

The Story Of LITE

LITE was created in Winnipeg in 1994 with a very simple mission: To promote community economic development by supporting inner-city initiatives in Winnipeg that build capacity and provide jobs. It was noticed that at Christmas time, when most businesses are experiencing their highest sales of the year, inner city businesses were seeing sales drop. Kind Winnipeggers were donating food to Christmas Hamper programs to be distributed mostly in the inner city, but this influx of goods meant that local residents did not need to support local businesses with their own dollars. The immediate problem of hunger was being solved, but businesses that employed local residences were under threat of closing. LITE founders believed that these charity quick-fixes only succeeded in making the situation worse – a culture of dependency was developing.

A dynamic and determined woman called Estelle Penner heard about this frustrating situation. Her office raised money every year for Christmas Hamper Programs but she wanted to make more of a difference. In 1994 she got the employees at her office to buy gift certificates from Neechi Foods, a worker cooperative with a mandate of providing jobs and quality food for the people of the inner city. These gift certificates were then sent to the Christmas hamper program, hoping they would be used to buy food for hampers at the store. This little initiative really caught on and LITE was created to raise money to buy food in bulk at Neechi to be donated every year! People believed that their donation would be better spent if it could have a double effect: using their charity dollars to support economic projects that would have positive benefits in the inner city long after the Christmas dinner is put away. And so LITE began.

Since 1994 LITE has raised over 1.2 million dollars toward long term Community Economic Development Initiatives, and now supports over 250 jobs annually in Winnipeg. Help us support poverty reduction in Winnipeg long term. To find out more about LITE or Donate visit our Website at www.lite.mb.ca

