

## Winnipeg, Manitoba (Canada): International Laboratory on Urban Development and Poverty Reduction



On May 6<sup>th</sup>, the Province of Manitoba and a network of Winnipeg institutional and community partners signed an agreement with the KIP International School to establish an International Laboratory on Urban Development and Poverty Reduction in Winnipeg as part of an network of laboratories of the KIP International School through its Universitas Programme. The signing ceremony took place at the Thunderbird House Circle of Life in the heart of Winnipeg's inner city. (see programme)



Signatories were Premier Greg Selinger for the Province of Manitoba, Dr. David Barnard, President of the University of Manitoba, Dr. Lloyd Axworthy, President of the University of Winnipeg, Dr. Shauna MacKinnon, Director of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (Manitoba), Mr. Brendan Reimer, Coordinator of the Canadian Community Economic Development Network – Manitoba, Ms. Diane Roussin, Executive Director of Ma Mawi Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre Inc. and Ms. Kathy Mallett, Executive Director of the Community Education Development Association. For the KIP International School, Dr. Luciano Carrino, President, and Ms. Sara Swartz, Director of the Universitas Programme.



Urban poverty, often concentrated in the inner city of major urban centres, affects cities in diverse developmental and cultural contexts. Traditional strategies have done little to eradicate poverty or to address the growing imbalances between poverty and wealth even in the same city. Yet at the same time, in many countries around the world and in many cities, innovative alternative approaches are

being experimented with great success. The challenge is to build on these individual success stories to identify more comprehensive solutions to the multi-dimensions of urban poverty and its structural causes.

Winnipeg's inner-city is characterized by racialized and spacialized poverty, with high rates of unemployment, street-gang and sex trade activity, violence and inadequate housing. Winnipeg also has the largest urban Aboriginal population in Canada, which is disproportionately concentrated in the Inner City, is disproportionately poor, and is very adversely affected by poverty. Winnipeg's inner city is also the destination of growing numbers of poor refugees and immigrants who face major economic, social and cultural challenges. Their presence increases the complexity of inner-city problems.

Despite the worrisome conditions found in the inner city, there are many encouraging examples of community development that have been implemented by dynamic community organizations, in partnership with local public institutions and often supported by the provincial government. For many reasons, most Winnipeggers are unaware of the success stories brought about by these initiatives. Some of the most exciting inner-city initiatives are being driven by the Aboriginal community, led in many cases by strong and resourceful women who bring to these initiatives a philosophy of sharing and community that is rooted in traditional Aboriginal belief systems. Research has shown that these sorts of community-driven initiatives are more effective than conventional, one-dimensional strategies that have had less impact.

Yet there are barriers in general to scale up and articulate successful community action, orient public policy, influence academic teaching and transform practice. There is a need to share knowledge about positive practices, taking into consideration that that work at local level needs better documentation and that innovative ways of addressing similar challenges faced in different contexts need to be exchanged and learned from collectively so that such initiatives can be drawn on to build articulated responses to the complex challenges of urban poverty.

Through the KIP International School's collaboration with many local and national governments, parliamentarians, OECD, United Nations and other international organization, the laboratory project will allow the Winnipeg partners to share the results of many encouraging experiences of community organizations, local and provincial governments, universities and research centres, contribute to international policy processes and build knowledge and practice networks with similar experiences

from around the world so as to experiment potential solutions to urban problems in Winnipeg.

The laboratory will also contribute to developing cutting-edge university education and professional development initiatives in Winnipeg related to urban development and poverty reduction that are open to the participation of international students and academics. It will develop case studies and other material, both from Winnipeg and other realities, to be incorporated into curriculum



development and provide opportunities for international exchanges for students and faculty.

The first activity is already in the planning phase. A group of researchers and practitioners from Latin America and Europe will participate in a study tour to Winnipeg's Inner City from 21 to 24 October 2013 and will share their own experiences with Manitoba participants at the gathering of the Canadian Community Economic Development Network in Winnipeg on October 25<sup>th</sup>.

To learn more about the Manitoba Research Alliance on Community-Based Solutions for Aboriginal and Inner-City Poverty, **click here:** <http://mra-mb.ca/>

To watch the video *Breaking Barriers/Building Bridges*, click [here](#)

To read the full text of the agreement between the KIP International School and Winnipeg partners, **click [here](#)**. To read the Annex 1, click [here](#).

