

# LiteNews

L · I · T · E local investment toward employment



in this  
issue

## cover story

Partner Profile:  
Neechi Food Co-op

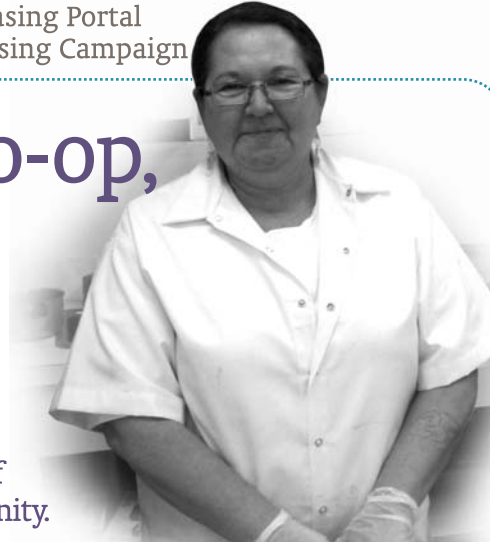
## features

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# Neechi Foods Co-op, a big friend for the inner city

By Arlen Kasdorf

Neechi is the Cree and Ojibwa word for “friends”, and Neechi Foods Co-op is one of the best friends to its surrounding community.



‘Neechi Co-op member, Candace Irvine’

Nestled in a small unassuming building on Dufferin Avenue, this full-service Aboriginal grocery store supplies its customers with a wide range of grocery needs including local foods like wild blueberries, fresh water fish, jams, wild rice and of course, homemade bannock. The store helps the community not only by supplying its grocery needs, but also by creating jobs and business ownership. Growing out of an Aboriginal training program, Neechi was started as a worker co-op, supporting the surrounding neighbourhood by giving local residents job experience and the chance to acquire shares in a business.

One of the local co-op members is Candace Irvine, who moved to Winnipeg in 2006 looking for full-time employment. After finding a part time job, she was still searching for extra income — Neechi helped by giving her the opportunity to reveal a hidden talent of making fresh homemade bannock. Soon after she started working at the store, her other job abruptly ended. Thanks to Neechi, she now enjoys being a full time business member-owner focused on improving the community.

One of the many examples of Neechi’s commitment to their community is their kid’s fruit basket, an initiative that was started to promote healthy eating habits. Children from the North End can come in and buy a piece of fruit for 25 cents, which is significantly less than any kind of candy. Since most kids would rather eat a chocolate bar than fruit, this encourages them to make wiser food choices and puts healthy communities first before profit.

In the mid-90s, the Lord Selkirk area was hit hard with a recession that caused numerous job losses and difficult times for families in the inner city. The increased need for food hampers at Christmas directly impacted Neechi since hamper-focused charities sourced grocery items mainly from major grocery chains. This charity spending habit put a strain on local, inner city businesses like Neechi.

Fortunately, a shining LITE came to the rescue by redirecting the buying habits of Christmas hampers so that the Christmas rush would help both local families and businesses. Without LITE, there is a good possibility that Neechi may not have survived those tough times.

For Neechi, business is a lot different now and plans are in the works to open a new location in May 2011, just a few blocks away on Main Street. The name of the new venture is Neechi Commons, and it will offer more to the community than it possibly could at its existing location. There will be a café overlooking the store, complete with a small arts & crafts section, and customers will also be greeted by a number of kiosks dedicated to local foods.

Jumping from 10 employees to close to 50, this new store is providing even more job opportunities, thanks in part to LITE’s continued support during the holiday season. In the future, Neechi Foods Co-op looks forward to making a deeper impact within the surrounding community.

## Ethical Purchasing Expo Update

September 24th’s Ethical Purchasing Expo, “Shop Outside the Box” was a great success!

rd Security Grant Families & Community



Eighteen local businesses, social enterprises and co-ops attended the expo to display, sell and promote their products and services. Over 800 people stopped by to shop, try samples, and learn more about ethical purchasing!

Our noon fair trade chocolate tasting game was a lot of fun! Thanks to MLA Doug Martindale, MLA Rob Altemeyer, MLA Dr. John Gerrard, Keran Sanders, host of the CBC Weekend Morning Show, and Megan Tate from The Winnipeg Foundation for participating as chocolate tasters! Thank you to The Winnipeg Foundation, Manitoba Hydro and Cocoa Camino for your support! Visit [www.lite.mb.ca/events.htm](http://www.lite.mb.ca/events.htm) to download the Expo’s vendor contact list.

# The SPP is back in action!

## Social Purchasing Portal (SPP) of Winnipeg

By Christie Fischer

### LITE is pleased to announce the revival of the Social Purchasing Portal of Winnipeg, aka the 'SPP'.

Previously hosted by SEED Winnipeg, the SPP was recently adopted by LITE due to generous project funding from Neighbourhoods Alive! and the Department of Local Government's Winnipeg Regeneration Strategy (WRS).

A "Social Purchasing Portal" may sound like a way to shop on the Starship Enterprise, but its mandate is local all the way. 'Portal' refers to the website focus of the SPP. Using the website portal's database, local suppliers (i.e. small businesses, social enterprises, etc.) are able to connect with purchasing partners (i.e. corporate business bodies, non-profits, etc.) who support opportunities for local employment and social responsibility.

The original project started in Vancouver in 2003, as a way to address unemployment and create further local economic growth in the Downtown EastSide, a neighbourhood in Vancouver's inner-city. In partnership with PATH Resource Centre and the EEC (Employment Exchange Committee), SEED launched SPP Winnipeg in 2004. The goals were similar — to see "Economic and employment opportunities result from directing existing business purchases to local businesses and social enterprises, which hire those who face barriers to employment" (homepage:www.sppwinnipeg.org).

The benefits to both purchaser and supplier partners of the former SPP are clear. The large law firm Taylor McCaffrey LLP has been a supportive purchaser partner since the project's inception. Mea Ramm, the firm's General Manager, explains how Taylor McCaffrey uses its purchasing power towards local suppliers — "We thought the concept of the SPP was great and wanted to help the businesses who in turn helped the community. We continue to use some of the suppliers that we've

met through the portal because they provide great products and great service." One of those suppliers of "great products and great service" is Food For Thought, a North End catering company that focuses on homestyle meals incorporated with local and organic ingredients. Melanie Rushton from Food For Thought, notes how the SPP has definitely "...helped the business [FFT's] with both purchasing and referrals", but she also expresses support for other small and local suppliers. When asked what she liked about the SPP, Melanie replied, "Seeing my peers growing and succeeding in their businesses!"

The Social Purchasing Portal will officially be relaunched in early 2011, and will continue to strengthen its former employment objectives and underlying values of community economic development (CED) in Winnipeg.

So ....what's new on the SPP horizon?

- A fantastic and simple to use website created by local web designers
- An expanded list of goods & services available locally
- The addition of a new element for the general public which will allow for easy access to a social purchasing directory of suppliers
- A strong emphasis on relationship-building between all partners!

In the meantime, check out the SPP's current website — [www.sppwinnipeg.org](http://www.sppwinnipeg.org) — to learn more about the project and the benefits of becoming a purchaser or supplier partner.

Support CED in Winnipeg! Contact LITE's office at 942-8578 (email: [litespp@mts.net](mailto:litespp@mts.net)) and speak to Christie Fischer, SPP Coordinator.

## Do you need help on the road to good health?

LIVE RIGHT NOW

Coming January 2011

CBC has unveiled an ambitious cross-platform health initiative designed to provoke, motivate and support Canadians to live healthier lives. Officially launching January 3, 2011, Live Right Now [www.cbc.ca/liverightnow/](http://www.cbc.ca/liverightnow/) is a six-month national program on CBC Television, CBC Radio and [cbc.ca](http://cbc.ca), designed to ignite a movement of Canadians making small, manageable changes that will have a big and lasting effect on their health. Start thinking about your New Year's resolution now and join us in 2011.

And for more incentive...CBC Television will be debuting a 10-part series called Village on a Diet beginning Monday, January 3 at 9 p.m., this series follows the people of Taylor, BC on their journey to better health as they commit to shedding one ton of collective weight.



## LITE Fundraising Campaigns

Every year, Winnipeg workplaces, schools and churches come together to raise money for LITE's Alternative Christmas Hampers and Community Grants Program.

Over the years, LITE fundraising campaigns have not only raised thousands of dollars in support of community economic development in Winnipeg's inner city, but have also become increasingly creative with their fundraising ideas.

Past workplace and school campaigns have raised money for LITE by holding a beard growing contest and by selling baking, used books, organic plants, and homemade candles!

Some more fun LITE campaign ideas include:

- Chili Cook-off (fee for entering and/or participants can collect pledges)
- Pie Throwing Auction (get your boss to agree to a pie in the face for a good cause & highest bidder gets to throw it!)
- Mini-Gala Dinner Party (have friends donate what they would pay to eat out!)
- Antique Auction (collect donated antiques & auction them off)
- Garage Sale (collect unused household items to sell in a garage sale — community centres are a great garage sale venue for winter months)

If your school, workplace, or church group is interested in coordinating a LITE fundraising campaign, contact us at 942-8578 and we will provide you with information and materials to get started!