

Where They Meet:
Indigenous Activism and City Planning in Winnipeg, Manitoba

by

Jason Syvixay

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A low-angle, sepia-toned photograph of a young child standing on a wooden step ladder in a narrow hallway. The child is reaching up to pull a rope that is attached to a large, dark, circular object hanging from the ceiling. The hallway is flanked by brick walls and has a textured ceiling. The overall mood is one of curiosity and effort.

Where They Meet

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Abstract

In Winnipeg, Indigenous activists are finding and/or creating new opportunities to meet in public space to discuss civic issues like safety, inclusion, and the right to land. Through physical resistance (i.e. Indigenous activists occupying public space through blockades, protest, and public demonstrations), Indigenous activists have begun to make known their varying political, economic, and social struggles — and in many cases, are rallying both public and media support to affect and create neighbourhood change.

This practicum will explore Indigenous activism, leading to lessons for planners and others. Instead of maintaining a critical distance from these demonstrations, which can often create feelings of alienation within the Indigenous community, I assert that planners and others can view these public actions as offering opportunities for feedback, dialogue, and change. Through a case study of Meet Me At The Bell Tower, I hope to demonstrate how Indigenous activism in public spaces may represent an important bottom-up, community-based approach to public engagement.

Acknowledgements

I would like to dedicate my research to the impassioned, loud, and hearty activists of Meet Me at The Bell Tower, for their tireless advocacy in creating spaces of inclusion and safety along Selkirk Avenue for area residents and visitors. Their efforts have made me incredibly optimistic for a revitalized North End, where people of all backgrounds and abilities are prosperous both economically and socially.

Completing this practicum was truly a team effort. There are so many people of whom I need to thank, people who listened in times of stress, people who lent a shoulder to cry on in moments of desperation, and people who offered knowledge and expertise – their contributions have transformed me personally and professionally.

To Dr. Rae Bridgman, my advisor, thank you for your kind spirit and generosity. Your words of encouragement have motivated me to push through this degree. You have inspired me to think with curiosity, with fun, with passion, and with purpose. To Dr. Jino Distasio and Jeff Palmer, my practicum committee, thank you for your humour and guidance on this project – my research was enriched with your insight and years of experience. Jino, thank you so much for all that you have done for me throughout my academic career. I have learned from you that the tenets of patience, diplomacy, and advocacy are necessary traits for city building – the weekend espresso and beer was certainly a bonus!

To my family and friends who provided much-needed reprieve from the drama of school, who offered words of encouragement and lots of food and drink – in no particular order: Ally Beauchesne, Joshua Lisoway, Nicholas Humniski, Andri Schudlo, Diane Gray, Blake Withers, Serena Gray-Withers, Katy Gray, Julie Syvixay, Jennifer Syvixay, Zak Beauchesne, Annick Beauchesne, Grandma June Gray, Mariette Mulaire, Elliott Cooke, Quin Ferguson, Keith Chadwick-Garrick, Braden Smith, and Harry Finnigan. I love you all very much. Thank you to my fellow students who I have spent many days and nights learning from, and professors within the city planning program. Thank you to Larissa Blumenschein, Ellen Enns, Constantina Douvris, and Christopher Thomas, for providing their support on this research as well.

Winnipeg is my home, and I am inspired by its potential. I hope my research inspires future generations to realize their role and responsibility in claiming and defending their right to the city – a city that is equitable and inclusive for all, a city that protects and supports Indigenous people, a city that values the voices of those underrepresented and marginalized.

Thank you. Miigwetch.



*“We needed something loud, like a bell.
We needed something safe, something we
could make safe, like a vacated community-
gathering place. We needed a symbol that
could be visible and shareable.”*

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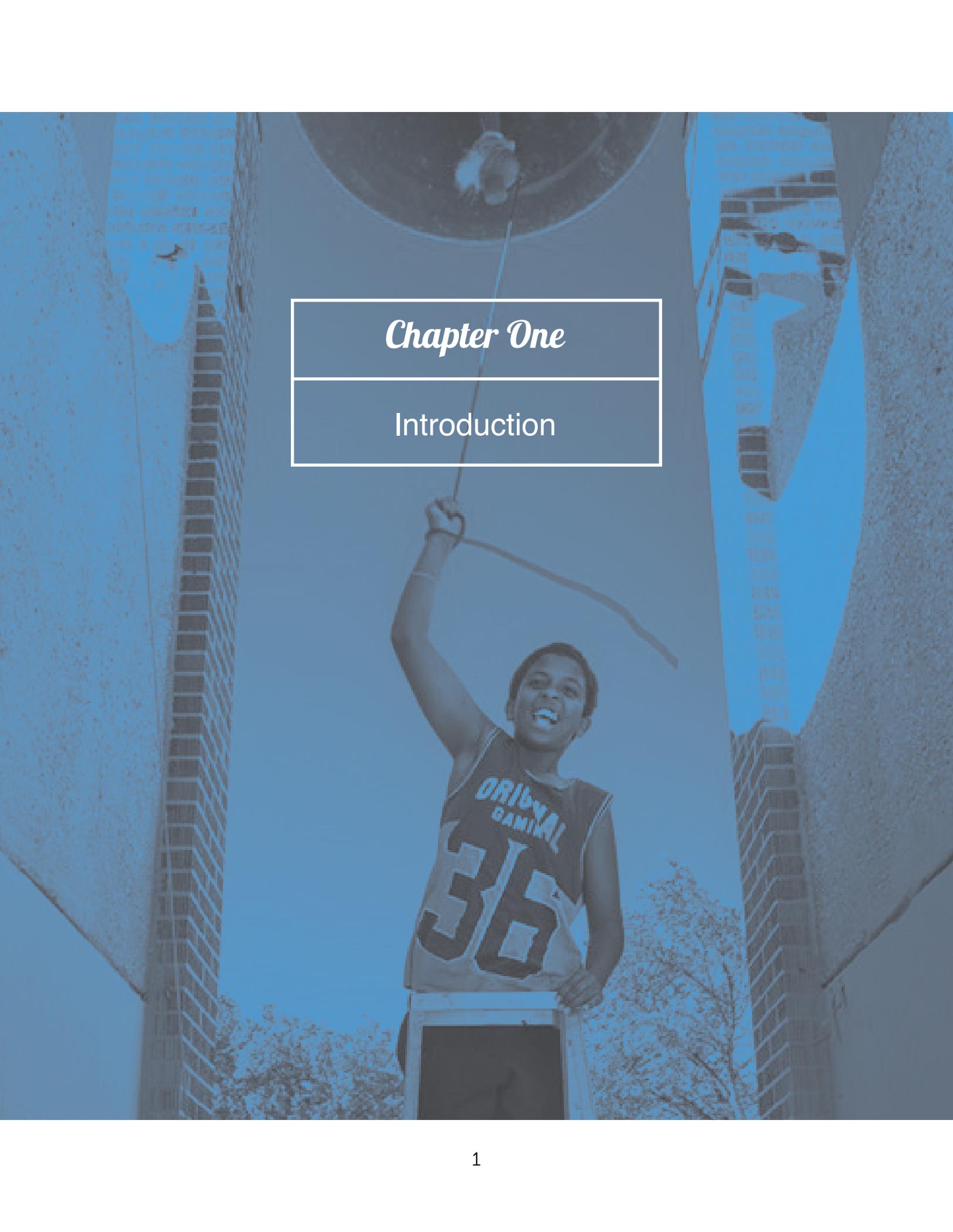
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“Instead of maintaining a critical distance from these demonstrations, which can often create feelings of alienation within the Indigenous community, I assert that planners and others can view these public actions as offering opportunities for feedback, dialogue, and change.”

A young boy in a basketball jersey with the number 36 and the words 'ORIGINAL GAMMAL' is smiling and holding a rope. The rope is attached to a circular object hanging from the ceiling of a gymnasium. The background shows the brick walls and ceiling of the gymnasium.

Chapter One

Introduction

1.0 Introduction

This chapter introduces the motivation behind my research: a protest that formed in Memorial Park back in 2014. This particular demonstration was of keen interest to me, as it took place in a downtown park that I frequent and enjoy quite often. It also made me think more cogently about public space – how it can be used by the public to communicate issues of importance; how it can include or exclude people; and how it can change when people mobilize and advocate. This chapter explains how my initial reflections on protest evolved into two main research questions. In addition, social indicators involving population, employment, and family structure for Selkirk Avenue are reviewed in this section, to highlight the neighbourhood’s existing conditions. This neighbourhood profile is helpful when thinking about Meet Me at The Bell Tower’s impact as it outlines baseline community wellbeing indicators.

1.1 Problem Statement

How the research began

Desmond Tutu, a South African social rights activist, said, “If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse, and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality” (Tutu, n.d.). When thinking about public action, it is often special interest and advocacy groups who take to the streets, in an effort to voice their concerns about community issues.

A protest held at Memorial Park in Winnipeg, Manitoba, in response to the death of Tina Fontaine, a fifteen-year old girl from Sagkeeng First Nation, whose body was found dumped deep in the murky waters of the Assiniboine River in August of 2014, served as the catalyst for my decision to explore Indigenous activism in public space (Taylor, 2014).



Image 2: Tina Fontaine memorial, 2017.



Image 3: Walk and vigil in honor of Tina Fontaine and Faron Hall, 2017.

During a tour of Canada's North, former Prime Minister Stephen Harper was quoted on Fontaine's murder: "We should not view this as a sociological phenomenon. We should view it as a crime" (Taylor, 2014). Harper's statement, coupled with the government's dismissal for a national public inquiry, led to the proliferation of tents at Memorial Park, growing from four to as many as fifty tents. Eventually, the camp concluded when the federal government committed to a national roundtable. While the outcome was favourable for this particular social movement, the protest engendered unintended consequences for non-protestors. Organizations like the Downtown Winnipeg Business Improvement Zone (BIZ), a member-driven business association I worked at the time for, and the Sikh Society of Manitoba, were forced to move their planned events to other locations along Broadway. In addition, municipal and provincial governments chose not to intervene, electing instead not to get involved at all. Washroom facilities, water and food, shelter and warmth, security, and other amenities were the sole responsibilities of the protest group. Who is entitled to urban public space? How are decisions on how such

space can be used and by whom?

I was interested in the demonstration at Memorial Park because it reveals how activism in public space is a form of political deliberation and negotiation, and often exposes the unevenness and inequality of power and influence in the public realm. That is, when protest erupts, there is a constant bargaining among various actors: activists, members of the general public, planners, municipal officials, and representatives of other levels of government. As Erin Canty (2015) asserts, “when you don’t have a seat at the table, it usually means you’re on the menu.” Activists are often required to demonstrate in public space because their voices are muted or unheard in the normative discourse around city issues. Thus, protests can represent “a challenge to the reigning model of urban governance” (Harvey, 2014). This research explores protest as a way to advocate for those who are marginalized, those who lack a voice.

1.2 Key Research Questions

This research proposes two questions:

- What tensions arise when people protest in public space and what do planning theorists have to say in this field?
- What lessons can be learned from Indigenous activism in Winnipeg spaces and what are the implications for planners and others?

1.3: Significance of Study

This research will impact the community in a positive manner by reframing the narrative of activism in public spaces to a positive, bottom-up, community-based approach to public engagement and action. The intent is to lead to planners working with community-based organizations in bringing their voices and perspectives in the debate of cities, and to look at protest in places as opportunities for collective action and mobility. As Margaret Crawford, a professor of urban design and planning theory, says, protest “activities identify neighbourhoods and communities” and “bring disparate groups together” (Dupree, 2002).

Planning professionals have been interested in Selkirk Avenue’s future for quite some time, from the Selkirk Avenue Development Strategy in 1983 to the redevelopment of Merchants Hotel to the birth of a revamped Powers Plaza. In 2003, students enrolled in the University of Manitoba’s City Planning program were tasked with planning and designing efforts of Selkirk Avenue’s redevelopment, as part of a studio class.

Published in 1989, the Selkirk Avenue Development Strategy received a Canadian Society of Landscape Architects (CSLA) award (Prairie Regional Citation) for its role in establishing land use, design standards, and policy.

The Merchants Hotel received \$11.1 million in funding from the Province of Manitoba in 2014, to be redeveloped as a mixed-use education and housing complex. As described by then-Premier, the Honourable Greg Selinger, the “redevelopment of [this] old hotel into an innovative educational partnership supported by on-site affordable housing, [means] students in the North End will have a new place to learn and see that a post-secondary education can be part of their future” (Government of Manitoba, 2014).

Neighbourhood advocates through the North End Community Renewal Corporation

turned to Spark Winnipeg, an agency that connects community with pro bono professional assistance, to bring in HTFC Planning & Design to assist in the planning and design for the redevelopment of Powers Plaza. With cost estimates surpassing \$600,000, organizers turned to Councillor Ross Eadie, seeing an opportunity to strategically align their project with regular maintenance to the neighbourhood: “if the street and sidewalks were already being repaved, why not extend it to the Powers Plaza?” (Martin, 2016).

The tie that binds the above mentioned projects: the development of these neighbourhood proposals have all attempted to include the voices of area residents. More recently, mobilized by Meet Me at The Bell Tower, Indigenous peoples have begun to share a set of recommendations for the neighbourhood.

Selkirk Avenue

Winnipeg quickly dominated the economy of the Canadian Prairies, as its “strategic location on the eastern edge of the Canadian Prairies made it a node of east/west communication and trade” (Hiebert, 57). The Red River also provided a connection to “the expanding economy of the American mid-west” (Hiebert, 57). By 1890, there were 80 wholesalers in Winnipeg, and “a few enterprising individuals amassed vast fortunes in wholesaling, retailing, real estate, and locally-oriented industry” (Hiebert, 58). This rapid growth in Winnipeg required skilled workers in construction, transportation, trade, and service sectors, and manual labour “who could shovel gravel and dirt at building sites, street railway, projects or other civic works” (Hiebert, 58). 21.5% of people in Winnipeg were employed in the transportation sector and 15.6% in construction industry (Hiebert, 59). 58.9% of the labour force occupied blue-collar professions (Hiebert, 60), with many of these workers settling in the North End and North Point Douglas area of the city.

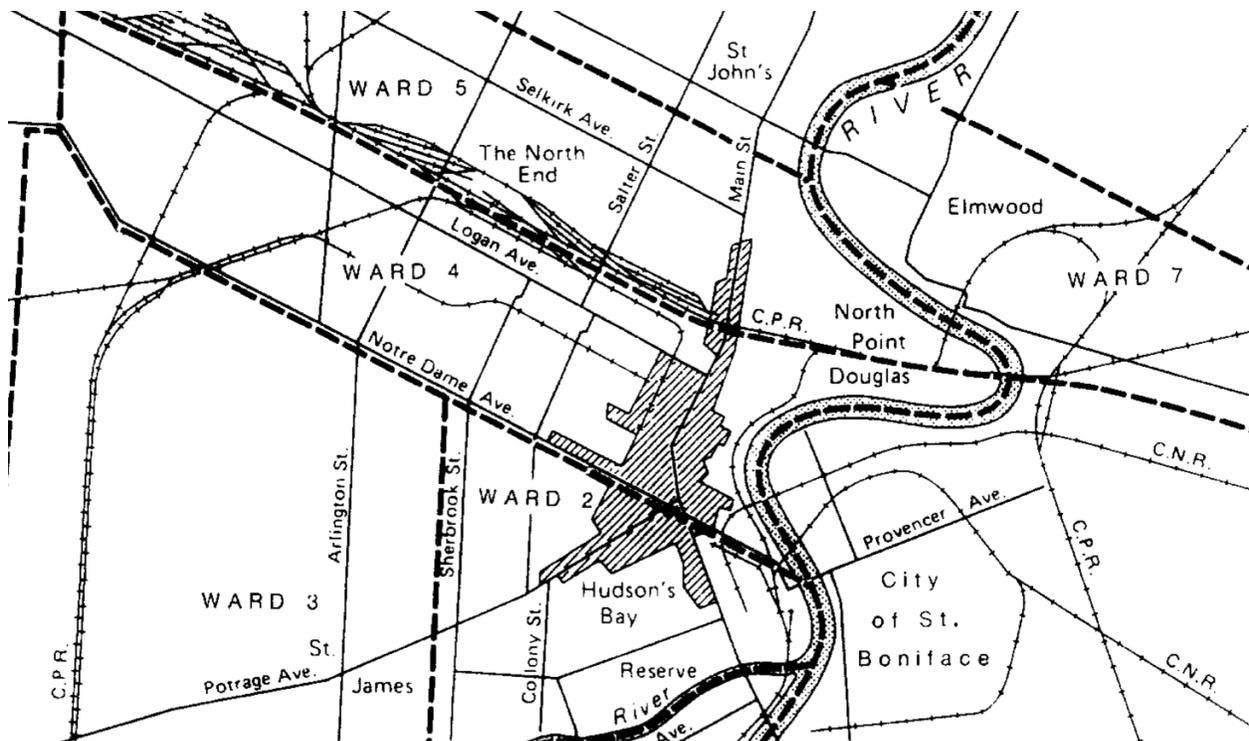


Image 4: Ward boundaries and neighbourhoods in 1919.

During Winnipeg's 19th and 20th century evolution, the North End of the city, according to author and historian, Gerald Friesen, was "the final destination for thousands of immigrant families looking for a fresh start in the new and growing country of Canada" (PP&D, Merchants Hotel, 1). These immigrants, many who were arriving from Europe, settled along many of the streets in the North End, particularly Selkirk Ave.

In 1874, an influx of immigrants, primarily those of Jewish and Eastern European heritage, moved into this area, which was considered a "working-class neighbourhood where poor housing and living conditions presented immediate challenges" (Stone, 2).

Their day in the life, as described by Padolsky: "It was the heart of the Jewish north-end. The Hebrew School was around the corner. The chief Rabbi lived next door to the school. A four block square beautiful miniature park stood nearby which was also named after Lord Selkirk. The Queen's Theatre which played to capacity with Jewish talent stood majestically on this street. The Pritchard pool, police station, butcher shops, chicken and egg dealers, barber shops, church, synagogues, horse barns, watch maker, tent and awning, sign painter, etc., were

conveniently located within a block or so, including Main Street. Even the farmer's market was a short distance away. The Aberdeen School which I attended was the farthest, two blocks away" (Padolsky, 1993).

Despite these hardships, the area began to prosper over the course of 50 years as "richness of culture, hard work and spirit of the community" (Brown, Danyluk, Pearce, Whitehouse, 2006) emerged. As residents' fortunes began to change, many "North End residents left the aging housing stock for new houses in the suburbs" (Brown, Danyluk, Pearce, Whitehouse, 2006) after the second World War, a significant economic shift which marked a significant increase of new immigrants and Indigenous people in the area.

Employment

Max Z. Blankstein, architect of The Palace Theatre, lived in the North End of the city. As indicated by the City of Winnipeg, Blankstein was "active in his community, supporting many of its charitable organizations" but later "died at his home at 131 Machray Avenue on December 31, 1931" (PP&D, 13). Blankstein also designed the Merchant's Hotel (541 Selkirk Ave.) in 1913. Many residents of Selkirk Avenue not only lived on this street but also worked and played in the area as well.

In 1901, 44.9% and 54.4% of occupation in Wards 4 and 5 of the city were skilled and semi-skilled blue-collar professions, respectively, and 19.9% and 29.8% of unskilled blue-collar. Outside of the North End, many of the occupational groups were predominantly owners, managers, professionals, and other white-collar professionals. As Daniel Hiebert states, "The southern portion of the city continued to be the area of choice for Winnipeg's elite, especially lots along the Assiniboine River in Fort Rouge and Crescentwood. Professionals and managers followed their lead, although they were not quite as clustered as capitalists" (Hiebert, 69-70).

While other white collar workers, petty proprietors, skilled and semi-skilled blue-collar workers were fairly evenly distributed throughout the city, “79 per cent of the heads of households living in the southern area were either entrepreneurs or white-collar workers – as opposed to 30 per cent in the area north of the CPR tracks” (Hiebert, 75).

Population

While Winnipeg’s population has seen a slow rise over time, the number of people settling in the Selkirk Avenue has seen a decline, from 20,055 in 1971 to 13,570 in 2011, a 32.3% decrease. In 2011, the number of female individuals aged 85+ surpassed the number of males, while the number of male individuals aged 45 to 54 outnumbered females. (Statistics Canada, 2011 Census)

Table 1: Comparison of Population Change Between Selkirk Avenue and Winnipeg, 1971-2011.

Year	Selkirk Avenue Area	Winnipeg
1971	20,055	535,100
1976	16,745	580,875
1981	14,090	564,475
1986	14,470	594,555
1991	13,864	615,215
1996	12,755	618,477
2001	11,350	619,544
2006	12,255	633,451
2011	13,570	663,617

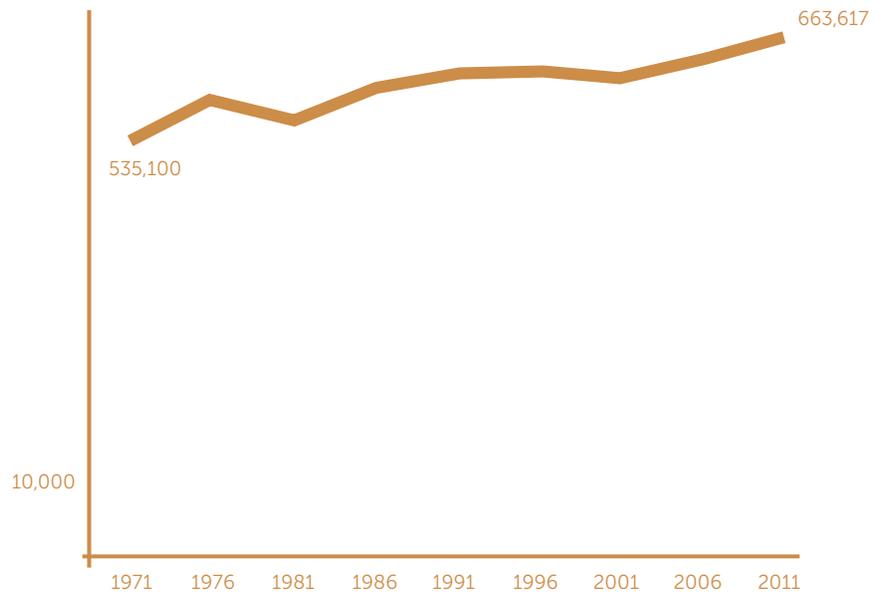


Figure 1: Winnipeg Population Change, 1991-2011.

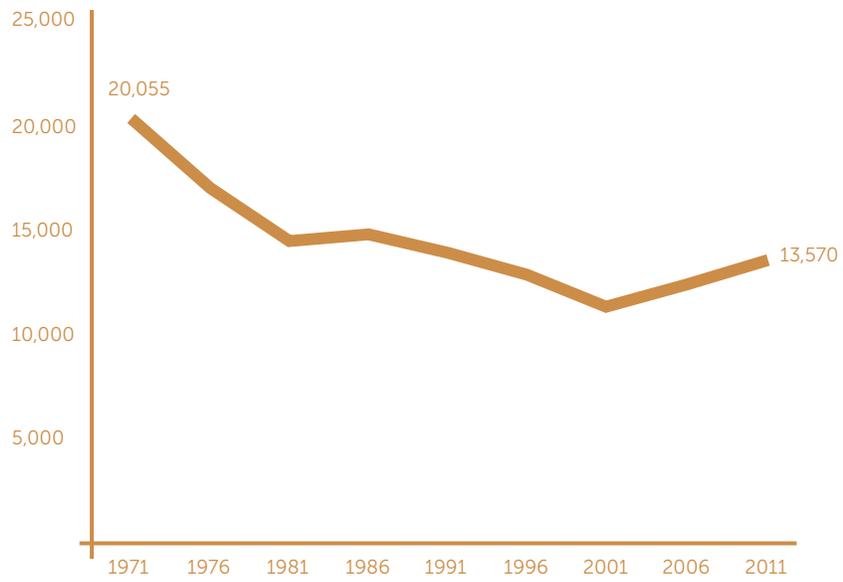


Figure 2: Selkirk Avenue Area Population Change, 1991-2011.

Family Structure

In Winnipeg, the total number of single parent households is 19.1% compared to 47% in the Selkirk Avenue area. The percentage of single parent females exceeds both the Winnipeg total for single parent households, as well as the proportion of single parent females in the city (Statistics Canada, 2011 Census).

Table 2: Comparison of Family Structure of Selkirk Avenue to Winnipeg, 2011.

Year	One parent, female	One parent, male	Total
Winnipeg	15.3%	3.8%	19.1%
Selkirk Ave. Area	37.8%	9.2%	47%

Average Employment Income

The average employment income in Winnipeg is \$72,612 while it is \$38,677 in the Selkirk Avenue area (Statistics Canada, 2011 Census).

Dwellings

In 2011, the majority of residents reported that they rented (59.4%) while 40.6% reported home ownership. The average value of a dwelling in the Selkirk Avenue area was \$133,501 compared to \$257,574 in Winnipeg. 3,070 dwellings were built in 1960 or before, compared to 145 from 2006-2011. (Statistics Canada, 2011 Census)

Ethnicity

In 2011, 16.8% of the total population in the Selkirk Avenue area identified as Metis, 26% identified as First Nations, and 0.2% as multiple Indigenous identities.

Job occupations in 1901 were inequitable for ethnic groups in Winnipeg. As Hiebert writes, the British occupied the majority of white-collar jobs “and the blue-collar jobs were taken up by non-British households” (Hiebert, 65). New immigrants “possessed fewer skills relevant to the more highly paid sectors of Winnipeg’s economy” as “any jobs in transportation, retailing, and services required familiarity with English” (Hiebert, 65). Many were excluded simply because of racial discrimination: “Jews, with an Index of Segregation of 60, were the most segregated of all ethnic groups in Winnipeg, a reflection of both anti-Jewish prejudice” (Hiebert, 66). This ethnicity divide was precipitated further as many residents of Selkirk Avenue found it literally and figuratively unsafe to cross the CPR railway tracks: “The newcomers – Jews, Ukrainians, Poles, and other nationalities – settled mostly in newly created districts in the North End of the city which, because of their poverty and newness, were appalling slums at first, while more affluent individuals tended to push farther south. Between 1911 and 1941, almost 90% of Winnipeg’s Jews lived in the North End while a post-Second World War migration south left only 47% living there in 1961” (Stone, 2).

Education

48% of people aged 15 and up identified as having no high school certificate, diploma or degree, while 24.3% reported having a high school diploma or equivalent. 27.7% reported possessing a post-secondary certificate, diploma or degree. (Statistics Canada, 2011 Census)

Mode of Transportation

In 2011, the number of people who reported “Car, truck or van – as a driver” as their mode of transportation for the Selkirk Avenue area and the City of Winnipeg was 50.7% and 69.1% respectively. 28.5% of residents in the Selkirk Avenue area reported public transit as their

main mode of travel, compared to 14.6% citywide. (Statistics Canada, 2011 Census)

Table 3: Mode of Transportation of Selkirk Avenue and Winnipeg, 2011.

Transportation Mode	Selkirk Ave. Area (male)	Selkirk Ave. Area (female)	Selkirk Ave. Area (% of total)	Winnipeg (% of total)
Car, truck or van (as a driver)	1,195	700	50.7%	69.1%
Public transit	450	615	28.5%	14.6%
Car, truck or van (as a passenger)	140	125	7.1%	7.3%
Walked	160	105	7.1%	5.5%
Bicycle	165	30	5.2%	2.1%
Other methods	0	50	1.3%	1.4%
Total	2,110	1,625	100%	100%

Poverty

The distinction between the wealthy and the poor in Winnipeg was very evident. Hiebert recalls how it was often very typical for those to explore the North End of the city to find themselves “shocked to discover abject poverty in Winnipeg – so shocked that he later returned with enough food and fuel for several particularly needy families in the area” (Hiebert, 61).

Living conditions were very distinct from the south to the North End of the city. Housing in Wards 4 and 5 were often overcrowded and unsanitary: “Of 941 households in the North End surveyed by the Winnipeg Department of Health in 1921, 31 per cent were crowded, 59 per cent had no immediate access to a bath, and 10 per cent lived in homes or apartments with inadequate heating systems. In addition, 82 per cent reported sighting rats in their buildings. Little wonder that the highest rates of infant mortality in Winnipeg were recorded in the North

End and that this area was hardest hit by the influenza epidemic of 1917-1918" (Hiebert, 74-75). In comparison, overcrowding in the south end of Winnipeg was only reported as 5%.

Political

A "Citizens' Committee" was established by a select group of "wealthy individuals to monitor the decisions of civic government and to nominate 'acceptable' aldermanic and mayoral candidates. Politically oriented workers, meanwhile, established a branch of the Independent Labour Party in Winnipeg and elected their candidate (Arthur Puttee) to the federal parliament in 1900" (Hiebert, 63-64). Some workers responded to their economic situation by supporting a rather "nascent working-class political movement" (Hiebert, 66).

Land Use

In the early 1900s, Selkirk Avenue was developed as a neighbourhood main street. Like most Canadian cities, during this time, there were no building regulations/standards, which resulted in a wide assortment of land uses and buildings of mixed uses. For example, "a local businessman looked to take advantage of available capital and his own commercial success and build a modern home for his retail store as well as provide several storeys of rental space above" during the most prolific growth phase of the city, the years leading up to the first World War (City of Winnipeg Historical Buildings Committee, 2).

As researched by University of Manitoba city planning students in 2003, "In 1911, the town planning commission began separating land uses, designating major traffic routes, establishing housing standards and instituting minimum lot sizes" (Brown, Danyluk, Pearce & Whitehouse, 3). By the 1960s, Selkirk Avenue's zoning primarily permitted C2 commercial (Figure 1). While this strict regulation was instituted, a few non-conforming uses still exist on

Selkirk Avenue today.

The narrow strips of land facing the river provided the basis for new street patterns as Winnipeg was expanding in the 1870s: "With Main Street as the major artery running north to south, Selkirk Avenue was among the avenues laid out to follow the boundary lines of early river lots" (City of Winnipeg PP&D, 4).

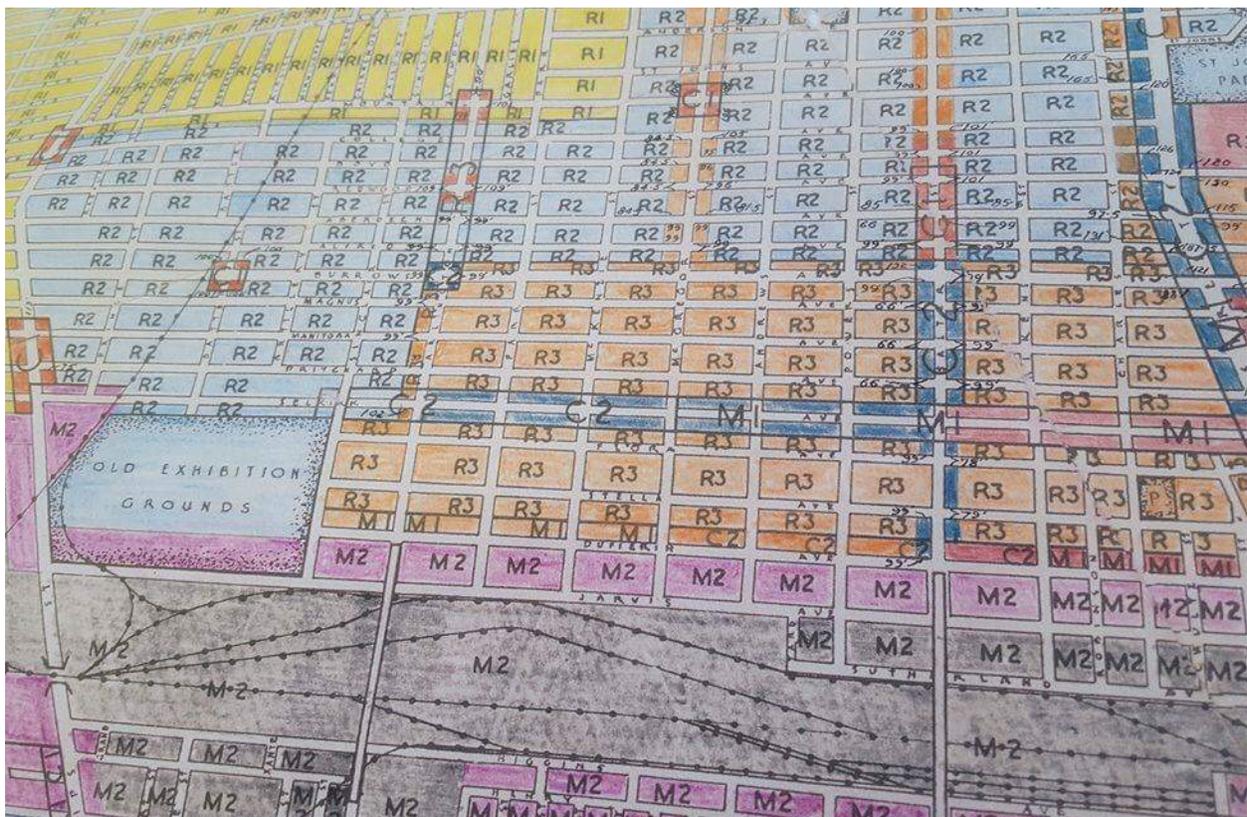


Image 5: Zoning map for City of Winnipeg with spotlight on Selkirk Ave.

Built Form

Streetscape, today, lacks beautification, connectivity, signage/wayfinding, and does not give off the impression that it has benefitted from neighbourhood revitalization for some time. “You will notice the commercial and residential mix that characterizes the eastern end of Selkirk Avenue. In sharp contrast to the physical segregation of newer residential and commercial districts, Selkirk Avenue has maintained this blend of work place and living space throughout its history” (City of Winnipeg PP&D, 4). In 1921, the city’s built environment reflected the realities of a growing city, one that saw a rise in the number of unskilled workers coming into the city for work, who also required housing supply: “The city’s built environment also continued to reflect these realities: provision houses, stables, and implement dealers crowded Main Street; the ebb and flow of unskilled workers was accommodated in hundreds of boarding houses, especially in the North End; and a permanent red light district catered to the transient male population” (Hiebert, 68).

Commercial Use

Known as one of the major commercial arteries in the city in the first half of the 20th century, today Selkirk Avenue is witness to a considerable decrease in commercial activity and neighbourhood decline.

Selkirk Avenue was a destination for many, with sidewalks lined with “banks, churches and synagogues, theatres, delis and restaurants, bowling alleys and pool rooms, butchers’ shop, department and grocery stores, union halls and benevolent society headquarters” (City of Winnipeg, PP&D). In 1925, there were 128 businesses; today, there are just over forty not tallying the pawnshops, money marts, and thrift stores (City of Winnipeg, PP&D).

Queen's Theatre
239 Selkirk Ave.



1890
\$6,000
Original Use: church
Current Use: bingo hall,
meeting space

Clay brick, stucco, 2-storeys.
Built as church, converted to
theatre, closed in 1950s and
became bingo hall.

Palace Theatre
501 Selkirk Ave.



1912
\$12,000
Original Use: theatre
Current Use: vacant

Clay brick, concrete
foundation, stone, 1-storey.
Addition was added in
1927-28 to double the size
of the theatre, at a cost of
\$15,000. A small barbershop
was demolished in 1927 to
accommodate expansion. In
1964, building was a store.

Merchants Hotel
541 Selkirk Ave.



1913
\$20,000
Original Use: retail/office
building
Current Use: under
construction

Brick and stone foundation,
3-storey building. Classical
Revival Style, historically-
based architectural elements
to increase the building's
conspicuousness on street.

Aurora Block
567, 567 1/2 Selkirk Ave.



1914
Original Use: mixed retail/
residential
Current Use: half vacant, hair
salon. In 1917, there were six
residential suites and two retail
stores (shoes and jeweller)

Wasserman Block
581, 583 Selkirk Ave.



1911
Original Use: mixed retail/
residential
Current Use: Spark Rentals,
R&B Embroidery Ltd.
Tenants included: a barber,
dry goods store, plumber, and
wholesale confectionary store.

Budnik Block
594, 596 Selkirk Ave.



1911
Original Use: mixed retail/
residential
Current Use: Baltona Meats &
Deli
Additional storey was built in
1924.

Image 6: Building typology from 239 Selkirk Ave. to 595 Selkirk Ave.

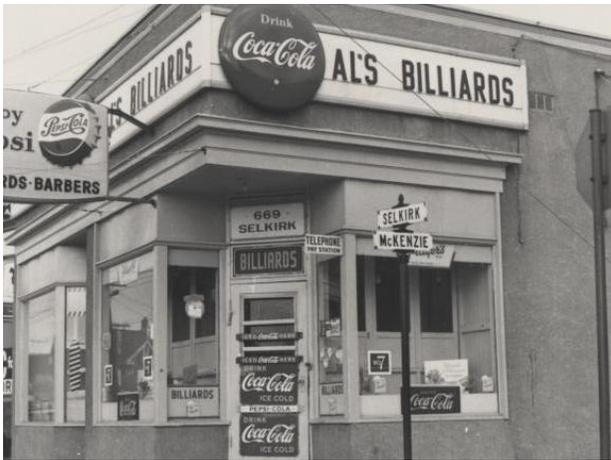
The Palace Theatre

The Palace Theatre was built in 1912, following a design trend towards neighbourhood theatres, a destination for families to frequent for entertainment. In the 1960s, with the advent of large shopping malls and large, multi-screen complexes, single-screen houses like The Palace Theatre suffered. The Palace Theatre was sold in 1964 and converted into a department store.

The Palace Theatre building focused on the pedestrian – with design features installed to capture the eye from the street: “broad canopy marquees, towering vertical signs, elaborate ornamentation, and trace and chaser lights” (City of Winnipeg PP&D, 3). This architectural excess was analogous to many other theatres in North America. There was a centrally-located domed ticket stand, a conspicuous front façade, poster frames to advertise shows or ‘Coming Attractions’, and a marquee that spanned the entire width of the building to provide customers refuge from the climate.

Merchants Hotel

Now the site of a major redevelopment as a mixed-use educational, student housing, and retail complex, the Merchants Hotel was once a “temporary bed for visiting salesmen and a beverage room and restaurant for area residents” (City of Winnipeg Historical Buildings Committee, 7) before its recent regression as a Single Room Occupancy (SRO) hotel, a site of both perceived and real crime: “The Merchants Hotel, once a hive of drunken street crime on Selkirk Avenue, is finally getting a fix-up, part of a slow renaissance now underway in one of the city’s poorest neighbourhoods” (Welch, 2014).



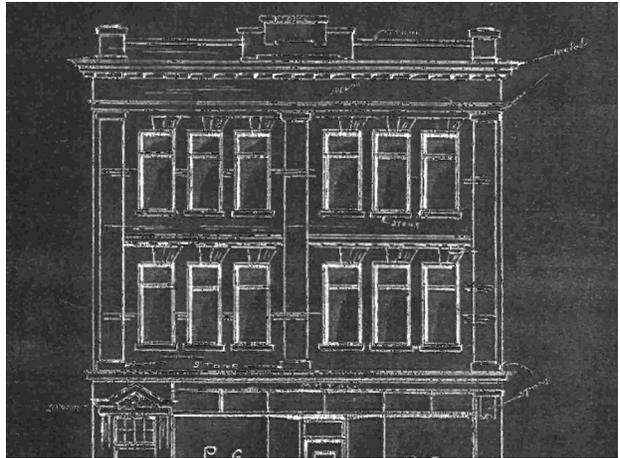
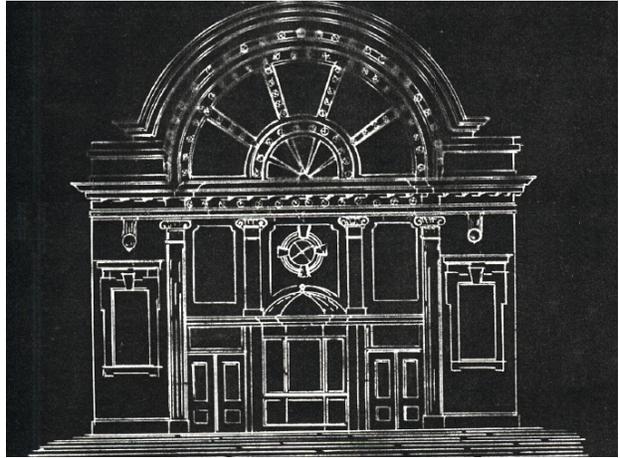
Clockwise:

Image 7: 413 Selkirk Ave., 1963.

Image 8: Royal Bank at Main & Selkirk, 1947.

Image 9: 669 Selkirk Ave., 1961.

Image 10: 292-294 Selkirk Ave., 1965.



Clockwise:

Image 11: Artist painting of The Palace Theatre.

Image 12: Longitudinal section of The Palace Theatre.

Image 13: Palace Theatre.

Image 14: Front elevation for Merchants Hotel.



Image 15: Architectural rendering for the redevelopment of Merchants Hotel.



Image 16: Redevelopment announcement of Merchants Hotel.

Adaptation and Re-use

While there is a limited number of commercial businesses in operation, on Selkirk Avenue's main street, some positive changes can be noted: buildings like the William Norrie Centre, Urban Circle Training Centre, and weekly gatherings of Indigenous and non-Indigenous activists at the Bell Tower. Organizations in the area are serving the diverse needs of a multi-cultural mix of cultures and communities.

Transportation Trends

The Selkirk Avenue neighbourhood is characterized by a simple grid of Streets and Avenues, while the residential building style is "multi-storey, closely placed homes on narrow lots with back lanes" (Brown, Danyluk, Pearce & Whitehouse, 3). Along Selkirk Avenue, various multi-family buildings of 2-3 levels can be found past Arlington Street. Industrial sites are located along the southern edge near the rail yards. The presence of these industrial sites and the rail yards cultivated some hesitation for people to venture from north to south.



Image 17: Streetcar tracks on Selkirk Ave.

Transportation Analysis

As written by Wachs, urban sprawl in Los Angeles occurred between 1880 and 1910, “in response to accessibility provided by street railways” (302). Later, during the boom of the twenties, Los Angeles saw “decentralization of much business and commercial activity as well as the continuation of residential dispersal” (302) as automobiles became widely used. At this time, city planning attempted to “establish its influence over the growth and form of the city” (297).

Similarly, Selkirk Avenue saw a loss of economic activity, employment, businesses, and residents as a result of wealth moving to the south end of the city, the rise of suburban shopping malls and multi-screen complexes (e.g. closure of The Palace Theatre), and the division of the south and North End of the city by the CPR railway tracks. As already mentioned, city officials looked to zoning to ensure conforming uses on Selkirk Avenue, as a way to preserve the area’s history and characteristics of a retail hub.

As Hiebert writes, "Originally a mixed neighbourhood, the social composition of North Point Douglas was set during the late-nineteenth century with the construction of the CPR railway tracks and marshalling yards which split the area in two. At the same time the Hudson's Bay Company began to subdivide its Reserve and market it as an elite neighbourhood. Together, these events precipitated a movement of wealthier households out of North Point Douglas, leaving behind a more homogenous blue-collar population" (Hiebert, 60). The Canadian Pacific Railway's freight yard and repair shop complex was located west of Main Street, which created noxious externalities like noise, dust, and "smell of livestock associated with the yards depressed real estate values throughout Wards 4 and 5" (61). Hiebert maintains: "the tracks isolated most of the North End from the rest of the city" (61).

A child recalls his subtle experience of this spatial segregation with his adventure on a streetcar: "One day I found a children's street car ticket. In those days adult tickets were six for 25 cents and children's were eight or ten for a quarter. What could I do with one ticket? I decided to walk to the end of Selkirk Ave. and ride back. I had never been that far and it seemed like a daring adventure for a six year old. The tracks ended abruptly with a curved wheel-shaped metal obstacle to prevent the car from going off the tracks" (Padolsky).

In 1921, the built form along Selkirk Avenue reflected the needs of a temporary workforce of unskilled workers coming into the city for work. This fluctuation of people resulted in housing supply of boarding houses and provision houses, and a lack of permanent residents. As Winnipeg rapidly grew, Selkirk Avenue's residential population began to decline, occurring at the same time as the loss of commercial and retail activity.

With a loss of commercial activity and things to do, and a lack of concentration of jobs and businesses owned by those living in the area as once was the case, many of the low-

income families in the Selkirk Avenue area are choosing to drive outside of the area for a variety of reasons: jobs may be located outside the Selkirk Avenue area, cars may be needed for trip-chaining, and public transit is inconvenient (e.g. time consuming, misalignment with timing for single-parents, etc.).

1.4 Chapter Outline

As outlined in the subsections of Chapter 1 above, the purpose of this practicum is to explore the role of protest, in particular, Indigenous activism, as providing opportunities for city planning. The case study of Meet Me At The Bell Tower will be explored to offer lessons for the planning profession on how weekly activist gatherings can assist in neighbourhood renewal of Selkirk Avenue.

The practicum has 6 main chapters:

The first chapter, "Introduction," provides a synopsis on the research explored, key questions for inquiry, and the significance of this study for the planning profession.

The second chapter, "Public Protest and the Right to the City," provides a literature review of scholarly research related to protest in public space, and Right to the City community mobilizing. This chapter will provide a basis of understanding and insight to affirm research gained from the case study.

The third chapter, "Contemporary Indigenous Public Action in Canada," provides brief summaries for context of activist movements in Canada, and the case study's position within this space.

The fourth chapter, "Research Methods," offers the reader a narrative on the research methods undertaken, analysis framework, and potential biases and limitations. The research framework was designed in consideration of the previous chapters, considering thoughtfully the circumstances and privacy of its participants.

The fifth chapter, "Bridging the Divide Between Indigenous Activists and Planners," blends insights learned from interviewees from the case study and personal account, compared and contrasted with the literature review from Chapter 2.

The sixth chapter, "Conclusion," provides statements on the nature of Indigenous public action in Winnipeg today and projections for the future, a review of the practicum's key research questions and their answers, and reflection and lessons for future research.

“More recently, mobilized by Meet Me at The Bell Tower, Indigenous peoples have begun to share a set of recommendations for the neighbourhood.”



Chapter Two

Public Protest and Right to the City

2.0 Public Protest and the Right to the City



Image 18: Women's March, 2017.

This chapter reviews academic literature on topics relevant to the practicum, with an emphasis on public protest and Right to the City research.

Public protest, as the literature review suggests, is a visible activity that involves some form of reclamation of space – generally in a highly frequented public space. With critical mass and strength in numbers, protest can help inform and influence neighbourhood community renewal. The literature speaks to constraints related to protest member outreach, partnership and coalition building with other similar movements, and participation of individuals in protest because of job security or political reasons.

With regards to Right to the City, scholars suggest that people have a role to play in challenging current governance systems in order to make cities more just and equitable. Accomplishing this feat is not that easy, as the literature reveals – it requires an awakening of residents' understanding that they have a say in how their communities are developed and how their communities should support them. The literature reviewed explores how activism emerges when community needs are not met, how activism can employ various governance models, and how to build community capacity to support these aims.

2.1 Public Protest

Public protests involve a delicate “ballet” and negotiation with urban space. As Danielle Endres and Samantha Senda-Cook (2011) argue, “Protest is always out of place (e.g., people taking over streets and preventing normal car traffic) and thus temporarily highlights both the constructed nature of place and that place is under constant negotiation” (277-278). In many instances, protests purposefully disrupt and inconvenience the use of space for non-protestors. This view is supported by an article written for The Canadian Press, in which Bilan Arte, an Ottawa organizer of a peaceful protest in support of Ferguson’s Michael Brown, was quoted as saying that “white/non-black allies [should] refrain from taking space [and should] never be the centre of anything” (“Ferguson aftermath,” 2014).

When Indigenous public action takes over public spaces, it contests the character of these spaces, and generates “a sense of space where ambiguities of proprietorship, of aesthetics, of social relations (class and gender in particular) and the political economy of everyday life collide” (Harvey, 2005). This very act of taking over a space for a protest calls into question: to whom does urban public space belong? And it forces us to think cogently about how urban space can be a tool in shaping political, economic, and social processes.

A lack of consideration of the potential impacts of Indigenous public action can also result in opposition to city growth and development. In 2004, when Manitoba Hydro unleashed a dam onto a spillway without the consent of the Indigenous community affected, the Grand Rapids First Nation set up an encampment in its direct path. In the words of elders Charles Osborne and Gideon McKay, “A lone wolf gives a weak howl, just loud enough to be heard by another. It responds, and slowly other wolves hear the call and respond, and as their responses bounce back and forth they gather strength, until finally the power of the wolf nation is

unmistakable.” Soon after, the Province of Manitoba cancelled its plans.



Image 19: Occupy Winnipeg, 2012.



Image 20: Occupy Winnipeg, 2011.

Planners are well trained to develop language and processes that can bridge divides and strengthen partnerships among stakeholders. Activists and planners can work together towards creating a more equitable city. Perhaps activism in public space is the first step towards facilitating greater discussion, democracy, and engagement in political deliberation and negotiation. The tensions, truths, and tales that rose above water because of the death of Tina Fontaine, remind us that activism has a place in public spaces, as they help to uncover, unfold, and expose marginalization, unevenness, and inequality at the hands of those in power and with affluence. Following from this, as John Friedmann states, planners should play the part of the alternative, not as top-down experts, but as partisans (Irazabal & Foley, 2010). How do planners, as agents of the state, play this role?

As Stephen Grabow and Allan Heskin assert, “the planner is active: a radical agent of change” who is not “a creature of divided loyalty, one who owes as much or more to the profession as to the people” (112).

D.A. Krueckberg’s “The Difficult Character of Property: To Whom Do Things Belong?” explores how various members of the community navigate public space. To whom do things

belong? Who is entitled to public space? How do we decide how space may be used? When protest erupts, does it impact the use of space for non-protestors? How do protestors occupy place in new ways, disrupt traffic and bodies, and generate results beyond the intent of protest organizers? All of these questions result in a constant bargaining among various actors: protestors, non-protestors, planners, municipal officials, and representatives from other levels of government.

Whose streets? Our streets!

Christopher Smith (2003), in "Whose Streets?" explores the use of playfulness and adding the carnivalesque into urban protest, and how protests are organized in such a way to disrupt and defy rigidity, control, and order in physical and political space – drawing attention to unevenness. Smith argues that protest in places become political and marketplaces for ideas and political deliberation, of values, and opportunities for change. That is, the potentiality of power that people have in taking over public spaces can transform places of economic wealth to places of resistance to power and marginalization. Indigenous activism in Winnipeg public spaces, then, offers a direct challenge to the "restriction of the freedom to appropriate space ... and other social forms of domination and control" (as cited in Smith, 2003, 165).

Endres and Senda-Cook explore the winners and losers of space, in "Location Matters: The Rhetoric of Place in Protest." Protest activity can also create unintended consequences for those who often occupy the same spaces and what that means for the protest group's overall impact and influence.

Margaret Crawford, a professor of urban design and planning theory, is interested in how informal activities like protest can expose community spirit, and how "these activities identify neighbourhoods and communities" and "bring disparate groups together" (Dupree,

2002). Crawford, in “Everyday Urbanism” (1948), also explores how the city is a social entity, and that it needs to respond to the needs and concerns of the neighbourhood.



Image 21: Gordon Bell High School protest, 2009.

Speaking up, not stepping down

In “Going Old School: Activism Reborn in Winnipeg’s Inner City,” Maunder and Distasio assert that community tension occurs when people demonstrate their concern for their community and that it can be a “sign that people care about their neighbourhoods and the things that make them great” (1). When citizens speak up about contentious issues, tension forms, pitting various stakeholders against one another. Maunder and Distasio frame their argument with the case study of Gordon Bell High School in mind, highlighting the importance of protest and tension, and how they can help to shape decision-making, influence politicians, and transform communities for the better.

For decades, students and faculty of Gordon Bell High School, as well as several supportive community members, had advocated for a green space. Their eyes and minds were set on a 2.5-acre parcel of land for redevelopment towards this aim but it had been recently sold to Canada Post. As a result, the provincial and federal government stalled on the demands

of the community. After a few years of inertia, an op-ed written by Nancy Chippendale, a community activist, put the issue back on the table. It cultivated a renewed passion and enthusiasm from the community, which then generated a mail campaign, encouraging supporters to send letters to Canada Post. As Maunder and Distasio put it, Gordon Bell's dream of a green space next to their school was a "classic story of how citizen activists, including kids, can prod several large-scale bureaucracies into community action" (1).

Students became a significant driving force behind the campaign, gaining allies from school trustees, retired teachers, parent council, and politicians – yet, no planners. An email written by a student, Morgan Hoogstraten, promoting a march, was identified as a major milestone in the campaign for the fight for Gordon Bell's green space. The email was the beginning of a student-led movement towards organizing in support of the green space. In a cold, blistery day, students stood in solidarity with politicians, which Maunder and Distasio describe as "a coming together of the top-down and bottom-up forces that were shaping the campaign" (3). The march generated media interest and became a place where reporters could build relationships with the organizers: "Now reporters had people to call, including students. Decisions behind closed doors – or non-decisions – would now be held up to scrutiny" (4).

Minister Bjornson emphasized that he would not act until he met with the school division. School division's Board of Trustees met and proposed to Minister Bjornson and Public School Finance Board to request funds for the field, to formally purchase the land from Canada Post. All of these stakeholders now became allies of the campaign. Pat Martin and Lloyd Axworthy, President of University of Winnipeg lent their public support and vocal endorsement. At this time, Canada Post was also supportive but was adamant for an alternative piece of land. An alternate piece of land was proposed but then Canada Post took their time. With the lack of a response, Nancy Chippendale leaked some of the behind-the-scenes information to the

media, and an article was written: "On April 23, the Free Press wrote a glowing story saying what a 'win-win' this land swap would be, and two days later, Canada Post quickly rejected the site." Media interest exploded, with many contacting students for their reactions. Minister Bjornson asked Canada Post to reconsider and Lloyd Axworthy sent an email to student organizers telling them not to give-up.

Media erupted based on Canada Post's initial rejection, and then they finally caved, after a series of top-down bureaucratic meetings with politicians like Pat Martin. Nancy Chippendale offered some rationale behind the decision: "Somehow I think Canada Post became convinced at that moment that this site really was the only chance for Gordon Bell, and their heart changed" (6).

Protest/activism must have a clear timeline for action to place greater pressure on decision-makers; provide solutions, not just passion; and gaining allies is critical towards building momentum, a sense of community thrust, and political backing.

Walking together

As outlined in "June 29th: Day of Action or Launching Pad for Sustained Campaign of Political Confrontation," a Day of Action was called for by the Assembly of First Nations to draw attention to Indigenous peoples' issues, and the fact that only 282 out of 1,354 land claims were settled by the federal government. Collective action across the country was undertaken as a formal motion was endorsed by the Assembly, which Brophy describes as having "turned heads in the minority Conservative government" (CCPA, 1). After being elected in 2006, the Conservative government did not identify First Nations issues as a top priority. In fact, they gutted the Kelowna Accord, a five-year \$5 billion plan forged under the previous government to improve education, health, and economic development in Indigenous communities. The

Day of Action resulted in the government re-assessing its priorities, not least because of concern over the possibility of rail and road blockades. This particular reading demonstrates the impact when protesters take matters into their own hands. That is, "The resulting confrontations thrust the disputes into the public spotlight, exposing the federal government's moral and legal liabilities to indigenous peoples" (CCPA, 2).

In "We All Work Together To Help One Another: The Story of Ma Mawi," Silver celebrates the 25th anniversary of Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre, an organization established in 1984 whose mission is to provide culturally relevant programs that provide support and service for Indigenous people and families. The term "Ma Mawi" means "we all work together to help one another." This article provides important insight on the various types of advocacy that can occur outside of the profession of planning. Ma Mawi employs 200 staff and its Board of Directors is comprised of Indigenous members. These opportunities provide the Indigenous community with a voice and an opportunity to participate in democratic decision-making.

Ma Mawi was created after an 18-month old Indigenous child was found drowned in a non-Indigenous foster home that was overcrowded. Ma Mawi took this unfortunate occurrence and broadened the concern/message: "Aboriginal children continue to comprise 70-80 percent of children in care in Manitoba. In fact, more Aboriginal children have passed through the child welfare system than ever went through the residential school system" (1). While they were successful in solidifying its place in the community and political realm, at times Ma Mawi found itself turning into a bureaucracy.

As a result, Ma Mawi sought to re-connect with the urban Indigenous community, and "shifted from a deficit approach, which focuses on 'fixing' what is wrong in a community, to an asset-based approach to community development, which seeks to identify and build upon strengths" (2). To me, this is an important lesson learned: as activist and grassroots movements

develop more capacity and become more organized, how do they continue to reach out to their membership and base of supporters?

Building partnerships

As explained by Grace in "In for the Long Haul: Women's Organizations in Manitoba," many of the women's organizations in Manitoba have been inspired by a rich history of feminism activism. Feminism activism in Manitoba began when the Manitoba Action Committee on the Status of Women (MACSW) formed during the second wave women's movement. This group was enabled through funding from the Royal Commission of Status of Women in 1970, a financial investment that subsequently resulted in an office sprawl to Brandon, Dauphin, Thompson, and Winnipeg. Grace's study highlights the various tactics employed by the MACSW that generated awareness around women's issues. From coalition building around particular issues to presentations to legislative committees, the MACSW coordinated key messages about the women's movement "to the province, and sometimes the federal government, on issues of importance to women" (5).

Women activists have recognized the importance of groups like MACSW "to build solidarity, to empower themselves, and to nurture their feminist consciousness" (8). Grace chronicles the path that women activists may take through life, arguing that many still continue to politically organize but in a more official capacity by "running for elected office, lobbying government for policy change, or seeking redress through the Charter of Rights and Freedoms" (6).

Without an umbrella organization or central coordinating structure, Grace argues, however, that the diversity of women's organizations results in fragmentation. She repeatedly references the absence of NAC (National Action Committee on the Status of Women) as a

detriment to the feminism movement, as it “provided a structure for women from various feminist perspectives ‘to act collectively’ and an important vehicle to articulate women’s views to the Canadian public and to governments” (8). She points to the Women’s Centre at the University of Winnipeg as an exception to this rule, as this space has become a hub for many movements to participate in the planning of International Women’s Day and Take Back the Night, and provided a space where women can focus on strategies for change and in setting policy agenda.

The Women’s Centre has become a hub for research, correspondence, organizational records, campaign material, and audio-visual recordings, giving feminist activists the tools to organize and mobilize supporters. As communication opportunities change and emerge, groups like The Women’s Centre has begun to engage in electronic communication as a means for community building.

Protest in light of job security and other factors

As Tayebi explains, “planning activists, like other kinds of activists such as Human Rights activists, work with marginalized citizens to raise their voices in existing decision-making processes and power structures” (88). Tayebi points out a limitation that many planners face throughout their careers, that is, an inability to support activist movements because of their employer or position. While this may be true, Tayebi argues that planners can still support local citizens by challenging the “political system of misinformation, which determines who knows what (and when) and claims legitimacy by claiming to act in the interest of the public” (91).

If passive from debate when protest/activism erupts, planners can be a source of misinformation, thwarting democratic participation. Planners have skills and knowledge that can help shape attention and public engagement: “Planning activists can shed light on decision-

making structures to indicate opportunities for participation in each phase of planning processes. They can inform powerless citizens about how the power structure legitimizes the predefined agendas. They can inform the public about their rights and needs, as opposed to what the political system attempts to introduce as public needs. The well-informed citizen can actively participate in decision-making processes to set agendas based on his/her real needs” (91). Dominant stakeholder interest may suppress important alternatives identified by activists. Planners can help guide discussion, to point out all opportunities.

2.2 Right to the City

Planning theory related to the Right to the City can be best described by D. Harvey in “The Political Economy of Public Space,” who states protests are “a challenge to the reigning model of urban governance” (3). When thousands of people gather and protest, they become part of the mass of a location, and therefore, are able to challenge predominant notions and forms of power and economy in public space. Planners can play a role in advocating for those who are without and for those who are marginalized. Therefore, public space is “an arena of political deliberation and participation, and therefore fundamental to democratic governance” (1). I am interested in the perspectives of both planners and protestors in this regard.

Activism emerges when community needs are not met

Novy and Colomb argue that a city is not a brand, nor is it a corporation – it is a community (1816); and if development does not align with community needs and aspirations, there is a chance for protest and activism. Their work entangles the various tensions that emerged as a result of the Media Spree project, a large-scale redevelopment scheme planned

on the shoreline of the River Spree in Berlin. This area, as described by Novy and Colomb, is comprised of clubs and nightlife venues.

Media Spree ended up “facing massive protests, culminating in a local public referendum in which a majority voted against the project and forced local authorities to reconsider much of the existing scheme” (1817). Creatives, artists, and cultural producers, were identified as a strong voice in “contestations of the present-day urban order” (1818) and as Novy and Colomb argue, this segment of society is who “Berlin’s politicians orientate so much of their policymaking” (1817). The article provides a rich history of the urban social movements that arose in the 1960s and the institutionalization of these activities, resulting in inertia. As they put it, these movements became “increasingly supported and funded by the state, institutionalized as part of the ‘third sector’ or co-opted into partnerships with state organizations for service delivery and neighbourhood regeneration” (1819). Resistance subdued as a result of this state cooperation can result in activist movements losing their radical political edge.

The Media Spree Development Project is 180 hectares on both banks of the River Spree, though primarily in the Kreuzberg-Friedrichshain district. Supported by Berlin Senate, this large urban development project currently planned in Berlin is led by a public-private non-profit association (called Media Spree Regional Management), which promoted the area to potential investors as a “creative cluster.” Creative cluster designation emerged as a result of Berlin’s ambition to enhance its status as a creative city, and to attract large media and music corporations. Development interest has not been as significant, and many aspects of the plan have not been implemented. More protesters emerged than investors, advocating against the master plan for the site. They did not agree with the massive scale and nature of the proposed developments and foreseeable privatization of access to the riverside, issues of gentrification, and displacement of area’s sub-cultural fabric.

Taking back the neighbourhood

Right to the City literature that expands on the case above is featured in the article, "Struggling for the Right to the (Creative) City in Berlin and Hamburg: New Urban Social Movements, New 'Spaces of Hope'?" The article's authors, Johannes Novy and Clair Colomb (2013), reflect on two urban protests in Berlin and Hamburg, identifying the major actors in each and whether these movements represent "the seeds of new types of coalitions with a wide-ranging agenda for urban change" (1). That is, does the demonstration lead to greater participation from not only the activists themselves, but from the larger community? This literature was helpful in guiding questions for Indigenous activists involved with Meet Me at The Bell: are these demonstrations providing opportunities for greater mobilization from planners, decision-makers, and other stakeholders?

Similar to the organizations listed in "Neighbourhood Renewal Corporations in Winnipeg's Inner City: Practical Activism in a Complex Environment," Indigenous activists in Winnipeg may also "have to carve out, define and defend their own, alternative political space" (1). When this space is created, Indigenous activists can begin to initiate change and spark discussion around issues that matter to them. As suggested by Silver (2009), community engagement may take many shapes and forms, like committee work and involving residents and volunteers in the decision-making of a neighbourhood: "The community really needs to take back their community, the neighbourhood. And I see that happening" (27).

Infusing activism into governance

A hot-bed of community building is occurring through Community Based Organizations (CBOs), such as the Spence Neighbourhood Association and the North End Community Renewal Corporation, as explained in "Step by Step: Turning Things Around in Winnipeg's Inner

City.” These organizations emerge as a result of resident and community action. In a State of the Inner City report, released on December 4 of 2007 by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, CBOs were attributed as important catalysts in the community: “But at the same time there is much going on that is positive, most of it driven by a significant number of relatively small community-based organizations (CBOs) that manage to be highly creative while staying in close touch with the day-to-day realities of inner-city residents” (1). CBOs develop opportunities for the community to participate, through advisory committees, relevant programs/services, and opportunities to gather and demonstrate with respect to mutually shared concerns and issues.

Silver, McCracken, and Sjoberg shadowed McCracken and Sjoberg’s foray into their roles as Executive Directors (ED) of the West Broadway Development Corporation and Spence Neighbourhood Association (SNA) respectively, providing a unique perspective as each began to learn “on the job about their two neighbourhoods and the roles and challenges of inner-city neighbourhood renewal corporations” (4). As chronicled in “Neighbourhood Renewal Corporations in Winnipeg’s Inner City: Practical Activism in a Complex Environment,” throughout the Spring of 2007, this particular study employed interviews that “were conversational, questioning, reflective and very rich in content” (4) and asked both McCracken and Sjoberg to reflect on the challenges they were faced with, the accomplishments they were making, and “to think out loud, share experiences, raise questions and express frustrations” (4-5).

While loose in structure to allow each ED to speak openly about their experiences, interview sessions often “had a particular theme, such as safety and security or housing development” (5). An insider’s view of the work of both McCracken and Sjoberg was one of the main purposes for this study, as the author hoped the insights would provide future EDs with a

tool-kit of expertise and institutional knowledge and an opportunity to pick up where McCracken and Sjoberg left off, if either decided to move on to another personal or professional endeavour. This research approach is replicated with my case study, as Meet Me At The Bell Tower is a fairly new initiative and following their progress over time presents learning opportunities for other activist/social movements.

This article provided lessons for how the Meet Me At The Bell Tower initiative could organize themselves using processes/engagement techniques employed by Neighbourhood Renewal Corporations (NRCs) in the future and how further funding could enable more capacity and creation of relevant programs/services. Silver, McCracken, and Sjoberg conclude that NRCs are important instruments for change in inner-city neighbourhoods, in that they “carve out, define and defend their own, alternative political space” (1) but how this can only happen with participation from residents in the neighbourhood. Perhaps Meet Me At The Bell Tower can support a NRC in the North End of the City of Winnipeg or partner on mutually shared concerns/interests. NRCs have historically been effective opportunities for residents to become engaged and involved, and to empower through democracy the right to the city and neighbourhood.

Such activity is a challenge without long-term financial commitment from governments; administrative supports, especially for financial and human resource management; small, innovative projects be moved on to a more permanent funding stream; and ability for cross-neighbourhood and long-term strategic thinking and planning (Silver, McCracken, & Sjoberg, 2).

In the mid-late 1990s, residents in West Broadway and Spence organized with the hope of “taking back their neighbourhood,” resulting in the creation of the West Broadway Alliance, now called the West Broadway Development Corporation (WBDC). The WBDC, like SNA,

engage in practical political activism by rallying the efforts of residents to organize to defend their neighbourhoods. This type of activism has a long history rooted in the North End, starting with the All Peoples' Mission in the heart of North End from 1907 to 1913, the Institute of Urban Studies, headed up by Lloyd Axworthy, Greg Selinger, community organizer in Logan neighbourhood at the time of the rail relocation struggle, and Winnipeg's feminist activists like Nellie McClung, who staged the famous play in 1914, Votes for Men. Indigenous women led the related effort in 1980s to establish non-mandated Indigenous child and family services agency, Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre. As Silver, McCracken, and Sjoberg, argue, "community organizing and mobilizing are essential ingredients in the struggle for social reforms in inner-city neighbourhoods" (13).

Community activism or citizen engagement can come with a cost. As Silver, McCracken, and Sjoberg argue, the work can be cumbersome, requires a lot of time/commitment, and sometimes funding for meetings, gatherings, and campaign materials. With NRCs in mind, Sjoberg had to learn "how to read a budget; how to support staff; how to run meetings that are focused and inclusive; how to be an advocate and spokesperson; how to do coalition work with different kinds of organizations; how to work with a union" (Silver, McCracken, & Sjoberg, 7). However, establishing boards and committees to engage and mobilize other people to participate can not only create diversity and inclusion, but broad based support: "The manner in which boards are constituted is important because it is essential that the voices of 'the community', with all its diversity, be heard, and it is important that Boards be seen by the community to be their legitimate representatives. If important parts of the community believe that their voices are not being heard, and their interests are not being heard, and their interests are not pursued, the legitimacy of a NRC and its ability to promote neighbourhood improvements can be eroded" (Silver, McCracken, & Sjoberg, 16).

The article argues that the concept of community is an abstraction. Communities in the neighbourhood are comprised of many: "Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people; housing owners and renters; people with a lot of formal education and people with a little; people are single unattached individuals and others who are parents" (Silver, McCracken, & Sjoberg, 14). Targeting the message of the campaign can result in increased perception from the community that action has been undertaken: "I certainly have observed far more engagement of both residents and volunteering in the neighbourhood in the decision-making and in knowing one another, and feeling a sense of pride in the neighbourhood and identity in the neighbourhood. Ten years ago my awareness was that if I talked with people about their hopes and dreams it was to leave the neighbourhood. Now it's to stay and be part of the neighbourhood changes" (Silver, McCracken, & Sjoberg, 24).

Right to the City is an opportunity to make cities better, more just and equitable. For this to happen, "citizens must claim [their] right of participation and allow others the same right" (Tayebi, 89). There are five axes that must be achieved to ensure a Right to the City: access to benefits of city life and responsibilities to facilitate these rights; transparency, equity and efficacy in city administration; participation and respect in local democratic decision-making; Recognition of diversity in economic, social, and cultural life; and reducing poverty, social exclusion, and urban violence (Tayebi, 89).

Who is in charge of mobilizing citizens to claim this right? Popular planning theorist, Friedmann, associates planners as being "social change experts and defines their role as social reformers with clients who are 'mobilized community and groups'. He argues that planners can raise awareness about the 'promise of emancipation' and 'confidence in the possibilities for change'" (as cited in Tayebi, 89). With their ability to act as intermediary and reflective, they can guide activists into thinking about all alternatives and solutions to issues.

While professional planners can play a role in community organizing, activists themselves through the utility of planning tools can facilitate informal planning. First, activists can develop and reinforce their message by consolidating and reaffirming power through coalition building. Second, the use of social media can help activists broadcast and raise their voice outside dominant power structures (i.e. "the media") and make them visible to all. The activist uprisings in Egypt, Tunisia, and New York, were empowered through the use of Twitter, which Tayebi describes as a "civil disobedience approach in bypassing the power structure and claiming their right on the streets rather than employing the established methods of public participation in the existing power structures" (92).

Building community capacity

Afzalan and Evans-Cowley believe neighbourhood planning is only successful when it offers tools and capacity for residents' empowerment. The use of Facebook as a means to gather perspectives and voices on issues in a neighbourhood was cited as an opportunity to create an ongoing conversation with residents and to mobilize action. In real time, feedback about neighbourhoods and community issues can be broadcasted. Where can the planner be located in this?

How do they sort through the comments? Do they sort through the comments? Do they delete the comments? When do they take action? Afzalan and Evans-Cowley maintain that "planners are required to (a) ensure the quality and accuracy of the shared information, (b) foster an environment that builds or maintains trust among members, and (c) facilitate equitable planning through connecting the online neighbourhood forum members with the neighbourhood residents who are not part of the online forum" (281). This practicum explores the ways in which planners can play an active role in activism in communities and in supporting

community members in speaking up about issues that matter to them.

As Novy and Colomb explain, the anti-Media Spree movement “used a diverse and imaginative repertory of protest forms to mobilize against the project: a rally through the project area complemented by boats on the River Spree, so-called ‘neighbourhood walks’ and workshops with residents and interested citizens, concerts and exhibitions, video installations and internet-based action” (1825). After six months, these activists were able to collect enough signatures to enforce a non-binding public referendum, which “exceeded activists’ expectations, with a turnout of 19.1% (above the required threshold of 15%) and a rate of approval of almost 87%. This made it the most successful local referendum in Berlin’s history, a result which put tremendous pressure on district politicians to modify the existing plan for the area” (1826). This resulted in the creation of a negotiation board to consider alternatives. Local authorities declared the existing development plans were “non-negotiable,” leading to internal disagreements among the coalition of activists groups, and fragmenting the previously unified opposition movement. This successful milestone was followed by the protestors expanding their attention, turning their attention to general urban development policies imposed by Berlin Senate by routinely speaking out and mobilization against gentrification, displacement of community networks, privatization of public space/goods, and loss of authenticity in the community.

Cultural producers generally can be better activists as a result of their connections to local elites and the media: “Additionally, their familiarity with communication techniques and media networks as well as their capability to contribute innovatively to the ‘repertoires of contention’ were employed to broaden the movement’s appeal and attract attention from both the media and the wider public. Activism, both Hamburg and Berlin illustrate, does not have to mean dry speeches, tedious chants and worn-out slogans. It can involve theatre,

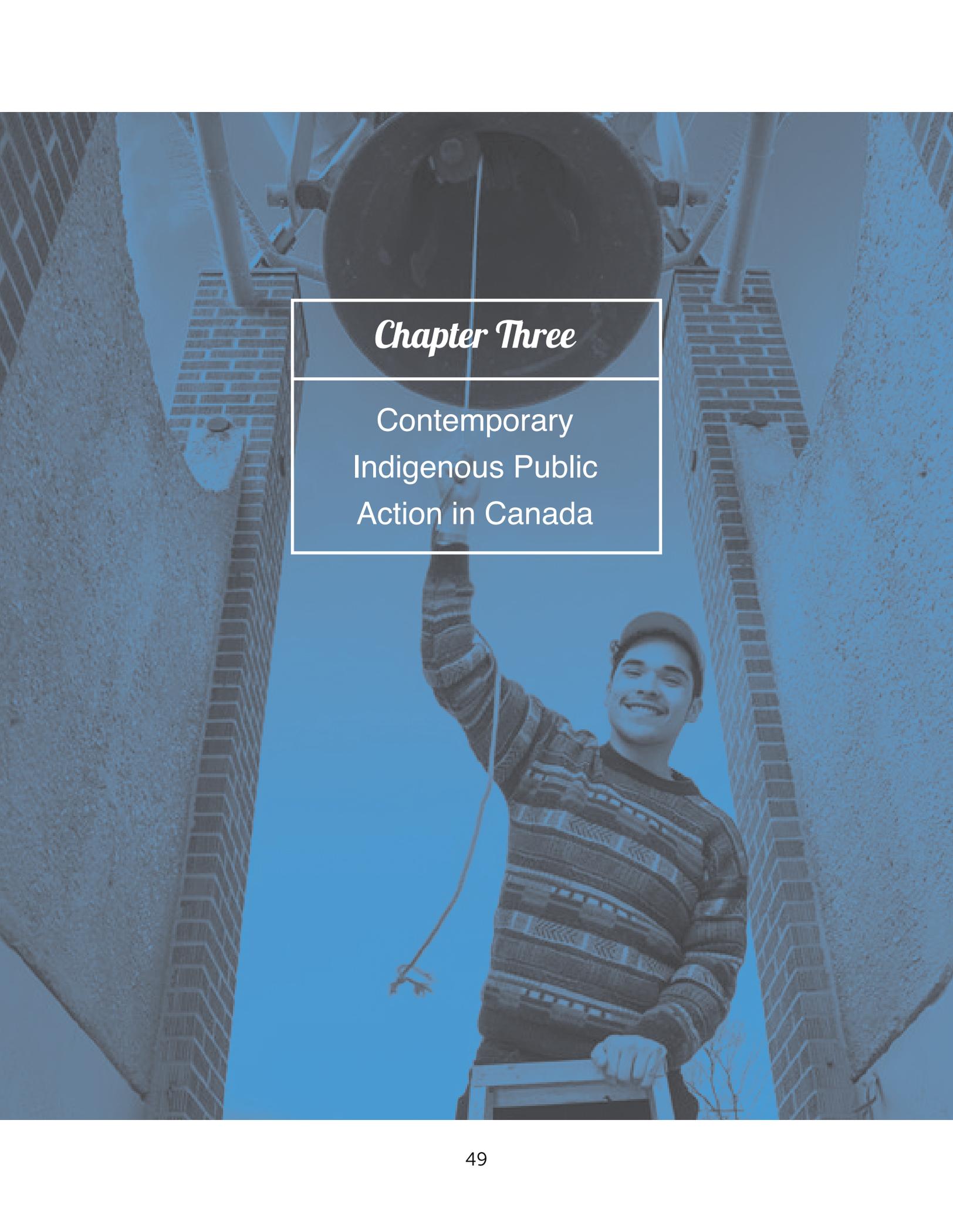
music, playful and ironic subversion of media and place-making discourses – techniques which help to capture broad-based attention and bridge the gap between activists and audiences not belonging to the classical leftist spectrum or receptive to conventional routines of protest” (1830-1831)

To enhance their movements, protests can look towards expanding their coalition building with other social groups and actors, to “move beyond defined self-interest and instead address wider urban issues” (1832). In addition, prolonged longevity of protest can spur as a result of widening the original scope of the cause, “leading to a resurgence of critical debates in the city at large around gentrification, housing and local rent regulation, as well as the commercial appropriation of urban spaces and cultures and ways to resist them” (1832).

2.3 Summary

Chapter 2 outlined the academic literature on topics relevant to the practicum, including public protest and Right to the City. The insights obtained helped to inform semi-structured interview questions, as well as, key considerations for final recommendations.

“When thousands of people gather and protest, they become part of the mass of a location, and therefore, are able to challenge predominant notions and forms of power and economy in public space.”



Chapter Three

Contemporary
Indigenous Public
Action in Canada

3.0 Contemporary Indigenous Public Action in Canada

Indigenous resistance has been an ongoing activity since 1869, starting with the Red River Resistance (Ens, 1994). Winnipeg has been an important site of activism for various First Nation and Metis groups. This protest never went away, even when Indigenous kids did through residential schools. Winnipeg is a colonial site with a colonial history, and Indigenous people have not accepted this colonization and have been actively resisting (and continue to) at all times.

3.1 Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

When you search "Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Canada" on Google, approximately 1,350,000 results are presented. According to a fact sheet produced by the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC), 67 per cent of 582 cases related to missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls are murder cases; 20 per cent are cases of missing women or girls; 4 per cent are cases of suspicious death; and 9% are cases where the nature of the cause is unknown. Research indicates that "between 2000 and 2008, Aboriginal women and girls represented approximately 10 per cent of all female homicides in Canada" even though women make up only 3 per cent of the female population. According to NWAC, only 54 per cent of murder cases involving Indigenous women and girls have led to charges of homicide, which is "dramatically different from the national clearance rate for homicides in Canada, which was last reported as 84%." These statistics are troublesome as they identify a disparity of assistance. As Indigenous women are "almost three times more likely to be killed by a stranger than non-Aboriginal women are," there is urgency, now more than ever, to gather more data to support this vulnerable population.

In 2016, Canada's Minister of Indigenous Affairs, said in an article with BBC, that "the number of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls is higher than 1,200," but regardless of the number, examining "the causes of violence against Indigenous women and girls [is critical] and leads to recommendations for concrete actions to prevent future violence."

To shed light on this important issue, Indigenous activists have employed a variety of creative measures to spark conversation, create awareness, and publicity.

Held at Winnipeg's Urban Shaman, an artist-run centre that presents contemporary Indigenous art, the Walking With Our Sisters four-day art installation saw the delivery of nearly 1,700 moccasin-beaded vamps, with each vamp representing a missing or murdered Indigenous woman. As explained by the artists, "The unfinished moccasins represent the unfinished lives of the women whose lives were cut short." An additional 108 pairs of children's vamps were installed, "dedicated to children who never returned home from residential schools." The vamps were crowd-sourced by the community, and as explained by the organizers, were an opportunity to "empower through the practice of art activism" (walkingwithoursisters.ca).

Activism related to Missing and Murdered Women in Canada may stem from a desire to share personal experience. As reported by The Globe and Mail, as a teenager, Sheila North Wilson, was "raped by what she described as a 'serial' predator in her northern Manitoba community. As a teen, she found herself inside a drug house run by a gang. Later, she ended up in an abusive relationship" (Blaze Baum, 2016). Before getting elected as Grand Chief of Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak, an organization representing more than 30 northern First Nations, she coined the social media hashtag #MMIW "for missing and murdered indigenous women" (Blaze Baum, 2016), which today has hundreds of posts on Twitter. The hashtag, North Wilson, believes is a way to tackle violence against Indigenous women, but also relates to the health of all communities: "taking care of the women inevitably means taking care of families



Clockwise:
Image 22: Idle No More, 2013.
Image 23-25: Memorial Park protest, 2014.

and communities.”

Standing up against violence is also manifested through vigils and marches. Organized by Tasha Spillett, a Women’s Memorial March in 2017 saw dozens of people holding up signs and photos with images and names of missing and murdered Indigenous women. For Spillett, the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women impacts us all: “I think that with the climate of the world that we are in right now it’s really important to centre love, to centre community and to build on those feelings. Really, it’s on all of our communities to come up with solutions” (CBC, 2017). More recently, on June 18 of 2017, families gathered on Father’s Day for a vigil to remember slain Indigenous boys and men. According to Statistics Canada, “the rate of homicide for Indigenous men was seven times that of non-Aboriginal males in 2015” (Metro, 2017)

Standing five-storeys high, a mural designed by artists Bruno Smoky and Shalak Attack, “depicts issues that are similar wherever indigenous land was colonized and the mural’s figure is based on indigenous women from Peru” (Waldman, 2017). Located only a short distance from the Vineyard Memorial Garden, “a site for reflection on and remembrance of 22 missing or slain women in the neighbourhood,” the mural has become a symbol of the strength of Indigenous women, as explained by newly elected NDP MLA, Bernadette Smith: “It’s a symbol of the strength of our women. It’s also bringing a light to an end of the city where often it’s dark” (Waldman, 2017).

The topic of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and advocacy around it has taken a variety of forms, whether through social media, marches and vigils, or art.

3.2 Idle No More

A grassroots protest movement, Idle No More, began on November 10, 2013, as four Saskatchewan women, Jessica Gordon, Sheelah McLean, Sylvia McAdam, and Nina Wilson, set up a Facebook page in the same name, to rally participants to an event in Saskatoon to protest Bill C-45, known as the second omnibus budget bill, which proposed changes to the Indian Act, Navigation Protection Act, and Environmental Assessment Act (CBC, 2013). With regards to the Indian Act, Idle No More believed Bill C-45 would allow “for easier opening of treaty lands and territory” (CBC, 2013). Changes to the Navigation Protection Act through Bill C-45, Idle No More claims, would “remove that protection for 99.9 per cent of lakes and rivers in Canada” as “major pipeline and power line project advocates aren’t required to prove their project won’t damage or destroy a navigable waterway it crosses” (CBC, 2013). Idle No More objected to the quick approval process suggested by Bill C-45 for projects that require environment assessments through the Environmental Assessment Act. Idle No More was also “angered by what they call a lack of consultation with indigenous peoples” (CBC, 2013) furthering a diminishing of rights and sovereignty of Indigenous peoples.



Image 26: Meet Me at The Bell Tower protester.

The first tweet, submitted on November 4, “@shawnatleo wuts being done w #billc45 evry1 wasting time talking with Gwen Stefani wth!? #indianact #wheresthedemocracy #IdleNoMore” by co-founder Jessica Gordon. With just a tweet, Idle No More has recruited nearly 45,000 members on Facebook and millions “of people to our websites, twitter account and face book pages every day” (IdleNoMore.ca), who “support and encourage grassroots to create their own forums to learn more about Indigenous rights and our responsibilities to our Nationhood via teach-ins, rallies and social media” (CBC, 2013). Compared to the Occupy movement that began in 2011, Idle No More received public endorsements by such elected officials like Assembly of First Nations National Chief, Shawn Atleo who said: “Through the ‘Idle No More’ movement, we have seen a tremendous outpouring of energy, pride and determination by our peoples in recent weeks. This level of citizen and community engagement is absolutely essential to achieve the change we all want” (CBC, 2013).

Organizers of Idle No More believe their national day of action “inspired thousands of people to action, committing themselves to ongoing resistance against neo-colonialism” (IdleNoMore.ca), with an estimated “50 events [that] took place on 28 January 2013, the Idle No More World Day of Action, including 25 in Canada and 20 in the United States, as well as rallies in London (UK), Paris (France), and Greenland” (TheCanadianEncyclopedia.ca, 2013). The impetus for these Idle No More events organized in “lies in a centuries old resistance as Indigenous nations and their lands suffered the impacts of exploration, invasion and colonization.” Organizers of the initiative have created a website, IdleNoMore.ca, to serve as an ongoing hub of “information on the historical and contemporary context of colonialism, and provide an analysis of the interconnections of race, gender, sexuality, class and other identity constructions in ongoing oppression” – giving untold stories a place to be read and heard.

One of the events sparked immediately after the first #IdleNoMore hashtag was used,

was the hunger strike of Attawapiskat Chief, Theresa Spence. Her protest called on a “nation-to-nation discussion between AFN chiefs, the governor general and the prime minister Stephen Harper” (Charleyboy, 2013) and sought to bring awareness to the lack of housing and clean water on remote reserves. At that time, many touted her as the face of Idle No more, but “founders [have] stated that she is unconnected to the movement that they’ve started” (Charleyboy, 2013).

An analysis by Mark Blevis shows the usage of the hashtag #IdleNoMore. According to Blevis, the movement is gender-neutral, with 49% of Tweeters being male and 51% as female. In addition, the hashtag attracted global participation, with people from countries like Antarctica, Germany, Egypt, Spain, and Finland (Blevis, 2013). More than 685,000 tweets have mentioned the hashtag #IdleNoMore, according to Blevis. In an interview with The Star, Ron Stagg, a Ryerson University history professor, noted how social media and the use of the hashtag, #IdleNoMore, has helped to unite First Nations groups: “(Issues) were seen as local issues rather than national issues. What this group has done with social media is to make (them) into a national issue. In fact, it’s even international” (Donkin, 2013).

3.3 Other

The REDress Project

The topic of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and advocacy around it has taken a variety of forms, whether through social media, marches and vigils, or art. Artist Jamie Black, brought attention to this issue by collecting 600 red dresses by community donation, then installing them in public spaces to serve “as a visual reminder of the staggering number of women who are no longer with us” (Black, reddressproject.org). Using social media, Black

collected nearly 600 dresses, shipped in from all over Canada by mail. My first encounter of the red dresses was when I was a student at the University of Winnipeg. As I made my way to another class, I noticed four or five red dresses eerily swaying from one side to the next from soft gusts of wind at the quad, a central meeting green space on campus. For Black, seeing the red dresses are meant to “draw attention to the gendered and racialized nature of violent crimes against Aboriginal women and to evoke a presence through the marketing of absence” (Beeston, 2017).



Image 27: The REDress Project.

Bear Clan Patrol

As stated on their Facebook page, the Bear Clan Patrol’s resurgence after years of hibernation in the community was to ensure a safer, more secure environment – “to protect its young women and children.” According to CBC, the Bear Clan Patrol was revived in response to the death of Tina Fontaine.

Established in 1992, the Bear Clan Patrol now consists of twelve members, with three elders from its original assemblage. Their goals are as follows: “promoting and providing safety, conflict resolution, mobile witnessing and crime prevention, maintaining a visible presence on

the streets, providing an early response to situations, as well as providing rides, escorts, and referrals” (Bear Clan Patrol Facebook Page).

Volunteers of Bear Clan Patrol regularly gather on Selkirk Avenue and then form into groups of five to patrol the streets. As explained by one volunteer, Tommy Prince, Jr. in a CBC interview: “I came back to see if I could make a difference and help start this patrol to make the North End safer for the community” (Fontaine, 2015).

Recently, police officers with the Winnipeg Police Service, joined Bear Clan Patrol for a walk-along, expressing their support and appreciation in creating visibility and safety in the community: “They’re out here walking these streets pretty much every day of the week, and we’re just out here to help them, assist them, kind of get a feel for what they’re doing when they’re out here,” said Constable Jeff Boehm in an interview with CBC (CBC, 2016).

Drag the Red

When the body of Tina Fontaine, a 15-year old girl from Sagkeeng First Nation was pulled from Winnipeg’s Red River, “a group of volunteers decided to take to the water to do what they say police won’t” (Vice, 2015). Through their endeavours, organizers say their Facebook page has recruited nearly 3,000 members, making a statement of a lack of action from police in the investigation of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. As noted by CBC, Kyle Kematch, one of the founders of Drag the Red was motivated to search for his sister because of a lack of support from the police and disparity in terms of police investigation in unresolved Indigenous cases:

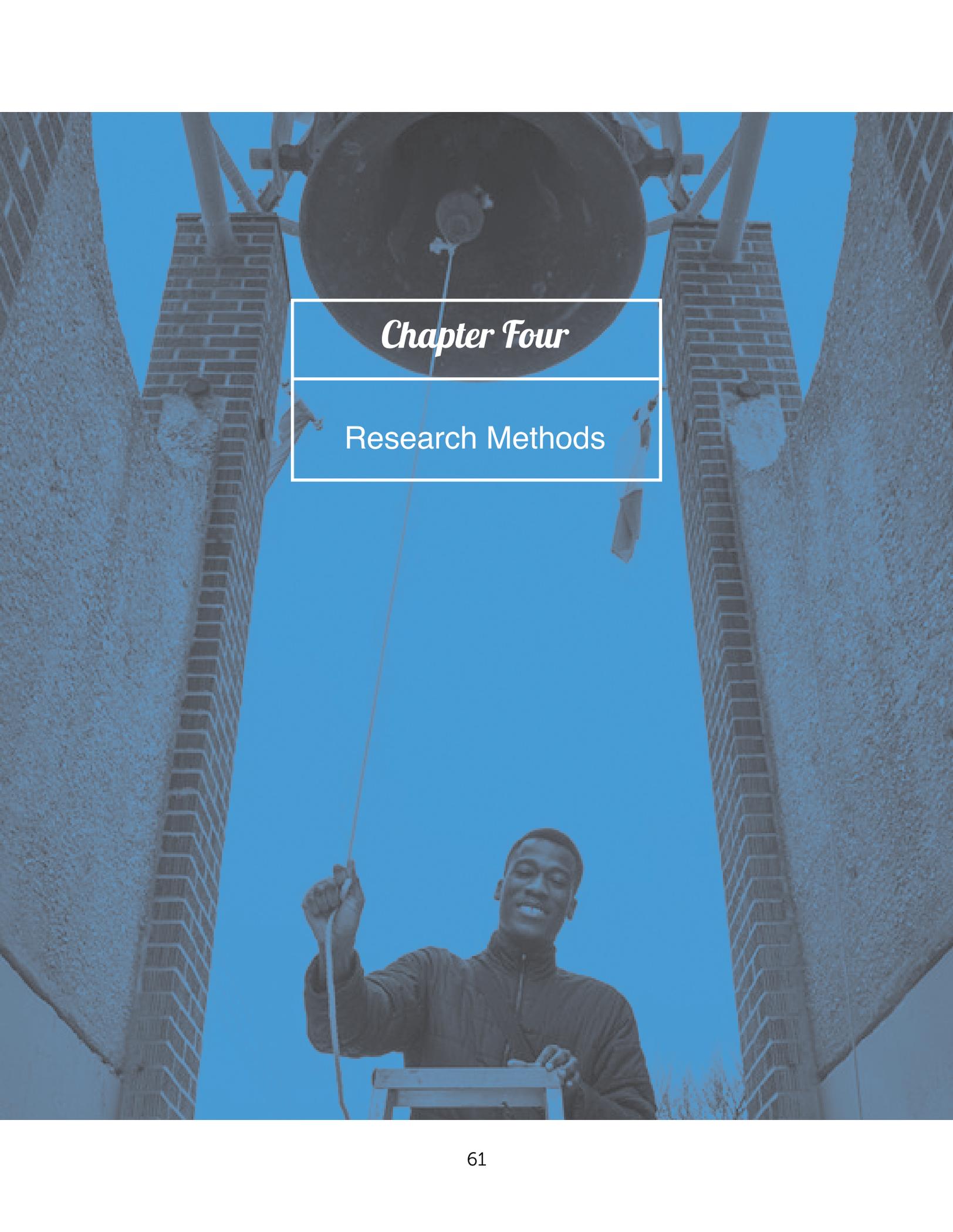
“The only thing missing, Kematch said, is help from the police. When Smith and Kematch started the initiative, shortly after 15-year old Tina Fontaine was found dead in the river, the

Winnipeg Police Service indicated they would support the group by monitoring the safety of its members. Less than two years later, police involvement has deteriorated to nothing, according to Kematch.” (Hoffman, 2016)

3.4 Summary

This chapter provided a summary of contemporary Indigenous public activism in Canada, and how it often involves the reclamation of “taking up of space” to demonstrate resistance. It is included as a reference on how Indigenous activism has and continues to be an ongoing activity undertaken to bring awareness to issues like Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, environmental degradation, lack of consultation with Indigenous people, safety, and the diminishing of rights and sovereignty of Indigenous people.

“Winnipeg is a colonial site with a colonial history, and Indigenous people have not accepted this colonization and have been actively resisting (and continue to) at all times.”



Chapter Four

Research Methods

4.0 Research Methods

This chapter introduces the practicum's research design, which includes case study, semi-structured interviews, secondary source/archival analysis, and ethnography/observation as research methods. The approach to data analysis is identified in this section of the report, as well as, potential study biases and limitations.

This practicum employed a qualitative approach to data collection. As Neuman (1997) argues, a qualitative approach places emphasis on how social context informs our understanding of the world. Since our experiences are varied, our social reality is not the same either. This practicum incorporates primary sources of data from semi-structured interviews with key informants. Secondary sources included archival documents, previous studies and documents, and media reports. It is important that researchers "avoid as much error as possible during all phases of the research in order to increase the credibility of the results" (as cited in Barriball & While, 328).

Meet Me at The Bell Tower takes place in the Selkirk Avenue area, a neighbourhood of rich historical and social value, that many planners and decision-makers are working towards redeveloping and renewing. Conducting research in this site provides an opportunity to highlight how Indigenous activism through Meet Me at The Bell Tower can help to affect and change the neighbourhood.

4.1 Case Study

A case study analysis of the Meet Me at The Bell Tower initiative presented an opportunity to apply existing literature and theory around public protest and Right to the City to Winnipeg examples of Indigenous activism in public spaces. As Robert K. Yin asserts, the case study method depends on "the use of and ability to integrate in converging fashion" (69) or

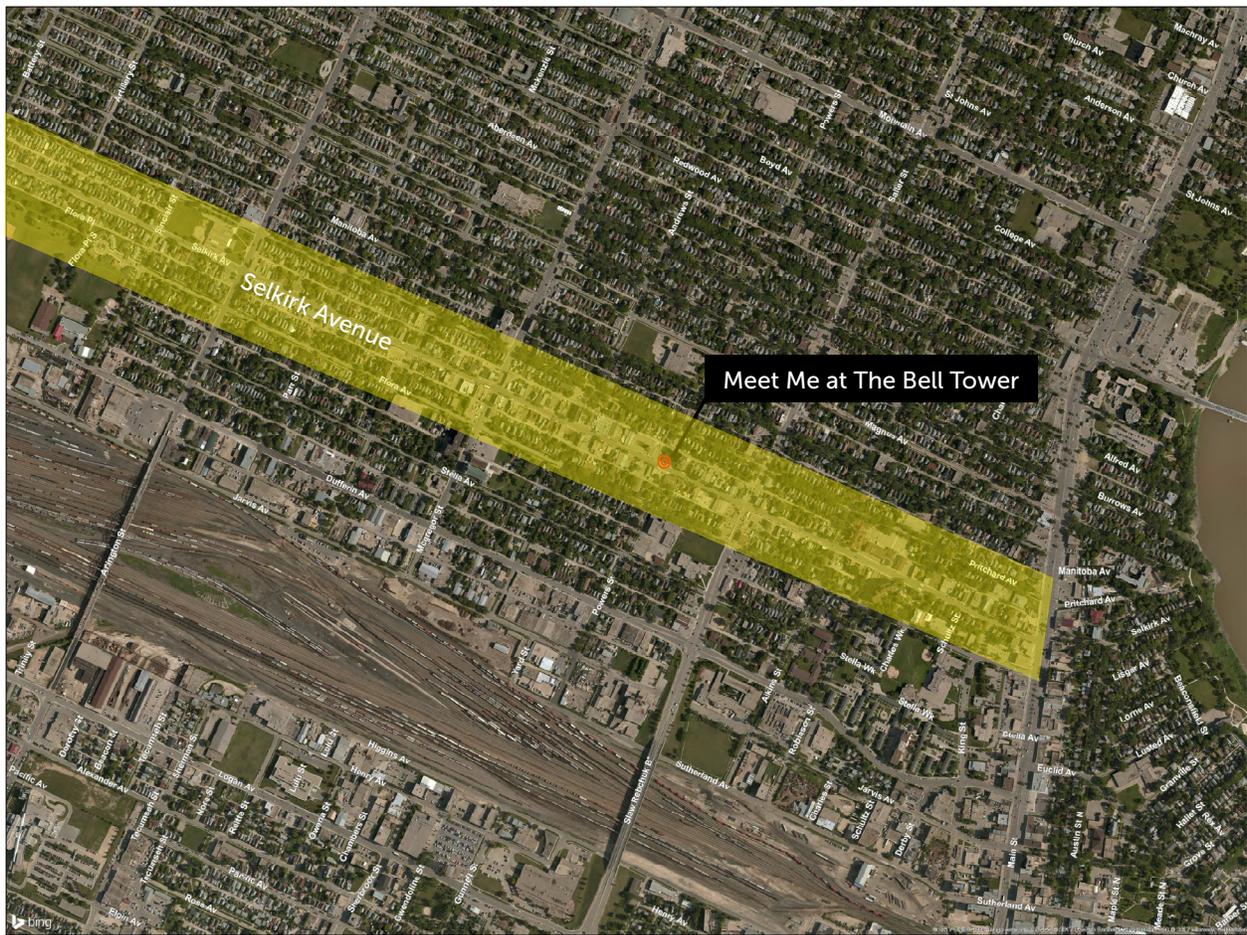


Figure 3: Selkirk Ave. Study Area.

triangulation from multiple sources of evidence. The case study of Meet Me at The Bell Tower draws upon evidence from interviews, direct observations, documents, and archival files, which will be discussed below. Case studies “implicitly assumes a richness of data because a case study is intended to examine a phenomenon in its real-life context” (Yin, 70). “Neighbourhood Renewal Corporations in Winnipeg’s Inner City: Practical Activism in a Complex Environment,” by Jim Silver, Molly McCracken, and Kate Sjoberg (2009), followed McCracken and Sjoberg’s foray into their roles as Executive Directors (ED) of the West Broadway Development Corporation and Spence Neighbourhood Association (SNA) respectively, providing a unique perspective as each began to learn “on the job about their two neighbourhoods and the roles and challenges of inner-city neighbourhood renewal corporations” (4). Throughout the spring of 2007, this particular study employed interviews that “were conversational, questioning, reflective and very rich in content” (4) and asked both McCracken and Sjoberg to reflect on the challenges they were faced with, the accomplishments they were making, and “to think out loud, share experiences, raise questions and express frustrations” (4-5). While loose in structure to allow each ED to speak openly about their experiences, interview sessions often “had a particular theme, such as safety and security or housing development” (5). An insider’s view of the work of both McCracken and Sjoberg was one of the main purposes for this study, as the author hoped the insights would provide future EDs with a tool-kit of expertise and institutional knowledge and an opportunity to pick up where McCracken and Sjoberg left off, if either decided to move on to another personal or professional endeavour.

With this in mind, I wanted to examine the work of the many Indigenous activists who have spearheaded Meet Me at The Bell. As this organization’s foray into public space is fairly recent, the study of Meet Me at The Bell provides an opportunity for future activists to learn from their challenges and achievements as they happen in real-time, as well as an opportunity

to follow-up as the organization grows in size and capacity.

4.2 Semi-Structured Interview

Semi-structured interviews with Meet Me at The Bell Tower activists were facilitated through Meet Me At The Bell Tower co-founder, Michael Champagne (See Appendix C for Letter of Endorsement). Each participant was informed of all potential risks and benefits to the study, and I confirmed with them that their responses would be recorded anonymously. A Letter of Consent (Appendix A) included an option to check a box that ensures that the participant had understood the information regarding participation in the research project and agreed to participate as a subject.

As maintained by Barriball and While (2013), semi-structured interviews “are well suited for the exploration of the perceptions and opinions of respondents regarding complex and sometimes sensitive issues and enable probing for more information and clarification of answers” (330). A series of pre-set questions helped guide conversation but participants were also encouraged to speak openly and take detours with their answers as they wish. The intent was to interview a total of 10 participants for approximately 30 minutes to an hour each, in a public setting mutually agreed on between the participant and myself. I ended up interviewing a total of 6 participants, as saturation of content was achieved.

During the interviews, the following questions were explored: what social structures hinder/enable activism in public space? How can planners and Indigenous activists collaborate on key issues to amplify the voice of the community on civic issues? As argued by Barriball and While (2013), semi-structured interviews have the potential to combat poor response rates of impersonal questionnaires, question validity of a respondent’s answers by careful observation

of nonverbal indicators, and can ensure that a respondent is unable to receive assistance from others in forming a response (329). Face-to-face contact was necessary in developing rapport, building a sense of trust, communicating a study's purpose/goals better, and resulted in value-rich content.

There were potential weaknesses, though, that must be considered and addressed. Some respondents may have been less forthcoming with information. To address this as much as possible, it was important to build rapport with the respondents. As Barriball and While (2013) maintain, interactive opportunities between the respondent and interview "helps to establish a sense of rapport and reduce the risk of socially desirable answers" (331). A set of questions for this practicum is located in the Appendices (Appendix B).

The names of those who were interviewed in this study were not included. Instead, they were assigned a pseudonym name. While their names will not be included, there may be a risk to confidentiality, due to the inclusion of stakeholder group affiliation, and small sample size. I undertook steps to minimize these risks by providing participants with an interview transcript so they had the opportunity to validate and vet the information. This will be an opportunity for participants to provide clarification, modify comments, and delete comments they deem inappropriate for the public domain. The timeline for participant feedback was two to three weeks.

4.3 Secondary Source/Archival Analysis

Content Secondary sources like media reports, articles, city documents, and blogs, were reviewed to identify the successes and challenges of other Indigenous activist movements in Canada, and to highlight the role of these demonstrations in creating awareness about

Indigenous issues. Google's search tool was used to find relevant content.

4.4 Ethnography/Observation

As Karen O'Reilly (2005) writes, "Ethnographic research is a special methodology that suggests we learn about people's lives (or aspects of their lives) from their own perspective and from within the context of their own lived experience" (84). With the consent of Meet Me At The Bell Tower founders, I engaged in ethnographic/observational research. Since Meet Me At The Bell Tower is an open and public gathering initiative, the participants are assumed to be welcoming and inclusive of new attendees. With this in mind, I attended Meet Me At The Bell Tower as an overt participant, taking notes about how the initiative is organized, implemented, and to obtain perceptions and feedback from the participants. Meet Me At The Bell Tower founders identified my presence and informed participants of my research and intent for attending and observing. The "Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans" was reviewed with regards to observational studies and how it should be applied as a researcher when observing in a public place. See Appendix D for an Information Sheet that was provided to participants of Meet Me At The Bell Tower.

4.5 Data Analysis

Semi-structured interviews provided candid perspectives and insights about protest and Indigenous activism's role in the redevelopment of Selkirk Avenue and the North End area. One of the challenges with this research method is the time required to transcribe interviews, but the benefits are the generative outcome of rich-content. A way to sort through this dense

qualitative research is to conduct a content analysis (Berg, 2001). Content analysis provides the researcher with a framework of how to make sense and interpret the data collected. According to John Creswell, content analysis requires continual reflection – interpretations and meanings are gleaned as data is gathered, transcribed, reviewed, and written (Creswell, 2013).

I recorded interviews with participants with a recorder, and transcribed them using a computer. A transcription service, InScribe, was utilized to slow the audio down to make transcription easier. When interviews were transcribed, I facilitated two to three reads, making notes of key themes that emerged. I then categorized interview data based on its relation to concepts and topics established in the literature review, and triangulated other data sources (ethnography and secondary source/archival documents) to build a coherent narrative.

4.6 Biases and Limitations

Data validity and reliability establish research credibility. As explained by Thyer (2001), researchers should use methods that ensure data recording is as accurate as possible, and a logical framework for data assessment to be used when interpreting meanings.

Data reliability refers to how repeatable the findings are. If the data yields similar results, the more reliable the data is expected to be. As outlined by Gray (2009), data reliability also depends on the research method's dependability in measuring the variables in a consistent manner each time it is used.

When facilitating the interviews, I worked towards increasing data reliability by undertaking the interview process in four stages. First, I provided participants with the same project information sheet in advance of interviews, outlining the project's purpose, topics of study, and why they have been chosen to participate. Second, I reviewed the questions and

interview guide to ensure that I was fully prepared before conducting the interview, keeping in mind length of interview and question sequence. Third, each interview began with the project's goal and objectives, a brief overview of the interview process, and the anticipated duration of the interview. At this particular stage, the interviewee was asked to review and sign a consent form. Fourth, I transcribed interviews and allowed participants an opportunity to make clarifications. Data reliability was made clear during the review of transcribed interviews, as common themes emerged. Using exact quotes from interviews in the written section of the report help to ensure inferential statements are supported.

Data validity depends on the accuracy of its findings (Rafuls & Moon, 1996). To ensure data validity, I provided participants an opportunity to read interview transcripts to determine its accuracy and to suggest clarifications or additions. Self-reflection was important for me to exercise when performing ethnographic observation and when reviewing data as my interpretations could have been influenced by my own views and experience of gender, culture, history, and socioeconomic origin (Creswin, 2013).

When selecting secondary sources and archival data, a list of key words were developed to ensure the publications chosen for review are relevant to the proposed research. As indicated by Thyer (2001), these data sources should be relevant to the topic of study, should support drawing conclusions, and should be trustworthy and believable. The sources chosen help address the key research questions outlined in Chapter 1.

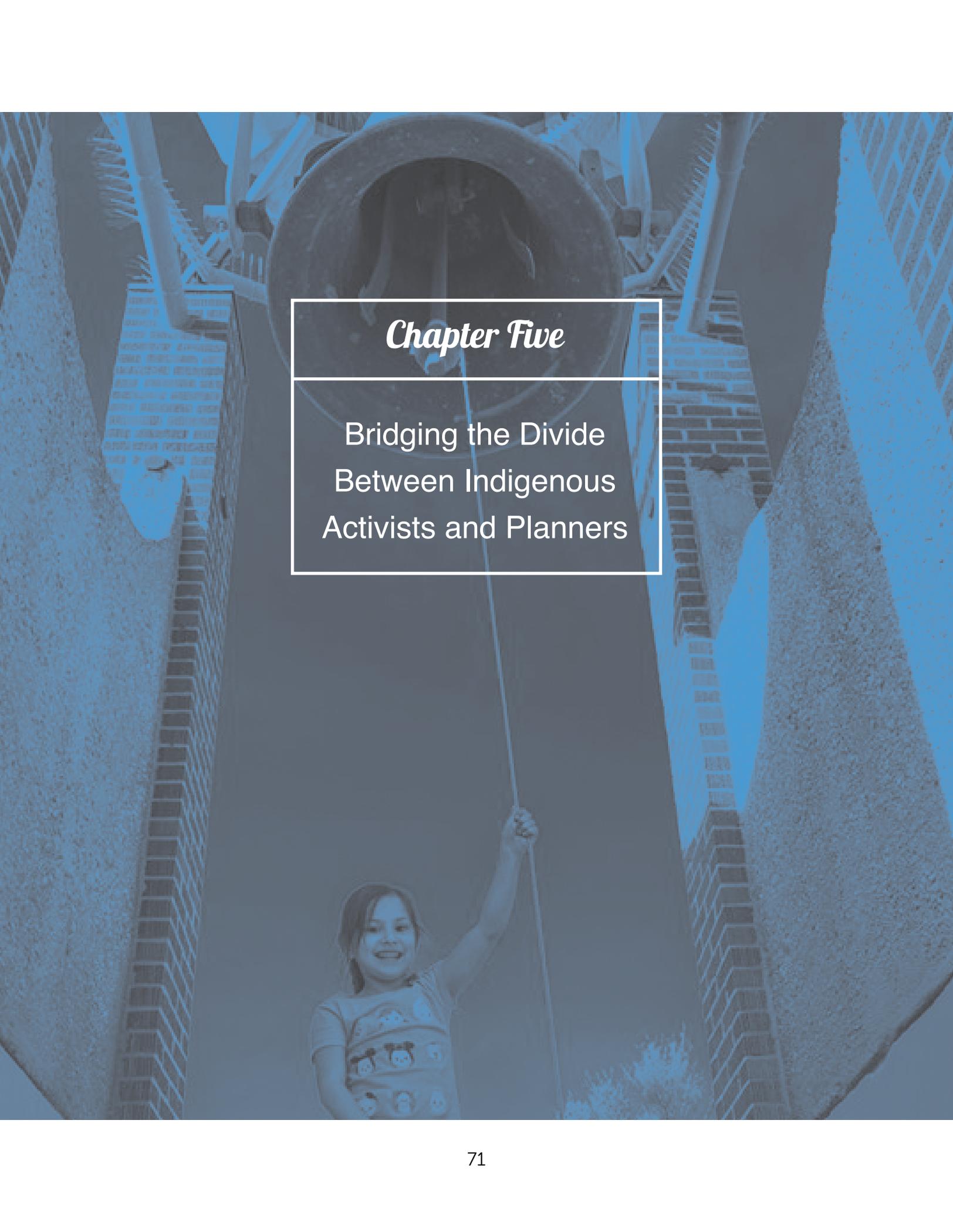
By using different types of data, researchers observations and conclusions can be more credible.

4.1 Summary

Chapter 2 introduced the practicum’s case study and neighbourhood of which it is situated – Meet Me at The Bell Tower in the Selkirk Avenue area. This chapter also identified how each research method selected was utilized to answer the key research questions outlined in Chapter 1. A literature review was performed to help inform the questions posed to respondents. Semi-structured interviews aimed to explore the motivation behind Indigenous activists’ participation in the Meet Me at The Bell Tower initiative, what opportunities do they view for non-activists to participate in these types of demonstrations, and what future plans these Indigenous activists have for Meet Me at The Bell’s advancement. Secondary source analysis helped to uncover and collate news articles, blogs, and policy recommendations that may have arisen as a direct result of Meet Me at The Bell.

Table 4: Research Questions and Research Methods Facilitated.

Research Question	Research Method
What tensions arise when people protest in public space and what do planning theorists have to say in this field?	Literature Review
What lessons can be learned from Indigenous activism in Winnipeg spaces and what are the implications for the planning profession?	Semi-Structured Interviews, Secondary Source Analysis, Ethnography/Observation

A young girl with a joyful expression is climbing a rope in a playground. She is wearing a light-colored t-shirt with a pattern of small, dark, circular motifs. The background shows a brick wall and a large, circular, dark structure, possibly a tunnel or a large wheel, which is part of the playground equipment. The entire scene is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter.

Chapter Five

Bridging the Divide Between Indigenous Activists and Planners

5.0 Bridging the Divide Between Indigenous Activists and Planners

The following themes emerged through interviews with Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants of Meet Me at The Bell Tower. My personal experience at Meet Me at The Bell Tower, captured through ethnographic observation, is communicated in this chapter as well. The commentary provided offers insight on strengths, constraints, opportunities and threats for Indigenous public activism, as well as ideas for change along Selkirk Ave. During the interviews, participants may have reiterated some of their comments with illustrations and drawings for quick visual reference – they are included in this chapter as a visual restatement of the data obtained through the interviews.

As discussed in Chapter 4, the names of those who were interviewed in this study are not included. Instead, the interviewees have been assigned a pseudonym name as described below.

Alex and Mac, two of the five co-founders of Meet Me at The Bell Tower, provided an overview of the initiative, its inception, challenges faced and opportunities they see in the future, and commentary on how they think the initiative has benefitted the North End community.

Ally has been a participant Meet Me at The Bell Tower for over two years, playing a supportive role. She often invites her friends and family to attend, and provides donations of food for many of the gatherings. Ally speaks to how the initiative has helped to mobilize people of all backgrounds to connect and gather, how the gatherings are inclusive and welcoming, and offers advice on how to grow the initiative in the future.

Elliott, having participated for over two years, provides collateral support in all logistics and event management. He spoke of the personal development that Meet Me at The Bell Tower has instilled in him, and how it has helped to build his own sense of confidence.

Josh, a student at the University of Winnipeg, speaks to the academic connection between Meet Me at The Bell Tower and research – and how, naturally, students want to participate in these types of initiatives as they become increasingly interested in community economic development. Josh spoke about the initiative’s success in creating safe space for people to gather.

Larissa, a participant of nearly two years, speaks to the inclusive atmosphere cultivated by Meet Me at The Bell Tower, and how that has helped to instil community pride and create neighbourhood change.

5.1 Neighbourhood Change

Welcoming and Inclusive Environment

Participants of Meet Me at The Bell Tower cite its inclusive and welcoming environment as one of the major reasons for participation and return visits. Larissa, a participant of two years, says, “I feel completely accepted at Meet Me at The Bell Tower. It makes me want to come back. There’s so much joy, happiness. Everyone is so happy.” Every Friday, participants of Meet Me at The Bell Tower meet at Powers St. and Selkirk Ave., with some arriving right at 6 p.m., when the Bell Tower’s bells are rung. There often is not a specific agenda and people arrive as they please and participate in the manner they feel most appropriate to them.

When I first participated, I did feel a bit of apprehension. My insight about Meet Me at The Bell Tower has been shaped by word of mouth, media, and interactions with its co-founders. While I was not intimidated or afraid to come to the event, I felt a bit unsure as to what role I would play and how I should conduct myself. Some questions that I had: Did I have to ring the bell the first night? Do I need to speak? Should I speak? When is it appropriate to



Image 28: Meet Me at The Bell Tower and Winnipeg Police Service.

speak? During my first visit at the Bell Tower, the co-founders asked me if I would be comfortable ringing the bell. Under the Bell Tower was a silver ladder, with the co-founders flanked at each side, encouraging me: “You can do this!” I felt supported and included, and other participants were on the sidelines cheering. One of the co-founders introduced me, and had me speak to the research being undertaken. Many of the participants had questions and were positive, pulling me aside to provide intel and other thoughts and reflections. I left my first participation at Meet Me at The Bell Tower feeling inspired to continue my research. Larissa echoes this sense of warmth within the gathering’s atmosphere:

“Indigenous peoples have great hearts. They have been resilient for hundreds of years and so, I think they kind of accept anyone and love. So, when you go to Meet Me at The Bell Tower, there’s just acceptance. Anybody is accepted and can be part of it.”

The provision of food is another reason why the environment is welcoming. Moments after the co-founders give greetings, people ring the bell, and a group photograph is taken, people return to a nearby facility, the Indigenous Family Centre at 470 Selkirk Ave. The smell of

curry and fresh bread fill the room, with treats and juice in abundance for people to enjoy. People flow into the space, knowing food is ready to be consumed, many with grins from ear to ear. As the line-up begins, others stand to the side to converse, to hug, to high-five. There is a real sense of community. Larissa says food is an opportunity to gather people, creating a long table for all to sit at and create conversation:

“Food is the biggest part of any kind of gathering with people. I think that it brings people together, especially in the North End. There’s more poverty. So, I think that having food and a really nice meal all together, sitting together, socializing is a big part of Meet Me at The Bell Tower.”



Image 29: Meet Me at The Bell Tower supply drive.



Image 30: Meet Me at The Bell Tower gathering at the Indigenous Family Centre.

Neighbourhood planning is successful, as reported by Afzalan and Evans-Cowley (2007), when it fosters “trust-building and learning efforts,” “inclusive and equitable visioning processes,” and “tools or methods to empower residents” (as cited by Afzalan and Evans-Cowley, 272). They contend that when people feel included and welcomed into a planning process, they become more empowered to participate in city building processes.

Meet Me at The Bell Tower regularly invites other organizations and agencies to visit and promote their initiatives to the community. At one of the gatherings I attended, there were about six organizations that were asked to come up and say a few words about their events and initiatives. This is an open forum for other organizations, politicians, and people to occupy, as long as they do so in a respectful and inclusive manner. As Ally stated during her interview: "It doesn't necessarily feel like it's just an Indigenous initiative. The topics are for everybody. We're talking about the community, not just the Indigenous community. I think that's one of the most important things of Meet Me at The Bell Tower. It's not exclusively Indigenous. It's inclusive for everybody. It's not as threatening as a lot of other groups might possibly be for people."



Image 31: Former Chief of Police, Devon Clunis.



Image 32: Bear Clan Patrol.

It also invites other religions and cultures to attend, as Ally contends:

"Meet Me at The Bell Tower is always there for people. They bring in the Muslim community to attend and present about their culture and religion. I've seen, not only just Indigenous people, but a lot of other people who live in poverty. Even standing at

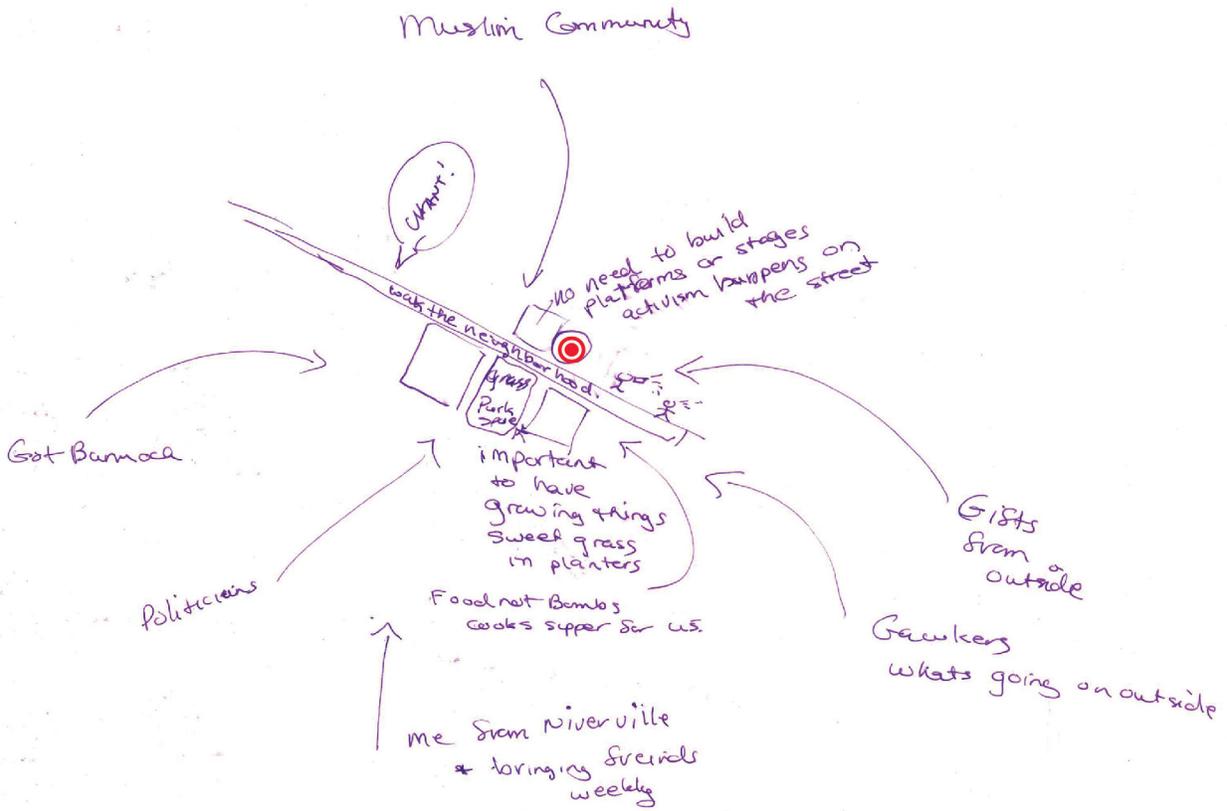


Figure 4: Ally reiterates her point about how Meet Me at The Bell Tower invites participation from people of all backgrounds.

the Bell Tower, people walk by who are obviously intoxicated, who are obviously buying drugs or alcohol. Michael [Meet Me at The Bell Tower co-founder] is always, 'Yeah, c'mon in!' Every topic is inclusive of everybody who is there, so I mean, it's great for that kind of thing. I know a mother who was just walking down the street one day. I was standing at the edge, and she came up to me and was like 'Can we talk?' And I was like, 'Certainly' and signaled to Michael. Her daughter ran away from home that day. She was really upset. Michael gave her the megaphone to say that her daughter ran away and that she was very sad. She didn't want any help necessarily. She just wanted to talk to someone. It's that type of thing. Anyone can say what they want. It's so inclusive."

Participants of Meet Me at The Bell Tower feel comfortable being candid about their personal struggles. The ability to speak aloud in front of other supportive participants creates a sense of power and autonomy, a space to speak their mind.

Safe Space

The gathering at Meet Me at The Bell Tower is a safe space in the neighbourhood for people of all ages and abilities to attend, as articulated by Ally:

"Again, we have regulars that come every Friday. I have no idea where their parents are, I have never seen their mothers or fathers, but little children come. It's a place where they can come together, to get presents. They can draw pictures, and people are like "Ooh great pictures!" But I think little ones who have showed up are getting positive feedback, a positive idea. There are some elders who come by every week as well."

Elliott, another participant of Meet Me at The Bell Tower, provides a hypothesis for the prominence of youth at the weekly gatherings – that it provides a space for kids to gather in the absence of a space in the evenings:

“Ndinawe is the resource centre which used to be a 24/7 safe space, where a lot of youth used to spend their time. Not many young people have places where they can volunteer, or are passionate about volunteering, so they go to Ndinawe to stay active and that’s a space that is really needed in the community. A lot of youth don’t use that space so people have decided to leave that area to go to the west end where they recently opened up a 24/7 safe space.”

The gathering is not violent, and as such, people feel safe to participate. As Ally states: “You have to have the violent protest, I totally understand that. Unless you’re really really angry and you have a point to prove, the general population is not going to go to those kinds of protest, whereas Meet Me at The Bell Tower is about inclusion, it is nice and relaxed. People feel safe there. You know what I mean? There are a lot of safe ways that you can participate.”

While some Meet Me at The Bell Tower participants view the gatherings as a safe space for that one-day of the week, others see the activity as an effective tool towards changing safety perceptions and statistics in the neighbourhood. They contend, that as their presence is facilitated through the physical taking up of space, they are making their neighbourhood more visible and legible for others, providing a clear message that the neighbourhood is being watched and watched over by each other, as stated by Mac, a participant of Meet Me at The Bell Tower since its inception in 2011:



Clockwise:

Image 33: Banner improvements along Selkirk Ave.

Image 34: Weekly clean-up at Meet Me at The Bell Tower.

Image 35: Meet Me at The Bell Tower at Indigenous Family Centre outdoor plaza.

Image 36: Meet Me at The Bell Tower outdoor gathering.

“And the sound of the bell now becomes a reminder for residents of the community that there’s a group of us that are standing guard, that are loving the community, that are loving the children, that are helping the families.”

Having people gather to show how the neighbourhood is being watched, is one of the major reasons why violence rates have declined, as inferred by Alex, one of the inaugural participants in 2011: “I think the violence rate would have to be the best outcome in the first year of Bell Tower’s inception. We decreased the violent crime rate in the William Whyte area by 18.9%.”

As a participant, I have heard the sound of the bell. It is loud and hard not to miss. I recall being late for one of the gatherings, and hearing the bell from my drive down Main Street onto Selkirk Avenue. While safety is improving, some participants of Meet Me at The Bell Tower see the sound of the bell as call to action, to be part of the advocacy for safer spaces in the area, as identified by Josh, a participant of nearly two-years:

“I’m not trying to focus on the negatives but there’s a reason why Bell Tower keeps happening. We need to keep ringing the bell. We’re going to keep fighting for safe spaces, for safe streets, to take back the streets and rebuild community.”

Built Environment Change

Since its inception in 2011, there have been considerable changes to the built form of the neighbourhood. Participants of Meet Me at The Bell Tower comment on how the gathering has created a greater sense of community ownership and presence – that it has encouraged

residents to be part of creating new change and compelled governments to invest in the neighbourhood.

Mac raised concerns about investment disparity with regards to neighbourhood banner improvements. According to him, Selkirk Avenue did not have banners for nearly 19 years, while every other neighbourhood has seen this type of investment made:

“It’s important to mention that for most of these childrens’ lives or fresh adults’ lives, they didn’t see renewal on Selkirk Ave. It was a full 19 years in between banners being updated. As we were doing that, we found it was 19 years prior, that was the last time since the banners were updated.”

According to Mac, organizers of Aboriginal Youth Opportunities (AYO) Movement, the pre-cursor to Bell Tower, began design work on the banners in 2010. According to Mac, after Bell Tower began rallying people along Selkirk Ave., City of Winnipeg Councillors began to realize that people wanted to see them installed, and quickly they were added to the budget. After these banners were installed, the North End produced a second wave of banners, carrying the banner forward. Not only were the banners important to mark the area, Bell Tower organizers discussed how the banners showed how it could bring back equity:

“Momentum. So now, people expect for us to have nicer things in the neighbourhood. And it was nice for us, because not only did the banners bring something new and revitalized to the neighbourhood for the first time in their young lives, but also for the first time in their lives, a Bell Tower that was intended to gather residents and businesses and community together – we had never seen it do that before.”

While the banners were installed, it also set in motion other projects, like the revitalization of a decaying Merchant's Hotel, and has been generative in creating other built form changes. As Mac recalls:

"And in January 6, 2012, shortly after Meet Me at The Bell Tower began, we showed up at the Bell Tower, we looked up, and we saw banners for the first time in twenty years in the North End. And not only, the thing that made that day also so significant, it was also the first Bell Tower that happened when the Merchants Hotel was closed. Two things happened at one time: we got the banners, and Merchants Hotel got shut down. We started Meet Me at The Bell Tower in November and it was still going, only for a couple more months, and then January, boom, no more Merchants. And now we have these beautiful banners, so the revitalization has really begun. And Meet Me at The Bell Tower was like: "We shut it down!" I feel like we felt like we were part of bringing the pressure."

The presence of people at the Bell Tower has resulted in a more hospitable and pedestrian-friendly space, with streetscaping improvements and spaces to sit, as explained by Ally:

"But even in the immediate area, yeah. When I first started two years ago, there was just the Bell Tower, there was that sort of lot between the two buildings, and now where we actually meet at the Bell Tower, that's all been paved. When you go in the summertime, there's grass. That's almost like a little palisade for us to gather at. Across the road, they put planters in and they grow sweet grass in there. That entire border or block or

whatever has really improved. They also started with the North End Initiative, so that a lot of the businesses. I mean, they've redone the streets for heaven sakes! So I don't know if that has anything to do with, Meet Me at The Bell Tower but they just closed Selkirk Ave. and redid the entire street, you know?"

The public realm is becoming a place for people, as described by Ally: "Physically, the street looks nice now. It doesn't look as derelict as it did even two years ago. A lot of the places now are fixing up now because they know that the folks are coming down there. But I don't know if that has necessarily really changed people's perceptions of it."



Image 37: Rallying the crowd.



Image 38: Working with elders.

With the space becoming more people friendly, Alex, a participant and organizer of Bell Tower, says it has enhanced community ownership. People are part of the revitalization and cleanliness efforts:

"Ever since that happened, I think the community has been more proactive in where

they live. Garbage has been significantly low. People just pick up garbage now. There are more community clean-ups. And with the revitalization of the Bell Tower, went into the revitalization of Selkirk Ave., where the Bell Tower stands. We got a new top of the bell – that’s when I feel the revitalization happened. And with the banners, you walk down the street, the banners are new. And the roads are a different story, and the people tell a different story.”

In addition, basketball hoops, skateboarding infrastructure, and benches were added. Alex also contends that Indigenous teachings have since been added to the built form, with Indigenous motifs and traditions added to the design of buildings:

“You can see the four feathers, the four pillars that are starting to go up. Have you seen the outline of the Merchants Hotel? And in the back, there’s the apartment building and everyone is like, and then there’s Makoonsag [Children Centre] across the street, the daycare centre, and it just creates this community of people who have now have pride in their neighbourhood, where they don’t litter on the ground.”

Reduction of Poverty, Social Exclusion and Urban Violence

Racism has been an ongoing topic of discussion in Winnipeg. Meet Me At The Bell Tower provides its participants with opportunities to learn more about civic issues, and to present opportunities by working together. As explained by one participant, Winnipeg’s Indigenous population is growing, and is “a topic that people should be thinking a lot more about.” Bell Tower provided Ally with an opportunity to get involved.

Identity was another important topic raised. As described by Elliott, Bell Tower brings

people together in a way that helps individuals and communities develop a sense of self: "One of the outcomes of Bell Tower is relationship building, networking, a sense of purpose or duty, a sense of who you are."

According to him, a person's identity can be reaffirmed when they are empowered by others and when they become empowered themselves. This empowerment and sense of identity can lead to positive neighbourhood change:

"When they first started Meet Me at The Bell Tower, they recall going to a lot of funerals, a lot hospitals, always gathering when bad stuff happened. But now that they are five years into the movement, Jenna and Michael have seen more positive events coming on now. And they see solutions are being talked about now compared to when they first started when everything was in a dark place. But now there is some light. They can definitely see their communities changing."

Bell Tower gathers individuals every Friday, bringing people together and connecting them. This helps to establish a sense of community ownership helps people feel safe and helps people form positive identity associations about where they live, and breaks down stereotypes as non-residents of the area come to participate. As Larissa comments:

"I think initiatives like this are super important for any type of culture or communities, especially for those in the North End. These people are living all sorts of inequalities, injustices, and I think that really Bell Tower has given hope to people and I think it should continue."

Instead of reinforcing stereotypes, the participants of Bell Tower are making a statement about their neighbourhood: that it is home, and that they care about each other. Bell Tower has also had an impact on safety, as its advocacy efforts were focused on safety as a result of a member of the community passing away. Josh, a non-Indigenous participant of Bell Tower discusses how safety is a number one priority of Bell Tower and for himself as an active community activist, and how it will continue to be a top priority until a solution is found: "I'm not trying to focus on the negatives but there's a reason why Bell Tower keeps happening. And we're going to keep fighting for safe spaces, for safe streets, to take back the streets and rebuild community."

While he makes this statement, he does acknowledge how the initiative has helped to reduce crime: "For sure, in terms of moving harmful vendors and contributors of a whole bunch of addiction issues, Bell Tower has helped make an impact, and stewarded a new focus on rebuilding the community. So that's a huge accomplishment."

When participants are asked about what the advocacy goal of Bell Tower is, they all responded in a similar fashion:

"It advocates for the youth primarily, I think, for better opportunities, for the next generation. Seriously, it's not like they're asking so much for themselves right now. They're just asking for a better future for the next generation and that's what we should all be asking for at this time. We should all be really thinking about what kind of world we're bringing our children into." (Josh)



Image 39: Activists forming at Meet Me at The Bell Tower.

Josh argues that the City of Winnipeg can learn from the outreach efforts of Bell Tower; how the Friday meet-up creates a feeling of safety to even start the discussion of safety in the first place:

“And I think also a huge part, if you wanted more people from the community participating in civil discourse and civil things like that, you have to actually have safe spaces to do so in the first place. So, that’s what Meet Me at The Bell Tower is trying to do, trying to create safe streets. That’s what the City of Winnipeg should be trying to do: create safe streets, safe places, and safe communities, in the North End. The City of Winnipeg should be focusing on poverty reduction and with that, I think people from the community will have a lot larger trust for police, for city planners, for the city in general.”

When places for engagement feel safe and put the safety of their participants first, it can kick start greater community efforts to work towards reducing issues like crime.

As explained in “Neighbourhood Renewal Corporations in Winnipeg’s Inner City: Practical Activism in a Complex Environment,” Silver, McCracken and Sjoberg indicate how Neighbourhood Renewal Corporations (NRC) help to raise discussion and awareness around housing development, safety and security. Meet Me at The Bell Tower explore the same common concerns and opportunities.



Image 40: Meet Me at The Bell Tower participants raise their voices.

Reclaiming the Neighbourhood

Participants of Meet Me at The Bell Tower, in their interviews with me, were hopeful that the weekly gathering could bring about positive change in the neighbourhood.

For instance, Ally talked about how the space has become a hotspot for youth drop-ins, and how their visits to the Bell Tower are actually informing their own perspectives; that the neighbourhood is safe and a positive place:

"I mean, we have a lot of little children. And I think that they are learning that the North End isn't a bad place to live. Just the right to be there. I think that's it. We never had, I mean, the cops will drive by every once and awhile, but generally speaking, they're okay. They'll drive by and sometimes they'll stop and get out and chat with people."

For Alex, an Indigenous woman, she did not have the same opportunity for a safe place to go as a child, which she recalls as being an obstacle:

"I didn't have a safe place to go. I was bitching a lot. I really wasn't, I guess, educated, but I knew that I wanted to make a change in the North End due to the violence, and due to like just everything. Just being so glum, and so hopeless. I didn't want to feel hopeless anymore and then I found this guy on the street and then we created AYO – Aboriginal Youth Opportunities."

Finding a safe space, and working with other like-minded individuals with the same lived experience, was critical in mobilizing the community to reclaim the neighbourhood:

"I think definitely that we brought back the spirit and ownership of the community. Meet Me at The Bell Tower empowered us to say that our voice matters, and ownership like you said, and that we need to take back this community."

An example of the community working together was advocating for a beer vendor, which was believed to be fuelling addictions issues in the area, to be shut down: "There's some kind of statistic talking about how the Merchants Hotel was the most, the highest grossing vendor in Manitoba. So it was something like that, we ended up shutting down as a community."

Non-residents of the area have also seen a change in the community, as identified by Josh, a participant of Bell Tower:

"It's growing. It's absolutely growing. Bear Clan Patrol is a part of Meet Me at The Bell Tower, and Meet Me at The Bell Tower is part of the Bear Clan Patrol because they're both fighting for the same thing: for safe streets, for hope, for a better community."

Neighbourhood identity can be reclaimed or preserved when working together, as explained by Novy & Colomb in "Struggling for the Right to the (Creative) City in Berlin and Hamburg: New Urban Social Movements, New 'Spaces of Hope'?" Under the banner, "Mediaspree Versenken!" opponents of the Media Spree development project in Berlin gained public attention in 2008 to oppose the "massive scale and nature of the proposed developments and the foreseeable privatization of access to the riverside, as well as to voice concerns about gentrification and the displacement of the area's subcultural fabric" (Novy & Colomb, 1825).

Shared Vision

Participants of Meet Me at The Bell Tower cite the inclusive nature of the gathering as a key feature towards ensuring the topics and messages are relevant, unifying, and engaging. As Ally explains:

"Everyone is included. It doesn't necessarily feel like it's just an Indigenous initiative. Everything they do, even though it's Indigenous-led, the topics are for everybody. They talk about, you were there. There's always something going on. 100 Basketballs was one of the first thing. And they talk about the North End, they don't talk about the

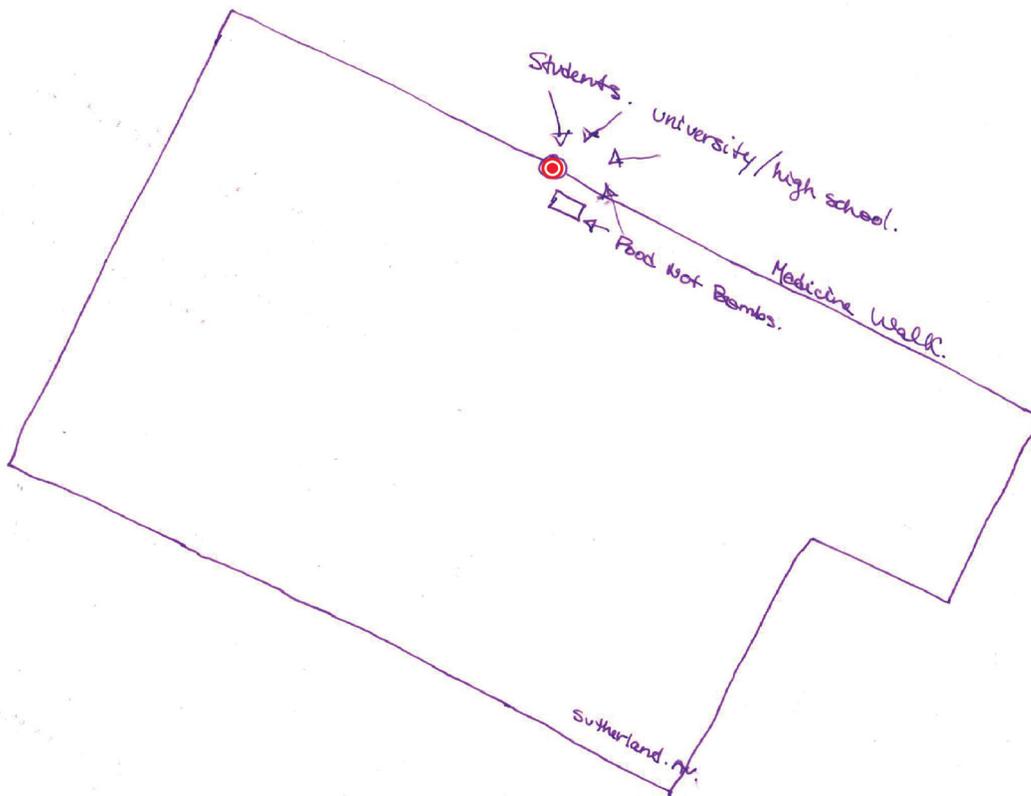


Figure 5: Larissa showing how Meet Me at The Bell Tower benefits with support from groups like Food Not Bombs.

Indigenous kids alone. We're talking about the community, not just the Indigenous community. I think that's one of the most important things of Meet Me at The Bell Tower. It's not exclusively Indigenous. It's inclusive for everybody. It's not as threatening as a lot of other groups might possibly be for people."

While the gathering has Indigenous participants, advocacy is centered on supporting the entire community. In Ally's words, "They are building a village." She contends that it is necessary for the wider population to see the North End issues as not just an Indigenous issue, that it is a city issue: "We're all in this together."

As explained by Silver, McCracken, and Sjoberg in relation to NRCs, the more "residents feel that they are fully a part of the NRC, and the greater the extent to which the NRC articulates a clear alternative vision that is expressed in its work and shared by neighbourhood residents, the more likely that the NRC will be able to maintain its independence" (17). Meet Me at The Bell Tower, then, can work towards neighbourhood change by continuing to invite members to articulate and agree on a shared vision for the community.

Hope

Bell Tower participants see their gathering as a reminder of the possibilities that can happen for the community. Not only does it offer an opportunity for participants to become educated on current issues impacting them individually and as a community, it affords a safe space to gather and be.

As Larissa discusses, "I think that for a community that has kind of forgotten, to keep acknowledging the people, and the people that come, and letting them know that things are working is important. Like you said, echoing. It puts hope in people. It makes people feel like

there is a purpose to this.”

This hope is vital for a community’s resilience, as it can become generative and amount to other forms of change:

“I think that hope needs to be within a community. And if you’ve got hope, then it can kind of grow out into a whole bunch of things. So, because of poverty, because of the effects of residential schools or Sixty’s Scoop, the urban area is where a lot of Indigenous people are living and where poverty is. If there is hope, there is outcome, there are people reaching out.”

5.2 Working Together

Coalition Building

Volunteers of Meet Me at The Bell Tower work with local businesses to procure donations of food and prizes for consultations, community events, and community feasts. Volunteers mobilized by an organization called Food Not Bombs make food, which is a big part of the gatherings. The ingredients are sourced from local businesses: “It’s called Food Not Bombs. There’s a couple of stores that typically give food every week, every Friday, and from whatever we get, we make something out of that.” (Larissa)

After participants get a chance to ring the bell at the Bell Tower, they head to the Indigenous Family Centre for a meal and to gather. Participants see this in-kind space rental as an incredible gift, one that should be appreciated and valued. As such, the room is opened, set up, taken down, and locked up by Elliott, one of the Bell Tower’s active participants: “Since it’s donated to us, it’s not our space. We have to take care of it. I’ve come to know the caretaker of

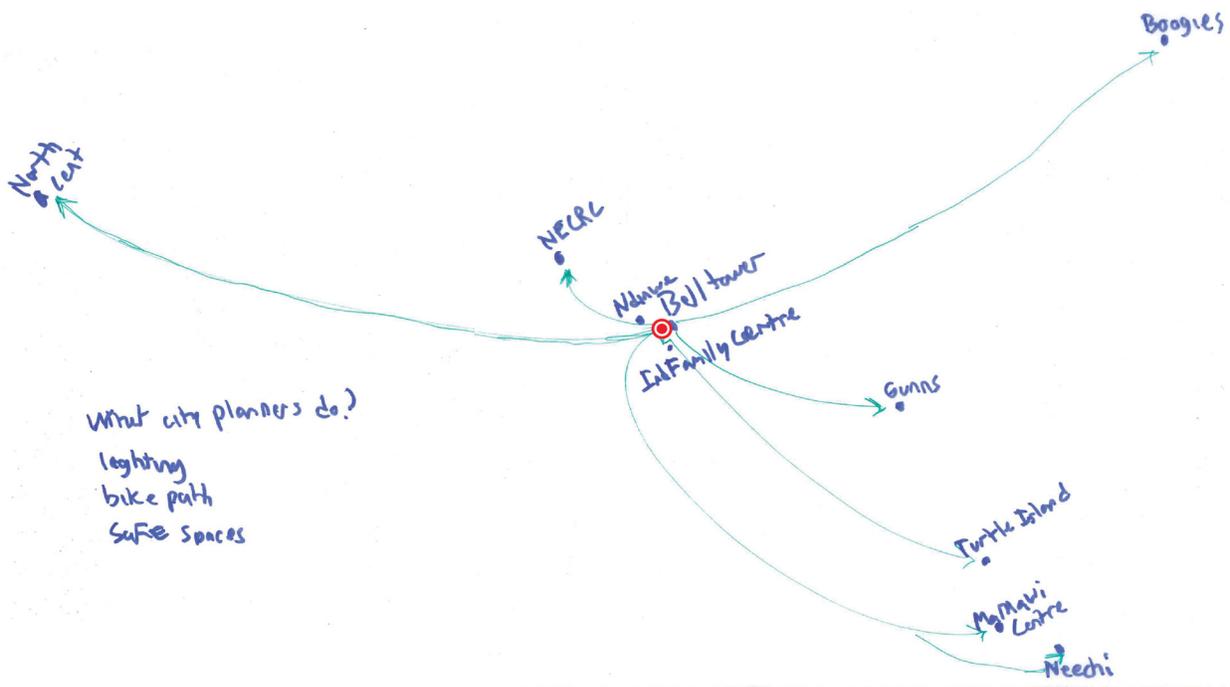


Figure 6: Elliott shows how Meet Me at The Bell Tower, while headquartered along Selkirk Avenue in the Indigenous Family Centre, often hosts other meet-up events at nearby businesses.

the centre and the people who manage it during the day. It's important to maintain a positive relationship.”



Image 41: Meet Me at The Bell Tower regularly participate in other protests.

While the Meet Me at The Bell Tower gatherings take place at the Indigenous Family Centre, workshops and other forums are led by key leaders in other parts of the city, as a way to broaden reach and support for the Bell Tower and development in the area:

“Other organizations that we work with are Neechi Commons, where we host are political brainstorm, and local businesses and restaurants. So Meet Me at The Bell Tower participants also get involved in other work that Aboriginal Youth Opportunities establishes in the community.”

Aboriginal Youth Opportunity is a broad-reaching community organization, led by the Meet Me at The Bell Tower co-founders, to create capacity for Indigenous peoples in the city. They use this platform to not only support citywide advocacy, but to drive participation at the Bell Tower. This group meets at other locales like Turtle Island Community Resource Centre,

Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata, and businesses like Boogies on Redwood and Gunn's Bakery on Selkirk Avenue. Their participation and meetings at these locations are in-fact an opportunity to support local and support business.

Building relationships with these businesses is not just an opportunity to formalize donations for their protest work, it is an opportunity to become an interface for positive interactions – the businesses that are supportive and welcoming are in a sense inviting all residents to come to their establishment, building rapport and becoming inclusive:

“When the violence was happening in 2011 and that rally for Clarky happened, we didn't want to lose the momentum. We met at 617 Selkirk Ave., Prezza Restaurant, and a new business with Filipino cuisine. We would go there for a year. We were from the neighbourhood and we wanted to support a local business. AYO would often go eat in that place. Mama and Jason [the owners] were warm and inviting, they always wanted to know what we were up to and how they could help.” (Mac)

As Idle No More protest activities began to prompt and emerge in Winnipeg, Bell Tower looked to creating a presence, utilizing these opportunities to build networks and to get their message across:

“[Idle No More] went to the malls, during the holiday seasons. They went where the people were, during the busiest days. They were at Portage Place, Polo Park, and St. Vital. I made it to one of those rallies, but I'm pretty sure Jenna went to all three.”

Interviewees cited how they would get information about civic rallies and protests from

Bell Tower and would attend them.

Fostering broad community support should be a priority, as identified by Josh, as it can help to bring about more significant neighbourhood change and prioritize investment and policy focus:

“I think activists and protesters need to work together rather than in their own silos. We’re often fighting for the same types of things. Meet Me at The Bell Tower partners with so many organizations and I think it’s important to build better partnerships and to continually build a broader sense of community because again, we should all be focusing on when the North End is healthy in Winnipeg, that’s healthy for the rest of Winnipeg.”



Image 42: Speaking up at Meet Me at The Bell Tower.

For non-Indigenous, and non-resident participant, Ally, Meet Me at The Bell Tower has been able to steward coalition building by being consistent, by never cancelling a gathering, and for being open to anyone:

“They’ve been there for five years. Even then, like I said, a lot of people don’t know they are there, or a lot of people are still suspicious about what they’re doing. Especially if you’re looking at an area like the North End, where they have been, over the years, like looked down upon and not only looked down upon, but just ignored entirely. So people are like, ‘I don’t know why are you bothering me because you’re not going to use my answers anyway.’ So I think persistence is important. Meet Me at The Bell Tower has been there every Friday for the last five years, so building trust is important.”

Coalition building is also like a game of dominoes, as one relationship is built, another one is formed, and then there is a ripple effect of action and change. As demonstrated by the Gordon Bell High School advocacy efforts, coalition building was critical in assembling all of the right partners together to enhance their campaign efforts:

“Kristine responded that she was requesting a special meeting of Trustees and would propose that the board write to the Minister and Public School Finance Board requesting funds for the field. Two weeks later, she told the coalition that the meeting had been held and the school division was formally asking the province to purchase the land. Nancy feels that this was the third critical point in the campaign because allies now included the Gordon Bell administration, Winnipeg School Division and the Education Minister.” (Maunder & Distasio, 5)

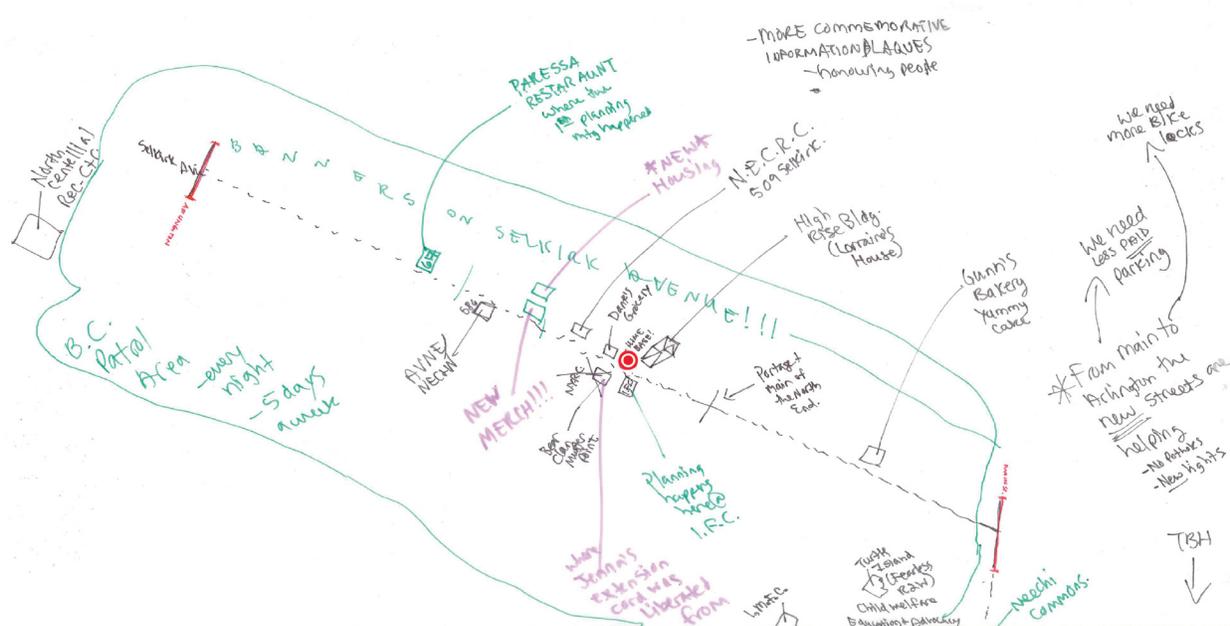


Figure 7: Alex and Mac reiterate how Meet Me at The Bell Tower has changed the built form along Selkirk Avenue and has re-ignited initiatives like Bear Clan.

Mobilization

The mobilization of participants of Meet Me at The Bell Tower started as a commemoration to the passing of a resident in the area, Clarky. The rally was well attended, and after the rally, participants wanted to keep the momentum going:

“After the rally, we asked, ‘What do we do now?’ The violence is still going to be there. We didn’t make change happen with this one rally. So, we needed to keep this momentum going. I went to Michael [the co-founder of Meet Me at the Bell Tower], we all went to Michael, and asked, ‘How do we keep this momentum going?’ We were like, “Let’s meet at the Bell Tower.””

The founders of Meet Me at The Bell Tower took to the major news outlets and social media to inform the public that they, the youth, would gather at Bell Tower, no matter what type of support they would be given. It is the presence of youth participants of Meet Me at The Bell Tower that was one of the driving factors for why adults in the neighbourhood came out in droves to the first gathering – as described by Mac:

“And I think people thought, ‘What the hell?’ A bunch of young Indigenous volunteers are going to go out and try and stop the violence in the middle of the murder capital of Canada? Are you kidding me? And so the residents of the North End said, ‘Ain’t no way we’re letting those kids do this by themselves.’ So on our first Meet Me at The Bell Tower, there were 40 community members there waiting for us to say, ‘We’re with you.’ And that’s really powerful because they didn’t want us to do this by ourselves. But what we said in our media interviews and on our social media was, ‘We’ll do this by ourselves

if we have to, we're used to no one helping us' and it was just beautiful to see who we could count on, and who we could count on was residents, and our neighbours, and our friends."

Part of the mobilization was participants realizing they were up for a significant challenge – this inspired the participants to continue to resist:

"On the last day of me working at Ndinawe, I liberated the extension cord from the Ndinawe place, and I seen a whole bunch of kids climb the [Bell] tower. So I was like, 'Let's put these two together, and let's hear that bell ring for the first time in twenty years!' And so, I was like 'I've never heard that bell ring. Who's heard that bell ring? Wanna ring that bell?' 11 o'clock at night we were out there ringing that bell. And then the next day, we come along, and the cord is cut. Yeah, by the police, obviously because old people in the high rise didn't want to hear us ringing the bell at 11 o'clock at night. So they got the popo's to come cut the cord down."

The bell has been rung nearly 300 times, a statistic participants celebrate and are proud of, as it means it has brought together a sense of community:

"There's only extra vacations. There's only extra Bell Towers. There's no less. There's never a skipping of a Bell Tower, there's only ever of adding of Bell Tower's. Because this is the Bell Tower family, they love each other so much." (Mac)

This sense of ownership over the neighbourhood and sense of pride reignited initiatives

that had ceased, and sparked new partnerships:

“We were talking with our elder and she told to us about Bear Clan, that there was a group just like us. And we were like, ‘How do we revitalize that? How do we bring that back?’ Then all of a sudden, it’s brought back, with the help of us.” (Alex)

With every positive development, like the banners being added or reduction in crime, participants of Bell Tower and the community became more inspired and eager to continue working towards change:

“We were like, ‘How do we keep this going?’ and so a lot of North End youth went on different community consultations on the renewal of Selkirk Ave., so like the street, and Selkirk Park right here where the Bell Tower is.” (Alex)

External validation of their efforts is the least of their concern, explains Mac. Meet Me at The Bell Tower is motivated by the North End community, the families that live there, and the youth that are inspired by their work.

Gaining inspiration by the people they hope to serve is at the core of Ma Mawi’s mobilization efforts as well, as described by Silver (CCPA, 2009): “Ma Mawi sought to re-connect with the urban Aboriginal community, to work with the community to build upon existing strengths, and to build the capacity of the community to solve its own problems.”

Advocacy

When asked about what Meet Me at The Bell Tower advocates for, non-Indigenous participants state that it is about advocating for the neighbourhood and about taking care of one another: “It’s about our community. This is where people live, take care of the people that live there. That’s what it is all about.” (Ally)

In addition, participants identify other topics of concern for Bell Tower: mental health, child welfare system, homelessness, and ensuring marginalized and voiceless people get an opportunity to be part of the decision-making process. Participants like Josh was attracted to this line of inquiry and form of advocacy undertaken by Bell Tower:

“And here we have, one of the best examples of grassroots organizing emerging from the community and combating these issues by building community. It was everything I wanted to see in the community at the time. There was a lot of momentum behind it, in the community and with students and with instructors as well.”



Image 43: Meet Me at The Bell Tower fosters Indigenous leadership.



Image 44: Indigenous and non-Indigenous activists gather at Meet Me at The Bell Tower.

For the organizers, the advocacy focus of Meet Me at The Bell Tower was centered around stopping violence, and supporting youth:

“We lost one of our young people in our close circle to suicide, and the week before we lost someone to violence, and the week before two people went to jail, and on and on and on. 2011 was a really bad year for us. It was also the year that Winnipeg was the murder capital of Canada. So we felt this deeply because of our friends and our relatives that were either perpetrators and victims. So we met on Selkirk Ave., and we were talking about, ‘Well maybe what we do is take our example from those young people that organized Clarky’s march and we’ll organize a rally, too.’”

The advocacy approach undertaken by Bell Tower participants is often radical and a showcase of trial-and-error. Alex recalls the first time the bell was rung, and not knowing what the response would be from area residents: “At first, I thought we were going to get in trouble, then I was like, ‘Fuck it! Let’s just do it!’ You know what I mean? It was 11 o’clock at night. I didn’t have my thinking cap on.”

The first bell tower was rung with an extension cord made of string, garbage bag remnants, and anything participants could find in the immediate area. As the do-it-yourself cord continued to be cut off by potentially area residents or the police, as speculated by Alex, the will of the Bell Tower participants could not be stopped: “Despite their efforts to calm or silence the bell, it was this, ‘We’ve arrived, this is our community.’” (Mac)

Other organizations began to look to Meet Me at The Bell Tower as an example of a grassroots organization that has been successful in rallying individuals around advocacy for Indigenous youth:

“People did look to us as experts. And we kind of were because now there were people across Canada that were saying, ‘Need a grassroots movement for Aboriginal youth’ and we were like, ‘Oh shit, we know how to do that!’”

Collaboration

Participants of Meet Me at The Bell Tower play important roles, and at times, it feels like a family at home preparing for dinner. Participants like Ally see themselves as behind-the-scenes helpers, especially if non-Indigenous or not a resident of the area, assisting with meal preparation, promotions leading, during, and after each gathering, and in recruiting their networks to attend. At Meet Me at The Bell Tower, there is no formal hierarchy for roles and responsibilities and people pitch in where they feel most appropriate. As explained by Ally, “There’s a feeling of camaraderie. It’s calm. It’s relaxed. It’s not militant.”

Elliott, a weekly participant, helps with the opening up the space, cleaning, basic tear-downs, locking the space, checking up on garbage, and other maintenance support. Elliott sees the Bell Tower as an opportunity to learn about reciprocity: “It’s like give and take. It has to be equal. All parties deserve an accessible occasion to participate.” From my own observation, Elliott transitions from helper to active participant in a seamless, and respectful manner, always keeping in mind relationships.

As Josh states, “I think, honestly, that it is so organic. It really is where people feel where they fit the most. Very rarely is it saying, ‘Okay, you’re doing this’ or something. Do you know

what I mean? It's also about taking that personal initiative. When something needs to get done, people just help out and do it. I think there is leadership shown by Michael and other AYO organizers and I think it's an important part. It helps keep it together. I mean, you need that at some level. And yeah, they made sure it has happened for the last five years."



Image 45: Meet Me at The Bell Tower is built on collaboration.

For individuals like Alex and Mac, collaboration with the City of Winnipeg is important to Meet Me at the Bell Tower's success:

"Relationships between Indigenous community and police are tense on the best of days. During Idle No More, I was often the police liaison. Idle No More activists would plan their actions and intended to carry out them without even informing the police. I would often always say, 'We have to. We're taking over the road. For our safety, we have to.' So I would liaise with the police. I would tell them, 'Our event is tomorrow' and they'd be like 'you gotta give us two weeks notice.' While a permit has never been supplied, we'd carry on with our plans and police would actually be part of it. I think they appreciated our circumstances and the heads-up."

At rallies, then, participants of Bell Tower use the megaphone as an opportunity to be productive and solutions-oriented.

“And we wanted, exactly like how we operate today, we knew Idle No More we needed everyone, we needed all the nations, we needed all the ages, we needed all of the neighbourhoods, we need all of the gifts. If we’re going to solve this, we need everyone. And so we didn’t want our megaphone to be a tool of division, we only wanted our megaphone to be a tool of unity.”

Collaboration amongst participants is so important, says Mac. As the group began to form meetings, they realized there was an expert in fields like communication, youth engagement, inspiration, policy development, and art. People participated in the way they thought was appropriate or best suited to their abilities.

As inquired by Tayebi in “Planning activism: Using Social Media to claim marginalized citizens’ right to the city,” what role do planning professionals play in supporting activists efforts to mobilize and claim their right to the city? For Meet Me at The Bell Tower, raising citizens’ awareness of their rights to the city requires collaboration with others, even civic departments like the Winnipeg Police Service, and as well as other activist movements. According to Silver, McCracken and Sjoberg: “Positive relations with other CBOs (Community Based Organizations) are especially important because a major part of the role of a NRC is to be the catalyst for bringing other CBOs together in pursuit of goals identified by the community. This necessitates positive working relationships, which is, by our definition, a political task” (15).

5.3 Community Growth

Capacity Building for Personal/Group Advancement

Participants have noted that Meet Me at The Bell Tower has helped to grow their own personal capacity. Gathering at Meet Me at The Bell Tower is not only a way to get involved in community efforts, but an activity to participate in and to keep busy while developing valuable skills:

“My interest in participating is that I wanted something to keep me busy, something to distract me from this everyday. I feel like, I get stuck in a rut. I feel like I want to do something that actually changes the world, or changes my local community.”



Image 46: Meet Me at The Bell Tower poster.



Image 47: Meet Me at The Bell Tower promotion.

Activists participating in Meet Me at The Bell Tower have noted the improvement in their social skills, interview skills, public speaking skills, networking skills, and even “using a megaphone if you’re speaking publicly – that type of activist tool.”

One participant noted how participation in Meet Me at the Bell Tower's forums and workshops made him more confident and encouraged to run for political office:

"For me, the brainstorming at the Neechi Commons. We had, in 2014 there was a municipal election. We invited six mayoral candidates to the brainstorming so we could engage with politicians, to hear about what they are going to do for the city. One of my dreams is to run for Mayor."

He adds, "I ran as a school trustee [in 2014] in my local riding of the Seven Oaks division, Ward 2. I placed last but got a thousand and thirty votes. I just felt happy to get my name on the ballot. I think that's the first step. So my commitment now is to run for mayor in 2014, 2018, 2022, 2026, and 2030. So that's my future plan."

For participants like Larissa and Josh, taking part in Meet Me at The Bell Tower was a natural step from their academic pursuits, having been referred to the initiative by their professors or heard about it through other organizations:

"I went there at the Bell Tower just to see what was happening because I was going to start a practicum at the Thunderbird House called Oshkii Gizhiig, where we would work with Indigenous peoples living with FASD. So, I went there just to see what was happening within that neighbourhood. Recently, I started working in the kitchen, in November, and to also participate in talks and stuff at the centre." (Larissa)

"I had really great professors who spoke highly about Meet Me at The Bell Tower. I saw, and I was learning about inner city issues. It was what I was studying." (Josh)

Both say their participation has helped them improve their knowledge about varying topics from Child and Family Services resources for women and mothers, access to water, and how they can speak up for communities as they advance in their own professions: “Even becoming a social worker soon, I’m trying to see what the needs are. So I’m trying to understand for myself and to partner and learn from the point of view of Meet Me at The Bell Tower participants. From an educational perspective, I am learning a lot.”

For Alex and Mac, both Indigenous participants, have noted how Meet Me at The Bell Tower has improved their public speaking skills and their confidence in taking part in city engagement sessions: “Now we always see the hearing notices! We never used to! But now we get so excited.” (Mac)

As reported by Silver and MacKinnon (2008), inner-city residents who participated in CBO programs developed “self-esteem and self-confidence” and began to “volunteer in their communities, function better at home with their families” (CCPA, 2). Participants of Meet Me at The Bell Tower cite the same outcomes from their involvement.



Image 48: Meet Me at The Bell Tower advocacy.

Indigenous Leadership

Non-Indigenous activists participating in Meet Me at The Bell Tower contend that their role and responsibility should focus on supporting Indigenous leadership. Ally noted the importance of standing to the side:

“I don’t get in the front. I stand off to the side. And if Michael needs anything, he turns to me. And that’s anything from holding his coffee, his toques, whatever that might be. Being non-Indigenous myself, it’s not my place to stand in the front, I don’t think. So I am often just behind-the-scenes. I’m there as a helper. If anybody who’s on the front lines, and needs something, I’m just there as backup for them.”

She highlighted in her interview with me that it is essential for non-Indigenous participants to acknowledge their own set of privileges, and for area-residents to be their own voice first:

“But I think with the general population, Meet Me at The Bell Tower just needs people to let them do what they have to do. And again, not to tell them what to do, not tell them how to do it, not tell them where to do it, but just let them be, and give them that support. It’s not my place to stand in front of what they do, because it’s not my voice, it’s not my community. I don’t live there, it’s not my community, it’s not my culture.”

Josh noted a similar sentiment in terms of his role as a supporting actor, as he is not from the neighbourhood:

"I think it's important for non-Indigenous people to take a step back, listen, rather than dominate the discussion. You see so many of these people who were leaders in the community beforehand and then took on a role within Meet Me at The Bell Tower. I'm not from the North End and I don't live in the North End. I contribute in the North End on Friday's, on Saturday's, and I like to support them from economic standpoints, and of course political standpoints. I support policies that help the North End. But until I am a leader in the North End, I don't think I should take on a leadership role in Meet Me at The Bell Tower per say unless I was asked to do something more than I would."

Alex did not envision and could not predict the significance of Meet Me at The Bell Tower in affecting and supporting Indigenous youth development. Over the past five years of its existence, the weekly gathering has assembled and mobilized many Indigenous youth, who contribute in the ways they feel confident in: "We just said, whoever has this passion: do it. It was kind of like, we brought it back to how Indigenous ways used to be. If you're good at something, you do that. If you're good at something, do that."

As their participation increased, many Indigenous youth from Meet Me at The Bell Tower began to participate in various public engagement workshops held by the City of Winnipeg, but also with newfound confidence became more critical of these processes:

"So what would happen is that, we, after every consultation, 'So what the fuck are you going to do with this information?' We're aboriginal youth here, Indigenous youth on the street, we are the hardest motherfuckers out there, in all of Canada, that's what statistics show or say, whatever, we live in the poorest community, so like, we want to hold you accountable. So you're going to come back, and you're going to show us

what you have. And you're going to do this until the project is done, and we're going to be at the forefront of it and we were adamant of that."

As explained by Silver (2009) when discussing the success of Indigenous organization, Ma Mawi: "The underlying premise is that it is not professionals and experts that will solve Aboriginal people's problems; it is Aboriginal people themselves, and Ma Mawi's role is to help the community to do so" (CCPA, 2).

Knowledge Capital

As explained in "Planning activism: Using Social Media to claim marginalized citizens' right to the city," knowledge is "used instrumentally as a mean of successfully gaining strategic ends" and is often "used communicatively for purposes of understanding" and discussing issues (as cited by Tayebi, 89).

The age-old adage that "Knowledge is power" is one of the major drivers of Meet Me at The Bell Tower, as organizers plan and host varying workshops and forums at the beginning of each gathering to encourage literacy of systems that enable and disable community prosperity: "One of the biggest thing for AYO and now Bell Tower is system literacy. We really really understand how much as inner city people, as Indigenous people, as young people, our child welfare system, how much of our life depends on systems. And like we're over-systemed and underserved. You know what I mean? And so people need to understand systems, if they're going to advocate through life successfully. If you're any of all of those things I just mentioned. So, we try to build up people's system literacy, literacy, we try to encourage people to follow process. As far as processes can take you. But we also encourage people to that when process does not serve the community, to innovate another way, to find a better way when the process

is hurting us, or when the process isn't working for us."

The City of Winnipeg proclaimed 2016 as the Year of Reconciliation. There seems to be a greater willingness to learn about the injustices and inequities faced by Indigenous people. Initiatives like Meet Me at The Bell Tower have contributed to this reconciliation, participants note, as it generates education and awareness about issues facing Indigenous people:

"People from completely different backgrounds, like way more privilege and lifestyles and people who haven't lived the same kind of life that so many Winnipeggers have in the North End and in the inner city, and racialized and Indigenous people. And so yeah, I think for me, it's been life changing for sure. It's been extremely life opening. You gain so much insight and gain a way better understanding and experience of our fellow citizens and friends and relatives and everything, who are just separated by social inequalities, race, and train tracks really." (Josh)

For participants like Larissa, taking part in Meet Me at The Bell Tower helps to foster shared experience and sharpen awareness of what life is like for other excluded groups: "For me, to be understanding of things that they are living, is the essential part of all of us living together."

Meet Me at the Bell Tower also invites learning about spaces within the North End, where activity is, and places primed for redevelopment. Elliott notes: "I think it's important to be well aware of what an environment is like." Participants of Bell Tower cite the importance for learning about the North End, the issues facing this community, as these issues are not just the North End's issues, they are not just Indigenous issues – they are citywide issues. The health of the North End is indicative of the health of the entire city.



Image 49: Meet Me at The Bell Tower invites people of all backgrounds and abilities to participate.

Social Capital and Networks

Social capital, as described by Foucault, can be leveraged by groups “to develop and reinforce their power to pursue and advance their causes” (as cited by Tayebi, 90). Meet Me at The Bell Tower has leveraged participation from all parts of the city, industries, and people – creating social networks and social capital.

Mac joyfully pointed during the interviews how Meet Me at The Bell Tower has become his family and how people who have met at this weekly gathering have even fallen in love, and have had children. The relationships forged at the Bell Tower, Mac asserts, is what connects the community: “It keeps ups connected to people forever.” This sense of networking and community connection is affirmed by participants like Ally, who notes how Meet Me at The Bell Tower encourages participants in the area to discuss solutions: “People looking out for each other and not looking outside of the North End to find answers. He’s looking for them inside.”

For Elliott, a participant who did not know his father growing up, Meet Me at The Bell Tower has been an opportunity to share experience with Indigenous youth who also have lost

their connections with family members:

“Relationships, for me, is about the concept of a virtue of respect and meaningful relationships. I know Michael Champagne talks of this concept of relationship permanence, where some relationships are permanent, and some relationships end. For example, I never knew my father growing up. So, I know a lot of Indigenous youth who don’t connect with their family members because of residential schools, or Sixty’s Scoop, or certain institutions that prohibit getting to know your own family or culture.”

Larissa, another participant of Meet Me at The Bell Tower echoes the statement of family and community, and how this approach to relationship building and networking has helped empower the community to find solutions for themselves:

“The organization has become a big family. Everyone knows one another by first name. I think that is something that is needed within a community that lives all sorts of hard things. Meet Me at The Bell Tower has empowered people. It’s made people come into their community to see their reality.”

As Mac notes, being a community activist sometimes is tiresome, but working together ignites a sense of community passion and resilience: “And if by next Friday your candle is dimmed, come back to Bell Tower and we’ll light you up again.”

For participants, Meet Me at The Bell Tower is a place for young people to gather, to organize, and to be leaders. This type of community gathering gives these participants leadership skills they need to survive in the real world, says Elliott: “I think with the concept of

leadership, of knowing purpose, of being passionate, and what you do to empower other people to stay active – keeps the momentum in the area going.” As these young leaders form relationships with one another, it can help the community advance, as it builds a sense of community resilience, pride, ownership, and partnership:

“I find each one kind of like a ceremony. It’s definitely a ritual. It’s something that we all gain things from. So each time, I just become a bit more connected with that community. I think it has only brought positive things to the neighbourhood. I don’t see how anyone can argue that it has done the opposite. It’s something good for people to do on Friday nights. It’s a healthy and positive community-building project. Positively, I think there are many, many benefits. From people learning, like me learning about the North End, and learning about experiences and lifestyles.”

5.4: Social Participation

Public Participation

As explained by Tayebi (2012), change in a community can only happen when citizens claim their right to participate (89). Participants of Meet Me at The Bell Tower outline the need for community members to be engaged, as it will help at a local level but express the need for political action:

“I think that for anything to work, I think people need to be engaged. And if it’s only at one level, if it’s only at the community level, then it’s only going to work and help those people amongst themselves kind of. But politicians should see that if Meet Me at The

Bell Tower exists, there's a reason for that."

If politicians do show up, participants note how their participation should be genuine and not simply for publicity, noted Ally:

"I guess it's people who want to be seen as movers and shakers. There's one person in particular I know, who shows up every week just for a photo then disappears after the photo. I think some people who are there for the publicity of it."

City planners and civic administration was added as a stakeholder group that should join politicians at Meet Me at the Bell Tower to consult with the neighbourhood. One interviewee noted the need to broadcast for more engagement from within the neighbourhood:

"I find that there are more people from outside the North End coming to Meet Me at The Bell Tower. The only people who are attending from the community are often those walking by who are stopping by to hear what's being discussed. Like I said, there are some little ones and some elders. I don't know if the wider community around the North End, what's all there at Meet Me at The Bell Tower on Fridays. To me, I always thought that there should be, there's free dinner right, I just always thought there would be more people. I don't think a lot of people are aware."

While perceptions are improving in the area, participants like Ally noted that participation in Meet Me at The Bell Tower might be hindered due to negative perceptions of the area:

“The wider community: they know that Meet Me at The Bell Tower is going on, but I don’t see more people going down there or less people being scared of going down there. It’s a shame. On Friday nights, I will notice that there are people who pull up to Meet Me at The Bell Tower but they sit in the car until they see somebody else getting out of their car. I’m like, ‘What do you think we’re going to do with to you people? It’s a Bell Tower?’ That hasn’t changed since I’ve started going there.”

Ally notes how Bell Tower organizers can enhance their message to non-area residents and reaching out to a broader population, educating them about what the gathering looks like and explicitly outlining how they can play a role.

For Elliott and Mac, Meet Me at The Bell Tower has helped to gather neighbours in the area together, which has enforced a feeling of community safety – the notion of more eyes and ears on the street, as per Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design: “I think Meet Me at The Bell Tower advocates for relationships, getting to know your neighbours. There’s certain parts of the area where you don’t know who your neighbours are and that’s kind of unsettling, to not know the people who live in your area.” (Elliott)

The ringing of the bell, Mac notes, is a reminder to residents that safety cannot be improved without their support and engagement:

“And that if you hear the bell and you see violence, you know what your job is, stop it, stop the violence. And that means: prevent violence in the first place, that means lead by example – to not be violent yourselves. It doesn’t mean, going in and inserting yourself into dangerous situations necessarily. It means taking care of children, making sure your home is safe. Being a good role model.”

Deliberately not accepting funding for their organizing efforts maintains its grassroots foundation in the community, and has afforded Meet Me at The Bell Tower to be vocal and untied to political pressures:

“So when Meet Me at The Bell Tower began, Aboriginal Youth Opportunities was the only group operating in this particular way that we could see in the neighbourhood. Deliberately not getting funding, deliberately not incorporating, deliberately staying away from all of those things. We didn’t see a lot of other groups locally doing that. But then shortly after it was in 2012, after Bell Tower had been around for a year and a half almost two years, something called Idle No More came up. Where did this come from – we don’t know but all we know is suddenly everyone across Canada, wanted to learn how to organize in the same way that Aboriginal Youth Opportunities had already been organizing for two years.”

That is, other movements were interested in learning how public activism could be sustainable over time, without external funding, while continuing to mobilize public participation. As Josh articulates, without pressures from interest groups like businesses, developers, and politicians, Meet Me at the Bell Tower could maintain its authentic and genuine position in the community.

Creative Engagement

Organizers of Meet Me at the Bell Tower utilized existing events and public speaking engagements to inspire and recruit participants of Meet Me at the Bell Tower. As Elliott explains, a conference he attended, “Count Me In,” was where he first learned about Meet Me at the Bell

Tower, as co-founder Michael Champagne was a keynote speaker. He cites his interaction with Michael as a motivator for his continued participation:

“I met Michael there, since I was volunteering, and Michael Champagne was the public speaker, the keynote speaker at the event. I got to know him, got to clean up and stuff. Me and him stayed behind to help wherever we can. And so, I met Jenna through Michael. I can’t remember the specific moment I met Jenna. But I know I met Michael at the conference. And ever since meeting them, I feel more involved, I feel more passion, I feel like I know where I’m going in life. Going back to my financial situation, just being around them helps me with capacity building, good networking, they’re giving those skills. And I can ask those questions. It’s mentorship.”

The same pathway for participation is true for Ally, who met Champagne at a Ted Talk, and was inspired by the work that he presented on.

Through storytelling, organizers have shared their experiences through a wide range of online communication tools to inspire others to participate. Before organizers became more sophisticated with their promotional tools, they used blogging as a form of information dissemination, as Mac explains:

“It was an ugly poster on paint. I took one of the banner images, edited it. It was all pixelated, just the nastiest digital images I’ve ever created. I look at what I can do now, versus at what I made then, and I’m like ‘Wow, I’m so great because I used to suck so bad!’ I made that first poster, that first blog post. The poster had a silhouette of the Bell Tower. The blog post essentially said, ‘If you’re like us and sick of the violence, then

meet us at the Bell Tower. We're sick of bearing our friends. There's no reason for young people to die like this, and we're going to end the violence. Come to our Facebook event, click this and send us a note to tell us how you can help us. Click here to buy a t-shirt to help us."

That blog post and poster caught the attention of many, including City Councillor Ross Eadie, who provided funds to purchase t-shirts, which were black with the word "Hope" written on them, explains Mac. As momentum was generated, founders used social media as a communication mechanism, but the real strength in their engagement efforts was a deliberate and provocative communication message that was confrontational and played to people's emotions:

"And pretty much the five of us became recruiters for that first week, planned it on a Sunday, posted it later that day on social media; Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, all any of us did everywhere we went, was invite people: 'Hey are you sick of the violence? Hey, do you like children dying? No, great. Come with us.' You know what I mean? It's brutal, but that's the language. We were deliberately being provocative in the language, we were deliberately saying things to get people excited: 'We're going to stop the violence!' – that excites our neighbourhood. 'Do you like children dying' – that upsets our neighbourhood. We were deliberately saying things to speak to the hearts of people. We didn't want to speak to their heads, we wanted to speak to their hearts."

More recently, participants have used social media as a means to challenge politicians online to participate. As explained by Alex, taking photographs of politicians at every opportunity

can be used for future social media posts: "I was in the Wesman seats because I was drumming at the event. I looked behind me and I was like 'Is that Brian Pallister?' And I was like, 'Darian, hold my phone come take a picture of me!' I was like "This is going to help us in the long run."

Alex eventually used the photograph she took for a post on Twitter, asking and challenging Premier Pallister to attend a special "Cuts Equal Violence" rally at the Meet Me at the Bell Tower. In this way, Twitter becomes a spontaneous, instant way to publicly hold politicians accountable:

"Lip-smacking is a tool. That social media piece, like the way that Alex has such a long-game in mind, when she goes to take a selfie with the Premier, is going to help us. We have experience in the last provincial election, when we were trying to meet with the party leaders, we shamed these people. We were able to get Greg Selinger, communist and green, Darrell Rankin, and James Bedomme. All confirmed, like pretty quickly with our AYO team. So we tweeted out a thing, being like, thank you to these three party leaders for confirming, and we put their twitter on the AYO Twitter, and twitter went crazy, 'oh wow this is so exciting!' but then we put one, right after, that said 'Dear Brian Pallister and Rana Bokhari, why are you ignoring us?' and we put their pictures with X's over their faces, the other ones had checkmarks on their faces. And it only take less than an hour, I got a phone call from a representative of Rana's: 'I have Rana Bokhari's office on the other line here,' and then we got Rana, shortly after. And we were able to say we got four out of five leaders of the last election to meet at our brainstorm."

More touchingly, participants discuss how social media has provided an opportunity to provide their own narrative of their Indigenous experience.

“But how we got here, is that we’ve been previously fucked over for so many fucking years by the media, that we say that, that we need to be our own media, we need to tell our own stories, because you ain’t going to depict, and paint me with a brush that I’m an Aboriginal woman, that I’m all these hopeless things, that like, I don’t feel this way.”

Blog posts were also employed weekly by participants of Meet Me at the Bell Tower so they could tell their own stories:

“So then we said, ‘We need to tell our own stories.’ I was writing every week about, I’d try to write twice a week, but then it became very cumbersome. I was trying to write, this is what our plan is for this week, but then it became ‘This is what happened at the Bell Tower.’ We now do both of those things at the Bell Tower.”

An article that described an organizer, Jenna, in an offensive manner, was another reason why Meet Me at The Bell Tower worked towards narrating their own stories through social media:

“That’s why we work so hard to tell our own message on social media, but also to be unifying in the work we do, in welcoming people from all circles to come because let’s pretend like if we were able to wake up every Indigenous person in Canada, that’s only 4% of the population. Can 4% of the population really make the change that is needed

for all of us? I don't think so. So we need everyone."

Tayebi speaks to the role of Information Technology, and especially social media, and how it has revolutionized the ability for activists to establish and expand their membership and networks who share the same experience or want to join their cause:

"Planning activists can use Social Media in establishing and expanding location-based networks to call for direct actions on the streets, spread the word, and obtain public attention for their causes. Different forms of direct action include civil disobediences such as marches, demonstrations, sit-ins, and refusal to pay taxes. Planning activists do not seize the opportunity to gain political power through direct actions; rather, their purpose is to gain decision makers' attention to consider alternatives that are regularly ignored in bureaucratic processes of decision-making" (92).

The sound of the bell, its reverberance, is a creative engagement tactic in it itself. As Mac notes, the bell became a community fixture in the same way community members know a church bell will ring – a reminder that the community needs to be cognizant of violence around them, and to be proactive in stopping that violence: "That was the moment when Jenna talked about her story, about liberating the extension cord and what that sound of the bell meant for them. And we realized that's what we needed – we needed to stop the violence here. We needed something loud, like a bell. We needed something safe, something we could make safe, like a vacated community-gathering place. We needed a symbol that could be visible and shareable."

Crowdsourcing a megaphone to be used by Meet Me at The Bell Tower participants was another way for the community to become and feel involved. As Mac recalls, a string of tweets with local radio hosts from Streets 104.7 about Meet Me at The Bell Tower turned into a hashtag, #NorthEndMegaphone, to procure a megaphone to amplify their voices at the Bell Tower:

“Miss Melissa and Winnipeg Jules said on Twitter, ‘How come North End Emcee [Michael Champagne, co-founder of Meet Me at the Bell Tower] doesn’t have a megaphone? He’s always yelling around the street corner.’ So they were like, ‘Oh let’s give them a hashtag #Northendmegaphone’ and I was like, ‘Yeah, we’d love one!’ on Twitter, thinking it was the end of the conversation. Less than a week later, Miss Melissa brings this fancy fucking megaphone over to where I was working at the time, Safe Workers of Tomorrow, and brings it to me, and says here you go ‘This is from Streetz, this is #Northendmegaphone, this is for you guys.’ And I was like, ‘Alright, well you know, this definitely isn’t my megaphone, it’s the North End megaphone, so it’s important that this megaphone is for the people!’”



Image 50: Meet Me at The Bell Tower’s efforts amplified with a megaphone.

Mac notes that the megaphone was provided at the same time banners were being installed on Selkirk Avenue and when Merchants Hotel closed – momentum was building. As these developments occur, the community has begun to believe they have a platform, an opportunity to have their voice be heard.

Before the megaphone made its first appearance at the Bell Tower, organizers developed a set of rules for its use: when used, the megaphone needs to be (a) solutions-oriented; (b) positive; (c) respectful; (d) democratic; and (e) loud:

“The megaphone is for solutions, megaphone is for compliments, the megaphone is not for swearing, the megaphone is not for criticizing, the megaphone is for everyone, and the megaphone is loud. So it was really important for us to be solutions-oriented with the megaphone, and so we had it, Bell Tower was growing, we were learning more about ourselves our neighbourhood, and our community. The revitalization was happening, our relationships with media and police were improving, and then this thing Idle No More started.”

When these rules are not adhered to, relationships with important partners can become strained:

“But here is where it doesn’t work. There was a woman, who was a non-Indigenous woman, who said, ‘I know some chants!’ I gave her the megaphone. I was tired, so I thought I could rest a bit. Do you know what she started to say? She shit talked the police that were keeping 300 people safe, with no notice, with no permit. And as a white woman, you come into an-Indigenous led space and you fuck up our relationships

with the police, excuse me, could your privilege reek any more strongly? So, suspended. Give me the megaphone back. Then I'm like 'Everyone on the count of three! I want to hear you give it to the police who are keeping us safe. I'm done, never again. Off we go.' This is how we have to go about ourselves."

During an Idle No More protest, Alex recalls a decision to be the only one in possession of the megaphone, as she became increasingly concerned that Idle No More participants would not abide by the tenants of respect and solutions-based messaging over the megaphone:

"I mostly didn't want these radical, radicalized Indians, I'm sorry, I'm just going to say it how I feel, the radicals to I guess like deface, but make our megaphone look like a piece of garbage. You know what I mean? By spewing their hate on the megaphone. I knew these radicals. I knew what they would do. So I put that in my mind, 'No, we're bringing the megaphone but I'm going to be in charge of it. Because you see in the media that they're just so full of hate, right, angry Indians, so I didn't want to perpetrate that stereotype. AYO is all about breaking that stereotype. I vividly remember being Polo Park and they were doing a round dance there, and I started spewing facts about the resistance and 500 years, and getting everyone riled up. And then the radicals told me to shut up because they didn't have the megaphone, right? And that just gave me more push, to be on that megaphone but also to pick out the ones, the other leaders in the crowd, potential leaders, who could have the megaphone, not just me."

Meet Me at The Bell Tower have given rise to other creative endeavours like Red Rising Magazine, an Indigenous-led magazine published semi-annually. As it emerged from the

weekly gathering at the Bell Tower, it remains an important fixture in the community, utilized for cross-promotion.

Communication

Participation should not just be about getting a photograph taken in front of the Bell Tower, participants have “got to be there with heart and soul,” argues Ally, a regular participant of Meet Me at The Bell Tower. Mac affirms this thinking, noting how their communication message appeals to people’s emotions:

“We’re really practicing our delivery, we’re really working hard. Because we’re the sticklers of people’s language. We have issue with the word issue – it’s one of the biggest things we say. We’re cognizant of our own choice of words, and the way that we tell our stories. We want to be honest and true to the heart of why we’re motivated to do all of these things. Because it’s not an intellectual motivation, it is an emotional motivation. That’s always what we want to speak to when we speak to our community members. But also when we’re talking to planners, people who are consulting, people who are elected officials, what we always want to say to those people is we want to tell them, we don’t want to talk to their heads, we want to talk to their hearts. If your heart is with us, then you’re not going to hurt us. You’re not going to break your own heart.”

The group of organizers became very experienced in delivering the message of Meet Me at The Bell Tower, after having to conduct many interviews with mainstream media: “I had done a couple of interviews prior to that, but never anything to this quality where I had to actually decide about what I was going to say, about what I was going to do. I mean, it was very

scary. Before when I would talk to media, I was like 'Oh the project is good because it does this.' But this time, it was something so personal."

Instead of telling people to join their initiative, organizers used media to say: "We're going to stop the violence and if you want to help us, you can come with us" and "We're going to solve the problem as best we can, but we need help. And if you think you can help, we'd love to welcome you to the circle."

Similarly for the Gordon Bell High School advocacy efforts, media was one of the critical communication tools that helped to inspire and mobilize participation but also hold officials accountable for their action or lack thereof: "Nancy identifies the Jan. 23 rally as the point that the campaign lifted off in the media, and the second critical point of the campaign. The rally and its student involvement had drawn all major media. Decisions behind closed doors – or non-decisions – would now be helped up to scrutiny" (Maunder & Distasio, 5).

When communicating to area residents and other individuals to participate, organizers note that it is important to communicate the four f's:

"We have the four f's of the village: free, food, family and fun. Those are the four f's of the village. As planners, that's what we adhere to. If we're going to plan anything, has to be free. We can't have a financial barrier for the community. Has to be food. We have to welcome families. We got to be fun. Laugh while we're doing it. That helps us do the work we need to do in the village." (Mac)

5.5 Systems Change

Governance

Participants of Meet Me at The Bell Tower talk about the need for system literacy, to bring about political change. This desire for system literacy is warranted, as Foucault argues that “action is the exercise of power; thus, to perform an action, we must understand how power works” (as cited by Tayebi 90).

Knowing which levels of government are responsible for the issue at hand, and/or the politicians to advocate to, are important tenants towards successful advocacy, as Mac explains: “It depends on the level of government, and the areas of jurisdiction they are related to. Because we’re so system literate at this point, we’re extremely understanding about how little elected officials can actually. So we try to be targeted and super specific when elected people come so that we can focus on what two or three things in their jurisdiction they can pay attention to. And if they don’t, we are sure to let them know that it would be political suicide.”

When community members can understand who to connect with within the City, it will ensure they are engaged and feel trust that action is possible: “I think, for me, it’s about not waiting for them to come. It’s about engaging that type of community, so it’s figuring out the networks in the City of Winnipeg – who are these city planners? Is there an organization that I can physically come to, to network with them? Community members don’t know how to engage with that profession.”

As explained earlier, Meet Me at The Bell Tower does not rely on external or public funding. In this regard, their advocacy agenda can be set freely:

“They can play the game, but their hands are tied, and ours aren’t. And at the end of our mandate, we don’t get voted out of office. When you become so rigid in your structure, and you depend on money to operate, you have less of a say in the grand scheme of things. Like we come from poverty, the movement we’re trying to build needs to be built on things we have, not on the things we don’t. Hopefully never will we something because of money. We want to build things because it’s the right things for our community and then the money will come. ”

Government and administration tied to funding is an issue, as expressed by participants of Meet Me at The Bell Tower. It means candidness and action is vetted, and can disable people from taking action:

“That’s why I think it’s so important for us to not have the strings of money in our work. What you’re talking about is job security for an individual, what we’re talking about community security for a neighbourhood. When a planner is more concerned about losing their job, than doing their job, than I don’t want that planner.”

With this in mind, many participants of Meet Me at The Bell Tower would like the organization to remain unfunded by outside interests. It allows, as explained by Josh, Meet Me at The Bell Tower to remain non-partisan and for the community:

“It’s not your typical style of governance but it’s community, you know, participation, democracy. It’s true democracy as well, which is one of the best parts about it. I think that its political aspects attracted me. I had friends who were in the University of

Winnipeg Students' Association who were involved. Student politics is involved with Meet Me at The Bell Tower. Meet Me at The Bell Tower really connects so many different communities together. It's dynamic."

While they may not be able to speak openly about public issues, planning professionals can "shed light on decision-making structures to indicate opportunities for participation in each phase of planning processes" and "inform powerless citizens about how the power structure legitimizes the predefined agendas" (Tayebi, 91).

Meet Me at The Bell Tower works towards system literacy by ensuring their participants are well-informed citizens who know about their rights and needs, and can actively participate in planning and decision-making processes.

Power Structures

Since 1948, when the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, activists have worked towards raising people's "awareness of their rights as humans and mobilize them to claim their rights as members of the society in which they live" (Tayebi, 88). Meet Me at The Bell Tower confronts issues of power imbalance in public space by providing a space of inclusion for people of all backgrounds. People, irrespective of their socio-economic status, feel safe and respected when they participate, as noted by Elliott:

"I think this is one of the best initiatives to do that because you don't have to be part of the North End to feel like you're welcome to participate in spaces. There are some spaces where maybe I'm low-income and feel like I'm not supposed to be there. I think the perception of like your economic stand, is one of the barriers in going into some of these places."



Figure 8: Word cloud depicting key themes of relevance emerging from Meet Me at The Bell Tower.



Image 51: Former MLA Kevin Chief joins Bear Clan Patrol.



Image 52: Former MLA Kevin Chief joins Meet Me at The Bell Tower.

As well, organizers of Meet Me at The Bell Tower redefine the role of teacher and student, based on expertise and experience – not whether someone holds political office:

“But the side effect of bringing community together is that education happens. We’re street educators. Meet Me at The Bell Tower is my favourite classroom because it’s a place where intergenerational knowledge is honoured, intercultural experiences and perspectives are included, and the role of student and teacher shifts based on the topic. And so, for us, it becomes a place where people can learn, people can teach, and then you take that with you Friday night out into the rest of your week.”

For Mac, it is important to treat politicians like normal people, and in many cases, instead of traditional protocol of holding up a politician in front of the public, Meet Me at The Bell Tower highlights their own first:

"It's really important for us to treat them like normal people. Often, elected folk will come to the Bell Tower and we'll wait for the moment, and we sync them up to make a speech. Then we'll say, 'We have special guests with us here tonight...' and then I name the Bell Tower family in front of everyone. 'Give it up to all of the great helpers here with us tonight! Give it up to those ones!' It's important for elected officials to clap for Food Not Bombs, for Bear Clan, and for helpers."

If politicians return after these gatherings, then Meet Me at The Bell Tower organizers can see if they are truly interested in supporting outside of a simple photo-op:

"And now we're at a point, where we refuse engagements with people who are not including their client, the user, the people affected. If they're not included in development, delivery, and evaluation, guess how much we want to deal with those people? Not at all. That's why it was really important for us as we began this project with you – you (Jason Syvixay) have to come to Bell Tower. You have to. Period. Full stop. Because that's how we work. And so now, we trust you. Because here we are."

Building relationships is important as it ensures institutional and system safety, as Mac asserts: "You're not going to harm someone knowingly if you have a relationship with them, and it's a honest and direct relationship." Mac asserts that politicians do not have that same relationship with the people they are supposed to serve.

For Alex, while it is important for politicians to attend Meet Me at The Bell Tower, "It doesn't mean anything until they do something." Alex recalls how politicians feel like they should be officially invited to come. She responds, "They can just come. It's an open space

where anyone can come in.” Since its inception, politicians like Mayor Brian Bowman, MLAs like Kevin Chief and Melanie Wight, City Councillors like Ross Eadie, and MP Robert Falcon Ouellette. Political will can only go so far, as many of the participants assert. Meet Me at The Bell Tower participants believe the community plays an important role:

“In French we say, micro. Then there’s meso. Then there’s macro effects within systems. So, I think within any type of social justice or any type of anything, it has to work from the smaller to the bigger. So, Bell Tower is micro. Politicians rule everything up to a certain point. And so, if we’re wanting it to really work, we need to see the bigger picture. It needs to touch others.” (Larissa)

Josh, a participant of Meet Me at The Bell Tower, highlights how the imbalance of power and development when it comes to city building, can be addressed by the addition of youth councils within administration, drawing upon participants of Meet Me at The Bell Tower: “I think, there’s a huge proportion of people who are missing from discussions on urban planning, and just like politics.”

Equity

Many of the participants who take part in Meet Me at The Bell Tower cite their understanding of the injustices faced by Indigenous people as a major driver for their participation, as Larissa notes:

“Very recently, I have been interested in injustices towards Indigenous peoples. And if it’s through funds, through recognition, or putting money within programs so that maybe there’s less crimes, less gangs, whatever, that helps this community then

something like Bell Tower wouldn't exist, right?"

For Indigenous participants like Mac, the Bell Tower is a perfect example of the inequity faced by residents, particularly Indigenous-residents:

"And that space and that Bell Tower, was overlooked, underused, ignored, like us. And now, organizations are closing their doors. There are projects that receive provincial funding that have been sent notices, that they be better done by March 15, they better have their report by March 20, because March 31, there might not be any funding ever."

Similarly for Elliott, an active participant with Filipino descent, says Meet Me at The Bell Tower creates equity for a variety of cultures by inviting them to come and learn, to participate:

"A lot of the Indigenous people live in the North End. And so, someone who is not Indigenous, but comes from a Filipino background, the Filipino community has been inside that space as well. We've hosted what we call the Welcome Series where we invite different cultural communities into the North End. For example, we invite the organizers of the Manitoba Filipino Street Festival to attend Meet Me at The Bell Tower, so they can promote their event and to build relationships with Indigenous people because in our country, in our city, the topic of racism and Indigenous sovereignty is coming back, and is informing the framework of what's going on in the world, or what's going on in our community. I think that's an important thing to remember: the land that we are on was not given to us, it has been taken. So being aware of the history of where we are is very important."

Additionally, with workshops and sessions also taking place in other places in the city, Meet Me at The Bell Tower is a unifying force, as it transcends geographical location: "Maybe getting to know other parts of the city to come to the North End because the city is divided. The train tracks divide the city. For us, Meet Me at The Bell Tower, is not location based, anyone can get involved in it. It's about actually engaging with different communities and different communities engaging back."

Planning professionals have worked towards equity by facilitating consensus-building processes that aim to "equalize power in decision-making by requiring a super-majority agreement" (Tayebi, 89). From my personal observation of their weekly gatherings, Meet Me at The Bell Tower looks towards achieving consensus.

Challenging Policy

Outdated policies are challenged by participants of Meet Me at The Bell Tower. When asked if a permit is required for their protest activity, Alex responds: "You have to get a permit. We're like, 'Fuck the permit!'" While they do not follow city processes for their rallies and events, Mac offers city administration a compromise:

"What I would say [to city administration], 'I understand we didn't follow your process but I'm communicating with you right now so you can understand what is happening. I'm not necessarily asking for your permission, but I feel like it is my responsible, to tell you police, tomorrow, 300 people will march down this public street. I feel like you should know this, I know we didn't fill out the permit. If there is something we can do, let me know!' There was always ways around it."

In terms of policy development, Meet Me at The Bell Tower has been engaged in consultations, and with every gathering, their participants become more system literate and can articulate their feedback in a way that can influence and shape policy. They offer the following advice for City administration when developing public engagement opportunities:

“I would say that the first piece of advice that we would have, anyone that wants to plan something for any community, to include the community in the development, delivery, and evaluation. Don’t show up with the plan already made, show up and tell the community, ‘I want make something with you!’” (Mac)

“Selkirk Ave. Park, I was part of the consultation. I was like 16 growing up. There had been so many consultations, and each and every single time, the community worked for the architecture and every single time, he came back to us, there was a new plan in place, and we got to add things, we got to take out things, we got to add the basketball hoops, and the basketball hoop was very significant in our area, because there’s not much basketball and then we started 100 Basketballs. So that was really innovative I guess in a way. But what along 8 years, there was five consultations. I remember five. And they all brought food, because we live in the inner city, so what do the residents need to show up to this meeting? Make it accessible, bus tickets, and shit like that, you know what I mean. Listening to the voice of the young people. And the residents.” (Alex)

Non-Indigenous participants of Meet Me at The Bell Tower cite the resilience and persistence of its Indigenous-founders in formulating policy suggestions and ensuring they are heard by media and other stakeholders:

“Yes, certainly. Again because, they are there. They’re in the community. They’re talking

to people. They're talking to a wide diversity of people. They're there morning, noon, and night-time. They're not just there during the day, you know. They're there in the evening, especially at Bell Tower on Friday evenings. They live there, so they can definitely give good ideas from that." (Ally)

It is not enough for planning professionals to simply encourage citizens' to fight for their Right to the City. As Tayebi asserts, "some [citizens] may not be able to defend their rights alone because they lack sufficient knowledge and experience. They need an individual who knows the rules of the game and has bargaining skills to defend their rights in courts and through negotiation with power" (91).

5.5 Summary

This chapter outlined how Indigenous activism can produce positive outcomes like: (a) Neighbourhood Change; (b) Working Together; Community Growth; Social Participation; and Systems Change. Within these outcomes were common themes identified through semi-structured interviews, personal ethnography, and secondary source research. Figure 18 highlights by font size the themes explored more significantly.

Neighbourhood Change: Meet Me at The Bell Tower has helped to create: a welcoming and inclusive environment; a safe space; built environment changes; reductions of poverty, social exclusion, and urban violence; a reclaiming of the neighbourhood; a shared vision; a sense of hope.

Working Together: Meet Me at The Bell Tower gathers people of all backgrounds to advocate and raise awareness on issues related to the community. The weekly activist

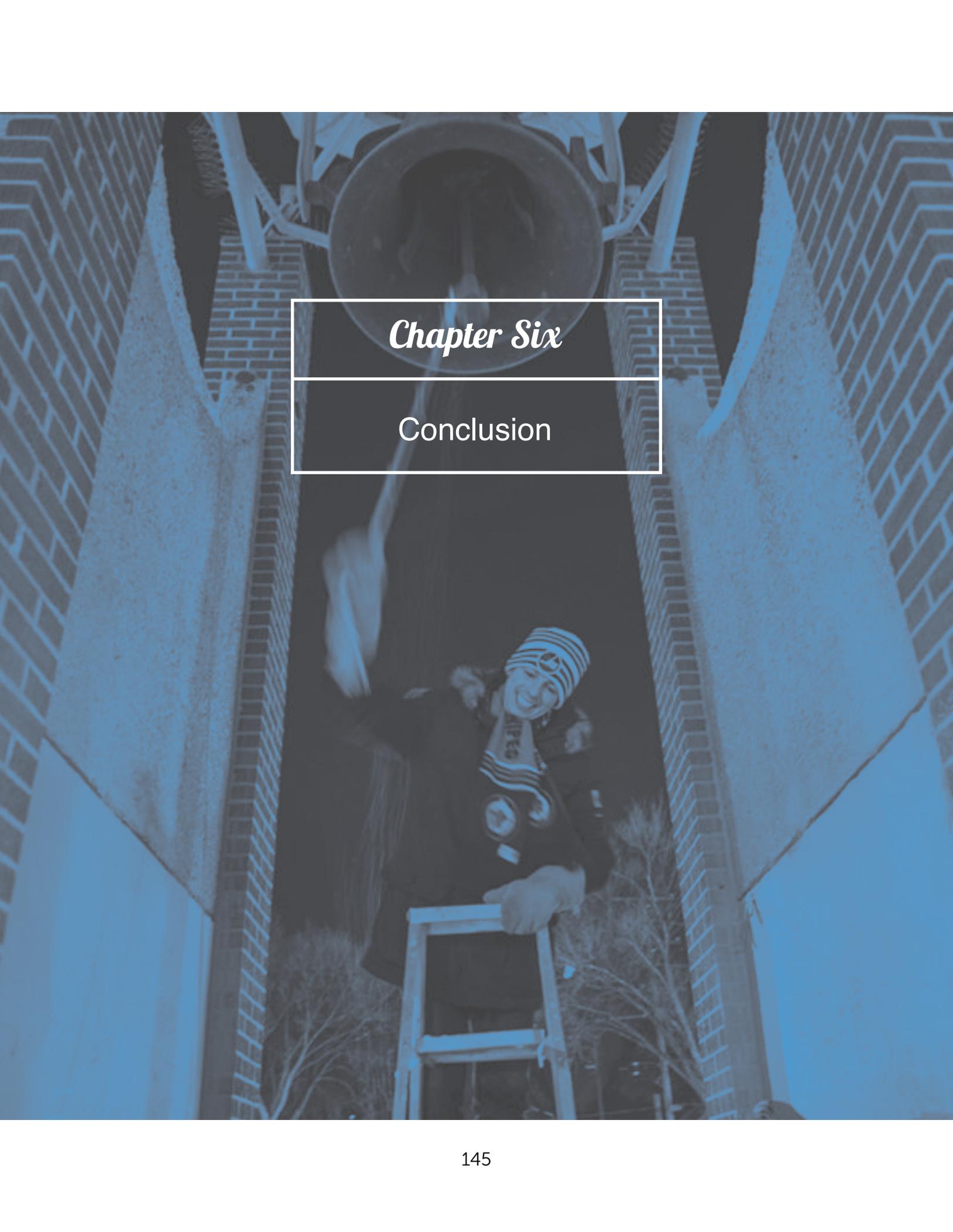
gathering's success is founded on its coalition building efforts, mobilization of all demographics, and collaboration with public and private sector.

Community Growth: Activist and protest movements help build personal and group capacity, supports Indigenous leadership, and enhances ones knowledge capital. They also support social capital and networks, people and organizations interested in seeing their community advance.

Social Participation: Meet Me at The Bell Tower and activist movements are affective when they employ creative communication tactics to engage with various publics to participate. A consistent advocacy message communicated through various platforms is a critical ingredient to a protest movement's success. Members of the public participate in protest because they feel included and welcome, and they see these as opportunities to speak candidly about issues of importance to them.

Systems Change: Meet Me at The Bell Tower places a priority on supporting their participants with a foundation of information on governance systems like policy, planning, and decision-making – so they are able to advocate and navigate those systems more strategically. Indigenous activism and protest challenge power structures, providing a greater voice to residents and community members. Meet Me at The Bell Tower and initiatives like it challenge policy and works towards equity.

“The megaphone is for solutions. Megaphone is for compliments. The megaphone is not for swearing. The megaphone is not for criticizing, The megaphone is for everyone and the megaphone is loud.”



Chapter Six

Conclusion

6.0 Conclusion

The previous chapters identified: key research questions related to Indigenous activism in public space, literature around public protest and Right to the City, Indigenous activism examples in Canada, and insights from Meet Me at The Bell Tower participation. This chapter connects the chapters together and offers a series of recommendations for planners and others.

In this chapter, I also reflect on the implications for planners and the planning profession, and ideas on how this research can be continued and enhanced going forward.

6.1 Nature of Indigenous Public Action in Winnipeg

Tayebi (2013) contends how urban social movements “are a response to the question of how the right to the city can be granted or claimed through planning and decision-making processes” (90). In Winnipeg, Indigenous activists are realizing their right to participate in decisions that affect where they live, and their rights to reclaim and create new spaces that meet their needs through occupation and taking up of spaces.

As outlined in Chapter 3, issues related to missing and murdered Indigenous women, loss of sovereignty, environmental protection, safety, and housing, are being advocated for by Indigenous people through protest throughout Canada. Whether online or in person, activism on these issues have sparked media and public attention, through its creative use of social media, gatherings, art, marches, and vigils. Meet Me at The Bell Tower, while a local Winnipeg initiative, has garnered international media coverage and is heralded as a positive example of Indigenous activism in Canada.

6.2 Answering the Research Questions

What tensions arise when people protest in public space and what do planning theorists have to say in this field?

A comprehensive literature review helped to describe a planner's role in supporting activist work, as they can help citizens claim their right to the city. As described by Tayebi (2013), planners need to go beyond rational technical expertise and should use their abilities to "advocate [for] citizens' right to the city, which includes both the right of participation and the right of appropriation" (88).

Citizens have and continue to take matters and issues impacting their livelihood and neighbourhoods in their own hands through public protest. The scholars referenced in this practicum assert very similar sentiments:

- Protest brings to light important community issues;
- Protest shows that people care about their community and want to make it better;
- Protest takes over space, drawing attention to whom space belongs;
- Protest employs unconventional and creative approaches to bring awareness to their campaigns, through carnivalesque public demonstrations, appropriation of space, and the use of social media; and
- Protest movements gain momentum when they build partnerships. Coalition building is an important skill that activists have mastered to rally support and generate significant interest in the issues.

As explained by Harvey, the “Right to the City is not merely a right of access to what already exists, but a right to change it” (as cited by Tayebi, 89). Right to the City requires the following five axes to be achieved: “(1) access to benefits of city life and responsibilities to facilitate these rights; (2) transparency, equity, and efficacy in city administration; (3) participation and respect in local democratic decision-making; (4) recognition of diversity in economic, social, and cultural life; and (5) reducing poverty, social exclusion, and urban violence” (Tayebi, 89). The scholars referenced in this practicum assert very similar sentiments:

- When people realize they have the right to the city, they can influence and inform their neighbourhood and livelihood;
- The expertise of planners can help activists and residents with facilitation, consensus building, campaign messaging, and policy-navigation;
- Building community capacity helps in empowering residents; and
- Governance models observed through Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and Neighbourhood Renewal Corporations (NRCs) help mobilize and recruit community participation in the decision-making of their communities.

What lessons can be learned from Indigenous activism in Winnipeg spaces and what are the implications for planners and others?

Neighbourhood Change

Meet Me at The Bell Tower’s activists cite its welcoming environment and safe space as reasons for their participation in this weekly gathering. They contend that when people feel included, comfortable, and safe, they are more willing and likely to speak freely and openly about community issues. The interviews and archival research indicate how Selkirk’s built

environment is changing for the better, occurring around the same time Meet Me at The Bell Tower began. Participants of Meet Me at The Bell Tower note how streetscaping elements like banners, sidewalk improvements, and plazas were installed when they became more visible in the community, when they began to show to others that their community mattered to them. Meet Me at The Bell Tower also encouraged many residents to participate in the cleanliness of their community, by organizing and taking part in weekly clean-ups.

Statistics have shown how crime has declined since the inception of Meet Me at The Bell Tower. Interviewees of this study noted how perceptions of safety in the neighbourhood have improved. The resurgence of a neighbourhood watch, the Bear Clan Patrol, was instigated because of Meet Me at The Bell Tower – as elders and adults did not want youth participants to be outside alone. The sound of the bell, ringing at 6 p.m. every Friday, is also a reminder to the community that the area is being watched and is safe.

During their interviews, participants noted how Meet Me at The Bell Tower has encouraged area residents and non-area residents to gather – promoting social connection, improving perceptions of the community, and creating safety in numbers. The gatherings have also given participants a new lease on the neighbourhood – seeing hope and change on the horizon, and discussing solutions with weekly forums and guest speakers.

With the above in mind, planners can look at protest groups like Meet Me at The Bell Tower as a positive endeavour, in mobilizing community members to play an active role in the revitalization of their neighbourhood. The “strength in numbers” quality of protest creates an undeniable presence in a community. As explained by Distasio and Maunder, protest should be seen as a positive occurrence – it shows how people care about their community. The visibility of protest creates a sense of urgency, and serves as a visual beacon to planners that these communities cannot go ignored.

Inspiring a shared vision for the Selkirk Avenue area is a positive outcome of Meet Me at The Bell Tower. Planners may look at Meet Me at The Bell Tower as an example on how various perspectives and people can work towards a shared vision.

Working Together

Meet Me at The Bell Tower functions with no external funding. Instead, organizers work with area businesses and not-profit organizations to supply activists with food, supplies, donations, and meeting space. Meet Me at The Bell Tower participants often attend other protests and rallies to build partnerships and coalitions with other social movements. Activists of Meet Me at The Bell Tower believe that building relationships is key to growing their movement, in expanding their networks and in further canvassing their message.

Meet Me at The Bell Tower mobilized its first group of activists as a tribute to a neighbourhood tragedy – the death of one of their own. Participants recall how an extension cord to ring the Bell Tower kept being cut off every day. This reoccurrence actually fuelled them even more to continue protesting and meeting. As participants of the weekly gathering began to see changes and improvements made to their neighbourhood (e.g. banner installation, redevelopment of Merchants Hotel), they became more inspired and motivated to continue with their advocacy.

Participants of Meet Me at The Bell Tower note how the advocacy efforts are centered around safety, mental health, homelessness, child welfare system, and in ensuring vulnerable populations get a chance to voice their concerns, to be part of the decision-making process. As one participant notes:

“I think because going to the Bell Tower has given people the permission to say things and to use their voice, and they’re like ‘Wow! Okay, I’m actually allowed to do that!’ And so I think it gives people the encouragement to do it elsewhere as well. Like ‘I was safe to do it here and it’s okay to talk up’ so yeah I think a lot of people realize, and the thing too, watching Michael and Jenna and everybody else talk about issues and everybody else, they’re like ‘Here’s a couple of kids who aren’t university grads, that weren’t born with a silver spoon in their mouths, don’t have a car, they don’t live in the West End, but you know what, people listen to them, so maybe we can do it that too!’”

Participants of Meet Me at The Bell Tower work together in a collaborative fashion, encouraging participants to contribute in the way that they feel comfortable – whether they support the group with communications, youth engagement inspiration, policy development, or art. They welcome support from people from all neighbourhoods.

Planners often seek ways to build community. Meet Me at The Bell Tower, in their own way, create opportunities to foster community connection. Planners can look to protest groups to gain insight on neighbourhood issues and concerns; they can be a source of feedback. Meet Me at The Bell Tower could be consulted by planners as an important user group or voice on new planning and policy ventures in Selkirk Avenue, providing ideas for design, and local knowledge of the community.

Community Growth

Meet Me at The Bell Tower empowers individuals to create solutions for themselves and to see themselves as solutions. Participants of Meet Me at The Bell Tower note how the weekly gathering has improved their personal and professional capacity (e.g. public speaking,

knowledge of community issues), and how they have become more engaged at the local level to participate in political process whether through running for office or participating in workshops and open house forums.

Non-Indigenous participants of Meet Me at The Bell Tower discussed the importance of playing a support role, not a lead role – especially if not part of that neighbourhood:

“Ask what they need. Don’t tell them what they need. Again, just be there, hang around, you know, come to a couple Meet Me at The Bell Tower’s and talk to the people and listen to what it is they are saying. Again, you know, and I know, it’s too often that governments think they know what’s best for others. But Meet Me at The Bell Tower has been doing fabulously just the way they are with nobody telling them what to do. Again, they just have to listen.”

Meet Me at The Bell Tower has inspired Indigenous youth to contribute to the redevelopment efforts of their community. Participants have become more knowledgeable and well-versed on civic planning processes through the informative sessions led by Meet Me at The Bell Tower, thus, being more confident to take part in planning exercises led by the city. Meet Me at The Bell Tower has helped to increase networks of individuals and groups working to make Selkirk Avenue and the North End a better place to work, live and play. Planners seek to find ways to strengthen community participation – perhaps Meet Me at The Bell Tower can serve as an interface for neighbourhood mobilization? Planners interested in community engagement can learn from protest. Bringing sometimes tense and volatile groups and stakeholders together to formulate solutions is a difficult task – one that is being done effectively by Meet Me at The Bell Tower, who are building and/or rebuilding relationships in and outside the community.

Social Participation

Participants of Meet Me at The Bell Tower identify various stakeholder groups that should show up and participate in their weekly gathering: elected officials, city planners, and civic administration. They argue that decision-makers often forget to take into consideration the very people they are elected and hired to serve. Since Meet Me at The Bell Tower is not externally funded, participants contend that their advocacy represents the genuine interests of a community. Perhaps city planners can look to groups like Meet Me at The Bell Tower as an unencumbered, candid and non-bureaucratic source of community feedback. They offer greater flexibility and nimbleness as far as public engagement goes.

As contended by Forester, planners “use their skills in controlling information and shaping attention” (as cited by Tayebi) but this depends on their employment and personal interests and values. As described by Tayebi, planners have three major employers: public sector, private sector, and not-profit organizations: “When the interests of these groups conflict with each other, employees are more likely to intentionally or unintentionally work in favor of their employer’s interests” (90). Planners, in some cases, are not in the position to speak openly about community issues but can use their specialized skills to support activists and to raise marginalized voices and vulnerable populations to realize and defend their Rights to the City.

Meet Me at The Bell Tower offered some ideas on how planners can support their activist work:

“There’s so much to learn from Meet Me at The Bell Tower. I think they really need to involve themselves and listen. And I think, like, they will really learn if they are actually getting involved. They have to show up, they have to be there, they have to be involved. I think that’s number one probably.”

Participants assert that city planners could simply attend the gatherings, and provide some knowledge on what their profession entails – this would improve system literacy: “Come every Friday. Share the posts on Facebook. Sharing it with your networks. If you have an idea, community members have an idea, email Michael and we will try to engage and find out how we can collaborate.”

Meet Me at The Bell Tower has helped participants become more aware of their right to the city, and their role in creating the city for themselves. As described by Friedmann, planners can support this awakening by raising “awareness about the ‘promise of emancipation’ and ‘confidence in the possibilities of change’” (as cited by Tayebi, 89). As noted by Meet Me at The Bell Tower participants, planners have certain expertise that can help support their growth and understanding of city process:

“According to Healey (1991), planners have the skills to play a combined and harnessed role as intermediators to the societal tasks of social mobilizations and to mediate between theory and practice in social transformations” (as cited by Tayebi, 89).

Planners, then, do not necessarily have to engage in action, they can play a reflective and informative role, providing knowledge and support to guide transformative actions in a community.

While Meet Me at The Bell Tower has engaged participation from all parts of the city, some interviewees noted that additional promotion is needed to solicit and amplify attendance from both area and non-area residents.

As described by Novy, protest can take on many creative forms: “The movement used a diverse and imaginative repertory of protest forms to mobilize against the project: a rally

through the project area complemented by boats on the River Spree, so-called 'neighbourhood walks' and workshops with residents and interested citizens, concerts and exhibitions, video installations and internet-based action" (1825).

The Meet Me at the Bell Tower initiative employs storytelling through various online communication tools to inspire others to participate. In addition, they use it to hold elected officials accountable. Using Twitter and other social media accounts, they are able to put pressure on elected officials:

"Since being elected. We've been giving him shit for a few months, for a variety of things. Because we see him in the community, and he says, 'Hey do you have anything happening?' and we're like 'Yeah, the Bell Tower happens every Friday at 6 p.m.' so we've been harassing him for the last two years since he's being elected. That's 104 Fridays. That's 104 missed invitations. You don't get anymore until you come, so he came."

As described by Healey, while societies are increasingly fragmented, there are "new tools that foster communication and collaborative action" (as cited by Afzalan, 272). Social networks established online have brought people together in places where there are political and social strain. Meet Me at The Bell Tower participants note how social media has given them the opportunity to reframe the narrative of Indigenous experience, breaking down stereotypes and focusing on the positive.

The use of the Bell Tower was a creative engagement tactic, giving participants something to rally around. The sound of the bell became a reminder to the community that the area is being watched over, is safe, and that violence should be prevented.

The megaphone is another communication tool engaged by participants of Meet Me at The Bell Tower. They contend that the megaphone needs to be (a) solutions-oriented; (b) positive; (c) respectful; (d) democratic; and (e) loud. When these rules were not adhered to, relationships with the community became strained. Planners can work towards sorting and guiding positive and productive debate using the Meet Me at The Bell Tower governance model for their megaphone.

When they promote their weekly gathering, they prescribe to the “four f’s of the village: free, food, family and fun.” Planners can look at the governance of the megaphone and the four f’s as a model for how they should engage and consult with the community.

Systems Change

Participants of Meet Me at The Bell Tower cite the need to become knowledgeable about city governance and political systems, and how planners can work together with activists to unfold and untangle regulations and policies. While they may not be able to speak openly about public issues, planning professionals can “shed light on decision-making structures to indicate opportunities for participation in each phase of planning processes” and “inform powerless citizens about how the power structure legitimizes the predefined agendas” (Tayebi, 91). Meet Me at The Bell Tower works towards system literacy by ensuring their participants are well-informed citizens who know about their rights and needs, and can actively participate in planning and decision-making processes.

Meet Me at The Bell Tower rebalances power dynamic by placing their volunteers and participants at a higher level than elected officials. While they believe that politicians play an important role in decision-making, they contend that the community can influence political decisions by becoming system literate and strategic about their advocacy. Equity in the

neighbourhood is achieved as people of all backgrounds and ethnicities become more vocal, and their issues up front and centre.

Meet Me at The Bell Tower hosts weekly discussions around community issues, raising their awareness about how to go about taking action. They regularly present their ideas and perspectives to media, on panels and forums, and through stakeholder engagement – as they have become known as a key voice on issues impacting the neighbourhood. They cite how planners need to involve the community from the outset of a study, not at the end, and to be genuine in their goal of soliciting feedback: “Don’t show up with the plan already made, show up and tell the community, ‘I want to make something with you!’”

Quick Tips: Recommendations for Planners (summary of above)

- Gain trust through relationship building with vulnerable populations.
- Activism can help planners sort and understand neighbourhood problems more fine-grain.
- Planners can support activism by attending events and gatherings and providing insight on their roles and responsibilities. This educates people on the planning profession and improves system literacy.
- Create safe, comfortable spaces for people – it encourages candid feedback.
- Protest creates a “strength in numbers” and undeniable presence – a visual beacon of the issues and places needing renewal and support.
- Bring people of different backgrounds and perspectives together to articulate a shared vision.
- Build partnership and coalitions with social movements, and other networks, to expand network and further canvas message.

- Small-wins become generative catalysts for further action.
- Collaboration is key.
- Protest can be a user group for neighbourhood renewal – local knowledge and idea bank for design and planning strategies.
- Build community capacity – they become the greatest stewards and champions for their neighbourhood (e.g. Neighbourhood Watch, community clean-up).
- Attend protest gatherings to provide knowledge on planning profession – this improves system literacy and policy processes. Ensures citizens are well-informed about their rights and needs.
- Storytelling through online communication tools in mobilizing support, generating interest.
- Facilitate public engagement like Meet Me at The Bell Tower’s megaphone: solutions-oriented, positive, respectful, democratic, and loud!
- Four F’s – free, food, family and fun: for public engagement and community consultation
- Work towards creating equity throughout planning processes.

6.3 Other Reflections

The issues raised by participants of Meet Me at The Bell Tower can be addressed through planning and design. In Appendix E, I suggest some rudimentary planning and design interventions at Powers Street and Selkirk Avenue (the site of Meet Me at The Bell Tower) based on the feedback provided by Meet Me at The Bell Tower participants. To better pedestrianize the street, I propose a cross-walk and bump-outs, to slow down traffic and to improve safety. Pedestrian-scale lighting, a multi-purpose plaza, and eyes-and-ears on the street created

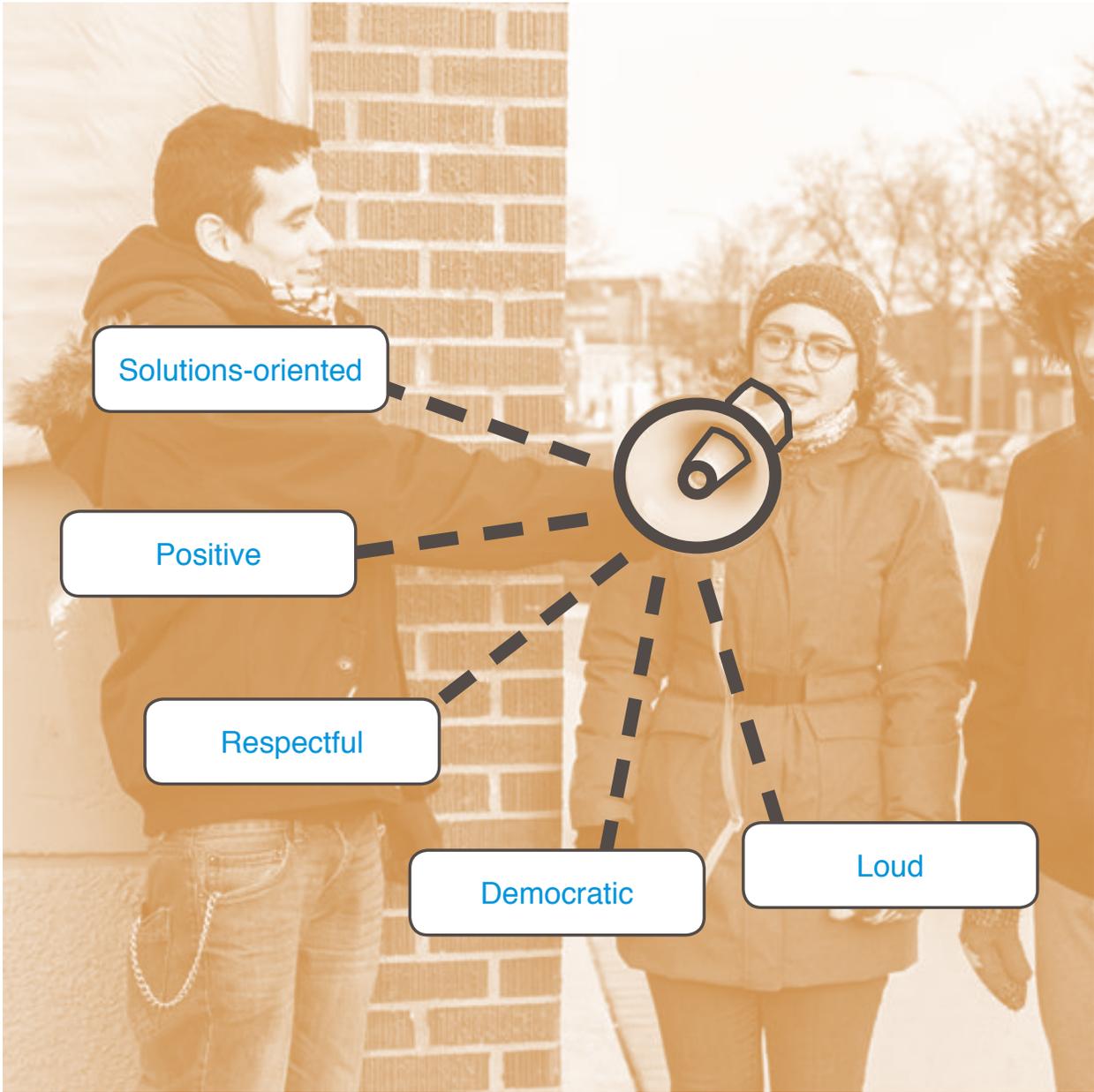


Image 53: Rules of the megaphone.

through tactical animation (e.g. festivals, pop-up programming) are also envisioned, to improve perceptions of safety. Creating a destination at Powers Street and Selkirk Avenue with programming and things-to-do may also reduce a feeling of isolation and instill a sense of pride and community. The loss of jobs in the Selkirk Avenue area identified through this practicum the interviews may be addressed by creating space for businesses to pop-up.

6.4 Lessons for Future Research

While the above preliminary recommendations could be formulated through this practicum, other lessons and insights gained from this research may need to be further explored in future research.

Social media is a powerful communication tool. It has the ability to “store the geographic locations of online contents from users’ IP addresses or fast-growing GPS-equipped mobile devices” (Tayebi, 91). An assessment of trends of online activism could be explored to help planners address issues logged in specific locations.

It would be interesting to compare the number of planners per neighbourhood in Winnipeg to other cities, and whether the absence of planners gives rise to more social movements as the lack of planning staff may make it difficult for residents to express their concerns in a timely manner.

Identifying how many occurrences participants of Meet Me at The Bell Tower have been asked to participate in official city planning engagement processes may validate the importance for protest in public space, as activism can empower residents to become more engaged, informed, and eager to participate in city building exercises.

While Meet Me at The Bell Tower currently benefits from generous in-kind donations

from the community, what happens when these supports are reduced over time? City planning departments or elected officials may choose to support these types of activist demonstrations with food and water, space for meeting/gathering, and marketing. Exploring the interest level from municipal planning offices about providing this type of support could be a valuable research undertaking in the future.

What happens if Meet Me at The Bell Tower's demands are met? How will this group continue to be relevant, loud, and operating in the next few years?

The work of Meet Me at The Bell Tower is incredibly inspiring. In the last five years, they have been able to affect and change the Selkirk Avenue area's built form, change perceptions of the neighbourhood for the better, and increase the participation of the community in reclaiming their spaces, among other outcomes described throughout this practicum. I envision so many other possibilities for this group and groups like them, and hope this research can be continued on by future planners interested in harnessing the ideas, creativity, and support of activists in their planning of truly just, equitable, and inclusive cities.

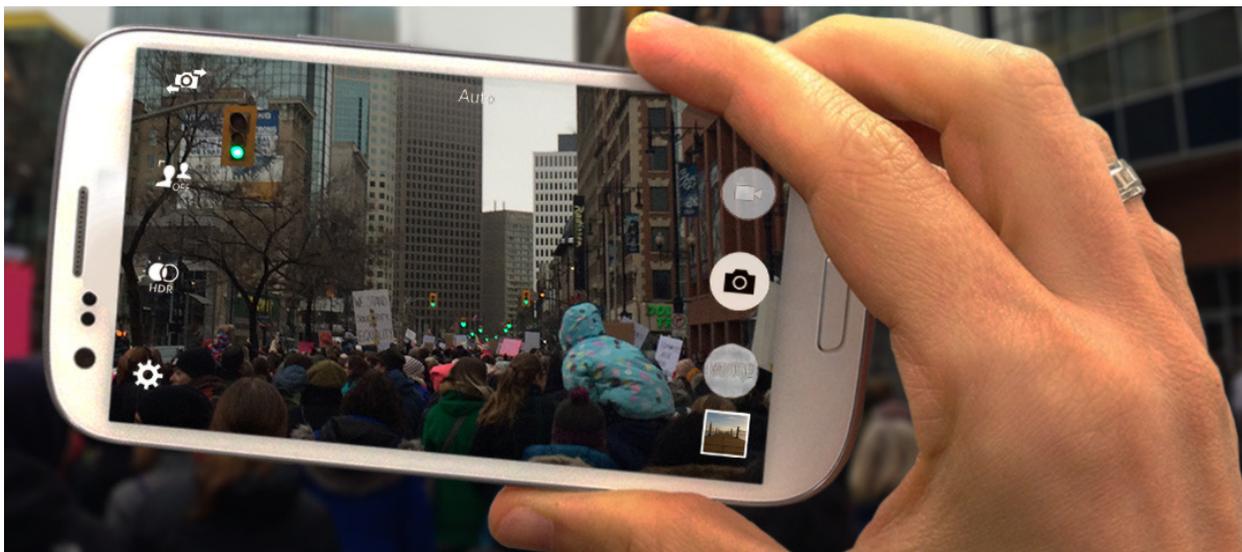


Image 54: Using social media to assess protest.

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Appendices

APPENDIX A: Letter of Consent

APPENDIX B: Interview Schedule

APPENDIX C: Letter of Endorsement

APPENDIX D: Information Sheet

APPENDIX E: Design Intervention Concept Drawing

LETTER OF CONSENT

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

As part of the graduate research project looking into lessons learned for planners and others from Indigenous activism in public space, participants of the Meet Me At The Bell Tower initiative are being asked to participate in short 30-minute interviews. These interviews explore Meet Me At The Bell Tower participants' experiences, their perceptions about the initiative's outcomes, and their thoughts on what more planners and the planning profession can do to support this type of community gathering.

Before participating in this interview, please read through the following page. It contains information about the project, your privacy, how I will use the collected information and how to ask any questions you might have.

Research Project Title:

Where They Meet: Indigenous Activism and City Planning in Winnipeg, Manitoba

Researcher:

Jason Syvixay, Graduate Student, Master of City Planning
Department of City Planning, Faculty of Architecture, University of Manitoba

Background:

In Winnipeg, Indigenous activists are finding and/or creating new opportunities to meet in public space to discuss civic issues like safety, inclusion, and the right to land. Through physical resistance (i.e. Indigenous activists occupying public space through blockades, protest, and public demonstrations), Indigenous activists have begun to make known their varying political, economic, and social struggles - and in many cases, are rallying both public and media support.

This practicum will explore Indigenous activism, leading to lessons for planners and others. Instead of maintaining a critical distance from these demonstrations, which can often create feelings of alienation within the Indigenous community, I assert that planners and others can view these public actions as offering opportunities for feedback, dialogue, and change. Through a case study of Meet Me At The Bell Tower, I hope to demonstrate how Indigenous activism in public spaces may represent an important bottom-up, community-based approach to public engagement.



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66 Chancellors Circle
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Research Procedures:

You are being asked to participate in my research. If you agree to participate, you will be asked a series of questions and given the opportunity to provide additional commentary. The interview is estimated to take between 30 minutes to an hour of your time.

Risk and Benefits:

This project does not involve any more risk than you would experience in your everyday life.

Confidentiality:

Your privacy is important. The information collected cannot be linked to a name or a specific address, as you will not be asked to provide either. Data will be stored in a secure location on a password-protected computer and will not include names or job titles of participants. Only the principal investigator and supervisor will have access to the data. Once the survey responses have been coded and analyzed, original documents will be destroyed. All typed and/or hand-written notes will be destroyed one-year after the final practicum is submitted (Est. 2018).

Feedback:

Upon completion of the interview, participants will be provided with an interview transcript so they have the opportunity to validate and vet the information. This will be an opportunity for participants to provide clarification, modify comments, and delete comments they deem inappropriate for the public domain. The timeline for participant feedback will be 2 to 3 weeks. If desired, participants can also be given a copy of the final study, once completed, at their request through e-mail or surface mail, if requested.

Preferred Method of Receiving Interview Transcript:

Email: _____ and/or

Surface Mail: _____



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I give permission for this interview to be recorded. (Write Yes or No inside the box)

Signature of Interviewee: _____ Date: _____

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study before June 1, 2017, at which point the research will be submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for approval. You are free to refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation. If you choose to withdraw from this study, your recording and interview transcript will be destroyed. Please contact the Principal Researcher if you wish to withdraw from this study.

The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This research has been approved by the Joint-Faculty REB. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator at [REDACTED]. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Contact Information:

Researcher: Jason Syvixay, Graduate Student, University of Manitoba



Research Advisor: Dr. Rae Bridgman, Professor, University of Manitoba



INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

The purpose of this interview is to uncover the issues of central concern to Indigenous activists of the Meet Me at The Bell Tower initiative, the social structures that are perceived to hinder this type of activism, and how planners and Indigenous activists may collaborate on key issues of importance. I anticipate lessons learned from studying the Meet Me at The Bell Tower case can help to create a toolkit for planners on how to best engage in Indigenous activism demonstrations. The intent is to interview Indigenous activists of the Meet Me at The Bell Tower initiative and planners, politicians, and other key decision-makers. To ensure reliability and consistency, all interviews will include standard questions to help guide the conversation. A list of sample questions is provided below.

Could you please tell me about your role and participation with Meet Me at The Bell Tower?

- What would you see as some of the most important outcomes of this initiative?
- How do you think this initiative has affected the neighbourhood community?
- What kind of projects have come from this initiative?

What does Meet Me at The Bell Tower advocate for?

What attracted you to participate in Meet Me at The Bell Tower?

What support (if any) does Meet Me at The Bell Tower need?

- From the community-at-large? From politicians? From city planners? Other?

Have any/what kind of relationships have been established and maintained with Meet Me at The Bell Tower?

- What new relationships could be formed?
- What interactions does your organization have with other activists or social movements?
- What lessons have you learned from your participation?

Is there anything else about Meet Me at The Bell Tower that you would like to tell me?



January 2017

Dear Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board (JFREB):

My name is Michael Redhead Champagne, co-founder of AYO! (Aboriginal Youth Opportunities), the group that founded Meet Me at the Bell Tower, and I am writing this letter to formally support Jason Syvixay's research. Entitled "Where They Meet: Indigenous Activism and City Planning in Winnipeg, Manitoba," is part of the Master of City Planning program at the University of Manitoba.

Meet Me at the Bell Tower is a weekly gathering in Winnipeg's North End, created in 2011, it has brought together hundreds of people to demand an end to violence. It has also cultivated a sense of community pride and ownership and has spurred important discussion around how to address crime, poverty, housing, and other critical topics. This initiative has generated both local and national media coverage, highlighting the strength of the urban Indigenous community in Winnipeg. As a group of dedicated volunteers, we are just getting started. Meet Me At The Bell Tower continues to grow in community engagement and participation. Jason's research will provide a spotlight on how far Meet Me At The Bell has come since its inception, the impact that we have had on community perceptions, and reveal what is in store for us as a group in the future with regards to city building. The research will provide us with a snapshot of our history that will be useful in future organizing and mobilizing work when it comes to education and public awareness.

We, AYO! & the MM@BT organizers, support this research and welcome Jason's participation as part of our Bell Tower Family. If you have any further questions I can be reached at 

Sincerely,



Michael Redhead Champagne



Faculty of Graduate Studies
Department of City Planning

University of Manitoba
Department of City Planning
66 Chancellors Circle
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3T 2N2

INFORMATION SHEET

This information sheet provides participants of Meet Me At The Bell Tower with a basic idea of what the research is about. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

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Where They Meet: Indigenous Activism and City Planning in Winnipeg, Manitoba

Researcher:

Jason Syvixay, Graduate Student, Master of City Planning
Department of City Planning, Faculty of Architecture, University of Manitoba

Background:

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This practicum will explore Indigenous activism, leading to lessons for planners and others. Instead of maintaining a critical distance from these demonstrations, which can often create feelings of alienation within the Indigenous community, I assert that planners and others can view these public actions as offering opportunities for feedback, dialogue, and change. Through a case study of Meet Me At The Bell Tower, I hope to demonstrate how Indigenous activism in public spaces may represent an important bottom-up, community-based approach to public engagement.

Research Procedures:

The Principal Investigator will take written notes about how the Meet Me At The Bell Tower initiative is organized, implemented, and to obtain perceptions and feedback from the participants. In addition, photography of the gathering may be taken.



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Risk and Benefits:

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Confidentiality:

Your privacy is important. The information collected cannot be linked to a name or a specific address, as you will not be asked to provide either. Data will be stored in a secure location on a password-protected computer and will not include names or job titles of participants. Only the principal investigator and supervisor will have access to the data. Once the data has been coded and analyzed, original documents will be destroyed. All typed and/or hand-written notes during the Meet Me At The Bell Tower gatherings will be destroyed one-year after the final practicum is submitted (Est. 2018).

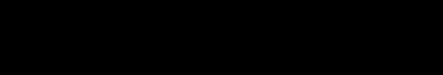
This research has been approved by the Joint-Faculty REB. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator at [REDACTED] and/or humanethics@umanitoba.ca.

Contact Information:

Researcher: Jason Syvixay, Graduate Student, University of Manitoba



Research Advisor: Dr. Rae Bridgman, Professor, University of Manitoba



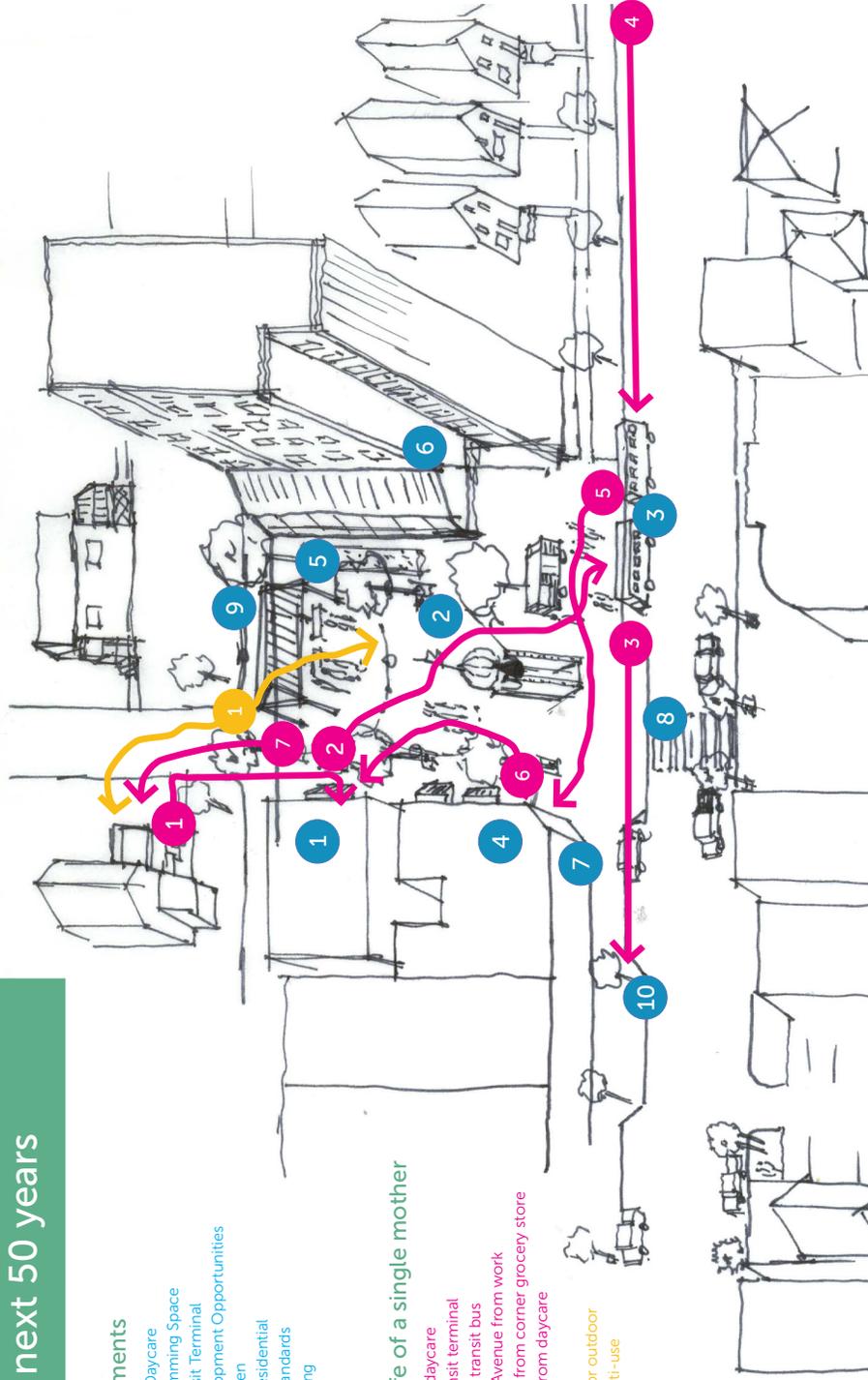
next 50 years

area improvements

1. Neighbourhood Daycare
2. Multi-use Programming Space
3. Proximity to Transit Terminal
4. Mixed-use Development Opportunities
5. Community Garden
6. Mixed-income Residential
7. Façade Design Standards
8. Pedestrian Crossing
9. Lighting
10. Streetscaping

a day in the life of a single mother

1. Drop children to daycare
2. Walk towards transit terminal
3. Travel to work via transit bus
4. Return to Selkirk Avenue from work
5. Pick up groceries from corner grocery store
6. Pick up children from daycare
7. Head home
1. Stay in the area for outdoor programming at multi-use programming space



Sketch of Selkirk Avenue Opportunities (Source: Jason Sykay, 2017)

land use

Incentives for mixed-income housing projects. Tax breaks for mixed-use development. Design public gathering plaza for multi-use programming. Enforce strict commercial zoning for main street, and residential at perimeter.

built form

Ensure that there is a public streetscape on Selkirk Avenue at all hours of the day and throughout the year during all seasons. Explore Indigenous-led planting schemes and street furnishings. Utilize Tax Increment Financing for streetscape/public realm improvements.

commercial use

Create and enforce design standards for business facades. Explore pop-up business opportunities for Indigenous entrepreneurs. Create shared-use opportunities for existing buildings. Celebrate diverse business options through marketing/promotions programs.

transportation

Adopt Complete Streets design with shared-street for pedestrians, cyclists, and car-users. Install bumpouts, pedestrian crossings, and transit terminal hubs to increase accessibility and mobility. Plan parking and transit close to major commercial and residential areas.