Section 1

Name of Partnership: The Manitoba Research Alliance

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We heard about the CCPH Annual Award by referring to your website.

Abstract:

The Manitoba Research Alliance has more than ten years’ experience in bringing together academics and community organizations to study and promote solutions to Inner-City and Aboriginal poverty, ill health and social exclusion. It has successfully put together three community based and community led research proposals which have obtained funding from the SSHRC and elsewhere. It has produced numerous books and publications, as well as videos, outlining the depth of poverty, its causes and possible solutions, with a focus on solutions that are community based. The MRA works through the CCPA, Manitoba universities and many community organizations. It also has the support of the Provincial government and it focuses its output on making concrete improvements in the community through policy change. The centrality of community input in the form of research priorities, evaluation and selection of projects, conduct of the research and dissemination of results makes the MRA unique.
Section 2: List of Partners

**John Loxley**, Economics, University of Manitoba: Principal Investigator

**Shauna MacKinnon**, Director, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Mb.

**Jim Silver**, Director of Urban and Inner City Program, University of Winnipeg

**Elizabeth Comack**, Sociology, University of Manitoba

**Peter Kulchyski**, Native Studies, University of Manitoba

**Ian Hudson**, Economics, University of Manitoba

**Jesse Hajer**, Provincial Gov., Community and Economic Development Committee of Cabinet

**Diane Roussin**, ED of Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre

**Kathy Mallet**, ED of The Community Educational Development Association

**Kathy Avery-Kinew** of The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs

**Evelyn Peters**, Canada Research Council Chair, University of Winnipeg

**Lynne Fernandez**, Project Manager, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Mb.

**Maureen Simpkins**, Education, University College of the North

**Jerry Buckland**, Economics, Menno Simmons College/University of Winnipeg

**Lorene Fontaine**, Native Studies, University of Winnipeg

**Omut Oguzoglu**, Economics, University of Manitoba

**Ian Skelton**, Urban Planning, University of Manitoba

**Organizations/Provincial Departments/Institutions**

**Assiniboine Credit Union**: a local, community-minded financial institution.

**Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs**: advocates on issues affecting Manitoba’s. AMC’s primary focus is political but will also fill in gaps not bridged by regional services.

**Building Urban Industries for Local Development (BUILD)**: is a social enterprise non-profit contractor and a training program for people who face barriers to employment.

**The Canadian CED Network (CEDNET)**: Promotes Community Economic Development (CED) to create economic opportunities and better social conditions.

**Community Economic Development Committee of Cabinet (CEDC)**: Provincial

**Community Education Development Association (CEDA)**: CEDA works with inner city residents and groups to provide community development services.

**Community Led Organizations United Together (CLOUT)**: A coalition of 9 Inner City organizations that combines resources to better meet the needs of Inner City residents.

**Fisher River Cree Nation**: A First Nations community located north of Winnipeg.

**Healthy Child Manitoba**: Provincial department.

**International Institute for Sustainable Development**: a Canadian-based, international public policy research institute for sustainable development.

**Intergovernmental Strategic Aboriginal Alignment**: A tripartite government initiative to increase economic participation of Aboriginal and First Nations people in Manitoba.
John Howard Society: a non-profit community-based justice organization that helps male offenders and their families to live healthier crime-free lives.

Keewatin Tribal Council: lobbies for and defends the rights of the eleven northern Manitoba First Nations people within its jurisdiction.

The Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre: was established in 1984 to reclaim Aboriginal people's inherent role and responsibility as the caregivers for Aboriginal children and families.

Manitoba Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs: Provincial government.

Manitoba Department of Advanced Education and Literacy: Provincial government.

Manitoba Department of Housing and Community Development: Provincial

Manitoba Hydro: Provincial Crown Corporation providing hydro electric and natural gas energy to the province of Manitoba.

Manitoba Teachers’ Society: Provincial trade union body for Manitoba teachers.

Native Women’s Transition Centre: supports Aboriginal women and mothers on their journey of healing and recovery from family violence, addictions, and institutionalization.

Ndinawemaaganag Endaawaad, Inc.: (Ndinawe) is an integrated service organization for youth, focusing on shelter, culture, recreation, education, outreach and support.

North End Community Renewal Corporation: committed to the social, economic and cultural renewal of the North End of Winnipeg (considered an extension of the Inner City)

North End Women’s Centre: a community based organization that provides women with support, knowledge, and opportunity on their journey towards independence.

Ogijiita Pimatiswin Kinamatwin (OPK): provides employment, education, basic life skills training, and social support for at risk Aboriginal ex-offenders and Aboriginal youth.

Premier’s Advisory Council on Education Poverty and Citizenship

Right to Housing Coalition: a coalition of 150 individuals and 41 organizations working to address the housing crisis and the chronic need for social housing.


Sapotaweyak Cree Nation: a First Nations located in Northern Manitoba.

Sayisi Dene First Nation: A First Nations located in Northern Manitoba.

United Way of Winnipeg: a non-profit organization that bringing together diverse partners at the local level to initiate action on community issues.

University College of the North: a public university located in Northern Manitoba.

The following University of Manitoba Departments: Economics; Education; City Planning; Native Studies; Sociology; Faculty of Social Work

The Following University of Winnipeg Departments: Indigenous Studies; Urban and Inner City Studies; Office of the VP Research and Graduate Studies; Office of the President

Urban Circle Training Centre: a non-profit, community-based organization that provides Aboriginal People with skill specific training targeted to job-market demands.
Section 3: Essay

History/Background
The Manitoba Research Alliance (MRA) is a closely-knit group of academic researchers and community and government partners. It first came together in 2001 to apply for a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) grant to study the role of Community Economic Development (CED) in the New Economy. MRA members had been engaged for years in the study of how to ameliorate the unacceptable living conditions in Winnipeg’s Inner City and Manitoba’s Aboriginal communities.

Conditions in Manitoba’s increasingly multi-ethnic urban centres and Aboriginal communities continue to be cause for concern, and in ways that resonate elsewhere. The household poverty rate in Winnipeg’s inner city was 40% in 2006, double the city-wide rate. Manitoba’s Aboriginal population is projected to grow by 45% by 2017, and because of migration from northern to southern Manitoba, will grow more than twice as fast in the south as the north. These projections are worrisome given the high rates of unemployment, inadequate housing, and crime and violence experienced in these communities. When coupled with increases in the numbers of refugees and immigrants, who typically take up residence in Winnipeg’s inner city, the levels of spatially-concentrated, racialized poverty will only rise—unless action is taken now to alter the course.

MRA researchers saw CED as a strategic response to depressed socio-economic conditions in these communities. They were concerned that the transition to the so-called New Economy – with its emphasis on high skill levels and capital costs – would further debilitate communities whose members face low levels of education, poverty, racism and social marginalization. This particular call for proposals gave us the opportunity to organize a team that, if successful, could mount a concentrated, comprehensive research agenda to tackle poverty and social marginalization.

The success of the MRA in receiving this first SSHRC grant, titled Manitoba Research Alliance on Community Economic Development in the New Economy ($800,000 over 3 years) demonstrated that the Alliance’s analysis of the situation in Manitoba and our approach to crafting community-based solutions was appreciated by a panel of experts. Important as that approval was, our main concern was, and remains, the approval of our community partners with whom we work so closely. This first SSHRC grant was very successful on several fronts: we produced a long list of publications including: research reports that were distributed by our lead organization – the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, policy recommendations prepared for our government partners, and scholarly books and articles. One of the most
important outcomes, however, was the deeper relationships that we were able to forge with our community partners and how they started using MRA research in their advocacy work.

The relationship between our academic, community and government partners took form during this first SSHRC grant. Not only did the community-based organizations that are our partners start to see real value in being part of the Alliance, but our government partners were starting to integrate some of our ideas into policy proposals. There was a real sense that momentum was growing, so in 2006 the Alliance decided to apply for a second SSHRC grant.

This next SSHRC funding opportunity was in the Community University Research Alliance (CURA) category. The MRA was already structured as a University – Community Alliance, so it was a natural fit for this funding opportunity. This proposal continued studying the potential of community development as a strategy for solving the deepening and increasingly complex problems of poverty, insecurity and social exclusion in inner-city and Aboriginal communities in Manitoba. Our community and government partners were part of the proposal writing and were key in defining our goals and methodology. We formed four research streams: Justice, Safety and Security; Housing and Neighbourhood Revitalization; Education, Training and Capacity Building and Community Economic Development. Once again, we were successful.

This second SSHRC project: Transforming Inner-city and Aboriginal Communities received $1 million over five years. Once again the Alliance, under the auspices of our lead organization the CCPA Mb., produced a considerable number of publications and was able to raise its profile in the broader educational/social justice community. It was under this grant that a particularly important MRA/CCPA project took hold: the State of the Inner City Report. This annual report is produced in close collaboration with our Inner City community partners and reflects the tremendous potential of community-university alliances.

The State of the Inner City (SIC) Report is a community based participatory research project that has been coordinated by our lead organization, The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, since 2005. The MRA has been an active partner since 2007, contributing funding and resources. Early each year a consortium of inner city community based organizations come together to identify research priorities. Through ongoing dialogue and engagement, research topics and methodologies emerge. Academics, students and community researchers implement the research and writing. A final report, including recommendations for policy makers, is launched in December each year at a community event. Community organizations use the SIC Report to advocate for policy changes to improve the lives of inner city residents. Through the SIC report we have explored issues including affordable housing, childcare, poverty and income inequality, social assistance, and the funding and reporting challenges facing non-profits. We are currently in the process of developing our 9th SIC report.

Working so closely with government and community partners throughout these two grants allowed our Alliance to mature into a permanent, well-respected fixture in Manitoba.
We honed our community-based participatory research skills to the point where our community partners now feel like they are “driving the research” (as expressed by the director of one of the community-based organizations we work with). The educational benefit to this sort of collaboration is invaluable as our community partners are able to see the role that policy – and the academic theories that lead to political decisions – influences their lives. These partners increasingly use MRA research in their advocacy work as they try to get more support for the programs they run in the Inner City; programs that make a real difference in people’s lives.

Having reached the end of the five-year term for the CURA grant, the Alliance realized that we had established an invaluable partnership between the academy, community and provincial government. We all agreed that we had accomplished much, but that our work was far from complete. As with all non-profit social-justice groups, the ever-present challenge is funding. So once again we turned to SSHRC and found another perfect fit: the Partnership grant opportunity under its Insight Connection Program. The team convened and put together another proposal entitled: Partnering for Change: Community-based Solutions for Aboriginal and Inner City Poverty. Once again, we were successful; in fact, our proposal was ranked number one out of 120 applicants. In March 2012 we were awarded $2.5 million over seven years. Our success in landing this grant is partially based on the genuine relationships we have with our community partners.

The MRA has grown even more with this new grant and we our team now included Aboriginal groups from outside Winnipeg. The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and various First Nations are helping us expand our research into more remote and northern communities which have not received the attention Winnipeg’s inner city has, but which face equally difficult circumstances.

In our two previous SSHRC-funded projects we deepened our understanding of these issues and identified both solutions and limits to transformational change. Using longitudinal studies, we seek now to determine the long-term impact of community-based solutions and assess if the results are sustainable, to systematically identify and document the common attributes of initiatives that produce lasting results, and to assess how these can be expanded and sustained at the institutional and policy levels.

The MRA also connects its research to academic theory, and some of our academic researchers provide the theoretical framework in which we locate our community research. For example, the Alliance has a published book on CED that develops a theoretical background for CED and includes the experiences of our community partners in implementing CED. We also published a book on the Social Determinants of Health in Manitoba which included authors from Manitoba’s academic health community and which has proven very popular with some provincial and federal health policy workers. Our academic partners also use MRA research in
their university classes and the Alliance has a strong record of including students in our projects. The University of Winnipeg’s Urban and Inner City program, taught out of an inner-city campus, was formed partly from the work coming from the MRA and its director, Dr. Jim Silver, has been a key member of the Alliance from the start. Having this program in the Inner City has helped anchor the MRA’s work in the community.

The MRA’s principal investigator, Dr. John Loxley – a University of Manitoba economist with an international reputation in finance, international development and community economic development – has long connected his academic research with community concerns. His theoretical work around CED figures significantly in our research approach and recommendations to policy makers. Dr. Loxley also has a strong connection with government policy, helping the MRA move community concerns to the attention of policy makers.

Dr. Shauna MacKinnon, director at the CCPA Mb., also plays a key role in the MRA. She is part of the MRA administrative team and is also a research co-investigator with a specialty in education, training and capacity building (she is head of that research stream). Dr. MacKinnon is the lead organizer in the SIC Report project and as an ex-provincial civil servant, also has strong connections with policy makers. Her relationship with many Inner City community-based organizations facilitates our research in this community.

Other key team members include Diane Roussin of Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre and Kathy Mallett of The Community Educational Development Association. These two EDs provide our team with the on-the-ground information we need to do research that matters to the community. Two members of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs also help steer our research agenda. Other members include academics from the Universities of Manitoba and Winnipeg and the University College of the North, other community-based organizations, neighbourhood associations, advocacy groups and provincial policy makers.

**Mission/goals**

The Alliance’s mission is to investigate through time the impact of promising community-based solutions to racialized poverty—such as innovative housing, education, employment and safety strategies, and personal and community healing and empowerment—to determine how they can be expanded and made sustainable at the institutional and policy levels. As much as possible we strive to build capacity in the community by using a community-based participatory research method that allows our community partners to have their voices heard by policy makers. Our ultimate goal is community transformation.

This mission and goal were determined through our understanding of the challenges facing Manitoba’s marginalized communities and informed by our understanding of community economic development as a strategy to help communities transform from a grassroots level.
Community
The MRA defines community as a group of people bound together through social and political networks that link individuals, community organizations and leaders together. Membership in the community is fluid and changing as individuals react to forces inside and outside the community (for example, changes in the labour market; migration from poverty and or dangerous situations; lack of housing). Nonetheless, there is a sense of shared space and interests, and community members see the value in working together to resolve problems and promote economic, social and cultural growth.

Governance Structure
Principal Investigator John Loxley oversees the entire team of researchers and administrative personal. He also heads the management team and research committee. Our Research Committee (RC) is comprised of academic, community and government representation, each of whom contributes both an extensive collective history of successful project management and genuine collaboration with one another. The RC is responsible for the intellectual direction of the project, and meets monthly. Team members are invited to submit project proposals, with a budget, and committee members vote on whether or not to fund the proposal. Decisions are based on how well the proposal meets our criteria as set out in our proposal guidelines (attached in the supporting documentation). Feedback is often provided to researchers to help them perfect their applications.

Administrative management is supervised by Loxley and the Director of the CCPA MB., MacKinnon. Institutionally, administration responsibility is shared by the CCPA-Mb. the Universities of Winnipeg and Manitoba and the University College of the North. The Research Alliance co-applicants, collaborators, community and student researchers, and partners—meet twice annually to inform planning and share research findings. A full time Project Administrator manages finances, organizes meetings and conferences, supports communication within the RA, and coordinates dissemination of findings. The CCPA-Mb. Director, the Principal Investigator and the Project Administrator form the management team.

Research projects are coordinated through our 4 research streams: Capacity Building, Education and Employment; Housing and Neighbourhood Revitalization; Justice, Safety and Security; and Community Economic Development.

Funding
As well as the SSHRC funding explained in the first section, which provides the MRA with most of its funding, the team also leverages additional funds from other sources. We have successfully received funding from the provincial government (Department of Housing, Green Manitoba and Neighbourhoods Alive!) as well as the United Way of Winnipeg, The Winnipeg
Foundation, Assiniboine Credit Union, Universities of Manitoba and Winnipeg, Spence Neighbourhood Association, West Broadway Development Corporation, and the Community Education Development Association.

The team assesses what its goals are and seeks funding from organizations with similar goals and values. In some cases, such as the United Way and the Province, we request funds from our partners. In the case of SSHRC funding, the team assesses the criteria of its various funding opportunities to determine which one fits our goals.

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives acts as fiscal agent for the MRA. Funding is allocated through the Research Committee of the MRA, whose members evaluate funding proposals based on the criteria set out in our funding guidelines.

**Community-Campus Partnerships**
The MRA acts as a bridge between the community and the academy, maintaining a mutually beneficial relationship between the two. Its strategy is to keep the lines of communication open between academics, community members and our government partners. We facilitate meaningful dialogue that provides academics with valuable research ideas and community members with credible research that they use in their advocacy work.

The three campuses that house our academic partners benefit from having their faculty members engaged in community research and the universities themselves are partners in the MRA. The resources these universities provide (for example, we send project funds to them and they disburse them to academics and students, ensuring that SSHRC regulations are followed) help the research proceed and provide an interface to promote and disseminate the research. Often research results get funneled into university curricula, thereby providing professors with cutting-edge material for their students, many of whom want to get involved with the MRA and apply for student stipends to conduct their own research.

Many students end up doing research in the community and some even end up working there. Once community members see that their experiences and ideas are valued by the academy, they are more willing to collaborate and engage in projects that help researchers understand poverty and social exclusion and how to work for change.

The University of Winnipeg’s Urban and Inner City (UIC) Program is an example of how our strategy of maintaining academic/community relationships delivers concrete results. Dr. Jim Silver of the MRA is the director of this program. It is located off campus in an Inner City setting and provides a welcoming environment for Inner City and Aboriginal students. The program offers courses that are shaped by MRA research. The UIC program is housed next door to one of the MRA partners, Urban Training Circle, and together these two institutions are providing a positive, community-sensitive influence in the Inner City.
Progress
Progress is best assessed through charting what we have learned from working through the three SSHRC grants. Our knowledge grows incrementally; it started with the first grant and grows with every completed project. At the beginning of our first grant, our understanding of poverty and social marginalization was mostly informed by academic theory, but that theory had been developed in other places; it was not necessarily applicable to our local context. At that time, we had some contacts in the Inner City, but we needed to deepen them so we could gather local knowledge and compare it to the theory.

The fact that we now have become part of a network of community organizations is in itself a mark of progress. Being a trusted member of the community has allowed us to gather and interpret on-the-ground information about Winnipeg’s Inner City – without that trust we could never have learned what we have.

The fact that we have successfully landed three SSHRC grants, and that the second and third applications were presented as building on the previous grant, shows that an independent panel of experts believes we are progressing in our understanding of how to transform Inner City and Aboriginal communities.

Outcomes
As a research alliance, we are committed to learning and contributing to knowledge. Accordingly, our most important outcome is the knowledge and understanding we have accumulated over the past decade.

To date we have learnt that many community members’ lives have been constrained by powerful structural forces such as those related to the processes of colonialism. Most did not realize how these structural forces had affected them until coming into association with community-based organizations (CBOs) (MacKinnon & Stephens 2010). We have heard, for instance, how many Aboriginal people internalize the false beliefs created by these structural forces and come to believe that they deserve their fate because of personal failings (Hart 2010). CBOs like our partners OPK and Urban Circle Training Centre offer job-training in a culturally-sensitive environment that helps Aboriginal adults understand the social sources of their personal troubles (Hart, 2010; Silver 2006). This insight has led us to an appreciation of the powerful cultural and psychological consequences of these structural forces, as marginalized people internalize the pain that is a central part of the complex poverty that is the object of our research. Second, we are struck by the inter-generational dynamic of this poverty. Comack et al. (2009) found this in their ongoing work with Aboriginal street gangs; MacKinnon (2011) shows how perceptions about education pass from parent to child. Yet we also found that culturally-sensitive, community-based educational strategies can mediate these negative attitudes, deal with internalized pain and promote personal transformation (Magro &
Ghorayshi 2010). Attention to historical dynamics also includes recognition of the differences between inner-city life in the 1960s and 1970s, and today (Silver 2010).

Our research in non-urban Aboriginal communities reveals two main commonalities. Land issues are still fundamentally important to a community’s wellbeing. Resource issues have a primary importance for communities like Cross Lake, Poplar River and Grand Rapids (Kulchyski 2006). Politically informed resistance to irresponsible resource extraction is often an effective form of CD. Leaders’ agency can motivate young Aboriginal people, produce benefits for the community and promote change.

Finally, we have learnt that there is a close relationship between Winnipeg’s inner city and Manitoba’s North, kept fluid by constant movement between them. Large internal migratory processes in all parts of the world have powerful effects at both ends of the process, as has been well documented. This knowledge informed our decision to reach out to remote Northern communities to understand firsthand what is occurring in these communities.

The MRA uses this knowledge to produce its many research reports and to assess what research follows from it. We also use this knowledge to determine concrete policy prescriptions that we pass on to policy makers. This information is also disseminated to the public, media and the academic community.

Another outcome is how our community-based partners now understand that change comes about through various channels, not just through the programs they deliver on the ground. Our partners now understand the role politics and power play in their lives, and they use MRA research to influence policy makers and educate the broader public.

On the same level, we have noted capacity building with community members who have participated in research projects. Our publication *Is Participation Having an Impact? Measuring progress in Winnipeg’s Inner City through the voices of program participants* by Shauna MacKinnon explains how community participants not only experienced personal growth through their participation in research projects, but were able to design a more meaningful set of measures to track improvement in community members’ lives. The link to this report is: [http://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/participation-having-impact](http://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/participation-having-impact)

We also consider quantifiable outcomes, specifically the number of publications, public engagements, media presentations, videos and conferences attended. A list of important publications and videos is included in our supporting documentation.

Anytime we can claim to have influenced policy we count it as an outcome. A concrete example is when the Province adopted a target of 1500 new social housing units. This goal came directly from CCPA/MRA research. Such concrete policy outcomes are hard won and take time. We continue to push hard on our municipal and provincial governments and the number of politicians who attend our public events (such as our State if the Inner City report launches).
tells us that we are taken seriously. Every meeting we have with the civil service and/or politicians is another outcome.

Finally, the fact that our partnership has grown over the three grants tells is an outcome of our success in maintaining the delicate balance between the needs of our three types of partners and our ability to direct the community’s voice to policy makers and the broader public. It also speaks to the quality of our research. We not only attract academics who wish to work with us, but new community partners such as the International Institute for Sustainable Development and the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. Different levels of government have also reached out to us; specifically the Intergovernmental Strategic Aboriginal Alignment, a tripartite government alliance. We have also been approached by a potential international partner, affiliated with the UN, who wishes to collaborate with us on research around urban transformation, and we are confident that an agreement will be signed in March 2013.

Assessing progress through the above mentioned indicators helps us determine if we are doing the right kind of research and whether or not we are disseminating it efficiently. At our biannual meetings, this sort of information is discussed to see how we can continue working with community partners and increase our profile with policy makers and the public.

**Partnership Equity and Justice**

Our main mechanism for ensuring equity within the partnership is our Research Committee. The Research Committee of is comprised of academics and community and government representatives. Two representatives of partnering Aboriginal community-based organizations, together with a representative of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC), sit on the project’s Research Committee. In addition to representing their organization’s views and interests in the project, the two Inner City members represent the CLOUT partnership, which is comprised of an additional five partnering organizations. AMC is the “political voice of action for First Nations in Manitoba” and represents First Nations communities throughout Manitoba. Having an AMC representative on the Research Committee will ensure that the voices of First Nations from remote and Northern communities will be considered.

Two members of the Research Committee (Fernandez and MacKinnon) represent the host organization, the CCPA Mb., which works closely with community partners to solicit their feedback and input into the research agenda. In addition to holding numerous meetings and consultations with our government partners, the Research Committee has continuous access to government partners via Hajer, who is a member of the Research Committee. Each research stream leader (MacKinnon, Silver, Comack and Loxley) engages closely with partner organizations to ensure their active participation in research project development.

All partners have access to the Project Coordinator (Fernandez) in order to bring forward concerns and/or suggestions. Fernandez is part of the Administrative Team, along with
MacKinnon and Loxley, and is able to share partners’ concerns with the Team members who will then deal with the issue and/or refer it to the Research Committee.

The Research Committee includes representation from our three partner groups: community; government and academic. Major decisions are made by majority vote, with each committee member having one vote.

Success
The MRA’s success is attributable to the willingness of its academic members to move beyond the confines of traditional academic research and include community members as equal partners. Their commitment to community is not just theoretical, it is lived and it is long-term. Community members are willing to collaborate because they see this level of commitment and are willing to “buy in” to the partnership.

Our success is also based on the credibility we have with government. The combination of the trust we have with the community and our credibility with government has allowed us to become a bridge between the community and policy makers.

Lessons Learned
The academic and government partners have learned to listen to our community partners. We now know firsthand that a full understanding of the Inner City and/or First Nations communities cannot be reached without learning from those with lived experience. Many times we’ve learned that we don’t actually know what the problems are, let alone their causes. And the community not only understands the issues on a deeper level, they have viable strategies for dealing with social exclusion. They are not waiting for someone from government or the academy to tell them how to fix their lives; they know how to do that. What they are waiting for are the resources and support so they can start on their journey of healing.

We now know and appreciate the strength and resourcefulness of community members and organizations. Many dedicated people work tirelessly to help community members and we appreciate what a difference they make in individuals’ lives. The Inner City, with all its problems, also holds heroism and hope. The community taught us to build on its strengths, to use an assets-based approach to community development.

We have also learned that we have to be housed in the community where we work so that our community members feel we’re accessible and that they are welcome in our space. We are not strangers who drive in from a distant campus.

We have learned to be patient in terms of our methodology and expectations. There are no quick fixes to poverty and social exclusion and we hope we can walk beside our partners for many years to come. This lesson informed our decision to do the longitudinal research we are embarking on with our latest grant. We now understand the difficulty in conducting this sort of
research with people who live with social exclusion as their difficult circumstances often cause them to live transient, unstable lives.

We have learned how hard our community partners work in the community. They are on the “front line” of the battle against poverty and deal daily with its effects including suicide, crime, homelessness, addictions, family violence and displacement, and youth gangs. Recognition of the trying circumstances they are dealing with has led us to pay those community partners who sit on our Research Committee an annual community stipend of $6,000/year, with a 2% increase each year. These funds help our partners allocate scarce resources within their organizations so that they can free up time to sit on the committee.

Finally we now also appreciate the limits that broader forces place on personal and community transformation. We have found that various state institutions (criminal justice, child welfare, social assistance) have become barriers to further change. This requires deeper analysis. We also now understand how changes in government, which can cause a sudden sea change in policy direction, can have a dramatic effect on people’s lives by destroying (or building) the supports they depend on. Even sympathetic politicians can know what they should do, but often don’t for political reasons, so we can never stop pushing for change, regardless of which party is in power.

Transformation

The very goal of the MRA is transformation on societal, personal, community and institutional levels. Having documented our understanding of what is required at a personal and community level for transformation, we now see the need for institutional transformation. Not until government and its many institutions understand the long road to transformation will the resources required for the community be available. That then is our ultimate goal, as expressed in our main research question presented in our last grant application:

we aim to investigate through time the impact of promising community-based solutions to racialized poverty—such as innovative housing, education, employment and safety strategies, and personal and community healing and empowerment—to determine how they can be expanded and made sustainable at the institutional and policy levels.

Transformation within and by our partnership is best exemplified by Diane Roussin, ED of Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre:

Since becoming involved with the MRA and CCPA Mb., Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata has become more engaged in the research process and, because our voice appears in MRA
publications, we incorporate that research into our advocacy work. This use of research is one more tool we employ as we work to improve the lives of inner-city residents.

As Executive Director of Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata, my work with the MRA has made me more attuned to how research can influence government policy which impacts the services required by our families and children. This lesson has been developing over the course of our collaboration with Community Lead Organizations United Together (CLOUT) and CCPA’s annual State of the Inner City Reports. During our consultations for the seventh report for release in November, 2011, we have decided that the role of government policy will take centre stage. Choosing this focus — rather than only concentrating on forces within the community — clearly shows how I, along with the other members of CLOUT, are purposefully engaging in active research as a means to impact public policy, which is a learning from our close collaboration with the MRA.

As a service organization, the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre’s focus is on providing quality service to the community. We often do not have resources to engage in research or to document the service model from which we work. Being involved in the MRA and CCPA provides us an opportunity to have the model from which we work documented and thereby contribute to a body of knowledge that otherwise would not exist.

Transformation is also exemplified by the how some community members grew through their participation in our research. That experience is documented in our publication Is Participation Having an Impact? The link to this report is: [http://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/participation-having-impact](http://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/participation-having-impact)

We also strive to bring about societal transformation through education and dissemination of our research, so that citizens can make informed decisions about which party they support.

**By what process did you decide to apply for the CCPH Annual Award and draft this application.**

We have had many conversations with our community partners over the past several years regarding how much we have learned about building a meaningful university-community research partnership. Our research committee has discussed ways in which we might share the many lessons that we have learned with others interested in collaborative community-based approaches to research. We decided that applying for the CCPH award would be one way to share our story with others involved in community-university research partnerships.
Section 4: Supporting documentation

4.a: TEMPLATE FOR CONFIRMATION OF PARTNERSHIP: Sent to Research Committee Members

DATE

Name and address of partner

ATTENTION:

Re: Confirmation of Partnership

Dear *

We are pleased to welcome you to the Manitoba Research Alliance and wish to thank you for your Letter of Engagement wherein * confirmed its commitment to the MRA 7-year research project: Partnering for Change: Community-based solutions for Aboriginal and inner-city poverty.

As you will know through your participation in the preparation of the grant proposal, in our 2 previous SSHRC projects we deepened our understanding of this problem through “close-to-the-ground” research, and identified both solutions and limits to transformational change. In this project we aim to investigate through time the impact of promising community-based solutions to racialized poverty—such as innovative housing, education, employment and safety strategies, and personal and community healing and empowerment—to determine how they can be expanded and made sustainable at the institutional and policy levels. This research is important because problems such as labour market disengagement, low levels of educational attainment, inadequate housing and rising levels of violent crime have become entrenched and inter-generational.

You will also know that we have three types of partners: government; community and academic. The MRA’s strength is its ability to bring these three groups together with a common purpose: to improve the lives of those who live in the communities we’re working in. We believe that our partners work well together because of the participatory model we engage in: it allows community to have an equal voice with government officials, who are willing to listen to — and sometimes act upon — the recommendations that come from community members. Our academic members facilitate the dialogue and also document the results for other audiences, whether they be other academics, mainstream media, community members, or the general public.
Our administrative team, consisting of John Loxley (principal investigator); Shauna MacKinnon (Director, CCPA, Mb.) and Lynne Fernandez (project coordinator), will be happy to meet with you at any time throughout the project should you have any questions or concerns you wish to discuss.

As a sitting member of our Research Committee, you will be able to help steer our research agenda and bring forward your organization’s concerns regarding governance. Your organization will received $6,000 year as a Community Stipend, recognizing the time you will be dedicating to the project. This stipend is contingent on your ongoing attendance at meetings; should you be unable to attend meetings, the stipend will be dedicated to research. You will also be able to participate in our regular gatherings and colloquia.

The Research Committee operates on a 1-vote per member system, with the majority vote ruling.

Once again, welcome to our team. We will be in touch in spring 2012 as soon as we receive the competition results from SSHRC.

Yours truly,

John Loxley
Principal Investigator

4.b: TEMPLATE FOR CONFIRMATON OF PARTNERSHIP: Sent to Non-Research Committee members

DATE

Name and address of partner

ATTENTION:

Re: Confirmation of Partnership

Dear *

We are pleased to welcome you to the Manitoba Research Alliance and wish to thank you for your Letter of Engagement wherein * confirmed its commitment to the MRA 7-year research project: Partnering for Change: Community-based solutions for Aboriginal and inner-city poverty.

As you will know through your participation in the preparation of the grant proposal, in our 2 previous SSHRC projects we deepened our understanding of this problem through “close-to-the-
ground” research, and identified both solutions and limits to transformational change. In this project we aim to investigate through time the impact of promising community-based solutions —such as innovative housing, education, employment and safety strategies, and personal and community healing and empowerment—to determine how they can be expanded and made sustainable at the institutional and policy levels. This research is important because problems such as labour market disengagement, low levels of educational attainment, inadequate housing and rising levels of violent crime have become entrenched and inter-generational.

You will also know that we have three types of partners: government; community and academic. The MRA’s strength is its ability to bring these three groups together with a common purpose: to improve the lives of those who live in the communities we’re working in. We believe that our partners work well together because of the participatory model we engage in: it allows community to have an equal voice with government officials, who are willing to listen to — and sometimes act upon — the recommendations that come from community members. Our academic members facilitate the dialogue and also document the results for other audiences, whether they be other academics, mainstream media, community members, or the general public.

Our administrative team, consisting of John Loxley (principal investigator); Shauna MacKinnon (Director, CCPA, Mb.) and Lynne Fernandez (project coordinator), will be happy to meet with you at any time throughout the project should you have any questions or concerns you wish to discuss. We will be holding yearly meetings to which you will be invited and concerns can also be brought forward at that time.

Should you have concerns that require more immediate attention, the administrative-team member will refer them to the Research Committee which includes the four research-stream heads, 4 members from community-based organizations, 1 provincial representative and the three members from the administration team.

Once again, welcome to our team. We will be in touch in spring 2012 as soon as we receive the competition results from SSHRC.

Yours truly,

John Loxley
Principal Investigator
4.c: EXAMPLES OF TWO LETTERS OF ENGAGEMENT RECEIVED FROM PARTNERS (all partners provided us with letters of this type)

Dr. John Loxley  
Manitoba Research Alliance  
c/o Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Mb  
309-323 Portage Ave.  
Winnipeg, MB R3B 2C1

Re: Application for SSHRC Partnership Grant

Dear Dr. Loxley:

I am writing to express Community Education Development Association's support for the Manitoba Research Alliance’s (MRA) proposal, Partnership for Change: Community based solutions for Aboriginal and inner-city poverty. I have reviewed the research proposal and agree in principle with its objectives.

CEDA’s mandate is to strive to meet the educational needs of our community, focusing on advocacy and programming that addresses the inadequacies of the education system in serving the youth of our community. We recognize that these inadequacies exist within a larger context of social and economic inequality as well as both societal and institutionalized racism and we are committed to raising awareness of this context both within and beyond the community we serve.

As a partner our contribution will be the ongoing collaboration with the MRA on any number of projects that emerge over the 7-year period, some of which we will help design. A concrete example is the evaluation project just approved by Pathways to Education Canada. CCPA Mb. will be collaborating with CEDA to evaluate our after school program Pathways to Education which is in its second year of operation.

CEDA works in partnership with Pathways to Education Canada and is the eleventh site which is located in the North End of Winnipeg. Our program offers a comprehensive, community based approach for high school students attending the education high school system. The main goal of this program is to provide youth with the resources and tools to complete high school.
Our Pathways to Education program has a 70% Aboriginal youth participation rate. The program recruits students at the grade 9 level within the catchment area of North Point Douglas, Lord Selkirk and William Whyte communities, all located in Winnipeg’s inner city and North end. Once the students register with the program they will receive the supports needed until they complete high school. CCPA Mb. and CEDA will evaluate and assess the cultural component on the program, and how this component helped the Aboriginal students succeed in the completion of their high school studies. Pathways to Education Canada is funding this project.

The above example demonstrates the degree to which CEDA collaborates with CCPA Mb. and the MRA in carrying out research projects, and our success in working together is reflected in Pathways to Education Canada’s willingness to fund a new evaluation framework for our program.

As co-director of CEDA and a sitting member of the MRA Research Committee, I enable CEDA to help steer the MRA’s research agenda and participate in governance. CEDA also benefits from having access to project results that we can use in our advocacy and public-education work.

Our intention is to continue this level of collaboration and research output so that we can contribute to do research that helps the community we serve (by finding ways to let students finish school, for example) and which educates policy makers about best practices in education and community development.

We also look forward to participating in MRA conferences.

CEDA is a CLOUT member and our in-kind contribution would be providing meeting space, and human resources ranging from $1,000 to $2,000.

Sincerely,

Kathy Mallett
Co-Director
October 19, 2011

Dr. John Loxley
Manitoba Research Alliance
c/o Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Mb.
309-323 Portage Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3B 2C1

Re: Application for SSHRC Partnership Grant

Dear Dr. Loxley,

First off, we hope that we are not too late in applying to be a part of this research. We have reviewed the research proposal and agree in principle with its objectives.

We will make efforts to provide support with the research when and where possible. It must be understood that we are way out there, no hotels, accommodations etc., people sometimes stay at the nursing station or the teacherage or with someone who may take you in for a fee.

We have been subjects of many studies in the past and may well have been a part of your organization, it could be determined if you check through your archives.

We hope that through the research program we will be helped in many areas as we are a struggling band and going through the motions of coming out of our dilemma, but are ill prepared. There is a lot of poverty here, cost of living is very high, it is difficult to make ends meet for many families.

Capacity building (Actual), education and employment are all needed and the young people need to be motivated to move forward despite conditions. Economic Development Support is needed, with proposal writing and support to get initiatives off the ground and rolling.

We have many members living elsewhere that need to be helped as well, and they also need our support, which is at the most of times difficult, we need support there as well.
In our minds, there will never be justice until relocation is dealt with by the Government, there is need for safety and security like anywhere else.

At one time people use to just rest a broom on the door when they were going to be out, so people knew they were away, now, with all the addictions, this is no longer possible, trust is a question, it went when people were relocated, it will require a lot of work to regain this too.

We do need to come up with way to revitalize the community. There needs to be fun activities, sports and areas where children can safely play and be safe without worry. There is very little in the way of recreation, support is needed to access funding and fresh ideas provided on how to set up schedule activities with commitment to carry them through and to maintain a steady schedule throughout a year.

We are sorry for not responding right away and so uncertain whether this will go anywhere but, we hope to hear from you.
We are under Co-Management, and our financial status could be determined via our co-management partner BDO from Winnipeg.

If you require additional information, please feel free to contact me at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Chief Jim Thorassie
4.d: LINK TO MRA WEBSITE: http://www.mra-mb.ca

Once on this website, please click on the REPORTS link at the top right-hand side of the screen. This link will take you to all the on-line publications produced by the MRA throughout the three grants. Publications are organized according to the grant they were produced by.

Because we emphasized the State of the Inner City Report in this application, we draw your attention to the links to that report in the Transforming Inner City and Aboriginal Communities grant, and encourage you to look at some/all of them.

4.e: LIST OF BOOKS PUBLISHED: We also have included below a list of the books produced by the MRA, which are not online and therefore are not included in our website:


4.f: SPECIAL EDITION JOURNAL PRODUCED BY MRA (not on website):


4. g: LIST OF VIDEOS PRODUCED:

In Their Own Voices: Urban Aboriginal Community Development

Together We Have CLOUT
Link to trailer: http://www.policyalternatives.ca/multimedia/together-we-have-clout
This video is posted on the CCPA website. A chapter about CLOUT is found in the 2010 State of the Inner City Report: this video was made to complement the written report.