



On the Edge of Change 2008:

The 6th Annual Community Development and Community Economic Development Gathering

Final Report

On Friday November 28th, 2008, the 6th Annual Community Development and Community Economic Development Gathering was held at St. John's High School, in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The Gathering was organized in order to provide a free professional development, service learning, and networking opportunity for staff of community organizations, non-profit agencies, civil servants, representatives from funding organizations, active community organizations, seniors, aboriginal, and newcomer organizations, neighbourhood resident associations, students, academics, consultants, and individual residents of Winnipeg and rural Manitoba who were interested in community development and community economic development. Given the multidisciplinary nature of community development and community economic development,

the Gathering housed a wide assortment of stakeholders interested in community development activities and initiatives. Planning and implementing an event for such a dynamic audience was a truly unique and much appreciated undertaking for all parties involved.

Participants in the 2008 Gathering took part in a full day of collaborative learning and connecting. Participants were able to network with old acquaintances as well as discover new friendships. Tangible and non-tangible resources were shared by participants who often work together to build stronger, healthier, and more inclusive communities. The Gathering ultimately provided an opportunity for seasoned CED'ers (aficionados) as well as CED newcomers to share experiences and become engaged in their own community development and

community economic development scene.

The Canadian Community Economic Development Network (CCEDNet) hosted the 2008 Gathering in partnership with the United Way of Winnipeg, Community Economic Development Technical Assistance Support (CEDTAS), the Community Development and Community Economic Development Training Intermediary, Community Futures, SEED Winnipeg, Ndinawe Endawaad, Volunteer Manitoba, the Manitoba Cooperative Association, and the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority.

This year's Gathering repeated last year's decision to host the event in the heart of Winnipeg's inner city, at St. John's High School. The inner city itself is an area rich in local leadership and has been at the forefront of many different community development and community economic development initiatives over the years. The Gathering's planning committee decided to host the event at St. John's High School since the Winnipeg's inner city has made many positive, creative, and ground breaking community development and community economic development contributions. It was also important, in conjunction with the Gathering's geographical location, to position the Gathering as a community building exercise that would help massage the negative perceptions that currently exist about Winnipeg's north end. St. John's High School was also an

appropriate venue for the Gathering as they have been involved with the Youth Opportunity Project for many years. In addition, sixteen Y.O.P students volunteered their time for the entire day and assisted at the registration table, setting up for food breaks and lunch, coffee distribution, elevator access, and as hallway guides and monitors. The students, in turn, received a glimpse of how active Winnipeg's community economic development community really is. Locating the Gathering in the inner city also supported the building of local capacity as it led to increased attendance by community residents.

Over thirty percent of this year's Gathering participants were from outside of Winnipeg from areas such as St Adolphe, Treherne, Kenora, Grandview, Brandon, Portage la Prairie, Thompson, Melita, and Niverville, Manitoba. Also, participants flew in from as far as Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Toronto, Ontario, Victoria, British Columbia and Moncton, New Brunswick. The momentum that the Gathering has gained in the past six years, has expanded beyond the boundaries of Winnipeg, and has become a leading conference opportunity for community economic development practitioners and enthusiasts. The popularity of the Gathering has also stemmed to the newcomer population, with involvement from groups such as the Immigrant and Refugee Council of Manitoba and the Immigrant and Refugee Community

Action Network. With over twelve percent of attendees either working with newcomers or newcomers themselves, this representation at the Gathering is significant, when one considers Manitoba's existing and future immigration policies. The newcomer community continues to strengthen and enrich our prairie city and province through community development and community economic development activities and initiatives.

Lunch time at the Gathering proved to be one of the many highlights and was coordinated by S.E.E.D. Winnipeg. Individual menu items were catered by ten different social enterprises, all of who are members of the social purchasing portal. Neechi Foods, Sun Peak Foods, Mondragon, Ellice Café, Nyam Nyam, and Food for Thought were a few of the caterers who provided the culinary delights. In an effort to be environmentally mindful, compostable dinnerware was purchased from the Waste Reduction store for breakfast, lunch and snack time. All organic waste and compostable items were carefully monitored and collected.



On the Edge of Change

The theme of this year's Gathering, "On the Edge of Change" was carefully chosen to reflect the tremendous changes and upheaval we

are experiencing in our economy and society. The economic crisis gives us reason to reflect on the way our economy is run and creates opportunities for community development and community economic development practitioners in Winnipeg and all around Canada. The theme was based on the idea that this is the perfect time to come forward with creative solutions to our communities' challenges and threats. Many of the days workshops spoke to this crisis and opportunity.



Workshops

In addition to an opening and closing by an aboriginal elder and drummer, thirty six workshops were offered at Gathering 2008. Workshops were loosely organized in six streams:

1. Introductory Session and CED

Concepts:

- *CED IOI*
- *Transforming or Reforming Capitalism*
- *Alternative Municipal Budgets and Citizens Coalition*
- *CED in Latin America*
- *What do we Know?*

2. Organizational Development

- *Building Partnerships: A Shared Vision*
- *Can't We Just All Get Along*

- *Program Evaluation*
- *Silos or Synergies*
- *Community Development and Advocacy*
- *Measuring Poverty Reduction*
- *Proposal Writing*
- *Dealing with Change*

3. Co-operatives

- *Housing Co-ops*
- *Worker Cooperatives*
- *Co-operatives as a Global Movement*
- *Car Share Co-ops*
- *Farmers Markets Co-ops*
- *Co-op Development Policy in Manitoba*
- *Co-op Wind Farms*

4. Food and the Environment

- *Feeding Manitoba One Cow at a Time: The Harvest Moon Local Food Initiative*
- *Cultivating Community*
- *Manitoba's Eco-guiding Enterprise*
- *Sprawled to Death*

5. Youth

- *Ndinawemaaganag Endaawaad, Our Relatives Home: Discussing Winnipeg's Youth Shelters*
- *Stimulating Youth Citizenship in Community*
- *Putting the YOU in Youth Engagement*

- *CED Through Youth Mentoring*

6. Newcomers

- *Migration as an Economic Growth Strategy*
- *Barriers to Newcomer Integration: Still out in the Cold*
- *Profit Plus: Why Social Enterprises Matter to Newcomers*
- *Changing Policy through Advocacy*

There were also individual workshops that were offered in the wider selection of that did not fit into one steam type. They included a "Transportations Impact on Social Inclusion" workshop, a child care as community economic development session, an "Aboriginal Employment Strategies" session, and "From Standing Trees to Standing Homes".

In total, 36 workshops were offered to participants, who were able to select three of their preference. An outstanding achievement for the Gathering was that all presenters provided their time, expertise, and experiences free of charge for the professional development and community learning event. This effort speaks to the high level of community volunteerism that exists in the Province of Manitoba's (and beyond) community development field. The variety of the workshops reflected the nature of the Gathering's principles –

to be inclusive, creative, and visionary. Most workshops had high attendance numbers and were opportune areas to network and connect with others with similar interests. Each workshop had a room host who encouraged a dialogue period of approximately fifteen to twenty minutes.



CED Strength in Manitoba

The 2008 Community Development and Community Economic Development Gathering was the 6th to be held in Winnipeg, and was attended with over 430 participants. This pays testament to the extensive level of interest in CD and CED in Manitoba. The participants attended from across all professional sectors, cultural backgrounds, and levels of expertise, including rural and urban populations from five different provinces. The 2008 CD/CED Gathering strived to employ as many community development principles in the overall planning stages in order to act as a model for further community development and community economic development conferences. The 'On the Edge of Change' Gathering was the largest regional event focusing on CED issues in Canada. Many of the planning techniques will be incorporated into the planning stages of CCEDNet's national conference in 2009.

The popularity of this event and the tremendous positive feedback provided by all participants proves that Manitoba is occupied with engaging, creative, and enthusiastic, community economic development practitioners and enthusiasts. We are grateful for the generous contributions we have received for this event. The support that has been given to CCEDNet, and other hosting organizations, has ensured that the resources were available to make this community learning event accessible and engaging for everyone (presenters, volunteers, and participants) involved. Total financial contributions toward the conference were \$28,000.00. This modest sum resulted in a free professional development, community learning, resource sharing, friendship building, and networking experience for more than four hundred individuals from all walks of life. As summarized by one participant:

“Excellent Gathering, found a number of ideas to think about, possibly incorporate into my own work and a number of occasions to meet new people and connect with others I know. I felt I gained considerably from the event and am grateful for the opportunity. Also appreciate the cost. I do a lot of volunteer work in my chosen field but have to be very creative economically. I may not have been able to participate had there been a cost. Thank you.”