

# **Study of the Impact of Peace Poles in the Frogtown Neighborhood**

**Conducted on behalf of the Peaceful Love Warriors**

**Prepared by:**

**Nadja Hogg, Graduate Research Assistant  
University of Minnesota  
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## **NPCR Disclaimer**

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Neighborhood Planning for Community Revitalization  
330 Hubert H. Humphrey Center  
301- 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue South  
Minneapolis, MN 55455

Phone: 612-625-1020  
E-mail: [npcr@freenet.msp.mn.us](mailto:npcr@freenet.msp.mn.us)  
Website: <http://www.npcr.org>

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## **Introduction**

Inanimate objects alone have no power to move, to act, to judge, to include or exclude, or to speak. However, the meaning attributed to certain inanimate objects gives them tremendous power to move people to act, to speak, to bring change, to hope, and to believe. Symbols bring meaning to many areas of life. To people of the Christian faith, a cross might symbolize eternal salvation and encourage religious devotion. To a University of Minnesota alumnus, the golden gopher could represent school spirit. To most, a swastika is a widely recognized symbol of prejudice and may cause offense to many who understand its meaning. Like many powerful symbols, the Peace Pole is an inanimate object that has been given significant meaning through history and ritual.

A symbol's meaning can be subjective. An inanimate object becomes a symbol when a significant number of people associate a particular idea or set of ideas with the object over time. In this way, the object takes on its meaning and gains the power of the ideas behind it. Once a symbol gains meaning, it can have a powerful effect, from encouraging specific beliefs and philosophies, serving as cultural reminders, taking its place in rituals, or moving people to action.

It is difficult to measure the power or the impact of a symbol. To do so, we must understand the ideas a group of people associates with the object. Furthermore, we must seek to understand the strength of this association. In the case of the Peace Pole in the Frogtown community, community members themselves are the best gauge of the meaning and impact of the Peace Pole symbol. As such, this is a qualitative study, consisting of five individual interviews and five focus groups with community members. In addition, the researcher performed an extensive literature search on relevant current events associated with Peace Poles in other areas.

Based on the interviews and focus groups, the researcher has found that the Peace Pole does have some impact in the Frogtown neighborhood. Through community ceremonies and celebrations, the Peace Pole has gained recognition as a symbol of peace and unity. Even those unfamiliar with the exact meaning of the Peace Pole seem to have some respect for the Poles. At the least, the Peace Pole is a tangible symbol of growing neighborhood values. Those more closely associated with the Peace Pole indicate that the Peace Pole is especially useful in community capacity building and neighborhood organizing, bringing community members together and demonstrating community pride.

## **Peace Pole History**

### International Symbol of Peace

The Peace Pole is the international symbol of peace. Shaped like the Washington monument, the Peace Pole displays the message "May Peace Prevail on Earth" in many languages, on either four or six sides. Peace Poles may be planted indoors or outdoors, and they usually stand six to eight feet tall. There are more than 200,000 Peace Poles planted in over 180 countries around the world (World Peace Prayer Society, 2002).

The project began in Japan shortly after the end of World War II. The prayer "May Peace Prevail On Earth" was written by Misahisa Goi, a poet and philosopher who encouraged recitation and meditation on the phrase, in hopes to spread the message and bring about world peace. The first Peace Pole was planted in Japan in 1955. The World Peace Prayer Society, a non-profit, non-denominational organization, supports the Peace Pole symbol, encouraging mankind to work towards harmony, rather than live in conflict (World Peace Prayer Society, 2002).

The Peace Pole may symbolize peace in a family or community, and it also may symbolize peace that is needed between cultures and countries worldwide. The Peace Pole symbol encompasses all kinds of peace, including peaceful families free from domestic abuse, peaceful neighborhoods free from drug and gang violence, and peaceful nations free from threats of war or terror.

The Peace Pole is a symbol, but it also provides an important tool for community capacity building and community organizing. At Peace Pole plantings, re-dedications, and peace events, the Peace Pole serves as a focal point for community activities and a visual reminder of peace.



The peace pole is four or six-sided, with the message “May Peace Prevail on Earth” on all sides.

### Peace Poles Across the Country

The Peace Pole has made national headlines many times in the past decade. School shootings and terrorist attacks across the globe have brought a renewed consciousness to the need for peace. Those unfamiliar with the peace pole may not realize that they are literally “all over the place”. The most fruitful sources for information about Peace Pole’s involvement in communities are local newspapers and other local media. A review of nearly a hundred news pieces reporting on Peace Poles in the United States reveal that the Peace Pole movement exists in many areas. There are Peace Poles at churches, schools, and community organizations. There are Peace Poles planted in gardens of private residences and part of the architecture of private homes. There is a Peace Pole in the prayer room at the Pentagon in Washington D.C.

In the past year especially, many organizations previously unfamiliar with Peace Poles have sought ways to bring the symbol of peace and unity into their community. The Peace Pole has served as the focal point for many peace gatherings, peace celebrations, and peace vigils. In fact, the Peace Pole will be planted at the World Trade Center site to mark the one year anniversary of the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks.

In direct response to September 11<sup>th</sup>, P.S. 69 in New York City held a special ceremony to plant a Peace Pole. The guidance counselor at the school hopes the pole will help the children at the school feel safer and more peaceful. As a part of the ceremony, every child participated, and they received a peace bracelet to wear. In an interview with the press, the principal of the school spoke of a need for a healing ritual for the children. "Mostly, " she said, " we want the children to have the chance to draw something positive from the world upheaval" (Cairns-Pastor, 2002).

On September 24, 2001, just three weeks after the attacks on New York City, an elementary school in South Carolina held a similar ceremony. There, students and faculty had the opportunity to read aloud how they can incorporate peace in their lives (Graham, 2001).

The Peace Poles gained much in the way of recognition from the 2002 Olympic Winter Games in Salt Lake City, Utah. In a ceremony initiating the Olympic Peace Pole project, 84 nations lined the walk of the City-County Building in Salt Lake. Those involved in the planning of the event spoke of the importance of the ceremony: "It takes all of us getting to know one another, to mingle and establish peace in our neighborhoods and throughout the world. The need for understanding and compassion is a universal condition of all humanity. " During the ceremony, an Olympic chaplain recounted the story of the "Olympic Truce", a truce between warring nations participating in the ancient games that lasted seven days before and seven days after the games ended (Van Leer, 2002).

In a separate celebration, 168 Peace Poles, two for each nation participating in the 2002 Olympic games, were dedicated in a ceremony that included a Zen Buddhist peace ritual, prayers in English and Hebrew, a reading from the Book of Mormon, and the singing of a Hindi prayer. After the Olympic games, the second pole that had been dedicated traveled back to the home country with the athletes for planting there. This gathering was the largest dedication of the Peace Pole project to date (Hancock, 2002).

Many other communities have utilized the Peace Pole, even before the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks.

For instance, in Iowa, the Iowa Peace Institute has hosted many peace events, encouraged peace activism in communities, and utilized the Peace Pole to symbolize a commitment to peace. The founder of the Peace Institute notes, "The peace movement cannot exist in a vacuum. It is the women's movement, the nuclear freeze movement, the environmental movement, and all other things that concern peace. Everything contributes to the wellness of the planet" (Los Angeles Times, 1991).

In Orange County, CA a local synagogue planted a Peace Pole to encourage interfaith understanding and peace in the Middle East. Their celebration took place on the first night of Hanukkah, and the parish was asked to reflect on the need for peace throughout the holiday (Los Angeles Times, 1998).

The sister cities of Mount Prospect, IL and Sevres, France unveiled Peace Poles in a joint trans-global ceremony to make a plea for world peace. The ceremony included community officials and school children in both cities. The organizer of the event commented that the pole in Illinois would be planted in a large flowerbed in a good, visible spot to remind the community of the commitment to peace. (Chicago Daily Herald, 2002).

In Elk Grove, IL, a high school teacher led a Peace Pole planting effort at the local high school. At the planting ceremony, teachers and students wrote messages of peace and then read them all aloud. The teacher organizing the planting noted the Peace Pole provides "a safe place... a

quiet place... a centering place where the school can come together.” Students have responded in very positive ways to the Peace Pole planting. One student commented, “I think it’s great. Most school don’t do anything like this” (Chicago Daily Herald, 2002).

In Elk Grove, NE, an international-studies magnet school has done the same. Principal Patricia Schweer noted, “By promoting respect and tolerance for other people, we would naturally promote peace throughout the world. That’s part of what we do here... It’s the students’ visions too, as global learners” (Omaha World-Herald, 2001).

A Walk-For-Peace in Madison, WI included a peace festival and presentation of a Peace Pole to the Governor of Wisconsin with a Peace Pole for planting in the State Capitol grounds. The first peace walk in Wisconsin, the event was endorsed by many local organizations. Its goal was to raise money for the “Children of the World” foundation (Wineke, 1999).

After the school shootings in Littleton, CO, the Risen Lord’s Church youth group decided to build a peace sanctuary on church grounds and plant a Peace Pole there. The point of the Peace Pole and garden is “to be something ongoing, a sign and symbol of what can be done when we choose to work together for a common good.” After the ceremony, one youth reflected, “This isn’t just something we’ve done for today to look at. This is something that hopefully should stick with us for the rest of our lives, to think before you act, think before you speak, and think before you take action” (Levin, 2000).

From these examples, it is clear that the Peace Pole has been used to rally communities of varying size and composition to the causes of neighborhood peace, school peace, global peace, domestic peace, and interfaith and intercultural understanding. Moreover, each of these instances cite overwhelmingly positive response to the Peace Pole planting and the ceremonies. Those interviewed by the media cite an increased sense of community, responsibility, and hope. Also, those involved in ceremonies nationwide express hope that the planting of the Peace Pole is more than a momentary event, but rather, an experience that will impact those involved for a lifetime.

### **Peace Poles in the Twin Cities**

Though the Peaceful Love Warriors focus their attention on St. Paul, and specifically the Frogtown neighborhood, Peace Poles have made their mark on both Minneapolis and St. Paul.

In Minneapolis, a Peace Pole is the center of community gardens in several neighborhoods. The gardens themselves provide an ongoing opportunity for neighbors to work together and build relationships with each other. The Peace Pole serves as a reminder that, by building relationships and coming together, peace in the neighborhood is possible. In addition, a peace pole planting and celebration is being planned in the popular Loring Park and Minnehaha Park areas to commemorate the one-year anniversary of the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks. The Peaceful Love Warriors are working in conjunction with the Loring Park Neighborhood organization to plan the celebration and commemoration.

In St. Paul, there are approximately fifty-five Peace Poles in the Frogtown neighborhood, and an estimated twenty others planted in nearby neighborhoods. At J.J. Hill Montessori School, street violence was once a problem. Now, the Peace Pole and community garden are welcome signs of peace to parents and to children who attend the school. One parent commented, “The energy is really altered here... Now it feels like a friendly place” (Hayes-Taylor, 1997).

Peace Poles in the Frogtown neighborhood were placed on a map of Frogtown. The locations of Peace Poles include businesses, community organizations, churches, schools, and

private residences. For instance, Peace Poles can be found at Willard's Bar, the Frogtown Police Station, West Minnehaha Recreation Center, the Speedy Market, The Wilder Foundation, the Urban Market, Lifetrack Resources, Frogtown Center, and Ryan Park, to name only a few.

### Peaceful Love Warriors

The Peaceful Love Warriors are a group of volunteers who live and/or work in the Frogtown community in St. Paul, MN. The mission of the Peaceful Love Warriors is "to address violence by fostering peace in the community, primarily through the promotion of the Peace Pole, the International symbol of peace." The group works primarily in the Frogtown neighborhood, but partners with organizations in the greater metro area and even in greater Minnesota. In addition to facilitating Peace Pole plantings, the group is also involved in organizing peace celebrations in the community, increasing partnerships within the community, responding to moments of violence or community crisis, building bridges between different cultures in neighborhoods, and putting together a non-violence curriculum to be used in elementary schools.

The group began as a result of two acts of violence in the Frogtown community. In the summer of 1996, a four year old girl and two Vietnamese business owners were killed in separate incidents. One of the community responses to these deaths was the coming together of the Peaceful Love Warriors. There are currently more than fifty active Peaceful Love Warriors. Anyone may become a Peaceful Love Warrior at any time. At present, fifteen community organizations partner with the Peaceful Love Warriors, providing a variety of support. Partner organizations include La Oportunidad, Inc., a culturally-based family service organization in St. Paul, Frogtown Weed and Seed, the Aurora/St. Anthony Block Club, North End School, the St. Paul Police Department, District 7 and 8 Community Councils, and Bethel College.



This Peace Pole was planted on the campus of Bethel College in partnership with the Peaceful Love warriors.

The city of Worthington, MN is an example of a partnership that has been formed outside the metro area. The Peaceful Love Warriors were asked to come to Worthington, MN- a rural town approximately 150 miles southwest of the Twin Cities metro area- to help build the bridge between the long-time residents and the new immigrant populations in Worthington. The small community had experienced a rapid growth in new immigrant families, particularly of

Latino and Hmong descent. The cultural differences were problematic in schools, especially, and the community was seeking some way to bring different people of the community together. The Peaceful Love Warriors helped facilitate a peace ceremony and celebration that involved many members of the community and helped initiate dialogue between old residents and new member groups.

The St. Paul Area Council of Churches is another important local partner. On June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2000, the group held a historical Reconciliation and Peace Pole dedication ceremony. The purpose of this event was to acknowledge the injustice and inhumane treatment of Native Americans, in particular, and to people of color in general. The Peaceful Love Warriors were asked to help facilitate the Peace Pole planting at this event, and the relationship between the Council of Churches and the Peaceful Love Warriors has continued.

## **This Research Study**

### Methodology

This qualitative study was initiated by the Peaceful Love Warriors and funded by the Neighborhood Planning for Community Revitalization program at the University of Minnesota. The project took place during May, June, and July of 2002. The purpose of the study was to examine the impact of the Peace Poles, specifically in the Frogtown area, and to provide direction for the Peaceful Love Warriors future programming.

The study examining the impact of the Peace Poles in the Frogtown neighborhood focuses on those directly involved with the Peace Pole project, as well as community members who frequent sites of the Peace Poles. It is based on an analysis of five semi-structured individual interviews and five focus groups. Two individual interviews were conducted with active Peace Pole organizers to gain a sense of history of the project. Then, a series of focus groups were conducted with community members at Peace Pole sites. One focus group involved teens at a recreation center where a Peace Pole is located, another at a senior living facility with a Peace Pole, another with police who work in the Frogtown community, one at a neighborhood block club, and one within a social service agency serving the community. In all, fifty people were interviewed either in a focus group or individual interview. All transcriptions of interviews and focus groups are available as Appendix A.

Participants were recruited at sites suggested by the Peace Pole program director, Peaceful Love Warrior members, and other community members. The focus groups took place with groups already involved at the site where the Peace Pole is located. For instance, the senior focus group was a senior activity group. The teen group was part of a summer program at the recreation center. The social service agency staff participated in a focus group as part of a regular staff meeting.

Each individual interview was 30-45 minutes in length. Each focus group was approximately 1½ hours in length. Interviews and focus groups were semi-structured, using open-ended questions. In focus groups, respondents each had the opportunity to respond to every question, then after each question they had time for general discussion or addition to their responses. A brief demographic questionnaire was distributed at each focus group.

Each interview and focus group was taped, transcribed, and checked for accuracy. Transcripts were hand-coded. Coding categories were derived from interview and focus group themes. Once transcripts were coded, similarly coded sections were sorted into data sets.

## Demographics

Of those participating in interviews and focus groups, 35 lived in Frogtown, 3 in neighboring Summit-University, 9 in other areas of St. Paul, 3 in Minneapolis. Everyone interviewed who was employed worked in Frogtown.

10 respondents were male, 40 were female.

19 identified themselves as African-American, 17 as Caucasian, 2 as Southeast Asian, 3 as Latino/a.

15 participants were ages 8-19, 3 were ages 20-25, 7 were ages 26-35, 4 were ages 36-45, four were ages 46-55, and 7 were age 56 or older.

## Rigor

Prior to beginning the study, the researcher spent two weeks involved in the community, meeting community residents and taking part in community functions. This initial engagement allowed the researcher to meet many of the participants in interviews and focus groups, increasing the level of comfort and trust of the participants.

The researcher was also mentored by a social work faculty member who has expertise in qualitative research. This mentor was able to provide the researcher with an opportunity to debrief. Also, the faculty mentor was instrumental in providing support and guidance in terms of research design and data analysis. In addition, the researcher had several opportunities to check back with community members to see if the data was, in fact, accurate.

## Setting

Frogtown is a neighborhood in St. Paul, MN, located in Ramsey County. The community is one of the most diverse neighborhoods in St. Paul. Approximately 38 % are Asian American, 22% are African American, 24% are Caucasian, 9% are Hispanic, 5% are multi-racial, and 1% are Native American. 92% of students attending public schools are children of color. English is not the primary language spoken at home for 64% of the school age children (Wilder Research Center, 2002). This diversity provides unique challenges within the community.

The Frogtown community faces several other obstacles. The poverty rate in Frogtown is one of the highest in the county. 86% of the children in Frogtown qualify for free or reduced-price school lunches, compared to 65% in St. Paul as a whole. (Wilder Research Center, 2002). Violence and violent crime are significant problems in the Frogtown area. In 2000, the child maltreatment rate was the third highest among St. Paul's seventeen neighborhoods. Also, in 2000, the violent crime rate was 2, 081 incidents per 100,000 people, compared to St. Paul as a whole, where the violent crime rate was 851 incidents per 100,000 people (Wilder Research Center, 2002).

Though Frogtown faces these challenges, the neighborhood also has many strengths. The District 7 Planning Council is an active neighborhood advocate. Neighborhood organizations are responsible for planning summer activities in parks, organizing National Night Out gatherings, neighborhood festivals, and biannual peace celebrations. The neighborhood has several active recreation and community centers with free and reduced-cost programming for youth. The Frogtown Times is the neighborhood newspaper, advertising local businesses and neighborhood events. Several years ago, business owners put forth the capital to get the newspaper on its feet. It is distributed for free to local businesses and read widely by community

members. Many of the assets in the Frogtown community are the result of efforts of active neighborhood and community organizations like the Peaceful Love Warriors. In fact, in a recent survey asking about the strengths of the Frogtown community, the Peaceful Love Warriors and the Peace Poles were voted two of the “34 best things about Frogtown.”

### Study Weaknesses

As this project took place in a time-limited environment over the period of a summer, the researched was limited in the amount of interviews and focus groups she could complete. By focusing on volunteers who participate in the Peaceful Love Warriors and those somehow connected to sites where there is a peace pole, the researcher’s data is not inclusive of the entire Frogtown neighborhood.

Also, there were no Hmong participants in either focus groups or interviews. Though an effort was made to recruit Hmong participants in the initial stages of the focus group and interview scheduling, there was no response from the Hmong community. This could be due to the closed nature of the Hmong community. However, as this population makes up roughly 40% of the Frogtown population, their absence from the study is considered a serious weakness. In future studies, an effort should be made to include a more diverse segment of the Frogtown community.

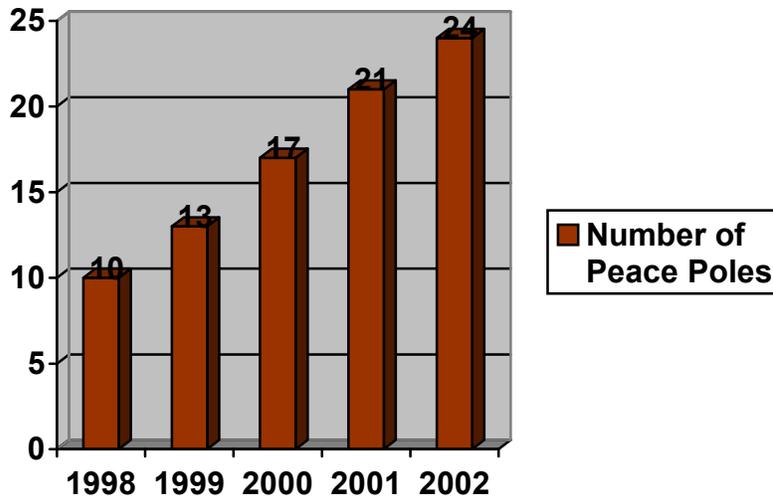
If future impact studies are done, the researcher recommends that they take place over an extended period of at least a year. This would allow a more thorough sample to be included in the study. This may also allow for a researcher to study the impact of a site where a Peace Pole will be planted, before and after the planting.

### Previous Studies

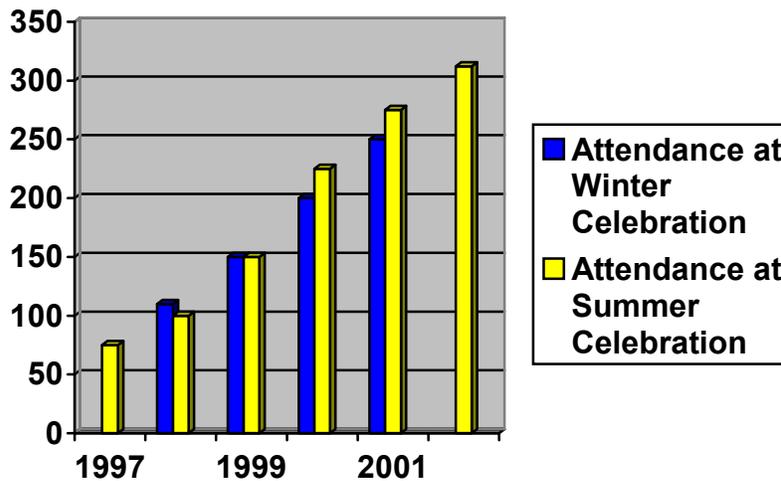
Several short surveys have been done by the Peaceful Love Warriors at peace celebrations and peace pole plantings. These surveys are non-random and non-scientific. To conduct the surveys, the Peaceful Love Warriors set up a booth at their peace celebrations and offered a small token to those completing the survey. Though they are not scientific surveys, they do provide us with some preliminary data regarding how those who participate in events held by the Peaceful Love Warriors feel about the Peace Poles.

Those who completed the survey were asked to respond to the open-ended question: “How has the Peace Pole been an addition to the neighborhood?” They were asked to write in their answers. The most common response (n=38) was that the Peace Pole serves as a reminder of goals and of peace. Others felt it helped the community come together (n=11), gave an alternative to angry or aggressive feelings (n=8), and promoted respect (n=10). Seven participants responded that they had not heard of the Peace Pole and did not know anything about them, indicating that there is a portion of the neighborhood who remains unaware of the Peace Pole symbol. This data is consistent with the findings of the current study.

The Peaceful Love Warriors also keep track of the number of Peace Poles planted. The following graph illustrates the number of Peace Poles that have been planted with help from the Peaceful Love Warriors. The number of Peace Poles planted has increased steadily, rising from 10 Poles planted the first year to 24 Poles planted last year.



Also, the Peaceful Love Warriors have kept track of their peace pole planting and attendance figures at neighborhood celebrations. The chart below indicates that attendance at yearly events has also grown steadily. Attendance at summer celebrations is typically slightly larger than at winter celebrations.



## Key Findings

### Familiarity with the Peace Pole

Several themes were apparent in reviewing interview and focus group material. With regard to familiarity, research participants fell into one of three categories:

- 1) They did not know about the Peace Pole until they met the researcher
- 2) They had moderate familiarity with the Peace Pole from neighborhood functions,
- 3) They were active in the organization and knew a great deal about the Peace Pole and its history.

Roughly half of those interviewed were familiar with several Peace Pole locations and some general history, but did not know in-depth details about the program. One quarter of those interviewed were intimately involved in the program, while another quarter knew very little about the Peace Poles or the Peaceful Love Warriors.

The knowledge of those interviewed could be due to the method of sample selection. Those who participated in interviews and focus groups were either suggested as participants by Peaceful Love Warrior members or were regular attendees at a site where there is a Peace Pole. Those with close ties to the Peaceful Love Warriors, the active members of the organization or leaders at Peace Pole sites, knew the most about the program. Those without direct ties to the Peaceful Love Warriors, especially elders and some children, knew the least about the program.

### The Meaning of the Peace Pole

Those familiar with the Peace Pole ascribe several meanings to the symbol. Peace was the most frequent meaning cited, followed by a sense of community and coming together, an appreciation of diversity and welcome for all people, a reminder of the important things in life, and a symbol of hope.

Those who spoke about the relationship between the Peace Pole and community building had been to peace celebrations or Peace Pole plantings. It is with these events that the pole has gained meaning for many. Says one woman, "(The Pole) is definitely a symbol of community building. People understand they are a symbol of coming together." A community police officer said, "I think the meaning is usually at a ceremonial function or a special event... it's kind of like a flag- at the celebrations they have dancers and speakers - It's one of the symbols that people could associate with the community." Another person interviewed noted, "The peace poles are a reminder that we do want a peaceful community and most of the people living here want that as well." A woman describing her experience at a peace celebration commented, "You know, the whole community comes out and people come out and talk to you. People I didn't even know were coming up and talking to me."

From community capacity-building literature, we know that the relationships and the human capital that exist in the community play a large role in the health of the community. When neighbors feel they have meaningful relationships in the community, there is generally more pride in the community, more ownership and responsibility, and an increased quality of life (Rothman, 1995).

Several of those interviewed also cited the multicultural nature of the Pole and the diversity of languages as important. "It's a symbol of community, and a multicultural community. And coming together and realizing that we're one. That's most important. And communication. I think the true communication is the languages." Another agreed, "Certainly I would echo the message of peace and multiculturalism." The diverse nature of Frogtown makes the range of languages displayed on the Pole even more important. This became clear in a number of

interviews. One woman noted, "And the fact that they say peace in the community in several different languages is important, because this is such a diverse area, and that is welcoming- that's really important."

**Many of those interviewed told very specific stories about the personal impact the Peace Pole can have. Those stories highlight the intangible effects of the Peace Pole:**

*"When we planted a pole at the child center, we had all these little kids from the center that were a part of it. After we put the pole in the ground, we had the kids come up and one of the kids, with this magical look in his eyes, said, "if you touch the pole, you'll have peace inside you." And they all went up and touched the pole and it was this magical little thing. And I think of the kids going up there and then very carefully touching the pole and getting this glow in their eyes, it was like somehow the spirit of peace had just taken over their bodies."*

*"Our first Peace Pole was about who was in the neighborhood- we want our neighbors to be safe, and we want to connect with each other."*

*"I grew up in a place where everyone knew everyone- and they took care of each other. They took care of the elders , and they took care of the kids, and you could see the peace pole as a reminder that, I don't care who lives in the community- there still can be a place where we are connected, we help one another, we learn from each other, and it serves as a way for people to get to know each other and not be afraid of your neighbor, so for me personally, I see it as a way to serve as a reminder for the community that we want. It sends a message to our new neighbors that you're welcome and we are aware that you are here- it's a way to do some outreach to people."*

#### The Impact of the Peace Pole

Responses to the question of impact drew mixed results. Some were able to cite ways in which the neighborhood was impacted, while others were not certain there was an impact directly related to the Peace Poles.

Of those who cited an impact, responses included the fact that the Peace Poles have never been vandalized, and they have been instrumental in the reclaiming of community land from negative activity. Also, respondents think they plant a seed, especially in children, to lead nonviolent lives, and they provide a space for important conversation and act as a catalyst for important changes to occur. The responses below illustrate these points:

*"As far as I know, (the Poles) have never been touched in six years, which is pretty amazing- considering where it's at- even that a car accident hasn't taken it out, the dope dealer hasn't kicked it over, or the kids who have marched down that street haven't vandalized it."*

*"I think they have encouraged a sense of solidarity within the neighborhood. It serves as a tangible object to rally many intangible values."*

*"It brings people together- out to meet their neighbors- people they have lived next door to for several years and don't even know them,- and it also brings the businesses together with the community and with the people. And I think that, when we have the peace pole plantings and things like that it helps people know that is going on around them and the resources that are available in their community."*

*"For people who don't know about the Peace Pole, it provides a way to talk about Frogtown, or just of a more peaceful, non-violent community."*

*“There are points in time when they have definitely been conversations starters and stimulate connections.”*

*“Being there is important. Having a place there and showing it is important is useful. If it’s not there, you don’t think about it. How often would we be sitting and talking about peace if the pole wasn’t there? We wouldn’t.”*

*“It’s like starting out with a small seed, and look what it grows into.”*

*“The children- they are growing up with it. It’s like the more they see it, you’re planting a seed. It’s a symbol of peace and maybe even of nonviolence.” “Peace is a bigger issue than just a pole. But a pole is a seed that starts the planting. And hopefully as it gets stronger, maybe we won’t have the conflicts we have had.”*

Those who were not able to attribute an impact to the Peace Pole suggest that the Peace Pole is limited in its ability to make an impact. However, those who speak about the limitations of the Peace Pole also note that the Peace Pole perhaps plays some role in changes that have taken place in the neighborhood.

*“Well, like I said we don’t really do much with it here.”*

*“(The impact) is mixed. In Ryan Park, for example- there has been an impact. Is it all due to the peace pole? Probably not- it’s all the people getting together and saying- Enough. This is our space. And the peace pole did help that happen. I see a lot of the poles out there with nothing go on around them. Those, I don’t think have as much impact.”*

*“It’s a symbol of peace and community, but the meaning has to be given to it. I think in Frogtown is has gained some meaning, but the Pole by itself doesn’t do anything without people behind it.”*

#### Change as a Result of the Peace Pole

The responses regarding changes associated with the Peace Pole were similar to the responses regarding the Peace Pole’s impact. Some respondents cited clear changes that were directly related to the Peace Pole; others did not feel the Peace Pole was the direct cause of any specific change.

Those who spoke of changes spoke of several Peace Pole sites that have been somehow transformed since a Peace Pole was planted there. For instance, the Ryan Park site was mentioned in every interview but one. Clearly, in this location, the community is aware of a change that took place at the site.

*“For me, at Ryan Park, it had turned from a great place to a prostitution and drug hangout. But once the Pole went up, people started seeing it as a place where we need to start doing things. Ever since then, we have been holding events there.... We went from no kids to thirty or forty every Thursday night in the summer.”*

*“I think that just the people coming together makes change, even. Because there’s something that hasn’t happened before.”*

*“The one at Speedy Market, to me, that was a good example. Speedy Market was at one time getting 320 police calls every year- about once every day. And they were working hard to eliminate that. And they have gone through periods where they have almost no police calls now. That one was really about change and the effort the business community can give to help reduce crime- to make sure the business is clean and does what it can to deter crime.”*

*“I believe the one that is at the police station sends the message that the police really want to work with the neighborhood, and I think they’re proud of having it there, and that’s another happening- that people are proud to have the peace pole- at their business or the playground. It sets up a feeling of pride.”*

*“I believe the Peace Poles have served as a “talking point” for neighborhood organizations to illuminate core values.”*

*“To me, it evens out the power. Because, as you know, we have those with power and those without. But I think that if everyone could see the peace pole for what it stands for, it would even the power out around the world and make peace easier to accept.”*

**. Others did not see changes associated with the Peace Pole. Those who did not attribute change directly to the Peace Pole note that the Peace Pole by itself is not a cure-all for difficult problems. Rather, the Peace Pole needs human interaction and organization around it to spark and maintain change. Though they note that the Peace Pole is useful to plant the seeds of ideas, they feel more change needs to come about.**

*“With change, I’d have to go negative on that one. I don’t think my site has made much of an impact. We still have our share of crime, and -isms are running rampant. I don’t think that’s a change.”*

*“I don’t think you can talk about the impact of the Peace Pole that particularly- although there are some places where poles have been planted that have seen change.”*

*“I don’t really see impact other than those who are involved with it.”*

*“I don’t know if I can attribute everything to the peace pole. It the totality of everything- it’s part of the programming, the staffing, teaching conflict-resolution, how they can solve things without having to fight.”*

#### How the Community At-Large Sees Peace Pole

Many of those interviewed have direct connections with a variety of community members. Based on their interactions with the community, they were asked to estimate how the larger community sees the Peace Pole. Those without direct connection to the community declined to answer the question. However, those who interact with community members, particularly those who interact around the topic of the Peace Pole, were able to provide some insight. Several noted that the larger community may not understand exactly what the Peace Pole symbolizes. However, those who don’t understand the meaning or history may still have some respect for it. The point was again raised that the Peace Pole has never been vandalized<sup>1</sup>, which speaks to the idea that the community does respect it.

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<sup>1</sup> One Peace Pole actually was vandalized, but many of those interviewed were not aware of that.

*“They see the community coming together, as they might see it as a symbol of hope. People do become protective of it, and I think it had made a difference in areas where we had planted it where there was a lot of negative activity going on, and they don’t do that anymore. And it depends on where they are at how much they mean.”*

*“(They see it) as a pole- just some writing on a pole. It’s peace, and they may have their own ideas of that- but beyond that, I don’t know if they get the whole philosophy behind it.”*

*“I don’t know if the community at-large “gets” the Peace Pole. That’s one of the concerns I hear.... I don’t think the meaning gets communicated enough to the general community.... I don’t think people realize there is a hidden meaning behind every one of them. What I think is happening, more often than not, we do these celebrations, even if people don’t get the meaning, there are people from different aspects of the community- young, old, different ethnicities, from businesses, and cops- and all being in one place together and striving to do something- I think people really see it as taking pride in the neighborhood and looking to make a change.”*

*“I think much of the area hasn’t heard about peace poles. I’d be willing to bet a lot of people have driven by and never even noticed. And until they are made aware that they are there- then I think you notice them- and that’s why the program and the project is important, because it makes people aware.”*

#### International Movement

Many of those interviewed were not aware of the International nature of the Peace Pole movement. Those who did know about it were directly connected with the Peaceful Love Warrior organization. Most of those interviewed said that the International connection is an important one, especially because Frogtown is such a diverse community. However, some voiced the concern that the Peaceful Love Warriors’ emphasis should be placed Frogtown neighborhood, rather than a more International campaign.

*“I think (the International Movement) is important. There are so many different cultures and ethnicities in Frogtown, so when you talk about community, you’re not going to get just one vision.... But you can show a movement, around something like the Peace Pole, as something everyone’s OK with. You don’t ever hear about someone protesting a Peace Pole- because everyone wants peace.”*

*“I hope there is future strengthening. I mean they are all over the country- they’re everywhere, and in that sense, we need to be a part of it. It’s part of creating a global community. And knowing that, I’m an African-American, you’re Caucasian, she’s an Asian, but we all have some common ground. So, it’s bigger too.”*

*“It’s really the local attachment that gets me. There isn’t much meaning in poles far away.... I know what it means in Frogtown and its value here, but there I don’t know what’s behind it.”*

*“I learned about peace poles before I came here, but in a different way. I have friends who are inter-racial and gay couples- and they had them in their house, as a banister. And I learned about it that way. And there, it was more about accepting differences and diversity. And peace, but more about diversity. So I think it has its own meaning here in Frogtown, but it is a national thing. It has its own life here in Frogtown.”*

## The Physical Representation of the Peace Symbol

The physical representation of the symbol of peace is important. The languages indicate welcome and celebrate the diversity of the community. The content of the written message is something that many diverse people can subscribe to. Someone involved with the peace project spoke about another unique feature of the Peace Pole: “The one thing that no one ever seems to object to going up in the community is the Peace Pole.” The fact that the symbol is free of controversy adds to the potential of the symbol to be unifying across diverse cultures, faiths, generations, and lifestyles. In addition, the symbol itself is largely viewed as visually attractive, which makes it popular for gardens and parks. One respondent noted that the visual impact is one of the most important ways the Pole acquires meaning. She notes, “I think just on a basic level, the visual is important. You can read it in your own language and in other languages, and the assumption is that it says the same thing in all languages, and that’s the most obvious way to get the meaning.”

### Recommendations

#### 1) Increase Awareness

Based on feedback from community members, the Peaceful Love Warriors can do several things to make the Peace Poles more effective. Of those participating in the focus groups and interviews, increasing awareness about the Peace Pole was an overwhelming theme. Many expressed a desire to have greater media coverage of the Peaceful Love Warriors and of Peace Pole plantings and Peace celebrations. Others suggested that plaques near the Poles explaining their meaning.

*“Well, just like we said before, we don’t really do anything with this pole here. Some people don’t know about it, and I think more people need to know.”*

*“I am worried about sustainability. They need to get the word out. Who will the next Melvin be? What will the next generation think about them?”*

*“Now that they have them up and running, all over the place, but I don’t know if they publicize it enough.”*

#### 2) Continue to Create Meaning with Current Poles

Also, many respondents would like to see continued activity surrounding Peace Poles that are already planted. At some locations, peace activities continue regularly. These locations are associated with the greatest impact and community change. However, many Peace Poles have not had a planned activity around them since they were planted. At those sites, fewer community members felt they played a significant role in the community. Some responded that Peace Poles should be planted everywhere, while others adamantly want more attention paid to where they are already planted, making sure that every Peace Pole site is actually a meaningful place and reflects the meaning of the Peace Pole.

*“Really, I think that Peace Poles have to go back to a place where it’s meaningful. Peace Poles, as weird as it may sound, shouldn’t just go up everywhere. It should always go someplace where it will be significant.... Otherwise, it almost becomes like a lawn ornament, and I don’t want to see that happening. “*

*“I’m concerned that they get planted, but there is no follow-up... With this kind of thing, the follow-up is crucial. If there isn’t a continuous effort to make every peace pole meaningful, their effect will be diminished.”*

*“Well, it would be nice if they did more with the Pole here. It could be a bridge between here and the other complex. We have a lot of younger families moving in now, and a lot of kids, and none of us know any of them, and they don’t know any of us, you know, so it is hard to have good relationships there. You know, I see kids at night being noisy, and the cops say, “Well, just call us and we’ll come out and take care of it.” But I don’t want to call the cops- that seems like a mean thing to do. I wish I could just talk to the parents or maybe to the kids, and if we knew each other, then maybe it would be better.”*

### **3) Hire a Full-time Staff Member**

Increasing awareness and increasing activity surrounding the Peace Pole both require time and energy. If the Peaceful Love Warriors do this, I recommend they have at least one full-time staff person coordinating the efforts of plantings, activities, and media attention. Currently, the Peaceful Love Warriors are an entirely volunteer organization. Though this is perfectly appropriate for a new grassroots organization, the Peaceful Love Warriors have grown to the point where they have reached the next stage of organizational development, requiring a full-time staff member to devote his attention solely to the program. Clearly, the volunteer resources and community involvement should remain a vital part of the Peaceful Love Warriors. However, further growth and community impact will be limited if there is no one to oversee the growth and development on a full-time basis.

### **Conclusion**

In the Frogtown community, the Peace Pole does have some impact. In this qualitative study, it has been associated with a reclaiming of neighborhood sites, a greater community pride, and an increased sense of unity and connection among community members. In terms of community development and community capacity building, all of these elements are vital pieces. Some note that the Peace Poles also have played a role in helping the police force in the Frogtown neighborhood connect with the community. Importantly, many respondents suggest the symbol reminds them to think about peace in the homes and neighborhoods regularly. And, when they come together as a community around the Peace Pole, they renew their commitment to peace in the neighborhood. In this way, the Peace Pole itself serves as a tangible symbol for intangible neighborhood values.

The impact of the Peace Pole seems to be directly tied to the amount of human interaction and continual effort that goes into each pole. Those poles with a high degree of human interaction around them have had a significant effect, with continual activities mentioned most often in association with some positive change. For instance, the Ryan Park Peace Pole was mentioned in nearly every interview as an important symbol that led to reclaiming a neighborhood park. Since the Ryan Park Peace Pole was planted, neighborhood organizations regularly sponsor activities in the park around the Peace Pole. Those without continual activity were not mentioned as often, and those that were mentioned were not associated with a significant amount of change. Thus, the Peace Pole is an effective community organizing tool, but needs regular organized activity to gain and retain meaning. With human interaction behind the Peace Pole, it can be an important catalyst for neighborhood change.

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# Appendix A

## Focus Group #1

N: I have some set questions. I'd like everyone to have the chance to answer each question, then I will give some time for you to add to your response and discuss.

?: My first question is about your familiarity with the peace poles. How did you get involved, and what is your extent of your involvement?

- 1) I got involved with the PLW about a year ago. I met Melvin and was welcomed in. The peace pole project and the peace pole celebrations, and the neighborhood picnic, the KKK gathering... I was involved those. The KKK gathering, which I considered a great success, was probably my biggest involvement.
- 2) Well, I haven't been as involved in recent years as I used to be, but I have been involved with peace poles since there was a celebration at the school when they got their peace pole- for five or six years. I appreciate that they are a visible symbol- when I drive by them, I see a symbol of a value.
- 3) I have been around for a lot of this stuff. I consider myself one of the original members of the PLW, although I don't attend a lot of meetings anymore because I don't have time. I have been at every one of the peace celebrations. I have sponsored poles and organized plantings at seven or eight plantings. I've also been at the Minnehaha planting, the Schefer planting, and many others.
- 4) You guys plant them, we plant around them. We have worked with a number of places with poles, planting around them and we have our own pole at the shop- it's not permanently planted, but we can take it out and take it with us- we have incorporated it into our state fair exhibit. And ever since Melvin showed up with the mini-poles, we have been putting them into arrangements and our peace gardens for people, and there are meetings at our shop also.
- 5) Being fairly new to the community, I haven't attended any plantings, but I have been to couple peace celebrations. And before I had come here, I'd never even heard of a peace pole. Now I've taken a tour of them, and I think they are a really neat thing that stands out in the community. I even put a picture of them on the Frogtown directory- because I think they are good picture of Frogtown.
- 6) I first heard about peace poles about three and a half years ago when I was working at the St. Paul Council of Churches. They planted a very tall peace pole- I think one of the tallest as part of a reconciliation ceremony to apologize to the American Indian community for the ways the church and even some of the synagogues treats Native Americans a long time ago. And then I worked here in Frogtown Center last summer, and I was involved with planning the peace celebrations, and the gathering when the KKK came. My current involvement is probably more in spirit than anything else. I haven't attended a meeting since last summer.
- 7) I found out about peace poles, Um 3 years ago when I moved back and got involved with the PLW to represent my bank for the community. Basically, I provide the Dashikis. I donate them to raffle off or whatever, and I am real pleased to be working with them. I feel they have a real positive effect on the community, especially when we instill it in our

young people. Really young, so they start to grow up knowing what it means and that has a great impact.

? Does anybody want to comment on what has been said so far?

Well, when you talked about getting children involved, one of the parts of a lot of the celebrations has been kids... When we had the first traveling one, well we went to a lot of places, most of which now have a permanent pole at them, but we had activities, and at that time, my office was in the child development center, and we had all the kids from the classes and the child development center design something. They created ribbons and talked about what peace was. So, in addition to the poles and the peace celebrations, there are these other activities that have gone on around those over time. There were quite fun actually. But there have been a writing contests about what peace means, and activities in addition to the poles themselves that have helped young people and older people get involved in thinking about the messages, learning about it as well.

?: I'm wondering if you all could talk about what the peace pole means to you personally, and then to the sites where you are located?

- 1) For me personally, uh, it's a symbol of community, and a multicultural community. And coming together and realizing that we're one. That's most important. And communication. I think the true communication is the languages. We're trying to spread multiculturalism- it's important to myself and my life.
- 2) I think I have some similar thoughts. It's about multiculturalism and coming together and peace prevailing in our homes and communities. And I think also living in the neighborhood, it's an important symbol because the outside perception is that there is no peace here. And there is peace here. So for me, it's also a very tangible beacon and a counter to the oppressive stereotyping of the neighborhood.
- 3) For me, I think it is that visible symbol, and the importance that we have them placed throughout the community so that there is also a unifying part about the message. You see them and you are reminded that they are all over the community. TO me personally, I know everyday as I walk into work, I see the peace pole outside, and I think about the message. My life is pretty hectic at work, and it makes it a more peaceful place, whether the thought is in my mind, or it makes me stop and look at the trees around... it has a calming aspect. In terms of the work in the community, I think it is a really important connection- a symbol of the message of peace and the importance of it, because there is peace here. There is also violence and it's a message that we don't want the violence and that we are creating something different. And then there is the connection of the people to the community, because we have plantings and celebrations, and we have to make sure people come to them. Even when I drive by them,- there may not be anyone there at that point, but I can think about people collectively making peace happen in the community. And then the other piece for me is the whole multicultural peace. And whenever I have been involved in a celebration, we try to make people think about the whole multicultural aspect, even ordering the poles and choosing which languages we want on which poles and thinking about representation. And I try to build an activity too, so that I can hear that message about people saying things in their own languages and giving messages in their own languages that connect them across our language differences and social differences. And I have great memories too, from doing this. When we planted a pole at the child center, we had all these little kids from the center

that were a part of it. After we put the pole in the ground, we had the kids come up and one of the kids, with this magical look in his eyes, said, "if you touch the pole, you'll have peace inside you." And they all went up and touched the pole and it was this magical little thing. And I think of the kids going up there and then very carefully touching the pole and getting this glow in their eyes, it was like somehow the spirit of peace had just taken over their bodies. So, there is that kind of fun and spontaneous aspect too. At Mt. Airy we had the pole and the celebration and Melvin and I were trying to get people to talk about what peace was. And people were shouting things out. And one older gentleman took the hand of a little girl and said "Peace means holding hands!" And that moment, everyone started holding hands. Now, if we had planned this, it would have seemed cheesy, but it was the spontaneity of it all. There is an unplanned, spirit kind of thing that happens.

- 4) Certainly I would echo the reference to the message of peace and multiculturalism. We take it as a way of saying something about Frogtown as well as giving the message- and I think, quite often as the case may be, such as the no-violence in Ramsey County, or "it takes a village to raise kids"- because we have kids from the neighborhoods coming in and not always behaving appropriately and not always behaving with each other appropriately. So, good touchstones for those kids is important, and even with some of my staff, you know- behavior is not necessarily always twofold- it's a touchstone.
- 5) Along the same lines, I have a very strong personal attachment to the peace pole. On thing that I always think is fascinating is it shows there are so many people who care about the community and make an effort to try to make it better. And just learning about the history has been really interesting to me- to see how far the neighborhood has come. And I see the peace pole as part of that movement- the movement of hope. Having a pole means making things better and having a positive impact on the environment around us and all that.
- 6) Well, the peace pole for me is s reminder that we never do this work alone. If I am out and about and see a peace pole somewhere, I might have no idea how long it's been there or who planted it, but it's a reminder that someone else has been doing this work, and they built on the shoulders of people before them, and I think I'm a part of that same circle, so it's a good affirmation.
- 7) It kind of has a real personal thing with me, because it makes me think of what it was like when I was growing up in Frogtown, and doors were left open all night, and we slept on the porch or put a tent out in our yards and we could sleep and not have to worry about someone coming along and shooting or any of that, and to me, the peace pole is bringing that back to the community. I have this burning desire to see residents have them in their yards, as a reminder. I'll go over to mom's house, and there's a kind of unsavory crowd that kind of hangs out across the street, and when they see me coming, they're like picking up and stuff because they know I'll start fussing. I say "TAKE OWNERSHIP. You live here, you see that piece of paper? Pick it up- don't wait for somebody else." And to me, the pole is like a reminder that we need to take ownership of where we live and of our community. And I see people like the neighborhood and the neighbors getting poles and putting them in their yards- then they are reminders of this is what it's supposed to be like. We're supposed to be together and happy and loving and everybody has differences, but if we learn to respect each other for who we are and love in spite of differences- that's to me what it means. It's just an awesome thing to me.

?: That's a good lead in to my next question, actually. I wonder if you could talk a little more about how the community at large sees the peace poles, or what you think they know about them?

- 1) Um, it depends on which part of the community you want to say. In my instance, working at the bank, it's a constant reminder, because we have such a diversity of cultures, and it's often that they clash or they don't get along. And being in a bank, it's dangerous, and having that peace pole there, it's just like a guide or protector. It reminds the community that this is ours. It's our home- our land, and whether we came here from another country because we had to, or we were just born and raised here- either way, this is our land, and our place now, so let's work together. I don't know how to explain it, but it's just like a guide to the way we should be.
- 2) It's a hard question for me to answer, because so much of my involvement around peace poles has been with people who already know about peace poles or people who come to celebrations because they already know what it's all about. So, because I don't live here or work here, I can't really say anything more than that. I can assume, but I think people who live in the community can answer the question better than I could.
- 3) I think along the same lines. When I first got here, someone told me that only one peace pole had been vandalized. I don't know if that's true or not, but that really says something to me. That even if there are all these negative things going on, that at least that symbol stands strong and holds hope.
- 4) I think I have a better sense of Frogtown than the larger community. People coming in from the store from outside the community might say "Oh, I've wondered about those" and it gives you the chance to give a Frogtown community.
- 5) I don't know what to say about the Frogtown community at large. A lot of the people I talk to about peace poles are obviously people who have some sense of them. But the things I think about are events where people who just sort of show up. We did the one at Speedy Market and this woman stopped for gas. And there, I don't know that people know about them or have an understanding of them. But it is a way to have some conversation. So, I think people that do know about them would say things similar to what we have said. That they are some kind of a message that is there in the community that reminds us that we are in this together and that we care about our community – that we are trying to create the kind of community we want this to be. For people who don't know, there is a way to talk about Frogtown, or just of a more peaceful, non-violent community. When we did the one at Speedy Market, this woman drove up, and she came to get gas and asked what we were doing. And we said we were painting a peace pole. And she said she had just come from nephew's funeral- he'd been shot and she just was getting back from the cemetery, and at that one we were handing out flowers free, and we had this whole conversation of the about he death of this child, and then she took a free flower, and she said, "I'm going right back out to the cemetery and am going to lay this on the grave". So again, it's this opportunity to really start talking and connecting with people in a different way through them. So, I don't know if people in the community broadly know what they mean, but they see them around, and when you have opportunities to connect and talk with people about them, there's a lot you can do.
- 6) I'd echo that. I think the bulk of people don't know they're there, but have probably see them. And there are points in time when they can be conversations starters and

stimulate connections. But I do think about the one at Jackson school- there are about 400 students there- and about half are from Frogtown. So, 200 kids found out about the peace pole that live around here. And you can just imagine that, when they are out in the neighborhood with mom or dad or whoever and they see one, they'll say "oh, we have one at our school, do you know what that is?", and they'll talk about it. So, perhaps more people know than I might suspect because there have been some larger scale events where there have been a lot of people, so it is a cumulative effect.

- 7) You're right- if you think about all the kids who have been exposed, you're right. There are probably a lot more people in the neighborhood who know through their kids.
- 8) I would say- it's hard for me to say much for Frogtown not living here, but from working here, I can honestly say that, in the year I have been working, and it's right outside our door- and it's nice for ME to use it as a reminder for meaning, and it is present for me. As for the community, I've never even heard anyone walk in and ask what that pole is, right by our flagpole standing there. I've never heard anyone inquire, and the kids- they play right along side it. How many were at the planting? Probably not many, with the turnover of kids. So, I would say, unless they are aware, it's still a need to know what the message is and why the pole is there, and that would help a lot.

? For those of you who have been to a planting, what was the planting like for you? What emotions did you see or feel yourself?

- 1) I pass.
- 2) I think it sits with what some others have already said- it's at the plantings that there is an experience of recommitment to being a part of the community- not just walking by or living in a house- but it's a home, and the home extends beyond the four walls- it extends to the neighbor's and down the block- so it is taking ownership.
- 3) It was a couple Dec. ago, there was a celebration and recapping of where peace poles were, and what I thought about that that point- and I've lived a lot of places in my life- is that the two most caring places I have ever lived have been the two with the lowest incomes and diverse populations. A much greater feeling of comfort than in the burbs.
- 4) I have spoken a lot about this- but the experience is different at every planting, and we've done different things at almost every one. They all have their unique qualities. At one, we wrote things we didn't like about the community down and we buried the papers as we planted the pole – we got rid of the things we didn't want anymore- symbolically- and said we were creating new things. For me, there are two pieces of the feeling. one is around a sense of hope. And then the other is a sense of creation. That we can make this community be what we want it to be. We don't just have to sit around and watch it happen to us. By taking action and saying the things we believe and burying the stuff we don't want and creating the messages we do want- we can make that happen. And actually over time in the community, I really feel like that has been happening in the community- and I have been a part of this community a long time- and a part of that is the peace poles. That sense of hope- that we can do something and make it be how we want is a really important message of those poles, and the things really do happen as we create the celebrations around them.

- 5) It's not so much an emotion, but something I've always felt is responsibility. Melvin is fond of saying that you have to be in a certain place as an organization to plant a peace pole. It's not as simple as just digging a hole and putting it in the ground. It really shows a lot about your commitment to fighting racism and any other 'isms that are out there, and building inclusive communities. I was at one plating where I knew the organization was very different internally than the outward impression it was giving by planting that peace pole. And that was a really interesting and confusing spot to be- because you think , yes, this is a good thing, because people waling or driving by are going to see this peace pole and if they know what it's about,. they think they know what the organization is about. But I knew at the time the organization wasn't about that. So, the word responsibility is really important to me. Do you really understand, as an executive director, as a staff person, what it means to have that outside your door. And I', curious to wonder, when a peace pole is planted, how many people in the org. is involved in the process. I do think the peace pole can be abused by organizations just saying "oh, we have this peace pole, check us out". I don't know how much that happens in Frogtown, because I think the webs of accountability are stronger here, but I wonder as peace poles are planted outside of Frogtown how much of that will happen. And, I don't raise that as a criticism, but a valid critique, because it comes back to the piece that, "If your organization is doing this, do you really have a clear sense about what this means?" People assume, when they walk by that pole, that this organization is a safe place. It's a healthy place. I know I can come and be greeted and received warmly and know what I am walking into. if an organization isn't like that, yet they have a peace pole- well, it's complicated, but something to keep in mind.

? The peace pole is an International symbol and movement. I'm wondering if you could talk about how much you know, and what you seen the importance of the Int'l movement.

- 1) I don't really know anything about it. I know that it is Int'l, but I wonder how much we are connecting with other countries- outside the great USA with that peace- the way things are going in the world, it doesn't seem like we are connecting really well- other than isolated communities doing their thing, I don't see it as int'l. I don't see it because I don't see us internationally connecting and getting along right now.
- 2) Yeah, I know it's an Int'l symbol, but for me the significance is not the numbers of poles or the countries that are attached tot hem, but the people I meet along the way that are a part of them. So for me, it's more important that it's such a prominent local symbol.
- 3) And I don't know anything about the Int'l movement. I will pass.
- 4) Not very much.
- 5) I'm aware of it, and I get an actual newsletter form the World Peace Prayer Society. I ordered a pole, so that's why I think I get the newsletter. I got two of them today just before I came. I look at it and they have pictures from around the world. But if that didn't exist at all, it wouldn't matter to me. To me, it's really a Frogtown things, and what it's doing in terms community building here is what matters. But I am aware of the Int'l effort.
- 6) I echo the same thing. It's the local attachment that gets me. There isn't that much meaning to me in poles that are far away. But I do know that when we went up to Itasca state park a couple of years ago, they have a pace pole. And I was just tickled that they had one way up there, and we took a picture. But I think that experience was fun to see

a familiar thing from home there in a very peaceful environment out in nature. But there was with it, a sense of what Andy was saying in terms of “I don’t know anything about the people who planted this pole.” So I don’t know what the commitment is to the message, or if it’s just like putting a picture up on the wall because you thought it might be a nice thing to do. I know what it means in Frogtown and its value here but there I don’t know what’s behind it.

- 7) This has reminded me of the Int’l movement. I don’t know how much of a focus the PLW and Frogtown are putting on it. I don’t think they should be putting much. I think their efforts should be more here, and that’s what they’re striving for and that’s what we need. There’s still plenty of violence and crime here, we don’t need to focus elsewhere right now. I don’t think that’s what our goal is.

?: What changes have you seen in the areas where peace poles have been planted?

- 1) I think I have to go negative on this one- I don’t think the one at my site has made an impact. We still have our share of crime on the East side, and –isms are running rampant. And that’s really what we fight constantly, and even referending the peace pole. So I don’t think that’s a change. So I would have to say no on that one.
- 2) I don’t think it’s something that can be tied that specifically to a specific location. The change is probably more in the atmosphere of the community.
- 3) I would agree- I don’t think you can talk about the impact of the peace pole that particularly- although I do think there are some places where poles have been planted where there are now- well, schefer has their pole and their peace garden with flowers planted in the same area as the pole, and at ryan park where we planted that one, there have regularly been flowers planted around them . The one in front of wilder- they now plant flowers around it. It was once just this barren place under a tree and now there is a pole and flowers around it. What impact that has, I don’t really know. But it means someone has been taking care of it. And then I think the piece that you mentioned earlier about the fact that they haven’ been vandalized. When I drive past the one at Speedy Market, which, most of us know, has kind of a reputation, I look at it right on the corner of Dale and Thomas and think- wow, it’s still there- it’s still standing up there- it isn’t written all over- but there is something about that. I’m not sure what it is, but there is something to be said about it.
- 4) I don’t really see a real impact other than those that are really involved in it. My 9 year old grandson say that they don’t cuss around the pole- they go somewhere else. So there is some respect for it.
- 5) I think the pole that was planted over here at the police station kind of marked a pretty significant shift in terms of police/community relationship. And so, that one, because it’s right beside the station and their such a public force in the community- that one is a location that has had an impact.
- 6) I think that gets at- well, as a policy student, you think of statistical ways to measure things- but I don’t think that’s really the point of the peace pole. I could do regression models and that sort of thing, but it wouldn’t mean anything. I remember last summer that Melvin would say that police officers are the biggest peaceful love warriors. That personally helped me to think differently about police men and women. Having done a

lot of work around racism and racial profiling and other injustices, it was easy for me to label police officers as the bad people. And Melvin pointing that out to me had a personal impact in terms of re-thinking the way you put people into boxes... but when you are in the box, or when you are the box, you have a hard time realizing it. So the impact on a personal level- which is why doing interviews and focus groups is probably the best way to do this- that's the only way to get the effect. It is atmospheric, I think, but I think we can also tell individual stories about how the poles have taught us something. For us, it's just a big part of the community. For me, growing up in the suburbs, it's an entry point to think about the city and all the places you would never want to live- and it was an entry point to think about a lot of my own "-isms" and unlearn a lot of things I was taught as a white male growing up in a middle class place. That's the one moment I can think of in terms of personal impact.

7) The one we planted at Ryan Park came after there had been some violence in the community and community members talked about wanting to make that park safe. Now, the peace pole wasn't the only thing that happened, but the peace pole was part of the response to that whole desire to create a safer park space for kids. Now the pole is there, and there are kids' activities there and community picnics there, and it was really a way to try and change the activity and atmosphere in that park. And I think there has been change there. Not just because of the peace pole, but all the other stuff that goes with the peace pole.

8) I can see it being real moving- to try to incorporate that peace there.

?:My last question is about suggestions or recommendations you might have for the PLW.

1) Well, I said already that I want them in the yards. If there was a way they could be something like Lucy statues. More awareness.

2) Well, I wouldn't want the peace poles connected to anything other than their own symbol, but if we could raise them to a level to a place where people go find them and take pictures with them and the awareness is raised- a couple of other things I've thought about- we need to re-visit and use the peace poles that are out there more regularly. Continue to have the messages they give with activity around them. We had a gathering after sept. 11 around our pole- I'd like to see them in residents' yards and at entry points into the neighborhood- strategically and in more places, and continue to bring people together at the poles to spread the message.

3) One recommendation I would make is accompanying plaques so that people that do pass by can know what they mean without having to ask. They will know why it's there, how long it's been there, who the plw are, exactly what it is. And then constant and more promotion, and other folks other than plw promoting it and referencing it. Referencing the message is key.

4) One of the things we have done with some poles is to label languages. People often ask that.

5) For me the other piece is maybe more modeling behavior in the communities... being out in the playgrounds with the kids and teaching alternative ways to settle their differences, and some of that kind of thing- to tie the words to the action.

## Focus Group # 2

? Maybe we could start with you telling me how familiar you are with the peace poles?

A: I know where there a couple of peace poles planted- like at Maxfield, or Wilder- I think they have one , at Jackson, there's several places they are planted. I have heard they are pretty expensive- I don't know for sure, but that's what I've heard. And I think it's saying that the areas are trying to have peace in the neighborhood.

A: I agree with her.

A: Well, of course I learned about them from Melvin here.

A: I know they were started in this area in response to tragedies that happened and wanting to get the message that , even though those tragedies did happen, people in this area overall still do want peace. We don't want the neighborhood filled with drugs and gunfire and prostitution or any of the other negative things that happen here, and the peace poles are a reminder that we do want a peaceful community and most of the people living here want that as well, and it's a reminder each time you see one that that's what we're striving for, and it's a reminder too, to take a look at yourself and how you can make that happen, and by doing that, it's providing peace in your home and your heart, and that's a start.

A: That's the way I understand it, and it's gone out there from here to different spots in the twin cities- with different groups.

A: I think it's a positive thing for the outside the community too. I think that people who come here might have the perception that people who live here, or who live in poorer communities don't care about what's going on around them. And it shows that the community does care and doesn't want those things around. I think there's a perception that when you're poor, you just don't care and let things go to pot- it shows that the people care- and that there are other social and economic factors that contribute to poverty.

A: I think too, for myself, you know how they have signs that say "drug free" zones? I see the peace pole as a sign of a "peace zone".

A: And the fact that they say peace in the community in several different languages is important, because this is such a diverse area, and that is welcoming- that's really important.

? I wonder if you could really hit on or center on what the peace pole means as a symbol to you?

A: Well, it means coming together.

A: And it might make people feel safer.

A: Because of the languages on it, there's a possibility territory and different languages in that territory reaching out to congregations around us. Outreach. absolutely.

A: I see peace- and it's like wherever they are the area has been christened for peace. They put one up here right down the street, and it's a sign that we should honor that.

A: I'm not even really aware of the peace pole.

A: I think when I see the peace pole, I think of community. I've had the chance to go to peace celebrations and a planting at Webster school- and there, that community came together to make it happen for them to get a peace pole. So I think of a community coming together.

? You mentioned the planting and celebration. For those of you who have been to a planting or celebration, I wonder if you could talk about what it was like?

A: I feel like people were socializing and talking, and everyone was just in this moment, letting go of all the bad things. Eating, laughing, talking, skits that the kids have done, poems Miss Bertha has read- it's a chance to get together and relax and unwind.

A: I think it's a special moment, because you know that everyone is there for the same reason- that they're committed to peace. You don't know on a day-to-day basis as you pass people on the streets if they are committed to peace or not, but at the peace celebrations, you know they had to work to get it to that stage, and they are there for that reason.

? How many of you have been to plantings, then?

A: Almost everyone here.

A: I think the planting I went to, the children were so wonderful- children always put on a good show- no matter what they do. It was magnificent- it was quite a while ago- it was at a school up here at Maxfield.

A: I'd have to agree- the one thing that stands out for me at plantings or celebrations are the messages of peace that the kids write down- they are asked "what is peace?" and getting them to think about that at such a young age is an impact on them- and it has an impact on the community as well, because when you here about what peace means to a child- it creates an awareness. It's that simple, and they are right on target.

? All of you work with the community in different ways- I wonder if you could speak to how the community at large sees the peace pole?

A: Well, I didn't know about them, and I lived in Frogtown for 14 years. So I am sure tyhere are a lot of people who don't know.

A: I think much of the area hasn't heard about peace poles. I'd be willing to bet a lot of people have driven by and never even noticed. And until they are made aware that they are there- then I think you notice them- and that's why the program and the project is important, because it makes people aware.

A: A lot of people I talk to in the neighborhood aren't really aware. They may see one- and they think they are cool- cool-looking, but I don't know that they know the complete message behind

it and how they got started. The Frogtown Times newspaper has done a good job covering the poles, but I don't know that the overall majority of people in the neighborhood really know the meaning or the message- but some people think they are so cool they'd like one in their yard- not for the meaning- but for the decorative.

? How do you think the peace pole gets its meaning as a symbol?

A: Through the celebrations- media coverage they get- and from working in this organization has been important to me. When you attend a planting or celebration, you here other's meaning of peace, and I think you have to be part of those to get a sense of what that meaning really is.

A: I think just on a basic level, the visual is important. You can read it in your own language and in other languages, and the assumption is that it says the same thing in all languages, and that's the most obvious way to get the meaning.

A: I agree with that.

A: One of the things that hits me about the poles from working to get them planted is that the pole never represents one person's effort or vision. You that, behind every peace pole you see- there is a huge effort. And so that's one of the ways it gets it's meaning. The poles that were planted at Webster were part of a ceremony where all the kids held hands to form a circle around the school. And that's just one example of the united effort . A lot of the schools sell peace bracelets or buttons- it's also a symbol of the united and combined efforts of community- so I think that helps the pole get it's meaning. Even if the average passerby doesn't quite get it, it still has an impact greater.

? The peace pole is part of a larger Int'l movement. I wonder how much you know about that, and how important you think that is?

A: I think it's important – there's too much war.

A: I think it's almost two separate things. I learned about peace poles before I came here, but in a different way. I have friends who are inter-racial and gay couples- and they had them in their house, as a banister. And I learned about it that way. And there, it was more about accepting differences and diversity. And peace, but more about diversity. So I think it has its own meaning here in Frogtown, but it is a national thing. It has it's own life here in Frogtown.

A: For sure, it blew my mind when I saw a peace pole in another country- it brought it home that it is an Int'l thing, and I think we can take it for granted here in Frogtown because there is so many, but it's nice to get a little perspective and realize people can't shell out the money for a peace pole, but it doesn't mean they aren't supporting peace. But hopefully it's something that can continue.

? I wonder if any of you have any suggestions or recommendations about the PLW to do next, to continue to do, or concerns for them?

A: I wonder if they could get a free radio spot. They have spots on radio to give a quick synopsis, and that might broaden its vision.

A: They have spots on cable too, and they might be able to get a spot on a community outreach show for free. More awareness.

A: I don't even really know where they are except Frogtown.

A: A good spot for one might be the Mall of America. There are always people from everywhere flying in and laying over. A lot of different people there.

A: I think there should be a junior PLW group for the youth. Like they have Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts, they could focus on acts of peace and promotion peace, and they might do different events together, maybe where little Tshirts with their name on it or something. They could take trips, focus on peace, and focus on youth.

### Focus Group #3

? Could you start by telling me how familiar you are with the peace pole and what your involvement has been with them, if any?

A: From my perspective, I know they are all over Frogtown. I collaborate with Frogtown Weed and Seed and District 7, so that's as far as my involvement has gone so far. There's one at the police station, and at a couple parks, and I know it all started when Davisha got killed in 1996, and there were all these flowers and trinkets collecting around where Davisha got shot, and they needed something to mark the place- a symbol- but they couldn't keep having all these flowers and everything all over the parking lot- and then someone came up with the idea of the peace pole, and they put it up- as far as I know, it's never been touched in six years, which is pretty amazing- considering where it's at- even that a car accident hasn't taken it out, the dope dealer hasn't kicked it over, or the kids who have marched down that street haven't vandalized it. And they started the peace parties.

A: That would be my other point- the promotion part. Now that they have them up and running, all over the place, but I don't know if they publicize it enough. They have the Frogtown times and the Frogtown festival coming up, and I don't know if they do anything with it there- maybe they could have a booth and they could say what they symbolize. I think they are all in different languages too. Hmong, and Russian, I know for sure. I'm curious to see how many people know about that. I don't think they do at so many places. I know at Ryan Park, for sure, because they did a lot of promotion. But after that, I haven't heard so much.

A: For me, I don't know that much about them, honestly. I see them sometimes, but I haven't ever been to any of the events or heard anyone talk about them.

? Are there any sites that stick out in your head where there has been some change?

A: Well, Ryan Park, like I said. University and Dale- I think there is one at the urban market there. The one at the police station. That pole had an impact with the neighborhood and the police relationship I think- maybe made the police more a part of the neighborhood. There's only a couple that I know about that I can say for sure where they are- although I see them around.

A: Yeah... I wouldn't have guessed 50 or more though.

? What impact would you say the peace poles have had?

A: Well, like I said- It's mixed. In Ryan Park, for example- there has been an impact. Is it all due to the peace pole? Probably not- it's all the people getting together and saying- Enough. This is our space. And the peace pole did help that happen. I see a lot of the poles out there with nothing go on around them. Those, I don't think have as much impact. Maybe to some people who know exactly why they are there, or helped put them there- but the impact is smaller. That's where that awareness piece comes in again.

A: Yeah, it's hard for me to say they have had an impact. Frogtown has seen some changes, but I can't say they are all just because of the peace pole. There is a lot more that goes into it.

A: You know, I think they are part of that ceremonial piece, and that's part of the impact. That's where the majority of it happens, I think.

?: Do you have a sense of how the community sees the peace pole at all?

A: We don't usually see the poles in context. I think the meaning is usually at a ceremonial function or a special event... it's kind of like a flag- at the celebrations they have dancers and speakers - It's one of the symbols that people could associate with the community- like at the anti-klan rally at Central HS- we had peace poles in the stage and a bunch of them there. So I assume that people would recognize them as part of a ceremonial function, rather than a stationary function.

A: I been stationed over there for two years. Part of a symbol. I don't know if it's caught on that much yet. People feel more of a piece of the neighborhood. It's slow but it's going- like the Weed and Seed in Frogtown- in District 7 and District 8. And there's transition in the neighborhood- like on the East side- I started my career on the east side and saw it go from A to B and back to A.

A: I'm not sure so many of the community really know much about them. The people I deal with- the prostitutes or the ones out there selling dope don't know much about them, for sure. I guess I don't know what other people think.

? Maybe we could talk about what the biggest challenges you see in Frogtown?

A: Well, there's too many- substandard housing, for one. Absentee ownership- when there are owners it's much better. You have people paying way too much money for their places and they use them to sell crack or allow others to sell crack there. So you've got that, you've got prostitution, but it's slowed down some- several gang issues that have calmed down the past few years but we're seeing a rise in the gang activity again.

A: Crime is often a quality of life issue. We need to focus on both issues- crime and quality of life. If people have a better quality of life, they have less problems with the crime. That's what we see. And it kind of goes in spurts- we try to keep a handle on it. The economy is good- the crime slows down some. My perspective is that there really needs to be ownership in the community. And that changes a lot. I've seen it happen- when people come in and start buying homes again and we get rid of the absentee landlords- that's a lot of what has happened here. We have a lot of home ownership here in Frogtown, and that's huge.

A: We get a lot of people in Frogtown from other neighborhoods- I'd say a large % of the felonies that happen here- the people aren't even from Frogtown. They know Frogtown has a reputation, and they come- from other St. Paul neighborhoods, from Mpls, sometimes from the suburbs- when Mpls police crack down in their neighborhoods, they come here, when we crack down hard, they go back or find somewhere else. If they've got crack to sell or other jobs to run, they'll find a place to do it, most of the time. And unfortunately Frogtown has that reputation as a place where that stuff happens.

? You were talking about the changes in the neighborhood. In the past five or six years, what changes have you seen, and why do you think those changes have happened.

A: Well, unfortunately, it seems like we're getting back to where it was. Bogus Boyz gang and other gangs are coming back- they sell dope and run girls – six years ago they were rubbing each other the wrong way and, you know, there's only so much territory to go around, so there was really bad blood between gang members. And sometimes they would see each other in other places, but then they would show up here in Frogtown and there'd be problems. And then

gang activity died down- we had a task force that was focusing on gang activity, and there was a big push- more cops in Frogtown, we shut down most of the open –air drug markets, and then this last year, we've seen it percolate back up. The Bogus Boyz have come back.

? Do you think that is a natural cycle, or is something else going on?

A: There are some cycles. The economy has something to do with it. Folks that might have been working a year or so ago, now they're out of work, and they're going to pay their rent, and they're going to find a way to make their money- they'll run a hustle whether it's selling dope on their own , or for someone else, or trying to make some money in a crap games in the alley, they'll find a way- when the economy turns south, crime goes back up. Also, Mpls has increased their effort in places over the last ten years, and let's face it- when Mpls squeezes tighter and tighter, they come here- and again, Frogtown is perceived as a place to sell dope, and let's face it- it's not too hard to get here- take the 16 down University. And they know there are customers here. Some of the stuff they shut down in the past 11 years- My guess is that the stuff in north Mpls. is picking up again.

A: For awhile there, you had people from Chicago and St. Louis coming up here and selling drugs, and Mpls came down hard on that, and they came here, and it took us awhile to figure that out, but we started dealing with that problem. A lot of the people in charge got put in jail when we cracked down on that, for life- and a lot of them I think are getting ready to come up for parole.

? One of the things I've heard a lot of in my interviews relates to kids- and the hope that kids get the message. How do you see your relationship with kids in the neighborhood?

A: When you go down the street, you can almost tell, while they're riding their bikes or whatnot, if they're 13, or 14, if they're good kids or up to trouble. We have some programs where we try to get involved with kids activities. But we don't get to spend too much time with kids. We've got the shop with a cop, and we play ball. But, I tell people, we're only out there in the neighborhood a certain number of hours, and parents and the neighborhood is there 24 hours, so I don't know how much we can do. And there are great kids out there. They just need to be steered in the right directions.

A: The Boys and Girls clubs do a lot for kids- I think those are one of the most important things out there. They keep the kids busy, and we know where they are, and we can go in there and see them and get to know them- shoot a game of pool with them, or something like that. And that is a place where we can develop relationships with kids. You can sit and interact. Over on the east side, that club is really important to the neighborhood.

? I know there are "junior" peaceful love warrior cards that you were using for a while. Can you tell me what you think about that idea?

A: We tried that. All the officers had a bunch of cards- some of the beat guys still have cards- It's kind of like a "that-a-boy" card.

A: It's an ok idea, but, frankly, those beat cops have some of the most calls of anyone. They unfortunately spend most of their time dealing with problems, rather than being able to hand out cards. They might have a minute or two in between calls to step out of there car before another call comes, but there just isn't a lot of time to do that kind of thing. The focus is in a different direction. They are standing on the side of a house watching a dope deal go down, or watching

a bunch of kids about to beat someone up, or someone suspicious walking down the alley looking into cars... your attention is focused in that direction- it makes it harder to see the kid the is mowing his grandmother's lawn and giving him kudos for that. You just don't see it because it's not what you're looking for. To be successful, we need time to do that. If we had more time, we might be able to talk to kids and get them to do the right thing, but it's hard to catch people in the act.

A: Most of the time kids see us when there is a difficult situation: someone is hurt, someone's a victim, someone's going to go to jail, and we have to put on our professional face. That other positive interaction is important, but it's hard to get it.

A: Yeah, I was working with a basketball program, and there was a kid in the program I knew, and then he was part of a call for a suspicious car that was said to have a gun. So we had to pull the car over and put everyone on the ground and make sure there wasn't a gun. And the kid was like "but you know me". And I had to say yes I do, but we also got a call that there was a gun, and just because I know you doesn't mean that I can let that go by. And it's a tough balance, because the day before we were playing ball up at the school like we were buddies. We have to adjust to different roles.

? I wonder if you have any suggestions or recommendations, or constructive criticisms for the PLW?

A: You have to start in the schools- that's so important. I'd focus on age 10-12. I coached for a lot of years, and I think kids have a lot of potential to learn at that age. Maybe have a kind of contest or something to identify the peace poles- see who can identify the most of them, or have the schools do more programs.

A: I think working with the new immigrant populations is really important. We have a huge new immigrant population, and there's real opportunity to use it to bridge the gap between new residents and people who have lived there a long time- because there are tensions. Often the new immigrants are most vulnerable to having illegal activity on their property, or being victims of crime. They don't want to rock the boat, or they don't know who to call or who to trust, and some are illegal immigrants, and they're not going to call the police. So, building those relationships is important. They have a lot of energy and good things to offer. Enable them to take care of themselves and their neighborhoods. The block clubs are good. But it's a challenge facing Frogtown right now.

A: I think more awareness too. I didn't really know much about them. And I'm not sure how many people do.

Interview w/Kids (Due to difficulty hearing from the tape, this transcription is summarized, based on the recording.)

? Can you tell me what you think peace means?

A: Peace is friendship and kindness.

A: Not fighting.

A: Yeah, not fighting.

A: Listening to each other and sharing.

A: Love.

A: We need to all get along together so there is peace.

A: Like saying shut-up and stuff, that's not peace.

? What about violence? Do you think violence is a problem?

A: Yeah. Fighting is a problem.

A: Yeah, a big problem.

A: All kinds of violence are problems.

A: Fighting and guns and shooting and stuff.

A: Yeah, guns and shooting is bad.

Do you know what a peace pole is?

A: What's that?

A: I think I know- we have one at our school... Webster.

A: I go to Webster too.

A: Oh yeah- we have one at my school too- Maxfield.

A: And we have one at Museum.

A: I don't know what you're talking about.

Have any of you ever done anything with the peace pole?

A: Yeah, at our school, we have a ceremony around it.

A: We did at our school too. And we do lessons about peace and stuff around it when we have an event there.

A: I know they had a ceremony, but only the fifth graders got to go.

A: Yeah, only the fourth and fifth graders got to go at our school. They planted flowers around it.

A: I haven't ever done anything.

Did you know they have a peace pole here?

A: Where?

A: Here?

A: I didn't know that. Wait, maybe- is it outside?

What do you think the pole means?

A: I think it means to not fight.

A: And the whole world shouldn't fight. There should be peace on earth and everyone loves each other.

A: I think what they said.

A: Isn't it in some different languages too?

A: I don't know what all the languages say.

Do you think that having a peace pole makes a difference?

A: Well, yeah it should.

A: At school we do some things with it, and we know not to fight around it.

A: Anything that helps peace should make a difference.

A: I don't know.

A: No- I think a lot of people don't pay attention to that- if someone is calling you names or something and you say something back, and then you are fighting, it doesn't matter if there's something like that around. You have to say something back, you know.

A: No you don't... that's why you get in trouble.

? Do you think other kids you know know about the peace pole?

A: All the ones in my class do- we all did the project together.

A: I don't know.

A: I don't think so- I didn't know about it until today.

A: A lot of kids at my school know. But I don't think my sister knows. She's too young.

? Maybe we could start with you telling me how familiar you are with the peace pole?

A: Well, we have one out there in the courtyard.

A: Yep, I know about that one. I know Melvin. I think we all know Melvin. Or at least have seen him around.

A: I don't really know much about them.

A: Me either.

A: I know we've got one out there, like they said.

A: Well, I was here when we planted that one. It was a lot of fun.

A: Oh yes, there was people laughing and talking. We had a lot of fun when that happened.

? Have any of you been to any other events where there was a peace pole?

A: No, I haven't.

A: No.

A: Me neither.

A: I went to a celebration there on University and Dale. I have been to a couple of those. I went last year and it was a lot of fun. People singing and dancing and the food- oh good food. And it was so nice. You know, the whole community comes out and people come out and talk to you. People I didn't even know were coming up and talking to me. They have a van that picked us up here and took us out, whoever wanted to go.

A: Yeah, but the van is only so big- only so many people could go. I didn't get to go. I haven't been to any of those things.

A: I just moved here about a year ago, so I am just now finding out what all that means.

? I wonder if any of you have an idea about what the peace pole means?

A: I think peace.

A: Well, yes, of course, peace.

A: I guess I never really knew that it meant anything until today.

A: Me neither.

A: I think it can mean community too, like at the celebration and when we put it in the ground here, we all were there, and there were all kinds of people from the community at the celebration.

? Do any of you know of anything else that has been done here with the peace pole since it was planted?

A: No

A: No, I don't think there was anything else. There hasn't been anything since we put it in. (Others shake heads no.)

? Do you feel the Peace Pole has had an impact here or elsewhere in the neighborhood?

A: Well, like I said we don't really do much with it here.

A: It might have an impact at those celebrations. Those really are wonderful.

A: I guess I don't know- we don't get out much into the neighborhood- you know we don't have a lot of chances because we don't really have transportation a lot of us.

A: I didn't know about it, so I don't think it's had an impact for me.

? How do you feel other people here in the building, or here in the neighborhood see the peace pole?

A: Well, it's kind of hard to say that, since I didn't know what it was to begin with.

A: I think some people here know about it- the ones that were here when we planted it here for sure. That was a lot of fun. But there are some that don't too, I am sure.

A: Well, I don't get out much into the neighborhood. I don't think the younger families next door know too much about it either. Maybe they do, but it doesn't seem that way. It's hard to say.

? If you could have some other things happen around the pole, what would they be?

A: Well, it would be nice if it could be a bridge between here and the other complex. We have a lot of younger families moving in now, and a lot of kids, and none of us know any of them, and they don't know any of us, you know, so it is hard to have good relationships there. You know, I see kids at night being noisy, and the cops say, "Well, just call us and we'll come out and take care of it." But I don't want to call the cops- that seems like a mean thing to do. I wish I could just talk to the parents or maybe to the kids, and if we knew each other, then maybe it would be better. Maybe there would be more respect.

A: I think that would be good.

A: Yes, now we don't do anything with anyone over there.

A: I like that idea- to be a bridge.

A: You know, there was National Night Out last night, and I don't know that this neighborhood did anything. They do so much stuff over in Mpls, and I read about that in the paper today- but I don't think there was anything done here. They could have done something- or maybe could use the pole next time. Because we didn't get any fliers or hear anything about any events happening here. And it's such an important thing, you know. When I lived at home, we did picnics and stuff like that every year.

? What are the major problems you would like to see worked on?

A: Well, here there's a lot of noise,

A: Yes, sometimes I can't sleep- there's kids hollering and they're up all night long.

? The peace pole is part of an Int'l movement- they have them in a lot of different countries and a lot of other places in the US- I wonder if any of you knew about that?

A: No, I didn't know that.

A: Me neither.

A: I didn't

A: (Several head shakes no).

A: I do think that is a good thing thought. I mean, everywhere needs peace. And if it can mean that people are thinking about it all over the place, that's what needs to be happening.

? Do you have any suggestions or recommendations for the group that plants the peace poles- in terms of what else you might like to see happen?

A: Well, just like we said before, we don't really do anything with this pole here. Some people don't know about it, and I think more people need to know. And maybe we can get more information and transportation.

A: Yeah, transportation is a big problem for everyone here. We can only get so many places.

A: But I like that idea about doing something to get our building and the younger group to know each other better. I think that's important. And maybe that would help the noise. I can't sleep at night sometimes.

Interview #1:

?: Well, I was just wondering if you could tell me what your role is in the community and how you got involved w. the plw? Sort of, what your extent of the involvement in the community is?

A: Actually my role in the community is community organizing. My job is to work with everyone who is involved in the Frogtown community, whether they are a resident or individual- city, state, local government- anyone- to get them to better utilize their resources and take part in a common vision of revitalizing the community. So, I play a big role in that aspect, and obviously with Catholic Charities being one of those partners and Melvin being involved w. the peace poles, I am involved with them. I have worked to plant four of the peace poles, and I also lived here about 20 years before I moved out. My parents still live in the same house I grew up in.

The organization is a community organization, and we have looked and decided, "Ok, this would be a good place to plant a peace pole." One of the major goals of our organization is to identify a common community concern. One of the things I came across as we have looked for this is the one thing that no one ever seems to object going up in the community is the peace pole. That's kind of how we have shaped the vision- making it a peaceful community and using the peace pole as that symbol that people are looking for. We have tried to incorporate the peace pole so that people into that kind of event so people can feel that anyone can help.

?: Ok, so you've kind of found the peace pole as a unifying symbol, if I'm hearing you right?

A: Yes, that's exactly right. We put one at Ryan Park, and there's one at the side of Lifetrack Resources. I made sure there was one incorporated there, and at Willard's bar. I was very adamant about getting those put in there.

?: So, you have organized events and helped plant peace poles. Can you tell me a little about the significance of the poles you are involved with?

A: For me, the places we put the peace poles have been places people haven't looked at as a welcoming environment- Ryan Park, for example- when we first started our events there, the neighborhood was concerned that there was a lot of prostitution and drug dealing going on there, so we wanted to show it as a peaceful place where people could come and enjoy the neighborhood... to deter crime in that area. And it's a place where people can come together and picnic and all different things. So that one at Ryan Park is all about where our community is going and what we want to do.

The one at Speedy Market, to me , that was more of a vision of an example. Speedy Market, at one time, was getting about 320 police calls every year- about once every day. And they were willing working hard to try to eliminate that. And they have gone through periods of time where they have almost no police calls now. And that one was really about the change and the effort the business community can give to help reduce crime, along with Willard's- to make sure their business is clean and does what it can to deter crime. It's been really significant to me.

The one at Lifetrack Resources is significant because it's so big and on a major thoroughfare. I wanted people to look as they were driving down the avenue and see that there were other things in the community besides the prostitution- that one of our goals is a peaceful community. That's why it was one of the first ones- it's something I really wanted to do.

?: So, you are saying you've noticed some clear changes- Tell me more about the peace pole being more than a symbol.

A: The thing is that many of the peace poles that have gone in have gone in in high crime areas- you know, where there has been a lot of trouble. Not one has been vandalized by crime. The one at W. Minny- well, someone there tried to take the saying- they broke the glass and took the plaque- but otherwise none have them been vandalized in the neighborhood. The one at the Speedy Market- it's just standing there, and anyone at anytime could take it if they really wanted it. The one at Ryan Park hasn't been vandalized- none of them have ever been moved from their resting place.

?: How do you think the community at large sees the peace pole?

A: I don't know if the community at large gets the peace poles. That's one of the concerns I hear. That there IS a peaceful love warriors, there's the following of the group, but I don't think people understand what the plw are trying to do. I don't think people understand what the peace poles symbolize, except that it's a welcoming thing. I don't think people realize that there is a hidden meaning behind every one of them. I don't think that gets communicated enough to the general community. I think so many have gone up that some people have kind of looked at them as a billboard almost. They're going up all over the place – and it might just be something cool and neat to do now, but people don't always realize the meaning behind them.

?: But you say there is still some change around the poles, even if people don't understand the meaning. Why do you think that's happening?

A: What I think is happening- More often than not, when we do these celebrations, even though people don't get the meaning, there are people from different aspects of the community- young, old, different ethnicities, from businesses, and cops- and all that being in one place together really striving to do something around the peace pole- I think people really see that as a effort of people taking pride in the neighborhood and really looking to make the change.

?: So it's kind of a tool for community building?

A: Oh, yes. Definitely a tool for community building. We'll give out the little poles and at our events, people will say "I want that". And people understand they are a symbol of people coming together.

?: You've been to a lot of different peace pole planting ceremonies. Can you talk a little bit about what the plantings have been like? What emotions have you felt or felt from other people?

A: Well, that's hard for me because I don't get emotionally charged like others. I see other people that really get into it... like Melvin and Sally... they are into the holding hands and everything. I can see it happening and I can see the people right in the middle of it are impacted by it- like this is a powerful thing going in. But for me, it's a symbol, but that alone isn't going to change everything. I don't want to take anything away from the peace poles. but I don't think the peace pole would be so powerful without the personality of Melvin driving them. I don't think I would have the same effect doing what Melvin does. He brings the personality and some of the life... he has that energy that brings it along. I think other individuals can do it, but I've only ever seen him do it. I don't know what it is... he's been involved with it for so long that he really gets the meaning.

?: You have said that it perhaps the peace pole has some limits. What other things would you like to see happen with the peace pole? What recommendations or suggestions would you give?

A: I'm not sure how they decide where they are planted or who gets a pole now. But I really think that the peace poles need to go back to a place where it's meaningful. – If you have \$300 to pay for a peace pole, you can get it. Peace poles, as weird as it may sound, really shouldn't just go up wherever. I really think, to have the kind of lasting impact, it should always go someplace where it will be significant, like what I've said about Ryan Park and Lifetrack- I understand about the schools and all that, and the rec centers, because they want them to be nonviolent places. But I think peace poles really need to go back to where something happened here, and people want to make a change and recognize that they want it to be a peaceful environment . Otherwise, anyone can plop them in a yard, and it almost becomes like a lawn ornament, and I don't want to see that happening. And I understand that people can be familiar- you can't really prevent anyone from buying them, but I hope we would encourage it to be planted because, you know something happened here, and we want to remember that.

?: Let's go back to the Ryan Park pole for a minute. It seems like that one has been very important, especially for you. Can you tell me a little more about what has happened in Ryan Park since the planting- what changes you have seen take place?

A: For me at Ryan Park, it turned from a great place to play to a prostitution and drug hang out. But I think that once the pole went up, people started seeing it as a place where we need to start doing things. Ever since then , we have been holding events there. Every TH at Ryan Park. The City comes to clean it up. When we first came to that park to do events we had to clean up glass and trash and everything, and we had to do that- but now the city actually comes out and maintains it because of the number of kids that will be there. And you see the park being used by kids. You don't just see people hanging out on the benches just smoking or drinking. It may happen late at nite still. But the police have recognized that, as we have done these events, they patrol more often, and it's not getting used for what it was used for. We went from no kids to thirty or forty every TH nite during the summer. The park is always crowded during events- We've had 300-400 people there before.

?: So it's really helped you reclaim that land?

A: Big time. There's the one at Speedy Market but we haven't gone back there. We do stuff at Ryan Park all the time. It's a case where people decided they wanted to see something different in the community.

We did our planting there on a cold, rainy day, and we still had 40 people there at that peace pole planting. And we publicized to the whole community, so there were all kinds of people there from everywhere. We advertised in the Frogtown Times, and there were people who just came out.

From that day one, seeing everyone out there, made us realize that we had to use that place for people to come to. And the peace pole was the thing that brought the people together and made them realize something was going on. And people maintain it. They pull the weeds that grow around the base of it. So it's interesting to see.

?: The peace pole is part of an Int'l Movement. Do you feel like you know very much about that movement?

A: Actually no. I don't feel like I do. I don't think the educational piece has happened- and that's on the part of the PLW. I didn't know there was one in front of the UN. I knew there was some sort of movement, but I don't think it's clearly conveyed here?

?: Do you think that's important, or not so much?

A: Yes, I do- I think it goes back to what I was saying earlier- There are so many different cultures and ethnicities here in Frogtown that- when you talk about a common community vision- you're not going to get one vision. because you have so many things playing into it. But when you can show a movement, around something like a peace pole, as something that everyone's ok with- you don't ever hear someone protest the peace pole like you do the flag or the pledge- because everyone wants peace. And conveying that it would help to know that this is part of something bigger, and that countries are utilizing this.

?: What do you feel like the meaning of the peace pole is as a symbol?

A: The meaning is about unity and an understanding of what I think everybody really wants, even though they may not know it. In their warped little world, I think anybody, even a racist or a Klan member... what they are striving for is peace- their methods aren't always ok, but the goal is still peace. I think it's about everyone really being together as one.

It's one thing that's common among everyone throughout the world. I don't think anyone wanted to live in war or famine- I think people are looking for peace in their homes, communities and their lives. That's one thing people are always saying about people who have died- you know, they say "he was at peace" when he died, and everyone strives to be at peace with themselves. and the peace pole is that unity and the symbol of peace. And I don't think that's achieved on a regular basis by a lot of individuals- and that's the one thing that the peace pole shows- this is a things that we need to strive for. I know I'm not at peace with everything I do in my life, but have one peace pole that's on my nightstand right by my bed- there's always a few things I always say at the end of the nite- I always tell my wife I love her because that's something I want her to hear, and I always look at the peace pole, because I want to bring myself to peace. And I strive to reach that.

?: Do you have anything else you want to add?

A: The only thing I would hope is that they utilize the report you put together. I see more often than not that reports sit on a shelf, and people say it's interesting, but it's not used. I also think as far as suggestions, when it comes to the celebrations, there should be some commonality among them. Something that is the same. Melvin kind of comes up and does what he does, and none of them are ever quite the same. There should be something the same among them- whether it be encircling, or holding of the hands, or whether it's a program- so people realize that from one peace pole to the next, there is something in common and people can relate to the poles.

Interview #2: (Regular PLW)

?: So what I wanted to talk to you about is your story- How did you get involved with the PLW

A: I got involved later, actually. I would say maybe four or five years ago. So I wasn't a founding members, but I have been involve quite awhile.

?: How did you get involved?

A: Well, a girl who used to work here asked me to write a poem for one of the peace celebrations. And I did. I've been helping out with the programs, going around to the different schools, helping them to prepare their programs, or actually participating in the programs. I like the community involvement, and that's why I continue to do it.

?: Can you tell me a little more about what the peace poles mean to you?

A: Well, to me, it is a symbol of peace. And if I think of situations that are happening in other countries, I guess I think that they need a peace pole. For some how or other when you look at that symbol, it makes you aware of other acts of violence and terrorism in the world, and you feel like if everyone had a peace pole or that symbol, maybe everyone would think more about peace and get along better. To me, it evens out the power. Because, as you know, we have those with power and those without. But I think that if everyone could see the peace pole for what it stands for, it would even the power out around the world and make peace easier to accept.

?: Can you tell me about any plantings that have been really special to you or that hold extra meaning?

A: The one I think I remember the most was the one at Davit's memorial. The American Refugee Committee and CFI got together and did a memorial service at Como Park at the pavilion. And Irene Rodriguez asked if I could do a poem there, and I wrote a poem based on what happened to Davisha. And that really touched me. And another I was really touched by- well, I have been touched by most- but we had one at the St. Paul Council Of Churches, and I read the New Constitution at that one. To me, it seemed like Melvin and I were sent in on meetings when they were making their plans, but I felt that I was an outsider. Like if I had anything to say it wouldn't matter anyway. And I felt this was a situation where I think that I was being totally ignored and I'm not sure why... because I am a woman or older woman, or black. And so I thought that we need a new constitution so we won't have this privilege stiff, and that's when I wrote that one. We had eight ministers there. And so I enjoyed reading there and hearing what other people had to say and how they felt about the peace pole. And I really enjoy working with the children at the schools. Like I said, let them know what's going on in the world around them- how to meet people, treat people, understand people from different religions and nationalities- just exposing them to things they don't get in their life everyday.

?: Can you talk about how the large community sees the peace pole?

A: I think they feel it is a symbol of peace. And it's surprising to me that a lot of people say that they would like a pole in their home. And you know, it makes me wonder, well, why are they saying "in their home?" I think people do think there is something with the peace pole. We seem to get quite a few people at the gatherings. It brings people together- out to meet their neighbors- people they have lived next door to for several years and don't even know them,- and it also brings the businesses together with the community and with the people. And I think that, when we have the peace pole plantings and things like that it helps people know that is

going on around them and the resources that are available in their community. I think the peace pole does a lot. And I might add that we give it to people and we hope it plants a seed and we hope it spreads. I think the peace pole has brought a lot of people together- and not just people, but also agencies. I am really surprised that we have so many members, and a lot of that is through the peace pole- it has connected us to the colleges, like Bethel, and I think that's great. Even if people don't pay attention to it every day, people will remember why it is there. At least I do- it sparks me up when I am going along and I see one. It's a reminder of who I am. When you read about conflict in the newspaper or go to a place where there is conflict, I want to take a peace pole with me and say, "this is what it's all about."

I've been at meeting where people have said "we need to have peace in our own neighborhoods and think about peace there first, When you get into the peace thing, that's peace all over the world. It's NOT peace for my neighborhood and go from there. You either have it in your heart that you want peace, or it's something else you want. You want satisfaction, or something to keep the cover over things for a while. But me, I want it all. I will say, if you're talking just about peace on your block or in your home, you're not ready yet. You need to have peace in your heart that we need it throughout the world. And people say, "no, we can't do it- it takes time..." How much time? We have to do it sooner or later. My part that I do may not go anywhere, but it will make a dent somewhere. Our children have to realize it, and their children. I don't believe there's a problem in the world that can't be solved. So maybe you can say the peace pole is a symbol of solving problems.

?: I'm wondering if you have seen any changes take place where there are peace poles, and what kind of changes there are?

A: I think there has been change. I think that just the people coming together makes change, even. Because there's something that hasn't happened before. I would say that each time we have a celebration around the peace pole we bring more and more people together and also, we have the people around here that make trouble, but when we have the peace celebrations, they com, and it means something to them. It's still a part of them and they are included. And I think those who would not associate with them at all see them in a different light at something like a peace celebration. And it makes them feel good too. It gives them a positive way to participate and have a good time and be accepted.

?: The last question I have is about the future, or recommendations or changes you would like to see.

A: I would like to see more of them in Mpls, number one. I would like to see a peace pole at every school. I would like to see more celebrations and peace poles going up in the surrounding suburbs and I would like for them to really know the meaning of the peace pole. I just hope it grows. I want to see the whole thing grow.

Note: Due to technical difficulty, this interview is summarized based on notes and a partial recording.

1) Can you tell me a little bit about yourself and your role in the community?

A: I am a community liaison, which means I try to connect my organization with the community in ways that the community welcomes. My organization is not directly in the community, but we do a lot of work here, and many of those who participate in this work are not from the community either.

2) How familiar are you with the peace pole symbols that have been planted around Frogtown?

I've been familiar with the pole for a few years now. I have been to peace celebrations, but I don't think I have been to a peace pole planting. I have been to several celebrations though. The celebrations are great- the community really comes out. There is stuff for kids, and often there is a presentation where someone reads poetry or gives an inspirational talk. I don't remember anything special happening at the peace celebrations regarding the peace poles, except maybe that there was a pole there. They could maybe do more with the pole at the celebrations.

3) How did you hear about the peace poles?

When I started doing community work I learned about them. I met Melvin, and he was very welcoming and supportive of me. He could have just brushed me off, but he was very eager to look at whatever kind of partnership we could put together. And he was my direct link to the peace poles and to the community.

4) What does the peace pole mean to you?

Well, it's a symbol. And it's a symbol of peace and community. And let's be honest, it is an object and it can only do so much. The meaning has to be given to it. I think here in Frogtown it has gained some meaning, but the pole by itself doesn't do anything without the people behind it.

5) How would you say the community at-large sees the peace poles?

I think the community at-large views them as tools for community-building, as evidence of a collective will to be a peaceful neighborhood.

6) What impact do you feel the peace poles have had on the community?

I think they have encouraged a sense of solidarity within the neighborhood. The peace pole has served as a tangible object in which to rally many intangible neighborhood values (e.g. inclusivity, hospitality, etc.)

7) Have you noticed any changes as a result of the peace poles in any places?

I believe the peace pole has served as a "talking point" for neighborhood organizations to illuminate core values, and I think the poles planted on school grounds have been incorporated into instructional events.

8) Do you have any constructive criticisms, suggestions, or recommendations for the PLW?

They need to make sure that there is meaning attached to the poles. And they need to increase awareness about what they mean in the community. I am concerned that they get planted, but then there is no follow-up. They go up so fast, and there seems to be a push to get them in a lot of places. With this kind of thing, the follow-up is crucial. If there isn't a continuous effort to make every peace pole meaningful, their effect can be diminished. I am worried about sustainability. Who will the next Melvin be? What will the next generation think about them- will they recognize the meaning? Or just pass them by?

Interview- Nieta

? Maybe you could start just by telling me what you do here and how familiar you are with the Peace Poles?

A: Well, actually I got involved with it through Melvin. And I had noticed the peace poles throughout the community, but I didn't really have an understanding of what they meant, except the English part of the pole says "May Peace Prevail on Earth". but then after working here and getting involved with activities around nonviolence and things like that, my involvement would be a good way to start sending a message in the community> And the peace pole itself was sort of a symbol and a reminder. And my deeper involvement came when I started working with Melvin and District 8. Again, it was around nonviolence and events about nonviolence in response to violent acts in the community- to start sending a message that it's a good community and want a community to promote peace, connectivity, togetherness and those kinds of things. And so, what we wanted to do was go on a campaign... it really stemmed from that young child that got killed- it really began from that. Although there were peace poles before that planted for various reasons. I think the momentum of the whole campaign stepped up after that. And, it goes back to the community saying we want to stop the violence in the area and start bringing folk together.

And the other peace was that I wanted to be a part of spreading the peace poles. When you think about the symbols, you also think about that whole planting piece. It's like starting out with a small seed, and then look what it grows into.

And then for my community, we looked next door and said, oh they're planting peace poles and they are raising awareness there, and I really wanted to start doing that here.

The community that I represent in terms of my job here, and personally too, because of where I grew up. I was hoping that it starts having people think about who really is in the neighborhood.

So what I do, is intentionally have the community, in their neighborhood meetings, have the opportunity to pick the languages, so they had to think about, well who is in the community- and what folks have you seen and they had to think about the demographics and the changes over time, and they say, well we have Somali families and Hmong families, and Vietnamese families, and they really had to think about that.

So, our first peace pole was about who was in our neighborhood- we want our neighborhood to be safe, and we want to connect with one another.

And then it grew from that, to getting our Tshirts. And people notice them- it's a loud color, and it's a simple message- that it means connectivity, health, balance- it's the message we want to send.

I went out one nite with a girlfriend, and she was the manager of an apt complex and we went out for dinner, and I happened to wear my T shirt, and when I went into the bathroom there, a girl said to me, where's your bubbles? Because she had seen Melvin and knew about the peace poles and associated those with the bubbles. So somewhere in this community, there was a connection.

So, I'm looking at it as a seed and just to spread, and people to know what it means and start talking about it. And then I found out about some of the things going on in Mpls- the gardens and things, and people just connect to it. And sometimes it gets planted because something negative has happened, but the outcome is positive- that we don't want violence- we want connectivity- people who stand on the corner no longer stand there.

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? It seems like the history piece is important to the meaning of the pole- Is part of the history of the neighborhood creating that meaning?

A: Yes, I think so, and I also think- not only does it have the historical grounding, but it also says what it could be. Because some of the realization- you hear people say, "well, we never did that, and it never used to be that way." But then you have to realize there's a change going on, and that we have to be open to it, so I look at it as an inanimate object, but it also has a lot of life to it. And the whole part about planting does something for me in particular, because here's something that is now a permanent part of the neighborhood- it's like when you plant something in a garden and watch it grow. And it can really blossom. I hope there is future strengthening. I mean they are all over the country- they're everywhere, and in that sense, we need to be a part of it. It's part of creating a global community. And knowing that, I'm an African-American, you're Caucasian, she's an Asian, but we all have some common ground. So, it's bigger too.

? Can you talk about the plantings and what they are like?

A: I've been to five or six of them, and in different communities. And it's interesting to see all the different things people do. The healing ceremonies... What the plantings do- you wonder- how can you get these stabilized in the ground, there's the technical side of it. I've been to one where we dug the hole, poured the cement, figured which way it should face- for me it meant people helping. It drew a lot of people together to help do something. Everybody had some talent- something to offer, and we worked all together and it happened. And we had advertised the planting with fliers, and you never really know who will show up. But it was amazing all the people that came and all the people you had a chance to talk to. And for the half hour that we did the ceremony and had each person talk about what peace means to them and have people really articulate it really brought you to another awareness- that there's families and elders and a range of cultures and interesting people and you got to meet them- it had such a sense of hopefulness, where a lot of people seemed to have hope- not feeling downtrodden- but that we can accomplish things together. You feel like you're with people who really want to make a

difference. You meet people that you didn't know but that they have the same needs and wants as you do.

? How do you think Frogtown community at large sees the peace pole?

A: It's a good question, and a hard question. I think, if I'm going to guess for the community, they see it as a way to send a message. It sends a different awareness for the community. They see the community coming together, as they might see it as a symbol of hope. People do become protective of it, and I think it had made a difference in areas where we had planted it where there was a lot of negative activity going on, and they don't do that anymore. And it depends on where they are at how much they mean.

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A: Well, there's one at the Speedy Market, and I think there has been change there. They don't gamble there no more. There isn't the drug dealing going on. There used to be a lot of vagrants where our peace pole is, and there aren't as many hanging out there as they used to be. It's a symbol that the area is protected. And I believe the one that is at the police station send sthe message that the police really wan to work with the neighborhood, and I think they're proud of having it there, and that's another happening- that people are proud to have the peace pole- at their business or the playground. It sets up a feeling of pride.

Maybe we can eventually do a tour of the peace poles. We did a tour in a Frogtown leadership seminar that I went to, and when we did that, we noticed all the peace poles. And the tour person could tell the story about what each one meant and how it came about, and that was kind of exciting. So, we want it to be that important and that big- where people know " Oh yeah, that's a peace pole". They might not get the whole picture, but they recognize it.

? You talked a little about this already- that the peace pole is International. I wonder what you know about the Int'l movement, and how important that is to you?

A: I know just a little bit about the general history. And I've read a little bit of it. To me, personally, it didn't mean that much- I mean, the message of the peace pole and what the people are doing- I connected to Ghandi somehow. That's how I look at the Int'l piece. But that's sort of the beauty of it. The main message is peace- and that all races and cultures want to have peace, so it doesn't matter where you are in the world, but it becomes some of the definition of that community, so that's the fluid piece of it. There's that common piece and it's fluid, and it serves the community as it sees it, and that's ok. And it's a symbol. People adopt symbols that become very important to them. And it serves as a reminder. It's really alive.

? I wonder if you have any suggestions or recommendations or the Peace Pole and PLW?

A: Well, I am trying to incorporate the philosophy and the ceremonial piece of it with my youth, and I am looking at it as being a project for them, and to be a training ground for them about how to bring about peaceful solutions, especially around violence. There's a lot of violence among the young folk, and I would like to see it more internalized on a younger lever. I'd like to see it become so important- as important as Charlie Brown- so we see them and it becomes a message that people begin to internalize, and not only internalize, but when you go somewhere, it's a common language, and when we talk about the peace poles, we all understand what we're talking about. That people will see it and know exactly what it means.

And I would like to look at it as a rite of passage for my own youth groups- they are building skills, but this will also help them build their values. And that's how I'm going to incorporate it into the youth program here. They have to wear the T-shirts- it's a culture and a message of the organization. This is the message, and I'm hoping it will evolve around doing some outreach. So they will be peer counselors to their own peers and they can reach out to other young folks who are having issues. And it will teach them to work with people they perceive as different. We ask, "Do you know anything about these other people- You are going to work with these people?"

? Do you have anything you want to add to any of this?

A: No , I don't think so. Other than I think it's a wonderful project.

#### Interview #4

? Maybe you could start just by telling me what you do here and how familiar you are with the Peace Poles?

A: Well, actually I got involved with it through Melvin. And I had noticed the peace poles throughout the community, but I didn't really have an understanding of what they meant, except the English part of the pole says "May Peace Prevail on Earth". but then after working here and getting involved with activities around nonviolence and things like that, my involvement would be a good way to start sending a message in the community> And the peace pole itself was sort of a symbol and a reminder. And my deeper involvement came when I started working with Melvin and District 8. Again, it was around nonviolence and events about nonviolence in response to violent acts in the community- to start sending a message that it's a good community and want a community to promote peace, connectivity, togetherness and those kinds of things. And so, what we wanted to do was go on a campaign... it really stemmed from that young child that got killed- it really began from that. Although there were peace poles before that planted for various reasons. I think the momentum of the whole campaign stepped up after that. And, it goes back to the community saying we want to stop the violence in the area and start bringing folk together.

And the other peace was that I wanted to be a part of spreading the peace poles. When you think about the symbols, you also think about that whole planting piece. It's like starting out with a small seed, and then look what it grows into.

And then for my community, we looked next door and said, oh they're planting peace poles and they are raising awareness there, and I really wanted to start doing that here.

The community that I represent in terms of my job here, and personally too, because of where I grew up. I was hoping that it starts having people think about who really is in the neighborhood.

So what I do, is intentionally have the community, in their neighborhood meetings, have the opportunity to pick the languages, so they had to think about, well who is in the community- and what folks have you seen and they had to think about the demographics and the changes over time, and they say, well we have Somali families and Hmong families, and Vietnamese families, and they really had to think about that.

So, our first peace pole was about who was in our neighborhood- we want our neighborhood to be safe, and we want to connect with one another.

And then it grew from that, to getting our Tshirts. And people notice them- it's a loud color, and it's a simple message- that it means connectivity, health, balance- it's the message we want to send.

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The University of Minnesota is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to its programs, facilities, and employment without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, or sexual orientation.