

YOUNG WOMEN WORK

**Young Women Work:
Community Economic Development Approaches
to Reducing Poverty and Improving Income**

Research by: Molly McCracken, with Kate Dykman, Ivy Lopez and Francine Parent

Zine design and photos by: Alex Stearns, Bethany Zanella, Boeseya Man-VanDyck, Ellen Friesen, and Rain Ackerman

Partners:

Andrews Street Family Centre
Prairie Women's Health Centre of Excellence
SEED Winnipeg Inc.
Wolseley Family Place



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www.pwhce.ca/youngwomenwork.htm or by phoning 204-982-6630.



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YoungWomenWork

Young women work – in their homes, in our community, in schools, and in jobs. Just like generations before them, they are working to improve their lives, and the lives of those around them everyday by doing things like helping a friend, taking care of kids, or finishing their homework.

But young women who do not have a lot of money find that the world they live in does not work for them. Struggling to stay in school, working for low pay, dealing with pregnancy and having trouble finding childcare, young women told us that life can be hard. But young women also told us they want to work to build a better future for themselves, and their community.

We talked to 50 young women in West Broadway and the North End to find out what they thought about their neighborhoods, schools, computers, working, pregnancy, motherhood, and what they hoped for in the future. We did this so we could learn what young women want, and how community groups can help them out.





This zine is written for young women, so that you can read about what the young women we talked to think, and what kinds of things young women want to do in their community to help make a better future. We made this zine so that young women would not feel alone, and know that others share similar experiences.



What do we mean by

poverty, gender, racism?



What is poverty?

Poverty is not having enough money for food, housing or clothing. Poverty limits what people can do with their lives. Poverty means having to choose between paying your rent, bills, groceries, transportation, doing your laundry and buying necessary things. While many people experience poverty, more young women than young men struggle with this every day.



Why are girls and women more likely to live in poverty than boys and men?

- The jobs that young women have often pay less than the ones young men have. For example, guys might work building houses, while young women might work cleaning houses. Building houses pays more than cleaning them.
- If a young woman is a mother, she might have a hard time finding someone to take care of her kids so she can to work for pay. Being a mother is a full time job, but you don't get paid to do it.

Racism: Judging someone by their race, and not giving them a chance. For example, not giving someone a job because of the colour of their skin.

Gender: Things that girls and boys are taught to do differently because they are girls and boys. For example, many girls are only given dolls to play with because girls are expected to take care of babies when they grow up, and boys are only given toys like cars because they are expected to know how to fix and use cars when they grow up.



Gender-equality: Equal rights of girls and boys, women and men. Equality does not mean that girls and boys be the same, but that they will each be given the chance and help to be whatever they want to be. So both guys and girls will be expected to take care of babies, and know how to fix and use cars when they grow up.

What is Community Economic Development? Community Economic Development (CED) is people using what they know to make business and services in a community. CED programs can be made to meet to the needs of people who live in a neighbourhood, and they are run by small organizations in the community.



This is a research project with young women. Research is a way of learning. We asked 50 young women the same set of questions, and then organized what they told us by themes, and wrote it out in a report. We tried to understand what we heard the young women say, and suggest programs and things that could happen to help prevent poverty with young women, and build on the good things they told us.

We asked young women about their cultural backgrounds, if they had a disability, or if they were straight, bi or lesbian. We asked them this because different young women have different needs, depending on their backgrounds. Most (36 young women) of them told us they are Aboriginal. Some of the young women were also visible minorities, immigrants, and had a disability. Most (30) of the young women we spoke to did not have children; four told us that they were pregnant. There were 16 young women who said they were parenting their kids. Eleven of their children were babies, and the average age of the children was two and a half.

What follows are the questions we asked, and what the young women told us.

The subjects in the photographs are not affiliated with the quotes given. The research and the photographs were compiled at different times; there is no connection between the two.

What do you think about your neighbourhood?

What they liked:

There are resources around like the Women's Centre...for women if you have kids and stuff and you can't afford to go to the store.

They have a boxing program and they have a community centre where kids can go and play after school til like 7:00. There's bingo halls, there's stuff to do.

I like the fact that there's a community garden close by...I like the one garden over at Magnus Elias Centre on Furby and Ellice, they have sage for smudging. I'm hoping they grow some more.

It's quiet, there's always somewhere to go around here that's close, like stores and hairdresser, and like places like this to go. I bring her (daughter) here (family centre) like every day. I'm pregnant right now too so...





What they didn't like:

Some young women spoke out strongly about the poverty they see around them and the risks to their own safety.

Slums, slummy, whores, loud, reserve – No, reserves don't have women standing on every corner.

If we go somewhere every car, every guy thinks you're...no matter how you dress or no matter how you look. Even if you're with your kids...no matter how young you are, I mean I was like 12 and I was walking down the street and some guy was honking at me. That's what happens to every young woman nowadays.

I don't like the garbage, I don't like the crime. Last summer... there was a gang fight right in my courtyard with bear mace and knives and guns. Like boy, they ran up once on the stairs, my stairs was the next set of stairs, and my kid was out there, my girlfriend's kid is out there...They're building a bunch of university buildings on the street and stuff so I'm hoping they're cleaning up all those houses those people belong to and shut them down.

Young women in both neighborhoods saw violence around them. Special steps are needed to make safe spaces for young women. Some groups are working to make neighborhoods safer for everyone, but the young women we spoke to said more should be done so that they are safe.

**Do you participate in cultural activities
if the community offers them?**

Learning more about culture is important for many people, and especially Aboriginal people.

Just learning, I just like learning about different things, learning about other cultures and learning more about mine and getting out and meeting new people.

Knowing about your culture and background is important for the health, healing and growth of Aboriginal young women.

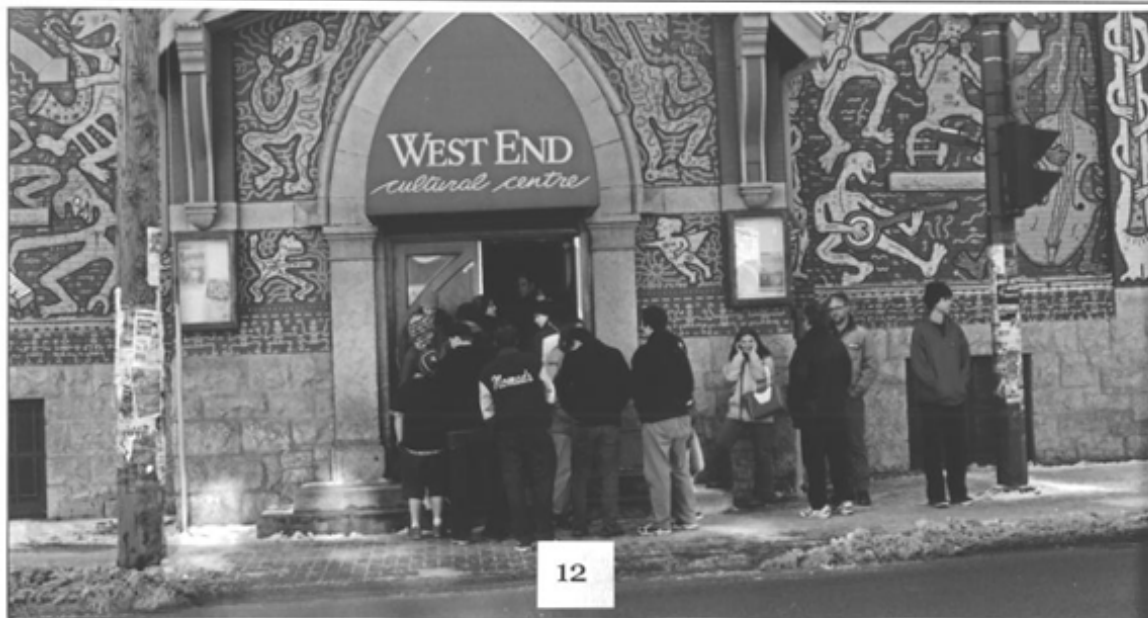
Just being with like my culture is helping, helps me sometimes, helps me get over my problems and stuff.

Some young women did not know where to find cultural activities, which they said were pow wows or traditional dancing. A couple were not interested in participating in cultural activities.





Aboriginal women traditionally were always respected in their communities as leaders and life-givers. Aboriginal women have fought for their rights and the rights of their communities. For example, Sandra Lovelace, a Maliseet woman from the Tobique Reserve in New Brunswick, fought all the way to the Human Rights Committee of the United Nations, so that Native women in Canada would not lose their status under the Indian Act through marriage to a non-Aboriginal man. Now, Aboriginal women have the same rights as Aboriginal men.



Do you work for pay?

Most of the participants said that they did not work for pay. Some worked babysitting or cleaning homes for others. A few had jobs in the Youth Opportunity Project, where they help at community groups twice a week for pay. Two worked at fast food restaurants.

Young women said they wanted to do things to help their community, such as being a Teacher's Aide, taking care of pets, babysitting or childcare, or working in the community centre.

Many had good ideas of things they could do to help them get a job, such as taking a baby-sitting course, talking to family and friends to find a job, writing a resume, volunteering, and filling out applications in the newspaper. However, about half of the young women said they did not know what they could do to help them find a job right now.

This points to the need to teach young women about job searching techniques, and to start thinking about what kind of life they want when they're older.



What kind of work

do you do

that is not paid?

All of the young women we spoke to did some sort of housework. If they were not mothers, many of the young women cared for other people's kids. And if they were mothering kids they worked to take care of them. Several of the young women wanted to take babysitting certificates so they could be paid for caring for other's children. Young women also did unpaid volunteering in community clubs or drop-in centers.

A lot of work that young women do is important, but it is not paid.

What would you say to a friend who is pregnant?

When asked in the interviews what they would say to a friend if she was pregnant, most young women said they would be supportive to her and her needs.

Young women in Winnipeg have a choice to continue with a pregnancy, or to stop the pregnancy and have an abortion. Confidential and respectful counseling is available for free to help young women decide what to do. Young women can go to community clinics, such as the Women's Health Clinic (947-1517) and the Mount Carmel Clinic (582-2311), and can also be referred by a doctor.

It is important that help is available to young women who are pregnant, so that if they decide to stop the pregnancy, they have all the information. If they decide to continue with the pregnancy, then they most likely need help as well.



Being a mother is a big job, so its important young women have information and respectful help to make a decision.

What's it like to be a Mom?



Some young women like being a Mom and having kids:

They're cute! I like I guess I like looking after them because I always...had to look after somebody in my life, my brothers or my cousins you know. I just have to so I guess I'm used to it sort of, and I enjoy it.

When you don't have a lot of money, it can be hard to be a Mom:

A lot of them (young mothers) will end up on social assistance, and they'll never find the time to go back to school. They've just lost out on every opportunity that has just flown right by them because they have a child and now they have to worry about where I'm going to get daycare if I want to go do this, and how much is it going to cost and I'm a fixed income, and well is somebody going to hire me because my kid's going to get sick you know?...Like I'll be 22 before my baby's born and I'm still scared to death of what I'm going to do. When the baby's 6 months old it'll be great, it can go to daycare, but where am I going to send it, where am I going to find a job...am I going to get her packed up, send her off and have to get to work on time and pick her up before her daycare closes?

If mothers had a place where they can bring their children which was a trustworthy place that didn't cost an arm and a leg, I'm sure a lot more mothers would be working rather than sitting on welfare. And then the money that those women would have rather used on welfare...they can put that money to better use. That's the money they can use to run these programs for these women.

It can be hard to participate in things because mothers need childcare.

Yeah 'cause most of the young women in the North End have kids, and maybe that's why they don't want to go to programs...I have kids and I can't go.

One 19-year-old woman explained that she'd always looked up to her older sister who was a single mother with three children because she looked so strong. But when her own daughter was born with a disability, she wished someone had told her how hard it can be to be a mother. She said:

Why have kids...because you're just going to be hurt in the end? What's the point?

Being a young mother can be hard. This young woman told us she wished that someone had talked to her about what it was really like to be a mother. The young women agreed that it would help if someone could come to talk about what it was really like to be a mother.

What do you think about school?

The young women in our study liked teachers they could relate to, in gender, race or age. One young woman explained,

Like I had a teacher who's 23, he's 8 years older than me, he's just so funny. He knows when something's wrong or how to get our class really into the subject to talk

Many of the young women were doing what they could to help them go to school.

I had a boyfriend. Dropped him because he was interfering in my school work.

When we asked young women what they did not like about their schools, several young women said bullying stopped them from going to school:

This year I got into a fight after school, I was walking home and they caught me and then after that I stopped going to school because of that. So I was too scared to go to school.

This is not fair; we need to work so that young women are not too scared to go to school.

Other things that stopped young women from getting to school were costs, like bus passes and lunches. Several young women told us that drugs, like pot, got in the way of them attending or doing well in school. Court dates were mentioned by one young woman as something that stopped her from going to school.

The young women we talked to who were not in school had plans to return to finish high school. One young woman who had dropped out of school herself said that she wanted to start a program that went to people's homes and gave them a ride to school.



Do you use a computer?

Knowing how to use computers is important for getting a job. We also know that boys tend to spend more time on computers, and play more computer games. This gives boys a feeling of being in control over the computer and being good at doing things on a computer.

Young women we spoke to generally used computers for Internet, emailing, MSN messenger and research. Some used word processing programs for school projects, or used computers for playing games. Whether or not they used computers, all the young women agreed that knowing how to use a computer would help them get a job someday. Young women wanted to learn more about how computers work, how to build a computer, how to set up an email account and design a web site.



Have you ever been treated unfairly in a job?

One young woman told us about a job interview:

Lately there's been stuff wrong there; the manager's been yelling at me...I think they're just trying to pick on me, they want me fired or something. For the past couple days I've been thinking of quitting because my mom says that's not acceptable and stuff.

They like me right up to the point that I said I have a kid. Well, all right thank you for your time. And I've never heard from them. But I have all the skills; I have all the qualifications, you know, to do this job. But because I have a baby, they're not going to let me. And I know why, because emergencies - they happen. Yeah, and maybe they want someone without a kid, but what about us people with kids. We're not allowed to work, you want us to sit on a government wage, which is barely nothing to live on. Like, this is not fair, it's not fair.

Young women told us they need help to know their rights, to have help to make sure they are treated with respect.



**What kind of money do you think you'll need to earn
when you're older?**

As much as I can get.

*I don't really care about the
money or anything.*

Because money comes and goes.

• • •

Hopefully \$300 every two weeks.

• • •

\$7.50 an hour.

• • •

*Probably \$6.00 or \$7.00 an hour,
something like that.*

• • •

*I don't know I'd probably want to
make at least \$9.00 or \$10.00
an hour.*



Right now with Social Assistance yearly is like \$10,000 a year. That's crazy...It's not even \$1,000 a month really...so I think I don't know, \$30,000 a year?

• • •

...just enough to live comfortably, you know. To live comfortably and be able to go out every once and a while and watch a movie or something, go to the bar, have some fun, stuff like that. Be able to get internet.

Young women just want to earn enough money to live properly. A job would have to pay a single person \$9.50 an hour, or \$20,000 a year so that you did not live in poverty. You would need to earn more if you were a Mom and taking care of others.

Young women need to earn enough money to live on. So it's important that young women have a chance to get an education, get training, help to stay in school, and help planning for their futures.

What do you want to do when you "grow up"?

The young women had a lot of things they wanted to do. Many wanted to do things that give back to the community and help others, such as social worker, nurse, or community worker. For example, one young woman wanted strongly to encourage other youth because of her experiences growing up:

(I want)... to be a motivational speaker I guess you could say? Because I used to be really bad...I was hating on everybody when I was younger, I did lots of bad things and I got into like running around with a bad crowd and everything, but that changed after I had my kid...I mean like I know a lot of these kids need to know like before they run into trouble and something they need living proof.

These are some of the things young women want to be:



Service

Community Centre Worker
Deaf Translator
Hairdresser
Family Support Worker
Marine Biologist

Own your own business
(restaurant, bar, taxi cabs)
Forensic Scientist
Interior Designer
Botanist
Architect
Actor
Writer

Business / Professional

Work in a business office
Work in government
Lawyer

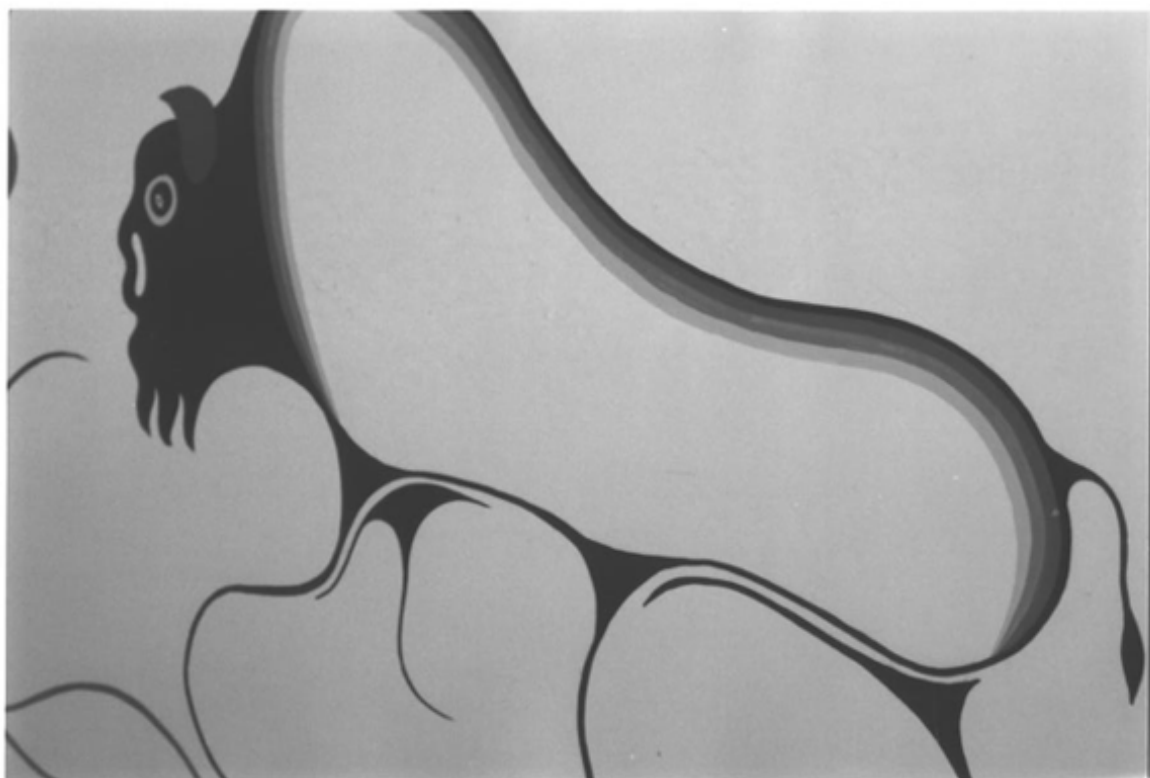
Nurse
Children's Worker
Pediatrician
Veterinarian
Police Officer
Teacher
Probation Officer

**Is there anyone that you look up to like someone you know
or someone famous?**

My aunty, she's a really hard-working woman...she's really motivated to get where she is (What has she taught you?) She taught me how to work hard, go to school, she put me in math class when I was younger, me and my cousin, so that really brought my math up. And she always tells me you have to finish school or else you're never going to get anywhere in the world, and that's the truth.

My dad, that's the only thing I, like, keeps me going (What do you like about him?) He just like, just talks to me lots and shows me that I need school and I want school. (What has he taught you?) Just like he's been going to school his whole life. And he's like so smart he can get a job like so fast and the people that I'm supposed to look up to are just like on welfare and struggling to find their bachelor suite and they're all like messed up in the head and like struggling and my family, that's why I don't live with my mother. It's like family problems. It's just like I never want to turn out like that.

Angela Chalmers (What do you like about her?) I like how she's succeeding and she's Aboriginal. (Has she taught you anything?) Not to give up, to keep going, chasing my dream.





What kinds of programs do you want in your neighbourhood?

I think they need more moms and children's programs like the one downstairs. They do lunch, and they have learning activities. Things about pregnancy and how the child grows and how their brain develops and stuff like that, so interesting...let young women know, like it's important to know that stuff.



...with the Aboriginal dance I think if we could make sort of a parallel group, like I'm willing to teach anybody who wants to learn how to dance pow wow, we can like raise money, we can take girls and go to a pow wow.



Self defence. Exercising and stuff, lots of women are, rather than going and paying them bucks to go and exercise, they'd rather sit there and smoke a rock, because you lose weight that way too, you know?...I know lots of women around here would really enjoy access to a gym or aerobics or even something for them to go and all do, like dream catchers, somewhere where they can go and somebody can watch their kids.



It'd be good if they actually had like a place where if you've been out of school for a while and you can kind of get into it and they don't like pressure you, like give you all the assignments at once...especially for young mothers because they have a lot of stuff, they just have so much to do.

Programs for young women should have:

- Aboriginal cultural teachings
- Safety
- Be young-women only when possible
- childcare, transportation, nutritious food
- Good pay
- No cost
- Learning about money and planning for the future
- Mentorship / role modeling

Young women have many needs:



Food
Clothing
Good housing
Health care
Child care
Jobs
Safety
Fair sharing of the work raising children
Education
Credit and banking freedom
Choice to end a pregnancy, or continue it
Support for being Moms
Freedom from violence and abuse

They want to learn – about their culture, and the cultures of those around them, about computers and about what they can do in the future. They want to talk about what it's like to be a young woman, and learn from others who have been there before.

The young women we talked to are awesome! They had lots of really great ideas for making their lives better. They wanted to give back to their communities and work with other youth, and develop and share their cultures.

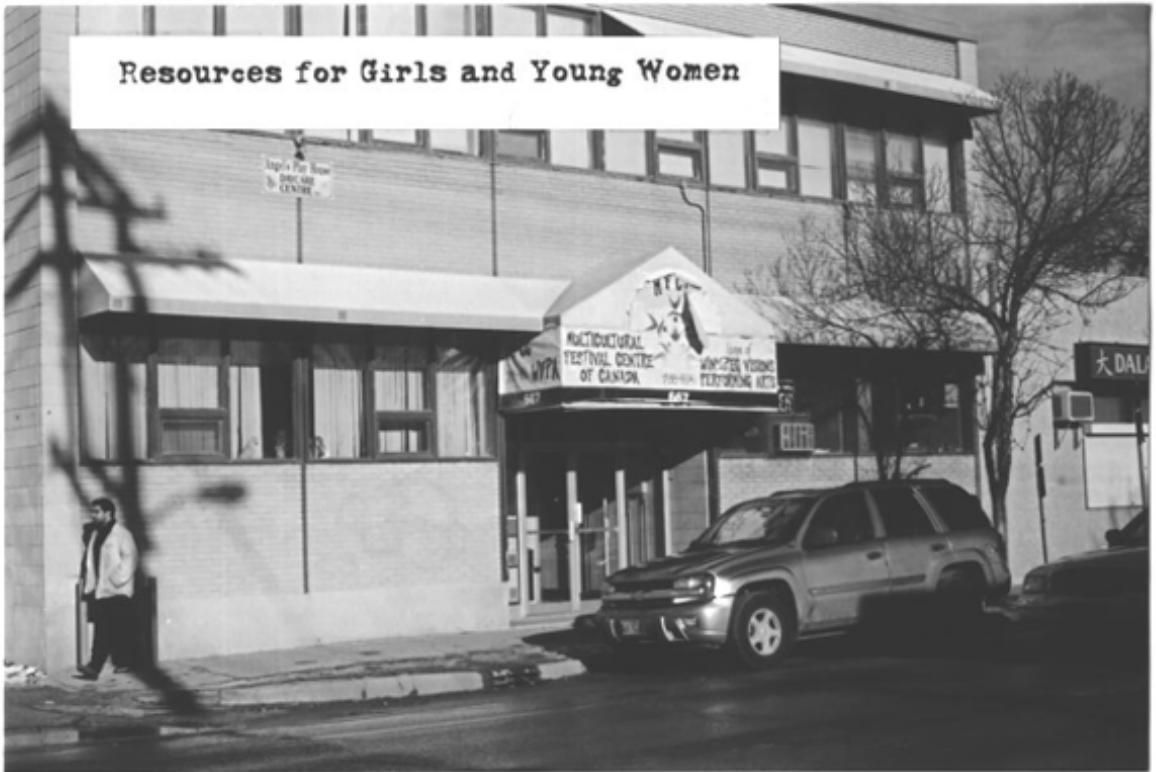
If you're interested in getting involved with other young women, find a youth group, or go to:

andrews street family centre 220 andrews st 589-1721

wolseley family place 691 wolseley ave 788-8052



Resources for Girls and Young Women



Ka Ni Kanichkihk - United against racism 4 - 245 McDermot Ave 953-5821

Youth Centres/Resources

north star girls' club 294-6423 (leave a message)

ma mawi chi itata centre 318 anderson 925-0349
94 mcgregor 925-0300

flora house 739 flora ave 586-5494

ndinawemaaganag endaawaad (our relative's home) - safe house and youth resource centre
472 Selkirk ave 586-2588

youth resource centre/shelter 161 mayfair ave 477-1804

winnipeg cfs resource centre 1386 main st 944-4268

Girl's/Women's Health/Pregnancy and Birth Control Counselling

women's health clinic 3rd floor 419 graham ave 947-1517

mount carmel clinic 886 Main St. 582-2311

Women's Centres

north end women's centre 394 selkirk ave 589-7347

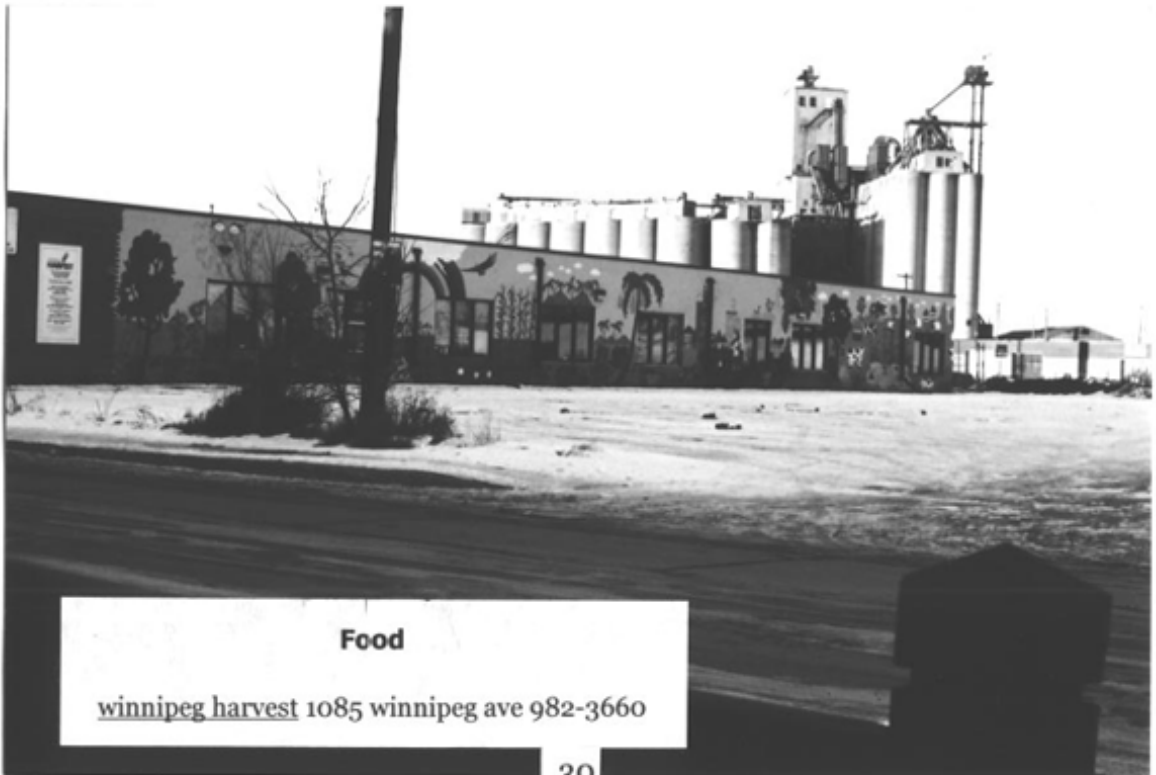
north point douglas women's centre 947-1321

Family Centres

andrews street family centre 220 andrews st 589-1721

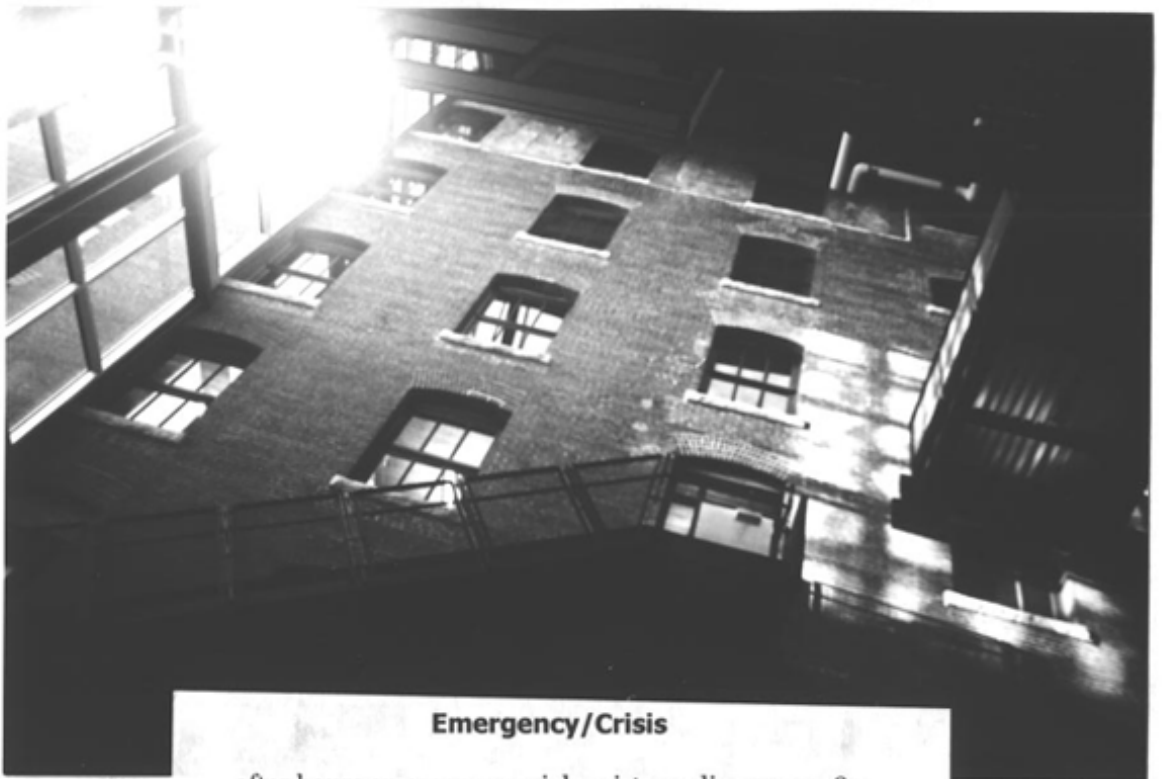
wolseley family place 691 wolseley ave 788-8052

lord selkirk family resource centre 12-254 stella
586-1595 or 586-1588



Food

winnipeg harvest 1085 winnipeg ave 982-3660



Emergency/Crisis

after hours emergency social assistance line 945-0183

clinic crisis line 786-8686

osborne house women's shelter 942-7373 crisis 942-3052

native women's transition centre 105 atkins 989-8240

winnipeg police (non-emergency) 986-6222





*Never doubt that a small group
of thoughtful committed people
can change the world.
Indeed it is the only thing
that ever has.*

-Margaret Mead

Thoughts...



Thoughts...

