EXPLORING INDIGENOUS CONTRIBUTIONS TO (INDIGENIZATION OF) THE CITY OF SASKATOON'S *STRATEGIC PLAN 2012-2022*

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ABSTRACT

Exploring Indigenous Contributions to (Indigenization of) the City of Saskatoon's *Strategic Plan 2012-2022*

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The self-determining autonomy of urban Aboriginal communities in Canada's Prairie Provinces can be strengthened at the local scale through decolonized municipal governance frameworks. The City of Saskatoon's *Strategic Plan 2012-2022* is highlighted to explore two interrelated questions: do Saskatoon's Aboriginal engagement strategies represent a co-produced or indigenized mainstream planning and policy-making process? Does the potential indigenization of municipal planning and policy-making represent a promising pathway to facilitate local decolonization through collaborative municipal-Aboriginal governance in Saskatoon? Results from qualitative interviews reveal that the City of Saskatoon's distinctive Aboriginal engagement strategies were not entirely meaningful for participants, though the planning process included elements that, if expanded upon, could deepen co-production. Indigenization through co-production necessitates a thorough integration of Aboriginal community input at every stage of a planning and policy-making process, shared control and decision-making mechanisms between municipal governments and Aboriginal communities, and ancillary considerations for increased Aboriginal representation and participation in the administrative and political functions of City Hall.

Keywords: self-determination, Aboriginal governance, decolonization, indigenization, policy co-production, municipal planning, strategic planning, urban

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

Many of Canada's major cities exist in areas that were inhabited by Indigenous peoples prior to European contact and colonization. Over time the Crown and subsequent Canadian governments forcibly excluded Aboriginal people from cities through a combination of overt and underhanded actions and policies (Peters and Andersen 2013: 4). In Canada's Prairie cities this occurred despite their locations on traditional First Nations *and* Treaty territories. The exclusion of Aboriginal groups from cities and their dispossession and isolation to rural, often destitute plots of land is reflective of the fact that cities are focal sites for the propagation of the Canadian colonial project (Tomiak 2010: 46). Beyond the leading role that urban centres have played in the production of Canada's liberal-capitalist system, First Nations, Métis and Inuit individuals were conceptually and legally determined by Canada's institutions of power to rescind their Aboriginal statuses, identities, and rights if they chose to live in cities.

Peters and Andersen (2013: 5) contend that "the conceptual and physical removal of Indigenous people from urban spaces that accompanied colonial urbanization reinforced perceptions about the incompatibility of urban and Indigenous identities." Despite Canada's hostile and dichotomous "assimilation or exclusion" policy doctrine toward urban Aboriginal affairs, Canada's large cities, especially in the Prairie Provinces, have experienced a resurgence of Indigenous populations since the 1970s and now contain significant and extremely diverse Aboriginal citizenries. Many urban Aboriginal peoples have reclaimed cities as their traditional territories and have developed contemporary identities and worldviews that blend cultural aspects of indigeneity and urbanism. Many of these people also consider their cities "home" and have uniquely

urban aspirations, yet in the non-Aboriginal public psyche "Indigenous" and "urban" continue to be regarded as separate and/or incompatible identities wherein the former denotes anti-modern, rural, and primitive, while the latter implies modern, metropolitan, and civilized (Wilson and Peters 2005: 398-399). Tomiak (2010: 1) highlights the entrenchment of this dichotomous viewpoint in Canadian institutions of power, aptly observing that "prior to the late 1990s, urban Indigenous communities – as communities – did not exist as far as policy makers were concerned."

Over the last half-century urban Indigenous communities have actively advocated for recognition of their rights to self-determination in Canadian cities. Urban Aboriginal communities have developed a multitude of institutions to express this right, to promote Indigenous interests, and to meet Aboriginal citizens' needs when and where Canadian governments do not (Peters 2007). The collective efforts of these diverse organizations have led some scholars to theorize about urban Indigenous governance or community decision-making apparatuses that embody legitimate Aboriginal "political" representation outside the scope of the Canadian state. Notwithstanding the significant work of grassroots organizations and community leaders, and although some recent literature has effectively challenged popular assumptions of indigeneity as non-urban and anti-modern, urban policy continues to neglect Indigenous perspectives at all levels of the Canadian state. Federal and provincial governments have little in the way of urban Aboriginal policy and habitually deny and/or offload their responsibilities to meet urban Aboriginal needs.

While urban Aboriginal organizations and communities have worked diligently to meet their own needs and represent their own interests, some municipal governments – especially in large Prairie cities – have developed and helped facilitate programs and

services to support Aboriginal communities. Some civic governments have also created Aboriginal-specific policies and cultivated various partnership agreements with Aboriginal organizations and governments. Such actions demonstrate institutional flexibility and responsiveness, while neoliberal processes of state restructuring have implicitly expanded the social roles and responsibilities of municipal governments (Green 2003). These trajectories, which I will describe more thoroughly in the next chapter, suggest that municipal governments are becoming significant actors, and civic governance an important site of inquiry, when considering urban Aboriginal rights to self-determination.

The proliferation of collaborative partnerships between municipal governments and Aboriginal governments, organizations and communities in several Prairie cities has bolstered some aspects of wellbeing; however, urban Aboriginal communities continue to have nominal influence on civic policy. Taking this reality into consideration, this thesis theorizes about the cultivation of collaborative governance relationships between the municipal government of a large Prairie city and its urban Indigenous communities. In the 2006 federal census the city of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, which is located in Treaty Six territory, claimed the second largest self-identified Indigenous population per capita out of all major cities in Canada, accounting for over 21,000 people or roughly nine per cent of its total population (Statistics Canada 2010). This number has very likely grown significantly since 2006. Saskatoon, like other Prairie cities, contains a burgeoning variety of political, service, advocacy, educational, and community organizations that are predominantly staffed by, serve, and represent the city's Aboriginal population. The City of Saskatoon also co-created Canada's first urban reserve with Muskeg Lake Cree Nation

and is regarded amongst Canadian municipalities as a leader in the facilitation of Aboriginal-municipal relations.

In 2009 through 2010 the City of Saskatoon initiated a strategic planning process to guide the city's growth and changing form and two years later the *Strategic Plan 2012-2022* was released to the public. Several other municipal governments throughout Canada have recently embarked on similar processes. Strategic city planning can influence civic configurations, policies, as well as the production of municipal initiatives, services, and programs. As well, planning in Indigenous communities has been associated with the production of culture, space- and place-making, identity building, healing, wellbeing, and is therefore regarded as a significant and potentially transformative practice (see Walker, Jojola and Natcher 2013, Lane and Hibbard 2005).

I posit that collaborative planning and policy-making initiatives between municipal governments and urban Indigenous communities in Canada's Prairie Provinces may potentially foster a degree of urban Aboriginal self-determination. Self-determination cannot be fully expressed in urban Indigenous communities without also decolonizing the Canadian state's institutions of power at every governmental level. Decolonization has several implications that will be considered in the next chapter; however, it should be mentioned that I restrict my examination to the municipal level of governance in this thesis. The findings from this research may have implications for decolonizing processes at other scales of governance in Canada.

This thesis asks and explores two related questions: Does the indigenization or co-production (Walker et al 2011) of a mainstream planning process in a Prairie Canadian city represent a mechanism through which decolonized, collaborative Aboriginal-municipal governance may be cultivated? And how might the municipal government

contribute to facilitating such innovation? I begin with the notion that the self-determination of urban Aboriginal communities can be strengthened at the local scale through decolonized municipal governance arrangements. Findings from related research suggest that any such arrangements should involve distinct strategies and/or mechanisms to ensure Aboriginal perspectives are thoroughly and authentically represented in civic decision-making functions. Although this kind of institutional change could potentially take on many different forms, I argue that the entrenchment of institutional collaboration between a municipal government and Indigenous communities is necessary. More specifically, it seems sensible that any such collaboration should harness existing Indigenous governance apparatuses that have been developed and legitimated by Aboriginal communities themselves.

The City of Saskatoon implemented a comprehensive community consultation program as part of its recent strategic planning process, which included distinct approaches to engage input from Saskatoon's Aboriginal communities. This thesis considers those distinct strategies as a case study to explore possible connections between co-produced or "indigenized" mainstream city planning and policy-making practices and the cultivation of collaborative, decolonized urban governance. Eleven participants who were directly involved in Saskatoon's strategic planning process were interviewed for this research and were asked to share a variety of perspectives about Aboriginal community engagement in this and other municipal functions. Results reveal that although some noteworthy steps were taken to maximize Aboriginal community participation, some of which suggest a durable foundation for collaboration and institutional interfacing (Walker 2008b), the City of Saskatoon's distinct strategies for Aboriginal engagement were not

entirely meaningful for Indigenous contributors. In short, indigenization or co-production did not occur.

While municipal employees and elected officials generally emphasized their commitments to Aboriginal inclusion and equity in City Hall as well as their facilitative roles in Aboriginal community development, several participants suggested that the indigenization of City Hall must be deepened in multiple areas for a collaborative planning process to be wholly meaningful. Aboriginal participants also asserted that they want to be empowered to contribute more thoroughly and effectively to municipal functions, including the City's strategic planning processes. Shared power and decision-making are central to these findings and also represent the common viewpoint that Indigenous communities should control aspects of their own planning processes within *and* alongside mainstream ones. This research finds that the indigenization of mainstream municipal planning might contribute to collaborative governance between City Hall and urban Aboriginal communities if those communities were diversely and equitably represented in municipal functions generally. To enrich Aboriginal representation in civic affairs entails specific, alternative mechanisms, devised by and with Indigenous community leaders and experts, to entrench meaningful channels for multi-layered Aboriginal community input.

This thesis is comprised of six parts: Chapter Two provides a comprehensive but not exhaustive review of the literature most pertinent to the research questions. Chapter Three explores methodological considerations and outlines the research methods employed throughout this project. Chapter Four begins to analyze interview results and attempts to form a general conception of the City of Saskatoon's existing strategies, mechanisms, and commitments toward Aboriginal community engagement. Chapter Five

investigates the City's planning process and participants' perceptions of Aboriginal contributions to, and implications of, the strategies utilized. Chapter Six considers future prospects for deeper collaborative governance arrangements and more intricately explores the role that indigenized mainstream planning can potentially have in the cultivation of decolonized urban governance. Finally, Chapter Seven connects the research with the literature and offers concluding thoughts about the significance and applicability of this research.

CHAPTER 2 – DEEPENING THE SCALAR GAZE: AN URBAN ABORIGINAL LITERATURE REVIEW

This review will thematically outline the seminal literature most relevant to my exploration of existing and potential mechanisms through which prairie Canadian city governments – particularly the City of Saskatoon – might 'indigenize' their mainstream planning and policy-making practices. This inquiry also asks if indigenizing such municipal functions is a viable pathway through which collaborative municipal-Aboriginal governance may be cultivated. Although the research topic is fairly specific, it necessarily includes contested ideas about Aboriginal self-determination within a restrictive federal-constitutional Canadian political milieu; the urbanization of Aboriginal peoples and the implications for self-determination and self-government paradigms; 'governance' as an alternative 'model'[1] to self-government in Canada's urban settings; and collaborative municipal planning and policy-making with urban Aboriginal communities.

Much of the existing literature that explores the connotations and implications of Aboriginal rights to self-determination in Canada has collectively theorized about Aboriginal self-government within Canadian federalism, through a particular focus on rural Aboriginal populations and land-based reserve communities. This is perhaps not surprising since contemporary Aboriginal self-government arrangements have generally been tied to land claims and modern treaty negotiations that incorporate specific areas of autonomy for existing Aboriginal governments. Research into possible pathways for Aboriginal self-determination in urban contexts are fewer and tend to highlight the

[1] 'Model' does not denote a specific form or structure, as in the objective-scientific sense. Here, 'model' represents a conglomeration of interconnected ideas that may materialize in and through a multitude of possible forms. Such ideas, however, have common normative foundations.

structures and functions of constitutionally recognized Canadian governments, their jurisdictional quandaries at the local level, and their relationships with existing Aboriginal governments in Canadian cities. This broad area of scholarship lacks direct, empirical inquiries into the structural and functional changes that Canadian municipal governments have (or have not) employed toward the cultivation of collaborative governance apparatuses with Aboriginal governments and organizations, described elsewhere by Walker (2008b) as municipal-Aboriginal "interfaces". The literature also neglects possible connections between Aboriginal self-determination and the meaningful incorporation of Aboriginal perspectives in mainstream municipal governance, specifically in planning and policy-making functions. Throughout the trajectory of this literature review I gradually narrow the conceptual gaze and primarily focus on scholarship produced over the last two decades. I thematically examine discourse that is most pertinent to Canada's contemporary political climate and locate areas in which this thesis contributes to the existing literature.

2.1 Aboriginal self-determination and self-government in Canada

The political movement for recognition of Aboriginal peoples' distinct rights has proliferated in Canada since the early 1970s following the federal government's failed 1969 *Statement on Indian Policy*. Popularized as the *White Paper*, this policy proposal was an attempt to integrate Aboriginal peoples into a burgeoning liberal-democratic Canadian society through the elimination of "Indian status" embodied in the federal *Indian Act* (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development 1969). The *White Paper* policy initiative resulted in widespread affirmations of distinct and inherent Aboriginal rights from various Aboriginal grassroots and political leaders across the country (see

Cardinal 1969, Indian Chiefs of Alberta 1970) and evoked significant criticism for its unilateral design, its disregard for established treaties, and its proposed rejection of Aboriginal autonomy and cultural difference. These reactions collectively galvanized Aboriginal communities and laid the foundations for a broader discussion about Aboriginal rights in Canada.

A central facet of Aboriginal rights discourse in Canada since 1969 is that Aboriginal peoples have never relinquished their self-determining autonomy and have actively pursued harmonious relationships with Canadian governments in order to express this right. I employ the principle of self-determination as a normative foundation throughout this thesis, yet it has historically proven to be a somewhat contentious concept through which to frame Aboriginal rights in Canadian government institutions and, to a far lesser extent, in academic scholarship (for example see Flanagan 2000). It thus becomes necessary to explore how the meaning, connotations, and implications of Aboriginal self-determination have been conceptualized in the literature.

A useful starting point is the entrenchment of Aboriginal rights in Canadian Confederation through Section 35(1) of Canada's *Constitution Act, 1982,* which states "the existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed" (Department of Justice, 1982). Section 35's vague wording established an empty "judicial box" that was meant to be filled over time with legal precedents that would ultimately shape the scope of Aboriginal legal rights within Canadian Confederation (Belanger 2011: 138). The open-ended affirmation of Aboriginal and treaty rights in the *Constitution Act, 1982* has shaped a contentious political climate in Canada and continues to inform conceptions of Aboriginal self-determination and consequently self-government in the literature. Sakej Henderson

(2008: 20) argues that the constitutional protection of Aboriginal and treaty rights guarantees Aboriginal political autonomy through treaty federalism, which he describes as "the attempt to conciliate pre-existing Aboriginal sovereignty with assumed Crown sovereignty that established an innovative transnational covenant that conversed both" through "the context, spirit, and intent of the more than 400 treaties." In other words, Aboriginal peoples have legal rights, entrenched in the Canadian Constitution, to autonomously control their own affairs within Canada but *alongside* or *equal to* Canadian state sovereignty. Despite Canada's constitutional protection of self-determining autonomy for Aboriginal peoples, consecutive Canadian governments have claimed unilateral authority over Aboriginal affairs and continue to develop colonial-minded and paternalistic policies to control this population (Maaka and Fleras 2008). This reality indicates a systemic conviction that Aboriginal rights are subject to absolute Canadian state sovereignty.

Many scholars and Aboriginal leaders have challenged the federal government's self-declared authority over Aboriginal affairs not only through the assertion that Aboriginal and treaty rights are protected in the Canadian Constitution, but that they are also legitimated through the doctrine of original occupancy and are therefore inherent (see Henderson 2002). Henderson (2002: 417) contends that Section 35(1) of the Constitution "affirm(s) the right to *sui generis* orders and kinship bonds, treaty federalism and its shared subjecthood, and the ability of these rights and powers to converge with older colonial powers in dynamic modern reconciliations to create a postcolonial society." Henderson's view relates to a broad conception of self-determination upon which I develop in this thesis: that Aboriginal peoples retain innate rights to freely define for themselves how to subsist, create life-meaning as individuals and communities, and

govern their affairs according to culturally appropriate ways of knowing (Alfred 1999) within the modern state of Canada and as active partners in Confederation (Green 2003, Murphy 2003). While Aboriginal peoples have always maintained their right to autonomously express self-determination, "self-government" has more recently become the primary political vehicle through which Aboriginal rights are conferred by scholars and Aboriginal political leaders alike (see Belanger and Newhouse 2004, 2008). Self-determination and self-government have often been discussed interchangeably in the literature but it is important to distinguish between these two paradigms, especially as they relate to urban Aboriginal peoples, which will be discussed later.

In their extensive analysis of literature produced primarily by Indigenous authors in the post-*White Paper* era, Belanger and Newhouse (2004: 134) describe self-determination and self-government as distinct but converging movements that have both "been based upon a foundation of Aboriginal knowledge as Aboriginal peoples have increasingly argued for cultural survival and the development of political relationships with Canada that are based upon Aboriginal political ideas." They describe self-government as a "political ideal" through which Aboriginal-state relations constructively embrace Aboriginal peoples' perspectives and their inherent right to self-determination. Whereas self-determination might be considered the broad and timeless right of Aboriginal peoples generally to decide for themselves how to live good lives, self-government is perhaps more narrowly defined as Aboriginal control over Aboriginal affairs relative to the contemporary functions and structures of the Canadian state. In this regard, self-government may be conceptualized as the modern political embodiment of self-determination in relation to Canadian governments, territories, and state institutions.

Little Bear, Boldt and Long (1984: xvi) similarly postulate that self-government is akin to self-determination but while self-determination represents the timeless freedom to decide collectively how to achieve a good society based on holistic philosophical considerations, contemporary self-government is contextually dependent on political and jurisdictional power sharing arrangements with the Canadian state. Access to and title over land, economic self-sufficiency, and autonomy to develop and control specific policy areas are central to this view of self-government. In this sense the reality of the existence of the Canadian state influences and in many ways limits possibilities for Aboriginal peoples to fully practice self-determination.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) constitutes a significant attempt by the federal government of Canada to reconcile Aboriginal self-determining autonomy with Canadian state sovereignty. RCAP's (1996) Final Report advances ideas for a renewed federal relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the Canadian state through three broad models for self-government:

1) Nation Government: Aboriginal people with a strong sense of shared identity and an exclusive territorial base will probably opt for the 'nation' model of self-government. Inside their boundaries, nation governments would exercise a wide range of powers and authority. They might choose to incorporate elements of traditional governance. They could choose a loose federation among regions or communities, or a more centralized form of government. They will need to find ways of representing the interests of non-Aboriginal residents in decision making.

2) Public Government: In some regions, Aboriginal people are the majority in territory they share with non-Aboriginal people - for example, in the more northerly parts of the country. Existing agreements (such as the Nunavut Agreement) signal that Aboriginal nations in that situation will probably opt for the 'public' model of self-government. In this model, all residents participate equally in the functions of government, regardless of their heritage. Structures and processes of government would likely be similar to those of other Canadian governments – but with adaptations to reflect Aboriginal traditions and protect Aboriginal cultures.

3) Community of Interest Government: In urban centres, Aboriginal people from many nations form a minority of the population. They are not 'nations' in the way we define it, but they want a measure of self-government nevertheless - especially in relation to education, health care, economic development, and protection of their cultures. Urban Aboriginal governments could operate effectively within municipal boundaries, with voluntary membership and powers delegated from Aboriginal nation governments and/or provincial governments.

Particularly relevant to this thesis is RCAP's "community of interest" framework, which offers a noteworthy albeit limited perspective on self-government in urban areas. While this conceptualization acknowledges the diversity of urban Aboriginal populations and emphasizes the need for governance arrangements to account for such difference, RCAP suggests that Aboriginal communities may only gain "a measure of self-government" through undefined urban Aboriginal governments whose minimal powers could be delegated from higher levels of government. The community of interest paradigm also neglects to address the existing authority of municipal governments in urban jurisdictions and therefore implies that Canadian governments, aside from the potential devolution of authority in some areas, need not adapt nor create new space for the entrenchment of Aboriginal self-determination in Canadian cities.

I would argue that urban Aboriginal self-government, as it is outlined in RCAP's community of interest paradigm, does not adequately represent self-determination for urban Aboriginal citizens. Its recommendations are based on the assumed permanence of Canadian federalism in its existing forms and also on the assumption that Aboriginal self-government must reflect this form of federalism in order to function effectively within the Canadian system. RCAP's proposal assumes that any "community of interest" self-government arrangement can effectively function within this largely unchanged structure and while this may be true to some extent, the principle of self-determination demands

that Aboriginal communities, even in complex urban milieus, have a meaningful say in the constitution of *all* public institutions and affairs that effect their everyday lives, including those of Canadian governments at every level.

Urban Aboriginal communities could potentially opt for multiple or multi-scale governance arrangements that concurrently take over from, and/or share powers with, municipal, provincial/territorial, and federal governments at the local level (Tomiak 2011). The focus of this thesis, which will be further elucidated throughout this chapter, explores possibilities for collaborative governance frameworks between large municipal governments and Aboriginal governments, organizations, and community leaders and experts. The idea of sharing governance authority and responsibility in urban environments is especially potent when one considers that many urban Aboriginal citizens are neglected in federal and provincial policy due to their multifarious connections or lack thereof to rural or land-based "nations" and the jurisdictional gridlock that Canadian federalism incubates in cities. RCAP's overall self-government framework has been scrutinized for its narrow reliance on "nation" as the principal scale for self-determination (Cairns 2000, Andersen and Denis 2003), which neglects possibilities for multiple scales of autonomy and Aboriginal ideas of citizenship; it promotes an "all or nothing" judicial approach to incorporating Aboriginal self-government into Canadian federalism through constitutional means (Frideres 2008: 138); and it tends to emphasize the need for urban Aboriginal self-government as merely a response to socioeconomic marginalization and cultural decay rather than proactive consideration of Indigenous agency and the principle of self-determination (Newhouse 2003).

Despite its shortcomings, RCAP has influenced contemporary claims that to cultivate a political environment capable of supporting effective and harmonious

Aboriginal self-government requires that the authority and jurisdictional rigidity of the Canadian state must be scaled back and its institutions restructured (Maaka and Fleras 2000, Cairns 2000, Green 2005). Much of the academic literature in the post-constitutional era, including RCAP, has tended to conceptualize Aboriginal rights to self-determination through judicial-centred perspectives that ponder potential constitutional pathways or spaces within existing federal structures that could embrace aspects of self-government for Aboriginal communities (Belanger and Newhouse 2004: 131-132). I do not contest that a federal-constitutional gaze is necessary when conceptualizing Aboriginal rights in Canadian Confederation, but this lens, on its own, is intrinsically limited. Alan Cairns (2005) suggests that there is an over-reliance on the courts' interpretation of the Constitution's minimally defined clauses as the major arbiter of Aboriginal rights in Canada. Belanger and Newhouse (2004: 132) contend that literature which focuses on the "high politics" of constitutional federalism generally neglects to explore the governance models and mechanisms that will need to account for the vast social, cultural, and geographical diversity of Canada's Aboriginal population. Furthermore, conceptual frameworks for Aboriginal self-government are restricted by a common proclivity to speculate only about land-based, rural, and often reserve-centred Aboriginal communities (for examples see Belanger 2008).

The majority of academic literature theorizes about Aboriginal self-government at the nation-state scale while merely skimming over possibilities for local urban Aboriginal communities to express self-determination. Michael Murphy (2003: 8) aptly calls for a "relational understanding of Aboriginal self-determination" and contends that any research into the high politics of federalism must "be supplemented by research into the actors, institutions, and policy developments that are closer to the level of implementation

and day-to-day-functioning of Aboriginal-state relations in Canada." Cairns (2005) similarly prescribes that judicial interpretations of constitutional Aboriginal rights should not be eliminated, but that the top-down federal-judicial gaze should be supplemented by active, creative, and grassroots efforts to work out the everyday mechanisms of Aboriginal self-government as informed by local Aboriginal communities.

Maaka and Fleras (2008) convey doubt that Canadian state sovereignty can be scaled back enough to allow for significant Aboriginal self-government arrangements due to the supremacy of state-determining autonomy in the international system. They propose a "counter-hegemonic" perspective that emphasizes "relations repair" through the meaningful incorporation of Aboriginal perspectives into existing Canadian state institutions (72-73). This contentious view represents a significant departure from the dominant self-government paradigm, suggesting that collective expressions of self-determination need not be restricted to new forms of Aboriginal governments working within existing government frameworks. It rather implies that self-determination can potentially find expression through mainstream governments if their structures and functions actively and meaningfully change to incorporate Aboriginal people and their ideas about governance. Important to note here is that Maaka and Fleras' perspectives open up new space to theorize about the self-determination of Aboriginal people living in Canada's urban environments. Indeed, the day-to-day functions and mechanisms of Aboriginal-state relations within existing institutions are ever more pertinent in Canada's major cities due to the increasing urbanization of Aboriginal people.

2.2 Urbanization and "urbanism" of Aboriginal peoples: unique implications for self-determination and self-government paradigms

Since the 1970s Canada's major cities, especially those in the Prairie Provinces, have witnessed a surge in migration of Aboriginal people from rural areas, as well as increased self-declaration of Aboriginal identities by many urban residents. Well over half of the country's Aboriginal inhabitants now reside in urban centres (Statistics Canada 2008). They form heterogeneous communities that navigate, participate in, and attach meaning to these locales in diverse and complex ways (Proulx 2003, Lobo 2001, Peters 2010). Many Aboriginal people in Canadian cities have retained strong ties to rural and/or reserve communities, they've maintained connections to the land in their cultural worldviews, and many have developed unique identities that blend aspects of indigeneity with the realities of contemporary urban life (Wilson and Peters 2005). These growing and diverse groups have profound implications for Aboriginal-state relations and also for self-determination and self-government paradigms.

Common notions of land and nationhood in Aboriginal rights paradigms are complicated by the urbanization of Aboriginal people. While many indigenist authors have articulated that a connection with land is important for spiritual wellbeing and strong cultural identities (see Alfred 1999, Chamberlin 2003, Borrows 2002) and for fostering economic self-sufficiency (Barron and Garcea 1999), existing self-government models that emphasize collective title over territory as a prerequisite for expressing self-determination are problematic in urban settings. Many Aboriginal residents lack legal or operative connections to land; however, as Wilson and Peters' (2005) research with urban Anishinabek communities in Ontario cities demonstrates, urban Aboriginal residents have developed ways to maintain personal connections to land by recreating ceremonial

practices in urban centres and by challenging colonial spatial boundaries through active mobility between reserves, other rural areas, and cities. If we regard legal land title as a normative underpinning for self-government, the self-determining autonomy of many non-status Indian, Inuit and Métis individuals and communities in Canada's major cities will remain compromised (Christie 2003).

Janique Dubois (2011: 8) argues that we must necessarily look "beyond territory" when conceptualizing Aboriginal rights to self-determination. She views autonomy beyond political "interests and boundaries" and contends that "territory, although important to enhance the self-sufficiency of Aboriginal groups, is not and should not be conceived of as a precondition for self-government, self-determination or nationhood." Michael Gertler (1999) explores the difficult relationship between commercial or economic development on urban reserves and broader community development for the entire Aboriginal population in a city. He similarly contends that a sole "focus on land-based forms of organization… might be a step away from a form of organization that would foster broad movement towards self-governance for a larger portion of the urban Aboriginal population" (277). This is not to say that parcels of land cannot or should not be pursued by Aboriginal communities for economic and/or self-government purposes; indeed they should where possible. These standpoints, which I share, rather imply that self-determination should not be restricted to those with legal ties to, or those living within, territorial bases.

Aboriginal populations in Canadian cities also confront the nation model of self-government that is developed in RCAP and pursued by many Aboriginal political leaders. As was noted above, urban Aboriginal populations relate to notions of citizenship and nationhood in varied ways. It has been argued elsewhere that the nationhood self-

government lens has been developed primarily by elites with particular motives (Belanger and Newhouse 2008) and theoretical conceptions of self-determining autonomy that continue to be largely informed by a shortsighted reliance on existing colonial configurations of Aboriginal communities, represented most notably through the *Indian Act* reserve system (Andersen and Denis 2011). The self-determination of urban Aboriginal residents who do not identify with state-recognized First Nations or national Aboriginal organizations that advocate for Aboriginal rights at the federal level is subsequently neglected in this paradigm. Although a nation-state scope is useful to frame the restructuring of colonial institutions and power relations at the central governmental scale in Canada, opportunities for local, multiple, and Indigenous scales of self-determination are negated if our conceptual outlook is restricted to this norm.[2]

Aboriginal rights paradigms must also take into account that while Aboriginal people in urban settings may or may not identify with Aboriginal "nations" or existing governments, they are also members of Canadian society and have individual protections under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Belanger (2011) argues that reconciling these individual and collective rights and aspirations in Canadian cities will be complicated by Canada's acceptance of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). UNDRIP contradictorily affirms that Indigenous individuals may freely determine their own political memberships and that Aboriginal groups also retain collective rights to develop culturally appropriate governance models. Belanger suggests that this may create a situation in which an urban Aboriginal individual chooses his or her own political affiliations but is denied membership because he or she does not meet the

[2] By "Indigenous scales" I mean forms of governance that are informed and/or developed by Indigenous peoples, not simply those that comprise the Canadian state and/or exist within the existing federal framework.

organization's self-determined membership requirements. In this sense, UNDRIP's conflicting statements could foster a political environment that is even more exclusionary for some urban Aboriginal people.

Belanger (2011) also asserts that recent Supreme Court of Canada rulings, especially *Canada v. Misquadis*, implicitly recognize urban Aboriginal communities as politically analogous to rural First Nations and therefore have the same constitutional rights to self-government. At a time when First Nations with reserve territories are actively attempting to exert their reach into urban settings through urban reserves, commercial land acquisitions, and tribal councils (see Barron and Garcea 1999, Peters 2007), the legal recognition of urban Aboriginal populations as distinct political communities pervaded with contradictory individual and collective rights is bound to create competition (or cooperation) between Aboriginal community groups, service and advocacy organizations, and governments that all claim to represent urban Aboriginal populations. Perhaps, then, there is a role for Canadian governments to play in mediating or providing resources to help navigate and disentangle such disputes as they arise. Of course, urban Aboriginal communities must expressly request the involvement of Canadian governments to help resolve urban Indigenous governance disputes. Unilaterally imposed state involvement would almost certainly be viewed as colonial interference, otherwise. While urban Aboriginal communities should strive to resolve any contradictions internally, Canadian governments should be willing and ready to assist such negotiations if it is requested of them.

Andersen and Denis (2011) assert that Canada's preferred framework for negotiating Aboriginal self-government arrangements, which generally upholds the nation model with land tenure at its core, has historically marginalized urban Aboriginal

communities. They express that Canada has almost exclusively negotiated with Aboriginal "bands" with defined territories and in turn has rejected urban Aboriginal populations as political communities with distinct group rights. This has resulted in the political exclusion of urban Aboriginal communities from dominant self-government dialogues in Canada. Urban Aboriginal communities are not only excluded from self-government negotiations, but they also face government neglect on multiple policy levels (Andersen and Denis 2011). Belanger (2011: 141) has argued that the federal government's historical policy model of unilateral control over Aboriginal affairs has effectively established urban Aboriginal citizens as "individuals who have abdicated their Indian status and, as a consequence, any and all claims to Aboriginal rights."

Others have echoed this view and have demonstrated that systemic socio-economic barriers continue to exist for urban Aboriginal people due to policy vacuums and jurisdictional mazes that arise when federal governments, which narrowly envisage Aboriginal rights as legal obligations to rural First Nations and reserve communities, and provincial governments, which have jurisdictional authority over health care, education and other social services, both deny responsibilities toward, or unilaterally decide policy directives for, urban Aboriginal citizens (Hanselmann and Gibbins 2003, Green and Peach 2007). Stokes, Peach and Blake (2004) argue that serious barriers exist for urban Aboriginal people to access services and programs due to Canada's jurisdictional ambivalence for Aboriginal populations in cities.

Amongst urban populations in Canada, Aboriginal groups consistently score the lowest on socio-economic measures of wellbeing (Walker, in Peters 2005). In his study of Aboriginal persons' experiences in Vancouver, Cardinal (2006) demonstrates that Aboriginal residents experience a lower quality of life than other subpopulations

according to a model of urban sustainability that utilizes indicators based on the Medicine Wheel as an analytic model. Evelyn Peters (2010) contends that these types of experiences are due in part to urban Aboriginal people lacking political representation in mainstream governments and, as a result, having little to no voice in public policy-making processes. Although it is necessary to discuss systemic marginalization when contextualizing the demographics and policy needs of urban Aboriginal people, Peters (2010) also asserts that there is a common tendency among scholars and governments to prescribe and develop urban Aboriginal programs that respond narrowly to perceived socio-economic deficits. More attention, Peters argues, must be given to the vast potential benefits of Aboriginal inclusion in public policy-making practices.

David Newhouse (2011) puts forth a similar notion that the historical literature on urban Aboriginal populations emphasizes what they lack rather than what they offer or aspire for. In response to this emphasis on urban Aboriginal "lack," some scholars have shifted discussion from the urbanization of Aboriginal people to Aboriginal "urbanism" (see Newhouse et al 2012, Walker and Belanger 2013). Aboriginal urbanism recognizes that many urban Aboriginal residents consider their cities home and they also retain unique ambitions to achieve good lives that are rooted in modernity and indigeneity (Walker and Belanger 2013, Environics Institute 2010). A focal shift from the urbanization of Aboriginal people to Aboriginal urbanism offers us a lens through which we may think constructively about the holistic application of Indigenous agency in urban governance *in addition to* specific strategies to alleviate the destructive impact that colonialism has waged on urban Aboriginal communities.

Contemporary literature regarding the urbanism of Aboriginal people confronts the (in)actions of Canadian governments as well as many assumptions and conceptual

limitations of existing self-government and self-determination paradigms. The authors I reference in this section reject that "urban" and "Indigenous" are contradictory identities and that Aboriginal people somehow lose their cultural connections and subsequent rights when they reside in cities; they explore the significant multicultural diversity that urban Aboriginal communities embody, which complicates existing models for self-government in major cities; and they challenge limited conceptualizations of Aboriginal self-determination as self-government frameworks that are informed by colonial social configurations and negotiated through the top-down, high politics of constitutional federalism. The sheer diversity of identities, variety of political affiliations, and disparate connections to government-recognized Aboriginal "nations" among urban Aboriginal populations highlights the need for locally appropriate governance frameworks to ensure that meaningful expressions of Aboriginal self-determination can exist in Canada's major cities.

2.3 Collaborative "governance" in Canadian Prairie cities

To theorize about Aboriginal self-determination in Canadian cities requires the consideration of political, economic, and social realities of local urban contexts. Since the 1980s many of Canada's federal and provincial governments have adhered to annual fiscal regimes that prioritize budget deficit reduction through a significant retrenchment of the state from the public provision of social welfare (Abele and Graham 2011). This trend is attributable to the proliferation of neoliberal policy mentalities. In academic discourse neoliberalism has been associated with a minimalist state and emphasizes the centrality of markets in determining states' economic organization, generally achieved through deregulation and privatization (Larner 2000). Wendy Larner (2000) asserts that

while neoliberalism connotes less "government," it potentially also means more "governance." Less government refers to the processes of state restructuring that have undercut or dismantled public welfare provisions, while more governance denotes the coercive arm of the state which increasingly "encourage(s) both institutions and individuals to conform to the norms of the market" (12).

The shift from government to governance, under the auspices of neoliberalism and through the structural dismantling of Canada's Keynesian welfare state,[3] has led to a situation in which federal governments have scaled back or offloaded responsibilities for social welfare to smaller scales of government (provincial, municipal) without also transferring the required resources, funding, and long-term stability that is necessary to meet citizens' burgeoning needs and demands (Green 2003). Neoliberal mentalities that emphasize individual self-sufficiency and competitiveness have also led to the "responsibilization" of increasingly isolated individuals and fragmented communities (Tomiak 2011). As a result of state retrenchment and the social conditioning that has stemmed from various policies and popular neoliberal discourses in government and the media, citizens are gradually accepting and indeed developing non-governmental and private sector approaches to addressing social welfare needs (Phillips and Levasseur 2004).

It has been argued elsewhere that neoliberal state restructuring in Canada has threatened to "recolonize" Aboriginal people through contradictory processes of social welfare retrenchment and the rise of strict accountability and regulatory regimes for

[3] The Keynesian approach to economics is predicated on intervention by the state in national economic management. The Keynesian Welfare State is such that the state provides its citizenry with inclusive social supports when the country's economy is struggling. For more about Canada's shift from Keynesian welfarism to neoliberalism, see Larner (2000) and McBride (2005).

voluntary and private (non-profit) sector organizations (Green 2003). Urban Aboriginal communities, wherein various service needs are significant, have been forced to take on social welfare responsibilities without the necessary resources, operational consistency, or transfer of control from Canadian governments. This has hampered many organizations' abilities to work effectively and autonomously. Green duly argues that constricting the regulation of state resources and support for urban Aboriginal organizations to market demands should be considered a form of neo-colonialism; however, Abele (2004) suggests that neoliberal processes have also opened up institutional and jurisdictional space, particularly at the municipal level, due to governments' growing reliance on private and voluntary sectors to meet communities' needs. Municipal governments have been particularly compelled to utilize extra-governmental partnerships and organizational networks to address citizens' needs, which may be a promising development for urban Aboriginal communities wanting to express self-determination.

Since over half of Canada's Aboriginal population resides in urban centres, the combined flexibility of local governments and the responsibilization of urban communities may offer potential opportunities for the consolidation of Aboriginal forms of governance. The paradigm of Aboriginal governance is less informed by jurisdictional boundaries than that of self-government and holistically includes "institutions, services and political arrangements dedicated to meeting and representing the needs and interests of the urban Aboriginal population" (Graham and Plumptre 1999: 378). To envisage self-determination in Canada's urban centres through Aboriginal governance as opposed to the more restrictive model of Aboriginal self-government is to explore the roles and relationships of myriad actors and institutions that collectively represent, are informed by, provide services for, and are staffed by Aboriginal people in city milieus (Hanselmann

2003, Walker 2006). Aboriginal governance is framed here as cooperative conglomerations of various actors that not only address the socioeconomic marginalization of urban Aboriginal people, but also foster outlets for political expression and representation.

Urban Aboriginal "governance" is utilized by Christie (2003) as a theoretical apparatus that challenges dominant individualist, market-centred conceptions of Aboriginal rights that have become entrenched in the public psyche via neoliberal discourses. Aboriginal governance looks beyond the individual, the state, and strict legal (federal-constitutional) conceptions of self-determination by emphasizing collaborative actions and networks among local communities and institutions (Graham and Plumptre 1999, Todd 2003). While group *rights* are central to arguments for Aboriginal self-determination based on original occupancy, continuity of political autonomy, and the existence of distinct worldviews, Christie (2003: 105) argues that urban Aboriginal communities "would likely be primarily concerned not with the rights of the individual but with the responsibilities and obligations of the community to its members." The Aboriginal governance paradigm explicitly challenges neoliberal ideologies and restructuring processes by underlining group rights, by striving to reconcile individual rights discourse with that of mutual responsibility, by challenging the centrality of markets with emphases on community health, wellbeing, and identity-building, and by generally aiming to obtain more control from the state in multiple sectors.

The reality remains that Aboriginal people have not achieved entirely meaningful political representation or culturally appropriate governance arrangements in Canada's major cities. As well, urban Aboriginal self-determination is restricted to and narrowly expressed through the often-fragmented work of voluntary and private sector

organizations such as Friendship Centres, individual First Nations and Métis political offices extended into urban settings (perhaps through urban reserves or Métis locals), and separate political organizations such as Tribal Councils (Peters 2010). My intention is not to discount the work that these organizations and institutions have done; indeed, many such organizations have been central to Aboriginal cultural survival and rejuvenation in urban centres (Newhouse 2011, Ouart et al 2013, Silver 2006). My intent is rather to frame the current limitations of this reality in relation to Canada's current neoliberal context in order to generally highlight "governance" as a potentially viable apparatus through which space for Aboriginal self-determination may be cultivated.

Joyce Green (2005: 344) suggests that a ground-up, inductive, and local approach to governance must involve an effective "indigenization" of the Canadian state through which Indigenous worldviews and ways of knowing are provided institutional space to flourish in mainstream politics. The necessary challenge in urban settings is then for Aboriginal communities to collectively devise culturally meaningful ways of governing that address the internal complexities of urban Aboriginal populations while informing, working in collaboration with, and being accepted within mainstream Canadian governments at the local level. But what does this mean for municipal governments?

Caroline Andrews' (2003) conceptualization of "progressive politics" in urban settings is useful here. Andrews contends that municipal governments in Canada have the ability to foster governance frameworks that include the voices and perspectives of local voluntary and non-profit social justice organizations in the development of civic policies. She argues that despite the imposition of fiscal restraints on cities in an increasingly austere neoliberal economic context, the institutional simplicity and flexibility of municipal governments allows cities to most efficiently engage with the progressive

politics of social justice in order to cultivate stronger equity among urban residents. In Andrews' words, municipal governance is "a terrain where conflict about knowledge and the 'knowers' can be more easily engaged and where technical expertise and technical experts can be challenged. It is not the only scale of politics where this can be done, but it is an arena where lived experience can make an important claim to be listened to" (313). Andrews' emphasis on "knowers" speaks to the significant impact that experiential, grassroots knowledge can have on communities when channeled effectively. This mantra, which may provide a foundation for urban governance frameworks that cultivate meaningful civic participation through the progressive politics of social justice, has important implications for Aboriginal self-determination in Canada's major cities.

Though there is a lack of consensus among Canadian Aboriginal groups about what constitutes sound or good governance, there is generally agreement among Aboriginal leaders and academics over "the need for Aboriginal groups to develop their own definition of good governance through a judicious blending of traditional and contemporary norms" (Plumptre and Graham 1999, 13). Walker (2008a) demonstrates the real success that this combination can have through his analysis of the Urban Native Housing Programme – a largely Aboriginal-controlled initiative that focused on culturally appropriate housing distribution in Winnipeg. Though Walker labels this project a "muted victory" due to the federal government's lack of long-term commitment as a governance partner, it substantively demonstrated better outcomes for its Aboriginal clients than any other non-profit or private organizations doing similar work (192). Walker concludes that "in order for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal society to engage with each other constructively and tackle the common systemic problem of inadequate state

investment in social housing, Aboriginal self-determination will need to be accepted in mainstream discourse at the local level (as well as in federal policy)" (200).

Urban Aboriginal governance offers an exciting conceptual idea from which to theorize about self-determination in Canada's major urban centres and especially those in the Prairie Provinces (Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba). All major cities in Canada's Prairie Provinces have large Aboriginal populations and also contain numerous and diverse organizations that have representative legitimacy over Aboriginal communities' particular needs and aspirations. At the same time, municipal governments have the potential to stimulate the development of collaborative governance frameworks with urban Aboriginal organizations due to their unique institutional characteristics. The authors covered in this section have argued and demonstrated that space for Aboriginal self-determination can and should be cultivated through partnerships between municipal governments and the Aboriginal organizations that already represent their communities' interests. Such formations should utilize grassroots knowledge by including myriad Aboriginal experts and leaders, and must also involve the "indigenization" or meaningful incorporation of Aboriginal perspectives in municipal government *in addition* to the creation of new, Aboriginal-controlled governance mechanisms.

2.4 Municipal planning and policy-making with urban Aboriginal communities

Many Aboriginal organizations and governments have taken on social responsibilities from federal and provincial governments and are actively working, sometimes in partnership, to improve the wellbeing of urban Aboriginal people through extra-governmental processes of community development (Silver 2006). Despite the grassroots mobilization of Aboriginal communities to develop their own support systems,

Aboriginal perspectives remain marginalized in public policy-making spheres (Green and Peach 2007). How, then, might we specifically conceptualize collaborative urban governance frameworks that take into account the diversity, rights, and political aspirations of Aboriginal communities, the existence and legitimacy of knowledgeable Aboriginal experts, leaders and organizations, and the jurisdictional realities and complexities of Aboriginal-state relations in urban centres? What normative concepts might we use to explore such possibilities?

Christopher Leo (2006) puts forward "deep federalism" as a conceptual apparatus to explore local governance processes beyond structural hierarchies and among governmental *and* non-state actors (Walker, Moore and Linklater 2011). Walker et al (2011: 162) aptly quote Leo's perspective in order to frame a much-needed conception of Aboriginal self-determination in the production of urban governance:

> If we challenge ourselves to think in terms of unbundled sovereignty, and to emphasize process over hierarchy in our understanding of governance, our concept of community must extend beyond metropolitan areas and cities to neighbourhoods and other communities, defined according to the boundaries these communities implicitly draw by the way they understand themselves, not according to anybody's preconceived notion of how governance ought to look (Leo, 2006: 493).

I utilize Leo's notion of deep federalism and its emphasis on unbundled sovereignty but suggest that governance processes and institutional structures (hierarchies) are mutually dependent and must be explored and theorized about concurrently. Framing governance as process is useful because it invites us to consider multifarious policy-making relationships among Aboriginal organizations, communities, and mainstream governments.

Municipal governments are becoming increasingly important actors in intergovernmental policy relationships and are also having to take on social

responsibilities due to deepening neoliberal processes. Andrews (2003) suggests that municipal governments could work collaboratively with Aboriginal organizations to build partnership networks that not only address some of the disruptive social effects of colonialism and neoliberalization, but also bring perspectives on urban Aboriginal self-determination into the mainstream political spotlight. Walker (2008b) asserts that improving municipal interfaces with Aboriginal institutions can lead to robust possibilities for consolidating Aboriginal self-determination in urban centres. He suggests that although municipal governments are constrained financially and lack legislative authority, they have room to be proactive, constructive, responsive, and creative in developing relationships with Aboriginal organizations.

Aboriginal inclusion in intergovernmental policy-making and programming relationships has been suggested as a means to foster jurisdictional cooperation to meet the needs of Aboriginal communities in Canada's urban centres (Murphy 2003, Hanselmann and Gibbins 2005). Though multi-jurisdictional cooperation is absolutely necessary in urban settings, intergovernmentalism does not appear to account for Aboriginal self-determination in the sense that Aboriginal organizations would only have a "voice" at governance tables rather than control or authentically share control over the tables themselves. Frances Abele (2007) explores possibilities for the contemporary inclusion of traditional Indigenous knowledge in Canadian public policy. Although she recognizes that "traditional" is a contentions term imbued with multiple connotations, Abele identifies a general but significant plausibility: that "Indigenous people might bring fresh insight and energy to policy development, not only by adding specialized knowledge to the discussion, but also by changing the institutions and the practices through which policy is developed" (247).

Chris Andersen (2009) posits that "Indigenous" and "Western" forms of knowledge are not immutable; in actuality they have historically influenced one another. He also contends that in the production of knowledge, Indigenous communities should be regarded for their "density" as well as their difference. Density implies that Aboriginal people not only have distinct knowledge about indigeneity, but they also retain knowledge about whiteness, colonialism, and Canada that non-Aboriginal folks do not share. Although Andersen is specifically referring to the role(s) of Native Studies departments in Western or "whitestream"[4] academic institutions, his notion of Indigenous density is also useful when considering other structures of power in mainstream society. Indeed, Aboriginal experts who can tap in to the density of knowledge that Andersen describes have much to offer mainstream governments. The knowledge and perspectives of Aboriginal people who reside in cities is influenced as much by the urban milieu as their non-Aboriginal counterparts and thus common ground is always feasible. Furthermore, participation in whitestream institutions might offer Aboriginal experts unique opportunities to reflect upon their own indigeneity and the ways in which existing power structures influence and shape urban Aboriginal communities (Andersen 2009).

Andersen's position is particularly significant to this discussion when considering specific functions of collaborative Aboriginal-municipal governance frameworks and the development of urban policy. Walker et al (2011) advance the concept of co-production as a compulsory foundation to good Aboriginal policy in urban settings. Their idea of policy co-production maintains that any policy or programming directive geared toward

[4] The idea of "whitestream" institutions was adapted from the feminist notion of "malestream" by Claude Denis (1996). Denis asserts that "Canadian society, while principally structured on the basis of the European, 'white', experience, is far from being simply 'white' in socio-demographic, economic, and cultural terms" (13). The whitestream concept can be applied to all institutions of power in Canada and certainly those that comprise the Canadian state.

an urban Aboriginal population must include the meaningful involvement of Aboriginal communities and their organizations, leaders, and experts (163). Co-production goes beyond consultation or the mere inclusion of Aboriginal "voices" at intergovernmental tables, as recommended by Hanselmann and Gibbins (2003, 2005), and prescribes the meaningful inclusion of Aboriginal knowledge and perspectives at every stage of policy-making processes. Policy co-production utilizes the normative principle of self-determination to emphasize that urban Aboriginal communities can and should be empowered to decide for themselves what they need and how to achieve it outside of the scope of existing governmental jurisdictions (Walker et al 2011: 164).

Co-production is specifically defined as "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" (Belanger and Walker 2009: 120). I, too, employ the concept of policy co-production throughout this thesis, but my inquiry differs from Walker et al's in a small but significant way. Whereas they theorize about co-production in the development of Aboriginal-specific policies in Winnipeg, I utilize this concept to explore the potential co-production of *mainstream* policy-making processes in Saskatoon. Although I agree that Aboriginal-specific policies are necessary to combat the negative intergenerational effects of colonialism and political and economic marginalization, I contend that Aboriginal self-determination cannot be fully expressed until the functions and structures of state institutions, including municipal governments, are effectively decolonized.

Decolonization, according to Green (2003: 53), "requires the inclusion of colonized peoples in institutions of power, the design of which in politically significant ways reflects the priorities and cultural assumptions of the colonized as well as the

colonizer." John Borrows (2002) similarly prescribes decolonization through Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal interdependence in structures of power, such that Aboriginal communities attain varying degrees of control over both Aboriginal and Canadian affairs. Julie-Ann Tomiak (2011: 46) acknowledges that prominent indigenist decolonization literature has largely neglected to theorize about "the specific nature of liberation from colonial domination in urban settings." She lucidly argues that Canadian cities are intricately connected to provincial and federal scales of government and, as such, have always been central locations for the consolidation and expansion of the "colonial-capitalist system" that has worked to "displace and dispossess" Aboriginal peoples (46).

Marcus Lane and Michael Hibbard (2005: 182) argue for transformative planning "as a means to transform the institutional bases of Indigenous subordination in postsettler states." Transformative planning constitutes a possible pathway toward decolonization through shared jurisdiction *and* mainstream acceptance of Aboriginal communities' knowledge about their oppression and how to dismantle it. While Lane and Hibbard speak somewhat generally about transformative planning by Aboriginal communities in predominantly rural settings, Walker (2008b: 23) applies their perspectives to urban settings wherein "oppression…in the case of the municipal-Aboriginal urban interface is the type that is more difficult to identify and understand than overt forms of racism and discrimination." He suggests that in light of this struggle, and also due to a lack of Aboriginal planning practitioners, "transformative planning in the urban context will need to occur mostly by non-Aboriginal planners *with* Aboriginal community members" (Walker 2008b: 23).

The general objective of this thesis research is to theorize about urban decolonization through the indigenization of municipal governance in Canada's large

Prairie cities. Decolonization specifically refers to the dismantling and/or reconstitution of colonial power structures through the meaningful participation of Aboriginal communities in such apparatuses. "Meaningful" implies that Aboriginal participation in local governance must realistically represent a significant degree of self-determining autonomy for a city's Aboriginal communities. Although the implementation of decolonizing processes is ultimately necessary for all scales and structures of power in Canada (Tomiak 2011), municipal governments are gaining prominence and influence in an increasingly neoliberalized society as they take on more social responsibilities from other orders of government. As was also mentioned previously, city governments in Canada remain relatively small, flexible, and responsive enough to experiment with theoretical and innovative mechanisms that might cultivate greater Aboriginal participation in, influence on, and control over local governance. The actions of municipal governments can potentially inform and influence the actions of other scales of government in Canada.

The expansion of collaborative municipal-Aboriginal governance frameworks or "interfaces" (Walker 2008b) in Canada's urban municipalities has been developed in the literature as a promising conduit for local decolonization. I contend that this idea of collaborative governance may be explored through specific processes of mainstream planning and policy co-production (in addition Aboriginal-specific policy-making practices). It is useful to think of the co-production of mainstream planning and policy-making practices as the "indigenization" of such functions since co-production involves the authentic and comprehensive participation and influence of Indigenous communities. The City of Saskatoon's engagement of Aboriginal community input toward its *Strategic Plan 2012-2022* offers a governance process through which to explore various

implications of "indigenizing" municipal planning and policy-making frameworks. Not only should strategic planning be considered an initial stage in the creation of public policy, but its transformative potential through meaningful collaboration also positions Saskatoon's Strategic Plan as an ample case study through which to explore the conceptual framework that I have developed in this literature review.

CHAPTER 3 – SHARING MEANING THROUGH LIVED EXPERIENCE: THE CASE FOR QUALITATIVE, PHENOMENOLOGICAL LIFE-WORLD INTERVIEWING

The primary emphasis of this research is to explore possibilities for, and implications of, the indigenization of the City of Saskatoon's planning and policy-making practices. The particular strategic planning process that Saskatoon recently developed provides an opportune case study through which to hypothesize about the indigenization of mainstream municipal functions as a strategy to foster decolonized, collaborative governance in a large Canadian city. This inquiry necessarily involves the consideration of many interrelated viewpoints since municipal planning and policy-making practices are facets of local governance generally and do not exist in isolation from other government functions. Furthermore, as was discussed in Chapter 2, prospects for collaborative governance are partially contingent upon existing interorganizational relationships and institutional interfaces. To explore various implications of, and connections between, the indigenization of planning and policy-making practices and collaborative municipal-Aboriginal urban governance, I sought first-hand perspectives of individuals who were not only involved in Saskatoon's strategic planning process, but are also key actors in existing municipal-Aboriginal relationships and cooperative partnerships. In this chapter I describe the methods utilized in this research and some pertinent methodological considerations that have been established in the literature. Qualitative and Indigenous philosophies are particularly relevant to this discussion.

3.1 Methodological considerations

There is significant need for qualitative research in areas of scholarly inquiry that involve Indigenous peoples in urban environments. According to Joseph Ponterotto

(2005: 128), "qualitative methods refer to a broad class of empirical procedures designed to describe and interpret the experiences of research participants in a context-specific setting." My research question involves the interpretation of subjective and experiential viewpoints related to individuals' knowledge of, and involvement with, the City of Saskatoon's strategic planning process. It also relatedly entails more general perspectives about Aboriginal political representation and participation in municipal governance and the City's interorganizational relationships with local Aboriginal institutions. A qualitative methodology seemed suitable for these objectives.

Qualitative research is not a homogenous enterprise, however, and several research paradigms exist within its scope. My inquiry does not lend itself well to research that strives to uncover universal scientific truths, or those of a positivist or "realist" perspective (Rolfe 2004); nor does it diametrically oppose realism in the way that Powers and Knapp view idealist (interpretivist) or constructivist theories through which knowledge of the world is completely and psychologically fabricated within each person's mind. Though I am interested in individuals' "lived experiences" – a common facet of constructivism-interpretivism – I adhere to Dilthey in assuming that these experiences occur within a historical social reality (Ponterotto 2005). In the case of Indigenous peoples in Canada, that social reality, generally speaking, is colonialism.

Colonialism in Canada can be understood as those aspects of social, political and economic systems that are imbued with myriad intersecting and oppressive structures and functions, power relations, and hierarchies that have existed in variable forms since European settlers colonized this land and its Indigenous inhabitants (for numerous examples and perspectives, see Cannon and Sunseri 2011). Because colonial ideologies and systems continue to privilege dominant groups and marginalize others in Canadian

institutions of power, it is necessary to begin with the assumption that all participants' experiences occur within the social reality of colonialism. One element of my research aims to confront colonialism in a specific municipal political context as a site of inquiry in which multiple, distinct worldviews interact. In this sense, the qualitative aspect of this research may be approached through a critical-ideological paradigm in which I attempt to "disrupt and challenge the status quo," or the hegemony of dominant worldviews in a diverse political milieu (Ponterotto 2005: 129).

Not only do I hope to challenge the status quo, but also to ideally contribute to the creation of more inclusive, just, and ultimately decolonized urban environments in Canada. As Ponterotto (2005: 130) asserts, "equally central to critical theory is the emphasis on dialectical interaction leading to emancipation (from oppression) and a more egalitarian and democratic social order." Though I am attempting to confront systemic oppression to some extent, the idea of helping to emancipate oppressed others seems somewhat presumptuous and paternalistic. Aboriginal peoples have actively challenged their oppression in creative and effective ways and have also proactively forged means to live good lives and maintain strong cultural identities within colonial contexts. As a non-Aboriginal researcher my objective is less about emancipation as it is about decolonization through the reconciliation of Indigenous worldviews with Canadian state institutions. Decolonization, to me, implies the emancipation of both colonized *and colonizers* from inequitable and ultimately de-humanizing systems of power and control.

At the outset of developing this research project it became apparent that I must engage with the perspectives of City of Saskatoon employees and elected officials, as well as a variety of individuals with Aboriginal ancestries and cultural identities. I required that Aboriginal individuals included in the study had to have been involved with

Saskatoon's strategic planning process and be, or have been, employees or leaders of Aboriginal organizations in the city. My objective was to document and compare multiple perspectives about local Aboriginal self-determination, institutional collaboration, and meaningful political representation and participation in the governance of Saskatoon. An appropriate form of qualitative research to carry out this task initially appeared to be participatory action research/learning (PAR) since I have an overarching objective to contribute to social and organization change (Mordock and Krasny 2001). PAR is a theoretically viable research method for the nature of this topic because of its inclusion of myriad ways of knowing (Reason 2006), its aim toward facilitating change (Mordock and Krasny 2001), its focus on collaborative inquiry and learning (Wicks and Reason 2009), and its seemingly creative and flexible parameters.

For an M.A. thesis in which financial and time constraints are prevalent, however, PAR was an unrealistic option due to the immense degree of planning, commitment of participants, and sheer amounts of data that would need to be managed. PAR also seemed overly ambitious for the academic and professional scope of an M.A. thesis project, as it undoubtedly requires much research experience and confidence to organize something so formidable. Under these circumstances, qualitative interviewing, as a form of inquiry that explores the experiences and perspectives of individual participants, was deemed an alternatively viable option for this project. But even within the qualitative research paradigm there are several methods that are plausible for this investigation. Some less time- and experience-demanding forms of qualitative inquiry include focus group interviews, survey questionnaires, and several forms of one-on-one interviews.

Focus Group interviews are semi-guided, collective conversations that generally consist of the researcher, who acts as a moderator, and six to ten participants, where "the

prime concern is to encourage a variety of viewpoints on the topic in focus for the group" (Kvale and Brinkman 2009: 150). Focus groups are certainly useful for qualitative research in which experiential perspectives are needed. Group interview settings can trigger emotionally expressive dialogue that is rich in meaning; however, the trajectory of conversation in focus group research is decided more so by participants than the moderator, which is not conducive to research that explores very specific or niche ideas. Furthermore, in a relatively small urban setting like Saskatoon, group interviews carry the very real risk of participants knowing and/or working with one another. Participants might therefore actively resist giving personal perspectives or run the risk of damaging relationships outside of the research.

Survey questionnaires can be useful research tools to ensure anonymity and also to gain potentially detailed, thoughtful responses to very specific questions. Conversely, participants may be less willing to dedicate time to responding at length to questions on paper, thereby garnering inconsistent data. As well, questionnaires leave no space for reflexivity or follow-up questions, which are useful to gain deeper meaning from a participant's response. A reasonable balance between focus group interviews and questionnaires was deemed necessary for this research. While one-on-one interviews were most generally promising to gain meaningful perspectives, several forms of this kind of inquiry exist, each one particularly relevant to the overall goals of the research. For example, Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) prescribe factual, conceptual, narrative, discursive, and computer assisted interviews as variable forms for qualitative research. In the end, a qualitative interview approach grounded in the phenomenological research paradigm seemed favourable. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009: 26) describe phenomenology as "an interest in understanding social phenomena from the actors' own perspectives and

describing the world as experienced by the subjects, with the assumption that the important reality is what people perceive it to be."

This approach seemed elemental to understanding several different individuals' experiences with municipal governance practices and their related perceptions of Aboriginal self-determination, meaningful civic participation, and political representation in a particular urban setting. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009: 27) explain how a phenomenological interview method works in practice:

> A semi-structured life world interview attempts to understand themes of the lived everyday world from the subjects' own perspectives. This kind of interview seeks to obtain descriptions of the interviewees' lived world with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena. It comes close to an everyday conversation, but as a professional interview it has a purpose and involves a specific approach and technique; it is semi-structured – it is neither an open everyday conversation nor a closed questionnaire. It is conducted according to an interview guide that focuses on certain themes and that may include suggested questions. The interview is usually transcribed, and the written text and sound recording together constitute the materials for the subsequent analysis of meaning.

Some key components of the phenomenological interviewing perspective and method that I felt would coincide with my research intentions include the fostering of descriptiveness in participants' answers; the open-endedness, flexibility and ambiguity of the conversation itself as a way to form and grasp meaning; and the ultimate goal of an interpersonal experience that is mutually positive and beneficial for myself and the participants.

Furthermore, semi-structured interviews provide an oral component through which participants may offer knowledge cultivated through lived experiences and be able to tell their stories of those experiences. Stories are important to all epistemological traditions but are fundamentally significant in Indigenous thought and research methodologies (Chamberlin 2003, Kovach 2010, King 2003). This research also

effectively aligns with Indigenous methodologies that explore notions of "representation as a political concept and representation as a form of voice and expression" (Smith 2012: 151). As was mentioned earlier, I consider the experiences of all interview participants to have been shaped in various ways by colonialism. Smith (2012: 151-152) describes how colonialism has generally impacted Indigenous communities:

> In the political sense colonialism specifically excluded indigenous peoples from any form of decision making. States and governments have long made decisions hostile to the interests of indigenous communities, justifying these by offering the paternalistic view that indigenous peoples were like children who needed others to protect them and decide what was in their best interests.

This project aims to combat the continued negative effects of Canada's colonial history and contribute to decolonized power relations and systems of governance by exploring mechanisms that might account for meaningful Aboriginal representation in mainstream governance processes at the local municipal level. It also theorizes about possibilities for what Smith (2012: 157) calls "democratizing in Indigenous terms" through which "Indigenous nations and communities… develop twenty-first-century governance approaches that are embedded in an Indigenous value system and (are) geared to meet contemporary social challenges with the best minds and skillsets of the community."

3.2 Research methods

For this research I carried out 11 phenomenological, qualitative interviews over the months of December 2012 to April 2013. I initially intended to conduct roughly 14 interviews, however, difficulty in finding relevant and willing participants, coupled with a general consistency in key findings from the first ten or so interviews led to the decision that 11 participants would suffice for this research. Participants were categorized into two groups from the outset – a method that reflects the nature of my research question.

Six participants are employees or elected officials who currently work for the City of Saskatoon and were, in varying ways, responsible for the strategic planning process. The other group was comprised of five individuals; one from an Aboriginal service delivery agency, two from non-profit community organizations, and two from local and regional First Nation and Métis governments who also participated in the strategic planning process. Not only are the perspectives of these Aboriginal informants important because of their direct involvement in the planning process, but they may also be regarded as a loose representation of existing Aboriginal governance in Saskatoon through their organizations' service delivery, political advocacy, and representative legitimacy.

It must be noted here that I do not consider this group homogenously "Aboriginal" and would not want to misrepresent common findings from this group as solely "Aboriginal" perspectives, nor do I consider City of Saskatoon employees and officials as a uniform group. Each participant is molded by a lifetime of unique experiences and, because of this, each has a distinct and diverse identity. That being said, analyzing and presenting participants' perspectives as a conversation between two groups is simply an effective way to theorize about collaborative municipal-Aboriginal governance. All interviews were conducted in person and ranged from 33 minutes to two and a half hours, with an average length of one hour and 23 minutes. The interviews were digitally recorded on a personal recording device and transcribed, coded, and analyzed according to themes that emerged in each section of the interviews.

In each interview I followed a semi-structured interview guide, which covered three broad sections intended to gain experiential perspectives and facilitate a common dialogue between each group. The first section was meant to explore existing relationships and collaborative mechanisms between the City of Saskatoon and the

various organizations with which Aboriginal participants are/were tied in order to paint a picture of the current governance climate in Saskatoon. I also wanted to understand the City's contemporary policy commitments and areas where it currently interfaces with Aboriginal organizations. The second section consisted of more directed questions about each participant's contributions to, and perceptions of, the strategic planning process. I attempted to culminate this section by prompting each participant to express his or her perceptions of the meaningfulness of Aboriginal community participation in, and contributions to, the production of Saskatoon Speaks, the Culture Plan, and the Strategic Plan. The third section was more open ended in that I asked participants to theorize about future prospects for collaborative governance and indigenized municipal planning and policy-making. In most interviews I ended this section by asking direct, hypothetical questions about possible governance mechanisms that several participants and myself deemed relevant to this discussion.

In the next three chapters the results of qualitative research interviews are structured as a thematic conversation between, in one group, City employees who had significant roles in developing and/or carrying out the Saskatoon Speaks community consultation program and/or the City's Culture Plan and, in the other group, perspectives offered by leaders and employees from various organizations that are active in Saskatoon's Aboriginal communities. This group also included one other First Nation professional who worked for a mainstream post-secondary educational institution. Participants from this group contributed, or were invited to contribute, to Saskatoon Speaks and/or the Culture Plan. This type of thematic conversation is meant to reflect the communicative element of collaborative municipal-Aboriginal governance, and specifically organizational interfacing (Walker 2008b), which is applied as a central

concept in this thesis. One City employee also identified as an Aboriginal person but for these chapters I have mostly included his perspectives alongside those of fellow City employees. Interestingly, however, there are instances where the perspectives of one or more City employees are more closely aligned with the perspectives of Aboriginal participants than their fellow employees and vice versa. I highlight these areas where they constitute significant findings.

Each interview was unique but I engaged each group of participants with generally similar lines of questioning. Participants from the City of Saskatoon were asked to describe their understanding of the reasoning, general structure, and methods utilized throughout the planning and execution of Saskatoon Speaks, the Culture Plan, the Community Vision document, and the final *Strategic Plan 2012-2022* document. They were then asked about the City's existing priority directives toward, organizational relationships with, and general mandate regarding Saskatoon's Aboriginal communities. From here some more directed questions were asked that further elucidated each participant's perspective on where the City succeeds and where it can potentially improve or expand its governance interfaces with Saskatoon's Aboriginal communities, organizations, leaders, and experts.

Aboriginal participants were asked foremost about the extent and significance of their participation in Saskatoon Speaks and/or the Culture Plan. They were asked pointed questions about their personal and/or their organizations' degree of involvement in the strategic planning initiatives and how they felt about their contributions from a variety of different standpoints. Participants offered perspectives on successes and areas for improvement and were asked to articulate views about their own political participation and representation through these kinds of municipal planning and policy-making

exercises. They were then asked some questions about their organizations' relationships with the City of Saskatoon and how the City generally interacts with or includes Aboriginal communities in municipal affairs. Finally, participants were asked broad follow-up questions that evoked some theorization about future prospects for collaborative municipal-Aboriginal governance in Saskatoon. I have categorized the results into three chapters that represent the thematic areas of questioning that were employed in the interviews. Each theme has several subthemes that arose in multiple interviews. Where it is practical I also organized the subthemes in a manner that places the two groups in conversation with one another on related topics covered in the interviews.

CHAPTER 4 – EXISTING ABORIGINAL-MUNICIPAL RELATIONS AND GOVERNANCE INTERFACES

This chapter is intended to paint a broad picture of the existing state of municipal-Aboriginal relations in Saskatoon. Municipal employees and elected officials were asked in interviews to describe their perceptions of the City's priority areas and strategies for engaging and working with Saskatoon's Aboriginal communities. I also inquired about existing governance mechanisms that might account for the inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives in the City's policy-making functions. This line of questioning was intended not only to gain a general understanding of the City's direction and commitments concerning Saskatoon's Aboriginal communities, but also to illuminate any existing and potential "interfaces" (Walker 2008b) that might bolster interorganizational collaboration. I also felt that this foundational inquiry was necessary to conceptualize the effectiveness and significance of Saskatoon's strategic planning process and Aboriginal community consultations.

In interviews with Aboriginal participants I asked each individual to reflect upon the City's engagement of Saskatoon's Aboriginal communities generally, his or her organization's (past and/or present) particular relationship with the City, and Aboriginal representation and participation in the day-to-day functions of City Hall. Results suggest that there is significant political will amongst municipal employees and elected officials to engage Aboriginal communities, institutions, leaders, and to develop interorganizational partnerships for a variety of specific projects or initiatives with mainly short-term, measurable outcomes. In terms of permanent governance mechanisms that might account for the significant inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives and cultural worldviews in civic policy-making processes, however, there are few. Aboriginal

participants generally indicated that their communities are not adequately represented at the administrative and political levels of City Hall, a reality that has entrenched widespread reluctance among Aboriginal citizens to participate in municipal initiatives and regular governance functions, such as elections. These foundational considerations have important implications for any future Aboriginal community engagement and consultation.

4.1 The City as successful programming partner, community facilitator

City employees and officials were asked in interviews how they view their professional role(s) in the lives of Saskatoon's Aboriginal residents. Many perceived the municipal government and/or their respective departments as community facilitators:

> …We often refer to ourselves as the enablers; the conveners; the catalysts; the facilitators. We do minimal direct delivery of programs, but we do some. What we do more so is help facilitate the delivery of programs by others. (City of Saskatoon employee #1, December 21, 2012)

Several participants emphasized a commitment to support community initiatives with municipal resources and the City's capacity and expertise for project coordination. In this regard, one of the City's predominant functions in the lives of its Aboriginal citizenry is to foster interorganizational partnerships in and from multiple sectors. Such partnerships are predicated on the development of various programs, services, and funding arrangements for the perceived benefit of Aboriginal residents. One employee summarized the City's responsibility to ensure that municipal programs and external projects are inclusive of all Aboriginal residents:

> We act as a catalyst to build capacity within the community. So if you're trying to do inclusion programs and…you're not able to include someone…based on their status as an Aboriginal person, that's not inclusive… and of course the Tribal Council, that's not in their mandate to service Métis. So we're the

> common organization that can pull those groups together to serve the Aboriginal population. So that's really what (we) try and do is ensure we've got representation around the table that reflects all the Aboriginal community. (City of Saskatoon employee #2, January 11, 2013)

This perception of the municipal government as a community catalyst or facilitator was also noted by Aboriginal organizational leaders who, generally speaking, concurred that elected officials and City employees have made significant individual efforts to build partnerships and relationships with and within Saskatoon's Aboriginal communities. One participant described an effective relationship she had with the former chair of the City's Cultural Diversity and Race Relations Committee as well as other partnerships she has experienced:

> Through National Aboriginal Day, the late Joan was instrumental. I was there two months on the job at the Friendship Centre and she came by and asked if we'd partner… now we host it. We're the chair of National Aboriginal Day. And with Mary Johnson and the leisure services, they're always partnering with Bill's program, like the youth, offering Pow Wow lessons and drumming... Warren has done some stuff with youth, to engage youth more, so he would always use the Friendship Centre to host a youth gathering and stuff like that. The mayor was always at events when he was invited. City Council, I'd always have some who'd say 'invite me…' I got along really well with them. I can't say…that they aren't trying. (Métis participant #1, January 22, 2013)

Another participant described good relations between her organization and City employees as a necessity due to the City's role as financial subsidizer, but nevertheless spoke positively of collaborative partnerships with the City and other institutions:

> We've always had a really good relationship with the City of Saskatoon. We have a really good relationship with the mayor and most of the councilors. They're our funders; you have to have good relationships… White Buffalo Youth Lodge is a partnership between the City of Saskatoon, the Health Region, CUMFI (Central Urban Métis Federation Inc.) and the Tribal Council… So we do sit in partnerships with them…it's not like we don't have a good working relationship with them. (Representative of Métis Service Provider, April 8, 2013)

Most Aboriginal participants expressed constructive experiences when working in partnership with the City of Saskatoon. Strong interpersonal relationships seem to anchor

professional partnerships that have been developed between City Hall and Aboriginal organizations in recent years. The idea of the City as a program and service facilitator within urban Aboriginal communities seems well-suited to the consolidation of collaborative governance frameworks; however, all Aboriginal participants and some from the City suggested that Saskatoon should invest energy in additional governance areas if collaborative partnerships are to be wholly meaningful for Aboriginal residents. These ideas will be considered later in this chapter.

4.2 Locating the City's priorities: practical opportunities, tangible outcomes

Another interrelated theme that emerged from interview discussions regarding the City's existing commitments to, and organizational relationships with, Saskatoon's Aboriginal communities is a dedication to collaboration on specific and practical projects with tangible or measurable results:

> Again I think what matters is doing stuff on initiatives. The high level stuff is important… I think Edmonton has an accord that I've heard about and I've thought maybe we should try and do something like that here. And I'd be open to exploring that further but…in the end I do think that partnering on the initiatives…in tangible results is the thing that's going to get us the highest level of success. (City Councilor, City of Saskatoon, January 3, 2013)

> What we've hitched our wagon to is the strength and relations with the local Aboriginal organizations and so…under that is all of the programs, processes, projects, partnerships, initiatives we have with the Aboriginal community from treaty land entitlements to working with the Office of the Treaty Commissioner, to authentic engagement… So what you do is you start to get the ground swell going by demonstrating partnerships, moving projects forward, changing the degree of racism and discrimination in this community, moving forward with partnerships with the Aboriginal community. (City of Saskatoon employee #1, December 21, 2012)

The Mayor also emphasized some particular, practical projects when expressing his view of cooperation with Aboriginal institutions:

> If you look at SIIT (Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technology) what's going on there today… they came to see us and said, 'we need bus passes like the University has. We need a U-Pass and if our students don't have it when winter comes – a lot of them have families, they're bringing in strollers, they can't get them down the streets anymore because of the snow, it's cold so they pack up and they go home'… It took us a couple or three months to get there but we got there and signed the U-Pass agreement with them. You know, things like that, cooperation. And I think the thing too is they're not expecting things for free either. They know things cost money and that we work in cooperation and we partner up together. (Mayor, City of Saskatoon, February 7, 2013)

Related to the City's role as community facilitator, at the core of which appears to be an emphasis on securing program and project funding and delivering inclusive services for Saskatoon's Aboriginal communities, City employees expressed a principal commitment to education, employment, and work-skills training for Aboriginal individuals:

> We also have through our Human Resources department our employment equity program and some of the initiatives they have around internal organizational development, recruitment strategies, mentorship opportunities, career pathing and targeted recruitments, going to career fairs...held in areas outside the city where there is an opportunity to attract some Aboriginal employees. We have our urban Aboriginal leadership coordinator or consultant who does some Aboriginal leadership programs and development. His Atoske camps are targeting job readiness, job training, employment skills, facilitation skills with young urban Aboriginal youth. (City of Saskatoon employee #1, December 21, 2012)

> We're in the highest economic boom in Saskatoon in years, in Saskatchewan. Yet the employment of Aboriginal people dropped by 400 people in this last four months. So I mean how do you understand that? ...Through the Regional Intersectoral Committee we set up a committee…to put an Aboriginal employment strategy together. So then we talked to North Saskatoon Business Association, Chamber of Commerce, SREDA (Saskatoon Regional Economic Development Authority), to their membership. You're saying there's not enough labour force here. What's the gap? Why aren't you hiring Aboriginal people? Is it because they don't have the skill set? Then we need to get you talking to the Aboriginal educational institutions so we can…build that skill set. Are the Aboriginal people employment-ready or shovel-ready, as we say? Some aren't, so how can we work to motivate them to get off…social dependence to economic independence? What do you need to make that transfer? It follows back to essential work skills, financial literacy. A lot of it is having confidence to make that step, you know? (City of Saskatoon employee #2, January 11, 2013)

Several City participants emphasized these types of initiatives when asked generally about municipal work with Aboriginal communities, suggesting that the City is largely committed to partnerships that aim to develop tools and opportunities for Saskatoon's Aboriginal residents to obtain employment and financial independence. While these commitments are probably reflective of the City's intention to help improve Aboriginal residents' quality of life, they may also be attributable to a neoliberal political-economic culture in which governments' commitments to Aboriginal citizens tend to conform to market needs and the ultimate social goal of individual self-efficacy (Green 2003).

I draw connections between "practical" or work-skill-related Aboriginal programs and services and general processes of neoliberalization in order to highlight what Green (2003) describes as an implicit danger for the "recolonization" of Indigenous communities. In other words, a disproportionately heavy focus on individualist, market-centred programs and services *without* mechanisms to accommodate collective Indigenous agency or meaningfully include Aboriginal identities, knowledge, and cultural values in mainstream governments may be more harmful than good in the long term. Neoliberalization has had adverse social consequences due to the state's unregulated retrenchment of social welfare responsibilities and should be challenged on these grounds; however, Aboriginal communities may currently find it difficult to achieve wellbeing and express self-determination without participating in their city's local economy. That being said, self-determination and the decolonization of urban municipalities might eventually entail some urban Aboriginal communities shifting from liberal-capitalist market approaches to traditional economic forms or some combination thereof.

Some participants from both groups drew connections between collaborative programming relationships that aim to develop tools for individual self-sufficiency and broader goals of self-determination. As one First Nation leader suggested,

> We can only provide the tools for self-determination. The real self-determination is when all of our citizens have opportunities and engage in those opportunities and they themselves are self-determining; they themselves control their own lives. If all of our people control their own lives and are not dependent on First Nations, they're not dependent on the Tribal Council, the Federation (of Saskatchewan Indian Nations) or government…well that's self-determination. When you have a collective of those people, that's when you get a self-governing community. (Tribal Chief, Saskatoon Tribal Council, January 29, 2013)

Another City employee who works often with Aboriginal leaders also expressed how the City generally helps mitigate some of the difficulties of Aboriginal programming that stem from individuals' contrasting legal statuses and certain organizations' limited membership mandates. This role highlights the City's institutional capacity to facilitate such funding and programming partnerships:

> If you go to the Saskatoon Tribal Council for funding you can only provide those services for treaty people. So if we partner with Saskatoon Tribal Council and don't include Gabriel Dumont institute, then we've just stopped the Métis people from participating. So with every program we do we try to be what's referred to as status blind… so we try to ensure that we've got status blind funding… So (we) see when we can pull the corporate community… the Aboriginal organizations, but also the First Nations and Tribal Council as an order of government, and us as a municipal government, it really sends a solid message. And it's not that we're the service providers, but we maybe can provide the facility or we can provide the funding. It's just getting everybody to the table to resolve the issues. So that's where we've had a lot of success. (City of Saskatoon employee #2, January 11, 2013)

While the City's role as a community facilitator may be primarily embodied through partnerships toward education, job-readiness, and financial independence, it has also utilized its capacities to nurture collaboration in other areas.

One example wherein the City of Saskatoon has dedicated significant partnership efforts, particularly with First Nation governments, is through the creation and negotiated servicing of urban reserves. Saskatoon is regarded as a national leader among urban municipalities for its work on urban reserve service agreements and its cooperative relationships with several local First Nations (Barron and Garcea 1999, Sully et al 2008). One City employee articulated the significance of such partnerships for economic development:

> We've got a number of investors… coming from other countries that are buying or acquiring businesses and we've got these sleeping giants in our own backyard that don't even know they're sleeping because we've had all of those years of colonization. Well you don't sit back and have the government tell you what to do… I believe the City is moving toward assisting, specifically with the development of urban reserves… That will…really assist them as far as moving toward self-determination is dollars. (City of Saskatoon employee #2, January 11, 2013)

Beyond the economic benefits of urban reserves for Saskatoon and its neighbouring First Nations, one Aboriginal participant noted that the presence of urban reserves instills in him a sense of pride, while the efforts that go toward developing and servicing urban reserves demonstrates that the City has political will to engage with Aboriginal communities:

> I know that the first urban reserve was in Muskeg Lake…and (that's) something that gives me a really good sense of pride for Saskatoon …So I know Muskeg Lake's urban reserve is the first in Canada and this could have been my band's urban reserve in Prince Albert if Prince Albert was a little bit more business-forward thinking in terms of what an urban reserve potential could be and could mean to a city… In the early '80s Saskatoon was more upbeat business-wise and more progressive. And so I'm really proud that there's an urban reserve here in Saskatoon… I know our City is introduced to what it means to engage the Aboriginal community and what it means to engage Muskeg Lake as a First Nation. (Member of Urban Aboriginal Strategy Steering Committee, March 1, 2013)

Although this participant's specific view was not necessarily voiced by others, his allusion to a symbolic significance that the City's dedication to urban reserves evokes relates to a major finding that will be developed more thoroughly in Chapter Six: that certain institutional gestures and visible symbolic commitments to Aboriginal communities can carry much influential weight in fostering connectivity to the City and a general sense of belonging amongst urban Aboriginal people.

4.3 Expanding the City's focus from specific opportunities to collective representation

All participants seemed to agree that individual self-sufficiency and participation in the local economy are necessary for urban Aboriginal people to achieve wellbeing; however, participants from both groups also expressed a need for collaborative relationships to be more comprehensively meaningful for Aboriginal citizens. In this sense, employment and economic self-sufficiency comprise only one component of wellbeing and self-determination:

> I think that collaboration is really good; it's vital, the collaboration with First Nations and Métis people but it maybe has to go beyond just project-by-project. The picture has to get a little bigger, you know? And it goes beyond economics. It's got to go beyond economics. Our kids are hurting here in the city. We need to make it a better place for them. (Métis participant #2, February 22, 2013)

Others, which will be further described in the next chapter, expressed that Aboriginal citizens need to feel comfortable with the City as an institution that reflects their needs, aspirations and cultural worldviews before they are willing to participate in municipal programs and services.

Several Aboriginal participants acknowledged a systemic disconnect between Aboriginal residents and the City government. A representative from a Métis service

organization attributed this perceived fission to a lack of Aboriginal employees in municipal positions that directly engage Saskatoon's Aboriginal communities:

> They have (engaged the Aboriginal community) through the Aboriginal programming and the MĒ TA WĒ TĀN program, but that's led by non-Aboriginal people… When they put people on committees like the Urban Aboriginal Strategy it's always a non-Aboriginal person who sits on there… So they're Aboriginal committees and the City's representation…a majority of them are non-Aboriginal. So people can say that they have a good understanding or full understanding. Unless you've been raised in poverty and know homelessness and have had to live a time with no roof over your head you don't have an understanding. And the challenge with a lot of these people is that they really want to do good and I commend them for that. They want to make change, but their direction a lot of times is not the direction that the communities need. And I'm talking about the core area…not the whole of Saskatoon. (Representative of Métis Service Provider, April 8, 2013)

Another participant attributed a perceived disconnect between the municipal government and Saskatoon's Aboriginal population to the City's historical neglect of core areas in which many Aboriginal citizens reside:

> Even though we say we're 20,000 First Nation citizens, well 18,000 of them are in certain neighbourhoods… It's advocating for those neighbourhoods and making sure that (they) don't forget about Riversdale, Pleasant Hill, Confederation Park… Far too often in the past they've gotten neglected and so when you neglect something you don't put the investments in them… then the people in that neighborhood won't care either. So once they start investing then you start to get some neighborhood pride and that's what I think's been missing for a long time in downtown Saskatoon. (Tribal Chief, Saskatoon Tribal Council, January 29, 2013)

One City Councilor asserted that the municipal government has room to improve on its responsibility to meaningfully represent Saskatoon's Aboriginal population and to ensure that the city and its communities are welcoming places for Aboriginal residents:

> I think the whole City has a huge responsibility to figure out how to be a place that…First Nations and Métis people feel a sense of belonging and that they see themselves reflected in the City because… I think in order for…the community to feel that this is a place to call home and to build their dreams and raise families and do all those things in a productive way that there is a sense of home and not that they're living in someone else's city, right? …I mean ideally we need to have more people elected to City Council who are Aboriginal… We need

> to always be in partnership with the education system, with the Tribal Council, with neighborhoods and the community associations and the informal grassroots folks that are out there to find ways to keep improving people's experience of the city. And we always have to keep our eye on that and think about how we can be doing a better job because it's…huge to the success of the city to see the First Nations and Métis population feel, really, this is a place for them to succeed…feel like it's home. (City Councilor, City of Saskatoon, January 3, 2013)

These perspectives collectively suggest that although the City of Saskatoon has developed successful collaborative programming partnerships with Aboriginal communities, governments and organizations for specific, tangible purposes, and while its employees have also developed some strong interpersonal relationships with leaders of such communities, some institutional aspects of the municipal government fall short in terms of authentically representing the Aboriginal population of Saskatoon.

4.4 Limited channels for civic participation and the multiple "layers" of Aboriginal representation

While most participants tended to agree that there is no shortage of political will from the City to engage in partnerships with Aboriginal communities and organizations on a multitude of specific projects and programs, they seemed to perceive less motivation and few institutional means to include Aboriginal perspectives in the policy-making functions of City Hall. Most City employees referenced the municipal government's Cultural Diversity and Race Relations (CDRR) policy and advisory committee when asked about existing mechanisms through which Aboriginal perspectives influence and/or are represented in municipal policy-making processes:

> We have a cultural diversity and race relations policy. It's an outcomes-driven policy that was developed with some…comprehensive consultation with the community. Within that policy there are four community outcome statements. One talks about a representative work force; representative decision-making bodies; awareness and understanding of the diverse cultures that make up this

> great city; and then zero tolerance for racism. (City of Saskatoon employee #1, December 21, 2012)

The CDRR committee is tasked with implementing and upholding the CDRR policy. While there are currently several members on the CDRR committee with Aboriginal ancestries, some City employees expressed concerns about the committee's effectiveness for representing Indigenous perspectives:

> The cultural diversity and race relations committee has appointed people from First Nations and Métis backgrounds to be a part of that overarching committee which is there to provide direction to City Hall on different things related to cultural diversity race relations… I don't think we've done as well as we could to integrate them… integrate the committee and their insights into the more detailed planning processes that we do. (City Councilor, City of Saskatoon, January 3, 2013)

> Their mandate is…education and race relations within the community…(so) there are times when Council asks for their advice that could impact policy. Not necessarily specific to Aboriginal…but also our immigrant community and so on… Has it influenced policy? No. It has helped us to work toward meeting policy and it has certainly influenced practices…on the ground and…supervision, management. (Manager of Strategic and Business Planning, City of Saskatoon, January 31, 2013)

Though some Aboriginal participants noted that the CDRR committee has developed and contributed to some successful programming partnerships, they also suggested that the CDRR and other municipal committees' limited inclusion of Aboriginal members at generally diverse tables constitutes a form of tokenism. One participant associated her view of Aboriginal-specific seats on municipal committees to her role on the Culture Plan community advisory committee:

> As far as getting our input on how this city is ran, I don't know, like they'll come to us for votes. That's when we see them, but… mind you we're sitting on a lot more committees now… Like my husband sits on the race relations committee… And I'm not so much on committees… I'm seeing more but sometimes, like the culture plan, you're sitting on it and it still feels a little tokenism, it really does. (Métis participant #2, February 22, 2013)

A City Councilor described similar concerns about the depth of Aboriginal representation at municipal planning and policy-making tables:

> One thing I know from a lot of committees and processes out there is everybody's trying to get their one or two First Nations or Métis people onto their board or onto their committee to be that rep, right? And the Tribal Council gets those requests on a constant basis and so when people say 'oh well we're making an effort to do it' I think it is an effort but is that really the end goal, to have one or two people there as sort of token representatives? I think there's room to go further in terms of thinking about… what's going to be really meaningful here? And how are you going to get enough diversity and perspectives? …First Nations and Métis have very different perspectives in pretty much everything…let alone somebody who, you know, comes here as a person who grew up in Alberta and is Aboriginal versus somebody who grew up in northern Saskatchewan versus somebody who grew up, you know, down at Whitecap reserve… In that whole population there's a lot of diverse perspectives. (City Councilor, City of Saskatoon, January 3, 2013)

This shared view, that reserving a select few seats on municipal committees insufficiently represents Aboriginal perspectives in the City's policy-making functions, relates to a major finding that will be further expounded in chapter Six: that there is significant need to develop innovative governance mechanisms that ensure Aboriginal representation and input in all functions of City Hall. At the very least, the indigenization of City planning and policy-making practices requires multiple stratums of Aboriginal input as well as specific governance apparatuses that are comprised mostly of Aboriginal experts with other community representatives.

One City Councilor acknowledged that, beyond the notable work of Saskatoon's new Aboriginal relations advisor, few mechanisms exist to ensure significant Aboriginal input in municipal affairs:

> I would unhesitatingly say (the Aboriginal relations advisor) has a lot of respect from executive committee and Council for how he's been able to do his work… But in terms of other formal processes, there aren't a lot. I guess the next question is what's the next step? Getting that office is important, getting that position of Aboriginal relations is important… I think there's still more to be done to figure out so what is the next step to find ways to build more meaningful

> connections…and ways for them to have that voice be a part of the process. (City Councilor, City of Saskatoon, January 3, 2013)

Another City employee noted a lack of Aboriginal representation at all municipal levels and especially in decision-making positions:

> We have some work to do in regards to the employment of Aboriginal people not only in neighborhood positions but all occupational categories, decision-making positions, on boards and committees. I'd like to see, you know, representation on council… there's some work there that needs to be done and I think there's some work internally… (City of Saskatoon employee #2, January 11, 2013)

One Aboriginal participant also noted a historical lack of Aboriginal representation at the City's administrative level but also recognized that Saskatoon is making efforts to change this reality:

> I think our City…administratively has done quite a bit… Within the community development branch they have an inclusion consultant who's of Aboriginal ancestry now which I think is great. Also with that branch they have…a special advisor. Sometimes though I wonder… because I come from a background of looking at organizations… There are issues with Aboriginal-designated positions or positions with Aboriginal title behind it and the weight that comes with that, but at the same time that's the City showing that they are trying to move forward and they are aware of that so I think that's a thumbs up for the City. (Member of Urban Aboriginal Strategy Steering Committee, March 1, 2013)

This quote is particularly significant as it demonstrates that although there is symbolic and practical value in hiring Aboriginal employees to conduct municipal work with Aboriginal communities, individuals in such positions, especially if unaided by other Aboriginal staff, may be susceptible to considerable internal and external pressures. Internal pressures may include but are not limited to ensuring one's work aligns with the government's accepted mandate while also avoiding what some would regard as taking "political" stances on urban Aboriginal issues and/or pushing too hard for institutional change. External pressures on Aboriginal employees in prominent civic positions may exist where urban Indigenous communities are extremely diverse and their demands for

authentic and equitable representation through Aboriginal-specific government positions are significant.

Participants from both groups also noted a historical lack of Aboriginal representation at the municipal government's political level on City Council:

> I didn't vote for but I helped Derek Rope, because I'm not in his ward anyway… I would have liked to see him in City Council but we don't have that yet. So I think about that angle and he's tried a number of times. He hasn't really given up… So I think in Saskatoon we have some leadership…he's First Nation and he's showing that leadership. He's showing that there are some people ready and willing to sit in public office if there's some public will for that. We're not quite there on that angle… maybe the city's not quite there. (Member of Urban Aboriginal Strategy Steering Committee, March 1, 2013)

> You can actually walk down to the second floor and they've got all the pictures hanging from every single City Council since the inception of the City… You'll need all your hands and toes and a calculator to calculate the white, middle to upper class males who've been City Councilors. (City of Saskatoon employee #1, December 21, 2012)

Though some participants suggested that there have indeed been two or three councilors with Aboriginal ancestry in the City's history, they did not necessarily declare those identities publicly. Several participants also asserted that if the majority of Saskatoon's Aboriginal population voted in municipal elections then perhaps Council would gain Aboriginal representation through conventional democratic means.

Participants who perceived a general reluctance among Aboriginal residents to vote in civic elections attributed this to a diminished sense of belonging to the City government:

> The problem we have right now is there's a lack of engagement because (First Nations citizens) think there's a lack of influence the City has on either their lives or that they have on the City. So that's one of the things we've been advocating is get out and vote because it does effect you, whether you think so or not, you could influence some of those policies. (Tribal Chief, Saskatoon Tribal Council, January 29, 2013)

> You don't see a lot of, well more Métis vote than First Nations but most First Nations don't vote… They don't have a sense of belonging here and their homes are their reserves. They live here and they go home, you hear them talk like that. So there isn't that sense of belonging. (Métis Participant #1, January 22, 2013)

The collective theme that emerges from these statements is that Aboriginal representation in Saskatoon's municipal government is currently limited, though perhaps becoming incrementally more robust. Participants from both groups expressed a distinct need for multiple layers of Aboriginal representation, or the inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives at all levels of municipal government. Although programming, funding, and service partnerships are seemingly numerous and generally successful between the City of Saskatoon and urban Aboriginal community-focused organizations, few mechanisms currently exist to meaningfully include Indigenous perspectives in the governance – specifically the policy-making functions – of the City. The question then arises: how might Aboriginal perspectives be more wholly and meaningfully incorporated into the functions of City Hall? More specifically, do Aboriginal inclusion, engagement, and/or collaboration in strategic planning, or the indigenization of a mainstream policy-making process, provide a potentially viable mechanism to infuse Aboriginal perspectives into municipal governance?

CHAPTER 5 – ABORIGINAL PARTICIPATION IN, AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO, SASKATOON SPEAKS AND THE CULTURE PLAN

This chapter develops themes that emerged from participants' perceptions of the City of Saskatoon's strategic planning processes and each person's involvement with Saskatoon Speaks and/or the Culture Plan. The information gathered through Saskatoon Speaks and the Culture Plan has been incorporated into the publicly available *Strategic Plan 2012-2022* document. My intent was to understand the extent to which Aboriginal experts and leaders, and Aboriginal communities generally, contributed or not to various stages of the planning process. I also wanted Aboriginal participants to consider the significance of their involvement in order to expound possible connections between indigenized strategic planning and collaborative urban governance. Since the Strategic Plan is currently being utilized toward the creation and modification of civic policies, I also consider these planning programs as the foundational stages of longer-term policy-making practices.

I began by asking City employees to describe the reasons for developing Saskatoon Speaks, the Culture Plan, and the Strategic Plan generally. Overall, community engagement in strategic planning was deemed important for the City to not only invite citizens to get on board with the municipal government's existing plans and priorities, but also to establish new plans and priorities based partly on community input. The resulting Strategic Plan is thus a hybrid document that includes these two broad approaches. City employees suggested that community engagement in strategic planning was meant to garner community buy-in to existing plans (and to reduce opposition), to facilitate shared decision-making between the citizenry and City Hall, to establish an "external reality check" on the City's priorities, and to generally plan for urban growth

while recognizing demographic diversity and fostering means for Saskatoon citizens to attain a high quality of life. One City Councilor's viewpoint effectively summarizes what most civic employees expressed:

> The City right now is going through a process where… we're changing. We're becoming a more diverse community. We're…growing really quickly and it's putting pressure on our budget, our finances, all of those things, and people's demands are going up in terms of traffic and transportation. But…we actually need to change the way we're doing some things. We're not going to be able to carry on just doing things the way we've been doing for the last 30 or 40 years and be able to keep taxes at a reasonable level, but also to be a city that's welcoming and that actually meets the needs of the people… There's a young First Nations and Métis population. There's a growing number of immigrants coming from other cities, so the face of the city's changing and City Hall on it's own…if all of this decision-making is done there and then brought out to citizens then they don't feel a connection to any of those changes. That's where you get push back and resistance and frustration and anger. Then if you want to change things like density and the way we move around the city and how we build roads and stuff like that, and you start making those changes unilaterally without informing people of what's going on and asking their input, that's where the whole NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) phenomenon really comes in… (City Councilor, City of Saskatoon, January 3, 2013)

5.1 Participation reluctance as resistance to (mis)representing Aboriginal communities

In response to specific questions about the involvement of Saskatoon's Aboriginal communities in the strategic planning process, City employees conveyed that the initial stages of Saskatoon Speaks were developed mostly internally, but in consultation with a private firm from Toronto, Ontario:

> What we needed to do is internally sort of figure out what direction we wanted to go and what it was we were hoping to get done. We had a number of conversations with consultants who actually do formalized community engagement to get some ideas of what this might look like. (City of Saskatoon employee #1, December 21, 2012)

This participant did, however, suggest that indirect community involvement occurred in the initial planning stages since City departments and employees actively invite

community input on a regular basis and so their perspectives were influenced by that engagement:

> Indirectly (communities) were (involved)… specifically from our cultural diversity/race relations perspective, from our immigration perspective, our urban Aboriginal leadership perspective. So indirectly involved…not sitting at the table having the conversations but (through) information gathered from employees…and a number of them who are in fact First Nations or Métis. (City of Saskatoon employee #1, December 21, 2012)

Concretely and directly, though, Aboriginal leaders and experts were first involved in Saskatoon Speaks through a stakeholder interview process. This process consisted of multiple one-on-one interviews and focus-group sessions, which ultimately collected perspectives about the City's strengths, weaknesses and future directives from roughly 140 diverse stakeholder groups. Several Aboriginal professionals, political figures, and community leaders were invited to participate in this process, which culminated in the production of Saskatoon Speaks' working themes for broader community consultation.

City employees who were involved with these interviews acknowledged that participation among Aboriginal invitees was less than what they had hoped. City employees also recorded and analyzed attendees' demographic information and written feedback at the primary Saskatoon Speaks community consultation event held at Prairieland Park. Municipal staff realized that Aboriginal participation was comparatively low there, too, and so two consultation events were devised to specifically target Aboriginal community involvement, some details of which will be discussed later in this section. Aboriginal participants expressed significant reasons why they, or people within their organizations, may have resisted participation in stakeholder and/or community consultations. Principally, some participants expressed apprehension about how their contributions would be represented by the City. They were concerned that

their viewpoints would be regarded as those of a single person among a multitude of others and thus lacking consequential influence, or that they would be seen to represent, or misrepresent, the collective views of an extremely diverse Aboriginal population in Saskatoon:

> We were invited to some of the sessions but it was just with everybody else and we felt like we were just a small minority or voice… So our opinion, does it matter? … I did talk to one of the City Managers prior to that and they would email me periodically but I never went because, really, our feeling was that we have…an obligation to represent the 20,000 First Nations people in Saskatoon… Do we represent a certain percentage of the population or are we just representing one person at these consultation sessions? …Because if you look at municipal politics it's all about what's good for all of the citizens of Saskatoon…whatever it is, you're another citizen. That's why…politically we didn't get that involved in it. (Tribal Chief, Saskatoon Tribal Council, January 29, 2013)

> I…don't want to seem like I have the answers or that I speak for… Our communities are so split up, like there are so many dynamics of what it means to be First Nation, Métis, Inuit, Cree. There are so many different groups in Saskatoon – Lakota, Dakota, Nakota, Northern Cree, Plains Cree, Swampy Cree, Saulteaux, Dene – There are so many different perspectives, so… I don't want to be seen as speaking on that perspective or being that voice. (Member of Urban Aboriginal Strategy Steering Committee, March 1, 2013)

The construction of the municipal Culture Plan followed a different process than Saskatoon Speaks, though interviews revealed similar concerns about representation. The Culture Plan gathered its information from community consultation sessions and was even incorporated into the Saskatoon Speaks process; however, it also relied on a community advisory committee of which three members declared Aboriginal ancestry. A City employee described the advisory committee's functions:

> Their main responsibility was to provide feedback on the various drafts, iterations of the Culture Plan…as they came forward. They were asked to participate and take somewhat of a leadership role at the several community engagement forums or sessions that we had… And then on two occasions over the course of three years we brought them together and they were a focus group among themselves and really got to meet one on one with the consultants and really hammer out…issues, concerns, things they felt…needed to be addressed

> or removed or what have you. (City of Saskatoon employee #3, December 21, 2012)

Although participants from the City expressed that the Culture Plan benefited from continual community feedback through the advisory committee mechanism, one interview participant who sat on the board conveyed concerns about the Culture Plan's representation of Saskatoon's Métis community. In particular, she expressed discomfort about representing Saskatoon's large Métis population without being empowered to gain community input herself:

> Actually I remember hearing after a few meetings 'what the hell is this all about really? Just what is this? How are we going to do this?' I'm representing Métis, you know? At least I should have an opportunity to go and speak to some of the organizations and get their input to bring back. I mean I'm not speaking on behalf of all of them, but I think I need to know what I'm talking about here, you know? That was kind of the feeling I got.
>
> There's how many thousands of us here in the city? …Maybe if the process was a little better, things could have been drawn up and presented at our general meetings or where we could have taken it more to our membership? A form could have went out to them because they do mail outs to a couple thousand people four times a year. (Métis participant #2, February 22, 2013)

A City employee who was central to the development and implementation of the Culture Plan recognized this common concern about representation:

> I remember…there were opportunities to…write all your thoughts and put them up and I remember…one First Nation person telling me… They contributed but they didn't feel comfortable putting anything in writing because they didn't feel they could speak for… they wanted to go back and consult other First Nations…an Elder… And I thought that was really interesting and I thought we need to do that better next time because that never even occurred. (City of Saskatoon employee #3, December 21, 2012)

Several participants recognized a necessity for more thorough community engagement in order to account for Aboriginal community diversity in municipal planning processes. Aboriginal participants' common reluctance to contribute perspectives to a mainstream community consultation program constitutes a major finding

that has implications for future civic engagement of, and collaboration with, Aboriginal communities and organizations. Strategies are needed to expressly ensure that Aboriginal participants have opportunities to contribute perspectives both individually and collectively. Individuals must be empowered to speak as Saskatoon citizens but the cultural depth of the urban Aboriginal population must also be appropriately acknowledged and legitimately represented.

Conventional or existing methods for engaging Aboriginal participation and input are perhaps only marginally effective within a larger community consultation process. Aboriginal leaders and experts were involved in Saskatoon's strategic planning process through stakeholder interviews, as community project champions who voluntarily promoted community consultation events, by organizing childcare and transportation to and from at least one consultation event, offering advice about specific cultural protocols, and contributing as individuals to community consultation events. The City, however, generally controlled the official planning process and retained all decision-making authority from beginning to end. This was done in collaboration with the private consulting firm.

For many Aboriginal leaders authentic collaboration means transferring a significant degree of agenda-setting, decision-making, and organizing control to their individual and collective organizations:

> For years PotashCorp, which we have a partnership with, would have these job fairs and these career fairs and try and recruit people. They'd never get any First Nations citizens there, so last year we said 'Career fair: White Buffalo, presented by the Tribal Council'… We still had the Potash logo but…150 people showed up with resumes. People are more comfortable coming to that environment not because they really like the Saskatoon Tribal Council, but they can attach some kind of a bond to it. So they know if it's a First Nation organization that they're…not putting themselves out there too far, so that's one of the things we have to get people comfortable with… And we have to get even

> the City to be comfortable with letting go some of those, letting go of the pen, letting someone else drive the agenda or at least have a different opinion. (Tribal Chief, Saskatoon Tribal Council, January 29, 2013)

A meaningful degree of control by Aboriginal organizations over municipal planning processes also necessitates more durable and effective mechanisms than reserving a select few seats for Aboriginal individuals at diverse tables. While the City directly engaged Aboriginal leaders in stakeholder consultations, there were no channels or mechanisms established to facilitate communication between Aboriginal leadership and Saskatoon's First Nations and Métis communities. The City controlled all of the community engagement functions while Aboriginal participants perceived their own involvement to be marred by shortfalls in representation. This finding is substantial and also central to discussions about prospective mechanisms to foster meaningful and more permanent Aboriginal representation and participation in City planning and policy-making practices, which will be further developed in the next chapter.

5.2 Inclusion through Aboriginal-specific strategies: notable efforts but too little too late?

City employees and officials maintained that stakeholder consultations and Aboriginal community engagement events symbolized a dedication to achieve inclusive participation from Saskatoon's citizenry in the strategic planning process. Inclusiveness was conceptualized as specific and targeted strategies to actively request input from all demographic groups in Saskatoon and to reduce barriers for participation:

> Some keys things to think about were how and when and where you advertise meetings, where you host meetings, what the facility looks like, is it accessible physically as well as sort of geographically? …Different ways of engaging or connecting with the groups… These primarily focused on your smaller scale, one-off public meetings. So then how do we overlay that to make sure we're being as comprehensive as we can and engaging the broadest numbers in the

> community? And as you probably already surmised…invitations, shoulder tapping, taking for lunch, personal phone calls to many of the Aboriginal community or Aboriginal organizations doesn't always work so well if it's an environment where they don't feel valued, don't feel that they'll have an opportunity to be heard, or it's not a comfortable environment to be in. (City of Saskatoon employee #1, December 21, 2012)

City employees recognized a need and developed distinct invitation strategies to demonstrate a strong desire for Aboriginal participation in stakeholder and community consultations. The City's approach also included several other tactics such as enlisting a prominent First Nations woman to address the crowd at the main Saskatoon Speaks event; recruiting Aboriginal community leaders as "project champions" in order to spread word about the program and galvanize participation among the broader Aboriginal communities; actively attempting to decrease barriers for attendance and participation by partnering with Aboriginal organizations to provide food, transportation and childcare at the Saskatoon Inn consultation event, as well as food at the Indian and Métis Friendship Centre consultation; by attempting to respect cultural protocols like inviting an Elder with an offering of tobacco to bless the gatherings; and then by taking information gathered at the community consultations back to Aboriginal stakeholders for final input.

As was mentioned above, these strategies were devised to demonstrate that the City was dedicated to authentic Aboriginal engagement in the planning process:

> Having champions in the community that are role models in the Aboriginal community, that are well respected…gave that sense that it really was authentic engagement and that we really did want to include them in the process. (City of Saskatoon employee #1, December 21, 2012)

This strategy of "having champions in the community" seemed to be a critical aspect of the City's impetus to also foster collaboration; it was considered to make the process of consultation a joint effort between municipal and Aboriginal leaders, which was explained by a City employee intimately involved in this process:

> I knew that we needed to get a leader from within the Aboriginal community to be a champion for this… We devised a strategy where we identified…about 20 people or so…within the Aboriginal community to get the word out. 'You promote it, we'll give you all the materials, we'll give you all the information, but we want you to try to encourage people to come versus the City.' So I think that worked. We had… supper served, childcare was provided, buses from a few locations… I think there were three or four locations that we got input from Gilles and the people he works with and Milton on where we should have the bus pickups. So yeah, it was really seen as a joint effort between the City and between some of the leaders in the Aboriginal community and their message simply was 'you've got a chance to speak your voice, take advantage of it.' And so we had a very good turnout. (Manager of Strategic and Business Planning, City of Saskatoon, January 31, 2013)

The multiple, distinct steps taken by City employees to bolster Aboriginal community participation in consultation gatherings are significant. It is important to also note here that all participants from the City acknowledged that inclusiveness generally necessitates alternative strategies for engaging Saskatoon's Aboriginal population.

The efforts undertaken by the City are noteworthy and indeed alternative to mainstream consultations, but the distinctness of Aboriginal community engagement appears to have centred on advertising and simply getting people out to consultation events; less so on the *form* of engagement itself:

> In terms of the actual structure of the event, many elements were very similar to any of the other events. So in other words we went through all of the themes… we wanted people to talk about the various themes. We had sticky notes so… 'here's what we've heard so far so please add to it or change something or however you want to, make your voice heard.' We had an open mic kind of session where people could get up and tell us what they thought and then we recorded those comments. (Manager of Strategic and Business Planning, City of Saskatoon, January 31, 2013)

That the structure of community consultation was not altered in any way for Aboriginal-specific events is not an inherent weakness; however, some Aboriginal participants stressed that Aboriginal organizations should have fundamental control or ownership over their own community consultations in order to foster connectivity and comfort with

the process. To make this point, one First Nations political leader compared the City's engagement of Saskatoon's Aboriginal communities to a hypothetical scenario in which his organization might engage a local immigrant community:

> If I wanted to engage in the Filipino community on some of the stuff we're doing…I can't go and tell them 'we're having a session at White Buffalo, you guys come out' and expect them to come. I mean they have their own process…I'm sure they're comfortable with… They have to feel comfortable to come through the door to begin with, and the next one is be comfortable to speak up… (Tribal Chief, Saskatoon Tribal Council, January 29, 2013)

This participant seems to suggest that accommodating ethno-cultural difference means enabling a minority group to decide for themselves how to do so. While I agree with this sentiment generally, only Aboriginal groups hold inherent and legal rights to be consulted by Canadian governments on their own terms.

Participants from the City diverged significantly in their understanding of Aboriginal separateness and how such recognition should translate into alternative community engagement. The Mayor, for example, suggested that Aboriginal communities, like other ethno-cultural minority groups, simply want to be "treated special" and should be included equally as such in mainstream civic programs:

> Well we met with the Aboriginal communities just like we met with other groups, so I think first of all it signifies that we consider them to be a very important part of the community, that in fact they were asked to participate, they were asked what were their needs, what their concerns were, where they saw the City going into the future. And I think they were addressed in that sense, like for example housing is one of them, safety is another, job opportunities… those are all things that were all addressed in our strategic plan and they're part and parcel of that… We wanted to be inclusive of everyone, not exclusive. And on top of it, whenever you ask to be treated special you will be treated special. Unfortunately that may be positive and that may be negative, but you will be treated special. And I think in Saskatoon here we have the opportunity to be far more inclusive and that's what we're trying to do. (Mayor, City of Saskatoon, February 7, 2013)

One City councilor acknowledged Aboriginal citizens' cultural uniqueness, existing governance affiliations and structures, inimitable life circumstances, and disparate feelings of comfort toward participating in City functions as reasons for implementing a distinct engagement process:

> Part of the reality is that a lot of people…who are First Nations and Métis, they have already existing governance structures that they're operating in and also a whole variety of other life circumstances… I mean what the day to day details of what the City's doing aren't always the top of mind area of attention for them. So I think that's a reason why it's worth figuring out those ways to do it… I have no problem with special treatment or whatever if the idea is saying 'hey, what can we do to sort of develop a comfortable and meaningful way for people from First Nations or the Métis community to be involved?' …Our goals should be to find out, you know, what is the table that we could create that would bring that community together with the whole city…with representatives from all walks of life? (City Councilor, City of Saskatoon, January 3, 2013)

Despite this recognition, the separate Aboriginal community consultation process was not planned to initially accommodate ethno-cultural difference, nor requests for special treatment; it was only developed once the City recognized that it had insufficient Aboriginal participation at the primary Saskatoon Speaks event.

Some Aboriginal participants relatedly perceived that the City's community engagement events were perhaps planned too quickly and neglected protocols that, if carried out more methodically and in collaboration with First Nation and Métis authorities, may have garnered increased participation in, and community attachment to, the planning process. One participant described some procedural considerations based on his own professional experience with Aboriginal community engagement and consultation:

> Gathering information from Aboriginal people happens at different levels. So…our process for engaging the work that we pulled out to try and create this Aboriginal strategy was a process of engaging community with first the ask…at the political level, 'can we be in your community?' And going through the steps required to get that support…being respectful of the community's input into the

> force behind the project. Once we had the input at the political level we worked at the administrative level, so we worked with the Band administrators. Once they had their political go ahead then they knew it was comfortable for us to be there. We worked with different communities on the administrative level… 'what's a respectful way for us to come into your community and gather this information? This is the process we'd like to use, how can we modify this process so it works good in your community?' …Then when we were in the community we gathered information from our focus groups…the different ones that we held in the different communities that reflected that respect at the administrative level at the community level. So that's…three areas and so for Saskatoon Speaks…I didn't quite see that full engagement. (Member of Urban Aboriginal Strategy Steering Committee, March 1, 2013)

Although the City eventually utilized alternative strategies to invite input from Saskatoon's Aboriginal communities, to alleviate some barriers for participation, and to attempt to create comfortable atmospheres for participants after the initial Saskatoon Speaks event, interview results suggest that the planning process could have more thoroughly included Aboriginal communities in ways that are informed by Aboriginal experts themselves. Participants also implied that there is a significant role for symbolic protocols and other considerations in creating comfort with, and connectivity to, municipal programs, which will be explored further in the next chapter. Such procedures should demonstrate respect for Indigenous cultural values and consist of multiple layers of consent and cooperation. Indeed, Aboriginal communities and leaders not only want to be involved in every stage of community engagement and consultation, but they also want to develop some aspects of the processes themselves.

5.3 Unilateral parameters on engagement

If meaningful Aboriginal consultation requires multiple layers of engagement and shared decision-making channels and mechanisms, it is therefore understandable that

some participants conveyed skepticism about the use of information gathered from community engagement events developed and hosted by the City:

> I participated because I was the director (of an Aboriginal organization) and it meant, you know, people are coming into our centre. But to be honest with you I thought it's like every other study. Where does it end up? What do they do with it? Where does it go? I think it's good to let people vent and air out what they want to say but has it made a change? I don't know, I don't think so, not really… (Métis Participant #1, January 22, 2013)

Several municipal employees and elected officials did state that they continually refer to and employ the *Strategic Plan 2012-2022* in its current implementation phase to develop civic policies and programs, which will also be addressed in the next chapter. City interviewees also asserted that commitments were made to Aboriginal participants during Saskatoon Speaks that their input would indeed be utilized and included in the plan.

One municipal official explained that Aboriginal participants were encouraged at community consultation events to express all of their ideas about life in Saskatoon because a variety of other organizations would be able to use information that is outside of the City's mandate:

> I think people were very committed and passionate about what they wanted to say. They feel strongly about this community and want it to be a better place for them and their children, or continue to do the things we are doing right. And some skepticism… 'are you really going to do anything with this?' …That was prevalent throughout… So we made a commitment and we're following through on that commitment… This is not going to be a strategic plan that sits on the shelf, it's going to be one that's constantly updated and used and referred to and when we met with organizations and the public and so on, we were very clear to say 'please put in all of your comments on everything, but when we compile everything and start to develop the City's plan on how we're going to use this information, we are only going to use the information that relates to the things that are within the city's mandate.' So health is not part of our mandate, education is not part of our mandate. So even though people talked about schools and, you know, health care programs and all of that, we packaged that information and sent that to the relevant agencies. (Manager of Strategic and Business Planning, City of Saskatoon, January 31, 2013)

Although City employees may have encouraged perspectives that were outside of the municipal government's mandate, participants from both groups suggested that the City wasn't as open to hearing negative or discourteous input:

> When we were walking through the agenda and asking people what they would like to see and do in their community in the future there was some individuals that were angry at the system and see an opportunity to let the system know. But if you don't have some ground rules set… You don't want people to be disrespectful… (City of Saskatoon employee #2, January 11, 2013)

> There were things that people brought up that they were saying this is not the meeting for. And for me I think it needed to be the meeting for everything whether they thought this is not the meeting for it because this is planning for how Saskatoon should go. Lots of times you need to get that other stuff out of the way and when you have people willing to participate you needed to be able to answer those questions and not say this is not the meeting, because people sometimes need to get rid of the old stuff first. (Representative of Métis Service Provider, April 8, 2013)

Perhaps, as these two perspectives suggest, there are divergent opinions between City employees and Aboriginal citizens about the latitude that should be afforded participants who are willing to speak at community consultation events. For many Aboriginal participants the municipal government is implicated in all issues surrounding urban life, whereas City employees might be more easily able to disentangle such issues due to their understanding of jurisdictional mandates.

This divergence was apparent in the Culture Plan process, too, as participants from the community advisory committee expressed misunderstandings and conflicting opinions about what "culture" connotes in the municipal context:

> Maybe looking back…to that definition of culture…we would have First Nations people come to us and say 'well this is all about the arts' and we say 'well yeah that's what it's about'… I remember we had this discussion about the Cree language and that's not what this was about… Sustaining the Cree language with the Aboriginal young people of today and various Aboriginal customs and traditions… but we would need to do a better job in articulating what we meant I think… There was a desire to get into everything from

> residential schools to language and the trap line and… that's not what this was about. (City of Saskatoon employee #3, December 21, 2012)

This participant expressed that although advisory committee members were given opportunity to discuss any and all ideas related to culture, the City was unsure about how to utilize the vastly different ideas that participants discussed but have since made strides to understand how those ideas could fit within the civic context. I would argue that within the strategic planning process generally, an apparent disconnect existed between the City's parameters on input and some of the opinions and feedback that Aboriginal participants wanted to express, thus representing a deficit in meaningful Aboriginal representation. It should be noted that many non-Aboriginal participants' ideas also fell outside of the scope that City employees initially envisaged; however, this research focuses solely on Indigenous perspectives.

A limitation on Aboriginal participant input was also manifest in the analysis and final portrayal of the data. After information was gathered from all of the community consultation efforts, it was then evaluated and eventually translated through several iterations into relatively concise *Community Vision*, *Culture Plan*, and *Strategic Plan 2012-2022* documents. Participants from the City expressed that this consolidation procedure was developed internally and principally by City Council:

> (The construction of the Strategic Plan) turned out to be really a Council-driven thing… they kind of did that themselves. (City of Saskatoon employee #3, December 21, 2012)

> We adopted…an editing approach…slash, burn, whatever, but we never started anything with a blank sheet of paper, it was always an editing process… It just helps things move along a little bit and we spent a lot of time going through what the community said… So this is the work that we're doing right now… Council went through a planning session a year before they approved this and said okay, if this is all the stuff we want to do… and some of it came right from what the community thought we should do… what should we do in the long term and what are some priorities we want to focus on in the short term? So they

> went through a process to look at these two lists…and then came up with this list and Council said 'no I think we want to add this to it.' And they'd vote on it or talk about it… But most of it is reflected in here. The process that we're going through right now is… this is what we want to measure… so now we need to set targets. (Manager of Strategic and Business Planning, City of Saskatoon, January 31, 2013)

One City employee seemed critical of the process employed by Council to determine the Strategic Plan's short and long-term priorities:

> When the first cut of this document came back it was then sent back to the branch managers in the areas where you had a piece to play…and say, you know, 'is the wording of this okay? Are there some things that are absolute red flags?' There was one where we talked about implementing the municipal Culture Plan. It didn't make its way into the 4-year priorities yet it's something that we're rolling out with, right? And council's approved a new culture consultant for us. It's listed in the long term or ten-year strategies. Shouldn't the Culture Plan be actually within the 4-year priorities? …It didn't make enough dots to get into the list that were the 4-year priorities. (City of Saskatoon employee #1, December 21, 2012)

The internal process of data analysis and consolidation into official planning documents represents a major finding that was deduced from nearly all interviews with Aboriginal participants; that control over various components of the planning process needs to be authentically shared with Aboriginal communities and organizations.

5.4 Toward authenticity: shared decision-making and control

The perspectives in this section collectively suggest that Aboriginal leaders and organizations want to contribute to municipal governance processes but not as individual members on wide-ranging, often temporary committees or boards; they want more permanent, high-capacity mechanisms for civic participation with a meaningful degree of control over certain processes and certainly over any Aboriginal community consultation. One participant relatedly expressed that Métis programs are successful when they're

controlled by a Métis organization; an idea indicative of the need for Aboriginal ownership over Aboriginal community consultation in municipal planning strategies:

> One (of our programs) is affordable housing, like those four grey apartment blocks on 22nd street? …Working with the police, they've said that crime has gone down 90% in that area because of that project, keeping them drug and alcohol free. And I know that has built some strong relations with the City of Saskatoon. They get that…we can change things, if you work with us. That's one project that I think they get it. And that's a program by CUMFI through Health Canada dollars. But that's made a big difference in the neighborhood… Like we're part of making them look good. Because of what our organization is doing it makes the City look good. Did you drive down 22nd before? It was an eyesore, a slum. Now they look nice. A nice Métis flag flying there too, that's important to us. People know that it's a Métis project. (Métis participant #2, February 22, 2013)

I surmise from the perspectives conveyed throughout this chapter that the City instituted many distinct strategies to invite participation and engage input from amongst Saskatoon's Aboriginal communities and leadership within a larger planning process that was devised almost exclusively through internal structures and functions. Although City employees and officials seemed to be sincerely dedicated to Aboriginal engagement in the planning process, most did not take into account that meaningful inclusion might necessitate Aboriginal organizations controlling their own community consultations, having decision-making power throughout every stage of the planning process, and contributing to the development of the apparatus and agenda of the process itself. Furthermore, as I will elucidate in the next chapter, Aboriginal participants suggested that to ensure meaningful participation and representation in future strategic planning and policy-making exercises from Saskatoon's Aboriginal communities, the City would do well to devise some particular institutional changes and experimental governance mechanisms to facilitate inclusive, mainstream Aboriginal participation in civic governance.

CHAPTER 6: LOOKING FORWARD

The results from qualitative interviews demonstrate that although the City of Saskatoon undertook significant steps to engage Saskatoon's Aboriginal communities in its strategic planning process, that inclusion was not entirely meaningful for those involved. In addition to proposing that Aboriginal organizations be more comprehensively consulted and/or acquire greater control and decision-making authority over the planning process, Aboriginal participants collectively suggested that the City must consider institutional changes in several interconnected areas for such a process to achieve legitimation; in other words, to be "indigenized" or "co-produced." These recommendations ranged from a general commitment to symbolic actions that promote a thoroughly inclusive culture throughout the City, to specific and intricate collaborative governance mechanisms that could potentially institutionalize Aboriginal control over, and/or meaningful input toward, several municipal functions. In this chapter I highlight major findings regarding Saskatoon's prospects for future collaborative planning and policy-making, as well as ancillary considerations for the City's relationships with Saskatoon's Aboriginal communities. This chapter also provides an effective transition into the seventh and final chapter, which will highlight connections between this research and the literature presented in Chapter Two.

6.1 Implementing the *Strategic Plan 2012-2022* through collaboration

It is appropriate here to address some implications and opportunities that arose in discussions regarding the current implementation phase of Saskatoon's Strategic Plan. Interviews with municipal employees and officials suggest that the *Strategic Plan 2012-2022* document is regarded in City Hall as a significant achievement that is reflective of

City Council's and the community's combined visions. The plan is now being continually consulted in the creation and alteration of programs and policies in every municipal department. One participant described some benefits of this implementation:

> (The Strategic Plan) is having an impact already and we see that. We've also seen that in decisions made about planning already and about how we're changing the way we design neighborhoods and so on because…people thought we need to curb our sprawl and keep taxes down and all these types of things… But then…when you actually make a decision about something…we can reference the strategic plan… But we do have that population of people who were involved who we can draw on and say…'is this still important to you? This is what you said, right?' And that's helpful because…we've got a citizen voice that we can work with as well as just the administrative voice. (City Councilor, City of Saskatoon, January 3, 2013)

This viewpoint suggests that implementing the Strategic Plan (including the Culture Plan) opens up interesting and perhaps welcomed opportunities for further input from the public. Such prospects could potentially lead to new, distinctive forms of collaboration with and engagement of Saskatoon's Aboriginal communities.

Although one City employee would have preferred that the Strategic Plan embrace "a stand alone directive around Aboriginal inclusion" with stronger wording, he nevertheless explained that the document has empowered the City to bolster programs for, and working relationships with, Saskatoon's Aboriginal communities:

> It's easier to sell your work plan back to senior management if it ties back into the strategic plan. So to me they go hand in hand, and…when the departments can meet the outcomes that are defined in the strategic plan it benefits them too. So it was important to me in moving forward that (inclusion) was articulated in the plan specifically towards Aboriginal people… I was able to see that play out through the development of the plan and the statements are generally inclusive enough that…one can see that the Aboriginal community fits in there. (City of Saskatoon employee #2, January 11, 2013)

This quote alludes to the flexibility of the *Strategic Plan 2012-2022* and highlights the City's significant potential to utilize the document to cultivate institutional space for enhanced Aboriginal inclusion and representation.

Such opportunities are viable because the drivers and indicators of success that are listed throughout the Strategic Plan contain language that is sometimes quite vague. An example can be found under the "Quality of Life" section where one strategic goal aims to "strengthen relations with local Aboriginal organizations," while another success indicator points to the "number of programs implemented that support the Aboriginal community" (Strategic Plan 2012-2022: 28). Municipal departments are now tasked with developing detailed success drivers, indicators, and targets; creating space for such directives in the annual budget and corporate business plan; and implementing plans and projects to meet those general priorities (Strategic Plan: 11). One City employee talked about his department's responsive flexibility in its task to implement the municipal Culture Plan:

> We make reference in a number of places to respecting and valuing culture in its broadest sense through the work that we do… if that makes sense. So incorporating those kind of broader cultural values into, say, urban design or creating…developing opportunities for a diverse cultural expression in civic spaces and places… When I read those actions now I think there was an effort to leave that door open, so not to predetermine how that cultural expression is defined… So I think there was, I think it was carefully crafted and written in such a way to give us that flexibility to go back and say 'how should a culture be expressed or represented in any number of ways?' (City of Saskatoon employee #3, December 21, 2012)

Although Aboriginal participants were generally reluctant to deem the strategic planning process entirely meaningful for themselves, perspectives from City employees and elected officials indicate that the existence of, and the City's adherence to, the *Strategic Plan 2012-2022* has at least created opportunities for further Aboriginal engagement and participation in municipal functions. Indeed, leaders and experts from Saskatoon's Aboriginal communities could and should be directly involved in shaping municipal strategies through significant input and meaningful collaboration. But what

does meaningful collaboration in urban governance entail? The next section will introduce interview results that highlight some considerations for meaningful Aboriginal participation and representation in municipal planning and policy-making practices.

6.2 Fostering authenticity: Aboriginal "inclusion" in City Hall

When describing municipal priorities and future prospects related to Saskatoon's Aboriginal communities, participants from the City spoke often of the municipal government's commitment to inclusion. The results of these conversations are directly relevant to the strategic planning process because Aboriginal inclusion, as was expressed in several interviews, denotes some form of authentic political participation and representation. Aboriginal inclusion and its perceived connotations diverged in slight but significant ways between Aboriginal participants and those from the City, though some perspectives of City employees and officials did reinforce those of Aboriginal participants.

Participants from the City generally described inclusion as increased municipal program and service uptake among Saskatoon's Aboriginal communities, stronger employment, skills-training, and education programs, and improved hiring practices to ensure a representative Aboriginal workforce in municipal departments. Some participants from the City emphasized that inclusion must also foster a more equitable role for Aboriginal communities in decision-making positions:

> When I use the word inclusion I want to see participation of the Aboriginal community in our programs, services, decision making, so that we can benchmark or measure against another numerical factor…there's a lot of duplication in programs and services that are offered, not only by Aboriginal organizations, but non-Aboriginal organizations that are providing services for Aboriginal people. (City of Saskatoon employee #2, January 11, 2013)

Several municipal employees affirmed the existence of systemic barriers to Aboriginal representation and participation in City Hall. For example, one participant spoke of the City's need for, and recent commitment to, intercultural competency training as a strategy to develop an inclusive municipal culture that reduces barriers for participation:

> About a year or so ago (the City) undertook…intercultural competency training…and inventorying of senior management, City council and some of our supervisors and leaders… (We are) working with our human resources department right now to see if we can put together a bit of a framework for diversity and inclusion policy…where we actually take a step back and take a look at all of our policies, practices, processes, and put them through an inclusion lens. So we have some policies in place that don't overtly discriminate but do create some systemic barriers for the Aboriginal community and/or visible minorities or persons with disabilities from actively engaging with the corporation either as an employee or as a customer of the City. (City of Saskatoon employee #1, December 21, 2012)

This quote is emblematic of several participants' perceptions of a dominant corporate culture that exists within the decision-making structures of Saskatoon's municipal government. One of the Mayor's statements seems to provide a perspective that represents this dominant civic culture:

> I look at…our cultural diversity and race relations department and quite frankly I think it should only be called cultural diversity because we all belong to one race and that's the human race. I didn't know we had different races. I think we have different cultures is what it's all about. And so for me I look at it as being a cultural diversity that we have and (the Aboriginal communities) participate in that. (Mayor, City of Saskatoon, February 7, 2013)

I want to be clear here that I do not suggest the Mayor's viewpoint is in any way condemnable or iniquitous. I would, however, argue that although there is no scientific evidence to support the existence of genetically dissimilar "races" within humanity, race is a very real social construct that has historically fueled cultural inequities, ethnically stratified power relations, and has provided impetus for colonization and colonialism. Proponents of Critical Race Theory (CRT) have posited that Canadian governments have

been predominantly molded by, and historical power relations continue to favour, white (and disproportionately male) Canadians over other ethnic groups (Belanger and Walker 2009, Walker and Belanger 2013). Belanger and Walker (2009: 123) discuss Claude Denis' (1996) conception of whitestreaming and how the misguided perception of public institutions as culturally neutral has worked to subjugate and exclude Aboriginal communities from systems of power:

> 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 (123).

One might argue that to reject race is to deny the existence of systemic racism as well as the profound and overt injustices that whitestream government policies have inflicted upon Canada's Aboriginal populations. Ignoring the implications of ongoing racial stratification reinforces colonialism through the standardization of dominant ways of knowing in public institutions, while simultaneously rejecting minority worldviews in the municipal milieu (Silver et al 2005).

One First Nations political leader described his experiences with this dominant municipal culture as a general struggle to find willful acceptance and accommodation for Aboriginal interests in City Hall:

> I still think we're fighting an uphill battle because…in the last I guess three years we've had some major sporting events and some major cultural events in Saskatoon…and we've asked the City…for grants and things like that. And the last event, just talking about staff members, whether it's the City executive or the City managers, they said 'we're giving too much to the Indians… grants to bring these events in.' Yeah but you've only been doing it for three years. What about the first hundred years? So we still have to get through that mindset. And… as much as council likes it to be a friendly place, it's not that friendly to First Nations. (Tribal Chief, Saskatoon Tribal Council, January 29, 2013)

The point made at the end of this quote is central to this project and represents a common viewpoint that Aboriginal participants expressed: that the strategic planning process should not be considered an isolated event. Participation in and attachment to such a project among Saskatoon's Aboriginal population was at least partially determined by individuals' feelings of connectivity to and representation within the municipal government generally. When the historical prevalence of institutional racism and whitestreaming are considered, the disjuncture between the Mayor's call for universal cultural equality and Aboriginal participants' desire for distinct recognition and inclusion of Aboriginal cultures becomes clear.

Some municipal participants did seem to acknowledge the reality of racialized inequalities through their ideas about Aboriginal inclusion in Saskatoon. One employee stated that the City must provide more opportunities to Aboriginal artists to create public installations and more heavily influence place-making practices:

> We need to…ensure that people…have opportunities; that know about the projects that are coming and have an opportunity. And we need to look at…how we look at art too… One of the big discussions we're having now is…outdoor public art can't just be tall metal things… It's not something I thought of before but it tends to be the domain of older white male artists and so…just by the way you craft your RFP (request for proposals) or your call for artists you start to inadvertently sort of preset the parameters of the kind of art you want. I think we need to…think about art and what art is and…giving those opportunities to First Nation and Métis artists. (City of Saskatoon employee #3, December 21, 2012)

A City Councilor suggested that the City of Saskatoon must be more open to learning from Treaty Six and the cultural knowledge of urban Aboriginal communities:

> What could we do using the treaties as a model…what does it mean to be a City within Treaty Six territory and what are the ways we can use the nature of the treaty relationship living…on this land? It's a really strong, basic concept to help, but…there are a lot of elements of it around the medicine chest and education and farming and so on that aren't really City-related elements. But what are the things that we can see as City-related elements that we could learn from and help guide a future relationship here? I think there's something there

> and I don't know exactly how to get at it and I think it needs to be built together. I've thought at times well maybe Council should propose this and should propose that but it's not really the way to do it… we need to develop those terms together, right? And determine what the best framework is to get there. (City Councilor, City of Saskatoon, January 3, 2013)

Both of these viewpoints emphasize that inclusion through meaningful participation and representation of Aboriginal communities in municipal governance requires distinct efforts to eliminate systemic barriers and locate particular opportunities for increased collaboration. As will be covered in the next section, participants also expressed the need for active measures to ensure that Aboriginal citizens *want* to participate in municipal functions.

6.3 Authenticity through symbolic gestures: extending the invitation

It became evident in interviews that people who identify with urban Aboriginal communities may only want to participate in the City of Saskatoon's planning and policy-making functions if the processes are indigenized or co-produced, which could be achieved by transferring some control and decision-making power to Aboriginal organizations. Participants also suggested that the City must achieve an authentic role within Aboriginal citizens' daily lives. Saskatoon has some strategies for Aboriginal inclusion and engagement and the City has also dedicated resources and efforts to numerous collaborative programming areas. Notwithstanding these programming successes, the City's previously mentioned commitment to urban reserve development, nor its relatively distinct Aboriginal community consultation process during Saskatoon Speaks, nearly every Aboriginal participant noted that the City lacks visible and symbolic actions and gestures that could potentially demonstrate an overarching acceptance of Aboriginal cultures and perspectives in municipal institutions.

For example, despite the work that Saskatoon has done in recognizing the treaty land entitlements of local First Nations and in implementing municipal service negotiations that allow for tax-exempt federal reserve lands within Saskatoon, participants suggested that the visible gesture of flying Treaty Six and Métis flags outside of City Hall would demonstrate a commitment to upholding the City's obligations to Aboriginal communities and affirming Aboriginal rights[5]:

> Well I think the cities can take some leadership even though sometimes they don't want to. And the easy way out is to say 'oh we don't have the mandate, that's not in our ballpark.' But treaties are in everybody's ballpark. A good way even to show that is put a Treaty Six flag at City Hall. I mean we've got the United Nations flag, that's not real close to home… You've got to show that you're willing and I think that would go a long ways. (Tribal Chief, Saskatoon Tribal Council, January 29, 2013)

Another participant compared his experience with Saskatoon Speaks to other events in which he has participated and noted that symbolic actions at mainstream municipal functions could be more meaningful for Aboriginal communities:

> When I would travel nationally I noticed there was a strong recognition of giving homage to the traditional territories we were in and regardless of it being a First Nation event or not a First Nation event…some of the conferences I went to weren't First Nations-driven conferences and there's city mayors and public officials giving homage to the territory and welcoming people to the territory, giving that recognition. And so I come back to Saskatchewan and I think we don't even have that recognition…a lack of even that small little process or procedure at our municipal level; giving homage to being in Treaty Six territory; homage to the traditional First Nations groups that have welcomed others; homage for First Nations groups here. (Member of Urban Aboriginal Strategy Steering Committee, March 1, 2013)

One participant suggested that one of the City's goals should consist of working toward instilling cultural pride within Saskatoon's Métis community by visibly recognizing local Métis contributions to Saskatoon:

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[5] The City of Saskatoon actually raised Treaty Six and Métis Nation flags, in a grand public ceremony, on October 25th, 2013 – several months after interviews were completed. The City has also recently developed plans to increase public art opportunities for First Nations and Métis artists.

> That pride in your culture, that was gone for a long time… When you have pride in your culture it affects everybody… When you have pride in yourself you have pride in your home, pride in your community, pride in your country. It just all falls into place if you've got pride in yourself… The best I could hope for…is that the City recognizes the history and the contributions of the Métis to this city... It makes people feel acknowledged, a little valuable, like we're part of something… And if you don't know about Métis history…if you're the Mayor and you don't know about Métis contributions going back to when you became a city why don't you? Or for any of our politicians, you should know about that. (Métis participant #2, February 22, 2013)

One mechanism that has been utilized by other major cities as a practical and grand gesture to demonstrate a municipal government's commitments to local Aboriginal communities is to create an umbrella municipal-Aboriginal accord which, in broad terms, defines the City's priorities concerning its Aboriginal citizenry (see Thompson Aboriginal Accord 2009, Edmonton Urban Aboriginal Accord 2006, Winnipeg's First Steps: Municipal Aboriginal Pathways 2003, and Toronto's Statement of Commitment to Aboriginal Communities 2010). In interviews with City officials and employees I asked about the plausibility of creating such an accord for Saskatoon. Though some participants were intrigued by the idea, most expressed that Saskatoon is able to carry out meaningful work with Aboriginal communities and organizations without such an overarching agreement or declaration:

> There's some mixed feedback from Winnipeg and Edmonton who've done the formalized accords. An accord is as good as the paper you write it on if your actions don't follow… At the end of the day if…you've built relationships and you've built trust and you are actively recruiting and hiring Aboriginal employees and retaining them, then decide whether you need that piece of paper to say we've signed onto this. (City of Saskatoon employee #1, December 21, 2012)

Municipal departments and City Council have valid reasons to emphasize specific, tangible projects and programs as the key component to developing "successful" relationships with Saskatoon's Aboriginal communities. Indeed, empty symbolism or

symbolic gestures without effective action surely would not be useful. That being said, Aboriginal participants clearly indicated a substantial need and desire for symbolic gestures that publicly demonstrate the City's commitments to its Aboriginal communities. Perhaps, then, it may be more useful to consider effective actions *and* symbolic gestures rather than emphasizing one *instead of* the other. An umbrella accord is of course only one example of the kind of symbolism that could bolster Aboriginal community participation in municipal functions. Regardless, Aboriginal leaders and experts who are most deeply connected with Saskatoon's Aboriginal communities should directly inform this kind of discussion, in partnership with the City.

6.4 Institutionalizing collaboration: exploring prospects for alternative governance mechanisms

In this section interview results are considered as a whole and connections are drawn between the potential indigenization of the City of Saskatoon's planning strategies and its general relationships with, and commitments toward, Saskatoon's Aboriginal communities. It is necessary here to shift the discussion toward potential mechanisms that could institutionalize and augment collaborative governance through meaningful Aboriginal representation and participation in civic functions. Aboriginal participants asserted that increased decision-making power and control over community consultations within the strategic planning process would have garnered more thorough participation and stronger input from Saskatoon's Aboriginal communities; that existing municipal mechanisms such as the Cultural Diversity and Race Relations Committee do not adequately represent Indigenous perspectives in planning and policy-making practices; and that the City can more meaningfully engage Aboriginal communities by achieving an

authentic role in Aboriginal citizens' everyday lives. Authentic engagement includes a visible, holistic commitment to the inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives in City Hall. While Saskatoon has achieved some success in particular cooperative projects with Aboriginal communities and organizations, I contend that more durable and permanent mechanisms are needed to thoroughly institutionalize these and other directives.

In multiple interviews participants brought up the prospect of developing a municipal-Aboriginal council that could potentially inform multiple discussions about Aboriginal inclusion while actively collaborating with City Council and civic departments on myriad levels. One Aboriginal participant described the potential symbolic *and* practical impact that an Aboriginal council could have on future community engagement and consultation:

> If they really want First Nations input and if that's important to them, wouldn't they set up a First Nations committee? Or would we just get lumped in under the race relations committee or diversity committee or whatever they may have? And then you really have to ask, if we're not putting the priority there, do your constituents see that? …You just can't tell people 'OK, you're important to me and I want your input,' then wave a magic wand and expect it to happen. You have to show them that you want them, that they are important, that you're willing to do this. Then they'll show up. I think they need to have some incremental changes there… The City may want to do stuff like partner up with the Tribal Council…as a way to engage more citizens. But even that's not going to be good enough. Eventually that's got to be more of an ownership on the First Nations side. (Tribal Chief, Saskatoon Tribal Council, January 29, 2013)

In all interviews wherein participants did not bring up the prospect of a municipal-Aboriginal council themselves, I introduced it as a hypothetical consideration. I posed questions about why such a committee may or may not be useful, how it might fit with or alter the governance structure of the City, what its functions might consist of, who would sit on such a council and, to City employees and officials with an understanding of

municipal budgets and priority-setting practices, whether or not this kind of mechanism is potentially feasible.

All Aboriginal participants suggested that some kind of Aboriginal council could foster the indigenization of planning and policy-making practices specifically, and also account for more meaningful Aboriginal political and administrative representation and participation in municipal governance generally. Most Aboriginal participants suggested that such a council should act as an advisory body that could provide a direct and mutually beneficial governance link between City Council, City management and administration, and Saskatoon's Aboriginal communities:

> I've often thought, I wonder if they set up an Aboriginal table, you know, an Aboriginal city council table basically aside from their council and have representation on there to talk about the city of Saskatoon. And if you had Aboriginal leaders on there who had a place to go and make recommendations, I think that would make a difference… It would be a good learning process for the Aboriginal community because they'd be getting information from the whole City. We have pieces of information from our communities where everyone has their working environment but we're not too concerned about what's happening in other areas. We don't have the time or capacity. So I'm thinking if we had a committee like that we'd have a group of people on there that can bring back out to our communities what's actually happening. (Representative of Métis Service Provider, April 8, 2013)

> (The council should be) advisory, exactly the way (the) Aboriginal advisory group advises the United Way board… That would work for the City. Why couldn't they do that? Like take some of the pressure off (City Council) when their constituents are complaining or, you know, have some issues. That might be some avenue to look at… They'd have to be maybe somebody from the Métis society, FSIN, community agencies like CUMFI, you know, Friendship Centre, an Elder, you know, just be an advisory… but it would have to be meaningful. (Métis Participant #1, January 22, 2013)

As this latter participant suggested and other participants echoed, an Indigenous council would probably be most effective if it enlisted representatives from different First Nations and Métis organizations that already provide representation and services for Saskatoon's Aboriginal communities:

> Well you could probably have representatives from the different First Nations organizations and Métis organizations. Like we could appoint somebody from the Federation (of Saskatchewan Indian Nations), appoint somebody from the Métis Nation and a local Métis council and maybe some interested members from the broader community. And they would be for lack of a better word the Aboriginal committee or advisory to mayor and council. (Tribal Chief, Saskatoon Tribal Council, January 29, 2013)

> It would be best to have leaders from various organizations who are already… you know, in this city everyone already knows who works for the people. (Representative of Métis Service Provider, April 8, 2013)

As these perspectives suggest, perhaps the involvement of existing, legitimate community leaders in an Aboriginal-controlled, permanent, and effective governance mechanism would nurture greater authenticity when the City engages Aboriginal community input and participation in specific municipal projects.

In addition to the possibility of achieving more meaningful Aboriginal participation in municipal projects, participants generally expressed that an Aboriginal council could also be utilized to locate and advocate for their communities' priority issues as the City implements and updates the *Strategic Plan 2012-2022*:

> I think it would be a very grand gesture for the City to have an Aboriginal advisory council at the political level that had space for Chief and councils from various communities or at the Tribal Council level to have representation and to have some kind of movement going in towards, or attention to what are the top issues? What is the city experiencing? What are the top First Nation issues and…how could that political force put some energy behind it so it's a better outcome for First Nation people living in the city? I think that would be really neat to have an Aboriginal advisory council and…that's one way of having that more prominent voice. (Member of Urban Aboriginal Strategy Steering Committee, March 1, 2013)

Other participants emphasized the potential significance of such a committee's dialogical functions and the potential to develop "indigenized" ideas concerning municipal policies, programs, and other directives:

> Lots of our decisions are made around discussion, you know? …Like when there's decisions to be made at the Friendship Centre board or CUMFI board,

> you've got people hitting the table and you're hammering things out, as they say, to come up with the best decision. You can't do that when you're just by yourself on a committee… It's kind of like…getting all of our perspectives together and coming up with what's kind of best and then presenting that instead of being...one voice on a big committee (where) it's majority rules. Then you're usually in a minority anyways or whatever, so yeah I think it would be more effective. (Métis participant #2, February 22, 2013)

> I think people need to be open to those kinds of initiatives and if they weren't good, then we tried. And I think that's where people are a little hesitant to do that extra step or go that extra mile. But I told our Chiefs, you know, if we screw up we're going to be screwing up because we're trying something, because we did something. So I'd rather screw up. But if we don't do something, for sure we're screwing up. (Tribal Chief, Saskatoon Tribal Council, January 29, 2013)

Although I am not necessarily prescribing that the City initiate a committee like the one that has been collectively postulated by this small group of Aboriginal leaders and experts, the interviews suggest that a conversation about some form of institutionalized mechanism(s) that can potentially reconcile First Nations, M**é**tis, and non-Aboriginal interests while accounting for the meaningful representation and participation of Aboriginal perspectives in City Hall is necessary. One City Councilor articulated a similar sentiment, from a municipal government standpoint, in a very thoughtful way:

> I think one of the key things is if we can change our thinking around this, especially the non-Aboriginal community, from 'what's our obligation here? What's our duty here? What do we have to do now to try and solve this problem?' That, which is the framework that most people are operating from… to 'what is the opportunity here?' …If we could get this right we could really be recognizing the fact that the…history of Canada hasn't been always good but…it's a merging and a bumping of these cultures and there's been some big failures in that process… OK, so what is the next chapter going to be and how do we take (an Aboriginal advisory committee), whatever it would be to say 'this is going to help us. This is going to help all of us to be the sort of best city, the best country, and overcome some of our gaps'…especially to me when we look at some of the challenges we have like the climate challenges and the environmental challenges and the sort of spiritual challenges that we have, that there's in fact probably things we could learn. It's not just an obligation for us, but what can we learn by actually re-engaging in a learning way and say… 'What are some of the ethics of some of the traditional teachings and so on and the medicine wheel? What could they help provide all of us to help carve a path into the future that's more sustainable, is more hopeful, is more holistic?'

> Because, you know, we're kind of sucking in some of those areas. The European-centred things are dropping the ball and as a City we've kind of blown a bunch of things too, right? That's how I wanted to approach this here, to try and get past some of this obligatory stuff… And yes there are rights and that's good, but there's got to be more than that for people to feel enthusiastic about it, right? (City Councilor, City of Saskatoon, January 3, 2013)

A conceptual shift from "obligations" to appease Aboriginal demands toward "opportunities" for mutual learning and problem solving opens up new terrain through which collaborative urban governance between the City of Saskatoon and its urban Aboriginal communities becomes more than conceivable; it becomes sensible. Interview results indicate that the potential indigenization or co-production of municipal planning and policy-making represents a viable pathway to meaningfully imbue civic governance with Aboriginal knowledge and perspectives; however, the cause-and-effect flow of influence that this pathway embodies is perhaps dual- or multi-directional. In other words, supplementary actions aimed to strengthen the representation of Aboriginal communities in the City's governance apparatuses and general functions would have a substantive effect on First Nations and Métis individuals' senses of belonging, cultural pride, connectivity to the city, and therefore their overall willingness to contribute to specific community consultation programs in the future. It is therefore reasonable to suggest that the City of Saskatoon not only (re)consider the degree to which Aboriginal communities are involved in strategic planning and policy-making functions, but it should also reflect upon existing *and* potential mechanisms for the meaningful acceptance and utilization of Indigenous perspectives and knowledge at all levels of civic government.

CHAPTER 7 – DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter I explicate the significance of this research as it relates to the most pertinent literature covered in Chapter Two. I will also abridge some of the key research findings from the previous three chapters and elucidate what can be learned, as well as where further research is necessary, from this inquiry. It is useful here to reiterate the normative concepts that were considered when composing the research question, the interview guides, and thematically organizing the research results. I began with the foundational notion that Aboriginal people throughout Canada retain inherent and legal rights to self-determining autonomy and strive to cultivate and occupy space through which individual and collective self-determination can be authentically expressed. While self-government has become the principal political vehicle through which Aboriginal self-determination is recognized in Canada, collaborative "governance" between various Aboriginal organizations (including political leaders, community experts and/or grassroots "knowers") and municipal governments is regarded as a promising framework through which to actualize local scales of Aboriginal self-determination in large Canadian cities and particularly those in the Prairie Provinces (Graham and Plumptre 1999, Christie 2003, Hanselmann 2003, Todd 2003, Walker 2006, Peters 2010).

I also employed the idea that creating space for self-determination generally necessitates the decolonization of the state and its existing power structures (Borrows 2002, Green 2003). Here, decolonization specifically involves the dismantling and reorganization of the historically "whitestream" public sector (Denis 1997, Andersen 2013) so that diverse Indigenous perspectives significantly shape such institutions. This idea of decolonization has been described elsewhere in functional terms as the "indigenization" of the state:

> Indigenization means that the settler state and its relatively privileged populations must also change to accommodate the reality of Indigenous nations and the politicoeconomic and cultural expression of Indigenous nations' rights. It means that privilege must give way to conscious recognition that Canada is built on Indigenous land, with Indigenous resources, with coerced Indigenous participation and at the expense of Indigenous wellbeing (Green and Peach 2007: 279-280).

The normative concepts of municipal-Aboriginal institutional "interfacing" (Walker 2008b) and planning and policy "co-production" (Belanger and Walker 2009, Walker et al 2011) were utilized in the primary research of this thesis as analytical bases through which I explored specific connotations and implications of collaborative Aboriginal-municipal urban governance generally, and the indigenization of mainstream planning and policy-making processes specifically. Leo's (2006) call to conceive governance beyond structural government hierarchies and instead toward intricate decision-making processes that extend into communities and other grassroots social configurations was also used to conceptualize this research. These concepts influenced my decision to investigate the City of Saskatoon's recent strategic planning process as a potential mechanism to inform and cultivate collaborative urban governance in a large, Prairie Canadian city. This inquiry explored perspectives about Aboriginal community participation in, and contributions to, Saskatoon's strategic planning process.

To reiterate, I regard the strategic plan as a foundational stage in the policy-making functions of Saskatoon's municipal government. Indeed, participants from the City noted that the *Strategic Plan 2012-2022* must now be applied in the creation and modification of all civic programs, services, and policies. Furthermore, Lane and Hibbard's (2005: 174) argument for transformative planning, which utilizes Friedman's (1987) transformative theory and Tully's (2000) conception of shared jurisdiction, posits that Aboriginal communities may gain some political autonomy and jurisdictional

authority by "identifying and implementing strategies for transforming (their) structures of oppression." While Aboriginal communities already engage in their own transformative planning processes internally to some extent, I argue that mainstream governments can and should further support such practices and be open to learning from them. How, then, do the City of Saskatoon's strategies for engaging and including Aboriginal participation and perspectives in its strategic planning process relate or speak to the collaborative and power-sharing elements of transformative planning, co-production, and governance interfacing?

In this research I asked and attempted to prompt participants to consider two broad questions: 1) Does Saskatoon's engagement of Aboriginal participation throughout Saskatoon Speaks and the Culture Plan represent a co-produced or indigenized mainstream planning and policy-making process? 2) Does the potential indigenization of municipal planning and policy-making practices represent a promising mechanism or pathway to facilitate local decolonization through collaborative municipal-Aboriginal governance in Saskatoon? The results of this discussion suggest that the City of Saskatoon's distinct engagement of Aboriginal stakeholders and communities in the strategic planning process represents some foundations for indigenization; however, their involvement was neither entirely meaningful nor comfortable for those involved. Results indicate that the indigenization of mainstream municipal planning and policy-making functions can help foster collaborative, decolonized urban governance in Saskatoon, but to indigenize such a process requires additional action on several interconnected and institutional considerations.

7.1 Saskatoon's strategic planning process: significant Aboriginal engagement, rudimentary collaboration and indigenization

To address the links between Saskatoon's strategic planning process and collaborative, indigenized urban governance, Belanger and Walker's (2009) and Walker et al's (2011) conceptual ideas about planning and policy co-production are very pertinent. Co-production is defined as "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" (Belanger and Walker 2009: 120). Co-production requires mechanisms that ensure Aboriginal community interests and perspectives inform every stage of planning and policy-making practices. Planning and policy-making strategies that are co-produced between Aboriginal communities and municipal governments are considered equitable and appropriate practices for large Canadian cities. Whereas Belanger and Walker (2009) and Walker et al (2011) describe co-production as a necessary precept for good *Aboriginal* policies, I began this research with the contention that the co-production of *mainstream* municipal policy-making and planning processes may contribute to decolonized urban governance generally. Mainstream planning and policy co-production, if meaningfully constructed and implemented by Aboriginal communities and municipal governments in partnership with one another, represents the indigenization of such processes.

Interview participants recalled that Aboriginal leaders and experts were invited to participate in Saskatoon's strategic planning process from its early stages. Several participants also noted that invitations were sent through a variety of channels in order to convey sincerity and were then followed up by City employees and officials. While the involvement of external Aboriginal stakeholders commenced early in the planning

process – specifically in the agenda-setting stage – their views were lumped together with the many other external stakeholders from numerous urban sectors. Data from all stakeholder interviews was collectively analyzed and translated into working themes for the Saskatoon Speaks community consultation program. That the City considered all stakeholder perspectives equally and altogether is perhaps not surprising since Canadian municipal governments tend to emphasize the needs and interests of individuals, families, and/or homogenous "taxpayers" more so than those of distinct ethno-cultural groups. Moreover, City officials and employees indicated that Aboriginal communities were given equal weight to other subgroups in the planning process, which suggests that Aboriginal voices are simply seen to comprise just another interest group; a point that the Mayor made explicitly.

Interview results suggest that Aboriginal stakeholders felt discomfort about comprising a minority interest group among many other stakeholders, which led to varying degrees of participation reluctance. The averseness that was shared by several Aboriginal participants demonstrates a significant need to engage Aboriginal leaders, experts, and communities through means that are distinctive from the rest of the population. Separate processes for Aboriginal participation in mainstream planning and policy-making practices might also require mechanisms to ensure that Indigenous perspectives are weighted more heavily than those of other interest groups in accordance with principles of decolonization and rights to autonomous self-determination in Canada. As well, Aboriginal leaders and experts should be empowered to comprehensively influence every stage of municipal policy-making and planning practices.

The initial participation of Aboriginal stakeholders in Saskatoon's strategic planning process, as with all stakeholders, was aimed to gain perspectives and feedback

on the City's strengths, weaknesses, and imminent priorities in order to develop the community consultation working themes (Saskatoon Community Vision 2011). The City eventually endeavored to expand some Aboriginal stakeholders' roles to "project champions" of the Saskatoon Speaks program and its Aboriginal-specific consultation events after it was determined that Aboriginal participation at mainstream consultations was comparatively low. Some stakeholders were also consulted by City employees, albeit limitedly, to determine appropriate and effective community engagement procedures. These strategies aimed to bolster the attendance and participation of Aboriginal community members at consultation events. Several interviewees from both groups saw the City's actions as efforts to utilize Aboriginal leaders' and experts' representative legitimacy within their communities. This viewpoint reflects a principal underpinning for co-production, transformative planning, and collaborative governance generally: the acknowledgement by mainstream governments that many urban Aboriginal individuals and organizations have not only earned legitimate, representative agency within urban Aboriginal communities, but they also retain and can offer particular knowledge about those communities beyond the existing scope of the state.

Although the City of Saskatoon acknowledged and somewhat utilized Aboriginal leadership and expertise, external stakeholders and participants did not have decision-making power throughout the strategic planning process, nor were Aboriginal participants empowered to develop and plan for Aboriginal-specific community consultation events on their own terms. It is notable that the City held Aboriginal community-specific events *in addition* to mainstream ones, yet the City ultimately retained control and decision-making authority over these processes. While the City's early and ongoing efforts to engage participation from Saskatoon's Aboriginal leaders and experts reflect rudiments of

collaboration, the fullest realization of co-production would require a far more thorough indigenization of the process itself. Indeed, as Walker et al (2011: 163) contend, "government officials have a responsibility to identify and engage appropriate Aboriginal leaders and experts in the policy process… from agenda setting to problem definition, to production and decisions based upon alternatives, to implementation."

While I am in no position to judge the quality or legitimacy of Aboriginal stakeholders' collective leadership and expertise who were involved in the strategic planning process, it appears that the City engaged individuals with significant, lived knowledge of their communities – those who might contribute to the cultivation of "progressive politics" in Saskatoon (Andrews 2003). Aboriginal stakeholders were also attached, in various ways, to the kinds of political, service, and advocacy organizations that are central to notions of governance interfacing (Walker 2008b) and transformative planning (Lane and Hibbard 2005). At the very least, self-determination probably necessitates that urban Aboriginal communities be enabled to substantiate the legitimacy of their own representatives. It is also apparent that the co-production or indigenization of strategic municipal planning requires more comprehensive and autonomous Aboriginal stakeholder participation. Interview participants suggested that Aboriginal communities should be engaged on multiple levels in any consultation process, depending on the communities' characteristics and representative structures. All Aboriginal interviewees suggested that a significant transfer of authority and control to Aboriginal organizations over various aspects of the planning process itself, especially where there is distinct Aboriginal community engagement, would not only increase stakeholders' willingness to participate, but might also mitigate participation reluctance among the broader Indigenous population. In other words, the City has a role to not only identify Aboriginal leaders and

experts to help shape the planning process, but to also provide the space and mechanisms for those individuals to authentically bring their communities into the process for constructive engagement.

The related concepts of co-production and transformative planning also necessitate the identification of institutional whitestreaming, specifically the structural and functional ways through which non-Aboriginal (principally "Western" or Eurocentric) perspectives are systemically privileged over Aboriginal ones. Belanger and Walker (2009: 123) explain:

> 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.

Participants in Saskatoon Speaks were provided opportunity to speak their minds at consultation events as long as their comments were not disrespectful of others. While viewpoints that did not directly relate to municipal mandates were recorded and passed on to relevant governments and non-governmental agencies, Saskatoon's planning process did not explicitly include efforts to understand or reveal whitestream structures and practices.

This is a crucial exercise for decolonizing collaborative governance relationships since the forms of systemic racism and marginalization that Aboriginal communities have experienced are very distinct from, have existed longer than, and have been more comprehensively oppressive and dispossessive than discrimination experienced by any other minority group in Canada. Green and Peach (2007: 281) aptly argue:

> Oppression and dispossession, and all of the bureaucratic practices that enforce them, must be recognized not as features of Canada's past that have been shaken

> off in a more enlightened and egalitarian present; they must instead be identified within current policy frameworks found on assumptions of Indigenous inferiority. We must recognize that oppression and dispossession are legitimated within official bureaucratic and legal language – and, more pervasively, within popular culture – rendering contemporary relations of dominance and subordination uncontroversial and causing Indigenous peoples to be blamed for their own suffering (281).

Although participants from the City did explain that Saskatoon has recently initiated some intercultural competency training and other processes to uncover institutional barriers to the inclusion and civic participation of disadvantaged groups, direct strategies to reveal the whitestream structures and practices that distinctly marginalize Saskatoon's Aboriginal communities are also imperative. In this research I felt it necessary to at least consider the broader municipal context by exploring participants' general attitudes toward Aboriginal inclusion and participation.

7.2 The City and Saskatoon's Aboriginal communities: A historical disconnect with contemporary interface foundations and conciliatory potential

I began interviews by asking participants questions about the City of Saskatoon's general relationships with, and priority areas of engagement of, Saskatoon's Aboriginal communities and organizations. The results demonstrate that the City of Saskatoon has indeed developed some prosperous relationships and partnerships with its urban Aboriginal communities. These associations have consisted mainly of deliberate, cooperative programming and services; urban reserve service agreements and land sales; and cooperative event planning and funding. The significance of these successes, which were professed by both groups of participants, should not be underestimated. They reveal that the City of Saskatoon harbours institutional potency, an innovative workforce, and

political will to engage Aboriginal communities for multiple reasons and through diverse means.

Successful partnerships and relationships between the City and Aboriginal institutions suggest that Saskatoon has much progressive potential to facilitate social justice and greater equity among urban residents (Andrews 2003). As Andrews (313) explains, "municipal politics deals with the issues of daily life and therefore with the issues that ordinary people understand." Due in part to the close proximity of municipal politics to urban residents' everyday lives, large Canadian cities can, and should, engage in discourse with knowledgeable community members about "the relationship between space and social justice" through planning (329). Saskatoon has developed strong relationships and partnerships through which varied dialogues already exist and I therefore presume that the City's progressive potential is considerable. Practical and effective cooperation in multiple sectors also indicates the existence of Aboriginal-municipal interfaces, especially in the priority areas that Walker (2008b) identifies as urban reserves, service agreements and regional relationships; and perhaps to a lesser extent in economic and social development.[6]

Despite these interorganizational successes, interview results suggest that Saskatoon's Aboriginal citizens are significantly disconnected from the City government. Many participants observed that Aboriginal Saskatonians' diverse worldviews, ideas, knowledge, and aspirations are not substantively represented nor reflected in municipal governance processes, including the City's policy-making functions. Channels for

[6] Walker's (2008b) conceptualization of the municipal-Aboriginal interface highlights five priority areas where Canadian cities might further their understanding of, and cooperation with, Aboriginal communities. They are: 1) Citizen participation and engagement; 2) Governance interface – municipal and Aboriginal; 3) Aboriginal culture as municipal asset; 4) Economic and social development; and 5) Urban reserves, service agreement and regional relationships.

Saskatoon's Aboriginal communities to express local self-determination appear limited to multifarious service, educational and advocacy organizations, First Nations and Métis government branches, collective political organizations, and through individual and grassroots action and resistance.

To be clear, urban Aboriginal institutions are vital for "(enhancing) the ability of First Nations and Métis people to make significant choices about their own political, cultural, economic, and social affairs" (Peters 2007: 233). So while such organizations work to forge channels to collectively express self-determination, they do not necessarily contribute to the decolonization of mainstream governments and institutions. Decolonization may occur if mainstream governments are willing to engage and enable Aboriginal organizations, leaders, and experts to influence such governments' configurations. Green and Peach (2007: 265) necessarily contend that "while governments can and should design ameliorative programs to address indigenous misery, there is no substitute for a process of genuine inclusion of Indigenous peoples in the state."

The City of Saskatoon's existing priority areas for Aboriginal engagement are important for individual wellbeing in a market economy and generally align with neoliberal discourses and ideologies. Namely, the City's emphasis on implementing cooperative services and programming aimed to strengthen Aboriginal citizens' opportunities for employment, education, work-skills training, and financial independence certainly reinforces neoliberal mantras of individual self-sufficiency, competitiveness, and conforming to market needs. While these directives can potentially function to bolster capacity among urban Aboriginal residents to express self-determination, they do not necessarily cultivate the institutional space that is needed to

meaningfully do so. As Green (2003: 54) argues, the decolonization of Canada's institutions of power, including municipal governments, requires the consolidation of Aboriginal self-determination through "new formulae for sharing political and economic power." She also contends that Aboriginal communities are at risk of being "recolonized" by neoliberal ideologies and processes. In this sense there is an implicit danger where Canadian governments' rhetoric and actions restrict the mainstream inclusion of Aboriginal communities to narrowly defined, market-centred initiatives that conform to "advanced capitalism"[7] without creating institutional space for collective self-determination (53).

Some participants from both groups argued that Saskatoon's Aboriginal communities could potentially gain a measure of self-determination by electing an Aboriginal City Councilor through the existing democratic process, especially since much of Saskatoon's Aboriginal population lives in a handful of core neighborhoods. Nearly every participant, however, described a common reluctance among urban Aboriginal residents to participate in City functions, including elections. This antipathy to municipal government was attributed by Aboriginal participants to the City's long-time neglect for core neighborhoods; historic underrepresentation of Aboriginal people on City Council, in upper administrative positions, and on municipal committees that include external community members-at-large; little to no Aboriginal control over municipal programs, even those specifically for Aboriginal residents; a widespread, diminished sense of

[7] Advanced capitalism is a term often used scholars of sociology, political economy, and particularly those who study various impacts of globalization and neoliberalization. Advanced capitalism is used to describe the convergence of socio-economic configurations and institutions in myriad sectors, both in their structures and functions, with liberal-economic market demands and regulations (see Green 2003 for discussion about Indigenous rights and advanced capitalism in Canada, McKeen and Porter 2003 for discussion about advanced capitalism and the restructuring of Canada's welfare state system, and Bacarro and Howell 2011 for perspectives on European industrial sector restructuring in advanced capitalist countries).

belonging to municipal government and its institutions; and life circumstances in which the necessities of day-to-day survival supersede individuals' will to participate in mainstream political processes.

Andersen and Denis (2003) argue that Aboriginal political interests and ambitions are perhaps not realized most effectively through models structured along territorial boundaries. In this sense, many Aboriginal people in urban areas envision their political communities beyond civic wards, often including rural territories and communities (Walker et al 2011: 164, Peters and Walker 2005) and might therefore feel disconnected from elections configured according to existing civic wards. The framework for municipal elections is one example of a process that could potentially change to more appropriately represent Indigenous perspectives. Jim Silver's (2006: 122-124) research in Winnipeg relatedly indicates that urban Aboriginal residents would likely vote in higher numbers if candidates made significant, culturally appropriate efforts to engage and address Aboriginal perspectives in their campaigns. He further contends that some Aboriginal people in urban centres do not vote in municipal elections not only because they hold nationalist interests and aspirations that transcend city boundaries and Canadian jurisdictions generally, but many also regard mainstream political systems and government institutions as structures of their oppression rather than representation (106-109). Perhaps if efforts were made to indigenize municipal institutions of power, Aboriginal citizens would view the City as a force for making decisions in their best interests and for the common good of Aboriginal communities.

Silver et al's (2005: 277-278) historical synopsis of urban Aboriginal citizens' common experiences with colonialism in Winnipeg, the vestiges of which are entrenched

in the municipal government's structure and functions, is also useful to help contextualize similar participation reluctance in Saskatoon:

> The origins of Aboriginal peoples' social exclusion are in their history, the history of colonialism. For well over a century, Canada sought to eradicate Aboriginal cultures, languages and spirituality – by means of residential schools, the Indian Act, and the outlawing of Aboriginal religious and spiritual practices, for instance – on the grounds that Aboriginal cultures were inherently inferior to European cultures. Many non-Aboriginal people still believe this to be the case; the decidedly non-Aboriginal cultures of most institutions imply that this is the case; and public spaces in Winnipeg – largely devoid of any evidence of the Aboriginal presence in the city – visually suggest that this is the case. The result of this process of colonization has been the creation of "...a racial and economic hierarchy with an ideology that claims the superiority of the race and culture of the colonizer," an ideology which has come to pervade Canada's culture and institutions, and which "...becomes an inseparable part of perceived reality" (Adams 1999: 6). In this way, colonialism is at the root of Aboriginal peoples' social exclusion, and their reluctance to involve themselves in institutions or organizations run by or dominated by non-Aboriginal people."

This synopsis infers that urban Aboriginal people may be more willing to participate in a municipal government's functions if its institutions and processes more thoroughly and visibly represented their interests. Aboriginal participants collectively asserted that Saskatoon's inclusion of Aboriginal persons within municipal institutions, especially on various boards and committees, tends to convey tokenism rather than sincere cultural acceptance. This kind of partial-inclusion reflects what Walker (2005) considers a weakness of intergovernmentalism: the restriction of Aboriginal input to a select few seats at multi-party tables. Partial inclusion does not create the institutional conditions to effectively challenge or dismantle colonial foundations that continue to privilege a dominant culture and marginalize others from the mainstream.

I argue that the municipal government of Saskatoon has a responsibility, perhaps in coordination with provincial and federal governments and certainly through meaningful collaboration with the city's urban Aboriginal communities, to devise

innovative strategies and mechanisms aimed at increasing Aboriginal participation in, and influence on, mainstream governance. In this sense, actualizing decolonization through the indigenization of urban governance would likely bolster mainstream political participation among urban Aboriginal residents. Increased mainstream political participation would both contribute to and reflect strengthened senses of belonging to the City of Saskatoon among Aboriginal residents. Several participants, after all, described one's overall sense of belonging as a notable determinant of his or her willingness to participate in municipal functions.

7.3 Indigenizing Saskatoon's strategic planning process through diversified and sustained Aboriginal engagement and inclusion: toward collaborative urban governance

Participants prescribed other areas to which the City should turn its attention in order to strengthen the indigenization of planning and policy-making practices. The central theme from this discussion is that Saskatoon's engagement of Aboriginal citizens' perspectives for the *Strategic Plan 2012-2022* should not be considered an isolated project; rather, it should be viewed as an extension of all other municipal functions past, present, and future. All Aboriginal participants described the existence of multiple, interconnected layers through which Aboriginal communities can and should be empowered to participate in municipal governance. Several participants suggested that such an invitation, in its most basic and visible form, could be extended through symbolic actions and gestures that not only demonstrate an institutional dedication to Aboriginal inclusion, but also visibly celebrate Aboriginal identities, histories, and cultures in public spaces and events.

Examples of such symbolism includes the raising of Treaty Six and Métis flags outside of City Hall, increased opportunities for Aboriginal artists and designers to aesthetically shape public spaces, and giving homage to the traditional territories and Aboriginal groups in and around Saskatoon at *all* civic events and gatherings. Participants explained that these gestures could effectually demonstrate a commitment to Aboriginal communities and instill pride in First Nations and Métis cultures throughout the city. Visible celebrations of indigeneity could foster a broad sense of belonging among urban Aboriginal citizens and promote recognition and acceptance among non-Aboriginal residents. I also asked participants from the City about the prospect of a municipal-Aboriginal accord that defines the City's and Aboriginal communities' shared goals and responsibilities. Some City employees conveyed that municipal departments currently prioritize applied cooperation with Aboriginal organizations, governments, and communities through specific projects with tangible results. While participants from the City proposed that success in these kinds of partnerships is perhaps more vital than the type of grand symbolism that a municipal-Aboriginal accord represents, several Aboriginal participants suggested that both are important.

Aboriginal participants denoted that their willingness to participate in the municipal planning process was at least partly influenced by their connectivity to other civic processes and the City's governmental apparatus. They collectively asserted that if one does not see his or her identity, aspirations, or community's knowledge accepted within the City government generally, his or her sense of belonging, attachment to, and willingness to participate in specific municipal projects will remain tenuous. I surmise that the indigenization or co-production of Saskatoon's mainstream planning and policy-making functions not only requires Aboriginal organizations, leaders, and experts to

attain greater influence and control over various aspects of the process, but also that distinct mechanisms and strategies to institutionalize Aboriginal engagement, inclusion, and participation in the long-term are also necessary. Ryan Walker (2008b: 27-28) contends that "without formal processes in place that regularize an ongoing working relationship between city council and Aboriginal communities, consultation can be sporadic, carried out differently each time, or not carried out at all if it is believed that it will be too time-consuming or politically charged."

Strong, locally appropriate municipal-Aboriginal urban interfaces in multiple sectors appear to be necessary preconditions for the meaningful co-production of municipal planning and policy-making practices. Also likely is that the institutionalization of co-produced planning and policy-making practices would reciprocally enrich municipal-Aboriginal interfaces. While the City of Saskatoon has interfaced with Aboriginal organizations and governments in some areas, there appears to be considerable need and opportunities to improve and increase interfaces among such institutions. Saskatoon's existing strategies for Aboriginal inclusion such as work-skills training programs, a cultural diversity and race relations hiring policy, and several other community programs and services, do not necessarily contribute to the cultivation of Aboriginal self-determination in the mainstream. Such approaches simply aim to build a workforce that is representative of the broader community and while it is certainly necessary for municipal staff to reflect Saskatoon's demographic diversity, this approach has its limitations in terms of indigenizing municipal governance if the City's apparatus remains more or less inviolable.

Strategies for inclusive employment *in addition to* institutional arrangements that cultivate mainstream space for urban Aboriginal self-determination are necessary for the

decolonization of urban governance in Saskatoon. Participants proposed that a measure of local self-determination could be effectively expressed through distinct mechanisms that function within and/or alongside the corporate municipal structure, but are predominantly controlled by leaders with representative legitimacy and knowledgeable expertise within Saskatoon's Aboriginal communities. Such mechanisms could potentially foster a direct bridge for the bi-directional flow of information and input between City Hall and Aboriginal communities. As Walker (2008b: 25) suggests, "one size does not fit all when implementing self-determination and municipalities can be equal partners with Aboriginal communities in designing meaningful ways of doing this in planning and urban development which impact positively on their collective quality of place." In other words there is plenty of room and also a significant need for creative, innovative, and co-produced inclusion strategies.

The City of Saskatoon has already introduced an upper-level administrative position that is generally responsible for Aboriginal relations. Several interviewees from both groups consider this position an effective mechanism despite its vast portfolio for one person. Participants also acknowledged that this position could potentially account for collective Aboriginal self-determination by expanding into an office or department with a sizeable, diverse, and predominantly Indigenous staff, multiple and diverse roles and agendas, and a community participation component. Another mechanism that was discussed in all interviews is some form of Aboriginal-municipal council. All Aboriginal participants proposed and/or supported the idea of this hypothetical apparatus and offered consistent perspectives about its potential functions. The foremost role that participants envisioned for such a council is advisory. They suggested that an advisory committee, comprised of Aboriginal community representatives with an appropriate combination of

leadership, knowledge, and expertise, could potentially influence decisions made by City Council and upper management through deliberation and consensus-building around all issues pertinent to Saskatoon's Aboriginal communities.

Walker (2008b: 29) describes some possible functions and benefits of a municipal-Aboriginal advisory council as it relates specifically to community consultation and engagement:

> A municipal Aboriginal advisory body with members who represent the various Aboriginal communities and their leaders could co-ordinate Aboriginal consultation and decision-making on municipal matters and engage in an ongoing process of consultation on municipal issues such as community services, planning and design. This would regularize the consultation process and create a system for collaborative decision-making.

In short, possibilities for co-produced mainstream planning and policy-making practices and decolonized urban governance are abundant if Prairie municipal governments are creative and willing to devise alternative institutional mechanisms with Aboriginal communities. The reality, however, is that civic budgets are tight and municipal governments generally act according to interest convergence, which Belanger and Walker (2009) define as:

> …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 (124).

Several City employees and officials conveyed a general adherence to interest convergence through their assertions that a culture of inclusion must permeate Saskatoon's non-Aboriginal communities before any significant institutional changes are considered. The idea here is that the City must first convince Saskatoon's dominant

population that Aboriginal self-determination, or at least the development of new mechanisms that could bolster self-determination, is in their collective interest.

Although these may be political realities, objectively I do not agree. If municipal governments "pursue racial equality and equity with people of colour only when those needs converge with the interests and needs of mainstream society" (Bell 1980, referenced in Belanger and Walker 2009: 132), then perhaps cities should attempt to force this conjunction through co-produced planning and policy-making. Through transformative, indigenized planning practices, municipal governments can strategically imbue the perspectives of mainstream society with those of minority Aboriginal communities in ways that allow for collective analyses of the general public's perspectives *alongside* distinct analyses of urban Aboriginal perspectives. Concurrent processes can account for Aboriginal density and separateness (Andersen 2013). Indeed, "Aboriginal" and "Western" are neither completely homogenous nor divergent cultural identities and many points of convergence are likely to be found; however, certain needs, desires, and foundational viewpoints are distinct among Indigenous communities due to systemically similar experiences with colonialism and, therefore, plans and policies should be shaped through a judicious blending of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal viewpoints where they contrast. The indigenization of a mainstream planning process would introduce and expose the non-Aboriginal population to Aboriginal communities' diverse ways of knowing. In this sense the City of Saskatoon has a role to lead by example and to proactively foster a culture of indigenization rather than respond if and when the rest of the population is ready to accept ideas rooted in Indigenous knowledge and experiences. Drawing from Lane and Hibbard's (2005) research, Walker (2008b: 34) concludes:

> Historic path-dependency in planning and municipal processes that has privileged western place-making concepts and priorities can be re-calibrated in creative and inclusive ways to 'expand the local imaginary' and the 'depth of civic identity'… We can begin to change the structural and systemic constraints that inhibit the ability of Aboriginal community members to actualize their urban aspirations based on their own assessment of needs and feelings.

While common ground between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal perspectives is possible in many governance areas, the City would also do well to locate points of divergence, attempt to understand where and why discrepancies exist, and begin to make institutional changes to accommodate these distinct standpoints.

Although this thesis often takes on a necessarily critical tone, it must be noted that the City did gain some thoughtful and significant feedback during its Aboriginal community consultation events. City Council and management included several components in the *Strategic Plan 2012-2022* that relate to Aboriginal citizens' wellbeing and civic inclusion. These references, albeit vague, allow for flexibility and creativity in the construction of civic programs and policies with and for Aboriginal communities in the immediate future. The City now has promising opportunities to deepen the indigenization of its policy-making functions by inviting Aboriginal communities to give shape to Aboriginal-specific *and* Saskatoon-wide plans and priorities. By developing mechanisms that ensure meaningful Aboriginal community involvement in municipal priority setting, goal-definition, and policy-making functions stemming from the *Strategic Plan 2012-2022*, the City of Saskatoon could chip away at some of the non-Aboriginal population's proclivity to regard Indigenous cultures as antiquated, non-urban, inferior, and ultimately negligible. The City of Saskatoon, like other municipal governments in Canada's Prairie Provinces, has a responsibility to cogently drive this imperative cultural change.

Saskatoon should actively seek to indigenize mainstream planning and policy-making processes due to the significant role that planning plays in the production of culture (Porter 2013). City planning influences the constitution of space, place, and policy, often through the misleading pretense of cultural or value neutrality. Dominant "Western" or Euro-Canadian planning practices inevitably reproduce colonial and paternalistic mentalities when they merely include Indigenous communities as equal "stakeholders" without distinct rights. As Porter (2013: 302) asserts, "we have missed the essential point that planning has a particular formulation for producing place…and this profoundly shapes our ability to either see or ignore Indigenous interests." She suggests that "far from being 'another stakeholder' or indeed 'another ethnicity' to be brought into a planning decision-making forum, Indigenous sovereignty challenges the very premise of that decision-making forum in the first place" since "planning is itself a culturally constituted model of being in space, with its own spatial rationalities and desires" (302). Porter's central idea is that the incorporation of Indigenous planning principles in Canadian cities can help to foster meaningful co-existence between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations in ways that support Aboriginal rights and claims for self-determining autonomy.

The primary aim of this thesis is not necessarily to deconstruct Saskatoon's planning process in order to uncover its dominant cultural foundations, but rather to explore the gaps between existing Aboriginal inclusion in a mainstream planning process and urban Aboriginal perspectives on meaningful, indigenized civic planning and policy-making. The findings support Porter's argument that coexistence between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities in Canadian cities necessitates critical analyses of mainstream governance practices and the development of mechanisms to actively and

thoroughly indigenize such processes. Indigenization requires a re-situation of urban Aboriginal communities' civic aspirations and diverse ways of knowing from a position among minority stakeholders within supposedly value-neutral, universal processes to a more central role that acknowledges, supports, *and incorporates* their self-determination, their traditional ownership and occupancy of territories on which Canadian cities now exist, their political separateness, and their cultural density (Andersen 2013). To be concise, what this thesis ultimately argues for is the cultivation of a municipal culture of co-determination between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities in Saskatoon, mediated or "facilitated" by the municipal government through institutionalized collaboration with myriad Aboriginal leaders, experts, and organizations. Indigenizing mainstream planning practices can potentially induce such a change. I utilize Walker and Belanger's (2013: 200) directly pertinent viewpoint to conclude this thesis: "Steeped in the place histories of many First Nations and the Métis Nation, Prairie cities have a great opportunity to expand the extent to which they reflect their First Nation and Métis communities within their governance, land use, urban design, economic development, culture, and heritage."

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