Interest Convergence and Co-production of Plans: An Examination of Winnipeg’s ‘Aboriginal Pathways’

Yale Belanger  
Department of Native American Studies  
*University of Lethbridge*

Ryan Walker  
Department of Geography and Planning  
*University of Saskatchewan*

Résumé  
Des tentatives pour faire avancer les pratiques urbaines d’aménagement avec les communautés autochtones de Winnipeg ont eu un succès limité depuis quelques années. Nous nous servons du concept de ‘convergence intérêt’ pour comprendre la motivation de s’engager à planifier avec les communautés autochtones de Winnipeg. En termes de politiques et de d’aménagement urbain, nous concluons que les leaders municipaux doivent entrer en co-production avec les communautés autochtones, comme partenaire civique au même degré, plutôt que d’agir au nom des Autochtones en se basant sur des interprétations à court-terme de l’efficacité et de l’autorité civique. Sinon, les tentatives pour créer des politiques municipales et des plans autochtones urbains continueront d’être vouées à l’échec.

*Mots clés*: Autochtone; urbain; aménagement; co-production; Canada

*Canadian Journal of Urban Research*, Volume 18, Issue 1, Supplement pages 118-139.  
Copyright © 2009 by the Institute of Urban Studies.  
All rights of reproduction in any form reserved.  
ISSN: 1188-3774
Abstract
Attempts to advance the state of planning practice with Aboriginal communities in Winnipeg have met with limited success in recent years. We use the concept of interest convergence to understand the impetus for engaging in planning with Aboriginal communities in Winnipeg. We argue that municipal leaders need to enter into policy and planning co-production with Aboriginal communities as full civic partners, rather than relying on a short-sighted interpretation of expediency and civic authority to act on behalf of Aboriginal peoples. Otherwise attempts at creating urban Aboriginal policies and plans at the municipal level will continue to fail.

Key words: Aboriginal; urban; planning; co-production; Canada

In 1999 Winnipeg Mayor Glen Murray identified Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada urban Aboriginal programming as, at best, substandard. Responding to research commissioned in the previous year aimed at determining how to improve urban Aboriginal socio-economic conditions Murray identified the federal government’s determined refusal to fashion and implement policies for non-status Indians living off reserve as the key issue (see Hanselmann 2001). Murray stressed that urban Aboriginal peoples were falling into what the final report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) depicted as a “policy vacuum” resulting in limited federal or provincial services (Canada 1996, 542). Variability in policy formulation, overlap or gaps in policy areas in different cities, and mismatches between policy areas and community needs of urban Aboriginal peoples have been identified as critical deficiencies in federal Aboriginal policies (Hanselmann 2001). Calvin Hanselmann (2001) observed that the majority of existing programs were produced in the absence of policy, suggesting that they were little more than ad hoc measures. Murray identified this “policy vacuum” early in his tenure as mayor and endeavoured to improve the situation by establishing what he publicly hoped would become a collaborative relationship with urban Aboriginal leaders in Winnipeg. His goal: to create and ultimately implement an urban policy aimed at improving Aboriginal socio-economic conditions by improving municipal-Aboriginal relationships.

Municipal planning is not as often thought of in concert with Aboriginal communities as say planning on a reserve community. In municipalities space is shared between Aboriginal and a diversity of non-Aboriginal peoples, unlike on a reserve, and so the planning processes must be transactive if mutual learning is to occur about the aspirations of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples (Friedmann 1973; Hibbard and Lane 2004). Linking learning to implementation requires a basis in normative principles for working with Aboriginal commun-
ities, which we discuss in the next section. Advancing the quality of planning with Aboriginal peoples in shared urban space will contribute greatly to the 21st century post-colonial city that the planning profession and scholars aim to help create (Sandercock 2003). Ryan Walker (2008) identified the governance interface between municipal governments and Aboriginal communities as one of five priority areas for further research to improve planning with Aboriginal peoples in urban centres.

In this paper we argue that in Winnipeg, attempts to advance the state of planning practice with Aboriginal communities through the inclusion of policy directions in the City’s primary official plan (i.e., Plan Winnipeg 2020 Vision) and the creation of a full secondary plan giving effect to those directions (i.e., First Steps: Municipal Aboriginal Pathways) have occurred in the past several years primarily as a result of ‘interest convergence’, which reflects the intersection of urban Aboriginal interests with those of City Hall and non-Aboriginal Winnipeggers. We also argue that the process of formulating the secondary plan was not based on sound principles for working with Aboriginal communities as full civic partners, according to a set of basic normative principles, but on a more short-sighted interpretation of expediency and civic authority to act. Ultimately, the endeavour has failed to be implemented. Our analysis will serve as an important learning tool for other prairie centres where civic interest convergence is also occurring between City Hall, non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal communities. We offer our perspectives on how to approach urban planning with Aboriginal communities in order to ensure plans (or policies) are acceptable to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal citizens and City Hall, and have a high likelihood of implementation.

A Normative Basis for Co-production of Plans and Policies with Aboriginal Communities

Policy co-production is a type of policy generation and implementation process where actors outside of the government apparatus are involved in the creation of policy, instead of only its implementation (Brudney and England 1982; Casey and Dalton 2006; Nyland 1995). Government and community-based actors work together from problem or issue identification, to priority setting through to programs and services, and onwards. Governments do not give away their responsibility for public policy making when they engage in co-production. Rather they proceed on the basis that there is value in co-production and shared responsibility for defining issues and priorities accurately and devoting public resources to programs stemming from the former that stand a high likelihood of achieving good outcomes. The principle of policy co-production is used in this paper as a normative principle for engaging in planning and policy-making with urban Aboriginal communities. It may not always be quick and easy to undertake co-pro-
Interest Convergence and Co-production of Plans in Winnipeg

production processes. Government actors have a responsibility, however, to identify and engage appropriate Aboriginal leaders, community members and experts in the process. There is also value in good processes for engaging with Aboriginal communities that, arguably, will have longevity beyond any single civic executive, administration or budget year.

The basis for arguing on behalf of co-production of urban Aboriginal policy is the principle of self-determination. As defined by the United Nations (1994, 2007), Indigenous peoples have the right as self-determining peoples to “full and effective participation in all matters that concern them” according to “the principle of free, prior and informed consent.” Promoting successful interaction in Canada is difficult due to a complexity of legal and political definitions that assigns responsibility for Aboriginal peoples to federal and provincial jurisdictions and various federal agencies (e.g., Health Canada). Political leaders in turn regularly cite overlapping authority or program duplication to stay Aboriginal participation in municipal policy formulation although things are slowly shifting. In 2002, for instance, the Federal Court in Canada v. Misquadis ruled that Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) had discriminated against the urban Native community. The court determined that Native political organizations can represent urban Native interests and that the HRSDC must provide funding for the infrastructure required to deliver services and establish representative governance. It also defined off-reserve Aboriginal people as a group of self-organized, self-determining, and distinct communities, analogous to a reserve community. Misquadis further reinforced the political connection between on-and off-reserve Aboriginal people articulated in the Supreme Court of Canada’s Corbière (1999) decision (which compelled First Nation bands to permit off-reserve members to vote in Indian Act–sanctioned elections and referendums) and the recent Gull Bay decision (the Federal Court rule that band council members no longer have to reside on reserve) (Canada v. Esquega 2008).

As these three decisions suggest, living outside the reserve community did not necessarily silence an individual’s voice in reserve politics. They also effectively eliminated the political lines between reserve and urban residence. Municipal leaders are, as a result, confronting mounting demands to acknowledge urban Aboriginal peoples as political communities imbued with unique rights that are shaped and reproduced through common histories, contemporary social interaction and collective future aspirations (Simpson 2000). Political communities are organic and not fixed in time, and over the past several decades they have not only persisted among Aboriginal peoples in rural and reserve environments but also taken on urban identities specific to the city as a home-place, whether singly or intertwined with reserve/rural communities elsewhere (Andersen 2005; Belanger et al. 2003; Wilson and Peters 2005). Unlike other national sub-cultures
availed with proportional access to universal political rights and freedoms, reflecting Rawls’ (2001) justice principles, rights that Aboriginal peoples also embrace, the goal of self-determination emanates from territorial occupancy that precedes Canada as a state. Recognition of this foundational right is considered necessary to ensure the stability and continued political evolution of communities of Aboriginal citizens (Kymlicka 1995; 1998; Wood 2003). One scholar further emphasizes the need to acknowledge this unique status by recognizing Aboriginal peoples as the third tier of Canadian confederation along with British and French descendants (Saul 1997; 2008).

Aboriginal co-production in this instance takes on a heightened significance, especially within the accepted Aboriginal-state framework characterized by Canada’s desire to undermine Aboriginal cultural saliency while aggressively advocating complete Indian absorption into mainstream society. Unlike immigrants or ethno-cultural communities whose development is aided by multi-cultural policies, Aboriginal development has been hindered by an Indian civilization policy advocating assimilation vis-à-vis urban immigration. Rather than promoting Aboriginal peoples’ “design, implementation and evaluation of…regional and national processes regarding laws, policies, resources, programmes and projects” (United Nations 2005), the federal and provincial governments’ failure to keep pace with these trends has in effect retarded urban Aboriginal development (see Canada 1996).

Self-determination in the Canadian context is not aimed at separation and isolation but rather is a right to fulfill community aspirations in partnership with non-Aboriginal communities (and governments) informed by treaty relationships, constitutional arrangements and continuing group rights (e.g., Henderson 2005; 2008; Macklem 2001). Writing about Aboriginal Australia, David Mercer (2003) echoes the Canadian Aboriginal experience when he points out a disconnection between rights associated with liberal democratic state citizenship and those inherent to Aboriginal peoples. He notes that individual rights and their universal applicability in liberal democracies are given precedence over basic collective group rights of Aboriginal political communities to self-determination. Most contemporary planning theorists take the virtues of universal applicability of individual rights in liberal democratic states as the foundation for rational action, making strong contributions to advancing planning practice as a pragmatic and deliberative process in a diverse society (e.g., Harper and Stein 2006). Communicative and collaborative planning theory (Healey 1996; 1997), for example, remains either implicitly or explicitly focused on bringing individuals into a liberal democratic public sphere for planning action. Explicit provision for group rights and aspirations based on Aboriginality needs to be made, and is certainly not incompatible with the communicative turn in planning. Co-production may nevertheless appear to be an imposing step that non-Aboriginal citizens and City
Interest Convergence and Co-production of Plans in Winnipeg

Hall may find difficult to understand and accept for it appears on the surface to be a radical departure from mainstream perceptions of the equality of individuals in liberal democracies.

In academic circles there is a defensible reason to involve Aboriginal peoples as co-producers of plans and policies; or, as Leroy Little Bear states, to make Aboriginal people part of the everyday business of Canada thus “improving Aboriginal political and social visibility” (in Belanger, Fitzmaurice and Newhouse 2008, 50). Will Kymlicka (2001) refers to the concept of ‘liberal culturalism’ in order to encapsulate the now widely accepted notion among academics that national minority groups with prior occupancy rights are entitled to a meaningful measure of self-determination. Considered prerequisites to facilitating this political development are access to their culture and its recognition by others in mainstream society. Outside of academic spheres and the aspirations of Aboriginal communities themselves, mainstream Canadian institutions and society are built on years of ‘whitestreaming’ (Denis 1997). The whitestream concept is used by Claude Denis (1997) to represent the idea that Canadian society is structured overwhelmingly according to the ‘white’ (of European descent) experience. Linked to this are a series of discourses centred on equality of opportunity, colour blindness and universal citizenship that provide mainstream societal institutions, and people, with a workable rationale for setting aside Aboriginality (Flanagan 2000; Walker 2006; Widdowson and Howard 2008).

Identifying whitestreaming within policy and planning processes is essential if we are to: (1) clarify precisely why non-recognition of Aboriginal interests continues; (2) determine how this influences relationship formation amongst individuals and nations living unavoidably side by side; and (3) develop the mechanisms to actively draw Aboriginal people into the formulation of municipal policies and plans and their implementation. For this stage of our analysis critical race theory (CRT) was the chosen interpretive lens. Developed in the late 1970s, CRT aided American scholars working toward social change and racial equality in reflecting upon their personal and the communal experience and to measure the relationship between race, racism, and official power. CRT research revealed the existence of institutional racism and suggested that the social construction of race continued to shape attitudes that legitimized uneven power relations in the name of individual equality. It also uncovered how the language of liberalism, specifically concepts such as neutrality, meritocracy, and colour blindness, was used to validate the maintenance of oppressive structures over people of colour. The legitimacy of non-mainstream peoples’ experience was effectively challenged, which led to carefully managed and regulated socio-political boundaries (Dei et al. 2004). Finally, unfair treatment was justified by the inherent supremacy of mainstream policies professing to end racial discrimination (Goodman 2001).
Critical race theorists initially faced criticism, primarily due to their pledge to unveil discrimination while characterizing progressive institutional practices as racist. As Carbato and Gulati (2003) argue, central to CRT is the notion that racism is prevalent in American (and by association Canadian) society. This singular approach arguably leads critical race theorists to overlook aspects of personal agency and social accountability. Rarely does the literature cite the role of how ethical considerations motivate planners and politicians. Self-interest in this instance is absolute and the guiding principle. Derrick Bell (1976), for example, was criticised for his work identifying a disconnection between the agendas of high-profile advocacy groups and the desires of the grassroots. In a second controversial article Bell (1980) posited that early civil rights advances were less about an expansive societal consciousness than they were about improving America’s tarnished international image and avoiding racial strife domestically. The correctives developed to advance minority agendas were, according to Bell, a product of mainstream structures and minimally reflected community needs and desires. Here the impetus of interest convergence becomes evident, which represents an important step in better appreciating the basis of the current disconnect between Aboriginal desires for engagement and the reluctance of municipal officials to acquiesce to these demands. Interest convergence is the point when concerted attempts will be made by mainstream officials to correct mismatches and disparities destabilizing the smooth functioning of mainstream society. Accordingly, the interests of non-mainstream populations (e.g., Aboriginal) in achieving social equality are accommodated only when they converge with the interests of dominant society. Researchers interested in the application of CRT as a conceptual scaffold for municipal policy development will be interested in our analysis of the factors driving the development of Winnipeg’s Municipal Aboriginal Pathways (MAP) secondary plan, and the local government’s response to its own policy initiative promoting city partnerships with urban Aboriginal peoples.

Methods

For the purpose of this pilot project, the first in a larger research agenda examining the issue of urban Aboriginal participation in municipal policy formulation in the prairie provinces, the chosen research methods of inquiry and analysis involved: (1) an analysis of key events represented in documents related to MAP that was used to frame the creation of question booklets delivered to key informants, and our overarching analysis; and, (2) notes taken from one-to-one semi-structured interviews with ten people in Winnipeg. Notes were taken at interviews, as opposed to using voice recorders, to keep with the national methodology set for the Major Collaborative Research Initiative from which much of this paper draws its empirical basis. Due to the volume of data collected across the country note-tak-
ing represented the right combination of rigour and manageability. The sample size was purposeful. Specifically, interviews were limited to key administrative staff and politicians at the City of Winnipeg and leaders in the Aboriginal community, whether associated with a political organisation (e.g., Winnipeg local of the Manitoba Métis Federation, Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg), or individuals with years of experience in a variety of policy areas and widely respected as mediums for community leadership. Some participants were senior staff of Aboriginal organisations that operate in the city. Telephone interviews were conducted with three Winnipeg City Councillors. All interviews (telephone and in-person) followed a general format whereby the participant was engaged in a discussion while the interviewer subtly posed, in variable order, a number of pre-determined questions. The questions were designed to keep us attuned to the major themes being investigated while eliciting the participants’ stories which, in this instance, act as a source of understanding that provides insight into personal decision-making (Cortazzi 2001). Ferrier has argued that “knowledge is constructed by people and groups of people” and is grounded in day to day activities (in Mitchell and Egudo 2003, 1). An analysis of the interview notes brought out themes central to Aboriginal policy formulation and political participation through careful reading and re-reading (Rice and Ezzy 1999, 258).

The Impetus for MAP: Interest Convergence between Non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal Communities

The confluence of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers has been home to First Nations for thousands of years, including the Cree, Dakota, Saulteaux, and Anishinaabe. The First Nations of the region had established economies predicated on seasonal rounds tracking moose, elk, deer, and other large animals, combined with fishing in the region’s myriad of lakes and rivers. The river junction was a habitual stop and became a regular meeting place where people would gather to trade and renew political and military alliances. By the 1860s pressure from Canadian officials to open the region to settlement compelled the British Crown to commence treaty negotiations in 1871 followed by the signing of Treaties 1 and 2 that year (Morris 1991; Ray, Miller and Tough 2000). Winnipeg is also and has always been home to the Métis Nation (e.g., Giraud 1986). Despite impressive socio-economic and political achievements, in the mid- to late-1800s various economic crises combined with internal factionalism soon proved too difficult for Métis leaders to surmount, and French and English blocs began vying for control (Ens 1996; Pannekoek 1991). Slowly settlers moved into and displaced Aboriginal populations from the Red River region, a process that was destabilizing politically and culturally.

By the 1950s steady First Nations migration into Winnipeg was visible as many sought, among other things, improved employment opportunities. By
1981, Winnipeg’s Aboriginal population had grown to 16,575, and by the year 2002 it increased by 39,180 to 55,755. Today, Aboriginal people make up ten per cent of Winnipeg’s population of 686,040 (Statistics Canada 2008). The Aboriginal population is currently growing six times faster than the non-Aboriginal population, and projections indicate that this trend will continue so that by 2020 Winnipeg’s Aboriginal population is projected to be over 100,000 (Winnipeg 2003a, 1). This total will represent more than 40 per cent of the provincial Aboriginal population (Manitoba 1998).

The long intertwined histories of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities in the area of Winnipeg in the 1800s and again noticeably from the 1950s onward did not result in improved relations or a positive urban experience for Aboriginal émigrés. Leaders from the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood and subsequently the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, for example, have long been critical of endemic urban Aboriginal impoverishment, trends that were exacerbated by increasing urban migration and high fertility rates. Various studies have confirmed that Aboriginal people live in a notably racist environment punctuated by limited political participation in municipal affairs. Following the highly publicized death of J.J. Harper in 1988, the Manitoba Justice Inquiry was implemented that year to investigate his and the 1971 death of Helen Betty Osborne in The Pas. It reported in 1991 that the most significant factor prolonging both cases was derisory police work that was hampered by communities that tolerated racism against Native people (Manitoba 1991). The systemic racism in the Winnipeg Police Department, it was later noted, was reinforced by several civic leaders’ disinterest in the shooting (Sinclair 1999).

This politically charged environment confronted Mayor Glen Murray during his initial days in office in 1998. Immediately implementing an agenda aimed at improving inner-city Aboriginal socio-economic conditions, Murray was responsible for temporarily cleansing Winnipeg’s inner city for national media consumption prior to the North American Indigenous Games. Held from 25 July to 4 August, the 2002 Games attracted 6,757 athletes and 2,678 spectators while generating over $16 million in revenue (Paradigm Consulting Group 2002). A large inner city Aboriginal population was also seeking urban revitalisation opportunities. This was for Murray an opportune time to promote to Aboriginal leaders the need to establish collaborative relationships. No doubt the potential for embarrassment was a driving force; however, the need to improve Winnipeg’s image coincided with inner city Aboriginal demands for improved housing.

It is interesting to note that Murray harboured concerns about the nature of civic power relations, and on 1 January 2000 he established the Mayor’s Task Force on Diversity to investigate civic practices, policies, procedures, and services as they related to women, Aboriginal people, the disabled, and visible minorities.
(all of which comprised the umbrella category ‘disadvantaged groups’). Mandated to determine whether these disadvantaged groups were being encouraged or discouraged from participating in Winnipeg’s political culture, the final report was assembled from more than 100 research reports, interviews with 40 representatives of various organizations and grassroots groups, and 100 individual commentaries solicited for review. Finally, two public forums were held to gather additional community commentary (Winnipeg 2001). According to Murray, “Our city has continued to work to identify and remove those barriers that keep individuals and groups from fully participating in the life and opportunities available to the people in Winnipeg, but we have not succeeded” (Winnipeg 2001, 9; emphasis original). The Task Force identified that while some barriers were physical, and as such penetrable once identified, many were “more insidious and systematic, ingrained in our institutions, and in the minds of individuals” (Winnipeg 2001, 9). Admittedly, while many of the identified barriers were “not unique to Winnipeg,” they were nevertheless considered “difficult to remove” (Winnipeg 2001, 9). The Mayor and council concluded that “collective and political will to continue the evolution toward positive change” was required (Winnipeg 2001, 9).

The findings of the Mayor’s Task Force on Diversity and the combination of poor Aboriginal-municipal relations and a desire to improve those relationships compelled Mayor Murray to develop an urban Aboriginal initiative stressing partnerships between the City and the municipal Aboriginal leadership and Aboriginal input into policy initiatives (Interview). With data in hand, the City of Winnipeg followed with its long range policy plan, Plan Winnipeg 2020 Vision. Promoted as a policy document to guide decision making for Winnipeg’s physical, social, economic, and environmental conditions, Plan Winnipeg advanced a vision of the City’s civic future. Adopted 1 December 2002, the plan covers a twenty-year period.

Subsequent to adopting Plan Winnipeg and after close to three years of research into Aboriginal community issues, all without the benefit of direct Aboriginal consultation, in August 2003 the City of Winnipeg released First Steps: Municipal Aboriginal Pathways. The City’s principal long-range policy and decision-making document, Plan Winnipeg 2020 Vision, includes a policy statement to ‘Promote Self-reliant Aboriginal Communities’. MAP was launched as a secondary plan to guide Council activities in achieving its objective articulated in Plan Winnipeg that defined “a policy framework–based on a number of key principles–to open the door to a new era of co-operation between the City and Winnipeg’s Aboriginal community” (Winnipeg 2003b, 1). The five policy platforms (pathways) within MAP are: (1) Employment, (2) Economic Development, (3) Safety, (4) Quality of Life, and (5) Outreach and Education. Each pathway has three ‘strategic initiatives’ aligned with it, alongside which specific action plans were supposed to be
developed shortly after MAP’s release by responsible departments. Action planning would also have involved developing implementation mechanisms, resourcing strategies and timelines to targets.

Additional research commissioned by Murray offered insight into contemporary urban Aboriginal socio-economic conditions. Based on these data councillors quickly concluded that Aboriginal people lacked employment opportunities and access to education, good housing, and an equitable justice system. These studies showed that the City of Winnipeg was facing a 38 per cent eligible retirement rate during an anticipated period of municipal Aboriginal population growth (Winnipeg 2003b). Statistical analysis indicated that 30 per cent of the Winnipeg work force would be eligible to retire by 2005, and that 50 per cent would be eligible by 2010. Officials estimated the City population growing by 14 per cent by the year 2020, resulting in an additional 87,000 residents living in Winnipeg and a total municipal population of 715,000 (Winnipeg 2003b). According to the then-Aboriginal Policy Coordinator of the Executive Policy Committee Secretariat, an urban Aboriginal initiative began to take shape. Although Aboriginal people had long been advocating for improved employment opportunities, she asked some basic questions: “How can we get a representative work force? What is best for the City of Winnipeg? The best thing is training the population that we have; getting young skilled, talented workers in the City of Winnipeg is our goal” (Interview).

Lingering questions concerning who precisely was responsible for urban Aboriginal peoples led to a prolonged debate about the ethics associated with diverting municipal tax dollars to urban Aboriginal needs. Murray argued that action was warranted to improve the existing urban Aboriginal situation. This led to his initiating a dialogue with urban Aboriginal leaders. The Winnipeg community’s positive reaction to the North American Indigenous Games prompted Murray and a committee of two councillors to consider the situation as “an opportunity” to bring “the issue…to the forefront” (Interview). The then-Aboriginal Policy Co-ordinator asserted that “consistently the Aboriginal community and Aboriginal organizations have been building their capacities and evolving; the migration rates have boomed; it is a number of variables that pointed toward the City of Winnipeg developing a strategy that could benefit everybody involved in a positive way” (Interview). The goal of improving municipal Aboriginal socio-economic conditions appears partly to advance notions of Aboriginal community progress and partly to achieve the Mayor’s desire to integrate Aboriginal workers into the City’s work force to combat anticipated mass-retirements.

Despite the notable work directed at creating an urban Aboriginal initiative, which was soon followed by the federal government’s 25 November announcement that it planned to invest $25 million in its Urban Aboriginal Strategy, after several months of denying rumours to this effect, Murray announced in May 2004 that he would run in the next Canadian federal election as a Liberal Party
candidate in the Charleswood-St. James riding. On May 11, Murray announced his resignation as the Mayor of Winnipeg, becoming the first mayor in Winnipeg history to resign approximately half way through his term. On 28 June, less than two months after announcing his resignation, Conservative Steven Fletcher defeated Murray in his attempt to become a member of the House of Commons. Murray's resignation was a significant setback for those pursuing the urban Aboriginal initiative he helped to create. The new City Council led by Mayor Sam Katz without delay turned its attention to business-oriented and entrepreneur-focused issues while demonstrating little interest in pursuing Murray's vision (New Winnipeg 2004).

During Murray's mayoral reign, he actively promoted engaging the urban Aboriginal community after research highlighted existing structural inequalities and power differentials between municipal Aboriginal populations and non-Aboriginal Winnipeggers. In response, he developed two important policy initiatives intended to draw Aboriginal people to the table as partners in civic development. Despite his intentions little came from his promising initiatives. Part of the reason is simply this: Murray's policies did not resonate with Aboriginal leaders. His proposed era of cooperation relied on a model whereby the Mayor and council guided policy development according to their interpretation of the needs and desires of the municipal Aboriginal community. Critics will argue that Murray did facilitate positive change, and according to Bell's interest convergence hypothesis, we are able to pinpoint two moments of interest convergence that led civic leaders to consult with Aboriginal leaders. The first moment occurred prior to the North American Indian Games, specifically the intersection of Aboriginal desires for urban renewal and municipal desires to improve the image of Winnipeg's inner city. Aboriginal demands for urban improvement were not new; Bell's hypothesis however helps to answer why previous demands for similar assistance were ignored by City Council: interest convergence simply did not occur. This further suggests that the entrenched stereotypes equating Aboriginal people as reserve dwellers who are minimally influenced by municipal policies continued to inform how city leaders chose to interface with urban Aboriginal leaders. The second moment was the perception by City Hall of the need to replenish a retiring Winnipeg work force. The MAP document identified the youthful urban Aboriginal community desirous of improved employment opportunities as an excellent replacement labour force.

In each instance, until Aboriginal concerns reflected mainstream society's needs, interest convergence did not occur. Despite this evident disparity municipal leaders forged ahead in an attempt to implement their urban policy. Rather than extending an invitation to Aboriginal people to actively aid policy formulation, the hope was that Aboriginal people would voluntarily insinuate themselves into the dialogue in order to be heard.
The MAP Process: Exercising Authority to Act instead of Engaging in Co-production
When City Council instructed staff to begin work on MAP, an early issue for municipal officials was whether or not, and to what end, they should be consulting with the City’s Aboriginal communities. One scenario considered initiating talks with Aboriginal stakeholders to learn about their priorities. Murray scuttled this plan, fearful of potential requests for intervention the municipal government was ill-equipped to deal with (i.e., policy sectors that are firmly within provincial and federal responsibility). Instead the five pathways and the strategic initiatives were drafted in-house and brought out to the Aboriginal community for feedback. Mayor Murray and the two councillors met with roughly 350 Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community members at an inner city high school to present the draft and receive input. It received mixed reviews. The concept of creating a working partnership between City Council and the Aboriginal communities was well received. The pathways and strategic initiatives outlined fell short of community expectations. To this criticism, Councillors and the Mayor replied that it represented ‘first steps’ to a longer-term constructive partnership. The implementation of MAP would involve using municipal programming and resources to address some areas, but would rely on partnerships with other levels of government to realize others.

The City’s objective was to achieve a number of socio-economic goals that would normally be unattainable without Aboriginal input and participation in the policy process. Since the Mayor’s office was situated as the hub of municipal politics, as a governmental agency, Murray considered the City capable of interfacing with several groups in an attempt to formulate innovative and collaborative approaches for problem solving. Murray publicly envisioned a relationship that was predicated on power sharing and a shared decision making process, the goal being to work together by pooling resources such as money, information, and labour to meet shared objectives. Thus the urban Aboriginal initiative was promoted as a means to secure trust, encourage mutual dialogue, sponsor mutual commitment, and establish cooperation. Curiously, during the consultation phase with Aboriginal people Murray and his team promoted a dialogue more akin to a town hall meeting. Formally situating his team in front of an audience of Aboriginal and non-Native community members, this configuration scarcely reflected the partnership model Murray previously advocated with Winnipeg’s Aboriginal leaders. This would also be the sole moment of communication between Murray and the greater urban Aboriginal community regarding the MAP process. Importantly, the exercise of this authority to act, rather than engaging in a co-production process based on the normative principle of self-determination, meant that City Hall defined the nature of the political relationships that Murray
Interest Convergence and Co-production of Plans in Winnipeg

had originally advocated should be firmly “rooted in a spirit of co-operation and good-will,” given that “history teaches us that Aboriginal issues can never be addressed in political isolation” (Winnipeg 2003a, 4).

The one aspect of the City’s urban Aboriginal initiative that required minimal clarification was its objectives. A list of anticipated outcomes was generated, but a process describing how to reach these objectives was not. The lack of direction was evident in the interview conducted with the then-Aboriginal Policy Co-ordinator. In reference to the MAP, she noted that “the document is saying basically that the corporation and the City of Winnipeg proper would be much stronger building partnerships and creating opportunities for our larger and growing young population.” When speaking to the notion of sustainable and self-reliant Aboriginal communities, she indicated that Plan Winnipeg was the central document to which “all other corporate plans plug into,” with the MAP acting as the Aboriginal component. Further, “to assist in creating sustainable and self-reliant Aboriginal communities, the MAP plan and policy statements are seen as ones that we can do while still realizing that this is just the first step and that there needs to be more consultation and additional steps along the way” (Interview). The majority of her responses demonstrated that there was no clear path in place to help the policy’s architects meet these objectives despite the desire to effect positive change.

Murray and his council lacked clarity concerning how the policy process would promote establishing the desired relationships with Aboriginal leaders. On the surface it appeared as though the Mayor’s office would act as the nexus, expanding into the community only when Aboriginal consultation was deemed necessary. Such an approach fails to respect the necessary power sharing a partnership requires to flourish. Murray and the City were exercising their authority to act; the problem was that Aboriginal leaders were not afforded a similar level of influence in the overall process especially if their interests did not reflect the City’s. It is also noteworthy that Murray and his team failed to consider how Aboriginal leaders viewed potential partnerships and collaboration; or to discuss the changes Aboriginal leaders envisioned to improve their community’s socio-economic conditions. Partnerships involve the sharing of responsibility and accountability, and, therefore, each partner should be honest and open about mutual concerns that have potential to affect the efficacy of the partnership. Had the City established a working relationship with urban Aboriginal leaders, the MAP process would have been driven by a combined City Hall-Aboriginal desire to see political and community agendas intersect. Instead the agenda was solely driven by the City’s reliance on their interpretation of interest convergence. With the exception of the Aboriginal people who participated in the town hall at the inner city high school, which was an open forum that offered them the chance to voice their opinions
about a policy that they had read about in the newspaper or heard about by word-of-mouth, there was little in the way of Aboriginal participation in the development of an urban policy designed to improve their lives.

Discussion

According to Bell (1980), interest convergence proposes that mainstream society will pursue racial equality and equity with people of colour only when those needs converge with the interests and needs of mainstream society. In the Winnipeg context, the interests of Aboriginal communities and City Hall, in such instances, will coincide, at least in some part. Interest convergence was limited during Murray’s regime, suggesting there are many important municipal issues potentially impacting Aboriginal peoples that have not been earmarked for policy consideration. Engaging Aboriginal communities in municipal plan and policy co-production on account of normative principles associated with their prior occupancy in self-organising societies, community rights and aspirations for self-determination and the obligations among treaty peoples and their leaders to proceed with mutual respect and recognition for each other, is a more appropriate rationale for endeavours like MAP. Normative principles also provide insight into how to interact and to consult as peoples that do not rely on a reactive policy of response to obvious instances of interest convergence. Whether the impetus for engaging in co-production of plans and policies with Aboriginal communities is driven ethically or on the basis of interest convergence, we believe that the way to proceed is the same. Co-production is necessary in order to lead to community acceptance and implementation. Without engaging in co-production with the Aboriginal communities, an inauspicious end was all that could come from MAP.

One of the positive impacts of MAP was that it raised the expectations of what was possible in municipal-Aboriginal policy. An activist mayor and councillors took a bold step outside of the tired and dysfunctional arguments of jurisdictional irresponsibility, and set an example for introducing a new distinctive policy field in other cities. Given that one of the lasting impacts of MAP has been symbolic, in the sense that it signals what kind of policy orientation is possible with Aboriginal communities, it is unfortunate that the process of formulating MAP was not more carefully contrived. The logic of deciding in-house what strategic initiatives would be possible and then taking those out to the community was a major flaw, and even less justifiable given that no funding was ultimately attached for implementation. What might have had the greatest staying power, in the light of the lack of resources to implement given the change in civic government, would have been an exemplary process of relationship building for long-term collaborative partnership between City Hall and the Aboriginal communities.
Policy co-production with Aboriginal peoples did not occur in Winnipeg with MAP. One participant noted that the main political organisations in Winnipeg, including the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg, Manitoba Métis Federation and Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs were party to a meeting with the Mayor and councillors early in the MAP process. As to why these organizations remained peripheral to the process, or were rarely mentioned in Murray’s dialogue is open to conjecture. One reason may be due to the nature of the operations of Aboriginal organizations rooted in cultural difference, regional variance, and competition for federal funding that result in sites of contestation developing when organizations attempt to work in concert (see Belanger 2006; 2008). That said, the City would have arguably been better off seeking other partners in the community. There are many Aboriginal leaders in Winnipeg who derive their legitimacy in the community based on their wisdom or expertise. These individuals are often not necessarily employed by or occupy elected positions at the three main political umbrella organisations. Giving up on collaboration because these three political organisations have conflicting interests is not a defensible position for the City of Winnipeg to take. Limiting Aboriginal participation and opportunities arguably perpetuates systemic discrimination since the City is able to control resources and constrain opportunities (MacIntosh 1998).

One notable positive appraisal of the MAP came from an Aboriginal community expert working in the sport and recreation field. He argued that the existence of MAP gave his organisation ‘a place to stand’ when approaching City Council for assistance with sporting venues and other in-kind support. While this seems like a positive outcome, it could just as well be achieved by using the policy statement in Plan Winnipeg 2020 Vision to ‘Promote Self-reliant Aboriginal Communities’. Creating a full secondary plan to give effect to that policy direction, complete with specific principles and implementation objectives cannot be a legitimate basis for opening the door to a new era of cooperation between the City and Winnipeg’s Aboriginal community if the Aboriginal community is not a full co-producer.

In consultations during this research, most Aboriginal leaders did not remember MAP, or noted that it sounded familiar but could not remember specifics. In their minds, perhaps it is vaguely associated with a public meeting at a high school that did not translate into much on the ground. Had the MAP process instead focused first on creating a strong collaborative partnership with Aboriginal leaders based on mutual respect and driven by a desire to articulate shared objectives, emanating from Aboriginal communities and City Hall, this might have had a lasting impact, with or without immediate financial resources. In praxis, Murray distilled important socio-economic issues negatively impacting inner city
Aboriginal peoples into a process whereby City Hall interpreted these needs and measured its response through a prism of non-Aboriginal community interests. The approach taken by the City was a well-intentioned attempt to achieve a set of its goals with buy-in and participation by the Aboriginal communities to meet its needs for integrating a growing segment of its population into the productive workforce. But although the town hall at the high school included about 350 people, it was not a deliberate effort to engage the Aboriginal community leadership as collaborative partners. It was a public forum much like any other advertised in the newspaper.

While it is easier now to look back on the impetus and process for creating the MAP secondary plan and criticise them, it remains an initiative that was forward-thinking at the time for municipal government, owing a lot to an activist mayor and two councillors who were eager to try new ways of working constructively with Aboriginal communities. We can certainly find some lessons in that for improving the governance interface between municipal governments and Aboriginal communities.

Conclusion

Canada’s Aboriginal leaders and a growing network of scholars examining similar issues actively promote mutual recognition and respect as the bases of self-determination and working political relationships needed to strengthen state-Aboriginal society relations (Durie 2003; Green 2005; Hunter 2006; Maaka and Fleras 2005; Mercer 2003; Canada 1996). Yet a serious lack of engagement on the part of municipal leaders with Aboriginal policy issues persists, including in the field of urban planning. It is necessary however that complex societies acknowledge the need to promote enduring political relationships to ensure that those individuals and nations living “unavoidably side by side” are able to successfully manage (Kant 1991, 43, 121). Implicit in this argument is the need to acknowledge the other, or in this case, Aboriginal peoples. Not unlike Native leaders of Canada’s Confederation period, urban Aboriginal leaders today find themselves lodged at the periphery of mainstream society. They are neither fully acknowledged nor consulted with on any normative or normalised basis. Our research on Winnipeg’s ‘Aboriginal Pathways’ has demonstrated this.

This paper has argued that municipal leaders need to enter into policy and planning co-production with Aboriginal communities as full civic partners, rather than relying on a restricted interpretation of expediency and civic authority to act on behalf of Aboriginal peoples. Communicative and collaborative planning theory is not enough to advance our practice with Aboriginal communities in
the post-colonial city, at least not without a further normative foundation post grounded in the self-determining autonomy that is the aspired to and practiced, inherent right of Aboriginal peoples. There has always been an ethical basis for municipal planners and decision-makers to engage in co-production that does not specifically rely upon fleeting moments of interest convergence to guide policy development. The co-production process accordingly provides added value to the municipal toolkit while offering politicians and Aboriginal leaders an instrument that has the potential to penetrate the public sphere thus improving fragile municipal-Aboriginal relations.

Acknowledgements
The first author wishes to thank Dr. Joseph Garcea from the University of Saskatchewan for his helpful comments on an earlier draft of this article. The second author wishes to acknowledge funding his contribution to this paper from the Major Collaborative Research Initiative program of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada under the Multilevel Governance and Public Policy in Municipalities project directed by Dr. Robert Young from the University of Western Ontario. Finally, the two authors would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments.

Notes
1 Off-reserve Aboriginal people include “Non-status” Indian people, including First Nations people, Inuit, and Métis people who are unable to access funds from their home community; First Nations, Inuit, Métis and non-status people who reside in a different province other than the province that their reserve or home community may be located; and First Nations, Métis or Inuit who may not be able to find an appropriate contact point, or may prefer accessing pan-Aboriginal services.

References
Belanger, Y.D. 2008. Native governments and organizations. In Handbook of


Corbiere *v.* Canada (Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs), [1999] 2 *S.C.R.* 203.


