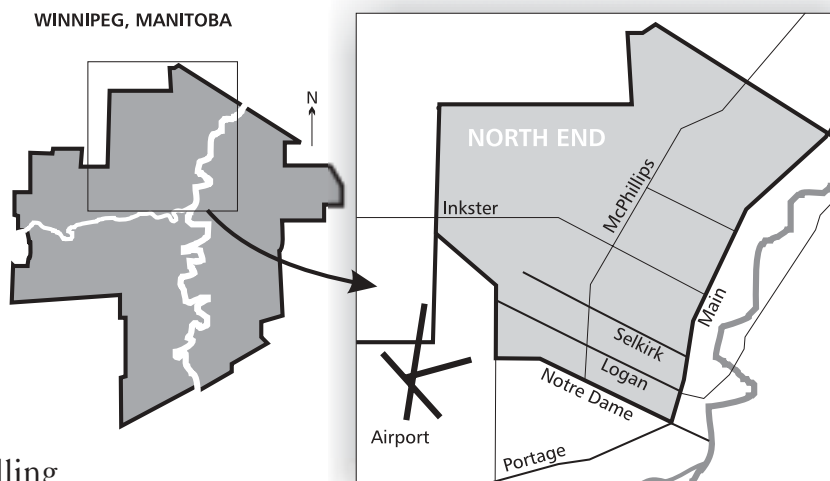


The steady progress since 1998¹ of Winnipeg's North End Renewal Corporation (NECRC) makes this organization seem like a textbook example of the successful evolution of a community development corporation, or CDC. The story is not yet complete – full maturity has yet to be attained.

Nevertheless, the story deserves telling now for it describes the early stages of a likely path to effective maturity. Moreover, NECRC illustrates one powerful structure for implementing community economic development (CED).²

Today, NECRC has established itself as a distinctly credible, action-oriented organization, driven by the residents of the area who have given it a broad mandate for a comprehensive and systematic program. It now has a budget of over \$500,000 and has mobilized over 200 working volunteers. Securely positioned with five years of core operating funding that began in April 2001, it routinely levers ever more financial support for its endeavours. Among the highlights of its work to date are commercial and housing development, training and employment services, tax reduction on local properties, community safety provisions, and a solid base of business and resident associations.

How has it managed to do all this and more in such a short time? Let's begin with its home in the neighbourhood.



from *this* EARTH

**NECRC
& the evolution
of a development system
in Winnipeg's North End**

**by Michelle Colussi & Stewart E. Perry,
with Mike Lewis & Garry Loewen**

The vacant shops on Selkirk Avenue, in the heart of Winnipeg's North End, are emblematic of the deterioration which many residents & organizations wish to reverse. Their instrument of choice to coordinate resources and initiatives: the community development corporation.



NECRC represents the application of the best of what we have learned in the CED field in Canada over the last 25 years. Indeed, some of the lessons applied to its development reach back even further.

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

Winnipeg's North End takes its name for lying north of the Canadian Pacific Railway tracks, which run through the city as a dividing line between the haves and the have-nots. The North End, while it has an overall identity, is made up of perhaps 11 sub-neighbourhoods, home to about 38,000 residents, including many Aboriginal people and immigrants. It is largely a poor population with a struggling working class sector.

Although rich in the industrial history that built Winnipeg, the North End is a physically impoverished district. As the city expanded, the old factory and other historic buildings of the area were deserted. Current estimates suggest that over 40% of the buildings on one of the two main commercial strips, Selkirk Avenue, are boarded up and vacant. In spite of the industrial land and excellent transportation links, there had been no development plans for the district.

The average household income in the neighbourhood in 1996 was \$28,649, comparing with \$44,937 for the rest of the city of Winnipeg. In that year over half the North End households lived below the poverty line, and the rate of unemployment was more than double that of Winnipeg generally. Crime rates were two and three times the number for the city as a whole, with prostitution charges in the area accounting for 73% of all criminal charges in the city. An arson epidemic in the mid-1990s reinforced its reputation among outsiders as a tough neighbourhood. It was fast becoming known as Canada's arson capital.

In spite of this depleted environment, there were enduring qualities of community and a sense of neighbourhood. The same pride and strength that was behind events like the Winnipeg General Strike in 1919, which ushered in the modern Canadian labour movement, remains evident in the residents. Newcomers continue adding to the cultural diversity of the area. Social agencies, while admittedly an indicator of the degree of poverty and need, are also a measure of local values and commitment. For example, the community supports 67 neighbourhood watch programs, 55 religious institutions, and 6 vocational training programs.

These assets, combined with the residents' strong sense of attachment to the sub-neighbourhoods of the North End, were the earth from which the actors in this remarkable story coaxed a process and a plan to renew one of Western Canada's oldest and poorest neighbourhoods.

THE BEGINNINGS

The actual stages of evolution of a CDC are preceded by a period in which the vision and leadership of a few good people – and the commitment and capacity of their organizations – play a critical role. The beginnings of NECRC may be found in the collaboration and commitment of two Winnipeg organizations whose respective leaders had a crucial relationship.

Since 1979, the Community Education Association (CEDA) had undertaken a range of human resource support and development initiatives in Winnipeg, with a lot of emphasis also on the housing sector. Through its executive director, Tom Simms, CEDA was instrumental in establishing SEED (Supporting Employment and Economic Development), a nonprofit organization intended to supply business support services to low-income people.



Garry Loewen explains the mission of the NECRC to William Whyte Residents Association, and how they can help renew Winnipeg's North End.

The actual stages of evolution of a CDC are preceded by a period in which the vision & leadership of a few good people – & the commitment & capacity of their organizations – play a critical role.

Although incorporated in 1988, SEED remained dormant until 1993, when the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) of Manitoba lent a hand. SEED was of particular interest to MCC staff member Garry Loewen. A former administrator of Toronto International Airport, Loewen had become an ordained minister in the United Church of Canada, and then came to work at the MCC on the problem of generating jobs for Winnipeg's poor. After helping to activate SEED, he was seconded to become its first director. SEED has since evolved into a leader in creating the training, credit, and legislative resources needed to make microenterprise and small business development into a community-building tool.

Simms and Loewen shared a basic understanding of the need to go deeper into community issues. They both came to conclude that they needed to do something more than their isolated programs, to do something more comprehensive. They recognized that the North End lacked necessary planning, research, co-ordination, and even communication resources (among the local agencies and with funders and other outsiders). It seemed to them that although the community was served by many organizations, most were working in isolation and some were struggling to keep going. There was no community plan to guide resource allocation or to provide a common basis for collaboration. It was also apparent that residents needed a vision of their future that went beyond doing something about the fires and the vacant buildings. Permanent changes would require a long term, comprehensive approach to development. There was no single program or project that could do what was necessary.

Simms and Loewen began to meet monthly over a brown-bag lunch to discuss CED topics; it focussed their attention on the idea of a more comprehensive approach. Late in 1997 Tom went on a tour of CED groups in eastern Canada. He returned home especially impressed with RÉSO, the highly successful CDC that was revitalizing an area in southwest Montréal. Like the North End, southwest Montréal included a number of different sub-neighbourhoods where there were lots of organizations, but little co-ordination or comprehensive effort until RÉSO began its work.

Loewen too had been following the story of RÉSO.³ Simms and Loewen talked and talked about RÉSO (they were always comparing notes anyway) and concluded that the North End really needed such an organization. In January 1998, they decided to gather a few community and organi-

zational leaders at another setting, the Indian Family Centre, in order to broaden support for the idea. This group agreed with Tom and Garry's analysis and favoured convening a wider range of organizations concerned with the North End to consider the RÉSO model. They formed an ad hoc co-ordinating committee of residents and organizational leaders to plan the event. They knew that they did not fully represent the area. Unlike other community organizers, however, they did not get bogged down in efforts to assure full representation from the very start. With a firm commitment to strengthening local input and ownership, they forged ahead.

To this point, some key conditions were now in place to begin developing the CDC:

- The recognition that just another program was not the answer.
- An awareness of CED in other settings, an awareness that a comprehensive approach could indeed address problems systematically and successfully over time through a broadly based community-controlled organization.
- Awareness of a model organization (RÉSO) that spoke directly to the particular local situation.
- A high level of vision, skills, and commitment in the founder organizations and their key staff members.
- Early engagement of some local residents and local organizations.
- A willingness to exercise leadership, with a commitment to ongoing expansion of neighbourhood participation.

From this point on, then, the local leaders began what now can be seen as the first three stages in the evolution of a CDC and its program:

- Building a community base of support.
- Constructing the CDC itself.
- Designing and carrying out the initial concrete programs and projects that can prove the organization's potential.

Typically, these stages are not neatly compartmentalized.

The characteristic events blur into adjoining stages, although the general pattern is apparent. The same is true for the story of NECRC.

STAGE 1: BUILDING THE BASE OF SUPPORT

The initial stage in the evolution of a CDC is that in which the community residents and their leading representatives specifically stop to consider their situation. They go through a period of systematic self-examination and self-education that brings about a shared analysis and community dialogue for consensus on the first steps toward renewal. All this has the effect of creating a readiness in the community for a CED effort and specifically for a CDC.

There are three common benchmarks in this process: a visioning event or events; the enlistment of all the sectors; and some sort of express intent or plan, together with some resources to go further. This entire process may take only two or

three months or perhaps it will require as much as two years. The North End achieved all three benchmarks in a year or less.

In March 1998 at a second, larger meeting, Loewen and Simms presented the story of RÉSO as a possible model. Some 30 different leaders had been invited to this second meeting, but these brought others to send the total to over 40 participants. The outcome was strong support for exploring further the potential for adapting the RÉSO model to Winnipeg. Again, in spite of this strong support, the working group knew it needed to build additional community awareness and involvement.

They decided to bring in RÉSO's executive director, Nancy Neamtan, to help build this involvement and give a fuller sense of CED possibilities. SEED had recently received an unrestricted \$5,000 grant from the Community Economic Development Technical Assistance Program (CEDTAP),⁴ and applied this to the costs of a whirlwind tour by Neamtan that April. Her trip involved meetings with all three levels of government, with representatives of North End businesses, and with a wide range of residents and North End organizations. Of particular importance was a meeting with 25 leading corporations arranged by United Way.

Neamtan's passion and competence brought a whole new level of credibility to the idea. In addition, this series of events helped ground everyone in a common understanding of what a community-based development group is and what CED is all about. Nancy was especially able to help residents picture what a community-based corporation might do for their neighbourhood, based on actual results in Montréal.⁵ Building this initial sense of hope, understanding, and support in both the private and public sectors was critical to the CDC's evolution.

The next step in the organizing process involved expanding the co-ordinating committee so it could start setting up the corporation. Up to this point, SEED and CEDA had certainly gained substantial local support, but sponsorship had to be taken up by the wider community. In May specific representatives were recruited from community organizations, labour, business, service groups, residents' associations, Aboriginal organizations, and the religious community. It signalled the beginning of a formal shift in ownership from the founding organizations to the community. (Loewen also began negotiating with the Western Diversification Agency to underwrite some of this work through a grant to SEED.)

The transfer of control to the community continued through the development of a corporate constitution based on representation of community sectors (similar to the RÉSO structure), and through constant networking. Ultimately the formal corporation papers were filed in July 1998, pending a formal definition of its community purpose.

With some money left over after Neamtan's trip the committee decided in the meantime to bring in more CED leaders that summer. They arranged for David Pell, president of the Canadian CED Network (CCEDNet), to present the work of his community group in Toronto. Then Mike Lewis of the Centre

for Community Enterprise (CCE), a technical assistance group in British Columbia, came to discuss the specific process for establishing and launching a CDC.

These visits raised the level of confidence that the idea was right, but also suggested that the Winnipeg committee needed to mobilize a systematic program of technical assistance to help them along the way. To that end, Loewen managed to obtain a \$25,000 technical assistance grant from CEDTAP, and the committee hired CCE for a sustained effort over the next three years. In the meantime Loewen recruited Derek Pachal to succeed him at SEED and moved back to MCC.

In September staff from CEDA and SEED were seconded to work intensively in the North End to animate and offer support to the different sectors as a base for the new organization, the NECRC. Throughout that fall a recruitment drive brought in 70 businesses and other organizations as members. Each of the various sectors met and elected their own representatives to the NECRC board, with the hope that a general community meeting could be held to launch the corporation formally as a real endeavour before the end of the year.

During the period leading up to what would be NECRC's first annual general meeting, the organizing committee began to deal with a number of fundamental issues:

- Where could immediate funding come from?
- How to extend the base of community support?
- Who was going to provide technical assistance to the planning and development process and how would that assistance be used?
- What more information was needed on key trends, issues, and sectors operating in the North End?
- How could membership and board structure maximize local participation and accountability, ground the corporation in local priorities and constituencies, and still result in a reasonably sized board of directors?

All these are issues that any CDC must resolve in order to get off the ground. It will be useful at this point to review some of these issues in more detail, as NECRC addressed them.

Initial Funding

The funding history of NECRC more or less parallels that of RÉSO. Initially, financial support for work in RÉSO's territory had come from outside the community. The Montréal YMCA had for two years subsidized and seconded two community organizers for one RÉSO neighbourhood, Point St. Charles. That experience became the basis for the community organization that later evolved into RÉSO. In Winnipeg the same sort of thing occurred. CEDA and SEED seconded their key staff to animate the community, and their efforts gave rise to NECRC.

This strategic re-direction of existing resources from the founding organizations is an example of co-operative leadership at its best. Not one, but two organizations put their efforts into the North End. Practically speaking, that represented in finan-

cial terms probably well over \$100,000 in 1998 alone, and in about two years totalled more than \$300,000 (apart from in-kind assistance) until NECRC obtained its own financing directly.

It takes time for a new entity to raise money on its own, and indeed NECRC did not have any of its own funding resources until the fall of 2000. And only later did it have enough money to hire an executive officer. Ultimately, basic core funding was obtained only in April 2001. Thus the financial in-kind support of others was crucial for some years. Probably no CDC has arisen outside of this kind of history of finance – that is, a subsidy through the seconded efforts of some interested organization(s) within or close to the community or (less frequently) subvention by a public agency.

Extending the Base

The process of connecting with residents, business owners, government, and the full range of organizations and groups working in the North End characterized the organizing drive from the outset.

The early decision to model the governance structure on RÉSO led to a membership recruitment effort that was organizationally rather than individually focussed. There were lots of organizations in the North End. The challenge was to build a common agenda and design a development corporation that fostered co-operation to address the gaps between what was being done by each group, as well as to utilize existing community resources more effectively.

In the period leading up to NECRC's first annual general meeting in November 1998, the sector meetings made a significant contribution to the initial situational analysis. They had still another benefit: to set the stage for each sector to elect its own representatives to sit on the first board. But the main result was to mobilize support and understanding in the neighbourhood.

However, to explain the success of these early stages, it is important to acknowledge that the founding organizations supplied more than staff; they came with established relationships with a fairly diverse base of organizations, businesses, and government agencies. They marshalled these relationship assets to secure internal and external support for the new initiative and to pave the way in establishing a range of new contacts.

For example, as a result of its credit arrangements for financing microenterprises, SEED had a good relationship with the Assiniboine Credit Union. The manager of the Credit Union introduced Derek Pachal, SEED's executive director, to a variety of small business owners in the North End. Not only did the manager open doors, but his presence also lent a degree of credibility to the project for those who otherwise may have been skeptical.

"We did a lot of door knocking," says Pachal, ⁶ "and we wouldn't have reached as many people without the support of those connections." Levering connections was also a task of the co-ordinating committee formed in May 1998. All were involved in this kind of networking on behalf of the proposed CDC.

The co-ordinating group determined that understanding and

support from municipal, provincial, and federal governments would be important over the long term. So they took every opportunity to share information and to invite them to events, beginning with the Neamtan tour. They continuously used outside expertise to articulate the rationale for CED and to tell about the results being achieved in other parts of the country. Mike Lewis said, “They took full advantage of every visit I made to Winnipeg to have me meet with decision makers and funders to educate, inform, inspire, and prod on their behalf.”

To build a base in the community and its environment that understands and supports a comprehensive approach will ordinarily be a prerequisite to launching an effective CDC. Sometimes a small group will try to start a CDC without such an effort, and depend upon gaining support at a later date. That is very risky. In Winnipeg the leg-work was done first.

There were other benefits achieved during 1998 as a result of taking this sectoral organizing approach. It got leaders of different sectors talking to each other. It served to initiate new relationships with a broad range of interests in the North End. Contacts and intelligence relevant to the start-up stages of the organization were assembled. And, not to be discounted, sectors began to evolve a better understanding of the interconnectedness of issues and interests in the North End and to believe that the decline of their neighbourhoods could be reversed through a more co-ordinated and strategic approach.

Local Information Gathering & Research

A major theme in the organizing year was to initiate a situational analysis of the North End neighbourhoods. Leaders understood the importance of a broader and deeper understanding of neighbourhood issues and dynamics to any planning and decision-making around local priorities. Some of the data gathered during this process could also provide a baseline for measuring progress in the first years of the corporation’s activities.

While much of the information could have been obtained through statistical sources of one kind or another, it also required a series of narrative descriptions of the role of the largest employers, the place of the larger commercial renters in the area, and similar qualitative topics. This information could only be obtained through interviews. Getting interviews depends upon connections. Interviews are more costly than statistical sources in terms of both time and money. So the staff and time contributed by the founding organizations were critical to this part of the organizing process too, as was their ability to access additional resources (a grant to pay students to complete some data gathering, for example).

Of course, part of the information gathering concerned where they could find money to support the initiative. Loewen made some initial contacts with Western Economic Diversification (WED), for instance. But the only real outside support at the time came from CEDTAP for technical assistance. Only later was Pachal able to clinch funding from WED.

Accessing & Using Technical Assistance

The knowledge, experience, and leadership ability among the staff of the founding organizations were clearly considerable, even though outside sources were required to supplement them. However, linkages to these sources were among the staff’s own strengths. Simms had visited RÉSO and Neamtan, for example. Through CCEDNet, Garry had gained access to the CEDTAP funding. Each used his own leads to assess and access technical assistance sources.

Lewis, who became the primary provider of technical assistance, testified to the

TABLE 1: NECRC BOARD

Sectors represented:	
Business (both small & large)	4
Residents’ groups (incl. housing associations)	4
Aboriginal organizations	2
Community service organizations	2
Religious & fraternal organizations	1
Labour organizations	1
Individuals chosen for special backgrounds	2
Total board membership	16

TABLE 2: THE AGM VISION & PRIORITY THEMES

What participants loved about the North End:

- cultural diversity (57%)
- friendly people
- old historic places
- central location
- sense of community
- social agencies/diverse business sector/affordable housing

What they would change:

- housing (70%)
- crime
- social problems
- business district
- reputation/dirtiness/youth opportunities

What they wanted to see in ten years:

- more locally owned business (44%)
- better housing
- safe, clean, vibrant surroundings
- employment/recreation opportunities

This strategic re-direction of existing resources from CEDA & SEED is an example of co-operative leadership at its best.... But the founding organizations supplied more than staff; they came with established relationships with a fairly diverse base of organizations, businesses, & government agencies. They marshalled these relationship assets to secure support for the new initiative & to pave the way for new contacts.

To assist people facing multiple barriers to achievement, NECRC's Resource Centre uses the PATH – Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (Inclusion Press, Toronto). Working with personal coaches, PATH participants learn how to express their hopes in terms of goals they can realize within one year.



solid understanding the core leadership had achieved:

“This group managed me, as opposed to me having to manage the process. They provided me with very clear priorities as to what they wanted me to help them achieve, and we worked as a team to achieve them. This very high quality of leadership was able to access the best of what I had to give, which made working with them quite a pleasure.”

To take one example, his session with the co-ordinating committee in June 1998 concerned translating RÉSO's sector governance model into an organizing strategy for building an initial vision. So Lewis' assistance guided the process of organizing in each sector, the primary method for deepening the participation in the community during the five months leading up to the first AGM.

Selecting and using consultants for technical assistance provides a local group with essential background and information that they would rarely have available in the community itself. Bringing in outsiders who are specialists in the CED process, however, is not enough. The specialists must be guided to the issues and tasks that the local group are struggling with. In Winnipeg, the leadership knew what direction they wanted to take; they sought people who could give them the practical maps.

STAGE 2: ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CDC

In the second stage of the evolution of a CDC, a stage that may take 6-12 months, another group of benchmarks can be discerned:

- creating a constitution and bylaws that provide for democratic local accountability and for conflict of interest provisions that make the organization credibly public-minded.
- a workable format for community action that is broadly accepted.
- a consensus on a set of concrete objectives that become embodied in a strategic plan.

The practical start-up of the corporation dates from the first AGM. It was at this point that the structure of the organization, its constitution and bylaws, were essentially ratified. More than 90 organizations were represented at that meeting. A 16-member board of directors was installed, confirming the representatives chosen at earlier sectoral meetings. The bylaws also designated two additional seats for individual community members.⁷ Table 1 (p. 25) summarizes the results.

Membership fees were set at \$1 per year merely to ensure some form of formal commitment. But by the next year it was apparent that collecting this cost more in staff time, etc., than it was worth, so the board set the fee for a lifetime membership. Such flexibility was a feature of the on-going evolution.

There remained the task of clarifying just what this governance structure was intended to address. With Lewis' assistance, the co-ordinating committee had designed a visioning process based on a publication of the Rocky Mountain Institute.⁸ Within the reasonable space of three hours, AGM participants were to answer three questions:

- What do you love about the North End?
- What do you want to change?
- What would you like to see ten years from now?

With Lewis' facilitation, people used their answers to define a set of priorities. Table 2 presents them in order of their importance to participants. (Percentages are given only for the top priorities.)

The level of dialogue and animated engagement among almost 100 people representing a wide variety of interests was a crowning achievement for all the work that had gone into building a base for the organization. Community-owned priorities were hereby established, and they could be examined in light of the initial situational analysis. In the coming year they would help focus additional research and ultimately feed the crafting of concrete goals and a strategic plan for presentation at the next AGM.

Ultimately, four overriding areas of emphasis for NECRC were extracted from the process:

- Affordable housing
- Community safety
- Cultural diversity
- Economic development/employment creation (with a strong component of small business renewal)

The first part of 1999 was consumed by research, dialogue, and analysis aimed at producing a SWOT analysis⁹ relevant to each of the four priority areas. Member working groups were established to get the more detailed research and planning work underway. The earlier sectoral meetings had unearthed specific concerns that the working groups could pick up and consult further on, with other residents. A flurry of activity produced a lot of specific ideas and relevant information, and even some clear action to be taken, but it was not easy to see exactly how to move from this point.

Loewen's return in March from a sabbatical in Australia gave the organization a boost. As MCC's community development officer, he would be able to dedicate fully half his time to the fledgling organization. By April a "leadership team" of seconded staff, comprising Simms, Pachal, and Loewen, agreed to share responsibility until there was funding for a full-time director. Loewen acted as the team's co-ordinator.

In June the United Way matched WED's grant to SEED. SEED then hired and seconded a full-time employment development director, Donna May Morin. She surveyed employment programs in the North End and brought together the program leaders to determine where the gaps were and how they should be filled.

Morin was a welcome addition to staff resources, but her work also made the question NECRC's priorities more urgent. A plan had to be formulated that would provide strategic direction. (It is worth pointing out that NECRC did not draft a strategic plan and then begin to carry it out. Rather, the process was interactive. Goals and activity areas guided exploratory action that in turn created a demand for more systematic objectives and projects.)

At this point, Lewis was asked to come in again. His first task was to work with the board to help establish their priorities from a very long list of issues and opportunities. The group used a priority-setting method developed by Mount Allison University's Rural and Small Town Program.¹⁰ Each board member scored each issue and opportunity in the following terms: first, how effectively action on it might contribute to the vision; and second, how difficult it would be to take such action.

In addition, issues were divided into two categories. "Policy issues" could be resolved only by convincing others to change; on "program and project issues" NECRC could take direct action. Sixteen action targets (see sidebar, "Plan for Community Renewal," this page.) emerged in relation to the four areas of concern articulated earlier in the visioning process.

PLAN FOR COMMUNITY RENEWAL

GOAL 1: To improve the quality and accessibility of housing to North End residents.

Plans:

- The CRC will promote and acquire financing for housing renovations.
- The CRC will assist and promote an inner city home ownership investment fund.
- The CRC will promote and assist North End residents in appealing their tax assessments.

GOAL 2: To improve the safety and image of the North End community.

Plans:

- To gain acceptance for community priorities with respect to community policing.
- To organize to conduct safety audits.
- To facilitate youth participation in organizing a conference concerning youth involvement in policing and recreation programs.
- To lobby for the closure of the Merchants Hotel.

GOAL 3: To promote the cultural diversity of the North End and strengthen relationships and understanding between cultural groups.

Plans:

- To facilitate the organization of an annual food fair/cultural event in the North End.
- To develop a pro-active program to promote inter-cultural dialogue, understanding, and relationship building in the North End.

GOAL 4: To stimulate economic development in the North End and increase the accessibility of North End residents to jobs in their community and surrounding areas.

Plans:

- The CRC will provide leadership for the redevelopment of the North End "Y."
- To set up a North End apprenticeship program linked to long-term housing stock renovation.
- To develop an effective program to attract business to the North End.
- To develop a produce/farmers/flea market in the North End.
- To attract or put in place a business incubator for the North End.
- To develop an effective capacity to place North End residents in the local and surrounding labour market.
- To develop and implement a business retention strategy for the North End.



Coaches and participants at work at the PATH Resource Centre, NECRC's employment development component.

The critical characteristic of NECRC's approach to employment development, as in other areas, was to animate & organize a process among the relevant organizations in the neighbourhood. Thereby the existing actors in the sector could together identify the gaps in service.

Ultimately the board consolidated the visioning work into goal statements:

- To improve the quality and accessibility of housing for North End residents.
- To improve the safety and image of the North End community.
- To promote the cultural diversity of the North End and strengthen relationships and understanding between cultural groups.
- To stimulate economic development in the North End and increase the accessibility of jobs in the community and surrounding areas.

These goals became the building blocks for the entire planning effort. Now the issues and opportunities had a framework that was consistent with the vision and with the priorities established by the community. They provided a focus for detailed action planning, as well as project and program development. The results became integrated into an overall Renewal Plan that could be presented at the next AGM.

It is important to note at this juncture how technical assistance was carefully tailored to NECRC's development process. Thus, for example, Lewis' June visit focussed on using the results of the working groups to formalize a strategic plan. In addition, he worked with the staff to establish a conceptual framework for employment development, based upon the idea of a continuum of the variety of services necessary for local job creation and employment resources. On this matter he recommended they bring in Cathy Harrington from Lutherwood-CODA,¹¹ a community economic development organization in Waterloo, Ontario with an outstanding record in employment development. In short, technical assistance was not offered in disembodied training or workshops, but rather, was designed to maximize its relevance to priorities and issues that naturally emerged.

Six months later a business development director, Marty Donkervoort, was brought into play, seconded full-time for more than two years from the Crocus Investment Fund. (Based in Winnipeg, Crocus is one of Canada's most innovative labour-sponsored investment groups.¹²) He and Morin began in earnest to give the neighbourhood what the NECRC had projected – attention to its problems in a comprehensive framework. In the meantime, the board of directors worked with the entire seconded staff team to establish the intermediate jobs to be accomplished: to seek direct funding, to identify a home space for the organization; to work through a number of policy issues related to governance; and finally to design a process for creating an overall strategic plan.

On the matter of space, they were swiftly blessed when MCC purchased and renovated a vacant building on Selkirk Avenue, a rundown commercial strip in the North End. The premises were spacious enough to accommodate both the NECRC and CEDA, so that close collaboration be-

came even closer. But what was especially helpful was that CEDA's rent was enough to cover the building's operating costs (taxes, heat, etc.), so NECRC did not have to pay any rent!

The Search for Core Funding

SEED had begun the task of seeking core operational funding for the NECRC even before it was incorporated. By the end of 1998 after the AGM, that need became even more pressing.

They had a constitution and a new board. There was community support. There was a basic vision and broad priorities. Early on they had received temporary support for technical assistance and later on for employment development and business development; they even had free space. However, even in the middle of an active program in the year 2000 they still had no funding for permanent staff or for any expenses of new program development. The entire staff was seconded, supported by the funds of other organizations.

By mid-2000 a new provincial government, which had been exploring the ideas of CED, was taking notice of NECRC. A positive attitude toward the new organization and its swift progress to date led the province to underwrite NECRC's career resource centre (see below). This was the first time NECRC received dollars directly for its program. When the province found ways to define further support in terms of short-term research and community organizing 'projects,' additional direct funds became available to cover core costs. With that encouragement, the board hired Garry full time as its executive director.

STAGE 3: INITIAL FULL OPERATIONS

In the third stage of its evolution a CDC tests its capacity to coordinate a nascent development system. It needs to secure core funding to reach toward its objectives. There will be benchmarks and subsidiary milestones in the course of pursuing social projects, venture development, housing, or other sorts of initiatives. Other benchmarks will apply in such matters as increasing the modes of community participation, refining the procedures and structures of the CDC itself, and, especially, creating long-term partnerships.

NECRC's entry into this stage of its development probably dates from its move into its own offices (the same day Donkervoort started work as business development director). From then on, the organization gathered momentum. As it progressed, its 4-point program became differentiated projects in employment development and business renewal (two aspects of its goal of job development) and housing, as well as community safety and diversity.

A general strategy of promoting collaboration to lever a range of community resources into a systematic or comprehensive approach for the community characterized NECRC's revitalization process. Another central aspect of its activities is that services are provided only when they are not (or cannot) be pro-

vided by existing organizations in the community. While this principle is not expressed in the NECRC's constitution or its explicit policies, it became a significant factor in the ability of the organization to bring the community together and to gain support. NECRC's role is to fill gaps and foster co-ordinated collaboration, not to compete.

Designing an Employment Development System

The early work on employment development aimed to identify gaps in services for those needing jobs or better jobs, to bring service providers together for increased co-operation, and to build a comprehensive and integrated system to facilitate the participation of North End residents in the labour market.

The critical characteristic of NECRC's approach to employment development, as in other areas, was to animate and organize a process among the relevant organizations in the neighbourhood. Thereby the existing actors in the sector could together identify the gaps in service. Morin had primary responsibility for mapping, organizing, and animating this process. Lewis provided early conceptual assistance and guidance and Harrington built up local knowledge, commitment, and excitement about what could be accomplished.

The group of service providers that Morin organized became the Employment Development System Committee and continues to meet regularly. As a result of their early discussions in 2000, the need emerged for a service to help with in-depth career and life path assessments. Committee members agreed that the NECRC should establish such a centre. NECRC successfully petitioned the province for support and the PATH Resource Centre opened in October 2000. It specifically aimed to provide a wide range of career-oriented assistance to North End residents facing multiple barriers to employment. This assistance, of course, could involve referral to the specialized service providers, both in the North End and elsewhere in Winnipeg.

Over 500 people have been assisted since PATH began operations. Twenty-six organizations have accepted referrals for their services in this co-ordinated, person-centred approach. Several other accomplishments demonstrate the comprehensiveness of NECRC's efforts in employment development:

- It designed and regularly offers a series of pre-employment workshops to North End residents.
- It has established six formal partnerships with employment support organizations.
- NECRC convened meetings with North End employers and training organizations to discuss how they could collaborate to enhance employment prospects.
- A job postings system has provided as many as 20 North End employers with recruitment assistance.
- Technical assistance to several organizations has improved their capacity to put together programs that benefit residents.
- NECRC delivered "Literacy With an Employment Focus" in partnership with a local school.

- A “Community Connections” program now provides North End residents with access to computers and the internet.
- NERC produced a series of training sessions for paraprofessionals in career counselling. Staff from a variety of North End human resource organizations (such as women’s support groups) have attended.

This impressive range of results has been achieved in just two years from the time Morin was hired as employment development director. Key to this progress has been the engagement of stakeholders, encouraging them to identify service gaps, and evolving a more integrated person-centred approach to support people in their efforts to move into jobs.

“This group managed me, as opposed to me having to manage the process. They provided me with very clear priorities as to what they wanted me to help them achieve, & we worked as a team to achieve them.”

Mike Lewis, CCE

Renewing the Business Sector

The other side of fostering jobs for residents, as NECRC’s board well understood, is a strong business sector. As in the employment development arena, so too in the business development field, NECRC had to bring together the stakeholders to consider what to do about their concerns, and how. When Donkervoort came on board, his first task was to convene business leaders and create a business support plan. In consultation with members of the business community, he established a North End Business Revitalization Committee to provide intensive and ongoing leadership. By November of 2000 they had developed a business renewal plan that received endorsement at a public meeting.

Through this planning process it became obvious that NECRC could not possibly tackle the whole commercial area at once – they would need to focus on one street at a time. Selkirk Avenue (where 40% of the buildings were empty) became the first target. The approach to revitalization included identifying and promoting the use of the existing, viable commercial space and revitalizing or demolishing the run-down space. NECRC provided a range of research, promotion, co-ordination, and brokering assistance, working especially closely with local busi-

nesses in the Selkirk Avenue Business Improvement Zone (BIZ).

For this task, the CCE technical assistance contract was again used – to bring in expertise that could help sort out the steps for comprehensive revitalization. A representative of a CDC from the East Side of St. Paul, Minneapolis, came to share lessons and successes.

To date, five properties have been redeveloped on Selkirk Avenue. One building is the NECRC headquarters; the PATH Career Centre occupies another; NECRC helped a charitable organization buy a third to house a Thrift Store. NECRC has purchased and renovated still another building that it rents to SEED and some other organizations that provide a variety of financial services.

In addition, NECRC played an important role in the purchase of a structure in another part of the North End. After a million-dollar renovation, the building will become a Native American training centre. In this kind of renewal activity, boards come off the buildings, properties are cleaned up, and the lights go on behind the windows. Soon there are people on the streets again – streets that are becoming safer.

One of the difficulties in commercial strip revitalization is finding the credit to finance the purchase and renovation of buildings for business and community purposes. NECRC hoped to create two Grow Bond Corporations (provincially supported corporations for credit resources) to finance businesses that want to expand in two North End areas. Here, through no lack of effort or efficiency on its part, NECRC has met one of its few failures. The provincial government recently decided to continue to restrict such corporations to rural areas. Now NECRC must consider other ways to bring capital into the business renewal process.

Other accomplishments of note round out the picture of NECRC actions in this arena:

- NECRC assisted the North End business community in achieving major reductions in their commercial property tax assessments. NECRC sponsored information events, put business owners in touch with specialists in the field, prepared community profile information packets, and represented businesses at appeal hearings.
- It helped organize the Sutherland Avenue Business Association in the Point Douglas sub-neighbourhood.
- It established an inventory of North End properties for sale or lease in order to assist organizations looking for premises.

Beyond the retention or recruitment of businesses is the attempt to create or expand local enterprises to strengthen the business sector and create jobs. Donkervoort worked vigorously on this dimension too. He helped undertake feasibility studies and business plans, most notably with a housing development venture that CEDA sponsored. Another business plan will help 11 inner-city social service agencies that work with abused women. The venture will centralize and systematize the collection, sorting, cleaning, storage, and distribution of household goods and furniture for women who must start up a new household.

In addition Donkervoort found the building on Selkirk Avenue for the Thrift Shop and prepared the purchase offer. While the Thrift Shop does not involve paid work, it does provide a much needed service for the North End. He was also involved in surveying a number of possible business opportunities with substantial potential for job creation. In every case, unfortunately, feasibility study has indicated that the prospects were not good enough to pursue. Nevertheless, by the time Donkervoort's successor was to be hired in early 2002, business development was solidly established as a process by which NECRC can hope to make a strong impact in job creation.

Fostering Affordable Housing

NECRC has achieved other successes on the housing front. Taking a networking approach to build co-operation and a common strategy, the CDC plays a key role in building the capacity of the affordable housing sector. This manifests itself in many ways. NECRC helps housing organizations to access resources and scale up projects. It links training programs to employment in the rehabilitation of housing stock. It assists block and neighbourhood groups in the development of housing plans, and provides training and capacity-building resources for housing organizations. Finally, NECRC ensures co-ordination among a range of housing interests and efforts throughout the North End.

NECRC also finds ways to help existing programs to dovetail. It helped bring together the City of Winnipeg and SEED in a common program for home ownership, for example. SEED established a branch office in the North End where, amongst other programs, it runs an Individual Development Account (IDA) project. Through matching funds, IDAs help low-income persons save towards some major asset – like their own home. A community housing plan for one North End neighbourhood (a plan developed by residents with significant support from the City) will help guide the creation of affordable housing there and link it to IDA purchases.¹³

The level of NECRC activity is in part due to the innovative role CEDA had already played for several years in the housing sector as an organizer and animator. CEDA's work under-girded and deepened the effects of NECRC's effort. For example, after NERC approved the idea, CEDA undertook and financed in NECRC's name the Self-Help Alliance for Fair Taxes. SHAFT distributed literature on tax abatement procedures and directly advised and helped over 300 residents to appeal and reduce their property taxes. Thus NECRC established an early presence in a field that residents had singled out as critical to renewal.

However, NECRC has used its position as a comprehensive development organization to accelerate and scale up the level of activity. For example, CEDA had long fostered the development of affordable housing through what was known as The North End Housing Project. It had been able to create perhaps ten affordable housing units annually for several years. But NECRC helped draw up a plan to triple the Project's capacity, ultimately looking toward 100 or more units per year; and has helped to find government funds to underwrite this leap forward.

At one point, Donkervoort helped set up a long-term business plan for another CEDA initiative, the North End Community Renovation Enterprise. This company creates jobs by providing housing rehabilitation services on contract with, for example, the North End Housing Project. Should NECRC adopt the renovation company as a program activity? No, the board eventually decided; the company would divert too much attention too early from NECRC's broader work. So the relationship is structured more as a partnership, with NECRC still assisting on common tasks when appropriate.

The integration in CEDA activities appears in still another arena. Just Housing is a CEDA program in which training and employment are linked. Just Housing joins literacy and numeracy instruction with training in residential renovation. The North End Community Renovation Enterprise hires many Just Housing graduates for work on the homes

Ultimately, technical assistance is probably more than the application of expertise garnered from outsiders. It is also the application of some expertise that is readily available locally, but has not hitherto been recognized or mobilized.

being developed by the North End Housing Project.

It is clear that the base for results in this dimension of renewal is the careful cultivation of collaboration among the many actors in the housing arena. Whoever is concerned with NECRC's housing initiatives must concentrate on bringing together housing agencies and other stakeholders. The North End Housing Network and a statistical database are the initial results of this kind of effort.

NECRC secured a grant from the City of Winnipeg for two people on a 14-month contract to share the work on a far-reaching housing-related project. They work with a new residents' association fostered by the City in the William Whyte sub-

for community outreach. Here are some of the results of this effort:

- NECRC organized a televised town-hall meeting of more than 100 people to discuss community policing. It then developed a 5-point plan to improve policing in the North End and presented it to the Police Chief. A working group was formed with the school division of the police department to plan the use of police officers as community service representatives in the high schools. Beginning with the 2002 school year, police department staff will be on hand as "School Resource Officers" in the schools to counsel and help the students.



In spite of a depleted environment, there are enduring qualities of community and a sense of neighbourhood in the North End. The same pride and strength that was behind events like the Winnipeg General Strike in 1919 remains evident in the residents.

A victim of the arson epidemic in the mid-'90s

neighbourhood. Housing improvement was the residents' major interest. NECRC's contractor staff assisted them in creating a community housing plan. The plan began with an assessment of the quality of housing and its general characteristics as single/multiple units, rental/owner-occupied, etc. Exterior improvements were costed and slated, some of which have already been implemented. In concert, the City has instituted a graffiti removal project for boarded up houses.

NECRC has fostered other accomplishments in this sector, among them:

- One of the community groups has created a community garden.
- Foundation funds support the major renovation of 20 buildings and other exterior fix-up for 30 more in the Point Douglas area, to be done over an 18-month period. In most of this sort of work, the North End Community Renovation Enterprise provides the rehabilitation services, and North End residents get the jobs.
- With NECRC help several Aboriginal housing organizations have received funding to improve their housing stock.

Building a Safer Community that Celebrates Its Diversity

From the beginning, residents identified safety issues and a desire to strengthen the cultural aspects of the community as priorities for NECRC. So from early on, a diverse set of tasks relating to safety were addressed, first by seconded staff, then part-time by NECRC staff, and finally, in July 2001, by a dedicated staff person, Janice Goodman. NECRC hired her explicitly

- In the spring of 2000 NECRC co-sponsored a community workshop on safety involving 120 people.
- NECRC is assisting the Mosaic Market BIZ and the Selkirk Avenue BIZ to think through and plan a commercial safety patrol. College students from a criminal justice program will be hired for the summer of 2002 to provide patrol services.
- Currently, NECRC is organizing a major consultation process with the aim of preparing an overall community safety plan.

Other community-building efforts were also important:

- Using perhaps 300 hours of staff and volunteer time, NECRC organized a community celebration in a local park in August 2000. About 400 people attended. About 800 people attended a second festival in 2001.
- A NECRC staff member chairs a steering committee to plan for government assistance for a youth program. This will bridge a substantial gap left by the closing of the North End YMCA in 1995. NECRC has worked with other local groups to keep this issue on the public agenda. Government has indicated a willingness to fund public consultation and planning and will provide up to \$1 million once a business plan is complete.
- The CDC has assisted a women's empowerment group in the preparation of a funding proposal for buying a building for a major expansion of their programming.
- Newsletters go out four times a year, delivered now to approximately 4000 North End households.
- Two very active residents' associations were born with assistance from NECRC, and others are being given support and encouragement in NECRC's outreach activities.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NECRC is approaching the fourth stage in its evolution: status as a mature and sustainable force for local revitalization. Quite apart from pursuing its program goals with increasing variation and impact, there are some other tasks to which NECRC will be devoting time and effort. They include the continued generation of financial resources, improving NECRC's internal operations, enhancing the participation of residents (and local organizations) in the work and governance of the CDC, and contributing to the increasing impact of like-minded organizations in the North End. The organization has already taken action on some of these concerns.

In April 2001 NECRC finally obtained a provincial commitment to cover core expenses and core staff – \$200,000 a year for five years. While getting such substantial

Employees of North End Community Enterprise carry out renovations on houses on Alfred Street and Powers Avenue. All these premises are now occupied.



support was an achievement in itself, actually a more far-reaching result was involved. As Loewen says,

“We know we have had an impact on [provincial] policy, because their original support was only available as project funds. Now they have a new program that has allowed them to provide operating funds. While we are not the only development corporation in the city, we are making an important contribution to raising the profile and credibility of this approach to revitalization.”

What made the big difference in the development of the provincial program was the CCEDNet policy agenda statement. The Winnipeg contingent of CCEDNet members – NECRC, SEED, and others – brought it to the attention of cabinet policy staff. The province has specifically used the CCEDNet principles¹⁴ and in fact now has representation in the CCEDNet membership.

Despite its successes here, NECRC is well aware of the necessity for any mature CDC to diversify its sources of support. As Loewen put it, “We got what we asked for [from the province]. [But] we didn't want to rely on any one source for 100% funding, so we are still working on a daily basis to build relationships and sell benefits [to other potential funders].”

The most recent efforts have been focussed on the City of Winnipeg. The City has been a financial sponsor of the festival events and has contributed a share of the salary of Lisa Chornenki, the housing outreach worker hired in May 2001. It is now consider-

These assets, combined with the residents' strong sense of attachment to the sub-neighbourhoods of the North End, were the earth from which the actors in this remarkable story coaxed a process & a plan to renew one of Western Canada's oldest & poorest neighbourhoods.

ing the possibility of donating a piece of property on which NECRC would put a new commercial building. This could have substantial long-term effects for the North End, including a revenue stream for NECRC.

Lobby efforts continue on this opportunity, and Loewen is hopeful that the City will come through. But he says, “While we are thankful for the support to date, we are a long way off from realizing the kind of contributions that rebuild communities.” Another staff person put it this way,

“The city recently contributed to a new arena in Winnipeg to the tune of \$10 million. When that kind of money is available to support community revitalization and poverty reduction we will have been successful.”

Diversification of financial support for NECRC is to be seen also in additional relationships with the faith-based sector. With Donkervoort’s encouragement, the Jubilee Fund provided the down payment that made possible the mortgage on the Path Centre building. Loewen has been able to get support from the Thomas Sill Foundation for the housing staff position.

But grant support cannot be the sole source of revenue for a mature CDC. It must build financial assets and generate dollars from the services it provides and from the commercial ventures or property development (including housing) that it sponsors. This is surely a major challenge for any community-based development organization. On the horizon for NECRC is the commercial building it hopes to develop on property granted from the City.

From the standpoint of its internal operations, NECRC is discovering that its sectoral structure has some disadvantages. While the formal links to organizations serve to reinforce the co-ordinating and support functions of NECRC, it does exclude some people. There is no direct link to residents who are not connected to an organization (yet may be significant local activists), nor to residents who are clients of the service organizations.

How can NECRC improve the participation and contribution of all residents? As community liaison director, Goodman is responsible for strengthening residents’ associations, but she (or somebody else) needs to address the place of the great majority of residents who are not and probably never will be members of the associations.

As to organizational representation, board members say that it is sometimes difficult to think about the good of the whole community if in fact that good differs from what is best for their own sector. Some sectors, say staff, continue to require a great deal of support. Participation in sector meetings is sometimes inadequate for a credible expression of goals and general concerns. Moreover, the board structure, even in terms of sectoral representation, has not adequately recognized the importance of the North End human resource groups. Training institutions, for example, are not currently represented on the board. Still further, as is often the case with such organizations, some sectors have board members whose commitment and representation leave something to be

desired. All of these concerns are and must be a topic of board attention.

Moreover, working with the other North End groups is not always smooth. For example, even though the sector-based governance structure permits the integration of other organizations into the definition and program of NECRC, “competition for turf” still occurs. Relationships with other local organizations bring a degree of tension to the NECRC. This will have to be regularly addressed, even if it can never be dealt with routinely.

And there is also always the task of appropriately distinguishing the roles and responsibilities of staff in relation to those of board members. NECRC recognized this problem early on, and hired Lewis in part to help sort some difficulties. But such concerns are endemic to an organization; they are never solved for all time. So, on occasion, this issue too will have to be revisited.

NECRC is discovering that its sectoral structure has some disadvantages. While the formal links to organizations serve to reinforce NECRC’s co-ordinating & support functions, it does exclude some residents.

Working with the Founding Organizations

The efforts of the NECRC over the last few years have had a distinctly positive impact on many other organizations, and ultimately on the kind of services available to residents. The goals of the Renewal Plan and the way in which they are systematically linked and approached have captured the interest and commitment of other organizations. With its networking strategy, NECRC is weaving together a development system that engages the broader organizational community serving the North End.

SEED Winnipeg itself has been affected. The influence of the NECRC has allowed SEED to have a physical presence in the North End that they would not have risked previously. “There is an environment of hope there now that makes our services feasible where they would have failed before,” says Pachal. SEED’s site in the North End allows them to deliver more intense services to residents. Certainly from SEED’s perspective, the investment in the development of the NECRC has paid off – both for their own purposes and for the benefit of residents.

However, because of the closeness of the relationship of SEED, CEDA, and MCC as the crucial founders of NECRC, attention will particularly have to be paid to the changing structures of those relationships as NECRC grows and evolves. For example, instead of serving as NECRC advisory staff, Pachal and Simms have taken on an ex officio relationship to the board. At the end of February 2002 they will no longer even have that sort of close relationship.

Already CEDA and NECRC have tried to establish a division of labour. At least for the time being, NECRC will concentrate on economic development activities and CEDA will focus on those issues that might be called community development. The two organizations constructed a sort of Memorandum of Understanding to that effect early in 2001. The agreement outlines a dozen projects and the specific roles that each organization will play in their implementation. For example, CEDA had been representing NECRC on the Inner City Housing Coalition. The agreement specifies the date at which the NECRC's housing outreach worker will assume this function. Much of CEDA's staff work has been and will continue to be undertaken in the name of NECRC. The process of backing away from such close, complex relationships will take some time.

The same sort of understanding has been reached with SEED. Although the details differ, one objective is the same: to phase out the intensive staff support that has been available to the NECRC and move the founders to an arms-length advisory function. Both SEED and CEDA continue to have a vested interest in ensuring the ongoing viability and integrity of the NECRC. Both organizations need to reposition themselves as working partners on an equal footing with NECRC, as opposed to benevolent founders.

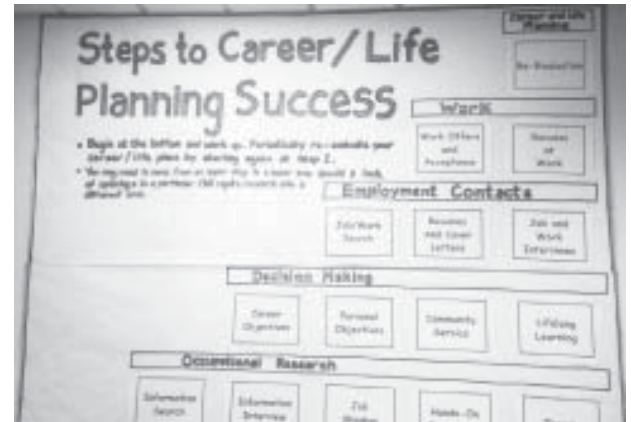
Pachal has been explicit about backing off. "Letting go is easier because I know they have the experience, the credibility, and the profile to do the work they need to do," he says. One of the details in the agreement with SEED deals with the dollars that come to NECRC through SEED. The Crocus and United Way contributions for staff phased out at the end of 2001, and these now go directly to NECRC. The agreement also outlines the way in which both organizations will work with small business to avoid duplication.

So far, so good. The marvellously productive and mutually trusting collaboration of the leadership in these interdependent organizations has proved capable and nimble enough to accommodate the necessary changes in their relationships. Nevertheless, all concerned are aware that this will bear continued attention for a long time as circumstances continue to change.

Staff

Another transition looming on the horizon concerns changing staff responsibilities, relationships, and incumbencies. In the beginning staff members had very flexible responsibilities. In his first year, for example, Donkervoort was also the bookkeeper and published the newsletter. Without exception, all staff have believed passionately that the work they are doing is important. For that reason they have been willing to go "above and beyond." NECRC has been a place where everyone pitches in to get the job done.

Staff will tell an outsider that working as a team is critical, and they all express a sense of joy or fun about their work. They also suggest that the role



The PATH Resource Centre acts as a hub and mentor of personal development, including finding work and a career. As much as possible, personal coaches refer PATH participants to existing organizations that specialize in the services a person requires.

“The most significant factor in our success was hiring the executive director. He has been able to pull all the pieces together, take responsibility, & provide focus & consistency within the organization.”

**Stan Scoble, board chair,
NECRC**

played by the executive director as a coach and sounding board has been essential to their success. Stan Scoble, the board chair agreed, saying, “The most significant factor in our success was hiring the executive director. He has been able to pull all the pieces together, take responsibility, and provide focus and consistency within the organization.”

But no organization can thrive forever being dependent upon one person, and eventually NECRC will probably seek a resident of the North End as its chief staff officer. That transition will be fraught with opportunities for problems and will be a major task for the organization.

In the third stage of its evolution a CDC tests its capacity to co-ordinate a nascent development system. It needs to secure core funding to reach toward its objectives. There will be benchmarks & subsidiary milestones in the course of pursuing social projects, venture development, housing, or other sorts of initiatives.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

Scoble, a business executive and chair of the Mosaic Market BIZ as well as NECRC chair, sums up the remarkable progress of NECRC in these terms: “Even we don’t really understand how successful we have been.”

Putting aside its projects and their outcomes for a moment, the organization is already a stabilizing influence on the landscape of the North End community. It has generated a different orientation to local development. It has created and is supporting a development system within the community that is strategic and comprehensive in approach. It is successfully mobilizing community resources and is leveraging external financial and institutional resources to address community-defined priorities.

NECRC is constantly expanding the base of resident support and participation from a broad cross-section of the community. It has ensured its continued presence with core operating funds and a variety of other revenues. It has developed value-

added relationships that have resulted in investments coming into the community and into the organization. It is imbuing the development effort with a long-term perspective while continuously forming projects and initiatives that take manageable steps towards the overall vision. Without question, there is a tremendous array of learning, as well as excitement about the fact that although people know they are achieving success, they also know they are still just getting out of the starting gates.

While organizational success is essential, ultimately the outcomes of the organization’s efforts for revitalization must be visible in the community as a whole. They must be apparent in a neighbourhood whose residents see a future for their children. Results must show up in good jobs and new businesses and in community resilience in the face of changes and threats to its future. NECRC still has the challenge of producing substantial change. As it moves into maturity, its organizational progress to date is a good predictor that it will achieve the necessary broader, concrete results.

There are many lessons to be learned from this outstanding CDC, and surely there will be many more in the years to come. In summary here are six to reflect upon:

1. This is a story about three closely-knit organizations that together supported the creation of a CDC as the most effective means for revitalizing a neighbourhood they all served. In all too many communities the costs and the duplication/competition factors seem to prevent the local organizations from considering this option, even while they yearn for a way to address their common problems: gaps in community-wide planning, research, brokering, facilitation, communication, and advocacy.
2. Putting a new CDC in place requires financial and human resources over a substantial period of time. It takes years – and it did take years for NECRC – to get fully established. This process is not something for a 1- or 2-year grant!
3. The evolution of the group will go through many common steps: community animation, organizing, research and priority setting, early organizational development, planning, and implementation. All these form part of a broad mobilization of resources and talent that, in the early years, puts legs under a table of projects and programs designed to achieve specific results. In the case of NECRC the founding organizations showed exemplary leadership and commitment for supporting this critical work.
4. Technical assistance will be essential. Outside experience and knowledge brought to bear at critical points can save time, energy, and money. Outside assistance must be selected carefully and will include a range of providers. Ultimately, however, technical assistance is probably more than the application of expertise garnered from outsiders. It is also the application of some expertise that is readily available locally, but has not hitherto been recognized or mobilized.
5. The benefits of a sector- and organization-based approach to membership and governance (and thus to the task of com-

munity organizing) can, in some communities, outweigh the challenges it poses. In the North End it has resulted in stronger organizations, stronger links between organizations, and the beginnings of a common agenda on which all organizations have begun to focus their efforts.

6. Providing a CED policy orientation for municipal and provincial government representatives can promote a broad set of new resources for one's own community and others'. Thus, new resources can come into play as the province or municipality governments begin to recognize the contribution that community economic development can make.

The evolution of the North End Renewal Corporation represents the application of the best of what we have learned in the CED field in Canada over the last 25 years. Indeed, some of the lessons applied to its development reach back even further, well into the North American experience of the 1960s, the War on Poverty, and the emergence of Community Development Corporations as a self-directed strategy for the economic and social revitalization of distressed communities. But it also represents what is best in neighbours who commit themselves to the renewal of their own communities.✎

¹ Formally incorporated in July 1998, NECRC was not practically launched until November 1998. An account of some early history may be found in Tom Simms and Derek Pachal, "The Birth of the North End Development Corporation," *Making Waves* (Spring 1999) 10,1: 5-7.

² A description of the progressive stages of a CED group's evolution and its potential structures may be found in "Investing in Canada's Communities: The CCEDNet Policy Agenda," Canadian CED Network, 2001.

³ Since June 1997 Loewen had also been active in the founding of the Canadian CED Network (CCEDNet). He would later serve part-time as its executive director until CCEDNet could recruit someone full-time.

⁴ CEDTAP is a fund established by the J.W. McConnell Foundation and administered by the Centre for Training, Investment and Economic Restructuring at Carleton University.

⁵ For background information on RÉSO, see Nancy Neamtan, "Full Partners," *Making Waves* (2001) 12,2: 35-40. See also "RÉSO: Fighting Back in Montreal's Southwest Neighbourhoods," *Making Waves* (1999) 10,4: 29-30; S.E. Perry, "Nancy Neamtan," *Making Waves* (1997) 8,4: 19-21; Nancy Neamtan, "CDC Innovations in Montréal," *Making Waves* (1995) 6,2: 8; and "RÉSO: Partnership Building, Montréal Style," *Making Waves* (1994) 5,4: 35.

⁶ In addition to the door-knocking, Pachal obtained funding from WED and CEDTAP, organized the first annual general meeting of NECRC, and directed the necessary informational scan.

⁷ Later NECRC would recruit a representative from the Filipino sector for a 1-year term, and still later a school principal and a youth program representative, both of whom remain active.

⁸ See Michael J. Kinsley, *Economic Renewal Guide* (Snowmass, CO: Rocky Mountain Institute, 1997), Chapter 8. Note that for NECRC formal visioning actually took place *after* the corporation was organized.

⁹ SWOT refers to strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. It is a common organizational development tool. One explanation of it is found in *Community Strategic Planning: The Workbook (Stepping Forward Guidebook Kit 3)*, p. 13, published by Rural and Small Town Programme, Mount Allison University, Sackville, NB E4L 1E9.

¹⁰ See *Community Strategic Planning: The Workbook*, p.17.

¹¹ See John Jacobs, "Reinventing Community Economies In The Industrial Heartland," *Making Waves* (1994), Vol. 5,4: 21-24. Since that article was published, Lutherwood-CODA has played a pivotal role in an unprecedented, community-wide strategy of poverty reduction. See Don McNair and Eric Leviten-Reid, *Opportunities 2000: Creating Pathways Out of Poverty* (Kitchener, ON: Lutherwood-CODA Publications, 2002).

¹² See Sherman Kreiner, "Engaging the Labour Funds," *Making Waves* (1998) 9,3: 28-30.

¹³ For an update on IDAs, see p. 16, this issue.

¹⁴ Among other actions, the government has asked a half-dozen departments to review and evaluate all their programs and policies through a "CED lens" to see how they should be shaped to promote CED in the province.

MICHELLE COLUSSI and STEWART E. PERRY are principals at the Centre for Community Enterprise and members of the Canadian CED Network. MIKE LEWIS and GARRY LOEWEN were also major contributors to this case study, which was made possible through funding from the Community Economic Development Technical Assistance Program (CEDTAP). All photos courtesy of the North End Community Renewal Corporation. The NECRC is located at 509 Selkirk Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R2W 2M6, (tel) 204-261-8757, www.north-endrenewal.org. For more information, contact Garry at garry@north-endrenewal.org or Michelle at colussi@shaw.ca