

‘Our Place, Our Home’: Indigenous Planning, Urban Space, and Decolonization  
in Winnipeg, Manitoba

By

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## Abstract

Indigenous planning continues to emerge globally, with increasing emphasis being placed on Indigenous autonomy and planning practices. Much of its theory, practice, and literature are often oriented toward rural settings, but in Canada, where more and more Aboriginal people continue to move to urban centres, questions of urban Indigenous planning and development are becoming more pertinent. By discussing an example of urban Indigenous planning – specifically the values and characteristics of the Neeginan project or vision for the North Main area of Downtown Winnipeg – this thesis aims to shed some light on urban Indigenous planning, as well as how it may differ from, and overlap with, other forms of planning and other types of spaces and built environments within the city. In doing so, it offers not only an assessment of Indigenous planning as it has been undertaken in a particular urban context. It also offers an assessment of how planning in general can continue to decolonize its practices as it learns to better support and relate to Indigenous priorities and planning approaches.

The analysis relies on interviews with people involved with Neeginan over the years, Neeginan-related planning documents, as well as City of Winnipeg planning documents, to examine three main issues: the distinct qualities of *urban* Indigenous planning in a multicultural context; the ways in which conventional Western planning processes, historically rooted in colonial structures and mindsets, have operated in relation to Aboriginal peoples in Winnipeg; and the ways in which these two issues – the flourishing of Indigenous planning and the decolonization of Western planning practices – might overlap and interact in a discussion of the Neeginan case.

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Figure 1. Context Map of North Downtown Winnipeg

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## Topic Overview and Background

A review of the relevant literature reveals Indigenous planning as a planning approach rooted in Indigenous worldviews and cultures that also has something to offer to conventional Western planning practices. In this thesis I examine the Neeginan concept or vision for the North Main area of Winnipeg, Manitoba, in terms of planning processes, built form, and those of the city around it. Since the late 1960s, 'Neeginan' has connoted various plans and initiatives for and of the Indigenous community in the North Main area of Winnipeg's Downtown. Through discussing Neeginan alongside City-led planning initiatives on North Main, I present an example of what Indigenous planning looks like in a specific urban context, as well as its relationship with that context. The thesis also addresses recent calls for a broadening of what is considered planning – moving beyond conventional 'top-down' models to include diverse groups.

The field of research is the city of Winnipeg, Manitoba, a very relevant context for this type of project as it has the largest number of Aboriginal residents of any city in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2006). Several blocks north of Portage and Main, Downtown Winnipeg's commercial centre, the North Main area has a high concentration of Aboriginal peoples, with organizations such as the Aboriginal Centre of Winnipeg, Neechi Foods Co-op, the Manitoba Métis Federation, and Thunderbird House all clustered in a relatively small area. Downtown was identified in the early 1970s as the locus for a possible "native people's community or 'village'" named Neeginan, a Cree word meaning "our place" (Damas & Smith, 1975, p. 10).

As people living on reserves began to migrate more and more to Canadian cities, including Winnipeg, in the 1950s and onward, they faced a variety of challenging circumstances. These challenges were seen by governments and administrators at the time as stemming from a “clash between the ‘traditional’ culture of First Nations people and the ‘modern’ culture of the city,” an issue that would need to be resolved through Aboriginal people changing “their personalities and cultures to fit into the city’s political and social order” (Hall, 2009, pp. 224-225). Aboriginal Winnipeggers, though, argued that “their cultures were not incompatible with urban living” and that the problems were rooted in lack of access to services of all kinds, and tied to a history of “systemic discrimination” (Hall, 2009, p. 225) that did not give them “immediate and real opportunities to participate fully in the new economies” of Canadian cities (Shead, 2011, p. 342).

Aboriginal community organizers in Winnipeg set about addressing these issues, and the 1975 Neeginan report and proposal (Damas & Smith) was very much a part of this. The area around Main Street and Higgins Avenue was to become a localized hub of Aboriginal social, economic, educational, and cultural activity, but it was not until much later that this vision would gain meaningful traction. In 1992, the Aboriginal Centre of Winnipeg Incorporated purchased the former Canadian Pacific Railway station at the corner of Main and Higgins, retrofitting and redeveloping it with financial assistance from Canadian Heritage, Heritage Manitoba, and the Winnipeg Development Agreement (Shead, 2009, p. 345). The Centre now houses numerous Aboriginal organizations including the Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre and the Centre for Aboriginal Human Resource Development (CAHRD), the latter of which includes the Aboriginal

Community Campus, the Neeginan Institute of Applied Technology, and Kookum's Place daycare. The Neeginan Village (a housing complex for CAHRD students), and the Aboriginal Aerospace Initiative (a program and facility training Aboriginal people for work in the Aerospace Industry) are also along Higgins Avenue, with future developments still in the works (Shead, 2009, p. 347). In the late 1990s, plans also began for the development of Thunderbird House, an architecturally striking cultural and spiritual centre just to the south of the Aboriginal Centre. Part of the original Neeginan vision, this facility includes a sweat lodge (distinctive in the context of an urban environment), and provides a space for numerous traditional ceremonies and gatherings of Aboriginal cultures on an inclusive basis. It has been offering the services and guidance of Aboriginal Elders to Aboriginal people exiting institutions such as the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba – and also to the wider population – through the Elders' services program (Community and Youth Solutions, 2011). Thunderbird House also opens its doors to the non-Aboriginal community, with its main rotunda area offering rental space for a wide range of business meetings, presentations, and other events. While Thunderbird House and the Aboriginal Centre are not formally affiliated, they do represent major components of the overall Neeginan development and planning vision.

This area of Winnipeg has also been the subject of various other types of developments, the 1967 centennial mega-project of the Centennial Concert Hall and Manitoba Museum being one example, the more recent Waterfront Drive redevelopment being another. The United Way, Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, and Youth for Christ buildings are also recent examples. These, like the Aboriginal organizations mentioned above, have made their mark on Main Street. Historically, Downtown (Main

Street included) was from the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries a bustling commercial hub. Culturally it has been and continues to be home to a wide range of groups – not only Aboriginal and European, but also populations from Asian, African, and Middle-Eastern countries. Since its early days of commercial prominence, the area has experienced decline and neglect, and has developed a reputation in the city as a dangerous place. Its reputation, combined with subsequent attempts at revitalization and redevelopment (especially from the 1960s to the 1980s), as well as its evolution into an Aboriginal cultural centre, makes for a rich context in which to study multiple types of planning and development initiatives in a multicultural context (see Figure 1 for a map of the area).

### **Research Questions and Objectives**

This project is not a blow-by-blow history of Neeginan, nor is it an itemized rehashing of the various City-led development schemes for Downtown. Instead, it examines and analyzes the underlying visions and aspirations for planning and development spearheaded by Aboriginal groups as well as the City of Winnipeg in the area particularly around Main and Higgins. Through this approach, I intend to explore three main issues: firstly, since Indigenous planning is still emerging and growing as a series of processes and approaches to planning, I examine what these processes look like in an urban context. Secondly, I explore the ways in which conventional Western planning processes, historically rooted in colonial structures and mindsets, have operated in relation to Aboriginal peoples in Winnipeg. In so doing, I recognize the need for these processes and the planners associated with them to *decolonize*, through self-examination of their

own roles, and also through greater cross-cultural listening and learning from other planning approaches (and

Figure 1: North Downtown Winnipeg Context Map



- 1 Thunderbird House
- 2 Aboriginal Centre of Winnipeg
- 3 Current site of CAHRD facilities, aerospace training, and Neeginan Village
- 4 Manitoba Métis Federation
- 5 Current site of Winnipeg Regional Health Authority building
- 6 Current site of Youth for Christ building
- 7 Intersection of Portage and Main
- 8 West Exchange District
- 9 East Exchange District
- 10 Centennial Concert Hall and Manitoba Museum
- 11 Waterfront Drive

Aerial image: University of Manitoba Data Library Services

as an emerging planner myself, I acknowledge my own role within these processes).

Finally, this project attempts to explore ways in which these two issues – the flourishing

of Indigenous planning and the decolonization of Western planning practices – might overlap and interact in a discussion of the Neeginan case. The following research questions are intended to guide the research and analysis:

1. What is Neeginan, and how has it evolved over time? What features have characterized it, and what values have informed it?
2. What can an examination of Neeginan say about Indigenous planning within urban spaces consisting of diverse and multiple interests, stakeholders, and groups?
3. How does Neeginan's approach compare with non-Indigenous planning approaches and practices, particularly in comparison with City-led planning initiatives for Winnipeg and North Main?
4. What implications might the results of this discussion have for planning theory and practice?

### **Personal Background, Biases, and Limitations**

My interest in this topic stems from previous academic work as well as previous employment with urban Aboriginal groups and rural First Nations. My previous studies in History focused on processes of social and spatial marginalization and how these processes came into play in cross-cultural relationships in Canadian cities. Before attending planning school, I was employed in community work between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Winnipeg, where I also had the opportunity to learn and experience traditional teachings and ceremonies, through Aboriginal Elders and community organizers. More recently as a planning student, these interests have

dovetailed with an interest in how planning affects the spaces and built form of cities, as well as the role of planning processes in relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups in urban environments. As a planning student I was also exposed to the concept of Indigenous planning through coursework and through attending an international conference and field school on Indigenous planning in Chiapas, Mexico. All of these personal and academic factors led me to explore the topic of this thesis.

The limitations of this thesis include the fact that, as a Caucasian male with a Euro-Canadian background I am an outsider to urban Aboriginal communities in Winnipeg. In order to address this, my research takes a reflexive approach in which I am cognizant of my own position within the processes of research and analysis, and engaging this topic also as a learning (or ‘unlearning’) opportunity and part of my own personal process of decolonization. This was of particular importance in interviewing people for the thesis, and the ‘Research Methods’ section goes into more detail on this issue. Along the same lines, I am grateful that the interview participants for this project, all of whom are Aboriginal, were so gracious to me as an ‘outsider,’ offering helpful and insightful comments in formal interviews and informal conversations.

Another limitation to the thesis is the fact that only six people were interviewed, a relatively small number resulting from circumstances such as people’s availability and location (some people involved with Neeginan over the years had since moved from Manitoba). Some others from Neeginan’s earlier days are now deceased. Interviews were therefore examined alongside documents and reports. Also, no interviews were conducted with people associated with planning and development at the City over the years. This could be an area of future research for projects more focused on the functions

of planning bureaucracies and practices in Winnipeg, and how these might relate to processes of marginalization. For this particular project, however, while the municipal city planning context was very important to the research, I wanted to focus also on the perspectives and voices within Indigenous planning and their relation to the city planning context.

Another issue the thesis does not discuss in detail is the presence of various Métis-led developments in downtown Winnipeg. Instead, it focuses more closely on the initiatives within Neeginan, which have been associated largely with First Nations groups. However, since Neeginan-affiliated programs and organizations, because of their urban focus, are geared toward First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people in Winnipeg, the term ‘Aboriginal’ is generally used throughout the thesis. I use the term ‘Indigenous’ in relation to Indigenous planning generally but use ‘Aboriginal’ when speaking of the Winnipeg context, as it is used more by community organizers in Winnipeg and is reflective of the complex issues of Indigenous identities and experiences in urban settings.

The complicated nature of cultural identity issues, particularly in the urban context raises the important point that Aboriginal cultures and worldviews are much more complex than a Caucasian Euro-Canadian graduate student can relay. While this project does touch on the depth and richness of Aboriginal traditional worldviews, it does so more in terms of land, space, and planning, specifically in terms of how land and space are conceptualized, and the worldviews informing such conceptualizations. I nevertheless do acknowledge that Aboriginal cultures and worldviews are much more

diverse and far-reaching than the specific planning focus of this project, and recognize that they speak to more than only conceptualizations of land and space.

### **Outline of Chapters**

The following chapter outlines in more detail the theoretical foundations of the thesis, reviewing the literature most relevant to how I approached the research. Two broad streams of literature are discussed. The first deals with the varied ways in which Indigenous planning has been discussed, theorized, and carried out in practice. The second deals with theorizations of space, particularly urban space, and spatial theories of and related to issues of Indigeneity and colonialism. Chapter Three details my research methodologies and the sources consulted for the research, as well as the ethical cross-cultural issues accompanying this type of work. In Chapter Four I present and analyze the results of the research, and the final chapter summarizes this research and analysis by returning to my original research questions. Chapter Five also touches on some areas of future research as well as some potential implications of the conclusions reached in this thesis for future planning theory and practice.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Introduction

The research for this thesis is grounded in two streams of theoretical literature. The first deals with the emerging movement of Indigenous planning, which has taken on several forms: those that maintain (consciously or unconsciously) a positivist view of rationalist Western planning practices, those that stress the importance of planning practices that are based first and foremost in Indigenous worldviews and Indigenous efforts toward self-determination, and finally those that call for a postcolonial critique of Western planning's complicity in the colonization of Indigenous peoples. The second major theme discussed here deals with the ways in which space, geography, and the built environment have been conceptualized and analyzed, especially with reference to social and cultural relations. These theorizations have emphases ranging from political-economic, to poststructuralist, to cultural and ethnic. While many of the foundational analyses of space have come from Western intellectual traditions (in particular Marxism), more recent articulations have taken a broader cultural approach, looking at the relationship between space and Indigeneity, as well as Indigenous concepts of space.

Although the above themes can be usefully discussed in reference to each other, presenting them in tandem raises certain risks. There is, for example, a danger in reproducing colonialist social structures through the use of Western-based spatial analyses to describe and interpret Indigenous processes, worldviews, and approaches to planning. This literature review will attempt to avoid such pitfalls, presenting these two separate themes and making linkages between them where appropriate. For example, those Indigenous planning approaches that are rooted in Indigenous values and those that

critique Western planning's colonialist roots, can both offer ways of thinking about space and social relations that encourage and foster social transformation through *decolonization* and Indigenous autonomy.

### **The Diversity of Approaches to Indigenous Planning**

The question of what constitutes Indigenous planning can be answered in a number of ways, as it is a wide-ranging field. One way to define it is in terms of its professional significance. The term "Indigenous Planning" has an official designation; the American Planning Association (APA) does have an Indigenous Planning Division, the intent of which is to advocate, "community development based on land-tenure principles and informed by the distinctive worldviews of indigenous peoples" (American Planning Association, 2011). In its official incarnation, Indigenous planning began to emerge in the United States at a 1961 American Indian Chicago Conference, where Indigenous scholars usurped the meeting and proposed a new agenda to draft a declaration of purpose on "Indian policy," which quietly ushered in the first "semblance of Indian self-determination" in the United States (Jojola, 2008, p. 41). Another key event occurred in 1992, when participating students at an MIT Community Fellows event pushed forward a postmodernist discussion on "grassroots activism and culture," an action that resulted in "the formulation of a theory of action they named Indigenous planning" (Jojola, 2008, p. 42). Three years later, the Indigenous Planning Network – which was the forerunner to the current Indigenous Planning Division of the APA – was formed at the annual APA meeting. Although this illustrates the early beginnings of the Indigenous Planning

movement in the United States, the realm of planning involved with Indigenous peoples and issues has expanded in multiple directions. I will review some of these directions, examining their key differences as well as some of their possible commonalities. Hopefully, what will emerge is a clear image of some of the major approaches, emphases, and schools of thought surrounding Indigenous planning.

I identify three main approaches, or streams of analysis within Indigenous planning literature. First, there are those writers, researchers, and practitioners who seem to view planning ultimately as a rational and impartial discipline able to arrive objectively at solutions to various problems. This stream is of course more nuanced than such a description implies – for example these authors are more critical, analytical, and self-aware than it may seem from such a brief depiction. These approaches to Indigenous planning have emerged as Western planning theory and practice has begun recognizing the need to modify its modernist leanings, and work with Indigenous groups in more appropriate and sensitive ways. Yet there remains a rationalist thrust to these approaches that often fails to adequately interrogate the planning discipline's relationship with Indigenous people.

The second theme relates more closely to Indigenous planning proper as briefly outlined above. With Jojola as a key proponent, this school of thought emphasizes the importance of starting first and foremost with Indigenous values, worldviews, and traditions when engaging in Indigenous planning work. This approach could be understood literally as 'Indigenous planning:' planning that is undertaken by Indigenous people and that is informed by Indigenous values. However, there are also writers in this

vein who point to ways in which Indigenous people and values can be misunderstood or misrepresented. Arguments in favour of Indigenous self-determination and interests are also part of this stream of Indigenous planning theory and practice.

Finally, other authors have adopted a postcolonial approach to planning work and research, unmasking the ways in which planning itself is and has been imbued with colonialist impulses, and persists in reproducing discourses, relationships, and spatial configurations that continue to marginalize and stigmatize Indigenous groups. This stance offers a challenge to those more rationalist writers mentioned above, and perhaps also in some ways to the 'Indigeneity-as-central' scholars. It is tempting to view these three streams of thought as a linear progression from least to most critical of planning as it relates to Indigenous peoples. In some ways this is correct, particularly in the way postcolonial writers present challenges to the planning field. However, these three thematic divisions also relate to one another in certain ways, are influenced by each other, and occasionally overlap. While the distinctions between them are nuanced, the distinctions do remain, making it possible to delineate and discuss them in this manner.

### *Positivist Indigenous Planning*

Allmendinger (2002) has described rationalism as “the apex of positivist planning theory.” It claims to “underpin planning with ‘scientific’ and ‘objective’ methods that can be applied to all aspects of planning practice,” presenting a “simple and highly structured view of the world and how to act in the face of inherent complexity” (pp. 42, 66). Indigenous planning, in its concern for marginalized populations and social justice, has come a long way from these earlier approaches, but there are ways in which it has

also retained some of this positivist, rationalist thinking.

Boothroyd's (1986) discussion of the "band planning" courses provided by the University of British Columbia's (UBC) School of Community and Regional Planning represents an example of such thinking, particularly in his discussion of systematic planning and how it can be adopted by Aboriginal bands in Canada. As Boothroyd states, systematic planning, a rationalist approach, first identifies the goal one wishes to achieve, analyzes the forces hindering or aiding achievement of the goal, identifies alternative solutions and their possible effectiveness, and finally, continuously evaluates the selected alternative once it has been implemented (p. 16). He does acknowledge Aboriginal methods of planning by stating that, "Planning is not new to Native North American communities. It has always occurred in the course of organizing fishing expeditions, hunts, feasts, and villages" (p. 14). However, he also states that while traditional planning methods are effective and necessary in some situations, Native leaders are increasingly interested in supplementing these methods, and that systematic planning is a method by which a community can "ward off threats and benefit from its social and natural environment" (p. 14). In arguing for the adoption of systematic planning methods by Aboriginal groups he posits that:

To become self-reliant by successfully taking on...basic and widespread responsibilities for managing one's future, requires today not only abilities to manage internal complex organizations, economies and resources – abilities which Native communities have always possessed – but also the ability to manage complex interactions with an ever-changing outside world. The management of complexity is what systematic planning is all about (p. 14).

Boothroyd here does give some credit to the efficacy of traditional planning methods and their ability to handle certain types of complexity, but by characterizing systematic

planning as capable of handling complexity, he seems to leave some room for the implication that, if systematic planning is “all about” the ability to handle complexity, then traditional methods are somehow not.

His analysis of the band planning courses provided by UBC highlights the fact that the Aboriginal students who took the courses viewed them very favourably, and that “Native leaders recognize that they can benefit from reflection on their planning practice and can learn from others’ ideas and experiences” (p. 15). As later work has shown though, and as will be demonstrated further along here, the fact that there is no mention made in this analysis of how conventional planning practices could learn from Indigenous methods, or should undergo its own process of self-examination, is problematic.

The application of conventional Western planning models to Indigenous contexts also characterizes Ndubisi’s (1991) study of the Ojibway community of New Credit and the ways in which the planning paradigm of social learning could be applied there. In making this argument, he seems to make a subtle differentiation between “culture” and “planning.” On one hand, “culture” deals with “the relationship between values, including beliefs and attitudes; the process of social interactions; and material artifacts such as skills and technology. As an information system culture provides a set of rules for guiding behavior” (p. 53). On the other hand, he situates planning as a “societal guidance activity normative in function and centrally concerned with making decisions and informing actions in ways that are socially rational” (p. 53). He does qualify this by noting how Western planning has been taken to task for its ethnocentricity, but nevertheless states that, “In a cross-cultural planning context, the planner...acts as a mediator of group-based processes” (p. 64). He thereby puts the planner in the position

of rational objective mediator, and aligns himself with rational planning methodology. However, he also emphasizes the need to recognize how values play a role within planning processes, and how “conventional planning concepts need to be reexamined in light of the value systems of the relevant client groups” (p. 64). Ndubisi therefore begins to depart somewhat from earlier rationalist tendencies within planning, although not to the extent of some Indigenous planning proponents and practitioners.

In more recent scholarship, Lane and Hibbard have been some of the more prominent writers and researchers on Indigenous planning, particularly in research on the United States and Australia. Lane (2002), much like Boothroyd and Ndubisi, argues the merits of Western planning in Indigenous contexts, and does so by proposing a hybrid planning approach that “integrates the positive features” of three models: “centralized institutional regulatory, community-based planning, and reticulist (facilitated process) approaches.” A hybridized model of this nature, he argues, enables collaborative planning between Indigenous groups and state governments, and “overcomes the deficiencies of community-based approaches by retaining an active, albeit limited, role for state agencies” (p. 827). Notable here is the fact that although there is concern for the ability of Indigenous groups to manage traditional lands, none of the planning approaches proposed originate from Indigenous contexts.

In a co-authored article, Lane and Hibbard (2004) invoke the image of the planner as objective mediator, in their discussion of planning’s contribution to resolving cross cultural conflicts over natural resources. They argue that planning is an “indispensable conceptual and operational lens” through which issues of Indigenous sovereignty can be understood (pp. 97-98). The positivist basis of their assertion is evident in their argument

for planning's relevance on the basis of its concern with "mediating between diverse claimants," its "problem-solving focus," and particularly its "emancipatory role...its potential to transform the structural dimensions of oppression" (Lane & Hibbard 2005, p. 172). Although they point out planning's concern for issues of social justice and equity, the view of planning as the objective mediator and rational problem-solver harkens back to old conceptualizations of the supposedly progressive and enlightened planner bringing 'civilization' to Indigenous people. Furthermore, the claim of planning's ability to reform oppressive social structures is very limited if it does not also first recognize how planning itself has historically helped maintain those structures, and then work towards changing this (Porter, 2010). In other words, Lane and Hibbard's argument fails to address planning's need for cultural self-examination, something to which postcolonial critics are well attuned.

Although the positivist approaches to Indigenous planning do rely on rationalist assumptions that have been fiercely interrogated, this does not mean that they ignore the ways in which Indigenous groups have been marginalized and the role that cultural, social, and governmental institutions have played in this marginalization. Ndubisi (1991) for example recognizes that planning has had many shortcomings. In the Canadian context, he states that planning undertaken by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada has been inept in effectively capturing Indigenous culture values and worldviews in the development of community plans (p. 53). He also begins to emphasize the importance of Aboriginal worldviews when he states that,

Systematic planning is especially likely to be acceptable to Native communities when it is seen to complement rather than replace the traditional planning modes relating to participation, consultation, information sharing and decision making, and when substantive insights

and knowledge of the elders are respected (p. 17).

However in this statement, systematic planning remains something that can be applied in traditional contexts. Hibbard and Lane as well have made similar qualifications to their arguments, remarking that, “planners tend to overlook, ignore, or misinterpret indigenous perspectives” (Lane, 2002, p. 829), and that planning has often “served indigenous peoples poorly” (Hibbard & Lane, 2005, p. 174). What these examples show is that while these planners are rightfully concerned for justice and autonomy for Indigenous people, their understandings of planning remain tied to colonialist mindsets and must further decolonize. They are therefore limited in their ability to help foster greater Indigenous autonomy.

### *The Centrality of Indigenous Worldviews*

While planning has often started with certain culturally-rooted ideas and related them out of context in various ways to Indigenous issues and contexts, there are other Indigenous planners who emphasize the need to start with Indigenous values and worldviews in planning practice and research. Jojola’s work is key to school of thought. He has described Indigenous planning as an approach to community planning as well as an ideological movement. According to him, “What distinguishes indigenous planning from mainstream practice is its reformulation of planning approaches in a manner that incorporates ‘traditional’ knowledge and cultural identity” (2008, p. 42). Land is key in this conceptualization of Indigenous planning, and “Unlike Western approaches, indigenous planning approaches were formulated on practices associated with land tenure as well as the collective rights associated with inheritance” (2008, p. 42). An Indigenous worldview, he points out, understands land through long patterns of communal ownership

and inheritance. This view of land embodies “values that are essential for attaining a well-balanced and symmetrical interrelationship between humankind and the natural ecosystem that it occupies” (2008, p. 43).

Not only does Jojola identify a need to reformulate planning practices along Indigenous lines, he also points out the ways in which Indigenous groups have always planned, even before contact with Europeans. In discussing the history of the All Indian Pueblo Council, he argues that planning “was not a concept imposed on indigenous peoples by Euro-Americans. Indigenous communities existed in myriad highly coordinated and planned towns and villages” (1998, p. 101). The Pueblo societies’ traditional beliefs in their origin from the earth, and this spiritual connection to the land had an effect on how they ordered and organized their communities – certain architectural forms, for example, “symbolically replicated the cyclical time dimensions of this cosmological relationship [with the earth] by its circular shape” (1998, p. 109). The traditional model of consensus-building, in addition to clanships, determined land use patterns and land tenure for the Pueblo societies (1998, pp. 109-110). Jojola (2000) presents the Oneida Tribal Nation of Wisconsin as case of how Indigenous values can themselves form a planning base for community development. The Nation’s construction of the “Turtle School” serves as an example of this. Crucial to the school’s construction was how “the ‘vision’ of a school was informed by the worldview of the Oneida people” (p. 13). The school’s design, which was roughly in the shape of a turtle, “was turned into a mnemonic device for sharing and interpreting the nuances of Oneida’s worldview” (p. 11). These cases studies begin to reveal the depth of Indigenous worldviews beyond the sphere of planning and conceptualizations of land. In terms of planning specifically, they

also help emphasize the importance of Indigenous culture in planning, and the reality that Indigenous communities have never been without their own forms of planning.

Corntassel (2008) has employed a similar argument, pointing to Indigenous actions of self-determination that are based in traditional ways of thinking. He examines discourses of environmental sustainability, stating that, unlike Western discourses on this concept, sustainability for Indigenous people is “intrinsically linked to the transmission of traditional knowledge and cultural practices to future generations.” Without the ability and opportunity for Indigenous communities to “continually renew their relationships with the natural world,” their “languages, traditional teachings, family structures, and livelihoods of that community are all jeopardized” (pp. 107-108, 118). The two starkly different discourses of individuality and communality are apparent here. Corntassel proposes a concept of “sustainable self-determination” as a way toward the “restoration of indigenous livelihoods and for future political mobilization” (p. 105). He offers examples of this concept in practice, specifically the Native Federation of Madre de Dios in Peru. Three main nations within this group sustain their communities through fishing on rivers in the region, and have also established sentry posts along two rivers “to monitor river traffic and report illegal loggers to the Peruvian authorities.” The second example is the Anishinaabe White Earth Land Recovery project, one of the major components of which is a “good food program” providing traditional foods to diabetic elderly Anishinaabes (p. 120).

Other writers have also examined how Indigenous groups have used their Indigeneity (in terms of identities, cultures, and worldviews) in combination with contemporary planning approaches in order to achieve development that is culturally

relevant and politically autonomous. The Zia Pueblo and Pueblo de Cochiti tribes of New Mexico, for example, have undertaken successful development initiatives through “traditional governance institutions and tribal members who can strategically engage both indigenous knowledge and outside expertise to plan development that supports cultural integrity” (Pinel, 2007, p. 9). As Beneria-Surkin (2004) argues, alternatives need to be articulated that build up “new capabilities in the form of human capital, technical knowledge etc.,” while maintaining “indigenous...knowledge and livelihood strategies” and ensuring that such practices are “defined by indigenous peoples themselves” (p. 115). Thus with Indigenous worldviews and self-determination at the centre, there are opportunities to “repatriate traditional planning approaches as well as adapt those mainstream practices that make [Indigenous communities] more culturally resilient” (Jojola, 2008, p. 45).

Other case studies in Indigenous-led planning are provided by Gow (1997), who demonstrates how this type of planning places Indigenous culture at its centre in a way that counteracts the “centrality of planning” – that is, the view of ‘the plan’ as “an indication of ‘high seriousness,’” and as “proof that the future and ways to deal with it have been taken into consideration” (p. 244). This alludes to the basis of positivist planning, discussed earlier, which views planning as a sort of all-knowing entity with comprehensive problem-solving solutions. Gow’s case studies come from Colombia, where the Guambía and Nasa communities developed their own plans that while distinct from each other, also focused on key common themes. These included the recovery of traditional culture and the contributions it can make to the economic and social life of the community, as well as the importance of educating community youth through, in the case

of one group, the construction of a high school as an “ethnocultural college” (pp. 257, 265). The above case studies, taken mostly from rural contexts, show the use and effectiveness of Indigenous values as planning tools.

In a more urban context, Silver, Hay, and Gorzen (2005) have researched Winnipeg’s inner city Spence neighbourhood and its Aboriginal population to understand its role in community development within that neighbourhood. Again, taking Indigenous values as a starting point for change and development, they find that traditional ways of life would have a positive effect on making the neighbourhood more inclusive, and could contribute to a fuller and richer kind of community development. Through conducting interviews with Aboriginal people from the area, they discovered that Aboriginal community members experienced a sense of separation from the wider community and were in some subtle ways not welcome, even in a neighbourhood with a strong community organization (p. 257). However, the interviewees also told the researchers “they want more opportunities to experience and practice their cultures, and want more opportunities for their children to learn their cultures” (p. 259). In light of this, after listening to the Aboriginal voices in the community, the authors concluded that, “The systematic effort by Aboriginal people in Spence to promote their cultures would have several positive results:” specifically the coming together of Aboriginal peoples would help build social capital, the celebration of cultures could offset some of the “deleterious” effects of past cultural denigrations, and also serve as a platform for “further community development initiatives” (p. 278). Again, in this case it is the traditional practices and values that form the basis of community development.

Finally, there are some scholars who have called for new ways of looking at

planning with Indigenous groups, critiquing how Indigenous populations have often been misunderstood, and their values sometimes assumed or essentialized by non-Aboriginal planners and institutions. They still advocate for a focus on planning from the point of view of Indigenous values, but they argue that this should be done and thought of in new ways. In looking at co-planning efforts between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups in Winnipeg, Belanger and Walker (2009) argue that the co-production of plans between city officials and Aboriginal groups must be based on the “principle of self-determination,” and on the priorities of Aboriginal people, rather than on “short-sighted interpretation[s] of expediency and civic authority to act” (pp. 130, 120). Walker (2008) has also argued the importance of Aboriginal self-determination in urban contexts, pointing to urban reserves as potential opportunities for First Nations self-determination, not only in terms of economic development, but also socially and culturally (p. 32).

Unfortunately, as Lloyd, Van Nimwegen, and Boyd (2005) have asserted, planning processes often fail to take Indigenous perspectives into account, with governmental planning authorities often making no room for the “rights, aspirations and interests of Indigenous people,” and instead viewing Indigenous groups as merely one of many stakeholders within a planning process rather than self-determining nations with deep historical and cultural ties to the land and resources often at stake in planning and development schemes (pp. 411, 414). Li (2002) has pointed out similar failings in her study of Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) in the uplands of Southeast Asia, arguing that, “the indigenous, forest-dependent, conservation-oriented communities envisaged as the subjects of CBNRM are more difficult to encounter in the uplands than [state] rhetoric would suggest” (p. 266). While some would benefit from

provisions of CBNRM, others “would find themselves re-assigned to a marginal economic niche that corresponds poorly to the futures they imagine for themselves” (p. 266). In other words, the state and CBNRM institutions essentialize the Indigenous uplands population as quaint and pastoral, concerned with preserving austere, subsistence, and ‘traditional’ lifestyles. These characterizations of Indigenous groups render this an improper way of adequately addressing Indigenous concerns or understanding Indigenous points of view.

The approach of encouraging new ways of cross-cultural planning while maintaining the centrality of Indigenous worldviews and autonomy represents some useful possibilities for Indigenous planning as it moves forward. The challenge, though, is to avoid the dangers of giving lip service to Indigenous values and subsequently subsuming them within non-Indigenous social structures and planning approaches. The examples above from Walker, Belanger, and Li illustrate how this can occur all too easily. These types of shortcomings must be contextualized within the long history of exploitation, unequal power relations, and colonial domination, which planning is beginning to come to grips with and which is the subject of more recent postcolonial planning theory.

### *Postcolonial Challenges*

While many of the positivist-inclined writers view the concept of planning somewhat unproblematically, and those who emphasize traditional worldviews as the starting point advocate a different (Indigenous) focus, there is a third stream of Indigenous planning theory that takes another, postcolonial, approach. This postcolonial perspective puts the focus on planning itself, arguing that planning practices must be interrogated for the ways

in which they have been exploitative and colonialist in relation to Indigenous people (Sandercock, 2004a, p. 95). They are also interested in the ways colonialism continues to function in settlement space and in planning. Such critiques are hinted at peripherally by some of the more rationally inclined scholars, and have taken even more of a central role for those who advocate for the centrality of Indigenous values. However, those who employ postcolonial frameworks to Indigenous planning sharpen and advance the critique even more. In her discussion of radical planning in the context of the global South, for example, Miraftab (2009) states that,

The persistence of Western planning ideals in our post/neocolonial, neoliberal times suppresses the subaltern conceptualization of cities and of planning. Insurgent planning scholarship aims at decolonizing the planning imagination by taking a fresh look at subaltern cities to understand them by their own rules of the game and values rather than by the planning perceptions and fantasies of the West (p. 45).

The key here is the recognition of the role played by widely accepted Western planning models in suppressing marginalized voices. Although that discussion focuses mostly on South Africa, the concept is also relevant to the present discussion. It also relates closely with Njoh's (2010) argument that "modern planning is not the benign, objective and value-neutral tool for promoting the functioning of the built environment that it professes to be. Rather, it serves as a viable instrument for realizing the cultural imperialistic goals of Westerners" (p. 369). Such a statement is a sharp blow to planning, but Njoh is also not situating himself directly in the realm of Indigenous planning; he is more concerned with keeping the discussion broad, looking at marginalized populations more generally, and relating Indigenous populations to the processes.

Porter (2010) has undertaken perhaps the most sustained and concentrated critical analysis of the colonial nature of planning, demonstrating “how planning is a cultural practice, in the sense of being embedded within as well as creating its own meanings” (p. 2). To uncover the nature of this cultural embeddedness, “archeological work on planning itself” is necessary in order to facilitate the decolonization of planning (Porter, 2010, pp. 2-3). To those enamoured with planning’s social justice bent – and some of the rationally-inclined Indigenous Planners might be counted in this group – Porter offers a strong caution:

Recognizing, celebrating, understanding and developing good transactive and collaborative dialogues with sociocultural groups that are ‘other’ to planning is an essential and laudable aim. Yet those approaches consistently miss what I believe is the first and most theoretical and practical work to be done: to turn our analysis toward the culture of the practice of planning. Even when power relations are well theorized, and local histories and cultural nuances sensitively understood, to pretend that planning is the position from which the clamour of ‘difference’ in (post)colonial settings can be heard, translated and mediated is to forget that planning’s own genealogy is colonial and its work a fundamental activity to the ongoing colonial settlement of territory. Forgetting to theorize planning’s own cultural position can render the ‘inclusion’ of Indigenous people in land management decisions a new form of colonial oppression (2010, pp. 11-12).

In other words, even planning’s perceived social conscience cannot be truly mobilized as it is still imbued with colonialist structures than require further interrogation.

This is not only a historical or theoretical undertaking; in fact it has tangible ramifications for planning practices. In reflecting on her own fieldwork, Porter (2004) relates how her practices and methods were challenged and changed: “unlearning one’s privilege is a key element of doing cross-cultural research. It requires critical reflection on how we have come to value our own knowledge and practices and investigating why that knowledge is privileged” (p. 105). However, she takes the practical implications of

her overall argument even further, stating that planners cannot just stop at reflection. What is required in addition to this is “the ability to focus on moments within institutional rules and parameters where real and lasting change can be achieved” (p. 109). She uses real world examples to show how this might occur, particularly in planning processes involving states and Indigenous groups. In cases such as these, those working with Indigenous communities must acknowledge planning’s complicit role in “neo-colonial practices of exclusion, marginalization and the denial of basic rights to indigenous communities,” and also must be sensitive to possible divisions within Indigenous communities, many of which – in the cases she describes – are produced by past governmental decisions (p. 108).

Porter (2006) also lists three other important practice-related implications of her arguments and proposals. First of all, the common approach of including “stakeholders of different voices in a more deliberative, communicative process assumes that such inclusion is the key aspiration of Indigenous peoples.” The inclination of planners toward ‘inclusion’ can be problematic as it rests on “paternalistic notions of compassion and comparative disadvantage.” Additionally, the conceptualization of Indigenous people as one of many ‘stakeholders’ in a planning process “fails to appreciate their unique status as original owners of country that was wrested from them by the modern, colonial state” (p.389). Challenging more rationally inclined researchers and practitioners, she cautions planners to recognize “the relations of power that are always present and operating in planning situations” (2004, p. 108). By adopting such a stance, planners could perhaps wean themselves from the tendency to assume their profession’s objectivity and (imagined) ability to exist outside of social and power relations.

It becomes clear in discussing the work of Porter and other postcolonial authors that there is still a long way to go for planners involved with Indigenous issues and contexts. While there are positives to be found in how planning functions, these arguments highlight the ways in which planning must undergo profound changes in order to better function in and alongside Indigenous groups.

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The three strains of Indigenous planning discussed here – positivist planning, the need to emphasize and start with Indigenous values, and the challenge to planning offered by postcolonial critiques – differ from each other in several ways. While positivist or rationalist thinkers are primarily concerned with conventional planning practices and how they can be applied in Indigenous contexts, the literature reviewed here shows that such an approach needs to be altered. The literature surrounding the centrality of Indigenous worldviews brings to light the ways in which Indigenous groups have always engaged in their own forms of planning, and shows the usefulness of traditional worldviews in forming Indigenous planning practices. Such approaches are not only useful to Indigenous peoples for their own development and self-determination purposes, but also to non-Indigenous planners as they seek to understand how better to engage in planning work that can encourage Indigenous-led planning to flourish. Finally, the arguments of Porter and others will hopefully begin to take hold in the minds and practices of planners, producing more fruitful, just, and transformative incarnations of Indigenous planning. The significance of spatial considerations within planning (and in particular Indigenous planning) is addressed below.

## Considering Space

Analyses of space have sought to balance Western thought's traditional emphasis on the historical and the social, arguing for a more concentrated focus on the *spatial*, and the role of space in shaping social, cultural, and political relations. Drawing on literature from disciplines such as geography, planning, the social sciences, and critical theory, this section will outline some of the more prevalent strains of spatial analysis. Once again I recognize the Western European roots of this spatial theory, and therefore attempt to utilize it carefully.

Two main themes will emerge from this discussion of space. First is the concept that space is not merely passive, an empty container in which social relations are acted out. Rather, the physical, built, and geographic environment is seen more as an actor, an entity that plays a role in how social relations unfold, and indeed can function to shape and impact those relations. Secondly, and closely related to the first point, is the idea that the social and the spatial are not two separate spheres without any relationship to each other. Just as space is not an empty objective vessel unrelated to the social matrices existing within it, those social matrices are not divorced from the space within and around them. Both act on and in relation to one another, and are very much interrelated. In other words, analysis of the spatial is as necessary as analysis of the social since, as will be shown, the two are so closely intertwined.

The discussion will unfold by first looking at influential approaches to examining urban space, beginning with the innovative materialist critiques of Henri Lefebvre, and continuing with subsequent adaptations and interpretations of his work by the likes of David Harvey, Edward Soja, and others. Many of these theoretical approaches focus on

the relationships among space, class, economics, and political structures, but others emphasize how space relates to difference – specifically cultural, ethnic, and racial difference. It is this second group that will be discussed here in detail, with a special focus on space and Indigeneity. Throughout each of these discussions I will also consider the implications for planning by examining how planning theorists have engaged with these questions. Hopefully what will emerge is a nuanced understanding of space, its relationship to social relations, and its relevance to planning practices.

### *The Production of Space: From Materialism to Postmodernism*

Perhaps no thinker has been more important to late-twentieth/early twenty-first century spatial theory than Henri Lefebvre (1991). His theoretical arguments regarding urban space are useful particularly for their emphasis on its non-neutrality. “Any determinate and hence demarcated space,” he states, “necessarily embraces some things and excludes others; what it rejects may be relegated to nostalgia or it may simply be forgotten. Such a space asserts, negates and denies” (p. 99). In other words, space can be a dynamic actor in social relations, and can affect how people relate to each other, perceive each other, and conceptualize the world around them. Furthermore, the seeming neutrality of space acts as “a whole set of errors, a complex of illusions” that masks the ways in which the state “reproduce[s] its own conditions of existence” through “strategic abstract space which seeks to impose itself as a reality despite the fact that it is an abstraction, albeit one endowed with enormous powers because it is the locus and medium of power” (Lefebvre, p. 94). Lefebvre’s interpretation of space is generally a Marxist one, focusing on the dominance of capitalist relations in the production of space. As examples show, though, he sees the socio-spatial relations at work in more complex ways than an economic

reading of Marx will allow.

Not only is space more than an objective container, it is also socially produced. It does not exist in and of itself, independent of anything else. Rather, it is a “social product,” and is “both the result and precondition of the production of society” (Schmid, 2008, pp. 28, 29). But if space is not passive, if it is socially produced, exactly how does this production occur? Lefebvre proposes a three-dimensional model, or triad, to understand how this production works, consisting of Spatial Practice, Representations of Space, and Representational Space. The first of these elements, spatial practice, concerns how space is used, and people’s relationship to and within that space (Lefebvre, p. 33). This type of spatial production results in “perceived space” – the ways in which space is taken in and understood by the senses (Schmid, p. 39). The second type of spatial production, representations of space, refers to discursive constructions of physical space, the ways in which ideas and concepts become materialized in physical ways, as well as the tools that perpetuate certain conceptions of space (Carp, 2008, p. 134). In Lefebvre’s words, this is the “conceptualized [or conceived] space” of “scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers,” all of whom establish social norms through conceptions and representations of space (Lefebvre, pp. 33, 39). The third element of the triad is representational space. This concept refers to “space as directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols” (Lefebvre, p. 39). These discursive images and symbols, linked to physical or material symbols, produce “dominated space” that is “passively experienced” (Lefebvre, p. 39) in the “lived space” of people’s everyday lives (Schmid, p. 40).

Space, then, according to Schmid (2008), is produced in three interrelated ways,

through material production, knowledge production, and the production of meaning (p. 41). The interrelations among these three types of production can be seen in the way social space is reproduced through *spatial practices* that “rest upon a determinate material basis” (p. 37). These spatial practices can then be discursively defined through linguistic *representations of space*, and these representations can then form a framework “which permits a (spatial) orientation and thus co-determines” the ways in which space is *lived* (p. 37).

Crucial to this concept of spatial production is the differentiation between absolute space and abstract space. While absolute space was at one time “made up of fragments of nature” chosen “for their intrinsic qualities,” abstract space was overlaid upon absolute space through the processes of urbanization and capitalization (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 48-49). The abstract space produced by capitalism “erases distinctions” and operates as “a set of things/signs and their formal relationships: glass and stone, concrete and steel, angles and curves, full and empty” (Lefebvre, p. 49). This abstract space is produced in accordance with market logic and the power of the state, creating spaces that have little to do with the absolute spaces, history, and social distinctions which may have existed prior to abstraction (Lefebvre, p. 53). This idea is of particular relevance to the discipline of urban planning, concerned as it is with the construction and continual change of urban landscapes. Despite the coercive nature of abstract space, however, there is also room for “differential space,” the seeds of which lie in the contradictions and manipulations of abstract space. Differential space refers to the possibilities of revolt against the machinations of abstract space in a way that counters the latter’s “homogeneity” and “accentuates differences” rather than erasing them (Lefebvre, p. 52).

This leaves space open for divergent spatial practices that carry the potential to contest and reshape the production of abstract space.

This brings the focus back to the spatial practices of people in the urban environment, a subject taken up in detail by Michel de Certeau (1984), who sees the space of the city as a “text” that can be interpreted and re-interpreted by its users (p. 93). For de Certeau, space is “a practiced place” – for example, “the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers” in an act of “*appropriation* of the topographical system on the part of the pedestrian” (pp. 117, 97-98). While de Certeau focuses on the creative potential of spatial practitioners, he does not ignore the power relations that shape social space and its users. His discussion of formal place names, for example, shows their role in creating spaces “brutally lit by an alien reason...proper names carve out pockets of hidden and familiar meanings” and “create a nowhere in places; they change them into passages” (p. 104). In other words the naming and mapping of space conforms it to a distinct logic, directing and controlling it to create a hierarchy and system of “order [within] the surface of the city, operating chronological arrangements and historical justifications” (p. 104).

David Harvey, who outlines the economic and class components of urban spatial analysis, also addresses this work of coercive forces in spatial production. Much like Lefebvre describes the construction of abstract space through the pulverization of absolute space, Harvey (1973) argues that, with the advent of industrial capitalism, effective space was replaced by created space. Whereas pre-industrial effective space consisted of “subtle symbiotic relationships between social activities and organic nature,” industrial capitalism fashioned created space in its place, creating a “man-made

[sic] resource system” involving “the structuring and differentiation of space through the distribution of fixed capital investments” (p. 309). This interest in how money shapes the urban environment is evident in his examination of “the interconnections between money, time, and space,” which, he argues, comprise and define the “whole of social life as we know it” (Harvey, 1985, p. 16). Similar to Lefebvre’s description of the ways the elements of his triad relate to each other, Harvey (1985) argues that money, space, and time act as “intersecting sources of social power.” Money can be used to command time and space, “while command over time and space can easily be parlayed back into command over money” (p. 22). For Harvey then, the city is formed by and for the interests of capital and is simultaneously a place in which capitalism functions.

In line with Harvey’s more economic Marxist analysis of urban space is Mark Gottdiener’s (1985) examination of the relationship between discourse and physical space. He argues that this relationship can be seen in how the “conversion of physical space can proceed with its own ideology and rhetoric as well as with the urban bulldozer.” The ideologies behind the conversion of space can furthermore “obfuscate or mystify” spatial conversions and developments, making it difficult to see the motives and methods of such developments (p. 6). In terms of the economic and political factors in the production of urban space, he points to planning – at both the local state level and the broader level of national policy – as playing a key role spatial production, “principally as a regulator of land-use development or by manipulating tax powers to subsidize economic and property development.” Furthermore, it is the coming together of “government and business to create a pro-growth network” that also contributes to producing space in accordance with certain powerful interests. This production also

occurs through the deployment of ideology, specifically “the cultural fix on economic growth as the principal goal of local areas” (pp. 269, 270). Thus it is the work of capitalist logic and development in shaping space that is of prime concern for Gottdiener, and he utilizes the concept of abstract space to describe this process. The abstract space produced by pro-growth ideologies and planning works to fragment both the sociality and geography of the city, an action which subsequently “liberates the vast majority of the population from responsibility for the less advantaged, because the former no longer live in close proximity to the latter” (p. 272). Increasing class divisions, made even more pronounced through the geographic segregation of different income groups, results in an increasingly fragmented urban environment.

The fragmentation alluded to in the materialist arguments of Gottdiener and others has been more deeply examined by postmodernist writers such as Edward Soja, who analyzes urban space in light of the increased multiplicity and multi-leveled fragmentation emphasized in the postmodern theoretical turn. Whereas writers like Harvey have built on the Marxist class and political arguments in Lefebvre’s spatial critiques, subsequent thinkers such as Edward Soja have followed up on the more poststructuralist leanings in Lefebvre’s interpretation of urbanization and spatial production. These two streams of analysis have been characterized as the “first” and “second” waves of Lefebvrian interpretations (Kipfer, Goonewardena, Schmid, & Milgrom, 2008, p. 3), and Soja’s is the most prominent of these latter interpretations.

Following Harvey, Soja (1989) calls for space to be analyzed with the same weight that has been accorded time and history in Western thought (p. 1). Furthermore, he argues that Marxist analyses of space need to be more in tune with and receptive to the

increasingly postmodern conditions of cities; to the ways in which capitalism “is becoming more flexible and adaptively reconstituted” (p. 5). However, he maintains that within postmodern urbanism there remain manipulative and power aspects of space that should not be forgotten, and should be analyzed for how they “are inscribed into the apparently innocent spatiality of social life, how human geographies become filled with politics and ideology” (p. 6). Here we come back to the idea of space as more than a benign ‘context’ or ‘setting.’

In examining these reconstituted “postmodern geographies” Soja (1996) proposes the concept of “thirdspace” as “another mode of thinking about space that draws upon the material and mental spaces [of materialist-postmodernist dualism] but extends well beyond them in scope, substance, and meaning” (p. 11). Thirdspace is also used to describe urban contexts that are a “limitless composition of lifeworlds,” and a “constantly shifting and changing milieu of ideas, events, appearances, and meanings” (p. 2). Although this postmodernist interpretation threatens to diminish the role of coercive power structures at play in the production of space, Soja does leave room for interpretations that emphasize the city as “a panopticon, a collection of surveillant nodes designed to impose and maintain a particular model of conduct and disciplined adherence to its inhabitants” (p. 235). The Foucauldian allusion to the social and political hierarchies behind the production of urban space begins to get at planning’s role in that production through forms of social control.

Planning processes are increasingly being considered in analyses of urban space, as planning theorists and practitioners begin to realize the importance of socio-spatial questions. Planning theorists and practitioners are engaging more and more with “new

treatments of place, based on dynamic, relational constructs, rather than the Euclidian, deterministic, and one-dimensional treatments inherited from the ‘scientific’ approaches” that have long been the norm (Graham & Healey, 1999, p. 623). As spatial questions become more central, so too are questions of planning’s role in shaping and producing space.

Lefebvre’s (1991) “representations of space” concept is something in which planners are deeply involved. As he puts it, planners are “doctors of space” who are able to perpetuate the mystifying notion that “the modern city is a product not of the capitalist or neocapitalist system but rather of some putative ‘sickness’ of society” (p. 99). Harvey (1985) has likewise stated that it is the state – and its many tools, including planning processes and policies – that controls and protects “rights to the appropriation of space.” It does so through land use planning that dictates the locations of people, industry, public spaces and facilities, and housing among other things, in order to create “an overall spatial frame to contain and facilitate the innumerable and fragmented decisions that otherwise shape urban development” (p. 31).

This implication of planning in the coercive production of space and social relations can be seen even more explicitly in literature that engages questions of power and governance as they relate to planning. Much of this literature has engaged Michel Foucault’s work on governmentality and power. Governmentality refers less to the formal structural hierarchies of governing organizations (although these are important to consider) and more on the subtle “mentalities of government” at play in the production of “truth” that becomes “collectively...taken for granted [and] not usually open to questioning by its practitioners” (Dean, 1999, p. 17). A theory of governmentality

accounts for the very complex and shifting nature of power as it plays out within and by governing entities. Governmentality also sees governance as the “subtle direction of the conduct of the governed,” and can thus be thought of as an “art” (Dean, 1999, p. 18).

These “rationalities of government” have also come under increased scrutiny for the ways in which they “have made spaces and environments amenable to calculative thought by mobilizing certain ‘truths’ of causal relations in and between spaces, environments, bodies and compartments” (Huxley 2006, p. 772). These Foucauldian analyses demonstrate that, if urban spaces are underpinned and informed by the logic of neoliberal capitalism, then power and governmentality have played a crucial role in making that logic normative.

Oren Yiftachel (1998) has argued that these leanings within planning practices toward governance and social control have been hidden by the profession’s supposed progressive nature as a force in favour of social good. He states that, although planners are often characterized as “do-gooders” who are frustrated by decisions, structures, and policies beyond their control, the planning profession is in fact a part of, and embedded in those seemingly external forces (pp. 396, 399). Because of planning’s concern with land use, space, and territory, the part it plays in the “modern nation-state’s attempts to control the production of space” results in the creation or reproduction of “uneven social relations within [a] tightly closed ‘territorial container’” (Yiftachel, 1998, p. 399). Thus power is exerted in a way that shapes and controls certain social relations and certain spaces.

The recent communicative trend in planning has been held up by many theorists and practitioners as an example of planning’s social progressiveness. Arguments in

favour of communicative planning point to its attempts at bringing together culturally, economically, and politically diverse stakeholders within planning processes. These arguments have been criticized, however, for ignoring the ways in which planning is often embedded within the very social structures it is supposedly trying to transform (Huxley & Yiftachel, 2000; Flyvbjerg & Richardson, 2002; Fischler, 2000). In terms of Indigenous planning, this presents the danger – identified by writers in the ‘third stream’ of Indigenous planning – of seeing Indigenous peoples and organizations as merely one of many equal stakeholders in planning processes, thereby ignoring their distinct connections and claims to land as well as the power structures that often function to marginalize Indigenous populations socially and spatially. The continued presence of positivist approaches within Indigenous planning provides another example of how inequitable power relations and social relations can often remain ingrained not only within planning generally but Indigenous planning particularly.

While the arguments of the Marxist and postmodernist spatial thinkers described here bring to mind planning’s coercive and governmentalistic qualities in terms of space, economics, and class, many other writers have examined the ‘social control’ aspect of planning in terms of ethnic, racial, and cultural difference. This is the subject to which I now turn my attention.

### *Space, Cultural Difference, and Planning*

One area in which questions of space and planning practices have come together is the area of difference, particularly ethnic, racial, and cultural difference. These discussions are often rooted in a postcolonial perspective, interrogating the ways in which colonialist institutions and relations often continue to be reproduced in contemporary times, in terms

of discourse, knowledge, and space. Edward Said's influential study of what he terms 'orientalism' is foundational in this regard. In examining the way that knowledge and discourse relating to non-European and colonized populations is produced by Western societies, he has argued that Western societies have often constructed "an essentialist representation of non-Europeans," who become thought of as the "other" (Green & Troup, 1999, 280). This furthermore has spatial implications, as discursive constructions extend to social geography, and have the power to designate "in one's mind a familiar space which is 'ours' and an unfamiliar space beyond 'ours' which is theirs." These geographical distinctions can be "entirely arbitrary" in the sense that the "imaginative geography of the 'our land-barbarian land' variety does not require that the barbarians acknowledge the distinction" (Said, 1978, p. 54). Through this "imaginative geography" (p. 54), a binary relationship is constructed between the spaces of the familiar, the 'safe,' the European; and the spaces of the 'others' – the 'barbaric,' the 'dangerous,' and subsequently, the marginalized.

The subject of spatial and racial marginalization has been taken up more recently by scholars such as Jennifer Nelson (2008), who combines postcolonial, Foucauldian, and Lefebvrian frameworks to show how Halifax's Africville neighbourhood was marginalized both social and spatially, and eventually destroyed. By looking at the historical (and colonial) context of Africville, the ways in which 'common knowledge' about it was produced, the process of demolition and the relocation of residents, as well as its subsequent memorialization, she shows how "white dominance and subjectivity are secured through the incitement to place, replace, and displace people in particular spaces, as well as to make and remake the spaces themselves" (p. 21). Not only were racial

discourses mobilized to construct Africville as a dirty slum full of degenerate people, but urban planning and policy were utilized in conjunction with racial discourse to demolish the neighbourhood and relocate its residents. City-led industrial encroachment on Africville land, followed by formal city policy recommending the expropriation of the land for industrial use and the relocation of residents, could all be carried out through the deployment of discourses of the black population of that particular space as a menace and a danger to the city around them (Nelson 2008, pp. 81-84, 94-95, 112). Nelson is therefore able to demonstrate how planning has a role in solidifying difference and discrimination through space.

In terms of planning and cultural space, Yiftachel and Yacobi (2003) have similarly argued how boundaries between groups and spaces in Israel are embedded and maintained. They describe how an “urban ethnocracy” comes into being through a dominant group’s appropriation of “the city apparatus to buttress its domination and expansion.” The results are “sites of conflict and instability, and essentializing group identities and ethnic geographies” (p. 673). Even the aesthetics and built form of a neighbourhood, legislated by city authorities and planners, can help maintain enforced ethnic boundaries. In the case of one Israeli city, planning policy dictated that the rural, pastoral image of an Arab neighbourhood be maintained, enforcing the visual distinction between it and the newer, high-density Jewish neighbourhood across the road, and thus “reflecting a stark spatial inequality between the ‘indigenous enemies’ and the ‘immigrant agents’” (p. 687). This provides an example of how physical space and design, legislated through planning (by a dominant ethnic group), helps establish mental constructions of certain ethnic and cultural groups as ‘other.’

Such examinations of planning, space and ethnic difference point to the increasing multiplicity and difference within urban settings across the globe. Furthermore, planning has failed to respond properly to this increasing cultural diversity, often focusing on “managing diverse communities” rather than “learning to work with” them in a way that makes “space for difference” (Rahder & Milgrom, 2004, p. 29). Vanessa Watson (2002) has critiqued both the old rationalist planning theories – as well as the more ‘progressive’ planning theories that have begun to in their place – as being “normative theories” unable to address the social and spatial contexts of the global south generally and Africa particularly (pp. 29, 41). Specifically, they fail to take into account the unique urban spatial forms of sub-Saharan African cities, where “strong urban-rural ties still exist,” keeping “many people in perpetual motion between rural and urban bases,” as well as the high degree of informalization that characterizes many urban settings in the global south (Watson 2002, p. 29; 2009, p. 2265). All of this points to a “gap” between

the notion of ‘proper’ communities held by most planners and administrators (grounded in the rationality of Western modernity and development), and the rationality which informs the strategies and tactics of those who are attempting to survive, materially and politically, the harsh environment of Africa’s cities (Watson, 2003, p. 401).

It is these “particular demands of context,” as well as the “social and environmental impact of spatial interventions,” that Western planning theory must recognize and acknowledge, without “resorting to importations from very different parts of the world” (Watson 2002, p. 47).

Although Watson (2002) critiques Leonie Sandercock’s concern with “with the recognition of diversity and cultural difference” (p. 27) as a normative Western planning theory, the two authors do share similar planning concerns in the areas of planning theory

and cultural multiplicity. Like Watson, Sandercock (1998) argues that the Modernist worldviews at the heart of Western planning theory can no longer be relied on in the face of cities that are increasingly “multi-ethnic, multi-racial, multiple.” Furthermore, she calls to mind Said’s analysis when she argues that the increasing cultural diversity of cities is often perceived as a “psychological, economic, religious, [and] cultural” threat rooted in “fear of ‘the Other” (p. 3). These fears also have a spatial dimension, as those people branded as ‘others’ are also defined as not belonging to “territorially based” communities due to the cultural construction of them as “inferior, deviant or threatening” (p. 191). Such myths, or narratives of community, “produce defensive exclusionary behaviour which subtly, or not so subtly...pressures ‘the Others’ to either leave or to make themselves as invisible as possible, to make no claims on public space” (p. 191). Planning, Sandercock continues, has too often facilitated such fears through practices that work to limit and demolish the means and spaces by which people of different ethnic or cultural groups come into contact with one another. Faced with the ‘others’ who disrupt established urban comfort zones (Sandercock 2000, p. 205), planners discourage spontaneous and organic interaction between groups, instead “systematically demolishing such spaces in the name of...fear” (1998, p. 210). To counter such spatially and socially exclusionary processes, she offers storytelling – the “use of narrative, of people telling their own stories about how they perceive [a] situation” – as a “potential consensus-building tool” (2000, p. 208) and a way to foster cities and spaces in which ‘others’ can become neighbours (1998, pp. 182- 183; 2003, p. 204).

### *Space, Postcoloniality, & Indigeneity*

One of the most glaring cultural issues in discussions of urban space and difference,

particularly in settler societies such as Canada with high populations of Indigenous peoples, is the relationship between space and Indigeneity. Space plays a role in European-Indigenous interactions, in Western conceptions of Indigenous peoples and worldviews, as well as in the worldviews of Indigenous peoples. Like the postcolonial approach taken by many of the ‘difference and space’ writers discussed above, much of the literature on Indigenous populations and space mobilizes postcolonial theory to show how colonial relations and spaces are reproduced contemporarily, and how such reproduction continues to marginalize Indigenous groups. This literature therefore has much in common with the postcolonial approaches to Indigenous planning.

This contemporary marginalization is the continued result of original colonists’ approaches to land use, which Porter (2010) states were based on the perception of territories previously unknown to Europeans as a *terra nullius* or ‘blank slate’ on which could be built an “ideal human settlement” – ideal, that is, to the colonists (p. 82). The lands in these new settler colonies were seen as “laboratories” in which tests could be carried out to “determine the arrangement of space on [Europe’s] own abstract terms” (p. 83), regardless of how the original Indigenous inhabitants perceived or used those lands. The cadastral survey became one of the primary tools by which British colonists organized and understood the land in these territories. Such surveys were able to delineate territory “as European space,” marking it as “known, legible and available for settlement” (p. 106).

This approach to land planning and organization also produced specifically European understandings of land through the scientific quantification – measurement, classification, and description – of territories thought of as ‘wild’ or ‘untamed.’ As these

territories were viewed in such terms, their natural topographies and features were not adhered to, with the “gridiron pattern of town planning” becoming the most prevalent and well-used form of establishing towns, particularly in the American context where it was “particularly useful to bring standardized land parcels as commodities to the land market” (Porter, 2010, pp. 106, 110). Not only were these European spatial configurations used as a way to impose order onto perceived chaos, they also functioned as military strategies for settlers in conflicts with Indigenous nations. The ‘rational’ and ‘scientific’ ordering of buildings and towns on gridiron patterns “allowed easy policing and patrol of town boundaries to restrict the movement of Indigenous people” (Porter, 2010, p. 111).

These colonial approaches to space are furthermore not restricted to the early organization and dispossession of territories historically used and inhabited by Indigenous peoples. Colonialist spatial organization is also present in contemporary urban contexts, and particularly in terms of urban Indigenous populations. Past colonial relations are continually inscribed in the present, and in present built environments. As Shaw (2007) states in her examination of the inner Sydney Aboriginal community of Redfern, “Non-Aboriginal people continually encounter the Aboriginal presence that colonization sought to dispossess and consequent urban settlement worked to replace. In subtle ways, such encounters invoke the colonial past, calling it into the present” (p. 34). Phenomena such as the preservation and valorization of (British) heritage architecture – through its evocation of the “good old days” – represent ways in which colonial values and understandings of land are inscribed anew in the minds of many and in the current built environment (p. 130). Additionally, the building of New York-style loft apartments and condominiums in the Redfern neighbourhood serves as another example of how

Western forms of housing and architecture are configuring and imagining land and the built environment in ways that marginalize Indigenous populations. In this specific case, such buildings provide a way for non-Indigenous people to “escape” the fear of urban life, and serve to gentrify a predominantly Aboriginal urban neighbourhood, making it “safe” for non-Indigenous people (p. 137).

Not only do spatial configurations and building design function to marginalize urban Indigenous populations through the evocation of colonialist values, but urban Indigeneity can also be “buried” or made invisible to affluent white populations. As Atkinson, Taylor, and Walter (2010) have argued, this occurs through the “socio-spatial construction of Indigenous life” by white urban dwellers and authorities, in a way that enables “aggressive and neglectful policy instruments in which Aboriginal life appears as something that is politically, legally, and spatially marginal” (p. 311). Jacobs (1996) has made similar arguments in her study of urban postcolonial geographies in Australia, showing how conflicting spatial rationalities are played out in an urban context. In the case of Perth’s old Swan Brewery site, located on land within the city considered sacred by Indigenous peoples, “residents and urban authorities...were confronted with the unlikely presence of the Aboriginal sacred in the city” (p. 104). This presence was considered unlikely because it did not fit with widely held perceptions of Aboriginal people existing ‘out there’ in rural areas, removed and distant from urban centres of European settlement. Despite the protests of Aboriginal groups, the brewery site was not “returned to ‘nature’” as Aboriginal groups wished, but was slated by city officials for financially profitable redevelopment (p. 119). Any attempts by authorities to acknowledge the Aboriginal significance of the land were to be carried out “by way of a

display of commodified Aboriginal culture and not the hidden culture of a public Nature” valued by the Aboriginal groups (p. 124). In this case, Western rationalities of space and land use trumped Indigenous worldviews and tradition in a way that “properly” placed the “Aboriginal sacred” in the urban scene (p. 126). Thus just as postcolonial Indigenous planning approaches critique Western planning’s colonialist views of Indigenous populations, so do spatial analyses critique the Western approaches to space that have historically and contemporarily been colonialist in orientation.

However, the continued spatial reproduction of colonial relations is not the final word on the subject of space and Indigeneity. Indigenous understandings of land and space present a worldview contrary to Western rationalities of space. Indigenous worldviews understand land not through neoliberal conceptions of individual rights or ownership, but through “long patterns of communal ownership and inheritance” (Jojola, 2008, p. 43), bringing to mind the importance of keeping Indigenous worldviews at the heart of Indigenous planning. Such a view of land embodies “values that are essential for attaining a well-balanced and symmetrical interrelationship between humankind and the natural ecosystem that it occupies” (Jojola, 2008, p. 43). It also sees land and space as more than merely physical entities with economic potential, but as places with deep cultural meaning and significance (Nilsen, 2005, pp. 24-25). This perspective has been articulated eloquently by Cordova (2007) who, while recognizing the variety of cultures among Indigenous groups in North America, states that there is also a common “sense Native people have of belonging to the Earth – that...they are made for the Earth; the Earth is not made for them” (p. 193). This sense is present in the idea of “Mother Earth,” a term “laden with recognition of human dependence on the planet’s many gifts”

(Cordova, 2007, p. 194). The idea of belonging to the Earth is bounded up with the sense of belonging to a very specific *place* within the broader context of Mother Earth. In other words, there is a sense of “*bounded space*” and the connection between the people within that bounded space to other groups beyond them who are also “endowed with a sense of themselves as being in bounded space” (Cordova, 2007, p. 194). Perhaps most importantly, this sense of place is “the foundation of cultural mooring and values; it is not simply ‘the environment’ that [Indigenous people] accidentally ‘occupy’—they are children of that place. There is no such artificial distinction between themselves and some alien ‘other’ that is termed ‘nature’” (Cordova, 2007, p. 197). Understanding this type of worldview goes a long way to understanding spatial and planning approaches that are culturally appropriate and meaningful to Indigenous peoples. It also hints at the depth and strength of Indigenous worldviews beyond the realm of planning and land use.

So strong are these worldviews that, despite generations of colonization and attempted assimilation, Indigenous peoples have often maintained their own cultural views and practices within postcolonial geographic environments. Wilson and Peters, in their study of urban First Nations people in Winnipeg (2005), interrogate the colonial practices of confining Indigenous peoples to rural reserves, and discuss how the subsequent migration of Indigenous peoples to urban centres “disrupts” the colonial “construction of separate and contained spaces for First Nations and settler cultures in Canada” (pp. 395, 396). Although many First Nations migrants to Canadian cities feel out of place in such an environment (due in no small part to the discourses of exclusion established toward Indigenous peoples within cities), they are nonetheless able to maintain their sense of place and identity by creating “small-scale places of cultural

safety...to express their physical relationship to the land” – for example, finding a tree or green space at which to offer tobacco, or tending a garden (p. 403). Such activities “disrupt” the physical and discursive colonial boundaries that have “confined First Nations cultural practices and identities within the physical boundaries of reserves and defined all other space as settler spaces” (2005, p. 35). Jacobs’ (1996) study of the J.C. Slaughter Falls interpretive trail in Brisbane uncovers a similar type of spatial restructuring and contestation. A sign at the beginning of this trail shows two types of trail maps, one in an “Aboriginalised style,” “etched onto a rock” (p. 150), and showing the culturally significant Aboriginal artwork at various points along the trail. This map is juxtaposed with a Westernized topographical map of the trail producing, in Jacobs’ analysis, a “doubleness” that “destabilizes the boundaries between Self and Other, colonial and traditional, authentic and inauthentic. This hybridity unsettles the comprehensive hold of colonialist constructs” in spatial and social relations (p. 151). Not only does this remapping re-shape and divest the conventional Western map of its colonialist meanings, it also serves as an example of traditional Indigenous knowledge educating and speaking back to non-Indigenous people. Since the trail “is meant for those unknowing people, settler Australians,” it “presumes that Aboriginal knowledge needs to be taught, needs to be learnt” (pp. 147, 152). These examples show how Indigenous understandings – and re-appropriations – of space can counter and contest old colonialist hierarchies. Through keeping traditions and by making Indigenous knowledge visible through maps, Indigenous peoples and worldviews can disrupt cultural expectations and perceptions, as well as the colonial space of the city.

These understandings of space are also at the heart of Indigenous planning as they

are a crucial part of the Indigenous values and worldviews that are foundational to it. In urban settings, Indigenous approaches to space not only help inform and strengthen Indigenous-led planning processes, they also bring about spatial reorganizations and reconfigurations that can help Western planning's process of decolonization and reeducation.

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The relatively recent emphasis of spatial concerns in social, geographic, and planning disciplines has resulted in new understandings of how social and spatial spheres not only interact with each other, but are also intertwined. Not only does spatial analysis shed light on how space is socially produced, it also reveals space to be much more than a blank tablet on which social relations are carried out. Indeed, space plays a role in affecting and shaping those relationships. This 'affecting' and 'shaping' comes into sharper focus when questions of power and governance are engaged, especially in terms of planning's role in defining space and social relations. Discussions of space and cultural difference reveal not only the role of planning in shaping space, but also how colonialism has been a factor in producing certain types of spaces, constructing certain norms of social relations, and marginalizing racial and ethnic 'others.' The topic of Indigeneity and space in particular shows the role colonialism plays and has played in this social and spatial marginalization. It also shows, though, how Indigenous worldviews regarding space and land can unsettle old familiar colonialist hierarchies, power structures, and approaches to governance. These spatial and structural disruptions of and within postcolonial space can help serve as sources of self-reflection for planning,

as it continues to grapple with its historical role as a shaper and manipulator of spaces and populations.

## **Conclusion**

Although the literatures on Indigenous planning and space are in many ways distinct and separate, there are several instances in which connections can be made between them. Keeping in mind the dangers of replicating colonialist mentalities through the application of Western theoretical literature in Indigenous contexts, connections can be drawn in terms of positivism's role in both Indigenous planning and planning's continued connection to oppressive and manipulative structures of power. There are also connections to be made between postcolonial approaches to Indigenous planning and cultural spatial analysis. Most importantly, Indigenous planning carries with it potential for affecting social change and transformation. Just as Indigenous planning runs counter to the colonialist tendencies still present in Western planning practices, it also provides an example of resistance to the homogenizing abstract spaces that these practices produce. Thus Indigenous planning can function as a means to spearhead self-determining Indigenous-led development. It can also provide the grounds for Western planning to unlearn some of its colonialist leanings, as Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups continue to plan and interact together in increasingly diverse urban settings.

## Chapter 3: Research Methods and Ethics

### Data Sources

The empirical component of this thesis consisted of gathering both documentary data and interview data. In terms of the documents, I searched for sources spanning from the 1960s, when urban Aboriginal community development was growing and pointing in the direction of what would become Neeginan, up to the late 1990s and early 2000s, when Aboriginal development in the ‘Neeginan’ area had become firmly established. I firstly chose documents that dealt with the formation of Neeginan and associated Aboriginal-led initiatives in the Main and Higgins area. Reports such as *Neeginan: A Feasibility Report* (1975), written by Damas and Smith for what was known then as Neeginan Incorporated, and *Our Place* (1997), written by the North Main Task Force, a group led by Aboriginal activist Mary Richard in partnership with several Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community groups and leaders, were crucial in this regard. These documents complemented interviews with people who were familiar or involved with the processes surrounding these reports.

I also chose to look at documents that would shed some light on the broader approaches to urban planning in Winnipeg, specifically at the municipal level. These included the various versions of *Plan Winnipeg* (forerunner to the current *OurWinnipeg* plan) and background studies associated with them spanning from the late 1970s to 2000. Similar to the City’s 1968 *Metropolitan Development Plan*, which was also consulted, these documents deal with the long-term planning and development goals of the City. I

also examined City reports and studies dealing specifically with downtown Winnipeg, in particular the northern section of downtown around Main and Higgins. These included the 1959 *Urban Redevelopment Study Number 1* for the Point Douglas area, published by the City's Urban Renewal and Rehabilitation Board; a similar 1969 report by the City on urban renewal for the Main Street area of Downtown; a 1972 report by the City's Department of Housing and Urban Renewal on the progress of urban renewal in Winnipeg; a 1972 report by Earl A. Levin of the City's planning department on the concept of Neeginan; as well as the City of Winnipeg's *CentrePlan* document of 1995, which described more recent City priorities and development visions for Downtown Winnipeg. All these documents are publicly available. This type of "unobtrusive research" (Berg, 2004, p. 209) of course did not involve human subjects, but I nevertheless kept in mind issues such as who created these documents and for whom and what purposes they were written, why certain documents may have been produced, and the possibility of corroborating documentary evidence with other forms of data (Gray, 2009, p. 497).

In line with this type of corroboration, a very important component of the research was a series of interviews with Aboriginal leaders and organizers who were involved with the Neeginan project, particularly in the development of some of its most visible physical manifestations: the Aboriginal Centre of Winnipeg (including organizations operating within it), and Thunderbird House. This was particularly necessary because stopping the research and analysis at the document-research stage could have left an incomplete picture; the responses provided by interview participants

helped elucidate themes within the documents, and vice versa. These interviews were a crucial element of describing and analyzing Neeginan's approach, and by extension approaches to Indigenous planning.

Participants were approached through publicly available lists (for example, the Aboriginal elders and stakeholders involved with the North Main Task Force's *Our Place* report are all listed within that document). Since there were a limited number of people involved with that report, interviews had to be done with whomever from this short list was available and willing. Aside from this, most interview participants were approached through professional contacts of mine within and with connections to urban Aboriginal communities. This approach adheres to a "snowball sampling" method, in which "the researcher identifies a small number of subjects, who, in turn, identify others in the population" (Gray, 2009, p. 153). It also follows a relational approach to research, which Wilson (2008) describes as the centre of "Indigenous ontology and epistemology ...relationships do not merely shape reality, they *are* reality" (p. 7). In this view, knowledge is not seen as an individual entity, but as relational – it is about "relational accountability" and "fulfilling your relationships with the world around you" (Wilson, 2001, p. 177).

Taking this into account, I contacted potential participants early in the process, meeting with them informally before the actual interviews to share with them what exactly the thesis was about and how I was going about it, and to discuss generally their work and perspectives. Not only was this important in terms of building trust and rapport, it also followed Wilson's (2008) assertion that "for Indigenous people, research

is a ceremony,” and “an integral part of any ceremony is setting the stage properly” (p. 69). In total, I conducted interviews with six people, all of whom are or had at some point been involved with Thunderbird House, the Aboriginal Centre, or organizations housed in the Aboriginal Centre. One of the participants is also an Elder, and part of the pre-interview protocol therefore included respectfully approaching this person with tobacco to request their knowledge and insight (National Aboriginal Health Organization, undated; University of Manitoba Aboriginal Student Centre, 2011). The six people I interviewed were: Allan, who works for an organization housed in the Aboriginal Centre of Winnipeg; Andrea, who is associated with Thunderbird House; James, who was involved in the early days of the Aboriginal Centre; Michael, who was also involved in the Aboriginal Centre’s formative years and currently works for an organization housed there; Sarah, who is associated with the Aboriginal Centre and is familiar with the initial Neeginan conversations; and Trevor, an Elder with ties to Thunderbird House (all names are pseudonyms). In addition to being involved with various components of the Neeginan vision, all the participants have been involved in a wide variety of Aboriginal-led-and-focused community initiatives over the years.

The interviews themselves followed a semi-structured format consisting of a list of questions to be covered but also allowing for some leeway in the conversation. This approach made it possible to cover certain issues determined beforehand, but also made room “for probing of views and opinions where it is desirable for respondents to expand on their answers” (Gray, 2009, p. 373). This was a useful approach for the project, as it intentionally departs from rigidly structured approaches which are “not congruent with

accessing knowledges that imbue both the fluidity and regulation of the storyteller's role within oral tradition, or that respond to the relational nature of Indigenous research” (Kovach, 2009, p. 23).

Although interviews were conducted informally to allow the participants to share information in a comfortable way, semi-structured questions were tailored to cover issues such as participants' understandings of the purposes and values of the Neeginan developments; the significance of, or motivation behind Neeginan's focus on the North Main area; possible relationships among different stakeholder groups in the area; as well as level of importance accorded to Aboriginal worldviews in planning and development for the area. Interview questions and methodology were also sensitive to the complexities of relationships between and amongst Aboriginal stakeholder groups as well as City of Winnipeg interests, by tailoring interview questions and approaches appropriately based on participants' various affiliations and backgrounds.

Just as there is risk in relating the themes of Western spatial theory and Indigenous planning to each other (something that I have tried to do sensitively and only where appropriate), there was also a risk in the research process of de-emphasizing the perspectives of interview participants, or of 'speaking for' them. I pursued a relational methodology described above to address this risk. The following section further addresses these methodological issues, and how they were addressed in the analysis stage.

## **Data Analysis**

After transcribing the interviews, I analyzed the data from both the documents and the

interviews through a three-step coding method outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1998), consisting of an “open coding” stage, an “axial coding” stage, and finally a “selective coding” stage (pp. 119-125, 142, 161). In the open coding stage I scanned documents and transcripts for initially apparent and potential themes. This process is intended to act as a “first attempt to condense the mass of data into categories” (Neuman & Kreuger, 2003, p. 438), and upon completion I ended up with a long and rather unmanageable list of potential thematic categories. Whereas the first stage focused on reading the sources themselves, the second stage of axial coding focused more on my list of themes and categories, and I re-read the documents and transcripts in light of the themes I had already developed. This also involved looking for potential relationships and connections between categories as well as for potential subcategories (Neuman & Kreuger, 2003, p. 439). I also considered the analytical themes found in my literature review and how these could relate to the themes that I was developing. At the end of this stage, I had formulated a much more streamlined list of thematic categories. In the final selective coding stage, I went through all the documents and transcripts once more, this time with the new set of thematic categories, taking detailed notes, and also colour-coding each thematic category, marking passages in each document according to colour-coded theme. I took detailed notes throughout this process, which I sorted first according to document and then according to theme. This helped me see the thematic categories spread throughout a range of data sources, but also *across* a range of data sources (this raised the risk of conforming to *variable analysis*, which I will address further below). Throughout the analysis I regarded the sources as more than merely a means of transmitting

information, but as an active constitutive agent in constructing opinions and supporting viewpoints (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 21). Getting at these constitutive functions necessitated reading beyond the apparent surface-level meanings of the sources, focusing instead on reading the context and uses of language at play within them (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 33).

Throughout my analysis, I was aware that using this coding method could run the risk of conflating Western social science research with Indigenous approaches to research. The danger is in the potential for Western methods to be applied prescriptively in a way that overshadows, discounts, or ignores Indigenous perspectives. Such methodological colonialism has too often been the norm in research with Indigenous communities. As Ball and Janyst (2008) have pointed out, this type of research has typically been conducted “‘on’ Indigenous peoples for the benefit of non-Indigenous scholars and agencies without meaningful engagement of Indigenous peoples” (33). Furthermore, the methods, questions, and approaches are often imported and “‘predicated on non-Indigenous interests, theoretical models, and research paradigms” (p. 43). To address these dangers I shared my analysis and interpretations of the interviews with the participants in individual follow-up meetings to ensure their words and points of view were properly represented. I found this to be an incredibly beneficial and helpful step in the process, as interviewees were able to revisit their answers to interview questions in light of my analysis, “‘actively construct[ing] the data” in order to “‘get beyond static analysis to multiple layers of meaning” in their answers (Gray, 2009, pp. 375, 502).

This approach to the research and analysis was a way to mitigate the risks

mentioned above. It also follows Alatas' argument (1993) that "indigenization" in the social sciences should be seen as emanating from Indigenous sources "while incorporating selectively" Western-based social science in ways that do not discount or marginalize Indigenous perspectives (p. 334). It also addresses the tendency in Western research toward 'going native' in a way that searches for and fetishizes some perceived 'essence' of the Indigenous Other, thereby highlighting and enforcing "differences and absolute oppositions between Western and non-Western cultures" (Alatas, 1993, p. 331) in ways that are not always beneficial or transformational.

In using cross-cultural research methods that respect the perspectives and knowledge of the participants, the role of the researcher is extremely important to consider. This is even more important when undertaking research with people from groups who have historically been marginalized and oppressed through colonial systems of domination, as has been the case with Aboriginal peoples in Canada. Porter (2004) addresses this issue perceptively when she states that cross-cultural work with Indigenous groups requires a degree of "unlearning one's privilege," that is, reflecting critically "on how we have come to value our own knowledge" and accepting that "we do not have answers and that sometimes we might be part of the problem" (p. 105). This unlearning of one's privilege is not only "a key to *doing* cross-cultural research, it is one of the things that *happens* to you when you do cross-cultural research" (p. 105). For myself then, I approached this project as an opportunity to continue my own personal process of understanding how colonialism can still be present in relationships and social structures, as well as how these relational and social structures might potentially be

transformed. This required continued self-reflection and “methodological humility” – always conducting myself under the assumption that I, as an outsider to Indigenous cultures, “may be missing something” (Narayan, 1988, p. 38).

Further to this I also adopted a reflexive approach, being aware of my own role within the processes of research and analysis. Mason (2002) describes a reflexive reading of data as one that locates the researcher as “inevitably and inextricably implicated in the data generation and interpretation processes” (p. 149). Rather than viewing reality as “objectively ‘out there’ as a set of social facts waiting to be discovered” (p. 175), a reflexive approach acknowledges that researchers play a role in constructing data. To maintain awareness of my role in the research, I kept a journal throughout the project, to note how I was reading the documents, how I was reacting and interacting in interviews, and how I was reflecting on interviews after they were finished. I was also conscious of not falling into the trap of what Mason refers to as “variable analysis” – a form of “positivist” social science research that treats thematic categories drawn from the data as concrete and absolute. This is often a risk in “cross-sectional” methods of data coding such as the three-step process outlined above, which involve establishing a generally “consistent system for indexing” – in this case, thematic categories or codes (2002, p. 150). To address this risk, I took care to treat my themes as “unfinished sources” – “loose and flexible groupings” and not “end products...in themselves.” I was also careful not to de-contextualize thematic categories from their sources (Mason, 2002, pp. 157-158). The research journal was helpful in this respect, as it helped me keep in mind the context – interviews with participants – that produced the data.

Finally, I chose to structure the research analysis chapter in a certain way: the first section of that chapter focuses primarily on Neeginan itself, and the perspectives of the interview participants. This is then followed by a discussion of the broad Winnipeg urban planning context. The intent here was to affirm the centrality and primacy of Neeginan and the people involved with it, rather than merely relating their stories *through* the context of conventional Western planning approaches in the City. It also enabled me to relate Neeginan to the changing context of urban planning within Winnipeg.

Although reflexivity is important, it does little good if not connected to action. As Porter (2004) states, reflection must translate to focusing on “moments within institutional rules and parameters where real and lasting change can be achieved” (p. 109). I therefore attempt to posit Neeginan as an example of how planning norms and social structures, which are often wedded to a positivist and colonial heritage, can be unsettled and potentially transformed in an urban environment.

## **Research Ethics**

In terms of ethical considerations for the project, I gained approval from the University of Manitoba Ethics Board through the completion and approval of a protocol submission form. Also, interviewees were made aware of the background and nature of the thesis, a general idea of the questions and subject areas to be covered in the interviews, and where and to whom the final results and thesis would be submitted. Interviews did not expose participants to more emotional or physical stress than they would experience in their everyday lives, and participants’ anonymity is upheld in this document through the use

of pseudonyms as opposed to actual names. As mentioned, participants were afforded the opportunity to review the transcripts and the analysis of them prior to thesis completion. Interviews were recorded using a digital recorder, although participants were afforded the option of having the interview recorded through handwritten notes (all were fine with using a digital recorder).

## Chapter 4: Research Results and Analysis

### Introduction

The ‘Neeginan’ area around Main Street and Higgins Avenue has become a locus for Aboriginal community and economic development, education, service provision, culture, and spirituality in Winnipeg. An examination of the processes at play in making this part of the city a hub of Aboriginal cultural, social, and economic activity, allows for a clearer understanding of Neeginan’s varied approaches to community development, its characteristics, and its underlying values. These processes and approaches to community development and planning all of course have social implications, but spatial implications as well.

The first part of this chapter looks at Neeginan as it has existed previously and currently in plans, in practice, and in built form. I should note that I use the term ‘Neeginan’ broadly to describe the general drive toward planning and creating an urban Aboriginal ‘hub’ in downtown Winnipeg, as well as the various physical manifestations this has taken – specifically the Aboriginal Centre (and the many organizations housed within it), and Thunderbird House. While these entities are not affiliated in any formal sense, they do represent key components of the initial overall ‘Neeginan’ vision for the area. These key components are based on the themes I developed in the coding process. The second part of this chapter looks at the urban context in which Neeginan has developed. ‘Context’ here refers to both the built form of the city as well as the urban planning processes and visions for Winnipeg, particularly at the municipal level. Relating Neeginan to this urban context reveals not only what is distinct about Neeginan as a form of Indigenous planning, but also how socio-spatial norms, the planning

establishment, and lingering colonialist social structures all comprise an environment in which Aboriginal-led planning and development is challenging and difficult. However, with increasing planning emphases on social and cultural factors along with increasing engagement of Winnipeg's Aboriginal population, there are some recent signs that this could be slowly changing. The Neeginan area of downtown Winnipeg represents a place and a mode by which existing social structures could be transformed.

### **Neeginan's Urban Approach**

Neeginan is a distinctly *urban* endeavour, and has been since its early stages. When Winnipeg's Aboriginal community embarked on the process of planning for the development of the Main and Higgins area, Aboriginal organizations were virtually unanimous in determining that the site of such a development would be a central location near or in the downtown (Damas & Smith, 1975, p. 16). This reflected the new postwar reality of Canadian cities, particularly Winnipeg, in that the needs of urban Aboriginal communities were increasingly important due to greater migration of First Nations peoples from rural reserves to urban centres. Interview participants saw this urban character of the Neeginan initiative as a way of addressing increasingly complex social, economic, and cultural issues for Aboriginal people migrating to Winnipeg. James, reflecting on the founding of the Aboriginal Centre of Winnipeg, remarked that these issues

*are the same as they have been for decades. Particularly Aboriginal people moving into an urban setting. They have to adapt to be able to live with their fellow citizens of the city. In some cases they have to get literacy training, in some cases they have to get their education, in some cases they have to upgrade*

*their skills to get a job—that’s not speaking to the social issues they face as a group of people: serious health issues, diabetes...social issues, family separation, fallout from the residential schools, isolation from their home community who are perhaps far in the north, language isolation, all that sort of stuff complicates the issues of any group of people moving into the city.*

The difficult issues attendant with migrating to an urban centre can also complicate people’s cultural identity. Whereas people living on the land in rural First Nations may be more closely tied to traditional Indigenous practices and a more rural way of life, the urban setting, as one interview participant noted, necessitates a degree of integration into urban life, while maintaining a balance with city life and a strong Aboriginal identity:

*It’s a real change in the way you live, and the way you relate to others. It’s a sea change sometimes in those things...and I don’t know that you could necessarily say that all aspects of that are good....In a way, you’re forced to change who you are, what you do, how you do it, and then if you don’t do that, then you’re left on the outside looking in (Michael).*

Neeginan, through its development of *urban* Aboriginal communities and the provision of supports to strengthen them, has always placed increased interconnections and “interrelationships” (Allan) at its centre, both in terms of the programs it offers and how it offers them. In the early Neeginan discussions, the vision was to address a variety of interrelated community elements:

*The Aboriginal community at the time was not looking for one thing. They were looking at the idea that these are all the elements we need to build our community*

*– we needed recreation, we needed training space, we needed education space, we needed housing (James).*

Along the same lines, one participant emphasized that the Neeginan approach to development and planning is one that sees community development as a holistic thing consisting of many parts that must all be addressed. Therefore it has always had as a goal

*our healthy growth and development in cities – and that’s, again, spiritual, political, social, economic development of our community (Michael).*

These tenets are evident in the operation of both the Aboriginal Centre and Thunderbird House, specifically in how both organizations house and bring together a diverse range of people and groups. At the Aboriginal Centre, this has happened through a breaking down of “silos” in which previous Aboriginal-oriented programs in Winnipeg had existed, in favour of a centre housing many different separate but related programs and organizations:

*With all of these silos there was no coordination, and it was only with the advent of the Aboriginal Centre, that you brought the coordination, where coordination became possible....you can refer directly from one agency to another, where the individual only has to go down one floor...to get the service that he’d [sic] need to do the additional training he might need. [It isn’t] like it was in the 1990s, because [back then] you would have one training organization in one part of the city, literacy program in another part of the city, and social assistance in another part of the city (James).*

Increased organizational and community interconnections such as these have also been a part of how Thunderbird House has operated in terms of its focus on traditional

spirituality and worldviews. Whereas in some cases there may have been greater divisions between different traditional backgrounds and Elders within the urban setting, Thunderbird House has more recently been working towards embracing and including such traditions on a broad basis:

*The key of it is that inclusiveness, and sharing that there isn't one way to Spirit, there isn't one set of teachings that are the way....So in that sense it's brought the traditional community together more...and now that respect is more there*  
(Andrea).

In being a consciously urban endeavour, then, Neeginan has sought to address issues of urban Aboriginal identity and community development by bringing together a wide range of interconnected aspects of community. It focuses on strengthening Aboriginal capacity in the urban context while also strengthening cultural identities that are distinctly Aboriginal. Its unique 'urban-ness' "recognizes the urban Aboriginal community's interest in becoming a full member of Winnipeg's economic, social and cultural fabric" while underscoring the importance of maintaining and strengthening Aboriginal cultural identity in the city (North Main Task Force, 1997, p. 12). In looking to blend certain 'contemporary' urban elements with more 'traditional' Aboriginal lifestyles and identities, Neeginan's various components are able to strengthen "new capabilities" while maintaining Indigenous "knowledge and livelihood strategies" (Beneria-Surkin, 2004, p. 115). Its urban approach is an example of how mainstream or urban planning practices can be adjusted and experimented with by Aboriginal groups in order to make them more "culturally resilient" (Jojola, 2008, p. 45).

## **Focusing Inward**

This urban emphasis has meant that Neeginan, as a series of organizations and programs existing in the Main and Higgins area, has been simultaneously focused both inwardly and outwardly – inwardly in the sense of strengthening Aboriginal capacity, self-sufficiency, community, and cultural identity within the city; outwardly in the sense of being open to the wider city around it. Developing and strengthening Winnipeg's urban Aboriginal community from within has been occurring in the realms of economic development, training, and education on one hand, as well as spirituality and traditional worldviews on the other. In terms of economic development, training, and education, this has meant that many of the organizations in the area, such as the Centre for Aboriginal Human Resource Development's (CAHRD) Aboriginal Community Campus, along with the Neeginan Institute, are making it a priority to be more autonomous and less dependent on funding, by working and operating as a more equal partner as opposed to a dependant:

*Our goal is not to be one hundred percent dependent-funded. We're in partnerships with other agencies and organizations within and exterior from the [Aboriginal] Centre itself....A lot of that is to develop some social enterprise that will be able to generate a capacity for us, to be able to do some funding on our own, and expansion. So yeah, rather than just going to the Feds or the Province and saying, 'hey, you know what, we want to do this, or we want to do that' ...they may be able to help us with the start-up, they may help us with the equipment, but the general maintenance of that equipment we would look at managing ourselves. So there's some self-sufficiency involved (Allan).*

However, this vision of self-sufficiency exists not only in terms of the organizations themselves, but also for community members at large. The vision of helping develop a strong and self-sufficient Aboriginal community in Winnipeg through education, training, and economic development, was mentioned by Sarah as a driving factor, particularly in the early stages:

*The values [of Neeginan] are on people having enough opportunity to make their own choices, to come together at 'our place,' where it was safe and they could find the resources they needed to become self-sustaining...which meant that they had the resources, the economic education, training, to make choices in their own lives.*

The skill-building and economic development components were also a part of the original Neeginan report, which placed importance on creating opportunities for a wide range of Aboriginal community members, from those with “job-ready” marketable skills, to those seeking a certain degree of training for a specific job or skill, to even those requiring not only employment training, but also social skills and supports (Damas & Smith, 1975, pp. 30-31). This openness to such a diverse range of people can be seen in how organizations such as CAHRD operate today. While some students at CAHRD’s Aboriginal Community Campus or Neeginan Institute come with previous skills and education,

*Some come with really next to nothing, and walk right in off the street, and they’re also assessed (Allan).*

For these people, social and cultural supports are available, from daycare, to Elders and job coaches, to literacy training (Allan). All of these things help to give Neeginan its

emphasis on developing “opportunities not only for jobs for our people but also the opportunities of freedom and pride” (North Main Task Force, 1997, p. 39).

This has often meant that organizations such as CAHRD have made it a priority to incorporate a holistic range of supports in their approach to education, training, and economic development. This priority reflects the urban context in which Neeginan exists, particularly for Aboriginal students moving to the city, who are often

*much more comfortable coming to a setting where they can walk in freely, not be judged, not have to fit in, not have to compete with the non-Aboriginal students.*

*You know, people are not ignorant – Aboriginal people especially – they’re well aware of the fact that, you know, every time the mainstream [educational]*

*institutions use them as a check on their clipboard, for their numbers (Allan).*

This type of approach, which strives to be culturally relevant and supportive to Aboriginal people in a way that provides a sense of familiarity in an unfamiliar urban environment, differs from non-Aboriginal approaches, according to Allan, in that it takes into account issues such as

*years of family negativity towards education, years of generations living in a whole different environment, seeing different things, speaking different languages, and so on.*

This is not to say that the city’s urban Aboriginal population was or is devoid of leadership, capacity, or opportunity to make choices, far from it. In some ways, the relatively recent advent of the Aboriginal Centre, Thunderbird House, and the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) offices all within the Main and Higgins area has been a way to re-build and even enhance the strong community strength and capacity that had already

existed within Winnipeg during the time of the initial Neeginan plan. Andrea remembered that,

*Back then, like in the '70s or '60s I guess, because it was a smaller bunch coming in, a lot of times they would end up knowing each other, or they would get to meet each other, and form those bonds here, and it had more of a community feel. And then, I don't know [in the] '80s, '90s, whatever, they tore down some of the hotels, they started making some changes, but then the gangs started moving in and it got kind of crazy. And there wasn't that sense of community anymore.*

However, she also remarked that,

*when they built Thunderbird House and they got the Aboriginal Centre providing programs and services, the Manitoba Métis Federation...in terms of the city, how do I say it, it's like the hub of Aboriginal renewal.*

The renewal referred to here is not only economic and social, but is also deeply rooted in Aboriginal traditions and worldviews, which while historically and traditionally tied to the land, are also being articulated in the urban environment of downtown Winnipeg.

Silver, Hay, and Gorzen's (2005) assertion that incorporating traditional Indigenous worldviews and ways of life into planning processes results in a fuller and more inclusive kind of community development (p. 257), is quite visible in how Neeginan has such traditional worldviews as the foundation for much of its work.

Although economic and business development is a crucial component of an organization such as the Aboriginal Centre, the importance of strong Aboriginal identity is not lost, as James emphasized:

*I guess, as [Aboriginal] people become more sophisticated and more integrated into Winnipeg society, they're not going to lose their identity as Aboriginal people.*

This is an important statement as it makes room for Aboriginal people to become members of the wider urban community, while also maintaining roots in distinctly Aboriginal worldviews even within an urban environment. Such cultural and spiritual foundations are important especially in light of Canada's history of colonialism and attempted assimilation, to which Andrea referred when reflecting on the role of Thunderbird House in the Main and Higgins area:

*In the [rural] communities, the ones who were doing ceremonies, a lot of them...had to do it in hiding, because it was outlawed and all that kind of stuff....So then, because it was outlawed – like, gatherings and sundances and ceremonies and all of that – people did it in hiding, and it was a bad thing, and they didn't talk about it.*

With Thunderbird House, though, she sees a kind of “resurgence” of traditional practices and cultural identity, a place where “re-learning” can happen, and where

*people who want to come and connect with their culture or their identity can come here and learn about it.*

With such a large urban Aboriginal population in Winnipeg, Thunderbird House, in bringing together Elders from all Aboriginal traditional backgrounds in Manitoba, has become a centre of Aboriginal culture within the city. This is especially important considering that at one time it was difficult to find such cultural and spiritual resources within an urban centre like Winnipeg:

*The Elders, a lot of times their ceremonies are out of town, which then doesn't give people in the city, who don't have access, [a chance to plug into those cultural resources]. We're dealing with a whole other generation of people who over the last three or four generations have been in the city, and they don't have their home base anymore, they don't have those connections back to their home community, so where do they go and learn? (Andrea).*

Not only do Thunderbird House's programs provide traditional cultural and spiritual supports, its operational model also reflects, as much as possible, a reliance on the knowledge and wisdom of Elders. It does so by relying on a Council of Elders – a group of Elders spanning a range of traditional backgrounds, that advises Thunderbird House's board of directors. According to Trevor, this reflects ways of life in many traditional rural First Nations,

*where there is a council of Elders that will advise the politics, the politicians, like Chief and Council for instance.*

An operational model based on the wisdom and knowledge of Elders is also part of a concerted effort to reclaim cultural strengths that were often eroded by European settlement and attempted assimilation (Andrea).

This orientation towards traditional worldviews and cultures is not only a part of how organizations like Thunderbird House operate. It has also been a crucial component of the overall Neeginan vision for the north Downtown area. The North Main Task Force's *Our Place* report of 1997, which was driven in large part by urban Aboriginal leaders and based on consultations with members of Winnipeg's Aboriginal community, reflected this cultural orientation in its section on the historical background of the North

Main Street area. Whereas City of Winnipeg planning documents would often present the history of this area as beginning with European settlement (this will be examined in more detail further below), the *Our Place* report took a different approach. First, it referred to the natural geographical and topographical history of the area by beginning with the receding of glacial Lake Agassiz and moving through a description of the natural environment before describing the “late pre-contact” arrival of “the Algonquin-speaking Blackfoot, Atsina and possibly some early Ojibway, and Siouan-speaking Assiniboin, Mandan, Hidatsa and Sisseton Dakota” (1997, pp. 6-7). Even the document’s description of the fur trade and later eras was told from an Aboriginal perspective. This reflects not only Neeginan’s cultural foundation and approach, but also the centrality of land and connection to the natural world inherent in such an approach (as asserted by Cornthassel, 2008, pp. 107-108, 118). It also exemplifies an Indigenous re-appropriation of not only approaches to planning urban space, but also descriptions and stories told about that space (something that will be more fully explored further below).

The spatial implications alluded to in the previous example were mentioned often and frequently by interview participants, particularly the importance of planning and development initiatives that result in physical structures that are culturally relevant to Aboriginal peoples. As Michael indicated,

*Neeginan was, I think, in the highest level, a place where Aboriginal people could, through the design of the building, express their heritage, some of their cultural traditions, and some of their design thoughts....its an effort to create, to try and recreate, some of who you were and some of what you had.*

He then pointed to Thunderbird House's sweat lodge as an example of this 'culture in built form,' pointing to the distinctiveness of such a traditional spiritual structure in such a completely urban setting. To take up Jacobs' argument (1996), this unique and unlikely existence of the "Aboriginal sacred in the city" has the potential to disrupt widely held perceptions of Aboriginal cultures and their role in the urban environment (p. 104), and to create urban space different from what is around it. The importance of distinctively 'Indigenous' urban structures was also referred to by Trevor, who, when speaking of Thunderbird House stated,

*You know, there's a lot of people that have never seen, that have never come in here [to Thunderbird House]. And it's interesting, people will say, "I've walked by here many, many times, I've always wanted to come in, but I wasn't sure, you know, if it's a place where I would be welcomed." And usually people are surprised when they come in here and see the layout of the place, you know? 'Everything's round here!' And it's a beautiful place, and it's welcoming.*

This phenomenon of people passing by but never entering is indicative of how certain spaces and the cultures within them can be both visible and yet strangely invisible and 'other' to the wider non-Aboriginal population. Said (1978) refers to this by commenting on how people make themselves feel "not-foreign" based on their own "unrigorous idea[s] of what is 'out there' beyond one's own territory. All kinds of suppositions, associations, and fictions appear to crowd the unfamiliar space outside one's own" (p. 54). In this case, Thunderbird House represents for many people who pass by it all the time a structure that is 'other' and unfamiliar to their own social and physical urban

experience. Yet upon entering, their preconceived notions are changed and perhaps softened by the welcoming nature of the space and the people working within it.

This was certainly the intent of the structure as outlined in the *Our Place* report, which described what at the time was referred to as “The Round House,” which would become Thunderbird House. Its round construction was to be based on “the principles of the Medicine Wheel,” and would be – as it now is – a respectful place for the Aboriginal community to “honour their beliefs, pass on their knowledge, gather for ceremonies and celebrations, feast, drum, dance and sing,” all within a building that would signify “how all the aspects of their lives are connected” (p. 13). The vision for such a structure was an integral part of the original Neeginan report as well, which outlined how the building would be designed in a way that represented of all Indigenous groups within North America; a welcoming place for all Indigenous cultures and traditions (Damas & Smith, 1975, pp. 24-26). Thunderbird House’s current model of operating reflects this, in the existence of the Council of Elders, from a wide range of traditions, providing guidance to the board.

In addition to cultural relevance within a single building like Thunderbird House, Neeginan has as part of its vision the goal of fostering a neighbourhood, and urban spaces (not only a single building) that speak to the urban Aboriginal experience through their design and organization. At one point the Medicine Wheel was even the basis of a proposed “structural and architectural transformation of a large geographical area of the North Main Street area into a huge Medicine Wheel that would form the nucleus of the Aboriginal community,” with Thunderbird House at the centre (North Main Task Force, 1997, p. 12). While this has not come about in such an all-encompassing manner, built

environments and public spaces that speak to, and foster spaces of, Indigenous cultures are still a priority for Main Street as the Neeginan vision moves forward. Michael stated as much, remarking how he sees potential for such spaces, by raising the profile of Aboriginal people in urban centres and in the built environment, to transform social norms, and attitudes toward and between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups:

*Part of our struggle in Canada is between groups, we know that. There's racism, there's discrimination, there's stereotypical images of all kinds of groups....So to me, architecture and construction and physical structures lend themselves to, I think, over time, breaking some of that stuff down, of creating more acceptance....I think it's a powerful part of our society and if groups can't express themselves in that way, then I think it's a drawback in many different ways.*

This comes in line with Walker's (2008) argument for planning processes that encourage Aboriginal culture in the spaces and built forms of cities in order to raise consciousness and strengthen relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups (p. 13).

Along with the concept of creating Indigenous space, Neeginan is also an initiative that has successfully reclaimed and re-appropriated urban space. A good example is the Aboriginal Centre of Winnipeg, which is located in the former Canadian Pacific Railway station on Higgins Avenue. This structure had at one time been the arrival point of new immigrants arriving to the city – “when new Canadians came to Canada, this is the first place they stepped foot” (Sarah). Although it was not explicitly part of the Aboriginal Centre's formal approach or mindset in purchasing the building, there is nevertheless significance in the fact that what was once a symbol of Western

Canadian settlement (and the related displacement of Aboriginal peoples from their lands) is now a hub of services and organizations led *by* Aboriginal people *for* Aboriginal people. Following Jacobs (1996), this is one example of how colonialist structures can be overturned and unsettled through Indigenous-led development (pp. 50-51). Even more specific to the context of Main and Higgins, the Aboriginal Centre embodies “the idea that we can take resources that have basically been thrown away, and create vibrant communities” (Sarah). This refers to the fact that throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s, the Main Street area around Higgins Avenue had fallen into disuse and disrepair, exemplified by the vacant train station.

*When it ceased to be a railroad station, and it was empty, the hotels became disused, the little shops that were here ceased to operate, the hotels that still remained here became drop-in places for those that are hard on their luck, it became a place where prostitutes used to hang out and everything else* (James).

With the advent of Aboriginal-led development as part of the Neeginan vision, however, the area began to change. Along with the Aboriginal Centre, James remarked that Thunderbird House, culturally relevant streetscaping, the arrival of the MMF offices, all helped change an area that, in public discourse within non-Aboriginal Winnipeg, has often been associated physically *and* socially with blight and social “disease” (Burley 2006, p. 63) – a characterization that, as I will discuss further below, was aided and purported by urban planners. Aboriginal-led re-developments and re-appropriations of this space within Winnipeg, then, became a means of transforming discursive ‘pathologies of space’ (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 99) that are often mobilized in ways that

equate the social problems of urban spaces with the people living in them. As Sarah put it,

*The idea that a hundred and five thousand cars go by [Main and Higgins] a day – they see the development of the Aboriginal community in a good, strong, positive, healthy way.*

This has not meant, however, that Neeginan has ignored or pushed aside the impoverished members of the population residing in the area. As Allan remarked, regarding the Aboriginal Centre's role in offering services to people from the community essentially coming in off the street, "we don't ever want to turn anyone away – if we shut our doors to that level, then we have to shut our doors completely." Also, the way in which Thunderbird House is inclusive of the community around it, has resulted in neighbourhood residents – including those homeless and suffering from addictions and substance abuse – respecting and looking after the Thunderbird House site:

*One day I was here...we had a sacred fire outside....And, these kids were drinking....They were sitting on the rocks in the centre there trying to drink, and some of the other people, that do drink, that sit on the rocks [outside Thunderbird House] all the time, were going, 'go drink over there, what are you doing, there's a fire, there's a ceremony, you can't be drinking right here right now! Have some respect!' (Andrea).*

Trevor reiterated this sentiment, remarking that this embrace of the surrounding community was also part of long-time Aboriginal activist Mary Richard's vision for Thunderbird House:

*She'd have a feast for the street people, and she'd say to them, 'I'm doing this because I want to be your friend, but I also want you to make sure that we're protected.' And so the street people took that to heart. And they look after this place, to make sure it's not vandalized. So, you know, it was quite a meaningful part of Mary Richard's vision to do that – to actually go out to the community, the street people, who make up a lot of the community, and go to them and say, 'I want to have a feast, I want to honour you, and I am going to ask you to help us, to feel protected, to have a sense of protection.' And so they look after it.*

This positive approach to the surrounding community and to community development generally is indicative of how Neeginan has approached planning and development on Main Street from the very beginning. It is also an approach to development that counters the problem-centric way in which work with Aboriginal communities has often been carried out (as the research methods chapter has shown, this work is often not carried out *with*, but rather *on* or *to* Aboriginal groups). For example, in the early discussions of Neeginan, Winnipeg Aboriginal groups decided emphatically to focus on the development of a services centre building as opposed to housing issues. The reason for this was that housing was seen as “the most exploited of all the issues affecting the native people,” with a whole gamut of housing surveys and studies having been conducted on the Aboriginal population with little in the way of positive results (Damas & Smith, 1975, p. 17). Sarah expressed a similar sentiment:

*The community came together and said they said we don't want to talk about issues; we want to talk about making change and solutions.*

## Reaching Outward

Even though Neeginan's primary focus has been the building of capacity, economic opportunity, culture, and self-sufficiency for Aboriginal people in Winnipeg, its scope has not only been internal. There has always been, in the processes of planning and implementing the Neeginan vision, an Aboriginal cultural and spiritual basis for making the initiatives around Main and Higgins open and inviting to the wider Winnipeg community of which it is a part. Thunderbird House for example is intentional in its openness to people of all backgrounds, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, particularly those who are curious and interested in learning about Aboriginal cultures and issues:

*The Aboriginal worldview takes in the whole idea of how we fit in, the whole concept of the creation family as well as the human family. I see [in streetscaping on Main Street] the black and the red and the white and they yellow [of the medicine wheel representing the human family]...things of all creation have a spirit, and all members of the human family are related. Different nationalities, different skin colour, different religions, different genders, different ages, but we're still members of the human family (Trevor).*

This openness to people of diverse cultures at Thunderbird House was described by one interview participant as, "kind of cool in a way, because you get to see all aspects of society running through our doors," from businesses and companies (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) renting out the space for meetings and presentations, to people living on the street and dealing with addictions coming to see an Elder, to people of all backgrounds coming for traditional ceremonies (Andrea).

The social and cultural openness seen here is also evident in the spatial and urban design values put forth in the *Our Place* report which pointed out how the various streetscaping elements proposed in that document would reflect Aboriginal culture in terms of medicine wheel principles as well as “the ‘wave of humanity,’ immigration and history associated with the emergence of Winnipeg, and the North Main Street area, as a multi-cultural community” (North Main Task Force, 1997, p. 17). This could have transformative implications for not only downtown Winnipeg, but also the wider city as a whole:

*Our priority is Aboriginal peoples, but you will find some individuals from other groups using [the Aboriginal Centre], and going to school here, taking training here. So yeah, Neeginan in its broadest sense – ‘our place, our home,’ and ‘our’ means all of us, and again this relates to the medicine wheel – is all peoples of the earth. And I think as we go forward that sort of open vision or all embracing vision...can lead to projects in any part of the city (Michael).*

Related to engaging and interacting with the city at large is something that several interview participants pointed out as a key issues, namely how proponents and organizers of different Neeginan initiatives engage and interact with the bureaucratic and policy structures with which they are confronted. A theme that came up often in interviews was the necessity of being strategic and incremental in carrying out and developing plans, due to these structural realities. Although there was a vision for Neeginan from the beginning, the processes of implementing a project such as the Aboriginal Centre, for example, was done on almost an “ad hoc” basis rather than some “grand plan by the government” (James). Rather, organizers started small and strategically, recognizing that

they had a potential ally in the form of provincial and federal heritage departments who were interested in maintaining the train station. Beginning with proposing a limited, rather than a full, retrofit to the building was how Neeginan organizers were able to get started in redeveloping the building. There is, as James stated, an element of learning how governmental and administrative systems work, and since ‘big splashes’ of development are not always possible, particularly for urban Aboriginal groups, initial steps often must be small:

*that’s the thing you have to be able to do, is to demonstrate what you can do, and as you achieve something, other things can fall into place.*

In discussing this strategic, ‘starting small’ approach, Allan agreed, remarking that education and training have been in operation at the Aboriginal Centre

*for over around thirty years now, but the thing is, we built it very quietly and built a really solid model. And through word of mouth and the community here, especially in Point Douglas...we’re recognized, we’re well recognized. So we’re kind of a diamond in the rough, or we’re the best-kept secret in the area, because we basically have a functioning model, it’s been successful for years, and yet it goes uncelebrated. And what is celebrated is all the negative impacts.*

The above statement reveals firstly a belief and confidence in a proven approach to community development through education and training, and secondly an underlying frustration with the surrounding discourse of non-Aboriginal Winnipeg regarding the city’s Aboriginal population – it is so often the negative perceptions that are emphasized. Compounding this frustration is the sense of often being the “poor cousin” in relation to planning, development, and funding within the city of Winnipeg (Sarah).

## The Winnipeg Urban Planning Context

The frustrations mentioned above speak in a subtle way to mainstream city planning approaches and processes in Winnipeg, which have often inadequately addressed or engaged the urban Aboriginal community and urban Aboriginal issues. In addition to interviews, a review of City Planning documents from roughly the 1960s (when Aboriginal migration to the city was becoming more pronounced) to the early 2000s reveals rationalist philosophies, a ‘physical-planning determinism,’ as well as lingering colonialist tendencies within Winnipeg’s planning establishment. Recent years, however, have seen a shift in many of these approaches toward more social emphases and acknowledgement of urban Aboriginal groups and issues.

The rationalist approach to urban planning, with its emphasis on supposedly objective and scientific methods of planning, was the main philosophy driving much of postwar planning and development in Winnipeg. An emphasis on large-scale Modernist architecture and urban renewal along with increasing suburbanization “almost every day promised a more rational urban environment” (Burley, 2006, p. 29). In this environment planners typified Lefebvre’s ‘doctors of space.’ One of the major objectives of Winnipeg’s foundational *Metropolitan Development Plan* of 1968 was to “modify and add to the existing physical form” in order to “achieve...an urban area...with a clearly defined pattern of areas of activity” (p. 36). In such an approach, the role of planners was one of ‘order maker’ and manipulator of the urban environment, an environment that was conceived of as a “system” with various subsystems, and that could be understood through modeling and forecasting processes of urban change (Metropolitan Corporation of Winnipeg, 1964, p. 7). The ‘elevated’ position of ‘the planner’ was in effect during

this time, with the public viewed as needing education as to planning efforts – particularly urban renewal – so that whatever initiatives were to be implemented by the City would be accepted as necessary by the public (City of Winnipeg, 1972, p. 18).

One of the implications of this rationalist planning mindset was that social issues, implications, and impacts were seldom fully considered in the development of plans, both at the broad city level and at the more specific downtown, inner city level. Focus was instead primarily on physical development, infrastructure, and land use planning. The early drafts of *Plan Winnipeg*, the City's long range policy plan that replaced the old *Metropolitan Development Plan*, would often specify that, "The general Plan focuses physical development," relating virtually exclusively to "physical elements of the urban environment," with but a brief mention of being "cognizant" of social factors (Winnipeg Development Plan Review, 1979, p. 5). This could also be seen in the key issues addressed by a 1978 status report on the development of *Plan Winnipeg*. These key issues of "Urban Development, Housing, Transportation, Parks and Recreation, Water Supply and Distribution, Pollution Control," and "Land Drainage," contained little mention of social and cultural issues as they might relate to such items (Winnipeg Development Plan Review, p. 10). The City's priority around this time of "business as usual" referred to continual suburban development and directed growth toward the urban peripheries, with "containment" in the "built-up" core of the city much lower on the priority list (Winnipeg Development Plan Review, 1979, p. i). This tendency to favour one type of development (suburban growth) over another (downtown growth), contributed to a "segmented" city in which the living, working, and moving of people within urban spaces – for example, an increasing Aboriginal population in an inner city

being vacated by others in favour of suburban neighbourhoods – were ignored (Burley, 2006, p. 77), as were the potential implications of such socio-spatial issues.

This is not to say that there were no social and cultural *assumptions* or *presuppositions* at play in mainstream planning processes. Even though a focus on the physical environment can often obscure any ideologies and discourses underpinning it, such ideologies and rhetoric can contribute to “the conversion of physical space” as much as “the urban bulldozer” (Gottdiener, 1985, p. 6). In Winnipeg, the rhetoric of ‘blight’ was constantly employed, particularly in relation to urban renewal and slum clearance. The discourse of ‘blight’ depicted lower-income inner city neighbourhoods as backwards and deficient, and “assumed that social maladjustment...of slum dwellers [was] contagious and a threat to those with whom they came into contact” (Burley, 2006, p. 63). A 1969 urban renewal study of the downtown area including South Point Douglas – the eventual location of Neeginan – described blight as resulting from “economic, social, physical and environmental factors,” but did not go into detail about exactly what these factors were or how they operated. Such vagueness on how perceived blight could come about was enhanced by discourses of disease and sickness that prevailed in descriptions of inner city blight. One urban renewal report stated that blight “is contagious and spreads like a cancerous growth. If found in isolated structures it can be quickly cured, but when whole areas are infected...only the most drastic and most expensive method of renewal, that of redevelopment, is the solution” (City of Winnipeg, 1972, p. 13). South Point Douglas itself was viewed as a hotbed of blight that threatened to ‘infect’ the rest of the city (City of Winnipeg, 1959, p. 4). As Alan Mayne (1993) has argued, such discursive representations of inner city neighbourhoods often obscure the line between

impoverished physical conditions and the social or moral condition of residents, resulting in perceptions of the social groups living in these neighbourhoods as somehow deficient or antithetical to ‘proper’ social norms (pp. 1-2).

In Winnipeg, the ‘blight’ discourse utilized by planners helped establish a view of inner city neighbourhoods as primarily deficient. The 1969 urban renewal report on the downtown area comprising South Point Douglas and adjacent locales to the south summarized the area under the heading “Summary of Deficiencies.” Furthermore, this report’s section on the area’s “needs and potentials” was particularly heavy on the “needs” with little “potential” seen in the existing neighbourhood outside of complete redevelopment and removal of “blighted conditions” (City of Winnipeg, pp. 83, 85).

This ‘othering,’ to use Said’s (1978) terminology, of the downtown core in city planning documents then contributed to a view of the urban Aboriginal population firstly as invisible in a sense, and secondly as a visible social problem. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s and into the 1980s, the primacy of physical development issues and the de-emphasis on social issues for Winnipeg planners meant that, by extension, Aboriginal issues, along with the city’s burgeoning Aboriginal population, were not visible to planners, at least not in the majority of city planning documents during these years. Despite the fact that steady Aboriginal migration into Winnipeg was visible by the 1950s (Belanger & Walker, 2009, p. 125), and despite the strong urban Aboriginal organization that went into the 1959 establishment of the Indian and Métis Friendship Centre (Hall, 2009, p. 221), the city’s Aboriginal population was not really taken into account in broad planning documents such as the *Metropolitan Development Plan* and the various iterations of *Plan Winnipeg*. Despite exceptions like the Neeginan report of 1975 (in

which Aboriginal community members were the key players), overall Aboriginal people in Winnipeg were viewed in the City's planning reports through a lens that betrayed lingering colonialist social structures.

### **Colonialism and Planning in the City**

Stories, as Sandercock (2003) notes, are shaped by power relations and often have certain underlying moral 'orderings' and assumptions. If planning, as she argues, is a form of storytelling (pp. 182-183), what stories were the Winnipeg planning establishment telling about the Aboriginal population in the city, and how was this population being represented? To quote Atkinson, Taylor, and Walter (2010), it was discursively "buried" and made both spatially and socially "marginal" (p. 311). Examples of this can be found in many planning documents, particularly in the sections describing the overall historical context of the City of Winnipeg. The *Our Place* report quoted earlier is the lone example of a historical description of the city that begins by referring to its Aboriginal heritage and history in way that simply did not occur in the planning department's reports and plans. The City's *Urban Renewal Progress and Evaluation* report of 1972 began its 'historical context' discussion by referring to French and English fur traders, the Hudson's Bay and Northwest companies, the squashing of the Métis' Riel Rebellion as well as the European settlement that took place in its wake. Special mention was made also of how European settlement inscribed itself in the urban landscape, with streets bearing the names of many prominent early settlers (p. 4).

The same document also makes a point of mentioning the various monuments throughout the city that speak to its European heritage, such as west's first railway locomotive, Ross House, the remains of Upper Fort Garry, and the La Verendrye

monument memorializing “the first white man to set foot in the area” (pp. 6-7). The only mention of monuments to anything resembling Aboriginal heritage are those that speak either to “the massacre of Governor Semple and twenty of his men” during a battle with Métis forces (the Seven Oaks monument), or the befriending of the Scottish Selkirk Settlers by a local Chief (the Peguis monument) (pp. 6-7). Both of these latter monuments present the Aboriginal population only as it relates to European settlement – either as a threat to it, or as an ally – inscribing in the physical form of the urban landscape the hierarchical colonialist relations between settler society and the region’s original Aboriginal inhabitants (Shaw, 2007).

Planning documents often also promoted a very particular form of ‘heritage.’ As one report noted, “historic buildings stand in sharp contrast with contemporary architecture, providing us with visible links with our heritage” (City of Winnipeg, 1980, p. 14). The “our” in this case was not elaborated upon, but the accompanying image of the city’s historic Exchange District, with its old warehouses and early skyscrapers testifying to Winnipeg’s urban peak as a result of European settlement and industrial capitalist development, does not seem to indicate much room for any Aboriginal heritage. Indeed it even speaks to the way in which “abstract space” – produced by and in the interests of capitalism and its “logic” – overlaid and to an extent even erased the “absolute space” of the natural environment and the Indigenous populations living with in it (Lefebvre, pp. 49-53). This abstraction and erasure of Aboriginal culture in the built environment was also present in how planners told the story of the Main and Higgins area where Neeginan would eventually locate. An early redevelopment study of South Point Douglas began its discussion of that area’s history and heritage by stating that the

location did not assume any semblance of prominence (presumably in European eyes) “until the arrival of Captain MacDonnell and the Selkirk Settlers” (City of Winnipeg, 1959, p. 1). Likewise in another report the heritage of the area was traced back to the European-settled village known as “Colony Gardens” (City of Winnipeg, 1969, p. 7).

Bearing these examples in mind, the *Metropolitan Development Plan*'s assertion that the city's downtown area creates an image of Winnipeg “that is held in common by all residents” and that “represents the universally accepted identity of the community” is telling in its cultural bias. The ‘burying’ of urban Indigeneity by city planning within Winnipeg shows that such statements were not made with urban Aboriginal peoples in mind as belonging to a “universally accepted identity.” In fact, such universalism ‘erased the distinctions’ (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 49) of the unique Aboriginal populations and identities within the city. Nevertheless, as the previous discussion of Neeginan has demonstrated, there were and are other identities – Aboriginal identities – at play in the urban environment, striving to maintain their distinctiveness while remaining an integral part of Winnipeg society.

Compounding this was the way in which the urban Aboriginal population was viewed through the lens of ‘problem,’ a complaint voiced by Aboriginal organizations in the initial Neeginan discussions. Even before these discussions the City Planning Department had produced a report recommending the development of a distinctly Aboriginal urban area; what would become Neeginan. While this was a precursor to the Neeginan developments, its language painted Aboriginal peoples in Winnipeg as “the single most urgent and difficult social problem that exists in the city” (Levin, 1972, p. 1). The language of the document was constructed and presented in a way that sought to

speaking *for* Aboriginal people, asserting that “there seems to be little or no indication” that “native people themselves perceive the nature of the problem and are prepared to seek the means to solve it” (Levin, 1972, pp. 1-2). Despite the role of proactive Aboriginal community organizers in establishing the Indian and Métis Friendship Centre thirteen years earlier (Hall, 2009) and despite the existence of strong bonds within the urban Aboriginal community in the ‘60s and ‘70s, Aboriginal people were portrayed as a disorganized lot clinging almost inconceivably to “that earlier happier period in their history” with “the naïve and hopelessly impractical notions of bridging that backward gap” (Levin, 1972, p. 3). Suggestions “that the lands of their ancestors be returned to them, or that they be paid for those lands at current market values...or that the white man has broken his treaty promises and has deprived the Indian of his aboriginal rights” (Levin, 1972, p. 3) are dismissed as not useful or productive – which runs counter to Jojola’s (2006) assertion that connections to the land are crucially important in terms of Indigenous culture and planning, as well as Porter’s (2006) argument that the Indigenous peoples’ unique position as owners of land previously “wrested from them by the modern colonialist state” must be taken into account when planning with and alongside Indigenous groups (p. 389).

This is true in Winnipeg, where the legacies of Canada’s colonial history of settlement, domination, and attempted assimilation are still being felt. This also was evident in Andrea’s comment regarding the social and personal struggles of people dealing with these legacies in their day-to-day lives, compounded by the existence, in Canadian society generally, of

*this other standard of, well this is what you should be doing, or this is how things are, from the non-Aboriginal community, like 'this is how you ought to be,' right?*

Related to this was the feeling evident in several interviews of how to “struggle for a real voice in Canada” in a way that engages a non-Aboriginal population that often seems disinterested in, or unaware of, the existence of colonial legacies in Canadian society and the potential to transform them:

*I mean, theoretically, if some of the historical Aboriginal governance methodology and practice was brought to the country of Canada, it'd be a whole different place. But you don't have a level of discourse and dialogue or interaction between Indigenous peoples and other Canadians about that*  
(Michael).

Openness to this type of discourse and dialogue has long been a part of how Neeginan has approached its role in Winnipeg. It has been a continual challenge, but one that has been receiving more attention within planning circles in more recent years.

### **Shifts in Planning Thought in Winnipeg**

Beginning slowly in the 1980s and increasingly so in the 1990s, planners at the City of Winnipeg became less deterministic about physical planning and more cognizant of how social and cultural issues fit into planning processes. *Plan Winnipeg* documents began to take on a much more participatory and inclusive approach. Urban planning and the City level now sought to depart from “the more traditional approach” of “focusing primarily on land issues” in favour of an approach that saw issues of “Economic Development,” “Environmental Stewardship,” “Social Equity,” “Urban Development Management,” and “Urban Image” as interrelated (City of Winnipeg Planning Department, 1992, p. 6). A

category such as ‘social equity,’ irrelevant in earlier planning documents, had now become one of the main issues dealt with in the City’s highest-level planning document, *Plan Winnipeg*. This new social emphasis was the norm for both *Plan Winnipeg: Toward 2010* as well as *Plan Winnipeg 2020 Vision* and indeed up to the current iteration, *OurWinnipeg*. *Plan Winnipeg 2020 Vision* even included “social consciousness” as a guiding principle, and something “integral to the vision that Winnipeggers hold for their city.” Here issues of diversity, poverty, and equity were all mentioned, indicating a newfound awareness of social marginalization within the city (City of Winnipeg, 2000, p. 10). Also, this new approach has overall been much more proactive in engaging with a wide swath of people and groups within the city, in order to arrive at a final plan for the future.

If the old ‘physical planning’ approach ignored social issues and thereby Aboriginal issues in the city, has the new ‘social planning’ approach engaged in a more meaningful way with Winnipeg’s burgeoning Aboriginal population? The short answer is ‘yes.’ The most obvious example (aside from the original Neeginan plan and report) is the planning that went into the North Main Task Force’s *Our Place* report, which was led in large part by Aboriginal community leaders like Mary Richard and other urban Aboriginal organizations in partnership with City administrators. The City’s planning department was also recognizing Aboriginal peoples and groups, and planning documents often included items such as encouraging Aboriginal people “to be partners in, contributors to, and beneficiaries of Winnipeg’s economic development initiatives and associated education, training, and employment programs” (City of Winnipeg, 1993, p. 28). Notable emphasis on “promoting self-reliant Aboriginal communities” also

emerged, in addition to “increasing awareness among Winnipeggers and visitors about the richness of the city’s Aboriginal communities” (City of Winnipeg, 2000, p. 10) – principles that had of course been crucial components of Neeginan initiatives from the beginning. The City’s planning visions for the downtown also began to acknowledge the Aboriginal heritage of Winnipeg as well as the Aboriginal presence within the downtown area. The overarching vision of *CentrePlan*, a subset of *Plan Winnipeg* focused on downtown development, emphasized both social equity generally and the urban Aboriginal presence specifically in its statement that, “the downtown...respects and honours its aboriginal ancestry recognizing their pivotal role in the success of the downtown. The downtown is a place for everyone, where opportunities are shared equally” (City of Winnipeg, 1995, p. 7).

Although the short answer to whether city planning processes have engaged more appropriately Aboriginal people may be ‘yes,’ the more accurate answer is that there is still a long way to go. In some of the recent planning rhetoric and priorities, the ‘problem-centric’ view of the urban Aboriginal population has remained. The initial *CentrePlan* report for example placed a great deal of emphasis on “promoting social harmony,” and made it a priority to “address the specific needs of aboriginal residents downtown” (City of Winnipeg, 1995, p. 21). In focusing on “needs,” however, there was in this instance no room for a view of urban Aboriginal people as participating in their own planning processes and community development initiatives. Rather, this section of the report focused on “challenges related to poverty, unemployment, and low education attainment as well as the need to strengthen traditional cultural and spiritual values” (City of Winnipeg, 1995, p. 21). This is not to say such social and economic challenges are

non-existent, but rather to point out how statements such as this within planning and policy documents can run the risk of once again viewing Aboriginal people through lens of ‘problem.’ And as we have seen, this view was already wearing thin for the Aboriginal organizers involved in Neeginan’s early days, and certainly for the people interviewed for this thesis project as well.

Belanger and Walker (2009) have corroborated the existence of lingering rationalist and colonialist mentalities. They point out how *Plan Winnipeg 2020 Vision* gave birth to a complete secondary plan in the late 1990s and early 2000s called *First Steps: Municipal Aboriginal Pathways*. Despite the creation of this plan, they argue that the processes used in developing it were “not based on sound principles for working with Aboriginal communities as full civic partners,” with the plan having “failed to be implemented” (p. 120). Despite the fact that civic leaders and planners had taken greater notice of urban Aboriginal issues, their policies and planning processes were still based on a model “whereby the Mayor and council guided policy development according to *their interpretation* of the needs and desires of the municipal Aboriginal community” (p. 129, italics added). In terms of the planning processes and urban environment in which the Neeginan vision is currently being implemented, there are still ways in which planning remains tied to its colonial genealogy, and merely striving for “inclusion” of Aboriginal groups in wider planning issues misses the point that “planning’s own genealogy is colonial” (Porter, 2010 pp. 11-12). This lingering influence of colonialism is especially evident within “the procedural dimension” of “the formulation and implementation processes of plans and policies” (Yiftachel, 1998, p. 401), where control

over and access to planning and development decisions are wrapped up in power structures that still reflect in some ways a colonial mentality.

## **Conclusion**

Although mainstream urban planning processes in Winnipeg have for decades replicated hierarchical social structures and colonial power relations that have in turn affected the built form of the city as well as the planning and policy environment in which the Neeginan vision has sought to establish itself, there are reasons to believe that this can change. Firstly, as the Aboriginal population has begun to establish itself as a crucial part of Winnipeg society, planners and decision-makers and the City have begun to adjust their planning approaches to reflect this – a development that, as I have argued, is still very much a work in progress. Secondly though, within Neeginan as well as within many other aboriginal organizations in Winnipeg, there exist long-running Aboriginal-led, community-based models of development, planning, and capacity building. Neeginan, both as a constellation of planning and development processes and as a physical *space* within the urban environment, represents a potential mode by which planning processes can better relate to Aboriginal people and priorities, and through which greater cross-cultural understanding can occur between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups within the city: in terms of space and location Neeginan is a culturally embedded area, markedly different from the urban environment around it; a place that is intentionally open for non-Aboriginal Winnipeggers to increase their awareness of Aboriginal perspectives within the city. In terms of planning processes, Neeginan offers approaches to Aboriginal community development that planners and administrators can support – not in a way that

overtakes or prescribes, but in a way that engages with Aboriginal Winnipeggers as self-determining, distinct, and integral players in Winnipeg's urban environment.

## **Chapter 5: Summary and Conclusions**

In summing up the findings and analysis presented here, I return to my original research questions in order to reach some conclusions and offer some considerations for future planning theory and practice, as well as some potential directions for future research.

### **What is Neeginan, and how has it evolved over time? What features have characterized it, and what values have informed it?**

In planning literature and rhetoric dealing with urban Aboriginal development in Winnipeg, ‘Neeginan’ often seems to have multiple definitions. This falls in line with the wide-ranging perspective given by interview participants on the definition and characteristics of Neeginan. Although it does refer to the original development plan published in 1975 outlining the establishment of an Aboriginal hub in the city centre and how culturally relevant Aboriginal-led development should take place in the Main and Higgins area, it has since then ‘branched out,’ with different organizations focusing on different priorities, whether they be cultural, spiritual, economic, or educational. Yet although initiatives have branched off in different ways, the diversity of all these priorities speaks to the same overarching vision – that of development and planning that is holistic, that sees the connections between social, cultural, economic, and physical-environment factors in a way that strengthens the urban Aboriginal community while also building its connections to the wider city of which it is a part. Two key characteristics have also informed Neeginan over the years. The first is an inward focus that emphasizes building up Aboriginal communities in Winnipeg as a whole, but also as individual community members. The economic development and training initiatives seek to

enhance and increase the important role of Aboriginal Winnipeggers within the city. The cultural and spiritual initiatives ground Neeginan in traditional Aboriginal views while strengthening and reclaiming cultural identity. Neeginan is therefore an example of Indigenous planning that initiates and maintains development aimed at self-sufficiency and autonomy for Aboriginal people. Second is Neeginan's outward focus, which acknowledges how the Main and Higgins hub relates to the rest of Winnipeg both spatially and socially. By maintaining an openness to Winnipeggers of different cultural backgrounds, it perhaps acts as a potential "differential space" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 52) in the city, countering the "homogeneity," marginalization, and oppression of abstract space by celebrating difference and promoting cross-cultural understanding in order to transform social relations in the city.

**What can an examination of Neeginan say about Indigenous planning within urban spaces consisting of diverse and multiple interests, stakeholders, and groups?**

Neeginan's distinctly urban approach to planning and development has needed to be cognizant of complex urban socioeconomic issues in a way that perhaps more rural and land-based Indigenous community planning approaches have not. One interview participant made the point, somewhat tongue-in-cheek, that while traditional Aboriginal values and worldviews are of course central to much of what Neeginan does (Thunderbird House particularly), the urban Aboriginal experience might be different than some non-Aboriginal Winnipeggers might think:

*We try to remind [people], Aboriginal culture is not just the romantic, 'oh, let's smudge and go into the sweat and, you know, dream some great dreams and talk about animals (Andrea).*

This speaks to the complexity of the urban Aboriginal experience, and raises the issue that while traditional approaches are important, they are not necessarily the only reality for urban Aboriginal people, as many may not practice traditional beliefs, or may indeed come from different spiritual or traditional backgrounds.

The same interview participant went on to remark that, in the urban context, cultural, social, and economic development of Aboriginal communities has to help them become “victors” over urban poverty, the loss of cultural identity, and social discrimination and marginalization. Neeginan has been working at this through methods that engage the urban experience while strengthening Aboriginal identities within the city. In this way then, urban Indigenous planning has the potential to disrupt the colonial socio-spatial boundaries that have discursively kept Aboriginal people on the peripheries of Euro-Canadian consciousness by “the assignment of First Nations cultures and identities to reserves” (Wilson & Peters, 2005, p. 395). The presence of Aboriginal-led community development that counters the colonial influences still lingering within broader planning structures in the city can destabilize this, helping open the door to transforming social relations and structures.

**How does Neeginan compare with non-Indigenous planning approaches and practices, particularly in comparison with city-led planning initiatives for Winnipeg and North Main?**

The planning that Neeginan has undertaken for the development of Aboriginal communities in Winnipeg has often needed to be strategic in terms of knowing how to work within the system of mainstream planning and civic administration in the city. This system has often been constrictive and adherent to rationalist philosophies and colonialist structures, which is not to say that the governing powers played no role in the development of Neeginan. This would indeed be an unfair characterization, as various levels of government have been involved in helping establish entities such as the Aboriginal Centre. However, Winnipeg city planning documents do show that, until recently, planning processes viewed the city in a compartmentalized way, focusing on physical planning and ‘ordering’ to the detriment of social considerations. The approach of Neeginan on the other hand had from its inception been concerned with interconnections between social, spatial, economic, and cultural issues. This in some ways could reflect the influence of Aboriginal worldviews and culture foundational to much of Neeginan’s work, as opposed to the City of Winnipeg’s approach from the 1960s to the 1990s, which was based more on the positivist approach of Western social and scientific thinking.

By comparing Aboriginal-led planning processes with those of the City of Winnipeg, I do not mean to set up a rigid ‘us-them’ dichotomy between ‘Indigenous worldviews’ on one hand and ‘Western planning’ on the other. In fact, this research has shown that an *urban* approach to Indigenous planning makes room for a blending and fusion of conventional urban, and traditional Aboriginal planning processes and ideals that nevertheless remain geared towards Aboriginal autonomy and capacity (Jojola, 2008).

**What implications might the results of this discussion have for planning theory and practice?**

As Indigenous planning grows and develops among both Indigenous and non-Indigenous planners, and as Aboriginal populations continue to migrate to cities, Indigenous planning that has a strong urban character will likely become more clearly defined, stronger, and more prevalent. The lessons from the Neeginan example and experience in Winnipeg could therefore be considered in relation to increased Aboriginal migration to urban centres across Canada.

One thing that several participants pointed out was the need for planners to better understand urban Aboriginal communities, organizations, and entities. They are the ones doing the development work on the ground, and this is made more difficult when city administrators and planners, or stakeholders from other sectors and organizations, are lacking in their awareness of who the main Aboriginal community organizers are, what the main organizations are, how they differ from each other, and which issues they address. One participant described this as knowing and following “the right channels” in approaching and working with Aboriginal groups (Allan). Aboriginal organizers’ lingering feelings of being the ‘poor cousin’ in Winnipeg’s urban family points to the fact that this type of deeper understanding has not yet been fully reached. Building this type of understanding among urban planners in Canada is one way in which the profession can continue to divest itself of its colonial heritage and recognize its role within “the relations of power that are always present and operating in planning situations,” particular with Aboriginal groups (Porter, 2004, p. 108). This follows Belanger and Walker’s argument (2009) that urban planning needs to unlearn its status quo approach to interacting with

urban Aboriginal groups, an approach that has often interpreted the desires and priorities of Aboriginal people in ways that conform to civic and municipal desires, rather than allowing forms of Aboriginal planning and development to flourish on their own terms.

Present and future developments in the Main and Higgins area of Winnipeg point to some avenues in which future planning work and research could be directed. Some interview participants pointed to the 2011 opening of a major Youth for Christ drop-in and recreation centre at the corner of Main and Higgins as a sore spot for many Aboriginal organizations, referred to their frustration that such a development could happen without any consultation of the many Aboriginal groups working and operating on North Main Street, in Point Douglas, and in the North End (a postcolonial analysis of the processes at work in developing an organization such as Youth for Christ in the heart of Winnipeg's Aboriginal 'hub' could yield some interesting conclusions). Another subject I haven't explored here is the role of the Manitoba Métis Federation in the area, particularly the development plans underway through the Métis Economic Development Organization (McNeill, 2011). Furthermore, as revitalization and redevelopment in downtown Winnipeg continues to occur, it will be interesting to see how developments surrounding the Neeginan area will interact and relate to this centre of urban Aboriginal development. For example, developments like the upscale Waterfront Drive condominiums creeping further north towards Higgins Avenue could result in gentrification potentially displacing and drastically changing the area adjacent to Neeginan. But there is also the potential that such developments – including Main Street revitalization and the slowly-expanding and developing Exchange District to the south – could be integrated sensitively to the Aboriginal community already existing around

Main and Higgins (a community already consisting of social and cultural programs, postsecondary training and education, as well as residential development). If properly and sensitively carried out, this could help continue implementing Neeginan's vision of a downtown area that is inclusive of diverse cultures, incomes, and backgrounds.

Such a vision could only occur though, through planning processes based on "new skills, not for managing diverse communities, but for learning and working with these communities to achieve a diversity of human possibilities – making space for difference" (Rahder & Milgrom, 2004, p. 29). Conventional Western planning practices need make such adjustments especially in their relationships to and with Aboriginal organizations and development within cities. If planning can continue to decolonize, by acknowledging its history of colonial expansion and displacement of Indigenous populations in favour of European spatial and social norms, it will hopefully begin telling different stories and engaging in planning that is socially transformative, rather than supportive of certain groups while marginalizing others. Hopefully, it will also result in planning processes that encourage and help foster urban Indigenous planning that is focused on strengthening Aboriginal communities and by extension the city as a whole.

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