

# LiteNews

L · I · T · E local investment toward employment



## in this issue

## Bluegrass and blueberries: LITE's 2007 breakfast

Homegrown bluegrass and blueberries headlined LITE's 11th annual Wild Blueberry Pancake Breakfast this past November 30. As always, the breakfast brought hundreds of people in the community together to enjoy delicious locally produced food, entertainment, art and crafts.

The breakfast at The Indian and Metis Friendship Centre is a major highlight of LITE's annual fundraising campaign to support employment and community economic development in Winnipeg's inner city. Attending LITE's breakfast is a wonderful way to celebrate the community. Inner-city residents, community workers, politicians, students, business leaders—all sit together and have a chance to talk. They also have a chance to buy locally made art and crafts from the many producers with tables at the event.



As volunteers this year served up freshly made pancakes piping hot from Neechi foods, Native Women's Transition Centre, and Andrew's Street Family Centre, the crowd tapped toes to The Magnificent Seven, a bluegrass group from the city that is quickly gaining a name with its powerful — and unique — acoustic bluegrass sound.

Other acts this year included Marco Castillo, RB Russell students, Niji Mahkwa students, and live art from Graffiti Art Programming. Students from RB Russell's Music Production Program were hired to manage the sound system.

LITE has always been about "local"— funding local employment initiatives as well as filling Christmas hampers with food purchased from NEECHI and a variety of local caterers. This year we took this one

step further at our breakfast. Sourcing local healthy food is no easy feat, but with the generous support of Tall Grass Prairie Bakery and Countryside Eggs, we served pancakes made from local wheat and wild rice flours, eggs and wild blueberries. We also served coffee organic fair trade coffee, supporting a women's worker co-op, and roasted locally by Black Pearl Coffee Roasters.

Thanks to all who attended and supported the LITE 2007 breakfast. We look forward to seeing you all next year!

### cover story

2007 Breakfast: Blueberries and Bluegrass

### features

Partner SpotLITE: IRCOM

Bylaw Bonanza: Smaller AGM Bigger Accountability

Brendan Reimer: 10 year LITE Board volunteer

2006-2007 Community Partners

### News bites

- \* Upcoming Events
- \* Thanks to CUPE Manitoba
- \* Winnipeg Schools Support LITE
- \* LITE Website Updates
- \* Thank you Donors

Check out Upcoming LITE Events next page

## Partner SpotLITE: IRCOM

### Immigrant and Refugee Committee of Manitoba

One of LITE's new partners for 2008 is the Immigrant and Refugee Committee of Manitoba (IRCOM). Founded in 1991, IRCOM is a not-for-profit agency that offers a host of services to newcomer families. These services include post-initial settlement, transitional housing, educational and recreation programs for children, youth, and adults, English as a Second Language tutoring, employment referrals, and community-based crime prevention.



In recent years, more and more newcomers have been settling in Winnipeg — more than 7,000 in 2006 — and adequate housing and support services are proving essential to their successful transition to Canadian life. IRCOM house, a five-story apartment on McDermot Ave, provides transitional housing to newcomers for up to years after their arrival in Canada. Currently, there are approximately 275 residents at IRCOM House from many different parts of the world, making it a busy hub of activity.

Last year IRCOM House property manager, Manny Revidad, began working with a group of Kereni men who had recently arrived in Winnipeg from refugee camps inside of Thailand. The Kereni are an ethnic minority from the mountainous region along the Burmese-Thai border. They have been struggling for independence since the 1940s and have been heavily persecuted by successive Burmese governments, including the current Junta military dictatorship. In recent years, dozens of Kereni families have come to Winnipeg from refugee camps in Thailand, where an estimated 125,000 Kereni are living in exile.

Having come from isolated rural areas with little modern technology, the Kereni had few skills that were applicable to the Canadian labour market. However, as Revidad explains, "they were very keen learners, and they wanted to gain skills that they could use to get jobs." Working on a volunteer basis, a number of Kereni men regularly helped Manny with building maintenance, including painting the entire first floor of IRCOM house. Through this initial work experience, the idea for a more formal training program was hatched.

This spring, LITE funding will allow IRCOM to employ six Kereni men part-time as they pursue further painting instruction. Formal training will be provided by a professional painter during a 3-month project that will also include resume development and education about working in the trades in Canada. The project will take place in the evenings, as the Kereni are busy Monday to Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., taking ESL classes.

By painting the hallways and apartments at IRCOM House, the Kereni Painting Project benefits all of the residents by contributing to the beautification of their home. The project is a very good example of Community Economic Development (CED) principles in action; and the staff at IRCOM hope that this initial funding from LITE will inspire future CED based employment development initiatives.

## Upcoming LITE Events:

### June 7

Run for Rights

### June 18, 5-7

AGM on a bus

### November 28

LITE's Annual Wild Blueberry Pancake Breakfast

Please consider adding LITE to your will as a beneficiary.

Through an estate donation of \$50,000, LITE was able to help start OPK (Ogijiita Pimatiswin Kinamatwin), an employment program which employs Aboriginal youth who have criminal records.

# Bylaw Bonanza: Smaller AGM, Bigger Accountability

by Nathan Sawatzky

There is a sinking feeling in your chest. Someone has just mentioned that naughty word: “bylaws”. In your mind’s eye, binders full of unbreakable code press in around you. You squirm. That obscure list of rules is supposed to be important, so you’ve heard. But if someone actually starts talking about the bylaws? The sinking feeling turns to crushing boredom. Your mind shrivels like a sun-dried tomato. You didn’t mean for this to happen; it’s just the dark power of bylaws.

So when the Board invited the LITE membership to join a bylaw committee, the volunteers were a brave bunch (I was the oh-so-lucky staff coordinator). But what made them so keen was a common concern that LITE have a sustainable future. At LITE’s 2007 Annual General Meeting (AGM), the Board had explained how chronically difficult it is to meet quorum (20 members) at the AGM. And once quorum is met, it is hard to discuss bylaw changes (some of which are badly needed) with a large group mostly interested in hearing about LITE’s community work. So should LITE change its membership criteria? (by the way, if you donated \$5 last year, you are a member of LITE)

## Should we change the business of the AGM?

Well, a big concern was that changing the membership would change accountability: the Board has always been accountable to LITE’s membership. Less accountability means less sustainability, since when something goes wrong, some safeguard should correct it. So the bylaw committee set to work, and after two fruitful meetings and many e-mails (and no boredom, by the way) we have arrived at two recommendations for the Board to bring to the AGM.

The first is to keep LITE’s membership the same, but to reduce the AGM quorum from 20 to 11. All members would still be invited to the AGM. And those actively interested will attend and contribute, as before. But with quorum assured, the necessary AGM business will always get done.

The second recommendation is to vote for Board members by a mail-out ballot in the spring mailing, instead of at the AGM. This would significantly increase member participation and Board accountability.

Check out the details of the proposed changes (available to all members) on the inserts in the spring mail-out.

## Questions? Let us know what you think!

Contact Nathan at [litepr@mts.net](mailto:litepr@mts.net), or 942-8578.

Ad hoc bylaw committee: Jackie Hogue and Denise Greyeyes (Board members); Dave Young, Blair Hamilton, and Wayne Taylor (members at large); Nathan Sawatzky (staff).

Thanks CUPE Manitoba for helping us cover the printing costs for our newsletter!

LITE would like to acknowledge the financial support of the Winnipeg Partnership Agreement, Winnipeg Foundation, and an Anonymous Donor.

# Brendan Reimer: 10 year LITE board volunteer



After 10 years of above-and-beyond-the-call service, Brenden Reimer is leaving the LITE board this June. We are really sad to see him go. Brenden has been an integral part of LITE over the years, serving as co-chair of the board for three years and chair of the Corporate Fundraising committee for another four. He has helped me tremendously in my work as executive director of LITE — Brenden is always the guy who knows what no one else seems to know! I interviewed Brenden about his years with LITE:



## LE: How or why did you get involved with LITE?

BR: Why did I work with LITE? It just made so much sense to me! When you have people who are taking the initiative to make their lives better and improve their whole community, why wouldn't we support that? It is in all of our best interests to reduce poverty, and we know that it is best done by people living in those communities themselves, but it is up to all of us to support that work in whatever way we can.

## LE: Anything stand out in your mind as the quintessential LITE experience?

BR: A typical LITE experience? Almost every time I talk about the inspirational origins of Neechi Foods, talk about how they suffered every December when sales should have been highest, and how they realized that Winnipeggers' generosity in handing out free food in the neighbourhood was the cause of their hardship, I almost always hear an audible "oooooooohhhhhhh" as lightbulbs come on in people's minds.

Most of us in Winnipeg really are wanting to do something good for other people, we just don't always know whether what we are doing is most effective, or maybe even has some unintended negative impacts, but to connect these dots results in a major epiphany for people — after which they tend to become very excited about the alternative to simple charity — local investment.

One story that does stand out (I used it in a recent keynote in BC) was from the first house that OPK did, where we were one of the first funders for them with \$50,000:

"A few years ago I had the privilege of attending a house blessing in Winnipeg's North End. It was a small house, and it was nestled in a neighbourhood where many of the homes were boarded up. But this one was different, completely redone: new stucko, new windows, new stairs, and as I went inside I could see that it had been completely redone as well. But after the Elder's prayers, and a few words from those who had been involved, I realized how the biggest impact of this work had not been the house itself. A young man asked if he could speak a few words, and said, "I just want to say thank-you to all of you who made this happen. Coming out of the gangs I always took from the community, and now I could give back. I learned how to work, to create, and felt very proud when I got my first pay-cheque. I never thought with my record that I could get a job, but you made it happen. Thank you for believing in me, and giving me a chance, when no-one else would have."

Thanks Brendan! We'll really miss you and your passion. We wish you all the best as you move forward.

## Run for LITE!

Mark your calendars: join LITE in the 2008 Run for Rights, Saturday, June 7th! You can run, walk, cycle, or blade the 5 or 10 km route that begins at Kildonan Park. Bring the whole family and enjoy live music afterwards as you support CED in Winnipeg.

Collect pledges in support of LITE or volunteer (we need 20!) to help on the day of the race. Download a pledge sheet at [www.lite.mb.ca](http://www.lite.mb.ca), or call Nathan at 942-8578 for info or to volunteer. See you there!

All funds raised help LITE support local initiatives that train, employ, and mentor the chronically underemployed in Winnipeg's inner-city. Our support gives a hand up, not a hand out!

## Winnipeg Schools Support LITE

General Byng students and teachers raised over \$1200 for LITE in December! The students and staff of General Byng not only took the time to raise funds for LITE, they also put the time into rolling all of the coins they collected.

In December, the students of Wolseley School donated money to LITE that was raised in December 2006 at their Winter Family Fun Night. The students rolled bees wax candles and sold them as "Candles for LITE".

The efforts of these students and teachers have helped LITE give grants to organizations that employ people living in the inner city and to purchase cookies, honey and groceries from local organizations and Neechi Foods toward Christmas hampers.

Thank you to all the students and teachers who continue to support LITE and CED initiatives in the inner city!

## Volunteer Opportunities at LITE:

If you are interested in volunteering for LITE, here are some ideas:

- \* volunteer at the Wild Blueberry Pancake Breakfast or the Run for Rights
- \* making a LITE presentation at your church or other organization
- \* become a contact person for a workplace campaign
- \* help us make thank you calls to donors
- \* attend an envelope stuffing party for a mailout
- \* serve on the board or on a committee

The LITE board is currently seeking LITE supporters with these skills: fundraising, communications, evaluating, strategic planning, and accounting. We are also looking for people with connections to faith communities and/or media. It would be an asset if you were a North End Resident or over 30 or 40. LITE's board is visionary, active and friendly. If you would like more information, please contact our office so that we connect you with our nominations committee!



## LITE's Website

LITE's updated website contains information about who we are and what we do. Donors, volunteers, partners, and organizations can find out more about upcoming events, volunteer opportunities, and the exciting work of our partner organizations in the inner-city. You can also view our most recent e-newsletter and this summer will be able to access past newsletters and information about LITE in the Media Archives that is currently under construction.

For more information or to make an online donation, visit LITE at [www.lite.mb.ca](http://www.lite.mb.ca) or CanadaHelps at [www.canadahelps.org](http://www.canadahelps.org)

# Community Grants & Purchasing Partners

## Community Grants

### Thank You to LITE's Donors

LITE appreciates the support of our many wonderful donors!

We have finished updating the privacy information on our donation materials and will be able to publish the names of our donors in next year's newsletter.

We would like to thank all of our donors. Your support has helped LITE fund training and placements for those seeking employment, and to purchase hamper items from inner-city worker co-operatives. Next year, LITE will reach the milestone mark of having invested \$1,000,000 in Winnipeg's inner-city thanks to your support!

Thank You — LITE's work wouldn't be possible without you!

### \$10,000

#### Project Manager — Graffiti Art Programming Inc.

Graffiti Art Programming (GAP) provides innovative art programming to inner city youth in the neighbourhoods of Point Douglas and William Whyte. In addition to operating a number of after school art classes, the Urban Canvas program trains aspiring at-risk youth in the design, production and installation of large-scale outdoor murals. Funding from LITE will allow GAP to hire a Project Manager. This position will enable them to acquire more commercial projects and move towards financial sustainability.

### \$6,000

#### Newcomer Skills Building: The Kereni Painting Initiative — Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba (IRCOM)

Based at IRCOM, the Newcomer Skills Building Program will give 6 newcomers from the Kereni community (an ethnic minority group originally from Burma) the opportunity to gain valuable experience in the areas of painting and maintenance. By painting the common areas at IRCOM, the Kereni participants will not only gain painting skills and work experience, but will also contribute to the beautification of their home and the home of nearly 300 other newly arrived immigrants and refugees.

### \$2,000

#### Employment Support Project — Resource Assistance for Youth (RaY)

RaY works with youth and young adults (many of whom are homeless or at risk of being homeless) to further develop their employability skills and increase their job readiness. Funding from LITE will expand RaY's existing Odd Jobs program by enabling the program to offer youth workers honorariums that are in line with minimum wage. The Employment Support Project program includes: free training workshops with certification in WHIMIS, CPR, and Food Handlers; the engagement of youth to survey the West Broadway neighbourhood for potential employment; and short-term employment for youth in need of experience.

### \$7,500

#### Childminding Program — West Central Women's Resource Centre

The Childminding training program was set up to address the lack of safe occasional childcare resources for non-profits, government and community organizations. The program simultaneously offers training, employment and respite childcare, ensuring that women can participate in community meetings and events, and offering West End parents training in positive parenting and education. The program has also generated employment for people who may have otherwise had to rely on social assistance as their only means of income.

### \$6,300

#### First Jobs 4 Youth — Spence Neighbourhood Association (SNA)

As part of SNA's First Steps Towards Employment Initiative, First Jobs 4 Youth is a project that provides 10–12 youth living in the Spence neighbourhood with part time summer employment, a fall work placement, and job skills training. The First Jobs program partners with other youth serving and community development agencies in Winnipeg to provide job experience, employability skills, and life skills. The fall placements, which are funded completely by LITE, connect youth with businesses within the Spence Neighbourhood. These placements act as an opportunity for local establishments to gain trust in the idea of hiring local youth.

## \$6,000

### West Central STREETS

West Central Streets is a non-profit community newspaper based in the neighbourhoods bounded by Notre Dame Ave., Carleton St., Portage Ave. and Arlington St. The purpose of the paper is to give voice to the interests, struggles and strengths of the people in the community. A team of 20 residents are hired at market rates each issue to distribute the paper door to door. All community people who contribute to the paper are paid an honorarium. An inner city graphic artist is hired at market rates to do design and layout of the paper.

## \$4,200

### The Point Community Newsletter — Point Douglas Residents Committee

The Point is a community newsletter in the North Point Douglas neighbourhood. The mission statement is: "to promote the formation of a strong and cohesive community by providing information and communication among all who live and work in North Point Douglas, and to project a positive image." Over the past five years this newsletter has become an important tool for communication, renewal, and neighbourhood pride. The newsletter also strives to develop and promote employment opportunities for local residents in the production and distribution of the paper.

## \$3,000

### The Good Food Club — West Broadway Development Corporation

The Good Food Club (GFC) offers low-income residents of the West Broadway neighbourhood an opportunity to learn about, and participate in, local organic farming and Community Shared Agriculture (CSA). The goal of the GFC is to create food security and support local skills development and employment. Under the guidance of the Landless Farmers Cooperative (located 20min east of Winnipeg), W. Broadway residents have the opportunity to work on neighbourhood community gardens and out at a farm. LITE is providing wages for several residents to organize weekly markets and community dinners. This work provides a first step for residents that may not be ready for more long term employment.

## Purchase Partners

### \$2500 — cookie purchase

#### Andrews Street Family Centre

Andrews Street Family Centre (ASFC) is a multi-service support centre that seeks to build on the capacity of residents to provide local solutions to issues related to family and neighbourhood development in the William Whyte area. Through LITE's purchasing program ASFC employs up to 10 local residents each Christmas season to make 1200 dozen cookies for Christmas Cheer Board hampers. The community kitchen co-ordinator trains residents in food preparation, health and safety standards, food handling, packaging, purchasing, and teamwork. The community kitchen serves as an important training ground for many residents for future employment opportunities

### \$1000 — cookie purchase

#### Food Connections Project —

#### Wolseley Family Place

The Food Connections Project blends pre-employment programming and Community Economic Development (CED). This project has four components: a cooking class, a breakfast club, a community store and a catering business, and it employs up to ten community members. The Food Connections Project provides supported employment to single parent mothers with little or no employment experience who participate in Wolseley Family Place.

### \$1000 — honey purchase

#### Fort Whyte Farm

Fort Whyte Farms provides 50 youth with training and knowledge in various farm and business skills every year. Eight students are employed full-time during the summer, and about 25 work on the farm for a stipend on a weekly basis during the school year. Students learn bee-keeping, honey collection, processing and packaging, vermicomposting, gardening, aquaponics (underwater agriculture combined with hydroponics), bison meat cutting and packaging, and the marketing and sale their products.

### \$2500 — cookie purchase

#### Native Women's Transition Centre

The Native Women's Transition Centre is a long-term residential safe house for Aboriginal women and their children.

The centre's catering provides employment and training to 15 women who live at the centre. Training includes preparing budgets, purchasing, food safety and handling and cooking. LITE's purchasing program supports NWTTC's catering business through annual an annual order of baking for Christmas Cheer Board hampers.

### \$35,500 — Christmas hamper food purchase

#### Neechi Foods Community Store

Neechi Foods Community Store is a full-range grocery store and Aboriginal specialty shop on Dufferin Avenue. Neechi Foods is a worker co-operative that provides employment, training and collective business ownership to seven inner-city residents. Neechi has been in business since 1989 and is widely known for its leadership in Community Economic Development.

### \$5,373 — blanket purchase

#### Northern Star Workers Co-operative

The Northern Star Worker Co-op is owned and operated by six First Nations and Metis women who hand sew a range of traditional and contemporary quilted blankets. For the past five years, LITE has purchased blankets from Northern Star to donate on a first come, first serve basis to other community organizations for use in their fundraising activities. This year 11 community organizations received blankets, providing sustained support for Northern Star through direct purchasing and exposure, and allowing LITE to support a wide range of community organizations.

### \$1000 — cookie purchase

#### We Yone Cooking Group

This group of 5 women from Sierra Leone gather together to cook and bake for social activities such as dances and other outings. The name "We Yone" Cooking Group means "Everybody's Cooking Group", as the group is growing and will soon have eight members from different cultures. The women also gain income through catering for events and activities.

The 7th Annual

# RUN FOR RIGHTS



Raise money in support of Winnipeg organizations working for **social justice** and **human rights**

**Saturday  
June 7<sup>th</sup> 2008**

**Kildonan Park**

Registration 8:30 - 9:00 AM, Start time 9:30 AM

**WALK CYCLE RUN  
WHEEL OR BLADE**

the 5 or 10 KM route along the Red River on Scotia Street  
(Kildonan Park to St. John's Park and back)

Call Janine at **475-3816** or email [run4rights@mts.net](mailto:run4rights@mts.net) to sign up for the run

Collect pledges or make donations to support one or all of the following: Aegis Foundation for Development, Afghan-Canadian Women's Organization, Amnesty International, Anarchist Black Cross Winnipeg, Canada-Haiti Action Network, Canada Palestine Support Network, Copwatch Winnipeg, Engineers Without Borders, Institute for Community Peacebuilding, LITE (Local Investment Toward Employment), Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council (Welcome Place), Saphalo Education Foundation, Tšepong HIV/AIDS Clinic (MGEU)

**WWW.RUNFORRIGHTS.ORG**

To fundraise for LITE, please call 942-8578 or email [lite@mts.net](mailto:lite@mts.net)

