat requires public investment on a scale much larger than has been the case to date, undertaken consistently over a long period of time, fifteen or twenty years, and implemented in a much more strategic fashion than has so far been the case. The political will for an undertaking of this scale is simply not there.

This takes us back full circle to the poverty of the North End early in the twentieth century. The North End then, as now, was segregated from the rest of the city, spatially and socially. This promoted ignorance of and a lack of tolerance for those who lived there -- an intolerance deepened by the different-ness, the Other-ness, of the Eastern European residents of the North End. The result was a failure, indeed a refusal, on the part of the city's leaders to invest in the North End. Artibise (1979, p. 15) attributed this to the "failure of Winnipeg's leadership to develop a mature social conscience". Evidence to date suggests that this may still be the case today.

In addition we have experienced, at a national and global level, as well as, albeit to a somewhat lesser extent, at a provincial and civic level, some thirty years of an ideological shift *against* the measures that would be needed to adequately address inner-city poverty in Winnipeg. Some political parties are simply opposed, on ideological grounds, to the degree of government involvement that would be necessary. Others fear that such an expanded government role with its necessarily higher taxes would prompt an electoral backlash from the sprawling suburbs that now encircle, both literally and figuratively, the inner city. None appear to be prepared to play the public education role that would be necessary to counter the "discourse of demonization" (Wacquant 1999, p. 1664) that has been a constant as regards poverty these past 100 years and that so distorts the understanding that is the necessary foundation for solutions.

Part Four: The Future of Poverty in Winnipeg

Poverty has persisted over the past 100 years, but it has also changed, especially in the past 30 years, and some of these changes are especially important. Today, at the start of the twenty-first century, a higher proportion of those who are poor than was the case earlier in the twentieth century are outside of and detached from the paid labour force, and are thus outside of and marginalized from the mainstream of society. In some cases this detachment has become inter-generational, and thus deeply rooted, contributing to

the emergence of norms and values that are also outside of, and marginalized from, the mainstream of society.

This creates a different kind of poverty than earlier in the 20th century, when poverty was largely a working class phenomenon, and a function of the appallingly low wages paid by employers. The 'jobless poverty' and related social exclusion of today is a major contributing factor in the emergence of a culture of despair and hopelessness, that increasingly manifests itself in the prevalence of drugs, gangs, and levels and forms of violence far beyond what prevailed in poor North End neighbourhoods in the first half of the twentieth century. The fact that families, cultures and communities are now, in some important respects, less strong and resilient than in the early twentieth century is another distinguishing feature of today's poverty. Poverty has persisted in Winnipeg over these many decades, and in some ways---the relentless denigration of the poor, poverty's association with racist attitudes, its spatial concentration in the North End and broader inner city---it remains unchanged. But the separation of large numbers of today's poor from the labour market is the major causal factor in creating changes in the character of poverty that are especially worrisome.

There are those who argue (Wacquant 2007; 1999) that we are at risk, because of changes in the global political economy, of this new form of spatially concentrated racialized poverty, with all its debilitating effects, becoming a permanent feature of the twenty-first century urban landscape, in Winnipeg and elsewhere. It is now the case, for the first time in human history, that a majority of the world's people live in urban centres, and most of them live in 'slums' (Davis, 2006). In some American cases, large swaths of inner cities have been fully abandoned and have been allowed to return to nature, so hopeless has the deterioration been seen to have become. This is dramatically the case, for example, in Detroit, where one can walk for miles in what was once the inner city without seeing another human being (Solnit, 2007). Many inner cities---and in the European case, suburban rings---are plagued by gangs, drugs and remarkable, deeply troubling levels of violence. These worsening problems, together with persistent racism directed especially, in the case of Winnipeg, at Aboriginal people, add to and reinforce a spatial and social segregation that keeps Winnipeg divided, and prevents serious efforts to find solutions. Thus the problems created by poverty persist, even as they change and, in many important respects, worsen.

These outcomes are a measure of the failure of our society, over a period of 100 years and more, to develop and implement those measures that would eradicate the poverty that has been a constant, albeit changing, feature of Winnipeg's landscape and culture. Rather than develop and implement successful anti-poverty measures, we have collectively chosen to blame the poor themselves. We have chosen to marginalize and exclude the poor, to construct them as the Other, even to demonize them. Even when governments have attempted to address the issue of poverty, they have done so in a partial, time-limited, haphazard fashion. The poor themselves, in the historic North End as in today's inner city, have fashioned many highly effective, locally-based organizations and activities that have been creative and effective, but of necessity, given their poverty, too limited to promote the large-scale socio-economic transformation that is needed if

poverty is to be defeated. That kind of transformation requires a broader societal vision, and a collective commitment to real change. In the absence of such vision and commitment, the poverty that now exists in Winnipeg will not only persist, but worsen and spread, as is happening in many American urban centres and European suburban rings.

Will Winnipeg follow this path? The answer to that question requires an answer to a second question: will governments, federal, provincial and civic, commit to the large-scale, long-term strategic public investment that is the necessary condition for overcoming the new and complex poverty that is now so deeply entrenched in Winnipeg's inner city? At the moment, there is no sign of this happening. Should this not happen, the inner city will continue to spread, and Winnipeg will march inexorably toward a much less attractive future for all. Yet we know that major sea-changes occur in politics; we know that in a relatively brief period society, driven by necessity or in some cases by inspired and visionary leadership, can move in very different directions. This is what is now needed to begin to solve Winnipeg's poverty.

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