



Winnipeg
Public Library
Board

*Needs Assessment and Report on
Library Services with
Aboriginal Populations Living in Winnipeg*

FINAL REPORT

Prepared by:

Leskiw and Associates

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Acknowledgements

Leskiw and Associates would like to acknowledge all of those community members who gave of their time and shared wisdoms. Specific note is made of those community leaders who willingly and readily provided their experienced opinions, and the assistance they gave in helping us reach further into the community.

Particular thanks goes out to those organizations identified at the end of this report. Their cooperation, direct assistance and support to engage members of the community reinforces our opinion of the value and worth of their contributions to this city.

Thanks also goes out to the Winnipeg Public Library Board for their foresight in requesting this information, and for the staff and management for their support and contributions.

It is to these relationships with individuals and organizations that the results of this work are dedicated.

Miigwech / Thanks. Ekosi.

Deb and Chris
Leskiw and Associates

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1.0 BACKGROUND AND PROCESS

In the summer of 2009, the Winnipeg Public Library Board tendered a request for the services of a consultant to undertake a needs assessment and community consultation concerning the provision of services by the Winnipeg Public Library (WPL), for Aboriginal peoples living in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Over the past number of years, the Winnipeg Public Library has undertaken a number of events and activities intended to draw a greater number of users from the Aboriginal resident population in Winnipeg. It is recognized that this population is growing and developing, and that it has unique needs in terms of services, access and opportunities to engage with library services. At the same time, it is acknowledged that the WPL does not know how or if it is successful in attracting additional Aboriginal users, and whether past initiatives have been effective or not.

The internal context within which this work was to be undertaken acknowledged that the Winnipeg Public Library has indicated its commitment to the continuous improvement of services with Aboriginal peoples, including new service innovations, building on past successes and a growing understanding of needs, expectations and potential.

The overall scope of the work that was requested was also to include an overview of efforts elsewhere to attract and retain Aboriginal library users, relative to the situation and circumstances that exist within Winnipeg. However, the primary requirement within the request was to seek information directly from the Aboriginal community with respect to factors such as usage, information and knowledge around services and offerings, and barriers to use and means to overcome them. Further, a focus was also requested on the inner city and the Aboriginal population residing within it.

To this end, a needs assessment and community consultation was viewed as the best means to obtain direct, specific feedback on current services as well as opportunities to strengthen services and offerings. It is also understood that by going out, talking to, and listening to the community, expectations and relationships would continue to develop and positive progress could be facilitated.

As part of this requirement a final report was to be prepared that summarizes the findings and presents recommendations regarding actions that can be undertaken and partnerships that can be developed to support the WPL in its goal of establishing itself as a leader in the provision of services with Aboriginal peoples. Therefore, the following represents a description of the work that was undertaken in response to the Request for Proposals, along with a reporting of the results obtained by *Leskiw and Associates*.

2.0 APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

Leskiw and Associates followed a predominantly participatory approach, based on a clear understanding of the community(ies), the wisdom that its members can provide, and the realities within which these communities live. In this manner, the assessment and consultation process, in itself, forms part of an overall engagement strategy.

Under this overall approach, there are a number of factors that have been taken into consideration:

- 📖 There was a need to reach a broad cross-section of the overall Aboriginal population in Winnipeg, through a variety of means that best respect and accommodate situations, circumstances and realities;
- 📖 Winnipeg's Aboriginal communities are diverse and unique, and it was necessary to hear from different age groups, employment and educational backgrounds, income levels, cultures and geographic settings, while being mindful of time and resource considerations;
- 📖 It was also important to balance the perceptions and opinions from the community, and to listen to those that are charged with the responsibility of managing and delivering services, so that any ideas that are put forth as recommendations, can realistically be considered; and,
- 📖 The consultation process provided an opportunity to motivate elements of the community towards partnerships and implementation of ideas.

The main emphasis was upon getting out and talking to the community.

The process and tasks that were undertaken utilized a combination of information gathering tools to systematically grow a foundation of information, on which recommendations would be based, and future actions may be pursued.¹

¹ Note: The quotes and comments on the side of the pages reflect the feedback obtained from the interviews and discussion circles, as well as commentary by the authors. They are provided to provide greater insight into the words of wisdom received.

Briefly stated, the key methodology that was utilized included: an environmental scan with information provided by WPL staff and internet searches to identify lessons that have been learned elsewhere; an examination of demographics relative to WPL intentions; an overview of the past and current WPL offerings and initiatives; and development and implementation of consultations conducted through interviews with community leaders (which informed the survey and discussion circle questioning), discussion circles and surveys with adults and youth.

Cooperation levels were very high, and as a result, while eight (8) interviews were anticipated, a total of nine (9) were held with a total of 13 community leaders. Similarly, eight (8) discussion circles were projected and nine (9) held, with a total of 124 individuals. Lists of those individuals and groups that participated are noted in Appendix A.

Written surveys were obtained from 106 adults and 37 young people (an additional 13 young girls responded through group survey formats at Kani Kanichihk and Circle of Life Thunderbird House). Therefore, over the course of the consultations nearly 300 individuals provided their opinions and feedback to these efforts. Copies of the line of questioning and the results of the adult and youth surveys are attached as Appendix B.

The following report is organized around overall findings, described in terms of: the demographics of the population relative to the WPL; attractions and impediments to the use of the WPL services and offerings, and the means to address barriers and encourage stronger usage; the opportunities to adjust or build on past and existing efforts within the WPL; and, lessons that have been learned elsewhere that can contribute to the current understandings.

Recommendations are provided under recognition of resource and capacity constraints and are, therefore, presented in accordance with three levels of *intensity* of action:

-  Simple adjustments and additions to existing processes and approaches to strengthen overall outcomes;

Traditional surveys did not work within two programs serving eight and nine year old girls...a form of group participatory survey was used to obtain responses in a safe and fun manner.

Balanced information provides a stronger overall picture of what exists and what can be done,

- 📖 More significant changes to thinking about engagement and accessibility to services and relevant activities that can be carried out to begin to realize such new thinking; and,
- 📖 A larger scale idea that constructs a significant point of emphasis and the means by which the Aboriginal population can become a strong and consistent presence within the context of the Winnipeg Public Library.

It should be noted that none of the recommendations are mutually exclusive and deliberation is encouraged to consider different combinations of suggestions, dependent on capacity and resource availability.

Collectively this information provides a basis for recommendations that fit most directly within a Winnipeg context.

3.0 FINDINGS

The findings within this assessment have been reported on in terms of several groups of information:

- 📖 Demographics and their relationship to the WPL;
- 📖 The results of the consultations within the community;
- 📖 Internal opportunities and limitations; and,
- 📖 Examples of best practices and considerations from elsewhere.

Understanding the demographics of Winnipeg's Aboriginal community provides a better sense of where and how differing engagement strategies / actions can be effective. Understanding the population to be served creates a basis for the targeting of different forms of offerings, and learning why various initiatives are more or less productive. While the demographics are more fully described within the *Interim Report, Leskiw and Associates, December 2009*, (Attached as Appendix C) there are several findings that are important to highlight.

3.1 Demographics Relative to the WPL

There are many factors that negatively affect the day to day lives of a disproportionate number of Aboriginal individuals and families. These include: low literacy and education levels; low employment rates; high percentages of single parent families, particularly single mothers; inadequate housing and compromised health status.

These types of factors translate into a continual struggle to meet many of the basic necessities of life.

As a consequence, there are large numbers of Aboriginal people in the inner city that must place high priority on meeting the basic needs of themselves and their families. Interest and attachment to services and amenities such as the libraries is often seen to be secondary to daily living requirements.

It is also important to consider the impact of the location of WPL sites, relative to the location of clusters of the Aboriginal population. It is widely recognized that there is a significant population of Aboriginal people within the inner city, specifically the southern parts of the north end, and the fringes of the central downtown core of Winnipeg.

In addition, there are significant segments of the Aboriginal community within areas of Elmwood / East Kildonan, Keewatin and Burrows neighbourhoods, the Maples, and the Weston area. Several of these populations relate primarily to four WPL locations: St. John's Library; Sir William Stephenson; Millennium Library; and, West Kildonan Library, and, to a lesser extent, the new site at the Cindy Klassen Recreation Complex.

While these sites do lie within the neighbourhoods with high populations of the Aboriginal community, access is not necessarily easy. Travel most often will occur via public transit or walking. Public transit can be seen to be expensive, particularly for families, while walking (particularly for youth) can raise issues of personal safety. Proximity to a sizable segment of the population does not necessarily translate directly into access.

...feeding, clothing and sheltering your family is most important, other things in life need to be seen for their value if they are to be utilized.

Safety and the cost of transportation must be factored into the idea of accessibility to library locations.

However, there are a number of demographic factors that may form a foundation for greater engagement between the Aboriginal population and the WPL including:

-  Decreases in mobility rates that have been historically very high; setting the stage for greater attachments to schools and neighbourhoods. Reduced mobility implies that there can be increased opportunities to develop and maintain relationships with neighbourhood / community resources such as the library.
-  Increases in the percentage of individuals completing high school and going on to post secondary studies and / or employment indicates a growth in literacy.
-  Growth in the desire to learn more about self identity, culture and traditions and language, with the consequent need for information and access to opportunities to learn.
-  The magnitude of the younger Aboriginal population provides the capacity to reach out to large numbers of young people through the schools as a targeted venue. The schools can be sought as allies to connect children and youth to the value of the library, and to establish a basis for continued use later in life.

Aboriginal people are starting to become more attached to particular neighbourhoods and schools.

In addition, children are often most instrumental in involving parents and connecting them to the library.

-  The large number of single parents, most often single mothers with young children means that there are large numbers of individuals that may be looking for sources of recreation and / or learning for themselves and their children at no cost. If libraries can be seen to be of value and accessible (physically and financially), they can translate into such sources of entertainment, once they are known and valued.
-  The growing middle class within the Aboriginal population implies a higher literacy and education level, which can translate into greater connection to information seeking, knowledge and the use of libraries as a resource.

Libraries can become a good source of low / no cost recreation and leisure time activities.

Countering this, however, is the possibility that, with higher income levels comes greater access to the purchasing of books, music and entertainment from private bookstores, and competition with the library resources.

 It is also important to recognize that a sizable number of Aboriginal residents within the inner city are connected to and / or are being served by a number of strong and effective organizations. Just as the schools provide a venue for engaging young people, these organizations provide the means to connect to adults and families.

Partnerships can be created with existing organizations to connect with the Aboriginal community in the inner city.

3.2 And the People Said

It is important to recognize that the individuals that responded to the questions throughout the consultations have an expectation that their words can be translated into action. It is realized that, while big changes may be on their *wish lists* of changes to be made, it can also be the small adjustments that begin to bring about the kind of library that is valued and utilized by the Aboriginal population.

Therefore, the conversations with leaders, feedback through the discussion circles and the survey responses all provide the means to raise both *issues* and *opportunities*. The issues reflect respondents' opinions on situations that limit use and engagement (by members of the Aboriginal community), while identified opportunities are seen as means to work to address the issues.

The issues and opportunities are seen to be parts of the same conversation, both leading to greater opportunities for engagement, and a stronger Aboriginal presence within the WPL and a more effective relationship between the community and the WPL.

Starting to engage means that people will want to be listened to.

As noted above, direct feedback was obtained from approximately 300 individuals. The vast majority of these have had direct experience with the WPL, with nearly 50% having been members at some point in their lives. Of those that are not members, nearly 70% indicated that they would like to become members.



There is a general feeling that the libraries can be useful and value, but more information is needed as to why and how.

Overall, it can be stated that there is a general view that the libraries can be of value in the community, particularly for the Aboriginal population. While the WPL services and offerings may not be an important factor in the daily lives of the majority of individuals (for a number of reasons), upon reflection and consideration, there are roles that include building pride in content, being the source for information, or supporting literacy growth, which the WPL can play that would be of value and benefit. Simply stated, it is worthwhile for the WPL to pursue efforts to further engage the Aboriginal population in Winnipeg.

There is a consistent desire to have library services that would work for the Aboriginal population, and as a result members of the Aboriginal community could take pride and comfort in their involvement with the library. For this to occur, the majority of respondents identified a number of key issues that they feel need to be addressed, and have also provided some suggestions to build strength within the WPL from their perspectives. Essentially people were talking about *bridging* the gaps in between the issues and the opportunities and *bridging* the cultures of the inner city Aboriginal community and the WPL.

The issue is seen to be, whether there is a relationship between the community and the WPL, or what would it take to build and maintain one.

The findings and feedback are summarized below in relation to the potential to develop strong and effective relationships between the Aboriginal population in the inner city and the WPL. The feedback and the findings may best be considered in terms of a progression of relationships through four (4) related stages.

- 📖 Establishing or **creating value** of the WPL within the community that motivates engagement;
- 📖 Becoming **inviting and welcoming** to encourage individuals and families to come and try library offerings;
- 📖 **Maintaining participation** by being respectful and continually addressing expectations; and,
- 📖 Learning to **grow and develop together** to foster increased community ownership and promote lasting involvement.

...its all about relationships.

Movement through the stages is negatively affected by the types of issues and barriers that have been identified by respondents, but can also be strengthened through efforts to realize the opportunities for change that have also been suggested. The following chart attempts to physically describe such relationships:



Address the issues and capitalize on opportunities to build and maintain relationships.

3.2.1 Cree-ating Value

In order to initiate stronger relationships across the Aboriginal community it is necessary to have an informed community, one that can connect with the libraries and see that there is value within this connection. Accurate information is a starting point to create such value.

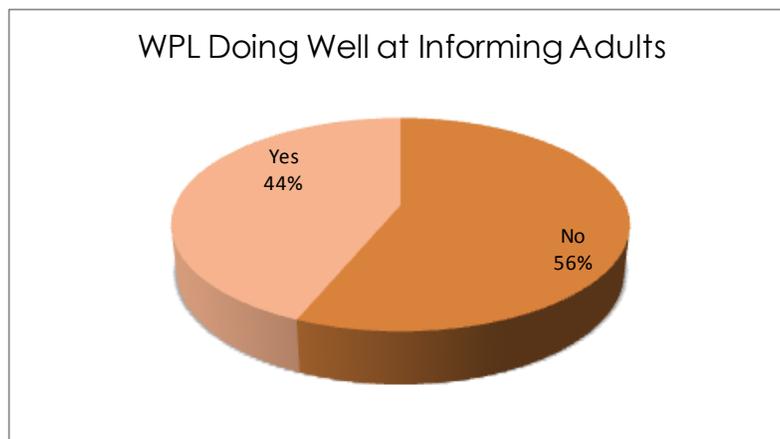
Across the interviews, discussion circles and surveys, it was evident that there exists a lack of accurate information on what the library is today, what they offer and how it can be of value. As a basic example, over 40% of adult survey respondents indicated that they did not know that memberships are free and that limited use memberships did not require identification.

Solid, useful and accurate information on the WPL is often lacking.

Nearly 60% of adult respondents did not feel that the WPL was doing a good job letting Aboriginal people know what they have to offer. Lack of information also exists as to where the libraries are located (with the exception of the central Millennium branch).

While the responses from young people are somewhat better, there remains a lack of accurate information within these age groups. Over 40% of young respondents did not know about memberships, while only 45% felt that the WPL was doing a good job of informing the public. Overall, it can be generally stated that the libraries are not 'on the radar' for the majority of individuals consulted during this exercise.

...the word on the libraries is not getting out. There is no well beaten path to the libraries.



This places the WPL in a position where it is difficult to raise its profile and illustrate how / why it can be of value to the Aboriginal population in Winnipeg. In the absence of accurate information about the library offerings / locations, people tend to either ignore or to generate their own (sometimes) inaccurate understandings.

Suggestions to pass on basic information to the community included:

- 📖 Advertising on APTN, in the Aboriginal newspapers and local neighbourhood newspapers. In particular, creating regular features and being a consistent presence within such vehicles was seen to be important.
- 📖 Advertising on the inside of public transportation is seen to be very useful. Advertising on the poster space inside of buses gets read several times each trip, thereby reinforcing the message. Advertising on the outside of buses is read primarily by people in cars.
- 📖 Promoting the libraries through public schools to children and youth is also seen to be effective. Children in classrooms are a captive audience, and support can be solicited from teachers. Once children learn about and feel there is value to going to the libraries there will be a better chance that all family members will come out.
- 📖 Working through community organizations to present posters and brochures is also valued. The organizations are seen as places to trust, and having visible information on the WPL at such sites works to pass on such trust.

In terms of the information that needs to be made available in order to illustrate value, several ideas were presented:

- 📖 Collections can and should be a major draw to bring people into the libraries. Content and collections that present Aboriginal history from the perspective of non-Aboriginal authors and historians are not well valued unless they are for specific research purposes (and not available on the internet). What is desired is a greater emphasis on contemporary Aboriginal life, with a focus on Aboriginal authors.

...its time to get past the feathers and beads syndrome and move into realistic depictions of life.

Highlighting Aboriginal authors and their books builds pride in the collections and makes the trip to the library more worthwhile. Promoting new authors serves to get the word into the community that the library is also proud of these new contributions to literature, regardless of whether the Aboriginal authors are writing about Aboriginal situations, or are simply telling other stories.

 With respect to the location of the existing collections, two points can be made:

- ✓ The current collections are not well known or seen to be visible. Although they are clearly marked with coloured stickers, not one respondent noted this level of visibility. Placing Aboriginal collections near the children's collections was seen to be of value, as many adults would end up going to the library with their children.
- ✓ Also, consideration should be given to a larger collection of Aboriginal contemporary content at the West Kildonan branch, as increasing numbers of Aboriginal people are moving into the area (as opposed to the Sir William Stephenson branch).

 Literacy still remains a potential reason why people do not see value in what the WPL has to offer. While literacy rates continue to climb, it remains an issue within segments of the Aboriginal community. As a result, it is seen to be important that the WPL have a visible role in addressing literacy. Holding regular learn to read sessions, developing a stronger volunteer base to serve as tutors, or working with community partners to promote literacy will serve to build recognition that the WPL is of value because of the connection to the value of literacy. Classes that are held in the library locations also work to reinforce understanding of where the libraries are, and how to get to them.

Partnerships such as the one with Elizabeth Fry and the St John's Branch on a literacy program raise community profile and perform valuable services.

 A focus on children and youth was also noted as a means of developing greater initial connection and perceptions of value within the Aboriginal community. The schools are seen as a means to promote reading, books and the library offerings by getting children excited about reading. It is

seen to start with Grade 1 students in order to reach them before they have the chance to fall behind.

 Promotion of more than simply WPL content and offerings should occur through the WPL website. It was suggested by a large number of individuals that the library (and its website) should become a ‘go to’ place for information on jobs, what is happening in the community of relevance to Aboriginal people, and what low cost / high value activities are available. It is recognized that promoting organizations and events serves to promote the WPL as well.

Be the place for information that I can turn to...

 Ideally, libraries should be seen as events – places to go and stay. This could include workshops and classes on topics such as genealogy, storytelling and having skating available in the park behind the Millennium library (see the following section for additional suggestions).

 Transportation remains a barrier to consider going to the library. For example, within the north end, the St. John’s branch is, geographically, the closest. However, it can require one or two buses and / or a considerable walk to get there. For families with young children this is not a viable option given the cost and the difficulty. Making transportation free to the libraries (show your library card and be dropped off at a branch, or show your receipt for books and receive a trip home), and transportation becomes an asset rather than a liability.

...make it easier for me to get there, make sure it is safe for my kids.

3.2.2 Inviting and Welcoming

Even with more accurate and timely information on the WPL offerings, it is important to continue to engage the community by being both, actively inviting and welcoming. Two primary factors were identified as being barriers to this stage of relationship building: the image that is held by many community members about the library; and, the initial perceptions of the WPL branches.

You can’t talk in the libraries.

The old image of the libraries as places of solitude with the librarian who ‘shushes’ patrons who talk, and where rules rule, is alive and well within the minds of most of the community participants.

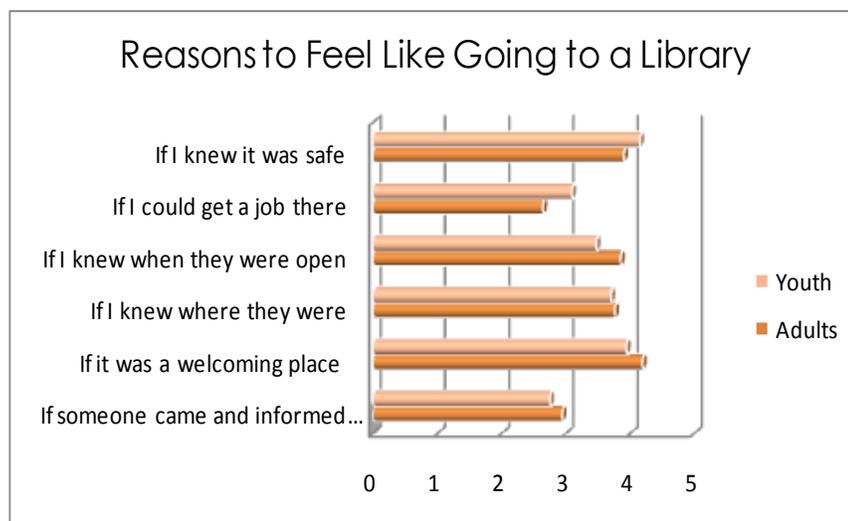
The facilities are viewed as being more corporate than homey, and are quite intimidating – particularly to young people and to new visitors.

The association is also made that, if the libraries must be a place of quiet, then children or grandchildren will not be welcome because they make noise. As a result, libraries are not seen to be inviting places for families. If Aboriginal parents cannot bring their children there is greater likelihood that they will not go.

It is generally believed that talking is not allowed, and it is not viewed as a place of comfort. Attending the library is seen to occur for very specific purposes – need to use the computer or undertake research – not for leisure or pleasure.

While different perceptions still exist, there are a number of reasons identified as to why individuals or families would attend libraries. Some of the most important reasons why Aboriginal people would feel like going to a public library are identified below (responses were ranked on a scale from 1 – 5 with ‘1’ representing strong disagreement with the statement, and ‘5’ representing strong agreement with it – see surveys that are attached in Appendix B).

...use the green space at the libraries for kids to play in and families to enjoy.



Knowledge about where they are and when they are open are important considerations. Being a welcoming place is most important to adults, while youth want to be sure that they are safe places. In the absence of good experiences, image and perception of image is most important.

Countering negative images is seen to be very important to encourage more Aboriginal people to be part of the WPL. Within the interview and discussion circles the negative connotation of the 'institution' was frequently noted. This concept is particularly strong for those that have personal or generational connections to residential schools, and / or who have not had positive experiences within the public school system.

Make it look homier and friendlier... I need to be able to relate to it somehow.

Ideas to counter these perceptions include, offering space exclusively for children where they can be kids and noisy if they need to be. Child minding so that parents can explore the space and its contents was also highlighted by many parents. Several individuals also noted that the space behind the Millennium Library should be converted to a skating park in the winter and skateboarding park in the summer if families and young people are to better use the library as an event.

A number of other suggestions were made to counter this image:

-  While the physical presence of the facility may be imposing (particularly noted for the St. John's branch), the presence of more posters and Aboriginal art would be highly valued. Depicting a place where community members can relate to the atmosphere, is inviting.
-  Connecting to the community translates into understanding the realities of much of the population and accommodating these realities. In some instances this may be as straightforward as remaining open for longer hours on weekends. During these times there are fewer opportunities for low or no cost activities, and the libraries can be viewed as a logical alternative.

It was clearly noted that the WPL should be seen to make an effort to *invite* Aboriginal people into their branches. Feelings around past institutional fears and attitudes will need to be replaced with a positive physical atmosphere and the accommodating nature of the staff. There is an expressed desire to have the WPL come out to the community and invite community members to come into the branches – illustrate that it is important to the WPL for them to connect with the libraries.

Overall, information needs to be flooded into the community that the libraries are different; they are community spaces, open and engaging for all; a place of value and positive recreation.

There are no people that look like me.

Through the discussions and interviews there is a consistently held belief that libraries are generally not seen to be welcoming places for Aboriginal people. The first image that many members of the Aboriginal community stated that they were left with (as they first enter the Millennium library) is that of the security guard and the feeling of being intimidated.

The seniors that participated in the consultations, in particular, questioned if issue of racism could still be front and centre in relation to how people are treated.

Attitudes of the staff are key to addressing these perceptions. While there was considerable praise noted for staff who were receptive to questions, and who helped find books or materials in cooperative and friendly ways (particularly at the Millennium branch); the belief was often noted that staff seem to be too busy behind their desks for patrons to bother them or even to approach them with questions. As a result, it is seen to be easier to leave the library and not return than it is to interrupt.

They (staff) can give that look...and you know, 'cause you've seen that look all your life.

Many staff are seen to be welcoming. However, several examples were noted where individuals felt that they are continually being watched. The bad stories move farther and faster within the community than the good ones, hence an image exists within some parts of the community that Aboriginal people are not welcome. Feeling welcome begins with attitudes and understanding. If all staff work to make all peoples feel welcome, usage and involvement will naturally increase.

Several comments were noted that WPL staff should mirror the attitudes of staff within bookstores – there should be a greater emphasis on treating people as customers and seeking the means to help them however needed.

The overall library system and the ways that one can find materials or books can also be a factor that relates to the welcoming environment of libraries. Many individuals noted that the process is quite scary and it can make people feel that they are “stupid”. It is very important that staff ensure that they can pass on information and be helpful without leaving negative impressions.

Having staff participate in cultural awareness programming is a good step forward. However, equally important as having an historical understanding of traditions and history, is to understand the realities of life within the inner city and the need to avoid judgmental attitudes. The single most important factor for adults regarding their experience in a library is having library staff who help rather than judge. Not being seen to be judgmental is a very important factor in any attempt to build and maintain relationships with Winnipeg’s Aboriginal population.

Trying to find a book is very intimidating.

Outreach is felt to be a role within the WPL, with greater emphasis desired of outreach to people (residents), not simply to organizations, networks / coalitions and their representatives. Outreach to parent councils, community members in drop-in or structured programs at community agencies, and directly to students were commonly noted means of connection.

In this regard, outreach by library branch staff was seen to be more valuable than outreach by designated *outreach staff*. It is the library staff that people will see if / when they go to the library branch, and it is these individuals with whom relationships will begin to develop. Branch library staff will be the *faces* of the library that represent the WPL.

It is seen to be very important that young people connect to learning and reading, and the WPL can play a prime role in supporting this. Partnerships with the inner city schools are considered to be important means to connect children and youth to reading and, subsequently, to the libraries.

...people want to put a face on the WPL.

The teachers, administrators and school resource persons that participated in the consultations universally noted that teaching staff would be more than willing to promote greater use of the WPL offerings by Aboriginal students.

Field trips to the libraries, sessions on how to use library services and find resources, and introductions to all of the other, non-book opportunities are viewed as the means to get young people connected to the libraries as cool places to hang out. The bookmobile was cited by a large number of individuals as a symbol of being able to connect to the library and its books. For those that had access to the bookmobiles of the past, a clear and positive image of the library has been maintained. Going out to the community in this way and inviting young people to connect with the library is seen as a very positive undertaking.

Schools are natural partners in getting children involved in the libraries.

In addition to schools, young people noted that the libraries should be connected to local community organizations and use them as a means of reaching out to youth. The trust that exists between the youth and the agencies can begin to be transferred through these community agencies, to the WPL.

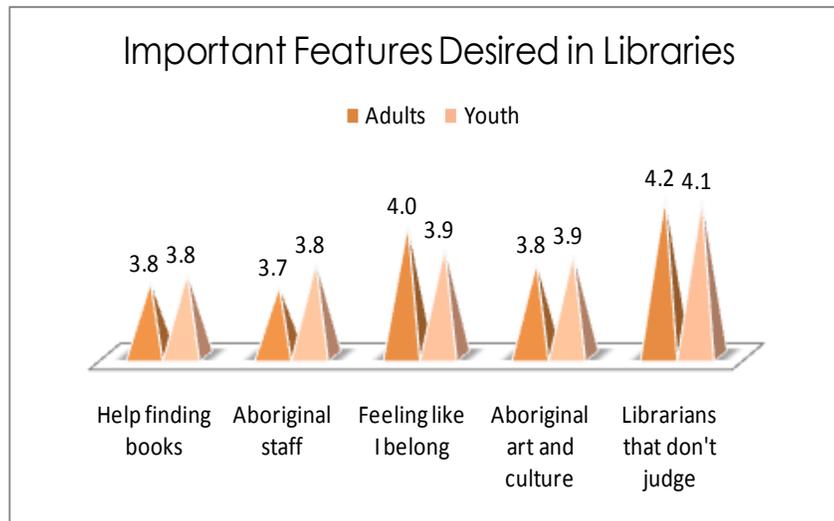
When targeting outreach towards organizations it was noted that organizations, agencies and schools are continually bombarded with information from a wide variety of sources. Therefore, personal contact with agency representatives is essential, and continual reminders and updates are valuable. Being consistently, personally visible is an important means of countering the overwhelming volume of information that comes into organizations through the internet.

...remember I have lots of info coming at me, help me remember the library...get in my face about it.

3.2.3 Maintaining the Relationship

It can be stated that relationships are dynamic and change continuously. Under this recognition it will be important for the WPL to be able continually invest effort in maintaining its relationship with the Aboriginal population in Winnipeg. In turn, it can be expected that engagement and usage will subsequently continue to grow stronger. With the growth in the Aboriginal population over the next decades, this is seen to be positive outcome for all concerned.

The results of the surveys provide a good picture of what Aboriginal respondents are looking for in terms of important features within libraries.



Through the discussion circles and interviews there were additional factors that were identified or reinforced which can limit or enhance these efforts:

📖 The attitudes of staff will continue to be important to relationship building and maintenance. As relationships between individuals develop, the opportunities to maintain stronger Aboriginal community participation in the WPL can also be expected to develop.

A need was identified for staff who understand the realities of life for many individuals within the inner city, and can accommodate those realities through policies and practices and exercising personal wisdom. Strong relationships will be expected to, and be able to find solutions that work to maintain Aboriginal involvement with the WPL.

I took out the book, but my cousin borrowed it and went back home with it. Is there anything that we can do about this, together?

 Fines for late fees represent the most singular factor that works against continued involvement and maintenance of strong relationships between the WPL and the Aboriginal population. It is important to recognize that, for those individuals that responded to questions about fines, the issue is not about *wanting* to pay the fine, but rather it relates to:

- ✓ Misinformation around the cost of fines (for many individuals fines are expected to grow exponentially as do short term loans) and the expectation that they are not affordable;
- ✓ Loss of the book / video, and the fear of the consequences;
- ✓ The reportedly nasty attitudes of some staff, letters and collection agencies who seek repayment; and,
- ✓ The absence of practical ways to deal with the issue.

...fines equal shaming... the Aboriginal community has learned from history to withdraw from shaming.

While fines are seen as the most significant factor in keeping individuals from returning to the library, there were no definitive means identified to deal with this issue. Some of the recurrent suggestions were:

- ✓ Advertising and informing individuals of the options to renew the materials by phone or internet (reminders at the time of borrowing would be appreciated);
- ✓ Eliminating late fees if the books are brought back within a (reasonable) period of time; and,
- ✓ Developing the capacity to work off fines through volunteering.

While attitudes and fines reflect key barriers to maintaining relationships, there are a number of opportunities identified that can continue to grow them:

 Ensuring that people feel welcome whenever they come in to a branch; working to create a strong sense of connection was noted as one of the most important considerations to keep coming to the library, by adults and youth alike.

...feeling like I belong there.

 Having more Aboriginal staff within the WPL system, particularly visible within several key branches works to promote the feelings of belonging. As was noted in the discussion circles, it is important for Aboriginal people to feel their faces are reflected back by those that they relate to in the WPL.

 Just as it serves to welcome individuals to the libraries, pride in the library collections works to maintain engagement and relationships. Pride has been expressed through being able to access larger collections by Aboriginal authors, even if the books do not have Aboriginal content. Acknowledging Aboriginal writers and celebrating their works is viewed as a means of growing ownership in the collections and the work of the WPL. People are not necessarily only looking for information on Aboriginal life, simply the opportunity to read the works of Aboriginal authors.

 Particularly for youth, supporting young Aboriginal writers and their works; sponsoring or holding workshops and clinics in writing are all viewed as solid means of engaging more young people to the WPL.

There are lots of young ones out there with lots of talent...it just needs to be supported.

 Events and activities are seen as strong ways to promote the WPL, its offerings and its desire to celebrate the Aboriginal population. Within this it is seen to be important to have regular and consistent events / activities that attract and maintain attention.

Sponsoring debates on political issues; holding information sessions on rights; offering literacy classes; and, storytelling, all form examples of the types of events and activities that are seen to be attractive.

The type of event / activity appears to be less important than the regularity with which they are offered and the level of promotion within the community on when they will be available. It is noted that this type of effort may take some time to achieve results, but positive results can be obtained.

 The use of storytelling as a means of maintaining strong relations with the Aboriginal population is one that is seen to be of particular significance. It has been noted that regular storytelling enables this art form to be viewed on the same level as written literature and books. The concept of Elders and storytellers as *our* (Aboriginal) libraries was raised in the discussions with community leaders. Raising this concept promotes storytelling as the Aboriginal contribution to literature. On-going presentation of storytellers illustrates the WPL's celebration of Aboriginal art and culture and demonstrates its desire for a lasting relationship.

Ours are oral histories and teachings, we need to celebrate this more often and in more ways.

3.2.4 Growing Together

Relationships imply a level of mutual interaction, with communication and the exchange of ideas playing a big part. Growing together forms the highest level of relationship whereby the Aboriginal population can take greater emotional ownership of the library and its offerings, and actively participate in strengthening connections between the WPL and the Aboriginal community. Within this context, this stage of relationships more fully reflects a capacity building arrangement, with both the WPL and the community learning from each other and growing in knowledge and ability to relate, rather than a charity model, which assumes a one-way transfer of information.

Ways that were identified to facilitate a *growing together* relationship include those actions whereby Aboriginal people can feel more in control over their participation and the WPL's reactions to their needs.

They can include:

- 📖 Connecting with organizations such as Rossbrook House, Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre, Andrews Street Family Centre, or Native Women’s Transition Centre and others, with the WPL making arrangements to lend books to the organization and the organization subsequently lending the materials to their members. In this manner, the WPL *borrow*s the trust and relationship of the members through the organizations in trade for the books and materials. The same process could potentially be utilized within several inner city schools;

It is important to note that each of the organizations that was involved in this consultation was willing to support some form of partnership arrangement with the WPL. Partnership arrangements would, however, have to be fully cognizant of the pressures under which these organizations operate and the limitations in terms of resources.

- 📖 Supporting and ensuring that the WPL is a more active celebrant of culture and heritage, by helping organize regular events or activities and providing guidance as needed;
- 📖 Generating volunteer opportunities that work to build skills / references that can lead to employment. Volunteers can be identified through partnerships with many of the local community serving organizations, or through networks such as the Lord Selkirk Park Community Advisory Committee and the North End Community Helpers Network;
- 📖 Creating an Advisory Committee that would assist in selecting collection materials, help develop ideas for the events or activities and serve as visible and tangible evidence of the WPL’s commitment to the Aboriginal population in the inner city. It was noted that the membership of such a committee is most importantly based on experience within the inner city, rather than academic qualifications; and,

Join with us,
celebrate with
us.

It's important to
have strong
voices, many
voices that
reflect our
diversity.

 Facilitating greater Aboriginal presence on the Winnipeg Public Library Board that can illustrate a stronger relationship *at the top*.

A considerable number of respondents asked the question as to how many Aboriginal members were currently on the Board with the view that commitment to change should first begin through the Board composition. Several comments were made that the Board should more fully reflect the composition of the population.

Within this consideration it was noted that finding the most appropriate individuals for such positions does not generally occur (within the Aboriginal community) through application processes; but rather by way of conversations and personal invitations to participate.

The Peoples Library at Manitoba Indigenous Cultural and Education Centre deserves special mention as a source of good research information.

3.3 Building from Within

While it was not the intent of this needs assessment to review or describe the internal workings of the WPL as it relates to engaging the Aboriginal populations in Winnipeg, it is important to recognize that there has been a slowly growing movement towards a greater sense of connection. Through information provided by WPL staff, it would appear that a combination of activities and initiatives have been undertaken under recognition of the importance of reaching the Aboriginal community.

As a summary to provide some context and to identify some of the initiatives that have been undertaken, the following information is presented.

3.3.1 Collections, Actions and Events

The Winnipeg Public Library has undertaken a broad variety of initiatives to raise its profile and to make it more attractive and engaging within the Aboriginal populations in Winnipeg. Specifically these can be viewed in terms of material *collections, actions* such as outreach, and *events*.

The currently listed Aboriginal collections include nearly 5,000 items. The majority of these items are marked (visible stickers) and provided within designated and marked space at a number of the branches. (NOTE: designation of an item as an *Aboriginal resource* appears to occur as a result of it meeting identifiable standards. It is not clear as to whether books written by Aboriginal authors without Aboriginal content are seen to be housed within the Aboriginal collections).

The vast majority of these are housed within the Millennium library (70%), including both the majority of adult and juvenile Aboriginal resources (books and videos). In 2006, the juvenile resources were developed into the *Aboriginal Reading in the Round*, whereby the section of the main floor space was designed to be a clearly recognizable and visible Aboriginal distinct space. The space is used to host programs and events such as storytellers.

The St. John's branch houses the next largest group within the Aboriginal collection, including approximately 540 items. It is within designated spaces that are clearly identified. Sir William Stevenson branch on Keewatin Avenue has similarly designated space housing approximately 490 items. These three sites are seen as the main depository for Aboriginal collections, with the remaining books / videos generally spread across the remaining branches. Other than the West Kildonan branch on Jefferson Avenue (with 13 items), the remaining branches have very few resources (2-4 items).

Data is maintained with respect to the usage patterns of these resources. However, this information simply notes *that* the resources are used / taken out, not *who* is using them. Ethnicity is not a factor within the coding of available user information, therefore, it is not possible to determine if there have been any changes in the level of use of the collections by Aboriginal people. Anecdotal information from staff do indicate a perceived overall increase in the number of Aboriginal residents using WPL services / materials.

The WPL does undertake active *outreach* to a wide range of community networks and organizations. It appears that, given resources and capacity, a focus for outreach is upon those groups with which the staff have a relationship, and to networks (such as the Coalition of Community Based Youth Serving Agencies), where a number of groups can be informed at one time. Outreach also attends events and provides information services upon request. Such requests have been growing in number in the past years, often in relation to schools and adult education institutions (Centre for Aboriginal Human Resources Development, Urban Circle Training Centre, etc.),

Through Outreach Services and Frontier College a *Check It Out* van visits Norquay Community Centre and Dufferin School bi-weekly to promote library use and to provide the opportunity for young people to take out library books.

Outreach and relationship building also occurs directly through the branches – primarily in the person of the branch librarian. There appears to be a level of internal debate as to the role of this position in terms of engaging with the community (and the branch staff in general) relative to the outreach staff functions.

While general comments are made that it is all staff's responsibility for outreach and relationship building, the capacity and ability of branch staff to undertake this type of effort relative to serving the public that already comes in the doors appears to be an overriding issue that limits targeted outreach at a neighbourhood level.

Increasingly the WPL hosts or organizes special events with Aboriginal themes or content. In the past two years (2008 and 2009) a total of nine events per year were held. This is up from the four events the year previous (2007), three in 2006 and single events prior to this time frame. The increases would indicate that there is a growing effort to promote Aboriginal presence and to attract greater numbers of Aboriginal residents into the libraries. While specific 'numbers' of who attended, and the level of Aboriginal participation at these events is unknown, anecdotally it is noted that the events are well attended and that an increasing number of Aboriginal people are also in attendance.

In addition, specific short-term projects have been attempted in partnership with community groups. St. John's branch library and Ndinawemaaganag Endaawaad (Ndinawe) youth serving agency developed and operated a homework club several years ago with some initial, but limited long-term success. Other projects that brought in storytellers or authors were seen to be successful, yet were not followed-up on, due to a lack of staffing or resources.

An additional note is required around the presence of Aboriginal staff within the WPL. At the present time there are five full time individuals of Aboriginal descent working in the system (there have been an additional 4 – 7 *page* positions - entry level positions normally involved with filling the shelves with returned books - filled by Aboriginal community members during specific periods over the past number of years). It is also noted that an Aboriginal internship position was created and filled several years ago, however, the individual left soon after the placement and, although attempts were made to determine why they left, no feedback was provided.

The majority of WPL staff that provided responses to the internal set of consultation questions do have a good recognition of the barriers to greater engagement by / with the Aboriginal populations. The list of major barriers from an internal (staff) perspective includes:

-  Transportation – physical access and the costs of public transportation for families;
-  Fees and fines that may be too expensive for families;
-  Lack of awareness as to what is available, or how to access it; and,
-  The ‘foreign’ or institutional nature of the libraries, particularly their architecture.

3.3.2 Internal Impediments and Considerations

Given the feedback received from community members and the commentary obtained from library staff it is possible to provide a cursory examination of those factors that limit engagement or can be built on to grow stronger relationships. In summary, the key impediments and related considerations are as follows:

-  Internally there appears to be some hesitancy to attempt new initiatives, or make specific purchases for collections because the results may not be viewed as being appropriate or acceptable within the community. From a community perspective, it can be noted that *making the effort* is important as it shows intent and commitment.

If there is concern about appropriateness it is important to also recognize that there already is experience and understanding amongst the staff and that experience and desire to better serve are precursors for solutions. In addition, there is a level of internal capacity in the form of the limited number of Aboriginal staff persons (full time or summer) as points of reference for new ideas. In this matter community and lived experience can be as equally useful as formal training.

-  The impression exists that there may be some conflict between either developing new initiatives or extending outreach for a specific group (such as the Aboriginal population) versus continuing to provide as high a level of direct service as possible.

Some elements of greater engagement will require specific actions that go over and above existing capacity, while others simply relate to developing positive relationships with all who enter; going out and talking and building relationships; and, ensuring that attitudes are welcoming are essential. This issue should not be seen as being ‘either / or’ but one of continually looking to add value to all WPL services for all groups. Added value in any form will serve to attract individuals including those within the Aboriginal populations.

 Outreach is responsible not only for reaching out to the Aboriginal community, but also to all other residents of the city. They do not appear to have a specific mandate for engaging with the Aboriginal populations, and must utilize their capacity where and when it is viewed as being most effective. Networks, community fairs, literacy shows, etc. are all designed to reach a maximum number of individuals with a focused staff effort. While such work serves to provide good information, it does not necessarily provide the time needed to build relationships, and an understanding of the value of the WPL.

In this manner it may be even more important for branch staff to all be involved in ‘outreach’ and relationship building. Members of the community have indicated the importance of being able to see someone that they know and can relate to which a branch. Consistency in talking with and relating to the same staff person is a key element of relationship building.

 Information is best targeted at specific audiences. Within the Aboriginal community it is important to recognize that there are different segments within the overall Aboriginal population just as there are within the general municipal population. Diversity exists in terms of education and literacy levels, heritage and ancestry, occupations, incomes and lifestyles and should be considered when information is being targeted.

3.4 Lessons from Elsewhere

As part of this overall assessment a review occurred of ‘best practices’ from elsewhere, and lessons that have been learned that may be applied within Winnipeg. Preliminary information was provided through staff of the WPL which has been supplemented through internet searches of promising library practices.

Through the internet it is possible to gather information from across the world. However, it is important to consider best practices with Winnipeg and its Aboriginal population as a reference point. As such, the majority of emphasis on lessons learned has been gleaned from western provinces and sister First Nation, Metis and Inuit residents within them.

As a means of setting the stage for some of these specific lessons it is important to consider some of the overall understandings in relation to Indigenous populations and library services, as initially identified within the *Interim Report; Leskiw and Associates December 2009*:

-  There is growing recognition of the need to engage Indigenous populations within the library services, in order to ensure service that is inclusive and to support populations with information, resources and leisure opportunities.
-  While recognition that something should be done exists, there do not appear to be any universal strategies that will lead to stronger and greater involvement of the Aboriginal community in library services.
-  It is generally acknowledged that basing engagement on knowledge of the community, its situation, values and expectations is required for any level of success.
-  Consistency in implementation of promising strategies and the need to take a long term perspective in support of such efforts is important for relationships to be built and change to be evident.
-  Barriers to accurate, timely and accessible information is seen as a primary barrier to access of services. It is important to generate information about the library offerings in ways and means that are accessible to, and understandable within the community. While use of language can be important, it appears to be equally important to maintain a level of involvement with the community to continually supply, translate and ensure accuracy of information.

Within this broad context and set of understandings, there are a number of specific features and initiatives that have been developed within the cities of Edmonton, Saskatoon and Regina, that provide some clear lessons for the Winnipeg situation.

Highlights from each of these city's public libraries are:

EDMONTON

A major study and consultation was undertaken in 2005. Many of its key findings echo those presented within this report. Since the completion and acceptance of the findings the Edmonton Public Library has worked to make itself more visible, valuable and connected to its Aboriginal population through a variety of actions, such as:

Developing linkages on its website that are of specific interest to the Aboriginal community. These extend far beyond the influence of the library services, into employment and training opportunities, political connections, current topics of interest and general sharing of information on what other organizations in the city are doing. Through this it is hoped that the library will be seen as a more complete resource for the Aboriginal population, and by default will attract more individuals / groups to the website and potentially to all other services.

Specific partnerships were developed with the public school system in order to promote literacy and the library system's involvement with it. This has initially focused on schools with high Aboriginal populations and extended outward. Actions include general promotion of reading and literacy, helping organize tours and outreach to ensure all students know how to access books, and providing library cards to all students.

To add greater emphasis and value to this initiative, the Edmonton Public Library has partnered with Edmonton's transit system to ensure that school classes that do not have the resources to come to the libraries for tours will be provided with free public transit. The overall intent of these actions is to build a relationship with the younger generation and introduce them to the offerings of the library. By reaching into the schools it is expected that a lifelong membership will develop that includes a high percentage of the Aboriginal population.

SASKATOON

Saskatoon Public Library received funds through the provincial government to specifically address engagement with the Aboriginal community. Some of the primary activities that have / are being undertaken are briefly summarized below.

Partnering with six other educational and library service organizations to sponsor Saskatchewan Aboriginal Storytelling Month. During January the partners jointly organize and promote Aboriginal storytelling through discussions, presentations and storytelling by local authors. The events appear to be widely promoted and well attended. The partnership enables groups to learn from and benefit from shared experiences and to generate much higher levels of public interest than they could separately. The events are held at a variety of locations including the libraries thereby indicating that the library is visible and active in the broader Aboriginal community.

It is important to note that this type of major event illustrates Saskatoon Public Library's commitment to engaging with the Aboriginal community and provides tangible evidence that Aboriginal content and materials are highly valued. Relationships grow from mutual respect and understanding of each other.

In a manner similar to that of Edmonton, Saskatoon Public Library website also contains connections to general information that is of value to the broader Aboriginal community.

A variety of scheduled events and activities are held such as Aboriginal writer's circles within branch libraries in order to attract more of the population into the facilities and begin to develop reasons for residents to become part of the library's offerings. While not exclusively Aboriginal in focus, the Saskatoon Public Library has also taken action in recognition of the impact that library fines can have on excluding people from continued involvement. In exchange for recycled plastics, the library reduced / eliminated resident fines – no word on how successful this initiative was, but it does serve to acknowledge the impact of fines and creative means to deal with this issue.

REGINA

The *Albert Street* branch library was slated to close due to a continual reduction of circulation levels.

Community reaction to this proposed closure and the subsequent extensive period of negotiation between the Regina Public Library and the community resulted in a new model for branch libraries being established.

A community advisory committee was established that provides guidance on the programming, collections, staffing and services to be offered.

The committee also brought the needs of the community to the library staff which helped define the development.

The presence of the community based committee enables the branch to apply for external grants which subsequently facilitates the hiring of Aboriginal staff from the immediate community, retaining Aboriginal writers in residence, purchasing Aboriginal art and materials, and organizing classes in Cree, beading and cultural awareness.

Circulation and usage of the library has grown considerably since these changes were enacted.

While each of these examples of ‘best practices’ is obviously specific for the situations, resources and capacity of the respective cities. they are illustrative of changes that can be made – both big and small – that serve as opportunities to learn how to better build relationships, extend value and significantly engage with urban Aboriginal populations.

4.0 MADE IN WINNIPEG SOLUTIONS

It is important to recognize that Winnipeg is unique, particularly the Aboriginal community in Winnipeg, which has served as a leader across Canada and North America as to practices and programming. At the same time there are ways to take the experiences of those that have lived in the community and worked in the system to create a blended set of solutions that are realistic and workable.

The following presents three groups of opportunities that are seen to be capable of fostering greater connection and engagement between the Aboriginal population in Winnipeg's inner city and the WPL. As noted above they have been organized according to the level of intensity / capacity / resources needed to bring them into reality.

Regardless of which recommendations may be pursued, it is seen to be important to have the following three pre-requisites in place to support any future initiatives:

-  Develop a plan of action for whatever level of activity may be selected. There were several promising initiatives undertaken in years past, however, because they were more 'add on' type of actions it became difficult to determine their effectiveness. Therefore, having an overall idea of what is expected, being strategic in determining actions to achieve expected outcomes and identifying what will determine progress or success (and how this might be measured) will provide context and a framework to pursue even minor initiatives.
-  Create an advisory group to assist with the development of the plan and to provide on-going feedback and advice. The group itself forms an initial level of greater engagement, and can serve to guide and review progress. There are several groups and schools that have been participants in this process who could possibly serve in this manner. It will also be important to identify and utilized the leadership that exists within the WPL to support the group and take responsibility for any initiatives to be undertaken.
-  Communicate intentions and expectations. Let the Aboriginal community know what can be anticipated and when. This will also work to have the WPL hold itself accountable to this element of the community that it serves.

It should be noted that none of the groups of opportunities that are recommended are mutually exclusive, and can form a growing foundation beginning with some minor **adjustments and enhancements**, leading to the development of **recognizable differences**, and into the **development of a community library**.

4.1 Adjustments and Enhancements

This first level of opportunities for follow-up recognizes that resources are limited and time constraints exist for existing staff. However, if there is a commitment to pursue any opportunities there are some possibilities that do not necessitate significant levels of additional resources.

Briefly noted these include:

-  Continue with the cultural awareness training and extend it through a series of lunch time discussions around current realities of living within the inner city, situations facing the urban Aboriginal population, and ideas for staff to continue to learn about their customer base.

Support to find speakers and contacting them can be facilitated through the advisory group, and only moderate expenses may be required for transportation or honouraria.

The intent of these conversations would be to provide staff with opportunities to actively work towards changes in perception and a broadening of insights into the Aboriginal community. Opportunities could even be created for library staff to further engage in the community by serving as volunteers in identified needs; thereby, further reinforcing relationships and understanding. All actions that work to dispel false perceptions or realities surrounding attitudes should be supported.

-  Targeting information directly to the majority of the inner city population through posters within community organizations, bus advertising (inside the bus, not out), and handouts to schools.

The aim of this effort would be to focus on simple, accurate information that counters misunderstandings and erroneous impressions.

-  Conducting outreach into specific audiences such as parent councils, community gathering spots such as Win Gardner Place, Ma Mawi's community care sites, and monthly meetings of groups such as the North End Community Helpers Network.

Contact and information would best be made available through members of the library branch staff with the support of outreach staff. In this way greater personal contact can result and relationships develop.

It will be important to continue these conversations on a regular basis, perhaps even attending regular meetings on a quarterly basis to update if there is anything new at the local branch, talk about recommended books, and generally be available for answering questions.

4.2 Recognizable Differences

In order to begin to make recognizable differences with respect to relationships and engagement with the Aboriginal community, it is expected that some dedicated resources will have to be secured and focused staff efforts organized. This second level of recommended actions requires the hiring of two experienced Aboriginal Liaison Coordinators.

One individual would be responsible for coordinating all internal learning and support branch ideas around neighbourhood level engagement. It is expected that this position would have considerable expertise in the workings of the WPL (or libraries in general). In addition, this position would support the work of the second Liaison Coordinator in the efforts outlined below. It is seen to be important that two individuals are hired together to form the nucleus of a team, be capable of supporting each other and backing up each other, and ensuring a greater level of stability and consistency in these efforts.

The second individual would be responsible for working with the advisory group and for initiating and overseeing all related activities. This is not intended to focus all of the activities on this single individual, but rather to have a point of contact / focus for the WPL staff and the community. It is expected that all of the work that is outlined above in (4.1) would continue to occur, with additional targeted efforts such as:

-  Prioritizing and acting upon actions to reach out to the younger generation, primarily through the schools and local youth serving organizations. Regular and consistent contact would be made through the designated staff position emphasizing opportunities to learn more about the library through tours.
-  It is suggested that work occur with Winnipeg Transit to determine what can be done to reduce the cost of public transportation to and from the libraries. Discussions have been on-going for several years around a north end dash bus arrangement traveling from points such as Selkirk Avenue, the Old Exhibition Grounds, Win Gardner Place, and the neighbourhood community centres. WPL's support for this concept could work to facilitate the

negotiations and it may be possible to add one or more library branches to a dash bus route.

-  A promotional campaign could be launched, perhaps focusing on literacy and the *Love to Read* concept. This could also be targeted in the schools / community organizations and linked with supports from the community. Any posters or media would do well to use prominent local Aboriginal people to spread the message and create a level of immediate recognition.
-  An active outreach campaign to Aboriginal organizations in the community. Regular and consistent contact would be expected to enable people in the organizations to become more actively involved with the library. For example, each of the organizations that participated in this consultation indicated that they could see themselves partnering with the WPL on a particular activity. The type of activity would vary, dependent on the situation of the organization, its membership, etc., but could include such ideas as: small scale lending libraries; hosting bookmobiles; organizing writers circles; hosting storytellers.

The intent behind these projects is to get direct involvement from partner organizations (each in their own way), and to utilize the trust of the organizations to develop stronger relationships with community members.

It is anticipated that resources would be required to help support the initiatives within each of the participating organizations.

4.3 A Cornerstone of Change Developing a Community Library

Within the neighbourhoods surrounding Selkirk Avenue in the North End of Winnipeg, the situations are very similar to those surrounding Albert Street in Regina. The population is predominantly Aboriginal with strong ties to a number of community based organizations.

In addition to these demographics, there are a number of factors that would support the establishment of a *community library* (or sub-branch) that would provide a presence for the WPL in the neighbourhood and a strong sense of engagement for the Aboriginal community.

-  There already is an active community development presence through the organizations and the coordination efforts of the North End Community Renewal Corporation;

- 📖 A strong and growing Aboriginal leadership is emerging through organizations such as Ma Mawi, Andrews Street Family Centre, Urban Circle Training Centre, and Aboriginal Visioning for the North End;
- 📖 The neighbourhood is taking on a resurgence of learning through the William Norrie Centre – University of Manitoba Inner City School of Social Work; Turtle Island Adult Learning Center; Pathways to Success; and Urban Circle Training Centre (University of Winnipeg will soon have a presence through the Inner City Studies program);
- 📖 There has been a strong desire expressed for a local library on Selkirk Avenue that would foster greater community learning and literacy, and be a place of recreation and leisure in ways that meet community expectations;
- 📖 Public transportation is good both east / west and north / south, even without discussions around a dash bus system; and,
- 📖 Discussions are being renewed around a culture and arts centre.

The combination of such initiatives and amenities does provide the opportunity for the WPL to become involved in a larger scale development – one that could lead to a community library. In some ways, the WPL participation within a multi-use facility as this concept envisions, relates to the WPL’s successful involvement in the Cindy Klassen Recreation Complex.

The benefits of such a community library could include:

- 📖 Recognition of the WPL’s role within community development;
- 📖 Visible support for learning, literacy and community information;
- 📖 Direct and tangible relationship building and maintenance with a significant portion of Winnipeg’s Aboriginal community;
- 📖 A community-based initiative that facilitates the search for private and public funds to develop and maintain programs, collections and events.

5.0 CONCLUSION

There is a desire from within the members of the Aboriginal community who participated in this effort, to get more out of the Winnipeg Public Library and its offerings. There is a general belief that the library can play a larger role in the lives of a greater number of Aboriginal people in Winnipeg if the WPL can take steps to show that it seeks to engage with the community and wants to develop good, solid relationships.

In order for good relationships to develop and grow there are a number of suggestions that have been put forward for the WPL. There is a need for the WPL to better inform the Aboriginal population in the inner city of what it has to offer and why it has value; there are barriers to continued involvement that could be addressed; there should be activities and events that make the libraries destinations for Aboriginal community members, particularly families; and, there could be more opportunities for members of the Aboriginal population to get involved.

Most of all, there is a desire to have libraries that are more welcoming and those that make people feel like they belong. The WPL and its staff need to continually display the attitude that illustrates Aboriginal people are welcome and that their patronage is valued. This is not a desire that is exclusive to the Aboriginal population, but one that builds from their experiences and provides advice that will strengthen all efforts to create libraries that any resident of the city would want.

An ultimate level of development in this regards would be to grow together (community and WPL) to build into the existing system, those elements that can utilize and celebrate Aboriginal literature, stories and information to support the community and to build greater bridges with the broader Winnipeg population.

To quote Chief Lafond, a Saskatchewan leader at the *Library for Saskatchewan's Aboriginal Peoples Conference in Saskatoon, November 1992,*

Elders are known for their knowledge to educate. They become walking, talking libraries and carriers of information about culture. The problem is to redefine libraries to make this knowledge accessible to the public.

The library must become a place where Elders will feel safe and comfortable so that they will be able to act as the living libraries that they are, and pass on cultural information to the community.

Libraries have the potential to empower people. Libraries can provide information so people can learn to learn...so that they will begin to ask questions.

The Winnipeg Public Library and its Board have made considerable progress to this end by working to attempt different activities and events, to bring greater capacity to staff to understand how it can best serve the Aboriginal population (particularly in the inner city) and to cause this consultation to be undertaken to hear directly from community members. The suggestions provided to bring about change seek to build on the types of initiatives and positive attitudes that have led the WPL to this point in its history.

It is evident that there is caring and committed leadership within the WPL that seeks to bring about change. All efforts to this end can make such a difference, and walking with the community in this regard will ensure a level of guidance, direction and accountability for such efforts – a true partnership.

For consideration and (hopefully) much discussion...

April 2010

Appendix A

Participating Community Leaders

and

Organizations

Community Leaders

Darlene Klyne, Coordinator - CEDA Pathways to Success
Josie Hill, Executive Director – Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre, Inc.
Leslie Spillett, Executive Director - Kani Kanichihk
Lorne Belmore, Principal – Children of the Earth High School
Marileen Bartlett, CEO – Centre for Aboriginal Human Resources
Development (and management team)
Phil Chiappetta, Co-Executive Director – Rossbrook House
Rob Riel, Principal – Niji Mahkwa School
Sharon Taylor, Executive Director – Wolseley Family Place
Tammy Christianson, Executive Director – Ndinawemaaganag Endaawaad

Community Organizations – Discussion Circles

Aboriginal Circle of Educators (ACE)
Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre, Abinotci Mino Ayawin
Aboriginal Visioning for the North End
Keyteyatsuk Elders and Seniors
Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata – Anderson Community Care Site
Ndianwe Youth Leadership Board
Rossbrook House, Eagles Nest Program
Turtle Island Learning Centre
University of Manitoba, Inner City Campus

Community Organizations – Surveys, Adults

Centre for Aboriginal Human Resource Development
Native Women's Transition Centre
North End Community Helpers Network
University of Manitoba, Inner City Campus Student Association
Wahbung Abinoonjiiag
Wolseley Family Place

Community Organizations – Surveys, Youth

Circle of Life Thunderbird House, Girls Program
Kani Kanichihk, Girls Program
Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre, Youth Programs
Ndinawe Youth Resource Centre
Rossbrook House

Appendix B

Line of Questioning

and

Survey Results

Winnipeg Public Library
Adult Discussion Circle Guiding Questions

When I say library, you think.....

If you were to build a library that you and / or your family would like to go to, what would it look like? Who would be working there? What kinds of things are happening there? Build it for me.

Is there a library close to where you live? Does it look and feel like the library you built? What is different?

What would really turn you off, from going to the library?

Are you a member of the library? If not, would you like to be? Do you know how to join? What keeps you from joining?

Ever see any information about the library? Billboards? Buses? Notices? Where could the library put there message that would get to you? How should they try and tell you what they do and who they are?

Knowing that the library board is really wanting to have Aboriginal people feel good about using the libraries, what specifically could they do to accomplish that?

Do you know how to use the library services and find information? Would it be helpful if there was a “Walmart” greeter at the library to help you figure out how to maneuver through the library?

Could you see a way the library could bring itself into your community.

The libraries have books, magazines, dvds, cds, access to computers for research or fun, as well as other programs? Are there any of these things that would be useful to you? Anything that would make you join the library?

If you were to go to the library for information / books, would you like to see more fiction, writings by Aboriginal authors, non-fiction research materials, etc?

Any other suggestions?

(NOTE: a similar line of questioning with variations in the language was utilized for discussions with the young people that participated.)



Winnipeg
Public Library
Board

ADULTS

Winnipeg Public Library Board (WPL) Wants to Hear From You

Introduction

The Winnipeg Public Library Board oversees all public libraries in Winnipeg (not those in the schools or high schools). They are checking to make sure that they are doing what is needed to have the libraries be of value to the community. In particular, the Library Board wants to encourage Aboriginal peoples to use the services of the libraries. Through this survey and other discussions, they want to know what services are being used, and if not, what can they change to better serve Aboriginal people in Winnipeg.

Please help by taking a couple of minutes to answer the following questions and give us your opinions. All responses are confidential.

Please tell us a little about yourself...

I am... 96 female 10 male transgender

22 24 and under 29 25 - 30 years 47 30 - 45 years 8 46 and over

53 single 30 living with someone / married

I have... 24 no children 82 children 124 how many

In the last year, I have (check all that apply to you) (Expressed as a percentage)

<input type="checkbox"/> 62	attend school/training
<input type="checkbox"/> 44	worked full time or part time
<input type="checkbox"/> 53	helped out in my community
<input type="checkbox"/> 36	been to the library in my place of learning
<input type="checkbox"/> 59	been to a public library in the city
<input type="checkbox"/> 22	borrowed a dvd or cd from a library
<input type="checkbox"/> 47	borrowed books
<input type="checkbox"/> 35	used a computer at the library
<input type="checkbox"/> 56	spent time at a library

Have you ever been a member of the Winnipeg Public Library? (expressed as a percentage)

75 Yes 25 No

Are currently a member of the Winnipeg Public Library? (Expressed as a percentage)

41 Yes 44 No 14 I don't know

If you answered "Yes", which librar(ies) have you used?

<input type="checkbox"/> 4	St. John's (Salter Avenue)
<input type="checkbox"/> 52	Millennium (downtown)
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	Sir William Stephenson (Keewatin Street)
<input type="checkbox"/> 3	West Kildonan (Jefferson Avenue)
<input type="checkbox"/> 4	West End (Cindy Klassen Recreation Complex)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other location Henderson, St James and Cornish 2 each

If you answered "No", would you like to be a member? (Expressed as a percentage)

47 Yes 14 No

Did you know that memberships are free and limited memberships require no ID (you can take out 2 items at a time)?

44 Yes 56 No (Expressed as a percentage)

Do you think that the libraries do a good job of letting Aboriginal people know what they have to offer?

40 Yes 60 No (Expressed as a percentage)

Please show whether you agree or disagree with the following statements. Circle from "5 to 1" depending on how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements. There are no right or wrong answers, only what you think and feel.

Things that would make me feel like going to a public library are?

5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Somewhat Agree	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree	Mean Score	
<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	A library person came to my community and informed me about their services	2.95
<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	If it was a welcoming place for me and my family	4.20
<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	If I knew where they were located	3.77
<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	If I knew when they were open	3.86
<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	If I could get a job there	2.65
<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	If I knew it was safe	3.91

I would not use the public library services because:

5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Somewhat Agree	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree	Mean Score	
<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	I don't know enough about them	2.6
<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	I think I may have late fees	3.32
<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	I've never needed to	2.12
<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	I don't know how to get a membership	2.09
<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	I don't think that they are useful for me.	1.92

If you have gone to a public library, or would think about going, what would be most important to you?

5 Strongly Agree 4 Agree 3 Somewhat Agree 2 Disagree 1 Strongly Disagree

5 4 3 2 1	Having someone explain the "system" or finding a book with me	3.8
5 4 3 2 1	Having Aboriginal people working there	3.7
5 4 3 2 1	Feeling like I belong there	4
5 4 3 2 1	Having Aboriginal art, culture and literature all over the place	3.8
5 4 3 2 1	Giving the library advice on what books they should have there	3.5
5 4 3 2 1	Having librarians that help me and don't judge me	4.2
5 4 3 2 1	Making it easier to get there and back (free bus rides)	3.9

More Aboriginal people would use libraries, if they ...

5 Strongly Agree 4 Agree 3 Somewhat Agree 2 Disagree 1 Strongly Disagree

5 4 3 2 1	Had mobile libraries that came to my area	3.36
5 4 3 2 1	Were connected to community agencies	3.8
5 4 3 2 1	Were connected with community centres in the area	3.9
5 4 3 2 1	Advertised in my neighbourhood	3.9

Please feel free to put more ideas on the back.

Miigwech/thank you very much for taking the time to share your thoughts with us.

If you want to have your name entered for a prize draw, ONCE YOU HAVE COMPLETED THE SURVEY just fill out your name and a contact number, tear off the bottom of the page and leave it with the person who gave you the survey. There will be three prizes drawn for on March 15th, 2010. One each for \$50., \$30., and \$20. Winners will be notified immediately, so please leave a current contact number.

NAME _____ NUMBER _____

or leave a message with _____ @ their number _____



Winnipeg
Public Library
Board

Winnipeg Public Library Board (WPL) Wants to Hear From Aboriginal You(th)

Introduction

The Winnipeg Public Library Board oversees all public libraries in Winnipeg (not those in the schools or high schools). They are checking to make sure that they are doing what is needed to have the libraries be of value to the community. In particular, the Library Board wants to encourage Aboriginal peoples to use the services of the libraries. Through this survey and other discussions, they want to know what services are being used, and if not, what can they change to better serve Aboriginal people in Winnipeg.

Please help by taking a couple of minutes to answer the following questions and give us your opinions. All responses are confidential.

Please tell us a little about yourself...

I am... 22 female 15 male transgender

7 10 - 13 years 21 14 - 18 years 5 19 - 24 years 3 25 - 30 years

29 single 8 living with someone / married

I live... 33 at home 4 on my own

other (example Ndinawe)

I have... no children children how many

In the last year, I have (check all that apply to you)

<input type="checkbox"/> 28	gone to school
<input type="checkbox"/> 13	worked full time or part time
<input type="checkbox"/> 28	helped out in my community
<input type="checkbox"/> 20	been to the library in my school
<input type="checkbox"/> 22	been to a public library in the city
<input type="checkbox"/> 5	been to a library in my college or university
<input type="checkbox"/> 19	borrowed books
<input type="checkbox"/> 15	used a computer at the library
<input type="checkbox"/> 20	hung out at a library
<input type="checkbox"/> 4	borrowed a dvd or cd from a library

Are you a member of the Winnipeg Public Library? (Expressed as a percentage)

50 Yes 50 No

If you answered "Yes", which librar(ies) have you used?

2	St. John's (Salter Avenue)
18	Millennium (downtown)
1	Sir William Stephenson (Keewatin Street)
3	West Kildonan (Jefferson Avenue)
	Other location _____
	Other location _____

If you answered "No", would you like to be a member? (Expressed as a percentage)

39 Yes 61 No

Did you know that memberships are free and limited memberships require no ID (you can take out 2 items at a time)?

55 Yes 45 No (Expressed as a percentage)

Do you think that the libraries do a good job of letting Aboriginal people know what they have to offer?

55 Yes 45 No (Expressed as a percentage)

Please show whether you agree or disagree with the following statements. Circle from "5 to 1" depending on how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements. There are no right or wrong answers, only what you think and feel.

Things what would make me feel like going to a public library are?

5	4	3	2	1		Mean Scores
5	4	3	2	1	A library person came to my school or centre (where I go) and informed me about their services	2.76
5	4	3	2	1	If it was a welcoming place for me and my friends	3.95
5	4	3	2	1	If I knew where they were located	3.71
5	4	3	2	1	If I knew when they were open	3.48
5	4	3	2	1	If I could get a job there	3.10
5	4	3	2	1	If I knew it was safe	4.16

I would not use the public library services because:

5	4	3	2	1		Mean Scores
5	4	3	2	1	I don't know enough about them	3.15
5	4	3	2	1	I have heard bad things about the place	2.54
5	4	3	2	1	I've never needed to	2.82
5	4	3	2	1	I don't know how to get a membership	2.64
5	4	3	2	1	I don't think that they are useful for me.	2.54

Mean Scores

If you have gone to a public library, or would think about going, what would be most important to you?

5 Strongly Agree 4 Agree 3 Somewhat Agree 2 Disagree 1 Strongly Disagree

5	4	3	2	1		3.79
					Having someone explain the "system" or finding a book with me	
					Having Aboriginal people working there	3.84
					Feeling like I belong there	3.91
					Having Aboriginal art, culture and literature all over the place	3.88
					Giving the library advice on what books they should have there	3.71
					Having librarians that help me and don't judge me	41.40
					Making it easier to get there and back (free bus rides)	3.98

More young people would use libraries, if they ...

5 Strongly Agree 4 Agree 3 Somewhat Agree 2 Disagree 1 Strongly Disagree

5	4	3	2	1		3.42
					Had mobile libraries that came to my area	
					Were connected to youth agencies like Ndinawe, Rossbrook House, etc	4.25
					Were connected with schools in the area	3.78
					Advertised to parents and families	4.03

Please feel free to put more ideas on the back.

Miigwech/thank you very much for taking the time to share your thoughts with us.



If you want to have your name entered for a prize draw, ONCE YOU HAVE COMPLETED THE SURVEY just fill out your name and a contact number, tear off the bottom of the page and leave it with the person who gave you the survey. There will be three prizes drawn for on March 15th, 2010. One each for \$50., \$30., and \$20. Winners will be notified immediately, so please leave a current contact number.

NAME _____ NUMBER _____

or leave a message with _____ @ their number _____

Appendix C

Interim Report, December 2009



**Winnipeg
Public Library
Board**

*Needs Assessment and Community Consultation
with Aboriginal Populations Living in Winnipeg*

INTERIM REPORT

Leskiw and Associates

December 2009

Background

In September 2009, the Winnipeg Public Library Board contracted with *Leskiw and Associates* to undertake a needs assessment and community consultation concerning the provision of services by the Winnipeg Public Library (WPL) for Aboriginal peoples. The need for such work was identified in recognition of the WPL's stated commitment to *the continuous improvement of services with Aboriginal peoples, including new service innovations, building on past successes and a growing understanding of needs, expectations and potential*².

The needs assessment and community consultation was seen as the most appropriate means to obtain direct, specific feedback on current services as well as opportunities to strengthen services and offerings.

After some negotiations with respect to the priority areas for the assessment, the originally proposed scope of work was reduced with the following activities agreed to:

-  A summary of best practices that are utilized in other library systems, would be created, based on information provided by WPL staff. The information that has been made available, will be utilized to create a better understanding of which practices and service promotion / delivery alternatives that have shown promise elsewhere, and how they may be incorporated within a Winnipeg context.
-  A synopsis of key demographic characteristics will be developed that will provide context within the interim and final reports. This summary would highlight Winnipeg's Aboriginal population in terms of factors such as: age; education and employment; family status; geographic locations; and, factors that can affect access to services.
-  An overview of the current WPL services and recent initiatives will be described, as they pertain to Winnipeg's Aboriginal communities. The intent of this task is not to evaluate the current work of the WPL, but rather to generate information on the current state of services with specific reference to the Aboriginal population. The results of this overview will be used as a basis for recommendations to adjust, strengthen or develop new initiatives.

² Taken from the Winnipeg Public Library Board Request for Proposals, 2009.

- 📖 An overall line of questioning would be developed to guide the discussion circles, interviews and written surveys that will be used in the consultations. The line of questioning is intended to reflect issues of overall understanding of the WPL, usage, access and information access, partnerships and value within the community.
- 📖 A three-pronged consultation approach would be developed and implemented that includes: interviews with key community leadership within the Aboriginal community; discussion circles with youth and adult participants; and, written surveys within selected locations .

It was agreed that a focus would be placed in work within the inner city, and that consultations would reflect this focus. In addition, *Leskiw and Associates* was directed to also focus on consultations with the community.

Reporting Considerations

The overall findings will be presented within a final report in May 2010. It is expected that that report will summarize what has been heard, relate it to current WPL offerings and Winnipeg situations, and to practices and initiatives elsewhere. Based on an assessment of the findings, the final report will also identify promising service delivery approaches, ideas for partnerships and stronger engagement with the Aboriginal community, and recommendations as to how to bring such practices to life.

As per the agreement between the Winnipeg Library Board and *Leskiw and Associates*, the information contained with this Interim Report focuses on the demographic / quantitative information, the consultation process and methodology that has been organized and finalized, along with the results of community leadership interviews.

The information contained with this *Interim Report* is intended to provide an initial context for the needs assessment and consultation findings, not to report on the findings themselves.

Process and Results Obtained to Date

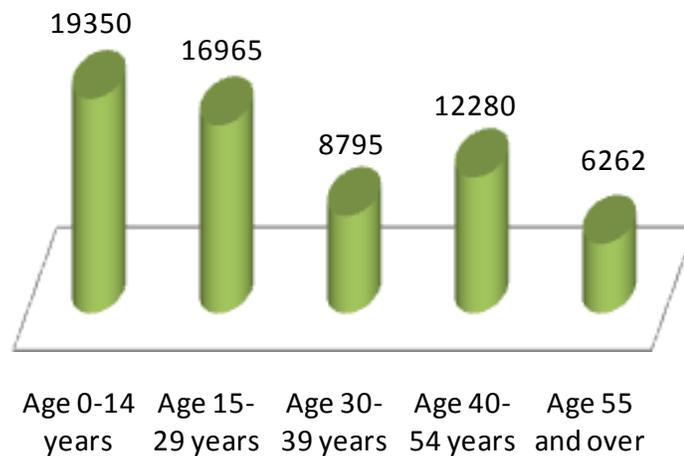
Review of Community Demographics

Understanding the demographics of Winnipeg's Aboriginal community is important to understand where and how differing service approaches can be effective. Understanding the population to be served provides a basis for the targeting of different forms of offerings, and learning why various initiatives are more or less effective.

In order to provide greater detail and indicators of demographic trends that can be used within the WPL context, the basic 2006 census data has been supplemented with some relevant findings from detailed subject reports from the 2001 census, as well as the 2001 Aboriginal Peoples Survey. Where evident, trends from 1981, 1996 and / or 2001 have been extrapolated to 2006.

The 2006 census, notes that there were 63,750 Aboriginal people in Winnipeg. This is up from 55,700 in 2001, and significantly higher than the 16,800 identified in 1981. As can be seen, the population remains very young, with over one-half of the population under the age of 29 years.

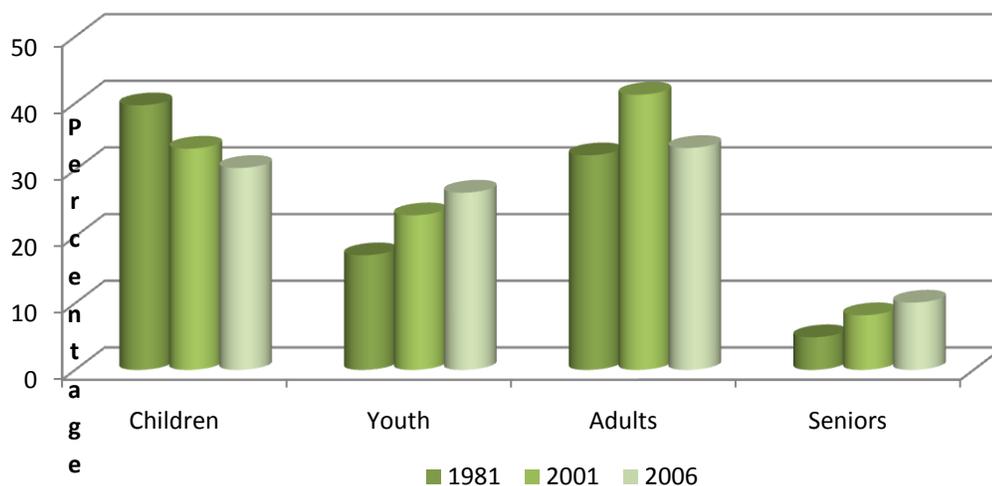
2006 Demographic Composition



The 2006 Census also notes that over one half (33,705) of this population are female. Individuals of *Metis* ancestry represent the largest single group (37,385), with *North American Indian* listed as the second largest grouping (24,950).

Comparatively, the demographic composition for the years 1981, 2001, and 2006 reveals that there are a number of subtle shifts in the Aboriginal population in Winnipeg occurring. While the percentage of children (less than 11 years of age) remains quite high, the relative percentage of youth has increased. Similarly, the overall percentage of seniors (over age 55 years) is still small (10%), yet it has doubled during this period.

Demographic Trends 1981 - 2006



Over the past twenty five years, there have consistently been a high percentage of children within Winnipeg’s Aboriginal population. While the percentage of children has dropped from 2001 to 2006, the percentage of young people continues to grow. With the large number of children and youth in this population, a youthful Aboriginal population is expected to continue to be evident over the next 10 to 15 years. Females represent 52% of the overall population. However, for children under age 14 years, there are proportionately more males than female children (52% males to 48% females).

With respect to population trends and significant considerations that can affect the ability of the WPL to serve the Aboriginal population, a number of factors are presented:

- 📖 The median income of Aboriginal families remains significantly below that of non-Aboriginal families in Winnipeg. Using the Winnipeg School Division catchment area for comparison, Aboriginal families' median income was approximately \$21,000. At the same time, the median income for non-Aboriginal families in this catchment area was approximately \$46,000.
- 📖 One of the primary consequences of inadequate income is health status. There remains a significant gap in health status between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal population. This gap is consistent across all age groups, and is particularly significant for adult women (diabetes, high blood pressure, arthritis, etc.). As of 2001, 42% of Aboriginal children had one or more long term health conditions (as diagnosed by a health care professional). Similarly over 49% of adults had been diagnosed with a long term health care condition. As of 2001, over 32% of Aboriginal children had not received dental care in the past year, and over 40% did not engage in regular sports or recreation.
- 📖 Four percent of Aboriginal children never eat a regular breakfast, and an additional 10% eat breakfast infrequently (as reported on by parents).
- 📖 The number of single parent families has continued to increase over time, with 25% of families being lone parent families in 2001, and over 29% being lone parent families in 2006 – 50% of children under 15 years of age lived in lone parent families. The vast majority of these single parents are single mothers.
- 📖 Housing conditions are major contributing factors to health. In 2001, 17% of Aboriginal families lived in *crowded* conditions (more than one person per room), as compared to only 8% of the Winnipeg average. By 2006, this situation had changed significantly, with only 5% of the Aboriginal population being recorded as living in crowded conditions. However, poor housing remains an issue for a considerable proportion of the Aboriginal population in Winnipeg. As of 2006, Aboriginal people were still three times as likely to live in dwellings needing major repairs.

- 📖 Mobility rates have historically been very high within schools that have a high percentage of Aboriginal students. In more recent years, there appears to be a downward trend with respect to mobility. For example, within Children of the Earth High School, mobility rates have decreased from 62.6% (2004), to 58.6% (2005), to 43.3% (2006). Declines are also evident in a broad number of schools with significant Aboriginal student populations.
- 📖 Housing conditions also influence mobility. Indications are that overall mobility within the Aboriginal community is decreasing slightly. In 2001, 70% of Aboriginal adults indicated that they had not moved in the past year. By 2006, this percentage had increased to 74%.
- 📖 Sense of self and understanding of heritage and traditions are seen as primary ingredients of personal strength and motivation. As of 2001, only 15% of Aboriginal young people in Winnipeg could speak or understand an Aboriginal language. Yet over 60% of parents indicated that it was important for them to have their children speak and understand. From 2001 to 2006, the proportion of Aboriginal adults that have working knowledge of their language dropped from 28% to 9%.
- 📖 A disproportionate number of adults did not complete high school and, as a consequence 45% of adults were not working for pay. This trend appears to be changing, as education levels are showing signs of rising within the younger Aboriginal population. Greater numbers are completing high school and moving into post secondary studies.
- 📖 As a result, overall employment rates for Aboriginal young people are rising across cities in western Canada, including Winnipeg. Employment rates in 2001 in Winnipeg were 55.1%, rising to 57.5% by 2005. Higher rates are particularly true for Aboriginal males. Females remain less engaged in the labour market, with the suggestion that a disproportionate number of young Aboriginal females stay out of the labour force for personal / family reasons.
- 📖 At the same time, Aboriginal men continue to experience the highest unemployment rates of all age / gender groups. In 2001, unemployment rates for Aboriginal men were 20.6%, more than three times that for non-Aboriginal men (6.7%). Rates for Aboriginal women were slightly better, at 15.3%. This situation is particularly poor for young men and women. Male youth (15 – 24 years) experienced an unemployment rate of 26.3%; while for young women, the unemployment rate was 22.2%, more than double that for non-Aboriginal young women.

- 📖 These significant unemployment rates appear to be changing, particularly for those individuals that have completed high school. As of 2005, the overall unemployment rate for Aboriginal adults in Winnipeg is shown to be approximately 10%.
- 📖 High school and post secondary completion is having a significant effect on employment rates. Employment rates for Aboriginal males that have completed university were virtually the same as for non-Aboriginal males, as of 2001. Consequently, income levels are moving higher for Aboriginal graduates, particularly those that complete post secondary programs.
- 📖 There are indications of a growth in the *middle class* with respect to the Aboriginal population. Employment income for adults within the \$30 – 39,000, and the over \$40,000 income groupings have risen by over 280% from 1981 – 2001. At the same time the respective increases in income levels for non-Aboriginal individuals rose by only 86%.

It is also important to consider the impact of the location of WPL sites, relative to the location of clusters of the Aboriginal population. It is widely recognized that there is a significant population of Aboriginal people within the inner city, specifically the southern parts of the north end, and the fringes of the central downtown core of Winnipeg. In addition, there are significant segments of the Aboriginal community within areas of Elmwood / East Kildonan, Keewatin and Burrows neighbourhoods, the Maples, and the Weston area. Several of these populations relate primarily to four WPL locations: St. John's Library; Sir William Stephenson; Millennium Library; and, West Kildonan Library, and, to a lesser extent, the new site at the Cindy Klassen Recreation Complex.

While these sites do lie within the neighbourhoods with high populations of the Aboriginal community, access is not necessarily easy. Travel most often will occur via public transit or walking. Public transit can be seen to be expensive, particularly for families, while walking (particularly for youth) can raise issues of personal safety. Proximity to a sizable segment of the population does not necessarily translate directly into access.

It is clearly evident that there are many factors that negatively affect the day to day lives of a disproportionate number of Aboriginal individuals and families. These include: low literacy and education levels; low employment rates; high percentages of single parent families, particularly single mothers; inadequate housing and compromised health status. These types of factors translate into a continual struggle to meet many of the basic necessities of life.

As a consequence, there are large numbers of Aboriginal people in the inner city that must place high priority on meeting the basic needs of themselves and their families.

At the same time there are a number of aspects arising from the demographics of the population that can be contribute to stimulate greater engagement and connection between the Aboriginal population and the WPL. Some key factors are:

📖 The scope of the younger population provides the capacity to reach out to large numbers of young people through the schools as a targeted venue. The schools can be sought as allies to connect children and youth to the value of the library, and to establish a basis for continued use later in life.

In addition, children are often most instrumental in involving parents and connecting them to the library.

📖 Mobility rates appear to be decreasing slightly, which can mean that individuals / families are becoming more connected to their neighbourhoods. This increase in stability provides an opportunity to build relationships.

📖 The growing middle class within the Aboriginal population implies a higher literacy and education level, which can translate into greater connection to information seeking, knowledge and the use of libraries as a resource. Countering this, however, is the possibility that, with higher income levels comes greater access to the purchasing of books, music and entertainment, and competition with the library resources.

📖 The large number of single parents, most often single mothers with young children means that there are large numbers of individuals that may be looking for sources of recreation and / or learning for themselves and their children at no cost. Libraries can translate into such sources of entertainment, once they are known and valued.

📖 There is an increasing desire for increased information on language, heritage and traditions. The WPL can work to place itself as a resource for such knowledge.

Overall, it should also be acknowledged that the Aboriginal population within the inner city of Winnipeg is well served by a number of strong and effective organizations. These organizations encourage relationships and trust and can serve as the means to best link members of the Aboriginal community with the WPL.

WPL Collections and Materials

Significant information was collected from Winnipeg Public Library staff with respect to the collections and materials that are specifically related to Aboriginal perspectives, writings, information, etc.³ From a contextual level, this information has been very useful in reviewing the original line of questioning in order to make the discussion circle and survey questions more focused. This background information has also enabled the consultants to better understand how the WPL is organized around Aboriginal collections, and to respond to questions from the community.

The process that was used to gather information (emailed line of internal questions, disseminated to the appropriate persons, and follow up on subsequent responses) enabled the consultants to reach a broader number of perspectives from within the WPL, and provided them with a stronger understanding of what is available, what has been attempted, and what has worked.

Staff responses to issues of access and perceived barriers to access have also been collected. These will be very valuable in comparison to the responses from the community, and with the understanding that the WPL has of the community and the understanding that the community has of the WPL.

Detailed information concerning these collections, the ways that they are made available, and the community perspectives around their awareness and use will be contained within the findings in the final report. For the purposes of this *Interim Report* the following can be noted:

- 📖 There appears to be considerable effort being made to organize and display such collections in ways that they can be easily located and accessed. Different means of presenting the collections have been attempted, and it is evident that heightening awareness and access is important to the WPL.

As an example, the primary library sites located in higher Aboriginal population density neighbourhoods have designated areas for Aboriginal collections.

³ It should be noted that the WPL staff on the Working Group for this project, and, in particular, Kathleen Williams have been highly supportive of these efforts, and have provided extensive information in this regards. Ms Williams' efforts to disseminate requests for information and collate responses has been very much appreciated.

- 📖 There are considerable and significant collections that do provide a basis for interest for much of the Aboriginal population, and for others to gain an understanding of this segment of our city's population. This appears to be particularly relevant with collections that relate to the interests of young people.
- 📖 A number of different attempts have been made by the WPL to specifically engage with the Aboriginal community. The actions are quite diverse and appear to have arisen in response to an identified / perceived need and opportunity. In addition to on-going outreach activities, actions such as the storytellers' times at the Millennium Library, or support for the small collection at Turtle Island Neighbourhood Centre are all viewed as being valuable. However, most actions tend to be 'project based', and were temporary in nature.

This information will be very useful in the subsequent consultations to identify which forms of engagement are seen (by the community) to be most effective, and which were less recognized.

- 📖 Unfortunately the results of the above noted attempts do not appear to have ever been formally assessed, and it appears to be virtually impossible to determine if usage by the Aboriginal community has grown or not (ancestry, race or population profiling of membership does not occur, thereby making assessment impossible). As a result, the comparative perceptions of the WPL staff (internal responses) and the community (external responses) will work to provide a more complete picture of the current relations between the WPL and the Aboriginal community.
- 📖 There are some requests for information that are still pending, and whose findings will also be included within the *Final Report*. These include the specific usage reports for different collections. (Thank you again for all of the WPL staff who are contributing to this knowledge).

In addition, a sample of current Aboriginal WPL staff is expected to provide their feedback. Their opinions should provide a unique perspective with elements of internal and external viewpoints.

Review of 'Best Practices'

Through information provided by WPL staff and subsequent internet research, it has been possible to identify elements of several initiatives that may show promise for use within Winnipeg.

Some consistent preliminary findings include the following:

- 📖 There do not appear to be any universal strategies that will lead to stronger and greater involvement of the Aboriginal community in library services. However, basing engagement on knowledge of the community, its situation, values and expectations is required for any level of success.
- 📖 The inability of mainstream library services to effectively engage indigenous populations is an issue that has been recognized in many parts of the world. Attention is also growing with respect to potential strategies, partnerships and opportunities to address this issue.
- 📖 It is generally acknowledged that consistency in implementation of promising strategies and the need to take a long term perspective in support of such efforts is important for relationships to be built and change to be evident.
- 📖 There appears to be growing knowledge around what barriers exist to greater inclusion of indigenous peoples within library systems. However, there is less information available on how to best address these barriers.
- 📖 Information is seen as a primary barrier to access of services.
- 📖 It is important to generate information about the library offerings in ways and means that are accessible to, and understandable within the community. While use of language can be important, it appears to be equally important to maintain a level of involvement with the community to continually supply, translate and ensure accuracy of information.
- 📖 Libraries, as community facilities can often be viewed as *institutional* and reflective of buildings and establishments that have a less than positive perspective within the Aboriginal community (residential schools, etc.). Efforts will be needed to work to alter this perspective and have the libraries viewed as welcoming places; valued and well-used.

It is important to recognize that Winnipeg is unique, particularly the Aboriginal community in Winnipeg, which has served as a leader across Canada and North America as to practices and programming. The first Indian and Métis Friendship Centre, the initial urban political organizations, the largest and best recognized non-mandated child and family service organization, and the unique, traditional residential transitional housing for women and families are some primary examples of this. It is within this context the interests of the WPL to better engage with the Aboriginal community should be considered. As Winnipeg and its Aboriginal community tends to be unique, ‘made in Winnipeg’ responses to situations may be seen to be most effective.

Consequently, the findings from the review of ‘best practices’ in other library systems will be considered from a specifically Winnipeg situation and perspective. Specific assessment of some such practices identified through the environmental scan information will be undertaken and reported on in the *Final Report*, relative to the Winnipeg context in order to produce practical, realistic and made in Winnipeg recommendations.

Leadership Interviews

As originally planned, a total of eight (8) interviews with community leaders were to occur. Cooperation exceeded expectations, and a total of nine (9) interview sessions were held. Within several of these interviews the community leader included several other representatives from the respective organization (senior managers, resource teachers, etc.) resulting in a total of 14 individuals providing their opinions and experience.

It is important to recognize that the individuals that were interviewed have extensive experience in their fields, and are generally recognized for the leadership that they have shown in their work. Through the interviews it was possible to gain further, specific insights into the relationship between the WPL and the general Aboriginal community membership.

Those individuals and the organizations that they represent, include:

Darlene Klyne, Coordinator - CEDA Pathways to Success
Josie Hill, Executive Director – Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre, Inc.
Leslie Spillett, Executive Director - Kani Kanichihk
Lorne Bellmore, Principal – Children of the Earth High School
Marileen Bartlett, CEO – Centre for Aboriginal Human Resources
Development
Phil Chiappetta, Co-Executive Director – Rossbrook House
Rob Riel, Principal – Niji Mahkwa School
Sharon Taylor, Executive Director – Wolseley Family Place
Tammy Christianson, Executive Director – Ndinawemaaganag Endaawaad
(Ndinawe)

So as not to potentially bias the commentary obtained through the surveys and discussion circles, the detailed feedback from the community leadership has not been reported on here, and will be incorporated into the overall findings within the *Final Report*.

However, there are a number of *themes* that emerged from the discussions with the community leaders that were put forth for consideration:

 There would appear to be limited information on exactly what the WPL has, offers or provides. Individuals who have not attended in recent years, still operate from outdated or misinformed perspective that the libraries are places where you have to be quiet, not eat or drink, and not truly enjoy the surroundings.

Families struggling with low incomes and day to day situations may find it difficult to view the library as a resource and place of value, without adequate information on what is available. Families must be fully aware of what is available, how it can be accessed, and support family needs / goals.

- 📖 The library system needs to be seen as being welcoming and inviting. A place to go that dispels opinions that it is an institution, and not a comfortable place to visit. The community needs to feel that it is valued.
- 📖 The library needs to come to the community, rather than expecting the community to come to the library. The presence of the library and what it has to offer needs to be heightened within the Aboriginal community. The best ways of initiating this is to bring the library to the people, come and talk about what is available, put in place the means to support lending through community organizations, and put a personal face on the libraries. It is not seen to be sufficient to simply invite people to come and hope that they will.
- 📖 Seeking greater engagement with the Aboriginal community will be a long term process. It calls for building relationships, not simply partnerships. Relationships are personal and build a level of trust and understanding. Partnerships are more business-like and not emotional. True engagement should be more of an emotional investment on all parts. Building relationships is not a *project-based* effort, but rather, a longer term commitment to change.
- 📖 The WPL has significant potential to be intimately involved with the lives of a large number of Aboriginal community members. When it is fully understood, it has the capacity to be of significant value, and to provide resources that are unattainable elsewhere.
- 📖 Barriers to using library services need to be very well understood before they can be adequately addressed. Library location is not a major factor to accessibility when one has a vehicle. However, location can be very important consideration when the expense of public transportation is taken into account, or where youth face issues of personal safety.

It should be recognized, that all of the organizations and schools that were contacted explicitly supported the idea of partnering between their organizations and the WPL. There is considerable empathy and willingness to assist. Community organizations can be used as strong partners to further engage and evolve members of the Aboriginal community with the WPL.

There is potential to be acted upon.

Steps from here...

Using the information gathered to date, the original line of questioning will be reviewed and adjusted in order to focus more directly on issues and opportunities that have been identified. A focus will be maintained on obtaining greater detail with respect to situations, issues or barriers that can limit engagement as well as practical means to overcome them. It is expected that the consultations will generate a level of interest in the WPL and its offerings.

Based on the feedback obtained to date, a draft questions have been prepared for use within the discussion circles. These will be ‘tested’ within an initial discussion circle in mid-December 2009. As needed, adjustments or clarifications will be made for the subsequent discussions.

A draft written survey for youth has also been developed. Ndinawemaaganag Endaawaad Youth Leadership Board has agreed to review the survey and to make recommendations on the wording / clarity from the perspective of young Aboriginal Winnipeggers. Their recommendations will be taken into account and revisions made before the survey is utilized within other youth groups. The adult survey will be designed with these recommendations, and with the overall feedback that has been assembled.

Initial inquiries were made to solicit input from children and youth through Niji Mahkwa and Children of the Earth High School in the form of written surveys. While there is acknowledged cooperation from the schools’ administration, there is a formal process that must be followed through Winnipeg School Division to ensure that the surveys are appropriate and safe for use in the schools. This process involves submission of the survey to a committee that meets periodically to adjudicate it and make recommendations to the administration.

While the value of this process is obvious, the process has steps that can be very time consuming (that are out of the direct control of the Division and any proponent). In addition, there is some concern that the use of the term ‘library’ may be misconstrued between the WPL and the individual school libraries; thereby, potentially skewing the results. Therefore, it has been determined that written surveys would be administered specifically through youth serving organizations, not through the school division.

Follow up will occur with all of those organizations that indicated a clear willingness to support this initiative and to provide access to their community members / students in a timely manner. The organizations represent a good cross section of the situations, demographics and geographic of the community.

It is anticipated that the discussion circles and written surveys will be completed by March 31, 2010, with assessment and analysis during April 2010. A final report will be produced and presented in May 2010.

For consideration and discussion...

December 2009