

WINNIPEG, MB

[www.warmupwinnipeg.ca](http://www.warmupwinnipeg.ca)

## Build Urban Industries for Local Development Inc. (BUILD)

Most construction contractors specialize in building and renovating physical structures. Building Urban Industrial Labour Development (BUILD) is a bit different. Although BUILD is in the construction business, its core purpose is to break down barriers to employment, build brighter futures for low-income individuals, and create more sustainable housing throughout Winnipeg.

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In short, BUILD is a non-profit business that improves insulation levels and installs water saving fixtures in Manitoba public housing units. Through their community economic development (CED) approach, BUILD is helping to reduce high utility bills and transition the city of Winnipeg towards a more socially and environmentally sustainable future.

From humble beginnings as a pilot project in 2006, BUILD is now a thriving social enterprise that employs over 100 staff members. Between 80–85 of these employees are considered 'pre-

employment trainees' and receive six months of paid training. Providing a wage to its trainees sets BUILD apart from most employment training programs, but BUILD's crew is what makes the program truly unique. Aboriginal men living in the inner city make up the majority of BUILD's staff. Most would have been receiving social assistance, and many have been involved with the criminal justice system. The trainees typically come to BUILD with nothing but "a willingness to work and an eagerness to make positive changes in their lives," says Shaun Loney, BUILD's executive director.



Not everyone who begins the six-month program completes it. However, those who do graduate leave BUILD with a beginner's driver's license, employable skills, and a drastically improved sense of self worth. In addition to hard skills training, BUILD provides its trainees with access to resources such as personal Life Coaching, parenting courses, and an evening cooking class. BUILD has also forged close relationships with local Elders who lead smudgings, sweats, and cultural workshops where trainees can learn about the balance of life and the seven sacred teachings.

BUILD's employees are not the only ones to profit from the retrofit program. Rather, quantifiable effects are distributed across the broader community. For example, in one year alone, 2,500 low-income homes received water or insulation retrofits. These installations resulted in thousands of dollars in annual savings for local families and the provincial government. As of 2011, BUILD helped the government and low-income families save over \$900,000 on utility bills. Thousands more are saved in the criminal justice system, as individuals who once resorted to crime now have a stable income to provide for their families. And of course it is not simply a matter of money; the planet also benefits. A newly retrofitted home produces 3 less tonnes of green house gases.

Perhaps most importantly, BUILD is inspiring a new generation of role models and mentors in some of Winnipeg's most impoverished and disenfranchised neighbourhoods. As an

additional benefit, many BUILD employees gain a greater appreciation of environmental stewardship and responsible energy usage that they can pass on to their families and communities.

Unlike many inspiring CED initiatives in Winnipeg, BUILD's work has not gone unrecognized. BUILD's innovative approach to community development has become an international model of success for reducing poverty, increasing employment, and boosting environmental sustainability. In 2011, BUILD won the top prize at the prestigious Scotia Bank EcoLiving Awards.

BUILD's latest undertaking has seen them enter the real estate market as part-owners of Winnipeg's new Social Enterprise Centre at 765 Main St. Along with co-owners Pollock's Hardware Co-op and Manitoba Green Retrofit, BUILD has helped turn the former warehouse into an innovative hub for social enterprises and community-based organizations in Winnipeg.

With an entrepreneurial spirit and a mandate to reduce poverty, BUILD has found innovative ways to spur employment opportunities, reduce energy emissions, and build stronger communities. Whether renovating public housing, or hiring low-income Winnipeggers, BUILD is working to create a sense of place and belonging.

## CED in Manitoba

***CED is Community Economic Development***

This profile is one of 50 stories of Manitoba communities working to build fairer and stronger local economies, reduce poverty, and revitalize neighbourhoods. Not all of the initiatives use a fully comprehensive CED approach, but each represents an important component of a CED solution. Read all our profiles of CED at [www.ccednet-rccdec.ca/CEDprofiles](http://www.ccednet-rccdec.ca/CEDprofiles)