

Dr. Lloyd Axworthy  
State of the University Address  
Sept. 13, 2007  
Convocation Hall

## **Introduction**

- Thank you, Dan. And welcome to everyone.
- In his recent book *Radical Hope*, Jonathon Lear (University of Chicago Anthropologist and Philosopher) describes how the Crow people were able to overcome the coming of the Europeans and the disappearance of the buffalo.
- Not by confrontation and conflict, but by a carefully worked out strategy.
- Used traditional values and practices; translated them into contemporary idiom.
- Through education, they adapted to new ways and ensured their continuing survival.
- Using the lessons of the Crow people, Lear writes:
  - *We live at a time of heightened sense that civilizations are themselves vulnerable. We seem to be aware of a shared vulnerability that we cannot quite name. Perhaps if we could . . . we could find better ways to live with it.*
- The same expression was articulated by the Jesuit thinker Teilhard De Chardin who said:
  - *Political and social upheaval, moral and religious unease have caused us all to feel more or less confusedly that something tremendous is taking place in the world. But, what is it?*

- These observations and questions about the future deserve to be answered here – at The University of Winnipeg – as we honour 40 years as a full-fledged learning institution.
- This weekend marks our transition from our starting point in 1967 as a highly-regarded liberal arts and science college.
- When we occupied a sheltered niche on the edge of a stable downtown in an important prairie city.
- Where we served a homogenous group of young high-school students through good-quality undergraduate education.
- Today, we are a university with more than 10,000 people –largest cohort of population in the inner city – offering a range of graduate and undergraduate curriculum and research opportunities for a more diverse student body.
- Located in an urban community experiencing dynamic changes and challenges.
- Live in a global village wired together into a myriad of networks with torrents of information spilling out of media and magic of the Internet.
- Contend with broad issues of conflict, climate change and global pandemics.
- Witness a shift of world power to new areas of Asia, Africa and Latin America.
- Share the vulnerability of the Crow people described by Lear and ask, as de Chardin did:
  - *What does it all mean both for us as an institution and how do we fit into an ever-changing shift in the global landscape?*
- What better place to raise these issues together at the outset of our 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Homecoming than in the newly-restored Convocation Hall.

- Since 1896, this space has been the hub of this University providing a place for debate, discussion, lectures, plays and proms.
- The birth place of the University –the so-called “separatist movement” was launched here by students of my generation.
- An election debate took place between advocates of staying within the University of Manitoba system as a resident college, and those supporting striking out on our own.
- The decision narrowly favoured the *indepandistes* – thanks to a little divine intervention from the forefathers of the founding colleges.
- Dr. Gerry Bedford’s new book about the history of the University provides more anecdotes on how this hall has been the fulcrum through which this community of learning found its direction, and solidified its spirit of commitment and common purpose.
- But what we see here today is not just a restoration – it is a reformation.
- Along with the carefully-crafted renewal of the original architecture, Convocation Hall now has the most modern of information equipment.
- Where we can plug into every part of the world and use the power of information technology to extend our reach and tap into a broad universe of knowledge.
- The Wesley Hall building is undergoing a re-make of its own as we install the latest retrofits to make it a sustainable, energy-efficient facility.
- Downstairs is Global College – a centre linking students and faculty to emerging issues and experiences around the world, and welcoming newly-arrived students from other parts of the globe.

- Knowledge knows no borders, and nor should we. The University is becoming a national leader in the pursuit of inter- and intra-disciplinary knowledge, to better reflect the changing trends in research and learning.
- To this end, the University is embarking in a consultative process to establish a total of four Colleges, Colleges without bricks and mortar – built in identity, community and a sense of belonging.
- These Colleges will create sites for interdisciplinary research and learning and the building of communities of knowledge – honouring the original spirit of United College.
- In addition to the Global College which we established two years ago, will be establishing three others: the Richardson College for the Environment, a College of Adult Learning and a College for Aboriginal Studies.
- Turn right and follow the walkway to Bryce Hall, soon to be home of the Centre for the Study of Canadian History.
- Look out the window and see a brand-new esplanade – Portage Commons – inaugurating a new green corridor in downtown Winnipeg designed to share space and activity between us and our neighbours in an effort at renewal.
- Walk a few blocks west on Portage Avenue and see the site of a new campus – future home of our new Richardson College of the Environment and Science Complex.
- Stroll down Spence Street Mall and see the finishing touches of a new physical fitness facility attached to Duckworth Centre.
- Cross Ellice Avenue and visit the Helen Betty Osborne building – home to the Wii Chiiwaakanak Learning Centre for our inner-city community.
- And complete your tour on Colony Street where the CanWest Centre for Theatre and the Arts is nearing completion.

- All this displays a mixture of the old and traditional with the new and transformative – a way of adapting to the change demanded by our circumstance.
- A way of translating the core mission of the University into a new idiom, just like the Crow people did over a century ago.
- These are the visible signs. But they don't tell the whole story.
- The story of how we as an institution must think how we pursue our mission, retaining the values of good teaching and the close contact between faculty and students.
- Qualities of a college – as many of us who went here or taught here in the days of United College will remember – without hanging necessarily to old ways of expressing those values.
- Harold Innis, Canadian philosopher and economist borrowed from Hegelian philosophy to remind us of the law of **Minerva's owl**.
- Minerva's owl only flies at dusk with the light of day behind it.
- Innis took this to mean that by the time we have become aware that calamity is upon us it is already too late to take action.
- That in the face of important signs of issues still to come, we recognize too late to respond.
- As a result we fall back on old answers or react out of haste and lack of forethought and inattention. Or simply get caught flat-footed.
- All this goes to illustrate the difficulty in mobilizing change.
- We must, therefore, attend carefully to the wisdom of other groups who have gone before us who have had to face major change.
- Jonathan Lear concludes his work by saying that Plenty Coups, the Crow chief, gave his people a "*traditional way of going forward.*"

- This is what we are trying to do at this University – opening a pathway going forward by keeping at one foot securely anchored in the foundations of the past as we move forward to meet the demands of the future.
- I have pondered how to manage and articulate this double-edged challenge – how to merge old with new – tradition with vision.
- For me, the definition of this challenge is SUSTAINABILITY.
- Defining our mission in our 40<sup>th</sup> year as being a sustainable university, acting as a catalyst for ideas and action, research and education on the issue that defines this early era of the third millennium.

### **Concept of Sustainability**

- Last spring, The University of Winnipeg awarded an honorary degree to one of the most inspiring women of our time – Sheila Watt-Cloutier, the former International Chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference and vocal advocate for the peoples of the North.
- Compelling Inuit mother and grandmother was recently nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize for her leadership of an historical initiative to examine climate change from a human rights perspective.
- Working tirelessly to rescue an entire population and way of life from impending annihilation by arguing that climate change is depriving indigenous peoples in the Americas of their rights to benefit from culture, to use and enjoy property, and to life, physical integrity, and security.
- Watt-Cloutier's work highlights the reality of a globalized world – where the relationship between environmental concerns and the provision of basic human security comes increasingly into focus.
- More and more, we as Global Citizens are coming to recognize that environmentalism's catch phrase of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – *Sustainable*

*Development* – is synonymous with global justice and the universal right to survive.

- The term ‘sustainable development’ rose to fame after the 1987 Brundtland Report, the document resulting out of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED).
- At the time, the definition seemed simple – development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.<sup>1</sup> How to manage growth in a responsible and equitable way.
- Since, the term “sustainable development” has come to be used in common parlance, the original meaning has often been lost in years of scholarship and political rhetoric – casting doubt on the Brundtland Report’s definition or re-framing it so much it barely resembles the idea that it once was.<sup>2</sup>
- Today, though, Watt-Cloutier’s work helps us cut through years of debate to see clearly what sustainable development means to us personally and what it means to The University of Winnipeg.
- Helps us understand that while “*needs themselves change*,”<sup>3</sup> certain fundamental human needs – many expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – persist.
- Also helps us understand what sustainable development means for different peoples, nations, and communities, particularly for the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada and around the world.<sup>4</sup>
- Cultural basis helps us focus our understanding that sustainable development is, in and of itself, problematic.

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<sup>1</sup> David Orr, “Four Challenges of Sustainability,” *School of Natural Resources – The University of Vermont Spring Semester Seminar Series 2003 – Ecological Economics*. p. 1; WCED, *Our Common Future*

<sup>2</sup> Herman E. Daly, “Sustainable Growth: A Bad Oxymoron,” *Grassroots Developments*, 15(3), p. 39

<sup>3</sup> Michael Redclift, ‘Sustainable Development (1987-2005): An Oxymoron Comes of Age’, *Sustainable Development* 13, pp. 212-227, 2005. p. 213

<sup>4</sup> Redclift, p. 214

- Sustenance of the standard of living of human populations, rather than attempt to qualitatively develop human populations within the biological and physical limitations of the planet.
- Watt-Cloutier's human rights perspective provides different ways of seeing the issue come together – humans are part of ecosystems and must live in intact and resilient ecosystems if their rights are to be ensured.
- Sheila Watt-Cloutier's efforts serve as an example for The University of Winnipeg.
- Over the past few years, we have steadily worked towards fostering an increased sense of global citizenship and environmental responsibility among our university community and reducing the ecological impact of our institution.
- Bringing human rights, social justice, and environmental responsibility together at our University is a necessary step if we are to support current academics in addressing the most pressing issues in the world today and to prepare our future leaders for the world they are inheriting.
- This convergence carries us into un-chartered territory.
- Requires all of us – students, administrators, faculty, and staff alike – to grapple with important questions and to continually challenge our world views.
- Our ultimate goal is to create a truly sustainable campus – a campus that acts upon its local and global responsibilities to protect and enhance the health and well being of humans and ecosystems.<sup>5</sup>
- In so doing, we will meet the needs of current generations in such a way that ensures that future generations can meet their needs.

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<sup>5</sup> Cole, Lindsay, *Assessing Sustainability of Canadian University Campuses: Development of a Campus Sustainability Assessment Framework*. Victoria: Royal Roads University, 2003, p. 30



- Amounts to an institutional contribution to what Tom Kelly, Director of the Office of Sustainability Programs at the University of New Hampshire, has called a “*reform project that envisions a reorientation of the entire international community towards the balancing of economic viability with ecological health and human well-being.*”<sup>6</sup>
- Within this context, here is my thesis: The University of Winnipeg has the potential – and in fact is on the road – to be a national, if not a global leader in sustainable development as it must be broadly understood in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- To succeed, must all be willing to set our goals for a sustainable campus within a broader framework of education not only of students, but also of ourselves.
- Many of our current challenges lie in the way we think about ourselves and our relationships to humans and ecosystems.
- In the way we **operate**, the way we **educate**, the way we conduct **research**, and the way we **interact with the neighbourhood community** in which this institution resides.
- I hope to convince you of our need to commit to some serious re-thinking and learning.

## Operations

- At the nuts and bolts level, The University of Winnipeg is taking steps to ensure that we as an institution can be sustained.
- Never enjoyed the benefit of large endowments or windfall bequests.
- Founding donors were prairie people who put what they could afford in the collection plate of congregation.
- Relied on public funding and fees from students to pay the salaries and keep the lights on.

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<sup>6</sup> Kelly, Tom, *Building a Sustainable Learning Community at the University of New Hampshire*, [http://www.vink.helsinki.fi/files/Theoria\\_building.html](http://www.vink.helsinki.fi/files/Theoria_building.html), accessed January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2007, p. 1

- It wasn't easy – as many in this room can attest – and it isn't getting any easier.
- One of the important values of this university is being put to the test – making education an equal opportunity exercise.
- Recently-released Task Force Report on Access spells out how participation rates of students from low-income areas haven't altered in the past decade.
- Mounting an action plan to set targets for substantially changing that condition.
- Funding for the university – based on growing enrolments – is under duress due to falling demographics of the students leaving high school.
- With the help of the University's Foundation, trying to counter that trend through private giving towards capital renewal – but doesn't alter growing demands for new equipment, competitive salaries, information learning, and improved safety and security.
- Success relies on our ability to be skilful at the process of change and to learn link the campus community and benefit from potential synergies – must stay in motion towards a clear set of goals. Otherwise, *“if you stop peddling you'll fall off the bicycle.”*
- SUSTAINABILITY has a much broader meaning than mere survival – must deal with how to grow in a responsible way.
- March 2005, *OmniTRAX/Broe Quest conference*, I committed the University to becoming a leader in developing and sustaining a vibrant learning community, all within a healthy neighbourhood and an intact and resilient ecosphere.
- Established Sustainability Task Force with student, faculty, and staff representatives to draft a series of policies aimed at reducing this

University's ecological footprint and making it a socially-responsible institution.

- A first set of policies was passed by the Board of Regents with a standing ovation last Fall.
- Last year, the new Sustainability Council began developing implementation plans for the goals set out in our policies.
- Committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions with the short-term goal of making the University Kyoto Protocol compliant, and the long-term objective of achieving zero net emissions.
- Other initiatives under development to conserve energy, convert to renewable energy, reduce waste, prevent risks to human or ecosystem health, green University procurement practices, and rigorous sustainability criteria on property management and development activities.
- Launched initiatives that will make this institution a socially-sustainable development hub for Winnipeg's inner city.
- Projects aimed at sharing resources with young people who would otherwise not have access to them – already having a positive impact on our community, and once combined will form basis of social sustainability strategy.
- Our university is leading Canadian universities in its commitment to sustainability and sustainable development – along with others such as UBC & Calgary.<sup>7</sup> Commitment to bring social justice and human rights into the purview of our sustainability lens is unique.

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<sup>7</sup> Moore, Janet, Freda Pagani, Moura Quayle, John Robinson, Brenda Sawada, George Spiegelman & Rob Van Wynsberghe, "Recreating the University from Within: Collaborative reflections on the University of British Columbia's engagement with sustainability," *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*. Vol. 6, No. 1, 2005. pp. 65-80;

The University of British Columbia Sustainability Office, *Annual Report: Progress towards a Sustainable Campus*, May 2006;

The University of Calgary Sustainability and Stewardship Program <http://www.si.ucalgary.ca/>.

- No other university in North America is seeking to establish a clear framework for socially-sustainable operations.
- New VP of Human Resources, Audit, and Sustainability is unique – enjoys oversight and organisational authority.
- Sustainability guides new development projects – new Richardson College for the Environment & Science Complex will be one of the most environmentally sustainable in Canada.
- Anchor at the western terminus of Portage Avenue and serve as a catalyst for substantial urban renewal in our inner-city community and revitalize our city and province as a whole.
- Centerpiece in the growing network of downtown institutions dedicated to making Winnipeg a center of innovation.
- Additional housing and green space – a new community will develop on that block. Job opportunities, educational outreach to the local population. A virtual college.
- Future of our campus and our community is bright. The economic impact of new development will be significant and will lead to new business opportunities and partnerships.
- As mentioned this morning, we are responding through the new Faculty of Business and Economics; will offer new and innovative courses and bachelor degrees in Business.
- So, as we transform this University, we are also reinventing this community, city and province. And the new campus is just one feature of this transformation.

### **Learning about the process of change**

- Leith Sharp, conducted extensive study of sustainability initiatives in over 30 university campuses in Europe and the U.S.:

- *[T]he challenge for the university sector is to become skilful at the process of change itself. Universities must become learning organizations, as well as teaching and research institutions.*<sup>8</sup>
- Must take Sharp's words to heart as we re-work the way this institution operates and makes decisions.
- Process will be a personal journey of learning about what sustainability means and learning how to be inspired by the idealism of our students.
- All of us must take ownership of a commitment to environmental and social responsibility and approach change with grace, patience, and perseverance.
- Must include equal commitment from students and student government, from academic departments, and administrative and service departments.
- Sharp points out that campus sustainability "will be a moving target, in that new information will continuously become available that will reveal new...requirements and opportunities."<sup>9</sup>
- Sustainability is not only as an end goal, but also a learning process in and of itself.

### **Learning to work together**

- First, STUDENTS. Blessed with idealism; serves as spark for change.
- Here, at our campus, it was a group of students who proposed a sustainable campus project. Their leadership promoted a multi-stakeholder approach to a Sustainability Management Strategy. Must continue to play key role.

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<sup>8</sup> Leith Sharp, 'Green campuses: the road from little victories to systemic transformation', *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, Vol. 3 No. 2, 2002, pp. 128-145, p. 129

<sup>9</sup> Sharp, p. 129.

- Challenges faced by students. Sharp points out (and students here agree):
  - *Students usually have no resources, limited understanding of how the university itself is managed and no immediate access to decision-making processes that they could directly influence.*<sup>10</sup>
- Made progress by involved students in policy development process. Not only contribute to the substance of initiatives, but they also learn more about how the university itself works and gain skills that help them identify and seek out resources.
- Now, the challenge is how to extend these opportunities for learning and participation beyond this handful of students – need to build more bridges between our students, and faculty, staff, and administrators.
- Must empower them with financial and experiential support they need to continue lighting sparks and to do what only they can really accomplish: engage their fellow students in the sustainability process.
- Must also find a way to maintain continuity between multiple student generations.
- Next, FACULTY. Bring unparalleled expertise and knowledge to sustainability efforts. Contributed to sustainability policy, projects such as the Richardson College of the Environment, and through supporting and mentoring students.
- Address the central assumption related to faculty engagement that Sharp highlights:
  - *Focusing on the campus is a distraction from the core mission of teaching and research.*
- Still, more can be done to foster a campus culture that sees academic focus on our campus as *part* of teaching and research.
- Hope we can provide faculty with exciting teaching and research opportunities right here on campus, integrating our campus sustainability goals with the core functions of this institution.

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<sup>10</sup> Sharp, p. 137.

- Must ask how best to recognize faculty who enhance their excellent teaching and research by contributing to this integration – see the University and its operations as a living laboratory for academic research.
- Some faculty on the Sustainability Council began to look for information about green teaching practices, found little available.
- Dr. Bill Buhay in the Geography department, for example, undertook project to close this gap, contributing both to our efforts at this institution and to similar efforts at other schools and universities.
- SUNSET (Sustainable University Now, Sustainable Earth Tomorrow) group recently launched its student-led initiative in experiential education – where students receive course credit for conducting research relevant to sustainability efforts at the University or in the extended community.
- Research proposals Kate Dykman, the program coordinator, has collected include an Ecological Footprint Analysis of Recycling; research into the viability of a local recycling industry; why paper use has exploded over the past two decades and how to realize the promise of a paperless, cybernetic society.
- Next, UNIVERSITY STAFF AND ADMINISTRATION. Ensure smooth operations so students and faculty can fully engage in teaching and research.
- They have the authority to implement new procedures; train and support faculty and students to adhere to them and teach their peers to do the same.
- Consistency allows lasting relationships to disseminate information; access to organizational information.<sup>11</sup> Provide valuable institutional memory that helps understand what has worked and what hasn't.

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<sup>11</sup> Sharp, p. 140

- As implementers and administrators of policies and procedures, university staff members determine how to implement them in the unpredictable world of student, staff, and faculty life, study, and research.
- For this reason, they must become familiar with the reality of student and faculty life to understand how to engage in their work and become more sympathetic to its changeability.
- I hope faculty and students can foster a culture of engagement and commitment to the sustainable operation of their university as they increasingly come to cooperate with administrators and staff towards common goals.
- Learning about the talents and restrictions of different segments of our university population carries significant opportunities, and campus sustainability provides a goal that can act as a rallying call to “*build a strong sense of collaboration and community throughout the institution.*”<sup>12</sup>

## **Research**

- Collaboration has the potential to become unspeakably fruitful in academic research. Sharp calls this “*a living laboratory for teaching and research*”<sup>13</sup> impacting the operations of our University.
- Universities have an unparalleled capacity for innovative thinking. Anthony Cortese, sustainability consultant and co-founder of the NGO, Second Nature, says:
  - *Higher education has unique academic freedom and the critical mass and diversity of skills to develop new ideas, to comment on society and its challenges, and to engage in bold experimentation in sustainable living.*<sup>14</sup>
- Universities have the *responsibility* to play a key role in bringing our world closer to its sustainability goals “*making this vision a reality*

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<sup>12</sup> Anthony D. Cortese, ‘The Critical Role of Higher Education in Creating a Sustainable Future’, *Planning for Higher Education*, March-May 2003, p. 15-22, p. 19

<sup>13</sup> Sharp, p. 140

<sup>14</sup> Cortese, p. 17



*[because] it prepares most of the professionals who develop, lead, manage, teach, work in, and influence society's institutions, including the most basic foundation of K-12 education.”<sup>15</sup>*

- Recently, Dr. Deborah Swackhamer, Interim Director of the Institute on the Environment at the University of Minnesota, gave an inspiring talk at our University entitled *Positioning Academia to Address Environmental Issues in the 21st Century*.
- Discussed how universities in general and how The University of Winnipeg in particular can best address the most pressing environmental issues we currently face.
- First and foremost, Swackhamer emphasized the need to welcome solution-driven research – based not on a general inquiry into a subject area, but on a particular sustainability problem or issue that is posed either by researchers or by the public.
- The research goal becomes to solve the problem –infusing specific purpose and very strong social relevance, and injecting some organizational support into solution-based research as well.
- Academics from the hard sciences, humanities, and social sciences work – what Swackhamer calls transdisciplinary research.
- Focus is on integration – strong approval from David Orr who argues, *“larger trends and patterns tend to be ignored within a discipline-centric context.”<sup>16</sup>* He asserts that *“we need to understand patterns and whole systems, which is the business of no single discipline, department, or specialized field.”<sup>17</sup>*
- Solution-driven research requires early stakeholder involvement and creative partnerships between varieties of stakeholders – working with groups most affected by a given issue to identify research goals and to establish a set of desired outcomes, stronger commitment to

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<sup>15</sup> Cortese, p. 17

<sup>16</sup> Orr, p. 2

<sup>17</sup> Orr, p. 2

participatory action research<sup>18</sup> and other forms of community-based research methods.

- Research partnerships must reflect the growing degrees of interconnections between governments, NGOs, businesses, educational institutions, and community groups.
- Hope that solution-based research will help The University of Winnipeg effectively model an appropriate balance between specialisation and transdisciplinarity.
- Scholars still must learn how to communicate to their peers from other areas of study in a way that does justice to their expertise in their field *and* delivers a message using vocabulary and writing that a non-specialist in the field can understand.
- Academics at The University of Winnipeg must begin to confront this, particularly as they begin to engage in work in priority research areas in our new College for the Environment, such as:
- **Environment and Water Quality** will focus particularly on water quality and usage in Canada, cross-border issues and a comparative international focus.
- **Environmental Management** combines policy and strategy development, equipping students with the skills to anticipate technological, legal, and policy trends so as to learn how to plan strategically beyond legislative compliance and “stop gap” interventions.
- **Environment and Health** combines the collaborative program in Environmental Studies with a distinct focus on the interplay between the outdoor environment and health status.

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<sup>18</sup> Participatory action research (PAR) is a method of research where creating a positive social change is the predominant driving force. PAR grew out of social and educational research and exists today as one of the few research methods which embrace principles of participation and reflection, and empowerment and emancipation of groups seeking to improve their social situation. Kurt Lewin is credited with the creation of action research (AR) in the 1940's but has evolved markedly since then.

- **Urban Ecology** addresses the environmental issues that are pertinent in urban areas.
- **The Global North** will address the question of Canada's arctic zone, its people, and its unique environment.
- Research opportunities are endless. But as an administrator, I can seek to create conditions in which engaged research is recognised and encouraged while continuing to support the basic research that acts as the backbone for the academic world.
- It is up to faculty to identify opportunities and communicate their findings in a way that is both thorough and accessible to non-specialists.
- Academics must learn to work across disciplinary boundaries more and more frequently; requires university staff and administrators to learn how to facilitate and support new kinds of research activity.

### **Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

- Equally important is the need to educate students in a way that empowers them with the tools and commitment they need to confront the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- Academics cannot embark on integrated research alone – students must be taught to think in transdisciplinary terms so that they can better engage in critical thought on the most pressing sustainability issues of the day.
- Learn to see many layers of a given issue, to understand them or to seek out the knowledge and collaboration of someone who does.
- Must learn the principles of engaged research and the relationship between specialisation and transdisciplinary thought. Our task is to *learn how to teach* these skills.
- We are off to a good start. This University is widely recognized for its strong arts and science undergraduate programs. Top marks in the

*Globe and Mail* 2006 Report Card from its students in the area of quality of education.

- Strong contingent of socially-engaged faculty members from all disciplines. Provide students with research opportunities that few undergraduates at larger universities can experience.
- Class sizes remain small, students graduate knowing that they have been exposed to ideas, discoveries, and theories that are at the cutting edge of their disciplines.
- Last week, the University took an exciting step forward as the Province of Manitoba announced approval for the University to offer graduate level programs:
  - Master of Science in Applied Computer Science and Society;
  - Master of Science in Bioscience, Technology and Public Policy; -
  - Master of Arts in English with a focus on Cultural Studies; and
  - Master of Arts in Aboriginal Governance – this program will begin in the Fall of 2008.
- Innovative graduate-level programs are current and relevant to our changing world and will play a vital role in our ability to retain and attract top students and faculty.
- Exclusive to The University of Winnipeg, will not duplicate other programs. Integrated with existing undergraduate programs and will strengthen research capacity, supporting the Province of Manitoba's priorities for expanding innovation and graduate studies.
- Also one of few universities in Canada to offer Student-Designed Majors. Students can study a specific question or theme that crosses disciplinary boundaries – humanities, social sciences, and hard sciences. Learning to communicate and think in an interdisciplinary way.
- Has potential to mirror the solution-based research approach and methodology and to prepare University of Winnipeg students to excel in transdisciplinary research teams.

- Long commitment to interdisciplinary studies. In 1969 the Institute of Urban Studies was established and to this day it provides the community with important research and action on how to respond to the issue of our urban existence.
- Founded in 1970, our Environmental Studies program was one of the first interdisciplinary undergraduate environment programs in Canada, and one of the first few to emerge worldwide.
- Soon to be given a boost, along with Biology and Chemistry programs, with the construction of our Richardson College for the Environment and Science Complex – a venue from which solutions-based and basic research can flourish and inform each other.
- Still, transdisciplinary thinking cannot compete against the educational power of the physical and cultural environment of this institution. Students learn from everything around them. Our surroundings have a profound impact on our perception of the way the world works.
- In learning how to create a sustainable university and in exploring new and integrated ways of doing research, one of the most important things that we are learning to do is model the types of actions, behaviours, and ways of dealing with change that today's students will have to adopt as they work in the world that they are inheriting.
- Physical operation of our campuses must reflect the cutting edge of research and discourse in all aspects of sustainability. Echoing David Orr: *“Academic architecture is in fact a kind of crystallized pedagogy; buildings have their own hidden curriculum that teaches as effectively as any course taught in them.”*<sup>19</sup>
- Our new Science Complex will embody this; our older buildings need to change to reflect this too. Reducing the ecological footprint of this institution means demonstrating to students the challenges, successes, and realities of physically changing the way buildings are run and the way waste and energy are minimised and managed.

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<sup>19</sup> Orr, p. 5

- Our students will gain direct experience – invaluable to them in years to come – not only with the Science Complex, but through other more modest and equally important initiatives – the retrofitting of light fixtures, renovating old buildings, and, of course, the development of new green spaces along Spence Street and through the green corridor.
- Plans for this green space are being developed after extensive consultations with the surrounding community in an effort to create spaces that will benefit local residents – green houses, native plant gardens, and recreational spaces that will all have outstanding pedagogical possibilities both for our students and for younger children who live in our neighbourhood.
- We can be inspired by the Office of Sustainability Programs (OSP) at the University of New Hampshire – employed concept of a Sustainable Learning Community: “*to acknowledge the straightforward and educationally profound fact that the community teaches.*”<sup>20</sup>
- OSP Director Tom Kelly explains that “*the learning community approach assumes that everything is curriculum and everyone is an educator.*”<sup>21</sup>
- This community involves faculty, students, staff, administrators, and the residents, community groups, and business neighbours that make up the neighbourhood to which we belong.
- See our University as a living laboratory where everything from bricks and mortar to meetings and consultations to research to community engagement and report writing are processes whereby learning can take place – a culture of cooperation and partnerships can form.
- Helps cultivate trust among all stakeholders on campus, garnering engagement from faculty, staff, and students.

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<sup>20</sup> Kelly, p. 4

<sup>21</sup> Kelly, p. 4

- All need to feel like members of a team working together towards a common goal. See ourselves as teachers *and* as learners prepared to challenge and be challenged by the ideas of the people with whom they share the campus and neighbourhood.
- It is only through finding meaning in the human condition that we can embark on a path of truly engaged citizenship and applied scholarship in local and global communities. This type of strong citizenship among the entire university community will be central to our achieving our sustainability goals.
- We have a duty to create and provide the educational programming that will prepare today's students for the world in which they live.
- Includes creating a "participatory culture" with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one's creations, informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices. Members believe their contributions matter, and feel some degree of social connection with one another. Must begin to give our students a sense of involvement in and ownership of their local and global communities – educating students for a vocation of global citizenship.
- Further, to address issues of inequality, of social and economic divides, of poverty, then we also have a duty to not limit access to this education to the wealthy.
- It is for this reason that I posed a pair of questions to my management team: how does The University of Winnipeg become an agent for change? And, what barriers can be removed to increase participation among populations traditionally under-represented in postsecondary education such as people from low socio-economic status (SES), Aboriginal, new Canadian or rural backgrounds?
- After examining the issue for five months, the Access Task Force developed a number of ideas and solicited broader discussion and commentary from both within and outside the University in its efforts to model inclusiveness in decision making processes.

- Just last week, the Task Force released their final report containing 16 initiatives (many are already in place) to access to post-secondary education and outlining an action plan to deliver these new initiatives.
- Must make the University available to all who are interested or be guilty of furthering the inequalities in society that give rise to so many of the social problems seen locally and globally.
- One example of the final piece of the sustainability equation – this University's relationship with the community to which we belong.

### **University-Community Partnerships**

- In a budding community that struggles with poverty and crime, The University of Winnipeg is gifted with resources that, if used appropriately and in consultation with community members, have the potential to provide immense benefit to those who live and work around us and to the students, staff and faculty at this institution.
- The task is how best to combine resources with those in the community in a way that moves both the University and the community closer to its social and ecological sustainability goals.
- The University of Winnipeg's more than 10,000 faculty, staff and students generate major traffic flows and contribute significantly to the downtown economy.
- Future growth will see a university population of between 12,000 and 14,000 in the next eight to ten years.
- Borders the downtown business district, part of a diverse neighbourhood made up primarily of Aboriginal people and recently arrived immigrant groups.
- Culturally rich, but struggles with inadequate housing, poor public services, and high rates of poverty, crime, and environmental disrepair.



- University has embarked on a strategy of engagement ensuring any plans are designed in conjunction with local governments, community organizations, school divisions, businesses and various ethnic and cultural groups.

### *Spence Street*

- Since September 2004, involved in well over one hundred different consultations, including several large community meetings in our immediate inner-city neighbourhood.
- People confirmed our belief that our University needed to become more responsive to the outside world, respecting community wisdom and expertise, and working hand-in-hand with our surrounding neighbourhood community as partners.
- Many consultations focussed on redeveloping Spence Street – and in particular, offering recreational facilities for children.
- In a Quality of Life Community Report in Spring 2004, 70 per cent of core area residents rated the availability of recreation programs as poor or fair.
- This led us to explore different ways in redeveloping Spence Street to serve the community with projects including an outdoor skating rink, wading pool or splash pad, mini-skateboard park, and in conjunction with Bill Wedlake and the Wesmen, outdoor basketball and beach volleyball courts.
- Complemented by one of the key elements of the new Richardson College for the Environment: a new urban green space – an environmental garden planted with native prairie vegetation, offering a living laboratory for students, researchers and the community.
- Recreational space and indigenous plants helps incorporate ecological sustainability into this plan. Helps develop ecological literacy among our young people and counteract a rather troubling statistic I recently came across – Children today can recognize over 1000 corporate logos but fewer than a dozen plants and animals native to their home places.

### ***UofW as an Educational Precinct***

- This shocking statistic forces us to ask serious questions about how and what children have the opportunity to learn – and how The University of Winnipeg can do its part to improve it.
- Considering our own backyard, prospects for Aboriginal young people in Winnipeg are far from promising – 85 per cent of Aboriginal households falling below the poverty line.
- As a result of despair and poverty – 75 per cent of the 1400-1500 gang-involved youth in our inner-city are of Aboriginal descent. Over 70 per cent of the ‘residents’ of our juvenile correctional facilities are Aboriginal, about the same percentage as Aboriginal males housed in provincial prisons. The figure is higher for Aboriginal females.
- Comments from community respondents to our consultations sum up the reality for many Aboriginal children and adolescents:
- *“Their survival is where they're at, never mind learning”*
- *“School is the first thing to go, it's a pressure they can do without”* and
- *“There's so much of a survival mentality that it disables you from dreaming.”*
- Cannot afford to waste the “talent capital” and human potential that could help shed light on the challenges ahead.
- The need to respond to this discouraging reality has been the impetus of a significant number of initiatives currently underway at The University of Winnipeg.
- Concept of an educational precinct in the downtown, anchoring the west end of Portage Avenue and providing a network of related university, community and business initiatives.

- Major focus to tackle the growing and unmet demand for education of the urban Aboriginal population who now number over 70,000 in the City of Winnipeg, along with the large number of newly-arrived ethnic groups, especially from Asian and African countries.
- There is room for partnerships through joint efforts in research, housing, urban renewal, adult learning, writing and literacy programs, and athletic programs.
- The Institute of Urban Studies as a flagship, a program in Urban Aboriginal Governance, a Women's Studies Program engaged in community service, and scholars from many areas working on a variety of issues in criminal justice, early childhood development, and conflict resolution.
- And just begun the new Urban and Inner-City Studies program that takes learning to the community.
- Our scientists, who are already leading the way in insect carried diseases, can be part of the burgeoning growth of our city as a centre of excellence in public health and disease control.
- Developing a program in Indigenous Science and hope that the research conducted in our College for the Environment will supplement this program.
- Community groups are in the forefront of pushing for recognition of a social economy. We need to be working with them to shape an equitable and sustainable urban environment. Education is a key to their success in achieving access and equity.

### ***Innovative Learning Centre***

- One of our most exciting endeavours is our Innovative Learning Centre, a targeted, comprehensive, and holistic approach founded on the Seven Sacred Teachings – courage, wisdom, love, truth, humility, honesty, and respect.
- Programming based in inner-city schools, professional development opportunities and educational resources for school teachers and

principals, research opportunities for University of Winnipeg faculty and students.

- Ambitious Model School of Science for inner-city children and youth located within the new Richardson College for the Environment and associated with the University's renowned Collegiate high school.
- The Model School will provide Winnipeg's least advantaged students with enriched learning opportunities in a state-of-the-art sustainable facility with labs, classrooms, and a greenhouse where organic vegetables and herbs can provide curriculum, nutrition, and community economic development opportunities.
- Adding to this integrated ecological education will be a community garden designed by the students where the natural world can be explored, prairie ecosystems demonstrated, and sacred indigenous plants studied and understood.
- Drawn a team of leading educators, academics, and administrators together to develop the Innovative Learning Centre: Dr. Dawn Sutherland, Rob Bend, Dr. Ken Friesen, Dr. Randy Kobes, Dr. Ken McCluskey, Dr. Brian Rice, Dr. Mary Young, Dr. Frieda Hart, and Jennifer Rattray.
- Recruited and hired Kevin Chief to develop and implement programming for the Innovative Learning Centre – a graduate of The University of Winnipeg and an active member of Winnipeg's Aboriginal community who has a proven track record of success within the school system and throughout Winnipeg's inner city.
- Developed a shared vision in which children, youth and families connect with communities and schools to achieve academic success.
- Centre partnered with the Winnipeg School Division, Winnipeg Aboriginal Sport Achievement Centre, The Aboriginal Education Directorate, Turtle Lodge Sagkeeng First Nation, Fort Whyte Centre and others
- Offers educational programs and services including:

- Eco-Kids and Enviro Techs, and summer camp for Aboriginal and inner city children
  - Summer employment opportunities for inner-city youth and Aboriginal students at The University of Winnipeg
  - Experience for future teachers in the Faculty of Education working with Aboriginal children and youth
  - Richardson College for the Environment and surrounding green space, greenhouse, and gardens will be available to schools throughout the province
  - Faculty of Education and public school system to use “teaching hospital model” to innovate curriculum and improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal and inner city students.
- Programs run in conjunction with efforts to reduce financial barriers through our **Opportunity Fund** – a fund with flexible bursary and tuition credit account programs aimed at helping youth from inner-city neighbourhoods, etc.
  - Gives them a “tap on the shoulder” to think about university or college as something that they can take part in.

### *LearningCITI & Wii Chiiwaakanak*

- Wii Chiiwaakanak Learning Centre helps bridge the digital divide, providing Aboriginal and inner-city students and community members with access to computers, programming, and other resources at no charge.
- Opened November 2005, the Centre serves hundreds of community members every week, bringing the University and its neighbours together through homework clubs and teachings from Elders.

### *Global College*

- Through our Global College, we have begun to address the issues of distance education, of community engagement, of the sharing of ideas and dialogue.

- A place where global citizenship, human rights, and issues affecting the planet can be researched, discussed, and debated by community members, students of all ages, government and NGO agencies, and the business community.
- Establishing an Institute for Literacy and Transformative Learning, a venue through which students can engage in service learning in the community.
- Already working with the **SUNSET** group to seek out potential synergies between the two different types of experiential learning that they offer.
- This is a perfect example of different sectors of the university community – in this case students and faculty – working together and capitalizing on each others skills and resources in the interest of shared goals.

### ***Social Sustainability in Operations***

- Our daily, logistical operations can help support the health and vitality of the Spence and West Broadway neighbourhoods.
- To support the local economy, we joined SEED Winnipeg's Social Purchasing Portal, which helps to direct existing business purchases to local businesses and social enterprises, which hire those who face barriers to employment.
- Also recently signed on to the Manitoba Food Charter, a one-page document that lies out a vision for a sustainable and secure food system in Manitoba. Committed The University of Winnipeg to food security and sustainability and to move towards supporting sustainable and secure food practices.
- Undergoing a complete audit of purchasing practices to ensure the economic and social sustainability of the community to which we belong.

- Sustainability Council will draft its social sustainability policies during the coming year. Exciting synergies and developments to take place once this occurs. Embody the principles of social responsibility and citizenship we wish to model for our students.

## **Conclusion**

- The tasks I am proposing are large; however, the vision of an ecologically, economically, and socially healthy university community with a thriving culture of cooperation and a notable ability to adapt to the demands of the coming age is a vision dear enough to your hearts that you will come to use it as the lens through which all work undertaken on campus is seen.
- This project is what Winston Churchill once called an insurmountable opportunity - *“an opportunity to revitalize and enliven curriculum and pedagogy...to create a genuinely interdisciplinary curriculum...to redesign the campus to reduce costs, lower environmental impacts, and help catalyze sustainable economies,”*<sup>22</sup> in Winnipeg and abroad.
- Comes down to our own personal human development – a notion embedded in the idea of sustainable development. Our intention here is to support our students, faculty, staff, administrators, and neighbours to continuously *develop* individually so that we might continually develop as an institution.
- Unless such development takes place, our actions here will continue to have a negative impact on the well-being of people around the world and we will confront more and more troubling claims like Sheila Watt-Cloutier’s that our actions are having devastating effects on communities of people we will likely never encounter in person.
- Such development clearly requires us to consider Earth’s ecosystems; however, it also requires us to consider the economy, society, and culture.
- For sustainable development to take place, sustainability must exist on all these levels. This is why today, we discuss ecological, economic,

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<sup>22</sup> Orr, p. 6

social, and cultural sustainability, and this is why all four dimensions of sustainability must be central to The University of Winnipeg.

- I call on students, faculty, and staff to take strong leadership roles in the work ahead.
- It is only through dialogue, debate, and cooperative action between people from all over the university that we will succeed in our goals – ensuring the culture of sustainability becomes the norm at this institution if we are to succeed and if our students are to succeed in the future.
- It is my hope that The University of Winnipeg will model sustainability in a way that will help everyone who steps foot into our institution see what a sustainable future will look like.
- This is surely a daunting task; however, the vision that can help drive us is best summed up by the words of David Orr that the young intern in my office has posted next to her desk:
  - *Imagine colleges and universities with a commitment to operate so that they do not undermine the integrity, beauty, and stability of the world their students will inherit....The limits are no longer technological or even economic, but those of imagination and commitment.*
- It is my pleasure to announce at this time that we will be releasing The University of Winnipeg our Campus and Community Development Plan.
- This University has an exciting future as it moves forward – building upon the traditions and values of the past while working to meet the demands of this new and changing world.
- And I invite you to celebrate this in the days ahead at the many events and activities planned for this 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Homecoming and Reunion Weekend.
- Thank you.