ETHNOCULTURAL DIVERSITY, INDIGENEOITY, AND INTERCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING IN THE CONTEXT OF PLANNING FOR RECONCILIATION: PERSPECTIVES FROM THE CITY OF WINNIPEG, MANITOBA

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Abstract

Through a case study of the city of Winnipeg, this paper examines perspectives on Indigeneity and ethnocultural diversity in the context of planning for reconciliation at the scale of a city as inhabited by both Indigenous and racialized communities. The authors reveal a separation between Indigeneity and immigration discourses in academic literature and in planning practice and problematize the processes by which cities plan for diversity. This paper draws from semi-structured interviews conducted with Indigenous and racialized inhabitants, organizational officials, and planners in Winnipeg to reveal that amid the absence of strong municipal planning and programming, intercultural understanding between Indigenous and immigrant inhabitants has developed in the city, and that planners can do more to help to sustain and enhance it. The authors conclude that by increasing the level of literacy and competency in ethnocultural diversity and in Indigeneity, and by focusing on processes of planning, planners and municipal officials can play a more constructive role in enhancing intercultural relations and advancing reconciliation in Winnipeg and other Canadian cities.

Keywords: ethnocultural diversity, Indigenous peoples, immigrants, reconciliation, urban planning

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Introduction

Population projections reveal that by 2036, immigrants will make up between 24.5% and 30% of Canada’s population (Statistics Canada, 2017b). A considerable trend of immigration revealed by the 2016 Census is that census metropolitan areas in Prairie Provinces are receiving a larger portion of recent immigrants than in the past. In 2016, Winnipeg, Regina, Calgary, Saskatoon, and Edmonton were home to a share of newcomer immigrants twice as high as their share of the total population in the country (Statistics Canada, 2017c). Winnipeg had the second-highest growth in the proportion of recent immigrant settlement in the past five years prior to the census in Canada. This phenomenon, along with increasing Indigenous population growth, which is more than four times the non-Indigenous rate, is evolving the character of this city (Statistics Canada, 2017a).

The increasing level of ethnocultural diversity in the Prairies, which includes both racialized immigrant communities and an augmented presence of Indigenous communities, creates a special context. While the focus of studies on immigration and multiculturalism has been mostly on major metropolitan areas, where ethnocultural diversity has been a constant component of their historical development (Patel et al., 2018), Winnipeg may become one of the earliest mid-size Canadian cities to enter a hyper-diversity phase if current demographic trends persist. This phenomenon invites planners to consider how ethnocultural diversity and Indigeneity in this city impact planning policy and practice in an era that advocates for truth and reconciliation between diverse non-Indigenous people and Indigenous peoples.

However, there is a lack of understanding of the ways that ethnocultural diversity is posing unprecedented challenges to municipal officials and planners in mid-sized Canadian cities. This paper presents a conceptual framework and case study for addressing diversity in Winnipeg and argues that an approach to urban planning for reconciliation should address both ethnocultural diversity and Indigeneity simultaneously. Through a case study of Winnipeg, this paper examines how the discursive separation between Indigeneity and immigration narratives in academic literature and the planning practice in Canadian cities should be bridged. Therefore, planning for cities wherein space and place are equitably shared between the settler mainstream society, diverse Indigenous inhabitants, and immigrants should also address a discussion of urban diversity and difference. The coexistence of Indigenous peoples and immigrants does not mean that both groups should be considered as equivalent to each other or one more important than the other in a robust concept of urban diversity. Unlike many immigrants who have voluntarily integrated into the existing social and cultural contexts, many Indigenous peoples have long refused to assimilate into settler colonial structures that “forcibly incorporated nations who want to ‘get out’ of imposed political arrangements that deny, exclude and oppress.” (Fleras & Maaka, 2010, p. 15).

This paper documents and examines experiences of intercultural understanding between newcomer immigrants and Indigenous inhabitants of Winnipeg, the ways they negotiate their coexistence side by side, and the ways the municipal government addresses Indigeneity and ethnocultural diversity in neighbourhood planning, design, and programming. We argue that intercultural understanding is a precondition to reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous urban inhabitants and hinges upon transforming the orthodoxies of urban planning, design, and programming that have conventionally approached ethnocultural diversity and Indigenous groups through outcome-based, standardized, and distributive procedures.

Context

I. Indigeneity and Immigration: A Discursive and Practical Separation

Truth finding and reconciliation for Indigenous communities on the one hand and social and spatial justice for racialized groups on the other in the discursive and material contexts of contemporary urbanism do not happen in a vacuum. As Walia
(2013) argues, White supremacy, racism, anti-immigrant xenophobia, and settler colonialism are mutually reinforcing. Reconciliation efforts have included societal and institutional commitments to the process of healing and redistribution between non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples. State-based reconciliation discussions normally conceptualize non-Indigenous peoples as a homogenous group; however, just as Indigenous communities are diverse populations in terms of their ancestry, cultural affiliations, and aspirations, non-Indigenous communities encompass not only the ‘White-settler’ mainstream but also varied ethnocultural groups.

In contemporary debates on reconciliation and planning for social justice for Indigenous and racialized populations, the fact that a large proportion of non-Indigenous society is comprised of international and racialized immigrants is ignored. Many immigrants are offered limited information on the settlement history, colonization, and contemporary debates on reconciliation in their early years, following arrival. The reason for this oversight lies in what Bauder (2011) calls the public and academic discursive separation between narratives of immigration and Indigeneity in settler societies like Canada. As Bauder formulates, historically immigration and Indigenous issues are related in the context of colonization but this relational component is rarely recognized outside of academic literature.

Multiculturalism involves a political process that shapes the national identity in settler states by welcoming immigrants or ‘arrivants’ (Byrd, 2011) and then integrating them into the fabric of the nation. How Indigenous peoples have always belonged to this land and were present before immigration began are missing from narratives of multiculturalism and immigration (Bhatia, 2013; Bohaker & Iacovetta, 2009). While these exclusions might serve to further assert narratives that perpetuate the colonization of Indigenous people in settler nations, Tuck and Yang (2012, pp. 6-7) draw a clear distinction between settlers and immigrants in settler colonial contexts:

Settlers are not immigrants. Immigrants are beholden to the Indigenous laws and epistemologies of the lands they migrate to. Settlers become the law, supplanting Indigenous laws and epistemologies. Therefore, settler nations are not immigrant nations… Settlers are diverse, not just of white European descent, and include people of color, even from other colonial contexts. (pp. 6-7)

Although Tuck and Yang (2012) categorize racialized immigrants as new settlers, there is a more nuanced aspect of immigration socio-political frameworks at work that Bauder (2011, 2014) observes. Bauder asserts that contemporary public discussions on immigration do not recognize Indigenous presence and distinguish between already-immigrated settlers who are mostly of White/European descent and more diverse, new immigrants predominantly from the Global South. This dialectical categorization perceives that the White settler community is the one who has been living ‘here’ and normalizes the inferiority of the rights of the ‘foreigners’ and lumps Indigenous peoples in the category of ‘other.’ Therefore, the settler state characterized as White and European has been able to, first, naturalize its privilege as authentically ‘native’ and superior; second, eliminate Indigenous peoples from nation-building discourses; and third, apply discriminatory attitudes towards newer immigrants to Canada.

Nation-building in settler societies is underpinned by a process where the privilege of Indigenous peoples as the original hosts, or as equal inhabitants, is disregarded (Byrd, 2011; Sandercock, 2003). Shaw (2007) refers to multiculturalism ‘gestures’ in settler societies, a ‘neo-colonialism’ process hiding behind a blanket of apparent ethnic diversity. In another critique, Canadian multiculturalism is defined as “a business that sells diversity and favours dominant French and English groups” (Ghorayshi, 2010, p. 91), unable to overcome ghettoization, and a passive state-based illusion of racial equity (Abu-Laban & Gabriel, 2002; Bannerji, 2009; Collins & Friesen, 2011).
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Some argue that in the major metropolitan areas of North America, diversity and multiculturalism policies and practices have surpassed their theorization and that policymaking bodies and planning institutions are responding to the demand of diverse communities in advanced ways (Qadeer, 2016; Qadeer & Agrawal, 2019). On the other hand, some scholars believe that multiculturalism as a public agenda and policy has failed in practice and has led to the formation of a ‘plural monoculturalism’ state in which diverse groups are living in proximity to each other and, simultaneously, in isolation (Sen, 2007). Ghorayshi (2010) refers to historical colonization, suburbanization, industrialization, and contemporary neo-liberalism, stating that they created the current racialized poverty and gap between multiculturalism rhetoric and the everyday lives of people in Canadian cities. The concept of cosmopolitan citizenship has been shifted from being free of national boundaries and prejudices to a person capable of consuming high-quality commodity and cultures, including Indigenous and ethnic cultures, rather than participating in social justice focused multiculturalism in settler cities (Allon, 2013; Fincher et al., 2014; Jacobs, 1996; Shaw, 2007). Although technology has allowed virtual connectedness and communication, globalization has exacerbated fractures and clashes among diverse communities as “people cling to more traditional identities and ‘hunker down’ in the face of more global uncertainties” (Cantle, 2012, p. 2).

Critics of multiculturalism argue that there is a need for a shift from official and state-based multiculturalism agendas to interculturalism (Bannerji, 2009; Bouchard, 2011; Cantle, 2012; Meer & Modood, 2012; Wood & Landry, 2008). Collins & Friesen (2011) assert that creating an active intercultural context would enable everyday intercultural contacts in cities, contributing to a reduction of inequalities, and realizing the ‘diversity advantage’ as a tool to facilitate urban development in neoliberal contexts. Ghorayshi (2010) also suggests that the shift from multiculturalism to interculturalism would bridge the ‘layers of separation’ between Indigenous and immigrant inhabitants.

In discussing the concept of ‘border colonialism,’ Walia conceptualizes anti-immigrant xenophobia, White supremacy, and settler colonialism as mutually reinforcing. Border colonialism sees immigration through a global system of displacement. De-constructing borders for Walia through the concept of ‘border colonialism’ is quintessential as a step towards decolonization, creating the potential for recognition of Indigenous material, spiritual, and epistemological forms of sovereignty (Bhatia, 2013; Sium et al., 2012). In Walia’s view, all social justice movements, therefore, should recognize Indigenous self-determination, resurgence, and worldviews to advance their goals alongside Indigenous movements. Walia’s argument can be adapted to the urban scale and the disruption of real and imaginary boundaries. Spatial segregation, uneven urban development, and the racial distribution of population in neighbourhoods are signs of the existence of imaginary borders within cities across racial lines. For example, the spatial distribution of Indigenous peoples in Winnipeg indicates a disproportionate concentration in inner city areas and a high residential mobility rate, showcasing a totally different context from the suburban areas. Research shows that Winnipeg is a divided city not only by stark differences in socio-economic status, housing affordability, and opportunities for families between different neighbourhoods, but also by racial and ethnic status as well (Distasio et al., 2015). Winnipeg’s inner city has long been a transitional zone for Indigenous peoples and immigrants and has been characterized by urban decline indicators such as poverty and a lack of adequate housing and employment opportunities (Carter, 2009).

Social and physical diversity grants vibrancy to urban life, but such social and spatial differentiation should occur without the debilitating impact of exclusion. Urban places are distinct, but they nurture the capacity for a just politics of difference through interconnectedness and porosity of
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II. Indigenous-Immigrant Relations in Place-based Planning

In the face of contemporary reconciliation debates, municipal governments are trying to engage Indigenous citizens in urban planning processes. In February 2019, the Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP) introduced the Policy on Planning and Reconciliation following the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada’s (2015) Calls to Action. The TRC calls upon municipal governments, in addition to federal, provincial, and territorial governments, to adopt and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations, 2007) as the guiding framework for reconciliation. In this policy framework, CIP’s goal is to elaborate how reconciliation can be “meaningfully embedded in planning practice in Canada and planners build relationships with Indigenous peoples based on mutual respect, trust, and dialogue” (Canadian Institute of Planners, 2019, p. 5). The policy encourages planners – who are mostly non-Indigenous – to enhance their professional practice by increasing their awareness of Indigenous cultural practices and protocols, self-determination, local knowledge, and planning methods. While several provinces may continue to refrain from passing legislation pertaining to the UNDRIP, in November 2019 British Columbia became the first Canadian province to pass this declaration. The B.C. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act sets out a process to bring provincial laws into harmony with the UNDRIP. It requires the development of a transparent and accountable action plan to achieve this alignment over time. Also, the legislation provides flexibility for the Province to create decision-making agreements and frameworks with Indigenous governments (Government of British Columbia, 2019).

In the context of Indigenous recognition and inclusion in urban development, municipal governments have conceptualized Indigenous peoples as a stakeholder group (Fawcett et al., 2015; Fraser & Viswanathan, 2013). Relegating Indigenous peoples as stakeholders reinforces a central problem with multiculturalism policies and discourses, namely, the lack of recognition of Indigenous prior occupancy, sovereignty rights, and nationhood. The challenge of such categorization is that the planning system of Canadian cities normalizes, and hence downgrades Indigenous inhabitants to an ethnocultural minority group such as immigrants. This categorization circumscribes Indigenous peoples’ specific rights-claims to a tight framework of urban service delivery instead of their right to participate in spatial production and placemaking according to their own needs, aspirations, and epistemologies (Nejad et al., 2019).

Little study has been done to examine the relationship between Indigenous peoples and immigrants in the shared spaces of Canadian cities. These two groups are and will be primary contributors to population increase in Canada and are increasingly in contact in urban areas. These complex relationships, according to Kasparian (2012, p. 5), are “set against the backdrop of dismissal, ignorance, and a deliberate forgetting of historical events.” Immigrants and Indigenous communities share the same public spaces, use the same civic services and facilities, and in many areas, live in immediate proximity to each other. Despite the existence of mutual misunderstandings and stereotypes, there are characteristics that these two groups have in common, though they are pursuing different aspirations and claims.

There have been efforts to increase the mutual awareness between immigrants and Indigenous communities. As an example, Kasparian (2012) refers to an activity organized by an integration centre for Francophone immigrants, where a group of newcomers spent a day with the Mi’kmaq community in New Brunswick. This experience “revealed how surprised [Indigenous] people were - given their very negative self-image - that immigrants were taking an interest in them. Immigrants, on the other hand, were amazed that Canadians have little or no interest in these
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[Indigenous] communities with whom they have been cohabitating for centuries, aside from stigmatized or folkorized representations” (Kasparian, 2012, p. 4). Research from Winnipeg reveals that immigrant newcomers and Indigenous inhabitants are developing cross-cultural relationships (Gyepi-Garbrah et al., 2014). For example, Ka Ni Kanichihk (KNK) is a community-based Indigenous organization in Winnipeg that provides civic services and supports created and managed by First Nations communities. KNK has engaged in establishing cross-cultural programs such as the Aboriginal Awareness Workshops and Youth Peacebuilding Gatherings.

Despite how multiculturalism recognizes ethnocultural diversity and the rights of minority groups in Canada, research reveals that racialized groups feel high levels of discrimination against them (Dinca-Panaitescu & Walks, 2015; Pendakur & Pendakur, 2016; United Way, 2019; Wilson, 2019). The level of misunderstanding, fear, and segregation between diverse ethnocultural groups, and between immigrants and Indigenous communities, is high as well (Gyepi-Garbrah et al., 2014). Ghorayshi (2010), for example, finds that in addition to problems of housing, adaptation, and employment in Winnipeg inner-city areas, immigrant newcomers are facing problems of racism, exclusion, misunderstanding, and lack of interconnectedness between them and urban Indigenous peoples. The reason for such tensions between communities has been scrutinized by MacKenzie and others, who argue that the need to compete over resources and political influence make such tensions between ethnocultural minority groups inevitable (MacKenzie et al., 2012). There is another viewpoint arguing that even though political actors may express much concern about segregation and resulting tensions, they are actually the ones responsible for their development and expansion (Glynn, 2010). Glynn points out that politicians welcome “a bit of competition between ethnic groups as a useful counter to much more challenging class-based unrest. Different groups should compete for a small share of the cake, than that they should combine and demand a larger one.” (Glynn, 2010, p. 1010).

Transforming the deeply rooted structures of orthodox top-down city planning, which have contributed to oppression and invisibility of Indigenous peoples and racial minority groups, starts from the local scale of neighbourhoods, urban processes, and even practices that might look mundane or insignificant at first glance (Sandercock, 2003; Walker & Matunga, 2013). Implementing processes that are based on relationship-building, respect and considering diverse communities as full civic partners precede the incorporation of Indigenous and racialized cultural elements or ad hoc participation in the outcome of planning processes. Some Western Canadian municipalities are demonstrating an increasing interest in the process of planning with ethnocultural diversity groups and Indigenous citizens. These practices are accompanied by an emerging ideological shift in policy making and institutional practice which has resulted in increasing Indigenous participation in planning processes. This shift has also been reflected in the built environment through the creation of some public art elements, streetscape, land use, local area planning, and business development (Garcea, 2009; Nejad et al., 2020; Walker & Belanger, 2013).

The project of cross-cultural communications and exchange in Canadian cities also advances by engaging Indigenous communities in immigration discussions, procedures, and trends from the local scale to higher policy-making as “welcoming newcomers to one’s homeplace, as host, may indeed be one of the most powerful expressions of sovereignty and occupancy as a political and cultural community” (Gyepi-Garbrah et al., 2014, p. 1808). In the beginning, such engagement might be more symbolic but gradually could lead to raising the level of Indigenous influence in policy-making bodies and planning institutions. To fulfil this purpose, new epistemologies in recognizing and accommodating diversity and difference in planning processes should be applied. As noted by Fincher et al. (2014, p. 24) planners need to move “beyond the
usual repertoire of social mixing strategies, offering an alternative that emphasizes process over design, couched in demands for social and spatial justice and recognition of cultural difference, instead of simply ameliorating the negative effects of concentrated poverty and ethnic segregation, or capitalizing on diversity.”

**Planning For Reconciliation In Winnipeg**

Growing immigration along with increasing urban Indigenous population growth – more than four times the non-Indigenous rate – is creating a special context in Winnipeg. The research involved the participation of immigrants and Indigenous peoples in sharing their experiences of the status of intercultural relations in urban life and perceptions between Indigenous communities, immigrant newcomers, and municipal officials in Winnipeg. It became obvious early into the research that gaining an appreciation of inhabitants’ viewpoints would help to understand how Indigenous peoples and ethnocultural groups construct their imaginations about one another and create spaces for coexistence. Consulting urban planners’ viewpoints on engagement with racialized and Indigenous communities would also reveal the level of their competency in understanding the nuances of diversity and difference in urban planning practices (Rios, 2015). However, the primary focus of this research remained on the perspectives of immigrant newcomers and Indigenous peoples in neighbourhoods where these communities live side-by-side to understand the ways through which they negotiate their cultural and social existence in the city.

To study the lived experience of ethnoculturally diverse populations in Winnipeg, 19 semi-structured interviews – a number by which data saturation had been reached – were conducted with newcomer participants from various countries including the Philippines, India, China, Ghana, Nigeria, Iraq, Iran, Brazil, and Russia. The target group consisted of individuals who immigrated in their adulthood and were within their first five years of residence in Canada. Immigrants come to Canada through various economic, sponsorship, study, and refugee immigration streams. Participants of this research belonged to the economic classes of immigrants. It means that they were either skilled worker individuals, former temporary workers, or international students who gained permanent residency recently.

Twenty interviews were also conducted with First Nation and Métis inhabitants of the city including a balanced selection of participants ranging from university students to seniors. The geographical focus of the study is downtown areas with a high concentration of immigrant communities such as Spence and West End neighbourhoods, also referred to as the International Village. Three interviews were also conducted with immigrant organizational officials, and one with a manager of an inner-city neighbourhood association. This neighbourhood association is engaged with Indigenous and racialized communities in the areas of housing, community communications, economic development, environment and open spaces, and youth. In-depth interviewing provided an appropriate tool for understanding the lived experience of inhabitants and the meaning they attach to that everyday experience in the city (Seidman, 2006).

Interviews were also conducted with three planning officials working with the City of Winnipeg. The interviews were flexible in content and were open-ended, providing the opportunity to build rapport and engage in a two-way discussion with participants (Yin, 2016). All interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using NVivo10 qualitative analysis software. Codes, categories, themes, and concepts emerged through the analysis process and were vetted to make sure that the study findings were reliable and accurately represented the context in which the research occurred (Yin, 2016).

**I. Indigenous-Immigrant Interpersonal Perspectives in Winnipeg**

In Winnipeg’s inner city, Indigenous peoples and ethnocultural newcomers live in the vicinity. Such cohabitation creates a complex context for planning and programming. Data from interviews suggest
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that mutual awareness between the two major groups of marginalized urban inhabitants has been increasing due to efforts made by immigrant and Indigenous organizations as well as augmented individual understandings. Even though the dominant separation between discourses of immigration and Indigeneity persists, these communities’ ideas on equity and justice in the city converge. The increasingly diverse civil society has started challenging settler mainstream conceptions of racial superiority within the public realm in Winnipeg. Many immigrant newcomer interview participants expressed their willingness to know more about the colonization history, cultures of Indigenous peoples, and the impacts of colonial processes on the lives of Indigenous communities. The following participant’s statement was reflective of the majority of responses from immigrant interview participants:

When I came to Winnipeg I never knew about these people. Technically speaking I think they are the real Canadians. All of us, all others are immigrants. I think there’s a lot more that I need to know. They are the real natives of this country. And then still the population is less, and I’ve heard different stories about them. So, I think it’s better if I do my research on them and try to know more.

(Immigrant participant, interview 6)

There is little information available on Indigenous issues for people outside of Canada who are applying to immigrate to Canada and this may be because Indigenous peoples are eliminated from nation-building and immigration processes. Canada is portrayed to immigrants as an inclusive and welcoming country abroad. Immigrants also revealed in their interviews that they did not receive much information about Indigenous communities in Canada after immigration either.

Interviews results exposed stereotypes among some of the Indigenous participants about immigrants too. Among them is the notion that immigrants are taking all the jobs and the social opportunities. But, as the following Indigenous participant observes, lack of appropriate mutual awareness is the root cause of several problems, contributing to existing historical issues between Indigenous peoples and new settlers:

Immigrants are misinformed. I really feel that they’re just as brainwashed about how to think and how to deal with us [Indigenous people]. And what we’ve been learning is that the government has been telling them, perpetuating very negative information and making our lives much harder because now there’s so many more immigrants.

(Indigenous participant, interview 16)

Several immigrant participants drew a parallel between current Indigenous issues and the historical dispossession and marginalization of their communities. Immigrant participants tried to avoid the same mechanism that blames Indigenous communities for their circumstances. By contrast, many Indigenous participants expressed their positive perspective towards welcoming immigrants into this country. Some pointed to the Indigenous traditional teachings which promote openness and hospitality. However, the invisibility of Indigenous cultures from the public realm was one of the main sources in the existence of negative stereotypes between Immigrant and Indigenous communities, as one participant reported:

I think people don’t talk about the Aboriginal issues, it’s considered as taboo. Even at the lunch table we are talking about it; people don’t freely express their opinions as they will do it on other issues. So, it’s really sad that people won’t talk about it. And you feel angrier when you see Canada sending things or efforts abroad like when there was the Ebola crisis and things and helping other countries. There’s a crisis in our backyard and we don’t talk about it.

(Immigrant participant, interview 10)

Such urban invisibility as described by the immigrant interview respondent imposes a form of cultural illiteracy and hinders cross-cultural understanding and interaction. This participant had shared their experience from a school and workplace context, which are places where, according to Amin (2002; 2012), cultural exchange
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and transformation could advance intercultural relations. If an intercultural city is a product of what Wood and Landry (2008) call cultural literacy and cultural competence, then there is a need for more transformative perspectives and aptitudes in urban planning, programming, and management. The counterpart view on cross cultural relations shared by an Indigenous participant highlights the lack of communication between Indigenous and immigrant groups, and the significant role of non-governmental organizations in advancing intercultural communication:

Being involved in politics or community organizations, if we have to network or communicate with new Canadians, I am very comfortable. When I was doing community working with the inner city I was working with the Africans. And I got along well with them because of the fact that I think there’s that shared history of colonization and empowerment.

(Indigenous participant, interview 18)

Sound and ‘meaningful’ communication are seen to be key to enhancing coexistence between Indigenous citizens and ethnocultural minority groups. The role of planning in terms of what constitutes meaningful communication could be addressed in two contexts; the first is the decision-making and policy-making levels which involve mostly top-down, bureaucratic, and official procedures. This level has been mostly dealing with mediation between diverse stakeholders in the planning process. A second major issue is with outreach mechanisms, which according to Main and Rojas (2015) could hinder cross-cultural interactions if they rely heavily on verbal lecture-type communication rather than more facilitative or active-learning techniques. An immigrant newcomer raised this issue as well:

You cannot drag everyone into an event and make it compulsory for everyone to come and say, “Okay you have to love these people”; this is not going to happen. So, I think one of the ways to encourage people to come to those events is to make sure they’re entertaining. It shouldn’t be like a lecture…I think it should be something that’s not directly focused on history per se because a lot of people find it boring. So, it may begin around some cultural artifacts and help people create something or learn something in a new way. Next time they will be ready for something [more] serious than making dream catchers.

(Immigrant participant, interview 8)

Similarly, Indigenous participants believed that effective engagement in communicating with other racialized inhabitants of the city could not only augment new immigrants’ awareness of Indigenous peoples, but also enhance the shared perspectives and coexistence among diverse communities:

I think a lot of them [immigrants] are very open to learning about other cultures, to working towards helping the less fortunate regardless of which race they are. But then you also get the ones who are spouting out the stereotypes we’re always facing. It depends on their realm, how they live their life, if they’re involved in their community or just staying at home. If we stay at home we are not learning anything, we’re not evolving, you’re just stuck in your stagnant thoughts. It’s better to be active in the community.

(Indigenous participant, female, interview 20)

These interviews bring to light some of the longer-term implications of multicultural policies that have left Indigenous peoples out of ethnocultural diversity discussions; however, they also highlight ‘intercultural relations’ which emerge from the lived experience of diverse urban inhabitants sharing and interacting within urban spaces, as referred to by Collins and Friesen (2011). These interviews raise questions about whether and how opportunities for intercultural interactions could bring Indigenous peoples into the discourses of urban identity building, planning, programming, and placemaking to enhance the city as a place for coexistence (see also Porter & Barry, 2016).

Both immigrant and Indigenous participant groups highlighted the Indigenous original occupancy, their different needs and aspirations, and the persistence of negative symbolic capital associated with
Indigenous peoples in Winnipeg. None of the immigrant newcomers pointed to the notion of the inconsistency of Indigenous cultures with the city and urban life. As immigrants’ first encounter with Indigenous communities happens in cities, they perceived Indigenous cultures as nothing other than ‘urban.’ None of the immigrant participants highlighted the reserve/city dichotomy debate or linked the problems associated with Indigenous communities to the incompatibility of Indigenous cultures with urban life. On the other hand, most of the Indigenous participants shared a positive view towards contemporary immigration trends in which the ethnic and cultural composition of newcomers has become more diverse. Data from the interviews indicate that Indigenous peoples favoured the increasing ethnocultural diversity among immigrant newcomers as it positively contributed to unsettling the “racialized structure of citizenship that characterizes contemporary Canada.” (Razack, 2002, p. 5).

Immigrant newcomers expressed their willingness to improve their mutual understanding and intercultural interactions with their Indigenous neighbours. Also, participants believe that municipal governance lacked interest in promoting intercultural relations and cultural awareness as this leads to unsettling existing power structures and privilege mechanisms. Indigenous peoples who were interviewed raised their concern about the inefficiency of state-based engagement procedures and processes in eliminating stereotypes, misunderstandings, and creating awareness among newcomers of Indigenous issues, cultures, history, and values. These responses begged the question: what can urban planning do to advance intercultural relations in Winnipeg?

II. Advancing Intercultural Relations in Urban Planning Practice in Winnipeg

For most of the Indigenous interviewees, spatial segregation is a daily reminder of persistent marginalization and oppression on traditional Indigenous lands. The spatial structure of Winnipeg has managed to keep most Indigenous peoples outside of urban life through invisible spatial borders and institutional arrangements which segregate Indigenous inhabitants from the society (Nejad et al., 2019; Walia, 2013). A participant shared their views on spatial segregation in Winnipeg:

I would probably feel less safe walking in the suburbia compared to the downtown, to be honest. I don’t know, as you walk through suburbia and people are very more skeptical or curious about you. And it’s like they’re asking “What are you doing in this neighbourhood?” or “are you lost?” I guess it’s kind of like the impression that I get depending on where I go in the city. I guess it’s kind of like the places I would like to avoid going to.

(Indigenous participant, Interview 8)

As Indigenous and immigrant newcomers are increasing their mutual awareness of challenges and are engaged in bottom-up capacity building for intercultural relations, urban planning processes are underpinned by conventional consensus-building procedures that neglect intergroup and intragroup diversities and differences. Contrary to Indigenous and racialized inhabitants’ beliefs about their engagement in planning processes, urban planners working for the municipal administration present a different perspective:

We make every kind of concerted effort to be as inclusive as possible and involve as much of the community as we can. With our city's development plan – Our Winnipeg – a large number of those folks that we engaged were through the Aboriginal community. I think we engaged five or six different Aboriginal groups specifically, and yeah there was just a real concerted effort to involve the entire community and the Aboriginal community makes up a big component of that.

(City planning official, interview 1)

Neighbourhood organizations are essential in implementing ethnoculturally inclusive planning processes through promoting participation, shared management, and social cohesion (Talen, 2015). However, the following quote from an official from a major inner-city neighbourhood presents a
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countering viewpoint from the planners and reports a vacuum in formulating and managing interactions between city governance structures and the city’s ethnocultural inhabitants in various urban planning processes:

The city has the *Our Winnipeg* plan. But that vaguely covers what kind of neighbourhood we know should happen. One of our major roles is to pull together community plans. So, we create a five-year neighbourhood plan with the community. Identify what the needs are and where they want to make improvements, and then we help over the five years to make that happen. …We always want to push that it gets approved at city hall, and we’ve never had success. We’ve also developed community green plans and the city has refused to approve those at council level. But the furthest we’ve ever got was they’ll accept them as a document, which means that they can refer to it. But it doesn’t mean that they’re bound to any of the goals or mandates in them.

(Neighbourhood organizational official, interview 2)

Another official who works for an immigrant-serving organization evaluates the engagement between immigrants and the municipal administration as limited and inadequate. By asserting that election days are the major times that officials from the City knock on their door, the interview participant argues that there is no effective engagement mechanisms, benchmarks or targets that force decision makers to transform existing mechanisms of community outreach, engagement, and inclusion:

There is an outfit called the Citizen Equity Committee. That sees to the ethnocultural groups within the city, and basically, they try to keep tabs or have a good relationship with most of the ethnocultural groups here in the city. But in terms of specific planning, there is no direct link. Like I said the ten years that I’ve been working with this organization I don’t remember if there’s been a case where the city came knocking on our doors asking for our feedback on certain things that they were planning on doing. So, I think there is some deficiency there in terms of how the authorities at the City Council operate with the ethnocultural groups.

(Immigrant organizational official, interview 1)

From the perspective of another organizational official, Winnipeg has managed to show its commitment to cultural diversity mainly through its Indigenous-specific and multicultural events. They represent a more superficial interpretation of equity and engagement for Indigenous racialized groups about which scholars and activists remain critical (Kymlicka, 2016; Walia, 2013). Projecting cultural diversity through events and celebrations is considered positive by participants, but reconciliation and inclusion go beyond events. Looking beyond the celebratory practices of inclusion and cultural celebration, an Indigenous participant critically evaluates what lies at the core of spatial production and programming in the city that hinders social inclusion and reconciliation:

I really think the culture of this whole kind of political economy is really about exaggerating differences between people and really highlighting those differences because it just keeps people totally divided and as long as people are completely divided along race and class and gender. I think the only thing that’s really going to change the world is people get connected stay connected.

(Indigenous participant, female, interview 10)

Recognition of cultural diversity is mostly done through practices that in Kymlicka’s view is “naïve and uncritical celebration of ethnocultural diversity” (Kymlicka, 2016, p. 54). Acknowledging cultures and rituals, cuisine, music, dance, and other cultural spectacles are part of this approach. The pitfall of such ‘outcome-based’ planning and programming is the inability of eliminating root causes of social, economic, and political marginalization of minority groups, providing a just politics of difference, and preventing the mainstream homogenizing and oppressive powers (Burayidi & Wiles, 2015; Young, 1990). Too much focus on difference might also exacerbate the process of othering, hence reinforcing the
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subordinate position of cultural minorities (Koopmans, 2010), or it may trigger inter-group discrimination or assign a person to a specific ethnic group permanently against their will (Abu-Laban & Gabriel, 2002).

Other scholars have examined the commodification of cultures through outcome-based planning and the effect of gentrifying ethnocultural neighbourhoods on the social life of ethnic minorities (Fincher et al., 2014). In addition to stakeholder outreach, the need for more engagement in decision-making has been traditionally interpreted as the need for increasing the number of ethnoculturally diverse politicians, city councillors, or planners. However, as data from interviews suggests, ethnocultural participants do not consider having a person from their ethnic community or country in municipal government positions necessariy transformative. The representation of members of the same community, ethnicity, or religion in the municipal government might not be of an advantage for all members of that ethnocultural group as inter-ethnic tensions may exist in every community. Distributing social opportunities among Indigenous and racialized populations, a focus on enhancing service delivery, and various stakeholder engagement mechanisms are also components of this outcome-based discourse that are unable to unsettle hierarchies of oppression which is a first step toward reconciliation (Alfred, 2009; Nejad et al., 2019; Viswanathan, 2019; Young, 1990).

A Future For Planning For Reconciliation?

In March 2017, Winnipeg’s City Council unanimously adopted the Indigenous Accord as an “important step forward in the City of Winnipeg’s Journey of Reconciliation” (City of Winnipeg, 2019). The Indigenous Relations Division within the municipal jurisdiction is mandated to manage reconciliation efforts, service-delivery, and Indigenous initiatives in the city. The City of Winnipeg also has declared its commitment to workforce equity and diversity by introducing the Equity and Diversity Initiative. Furthermore, The Citizen Equity Committee is mandated to advise the Mayor and Council on diversity and difference issues in service delivery, policy making, and community outreach. In February 2020, the Newcomer Welcome and Inclusion Policy was also adopted by Winnipeg’s City Council. The human rights-oriented policy framework and potential actions for implementation are based on a number of ‘pillars’ that directly reflect the priorities and aspirations of immigrant participants. These pillars include: “A welcoming city, A city without racism, equitable and accessible services, a representative workforce, and active implementation” (City of Winnipeg, 2020). The corresponding actions proposed in the policy herald a new perspective towards identifying how multicultural planning at the municipal level should be defined and executed.

Nevertheless, it seems that all these activities to make municipal activities more inclusive for Indigenous and immigrant citizens are done in a compartmentalized and segregated way. The participant interviews revealed that reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, including racialized immigrants, although present has not been entrenched in the practice of urban planning in the city despite various initiatives driven by the City of Winnipeg. However, there are actions that could be undertaken by city planners to further the possibilities for planning for reconciliation:

- Effective communication was deemed to be essential in urban planning in fostering intercultural understanding among diverse city inhabitants and a better understanding of planning in the city. The interviews revealed that a deficiency exists in communication between city planners and immigrant communities. It is not merely a result of language barriers, but stems from an outreach mechanism that relies too much on verbal communication and textual evidence and less on the application of innovative approaches.
- The use of jargon also creates a gap between those who can understand the technical language of planners and those who do not or cannot. One solution is presented in research by Main & Rojas (2015) about applying
creative active learning methods of engagement which yields promising results. Two examples of photovoice – expressing participant ideas through photography – and Place It! – proposing solutions through creating simple models of the built form – highlight the importance of the art-based approaches towards engaging marginalized inhabitants in planning processes.

- The focus on the process of planning and empowering urban inhabitants in various stages of decision making and planning provides an ample opportunity for planners to understand and support diversity at the scale of inner-city neighbourhoods. Establishing a process for shared management of the built environment as a ‘neighbourhood-stabilizing’ strategy alongside more flexibility of regulatory mechanisms such as design codes, and determining public investment priorities, are quintessential principles toward planning contemporary diverse neighbourhoods (Talen, 2015, p. 279). The focus on neighbourhood planning and programming and the local scale of everyday lives of urban inhabitants shapes a platform where both Indigenous peoples and ethnocultural groups could come together and collaborate. As noted by an interview participant:

  I think that mentality should be changed. If you go with the perception that I have to just let them know this is the planning and what we are doing, that doesn’t help. I think one of the major things is the process. It’s never the outcome. You cannot just come up one day and say that this is the new place or space coming up for the city, and this is how it’s going to work. In your head, it is fine because you have the knowledge of spaces, how it’s designed, so according to you it’s perfect. If the process is missing, you are going to disconnect with people.

  (Immigrant participant, interview 9)

- The priorities of government authorities and market forces affect planning processes significantly. City planners have long tried to involve local groups and neighbourhood organizations in neighbourhood planning. However, there is too much focus on the distribution of services and social opportunities to Indigenous and racialized groups through a standardized framework that conceptualizes all diversity groups as homogenous, rendering municipal officials and planners powerless in influencing urban development towards reconciliation and inclusion.

- The lack of awareness and communication between planners and citizens, cultural incompetence and illiteracy of planners in terms of communications with diverse ethnocultural groups and Indigenous peoples are some factors that have left planners lagging behind dynamics that are rapidly transforming urban space and place in Canadian cities. All planner interviewees categorized Indigenous communities in the same manner as immigrant minorities – that is, as stakeholders, rather than differentiating their history and impact on the city and country. The main approach of city planners to engaging ethnocultural groups was by applying public consultation and communicative practices. A distributive approach underpins these consultative practices and treats all urban inhabitants as equivalent stakeholders, which is not effective at removing various forms of oppression imposed on the life of Indigenous and racialized communities respectively.

- Intercultural relations in urbanism concern managing difference and conflict in deliberating plans and programs, in both symbolic and material ways. Furthermore, cities need to adapt to diverse needs among multiple publics in physical development processes as well. Planners may know that they must focus on the process as well as the
outcome of planning practices through applying creative participatory methods; however, a focus on solely consensus-building planning procedures tends to be non-transformative (Nguyen et al., 2015). Finding shared or common ground between state-based ethnocultural urbanism and Indigenous planning and allowing for their unique approaches may ultimately be the key to transforming existing regimes of spatial production which have disempowered and marginalized cultural minority groups and Indigenous peoples from urban life (Viswanathan, 2019).

**Conclusion**

This research showed how the literature on urban planning in the context of ethnocultural diversity rarely incorporates Indigeneity and the interconnectedness of immigrant-Indigenous issues in its repertoire. By offering insights through primary research with interview participants, this paper attempted to fill gaps in the literature using a case study of planning for reconciliation in Winnipeg. There is ample room for additional research that could address emergent questions. For example, in planning an increasingly diverse city like Winnipeg, should the focus be on managing differences (negotiations, facilitations) or similarities (celebrations)? Or in other words, should the focus be on the planning process or on planning outcomes, and consequently, which one is the primary task of planning in its effort toward reconciliation? How should Indigenous inhabitants who are claiming their right to the city and place negotiate their coexistence with diverse groups of racialized immigrants? How can both Indigenous and racialized immigrants challenge the settler colonial structure of the society and the spatial structure of the city? These are topics that were discussed with participants of this research but in fact, they are ongoing questions regarding planning in the 21st century in Canadian cities that should be addressed in further research.

Reconciliation between Indigenous inhabitants and racialized people in Winnipeg has already commenced, as findings from the semi-structured interviews confirmed. However, the settler colonial structure of society and its urban development administration are lagging behind. Urban planners must recognize that they have a role to play in reconciliation. Reaching a shared sense of collaboration requires that “both legislative change and a cultural shift in how planning is done” occur (Fraser & Viswanathan, 2013, p. 16). Nuances exist between different Indigenous communities and ethnocultural groups residing in a city. In addition, there are diversities and differences among people that seemingly belong to the same community. A sustained commitment among planners and municipal officials to cross-cultural understanding is necessary and foundational to planning for reconciliation. Approaching this *labyrinth of diversity* in urban planning, design and programming through a comprehensive and cohesive discourse is mutually reinforcing and can enhance the capacity of collective empowerment of immigrant and Indigenous groups in pursuing their urban rights and advancing reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

Debates about multiculturalism and Indigeneity are inherently linked to discussions about urban diversity and difference and have ultimately disregarded racialization when considering who are the non-Indigenous people or settlers who recognize that they are implicated in reconciliation efforts. As the CIP’s Policy on Reconciliation asserts, reconciliation or “the commitment to establish and maintain a mutually respectful relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples” is a long-term process of “relationship-building, learning, and healing” (Canadian Institute of Planners, 2019, p. 2). Reconciliation fulfilment is not about achieving specific outcomes or products in the short term. Planning for reconciliation debates must engage with discussions of ethnocultural diversity and difference in cities, not only because cities are shared spaces that relations of power and privilege are materialized, but also as racialized groups will constitute a considerable proportion of the non-Indigenous populations in the process of reconciliation in the near future.
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This paper criticized the ways the planning practice engages with diversity and difference in Winnipeg and it does not intend to take a normative position to determine a robust framework through which planning should engage with ethnocultural diversity groups in all other contexts. Participant perspectives provided some guiding principles for civic officials to understand and facilitate planning and design done by/with diverse citizens. The ideal of inclusive and equitable urbanism happens when the conventional structures of decision-making are unsettled, and space is opened for situating alternative modes of planning, design, and intercultural communications. In every city, it is up to inhabitants to decide how to participate in civic efforts, what approaches to take in social and cultural representation, what would be the outcomes of their activities, and how to exercise their rights in planning processes.

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