



**COMMUNITY ACTION —
WORKING TOGETHER
TO IMPROVE
OUR COMMUNITY**

**RESULTS FROM NORTH CENTRAL
INNER CITY SYMPOSIUM
DECEMBER 5, 1994**



SPONSORED BY NORTH CENTRAL COMMUNITY SOCIETY



NORTH CENTRAL COMMUNITY MAKES COMMITMENT TO ACTION

The North Central Community has a history of taking action to better the lives of its citizens. North Central was the first community group to receive funding from the City of Regina back in 1976. Since then, a number of positive actions have been organized by community groups, including such services as a health centre, several seniors' programs, recreation programs, crime prevention and children's programs.

Despite these positive actions and community commitment, serious problems abound in this particular area of the city. As a way of addressing these problems in a co-ordinated way a symposium was held on December 5, 1994. The intent of the symposium was to facilitate a sharing of information among service providers in the area and build partnerships for improving conditions in the community.

This report provides a brief overview of current actions undertaken by North Central community groups and details the issues and ideas generated at the symposium.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

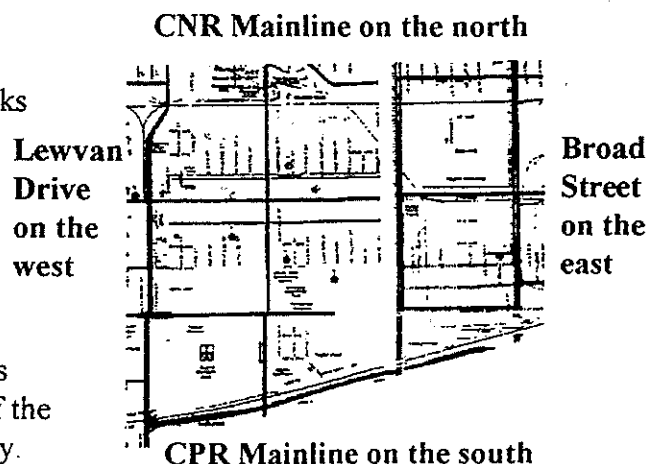
The North Central Community Society had its beginning in 1972 under the name of the North Central Social Services Resource Committee, when a group of area residents began meeting to deal with issues in the social services field. Since then it has expanded its role beyond social services, and has gone through several changes in structure. In 1982 the Community Society became a registered charity and has continued to be both incorporated and a registered charity.

The Community Society did its first Neighbourhood Plan in 1979 and was a NIP area at that time. An updated Neighbourhood Plan was completed in 1987 and was adopted by City Council as part of the overall Development Plan for the City of Regina. North Central is now one of six inner city community groups receiving funding from the City of Regina.

North Central Community

The community covers an area of approximately 250 square city blocks and consists of the area marked by the map at the right.

It contains approximately 4,500 households with a population total around 10,000 people. The area has a large number of single parents and seniors. Approximately 50% of the population are of aboriginal ancestry.



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES



Although the North Central Community Society is involved in many positive community activities, there are many issues which require immediate attention. Some of these include alcoholism, drugs, prostitution, teen pregnancy and AIDS. Many community residents experience isolation and alienation as a result of poverty, unemployment, and movement off reserves to an unfamiliar urban environment. Many services in the community need improvement, particularly in the areas of housing and supports for families and youth.

It is the belief of the North Central Community Society that many of the problems in the area are the result of high unemployment. Many of the residents see little future for themselves as part of the mainstream society and are thus forced to look to the more destructive avenues for support.

1986 Stats Canada figures indicated that:

- 69% of the population in the area were low income
- many used more than 30% of their income to pay for housing
- North Central had the highest unemployment rate in the City of Regina

Community Schools data shows that:

- there is a high proportion of residents receiving social assistance
- there is a high proportion of single parent families in the area
- there is a high proportion of students and adults whose first language is not English

In working closely with the community to improve services the North Central Community Society identified a number of program needs prior to the symposium. These included:

1. Community worker to provide: elder care, senior support, support for single mothers, and to act as a child advocate.
2. Safehouse, refuge or drop-in centre for children and youth, providing counselling services, recreation, especially important for weekend evenings.
3. Ongoing support groups and educational programs for victims of family violence, diabetes and cardiac and for single mothers.
4. T.B. and Diabetes screening programs for people of aboriginal ancestry.
5. Parenting classes, such as Nobody's Perfect.
6. Community Education seminars on various topics such as: AIDS education series for young children and teens and including parents; renters' rights; money management; nutrition and meal preparation; estate planning; maintenance of seniors' independence; and drug and alcohol abuse.
7. Community program to allow for the deterring or removal of prostitution in the area.
8. Increased recreational programs.
9. Housing worker to work with tenants, landlords and housing stock in the area.
10. Expansion of the existing programs in health, recreation, housing, Neighbourhood Watch and expansion of employment and housing programs with New Careers Corporation, including an Employment Access Program.



SYMPOSIUM DAY*

1. OPENING

The symposium was open to community agencies and community residents, representatives from other inner city groups and city and provincial government staff.

M.C. Rob Deglau from North Central Community Society described the work leading up to the symposium and outlined the commitment of the society to work with community leaders, politicians and government staff to get the needed improvements in community services. Gary Harris, President, North Central Community Society, recognized the important support the political leaders were demonstrating by participating in the symposium.

Dwain Lingenfelter, MLA, Regina Elphinstone and Minister, Sask. Economic Development, acknowledged the importance of a working group to deal with inner city problems. He reviewed recent budget increases of Social Services and outlined the need for an increase in jobs and training for people in the inner city.

Mayor Doug Archer focussed on the need to nurture a process of renewal from within the neighbourhood with solutions that are embraced by the community. By working together there will be better overall solutions for the community.

Councillor Jim Harding described the isolation and alienation people are feeling in the inner city. It will be actions, rather than talking that will demonstrate a commitment to improving conditions in the inner city. He referred to the deep divisions in the city, between cultures, genders, economic class and indicated his belief that the civic government processes are very removed from inner-city neighbourhoods. He indicated the need to rebuild the community, and that it will take a lot of work. He felt that the symposium was a good forum for sharing ideas.

Joanne Crofford, MLA, Regina Lakeview, lent her support to the symposium by participating in the discussion groups.

** Comments from the Opening and Discussion groups have been edited for ease of presentation. We have attempted to report as fully and as accurately as possible the intent of the responses. A full listing of the points made during the discussion groups are available at the North Central Community Center.*

II. DISCUSSION GROUPS



A. HOUSING

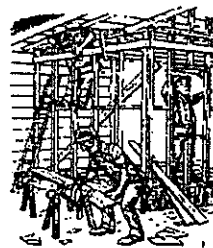
ISSUES IDENTIFIED

1. Quality of Housing

- area has too many absentee landlords and too many slum landlords, too many revenue homes as opposed to houses owned by the people who live there
- value of the houses in the area are going down (seniors who own can't afford improvements, absentee landlords won't make improvements)
- values also being affected by image of neighbourhood, its high crime rate and its disincentives for young families to move in, ie pools and school closing (houses worth 1/2 of 1982 value)
- income and employment level in community is low, restricts ownership potential
- conditions in community could affect insurance coverage and rates

2. Image problems

- self-perpetuating of wrong image



POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

1. Promote home ownership

- Sask Social Services should assist people to buy homes
- invest in down payments for people on assistance, use models such as Gabriel Housing, Silver Sage
- explore possibility that Bands might assist Treaty Indians with off-reserve housing
- explore low-cost housing and owning options, ie sweat equity, rent to own, use RRSP for downpayments, downpayments lowered to 5%, co-operative housing with lower monthly payments

2. Infrastructure Improvements

- community should be considered as a whole when programs such as Habitat for Humanity planned rather than certain blocks being improved
- rebuild existing houses (Habitat for Humanity, New Careers)
- improve lighting in community
- improve schools, swimming pools
- have murals and artwork in the neighbourhood
- have a neighbourhood clean-up day
- support upgrading of community, co-operation in helping seniors and shut-ins get the needed upgrading on their homes, share through the use of block captains
- use programs of New Careers for home improvements
- support people in community to demand improvement, perhaps with a small scale seminar, synopsis to government, lobby for infrastructure improvements
- communicate resources, ie rentalsman, ombudsman, to help improve awareness of resources people have to make improvements

3. Promote development of area and improve community image

- work to attract businesses to the area
- work with residents to identify and respond to the problems
- use community play to bring people together and improve image of community



B. CRIME PREVENTION

ISSUES IDENTIFIED:

1. Youth

- are gangs in the area
- currently there is too much leniency towards youth
- our youth feel a desperation
- are no opportunities for youth that will help them stay off the streets
- is a lack of parental supervision
- may need to be curfews and an enforcement of them
- there are cultural issues that can have negative impacts for youth, need to better understand needs of extended families
- are experiencing changing social norms in area of family discipline
- legislation regarding youth crime is federal, question of how to change it

2. Seniors

- seniors are targets as victims of crime
- have a lack of knowledge of how to protect themselves
- residents of area are vulnerable

3. Police

- police have limitations, are under-staffed, under-funded, limits on legislative authority
- difficult to provide follow-up

4. Prostitution

- no prosecution of Pimps
- abuse of prostitutes
- young girls and boys are entering prostitution for the profit of pimps (are coerced)
- there is a lack of knowledge of what to do about the problem
- from Angus St. to Pasqua St. are more drugs, syringes
- children are being harassed
- in past has focussed on aboriginal girls
- legislation exists to take the control away from the pimps but a question of whether community can enforce
- prostitutes are victims
- problem of prostitution does not totally rest with police enforcement
- Johns need to be charged, but resources are limited to do so
- young girls who are susceptible to prostitution are those in poverty, with low self-esteem, who have been sexually abused, are unemployed and those who are drug users
- prostitution affects property values, increases litter by residents

5. Social and Economic Conditions

- concern that victimization and alienation do not increase
- many of the crime and victimization problems are the result of poverty, low-income and unemployment
- residential schools resulted in no experience in parenting and teaching children

6. Communication

- often there is miscommunication as a result of different expectations of role and responsibilities
- citizens are abdicating their responsibilities in some situations
- currently not regular dialogue to discuss/share perspectives

IDEAS FOR RESPONDING TO CRIME (POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS)



1. **Neighbourhood Watch and Support**
 - lodge complaints as a group and be a support to one another
 - include Aboriginal people in the group
 - explore possibility of starting a victim's circle (in a school)
2. **Create a drop-in centre/safe house for children and youth**
3. **Improve housing in area**
4. **Improve recreation opportunities in area**
5. **Address Prostitution**
 - involve community in solutions
 - develop a prostitution watch - start with the young, with seminars and workshops in schools
 - have a street patrol for contact on the street
 - quicker response rate when concerns of young children are raised with Social Services
 - Mayor's Task Force on Prostitution needs to communicate its progress to the community
 - need better communication about issue generally, need to help community become involved to reduce fear
 - need to protect children and parents and help them know they are protected
 - need individual visits and support for those in the community
 - need to involve other parts of city in the problem rather than seeing it as only an Inner City problem
 - develop a bad date registration
 - develop a safe place where prostitutes can communicate with one another, receive counselling and be treated with understanding
 - use Pihtowkek project service
 - new legislation is needed where Johns are charged/alternative proposal was to remove from criminal code and have a tolerance zone with a safe house in a non-residential area (barricades do not work, issue needs to be treated as both a police matter and a social issue)
 - need to deal with both the visible problems, the drugs and the pimps, and the invisible, the poverty, low self-esteem, and the racial attitudes
 - involve younger girls in working in the area in the schools, libraries, homes and provide education and awareness regarding prostitution, drugs, alcohol and sexuality
6. **Support families and facilitate improved parenting skills**
 - help families to develop positive role models and values in the homes, in some cases currently these models are being offered by pimps
 - support parents' responsibility to teach children values
 - teach life skills, sex education, health, social awareness, resisting of peer pressure, start these teachings within the home, also use community resources
 - facilitate a support group for young girls
 - persuade parents to participate, through individual contact and news letter
7. **Improve Co-ordination in Community**
 - co-ordinate groups in community to work together, move past the competition to obtain funds
 - co-operation and communication are needed
 - have continuous contact, ie regular meetings



C. POVERTY/EMPLOYMENT

ISSUES IDENTIFIED

1. Impacts of poverty are severe

- poverty has drain on all other aspects of life
- fosters lack of trust
- affects self-esteem, skills are not seen as useful
- contributes to feelings of being powerless and without rights
- creates a lack of incentive coming from a lack of hope
- leads to lack of education, low literacy

2. Poverty/Unemployment excessive in North Central

- high percentage of community on social assistance, perhaps as high as 50%
- due to the high degree of mobility in this community no one feels at home
- there is a lack of opportunity for jobs
- is a lack of child care availability
- many people in community lack education
- is a lack of life coping skills

3. Problems with Existing Programs

- the existing job creation programs are too short-term and not appropriate to prepare people for employment
- programs sometimes designed without adequate consultation with affected groups
- lack of knowledge of how to access programs
- lack of money and available training and employment spaces
- racism and immigration policies contributing to poverty
- allocation of program funds are not always based on need, sometimes more political and squeaky wheel decisions
- fragmentation of money resources
- control by service providers
- NGOs protecting their "turf"



POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS



1. Programs "with" people vs "for" people

- have a resurgence of co-ops, from welcome wagons among neighbours to cleaning/bread and bannock co-ops to economic co-ops such as Calmeadow (micro-enterprises run as worker co-ops)
- services provided in the community by people in the community with knowledge of the community, this would develop trust relationships, also have integrated services, ie. within the schools
- consider developing a barter system for goods and services
- create a free store, clothing and other goods can be from donations
- facilitate getting people involved, ie community play, library, sports-schools and news letters can be used to advertise events, community news and agency networking
- have bridging activities that are not over-structured, allowing people "to do" something rather than "giving" them counselling, needs to be available on a come and go basis

2. Improve skills/Raise self-esteem

- put computers in library for public use
- have mentor employment programs
- support early intervention, nurturing and life skills
- have "street wise" mentoring, with youth having talking and sharing circles, police, fire and paramedic personnel providing time in community to serve as role models
- more awareness and education regarding employment equity

3. Employment Improvements

- help welfare recipients get back into mainstream, allow them to retain more of their earnings from employment
- continue support for single mothers
- develop community-generated job creation programs, using all-night drop-in centres, use of schools during the summer, encourage employers to hire from within the community
- have a community employment centre, provide services to seniors in the areas of gardening, snow removal, fence repair
- the community employment centre could also offer assertiveness training and life skills
- expand apprenticeship training and employment
- expand Habitat program in community to encompass upgrading and repairing existing homes
- improve access to information about employment and training programs, ie newsletters, information in schools and libraries, having a directory of North Central

4. Legislative Changes

- legislation needs to be changed to limit amount of part-time employment, Superstore was used as an example of inappropriate use of part-time workers
- improve labour standards
- oppose UI changes, with a community group lobby and/or a coalition building of inner city council
- find a means to move ideas, problems/solutions beyond the community (in order to get a broader degree of support)



D. FAMILY VIOLENCE/SUBSTANCE ABUSE

ISSUES IDENTIFIED



1. Many Causes

- lack of respect for women
- poverty, frustration and lack of power
- lack of skills to deal with frustration
- family violence related to poverty, poor housing, poor health, frustration taken out on other family members
- low self-esteem
- negative image of youth, peer pressure
- lack of family involvement
- lack of aboriginal people working in services
- lack of recreation opportunities
- intensity of poverty in area so severe, community less skilled to deal with the problems
- media images
- differences in value systems, negative role models

2. Current circumstances

- causes people to withdraw from the community, people in the community who feel victimized may see no solution except to move away
- keeps people out of the community
- people are afraid of police authorities, lack trust
- people need information
- people are not talking with other aboriginal people, need more accessibility, need aboriginal support workers
- short term crisis interventions or band-aid solutions do not effectively deal with the problems
- social workers don't have listening skills needed
- training is needed to make workers more sensitive and aware, especially of street people and poor people
- system is inflexible
- need programs and dollars to address family violence and substance abuse, currently there is slow follow-up from Social Services
- need to move dollars out of programs that aren't working into those that are, ie job planning clubs, need hands-on experience and respect for people
- lack of treatment available
- sniffing is related to poverty, cheaper than drugs
- because of poverty situations of violence and substance abuse more visible
- need positive solutions which provide hope

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

1. Education and Awareness

- educate the system on what the needs for addressing family violence and substance abuse
- new family violence legislation offers some new opportunities for addressing problem
- need to identify the issues leading to the behaviour, and identify steps for addressing, ie. poverty, skills, education, available resources, support groups
- need life skills in school, to promote self-esteem, confidence, and wellness
- need to support families in teaching children more positive life-styles that will lessen violence and substance abuse
- educate the community on the importance of reporting violence

- better identification by teachers of kids who are abused
- support groups for kids
- communities support each other in taking action
- reaching out to those who have been victimized
- find ways to improve respect of all residents
- perceptions are important, people have to feel safe and believe things can change



2. Increased Resources

- more resources for long-term support for families
- need to hold system accountable to the community
- need family support worker program
- need safe shelters for women and children
- need more dollars for youth
- currently there is a lack of vital resources for substance abuse and family violence, children and youth are at high risk, are very influenceable, existing services don't have sufficient funds to do complete job
- need skills and lifeskills training, substantial ones, not just short-term
- need financial resources for non-traditional services

3. Improved Delivery Systems

- need integrated services
- reduce government bureaucracy, red-tape
- need a service directory
- need decentralized Social Services offices
- government and NGO's be housed in area so they are more accessible to their clients (Including having police located in the community)
- co-ordinate services with primary worker assigned
- need community workers and resources in non-threatening places, ie coffee houses rather than institutions
- more worker outreach into homes, more door-knocking
- workers need to be sympathetic to client needs
- parents need to be made aware and supported more in taking responsibility
- provide children and youth opportunities to take responsibility for programs and leadership within the school and community (give responsibility back to parents and kids for solutions)
- increase community policing, community justice workers
- all-hour drop-in centre for youth
- aboriginal controlled services and delivery, get three levels of government to agree to allow native people to set up services to address their problems
- improve native resources and support for the native community, many urban people have lost touch with their identity and need assistance to resolve the confusion that can lead to violence
- use NADAP workers for the cities-aboriginal workers who have experienced similar problems can provide help and support
- increase programs for native residents and for non-native residents to increase understanding

4. Better Use of Existing Resources

- adopt a grandparent for people who don't have grandparents
- community support for those in need, people helping people, methods to "retain" parents
- spiritual solutions, better lifestyles
- organizations build trust, getting out of offices, networking, co-ordination of services, community residents directly involved with residents, helps build trust
- opportunities to move in positive ways
- find ways to use resources differently



E. RACISM

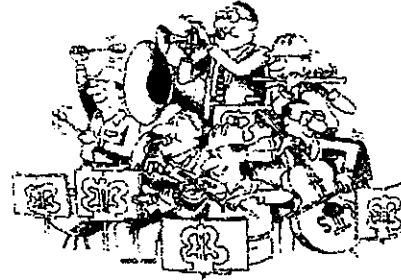
ISSUES IDENTIFIED

- 1. Loss of Opportunities for groups discriminated against**
 - racism results in a waste of human resources
 - children and women suffer the most, aboriginal women often face double discrimination, both gender and race
 - people discriminated against are disempowered and receive unfair service, affects education, employment and proper housing opportunities
- 2. Racism can result in revictimization for people**
- 3. Racism is a learned behaviour and set of attitudes, shows up in different ways, ie are cycles of racism and institutional racism**

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

- 1. Education**
 - educate people early to break the cycle
 - start helping children understand cultures, values and unity
 - take a wholistic approach, build for future, limit "band-aid" projects and programs
 - take actions to make racism behaviour intolerable
 - develop common values to build on
 - need adult commitment to education and community
 - start with family and friends
- 2. Address the imbalance of opportunities**
 - make policing and laws culturally sensitive
 - government agencies need to become more culturally sensitive, familiar faces and names are needed
 - services need to be fair and equal, may mean reinventing the status quo for equality to get to a "level playing field"

NEXT STEPS — SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHERING COMMUNITY AGENDA



1. BETTER CO-ORDINATION

- there needs to be better co-ordination by the NGO's for all programs offered in the community
- people in the community need to be involved in the design of programs - these programs will vary from community to community, however if local people are involved there will be better support
- there needs to be meetings with the Directors of the various agencies in the area
- there needs to be a closer liaison between Education/Recreation
- a directory of services, specific to North Central is needed
- there needs to be greater co-ordinating efforts on the part of the North Central Community Association
- there needs to be more aboriginal representation on the North Central Community Association

2. IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

- a meeting between the management of community associations and the city
- neighbourhoods and associations need to strengthen their resources, together, without any hidden agendas
- a meeting, in January of the Inner City Associations
- delegation and/or preparation of a briefing paper to Dwain Lingenfelter
- encourage everyone to take one or two solutions proposed at the symposium and start lobbying with family and neighbours while waiting for meetings
- North Central Community to compile information from the symposium and send out
- start work on a Strategic Action Plan, aim for an alliance of organizations and plan to discuss at the proposed January meeting