

# JUNE 1980

## FOREWORD

From June, 1977 until April, 1980 the people of Vogar, Manitoba were participating in a comprehensive socio-economic development program as a demonstration of possibility for native settlements throughout Canada. With The Canadian Institute of Cultural Affairs providing residential consultant staff, Vogar joined a network of twenty-four communities around the world in creating a global demonstration of local development. The success of what was accomplished can be measured in many different ways but several indicators speak for themselves. They include the initiation and management by village residents of four businesses, the degree of local pride evinced in the landscaping of private homes and public space, the realisation of a long-standing plan for a community park and the purchase, management, and expansion of the village store.

The following report is an assessment of the past three years of village effort. The first section is the story of Vogar and deals with its history and indicators of change. Some of the activities reported in this section can be attributed directly to the Vogar Human Development Project. Some, of course, have happened beyond the plans of the initiating consultation. But all indicate the determination of the Vogar community as it builds its future. The success of Vogar has been greatly assisted by the active participation of a large number of people in the public, private, and voluntary sectors, who gave their time, money, resources, and expertise to support the efforts of the local people. The second section deals with the methods of development, which include project initiation, actuation, and documentation.

In order to ensure the self-confidence, self-sufficiency, and self-reliance of the village, the role of the ICA consultative staff was designed to change during the course of the project. During the first year the staff played a direct role in initiating programs along with community residents. By the second year the ICA's role had become that of side-by-side consultants with community residents in maintaining existing programs and initiating new ones. During the third year of the project ICA staff remained resident in the community for consultation upon request, but their main emphasis was in assisting other villages, primarily through the Community Forum program. The intended fourth year of the program would have seen the ICA no longer in residence in Vogar but available upon request for consultation. Toward the end of 1979 a series of media presentations and events within the Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF) changed the Vogar residents' perception of the Vogar Human Development Project and the role of the ICA as consultants, breaking down the trust which is essential for the continued success of this type of development. Therefore, after consultation with residents of Vogar, advisors within the larger Metis community, and advisors from across Canada, the ICA decided to advance its timeline and enter into the "fourth year" relationship in April, 1980, becoming non-resident at that time.

This report is written in an effort to pass on the story of Vogar and its discoveries about the journey of human development so that other communities may benefit through its learnings.

## VOGAR COMMUNITY REPORT

JUNE 1980

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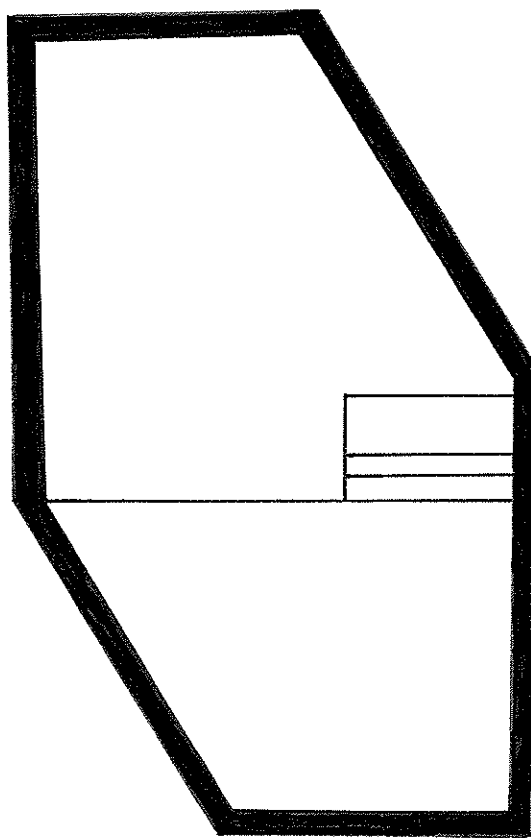
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# THE STORY OF VOGAR



## THE HISTORY OF VOGAR

This is the story of Vogar, one of the rural Metis villages in the Interlake region of Manitoba. Located 200 kilometers north of Winnipeg near the eastern narrows of Lake Manitoba, Vogar has just under 200 permanent residents.

### I. EARLY PERIOD

Early in the 18th Century, traders and trappers from eastern Canada began exploration of the Prairie Provinces and expansion of their trade with the native peoples in the area. As trade increased at the beginning of the 19th Century, the first permanent settlements were established in the Interlake region and European contact with the native population intensified. The original Metis people were the children of these fur traders and native women. Their descendants settled around the trading posts and played a vital role in the early development of the area. Many of the early Metis, educated in Europe or eastern Canada, served as negotiators and translators between European and native interests, pioneered the development of new trade routes and invented highly effective land and water transportation systems. With the opening of the Transcontinental Railway in 1885, thousands of immigrants began settling in the area, bringing with them the first commercial agriculture, thereby reshaping the traditional Metis way of life. As the land was put into agriculture, buffalo herds dwindled. As the fur trade declined, so did Metis influence and spirit. Alienation and the struggle for land became the story of the Metis people.

### II. ASSIMILATION AND ISOLATION

William Monkman was one of the first Metis families to locate near the Saulteaux native settlement called Dog Creek on Lake Manitoba around 1890. He was soon joined by other Metis families. In 1898 the first Icelandic farmers established themselves in the area. Just after the turn of the century the village acquired the Icelandic name, "Vogar", which means "little bay" and a period of development began. The first post office was opened in 1905. By 1910 a small sawmill and store were in operation. And in 1918 the first log church was built. During the next ten years two more churches, two stores, an auto repair shop and a school were added to the village. However, continued development also meant the loss of the traditional sources of Metis livelihood as commercial fishing depleted the lakes and settlements engulfed the remaining hunting grounds. Metis income became dependent upon seasonal farm labour, and the resulting increased exposure to Euro-Canadian culture led to further modification of Metis life. With the growth of regional towns and improved transport in the 1930's, Vogar, like many other small communities, went into a period of decline. The more complete services offered by the nearby town of Ashern led to the closing of the mill, store, repair shop and churches. For the next forty years the Metis people lived on the fringe of Canadian growth and development; forgotten by the larger society and cut off from their own past.

### III. RESOLVE TO REBUILD

A growing national awareness of the native situation in the late 60's and early 70's has resulted in the gradual reversal of this situation. The Vogar local of the Manitoba Metis Federation has done much to provide self-respect among community residents and the 1970's witnessed a surge of activity and the gradual improvement of community services. In 1972, new school units were brought to Vogar and in 1973 an outdoor skating rink was built adjacent to the school. In 1974 the first community well was drilled at the south end of the village and in 1976 the new housing construction began. In 1977 a new school and gymnasium were added to the community.

In April, 1977 an invitation was extended to The Canadian Institute of Cultural Affairs to join with the village of Vogar in its continuing efforts of local development. The Vogar Human Development Project was initiated with a week-long consultation in June, 1977.

## INDICES OF DEVELOPMENT

### A. TOWARD ECONOMIC SELF-SUSTENANCE

INTENT: At the time of the Human Development Consultation, it was the expressed intent of the people of Vogar to move toward self-sufficiency by increasing the economic opportunities available within the village. This was to be done by locating additional sources of capital investment and by providing increased employment through small scale village industry and expanded business activity.

CONTRADICTIONS: Although all of the contradictions delineated in the Consultation Summary Statement are in some way related to economic development, those which seem most directly related to the economic life of the community had to do with the limited availability of both capital funds and local employment, the undeveloped potential of village businesses, and the unstable base of individual family income.

INDICATORS: Among the many indications of rapid economic development, the following three have been selected as representative:

1. Vogar Products is one of the few businesses owned and operated by Metis women in the province of Manitoba. Thirteen women have worked for the company during the three year period and it provides permanent employment for four.
2. The grocery store is now Metis owned, maintains a full line of groceries, and has increased sales at least six fold. It has expanded to include a Pool Hall and a small snack bar. Permanent employment for three has resulted.
3. Through his own initiative a Vogar resident prepared a business plan, wrote a funding proposal, purchased equipment, and hired workers; thereby establishing a new sawmill in the community. It employs four full time workers. A locally established construction company has built five new homes and completed other contracts outside the community as well as within it.

## VOGAR PRODUCTS

Few employment opportunities exist for women in Vogar. To remedy this either existing businesses must be brought in or new businesses developed. Vogar Products is one of the new businesses created. Many women recognised their sewing skills as a resource and in the summer of 1977 field trips were made to learn about the sewing industry. By the fall, handcrafted quilted items were being tested in the market place. During the winter, a business proposal was developed and funding was approved by the Local Employment Assistance Program (LEAP), a federal agency. During the first year, the business was located in a house provided by a family in the community. The firm was incorporated and a Board of Directors was formed which met regularly to review the business operation. The product line became established as handcrafted comforters in six patterns that reflected contemporary and traditional Metis lifestyle. Employees participated in marketing tests that took them across Canada. Selected retail outlets carried the comforters and sales reached \$12,000 in the first year. In the second year, an old unused school house was purchased, renovated, and relocated. An open house in February, 1979 allowed more than forty visitors to view the completed renovation, inspect the products and to celebrate the business' achievements. Training in management skills, testing marketing techniques, and production refinement were the business priorities. During the three years, thirteen women have been employed by Vogar Products for varying lengths of time. The Board of Directors is made up of the employees and several advisors. Vogar Products Ltd. represents one of the very few business ventures owned and operated by Metis women. The women have continually demonstrated willingness to contend with the complexities of business life and the manager and several others are gradually improving their accounting skills and management practises. Appropriate and successful marketing techniques continue to be an issue for the business. The experience with Vogar Products has allowed the women to develop new skills, earn steady wages and to participate with confidence and awareness in the many complex and difficult situations a new business faces.

## NEW BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

The dependence of Vogar residents on seasonal employment, jobs away from the community, and retail stores which were a long distance from the community required the development of local industries which would utilize the skills already resident in the village as well as provide the opportunity for on-the-job training in new skills. In the spring of 1978 discussions with several of the skilled tradesmen in the village revealed possibilities for a locally owned construction company. Start-up funding for a partnership of two carpenters was received from government agencies and the Vogar Construction Company Ltd. was launched. The men prepared bids and received contracts for five houses and two smaller jobs in the village, and employed as many as six men. Partner-

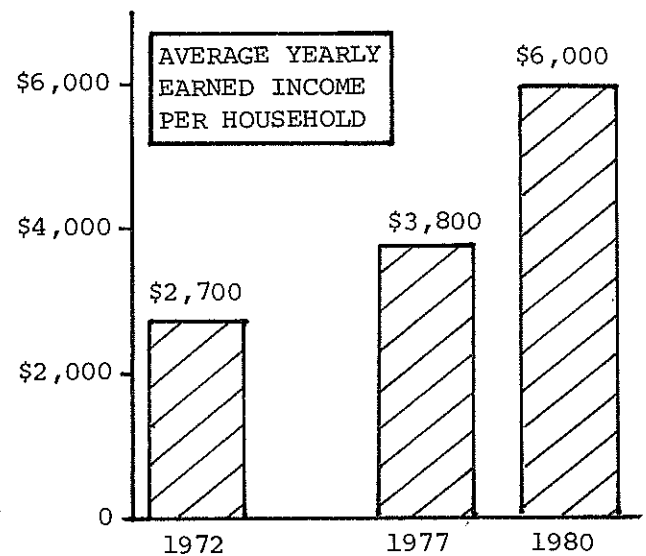
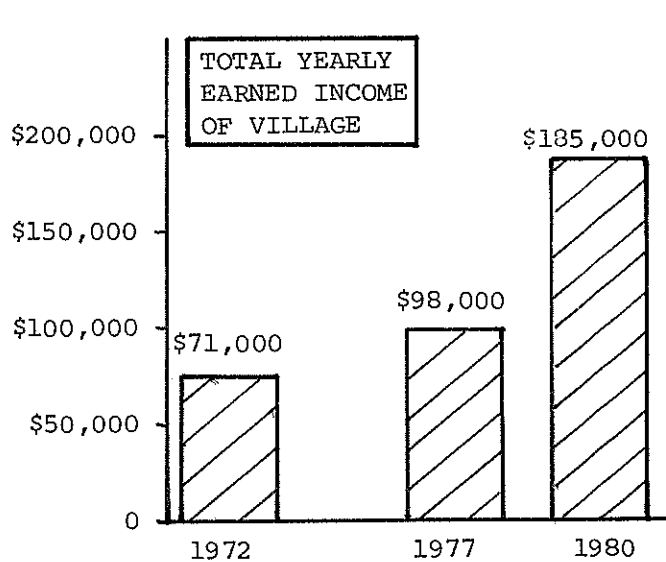
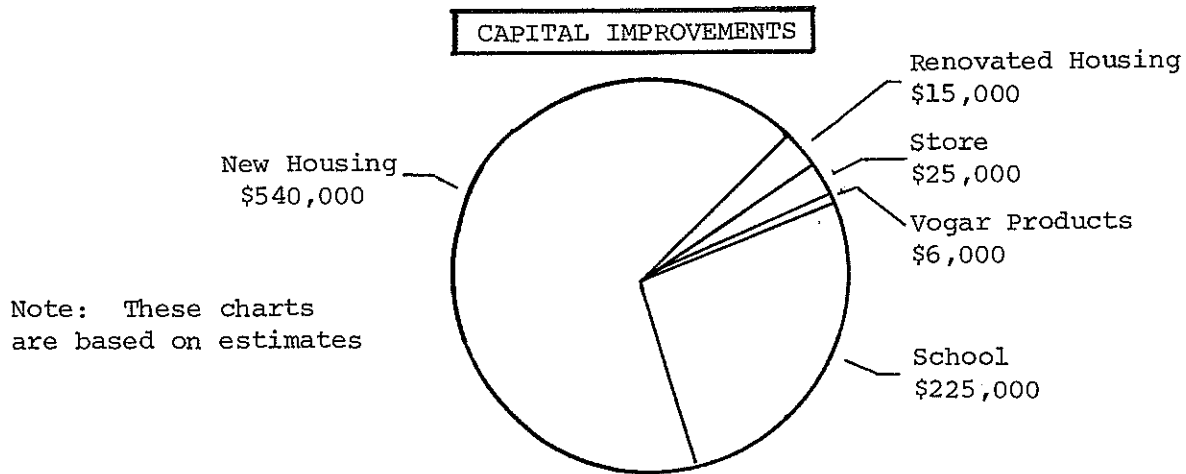
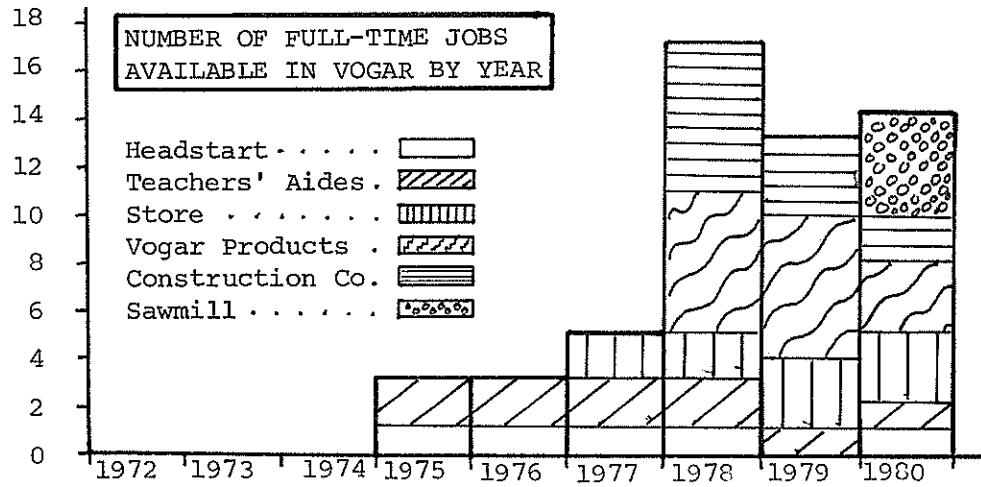


ship misunderstanding and management difficulties have reduced the size of the operation. While transition is being made to single ownership, the company continues to employ two men and accept renovation contracts. In January, 1979, three families became involved exploring further business opportunities. One resident was convinced that a custom milling service would be profitable. Another felt that he could operate a successful truck and front loader service and the third decided to research the feasibility of a community laundromat. The development of their proposals involved these men many evenings for several months. They implemented market studies, prepared budgets and cash flows, and secured estimates for equipment costs. Of the three requests submitted to government funding agencies, all received initial approval and Murphy's Mill received final approval. Murphy's Mill began operation with four men in December, 1979, clearing timber for later milling. The new sawmill arrived in early spring and was immediately put into service. People of Vogar are now able to contemplate new business ventures, knowing that the technical and financial resources needed to launch an industry are available to them and that they themselves have the initiative and resourcefulness to make them succeed.

#### EXPANDED GROCERY STORE

In 1977 people in Vogar traveled forty kilometers to Ashern or Eriksdale for full line grocery service. Since Johnson's store in Vogar only supplied some basic staples and snack foods, many people felt that a full line grocery store was needed. In October, 1977, using private funds secured on loan, a lease was arranged with Johnson's store, interior renovations including new shelves and flooring were completed, a full line inventory was purchased and two employees were hired and trained. The Vogar Community Store ribbon-cutting ceremony was held soon after. Several months later a freezer and display cooler were purchased. The viability of the store was quickly demonstrated when the monthly sales increased to over \$8000. With the financial assistance of government agencies, a family in Vogar arranged for the purchase of the property and business. In late fall of 1978, Vogar Community Store became R & L Groceries. The facility was remodeled and pool tables and a snack bar set up in the back room. A few months later, a garage for automotive service and repairs was opened in the building behind the store. Before too long, R & L Groceries, Poolhall and Garage had become an essential part of the Vogar Community and an indication of the people's intent to become self-sufficient.

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT





VOGAR  
CONSTRUCTION  
COMPANY

GENERAL STORE



## B. TOWARD HUMAN SELF-CONFIDENCE

INTENT: The intent of the villagers of Vogar during the years 1977-1980 was to develop self-confidence by furthering the operational unity and social cohesion of the community. This was achieved through the engagement of citizens in community projects, upgraded public facilities and a re-articulated village identity.

CONTRADICTIONS: All underlying contradictions identified in the Consultation Summary Statement have an effect on the human dynamic of development. Those in Vogar which seem to have the most direct relation on the human dynamic had to do with the fragmented forms of community decision making and operations, the insufficient care of village property, the aimless design of public space, and the sense of collapsed cultural identity.

INDICATORS: Among the many indicators of rapid human development, the following four have been selected as representative:

1. Eighteen new homes were built in the community through the Manitoba Metis Federation housing program. Driveways were constructed, culverts installed and regular upkeep and landscaping undertaken.
2. A Canada Works Corps program was established which over two years constructed one half mile of concrete sidewalk, rennovated the community hall, cleared and fenced an eight acre park area, and cleared and brushed public areas in the community.
3. Signs have been placed throughout the community identifying family homes, businesses and public facilities. Village drainage was substantially improved through the installation of more than twenty new culverts.
4. Community volunteers have organised youth programs, sports events, and community-wide social activites. Volunteer efforts have also assisted the elders of the community and provided for the upkeep of village property.

## MODERN HOUSING

Perhaps one of the most significant recent developments in many Metis communities has been the implementation of government housing programs. This has meant that small log cabins without plumbing, adequate insulation, and proper heating systems are being replaced by modern homes purchased through a mortgage assistance program. Vogar is an example of a community that has benefited dramatically because of the MMF housing programs. Almost every home in the village has been renovated through the Critical Home Repair Program or is a newly constructed modern house. The cost to the families of the first ten houses was greatly reduced through a Manpower grant that provided locally milled lumber and a local construction crew. These homes were completed in September, 1977. An additional eight houses have been built since then, making a total of eighteen new houses in the village. Every family has done landscaping work which has included planting grass and flowers, trash and rubble pickup, brushing and fencing. Three of the families have built side-walks. In addition to building the houses, driveways were constructed, culverts installed, and regular maintenance implemented through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation program. The pride that residents have in their new homes is reflected in the careful upkeep of the property by the majority of the families. The housing has had a significant impact on community lifestyles. Larger homes have allowed more private space. The twenty-one new water wells mean that all residents now have easy access to safe drinking water. Running water has led to better hygiene and a reduced incidence of skin disease. Heating systems have meant that families can now leave their homes without fear of the house either freezing or catching fire. Families have taken pride in their homes through buying additional furniture and decorations.

## CANADA WORKS PROGRAM

Short term work programs have been utilised fully by the community of Vogar to accomplish major environmental and beautification tasks. These programs also made available a significant number of jobs in a time of high unemployment. The Canada Works Program employed ten persons in the winter of 1978 and twelve persons in 1979. The Young Canada Works Program provided employment for six students in 1978 and for nine in 1979. After community residents had listed needed village improvements, the project proposals were prepared and submitted under the sponsorship of the local MMF, and represented some of the largest Canada Works allocations in the region. Once approved, the grants were administered and managed by Vogar residents. Two of the people employed worked as teachers aides, while the rest formed a public works crew. The most dramatic project implemented was the construction of a half mile of cement sidewalk that visually unifies the village and marks Vogar as a "community on the move". The work corps also undertook the renovation of the forty year old community hall. They poured a new foundation, resingled the

roof and insulated and painted the entire building. The community had for many years desired a park with sports grounds, a picnic area, and a parking lot. An eight acre site behind the school had been designated for the park and the Canada Works crew began clearing the land and removing tree stumps and rocks in preparation for discing and seeding. The whole park area was then fenced. Other accomplishments of this group include: insulation of the church; brushing the area surrounding the church and community hall; clearing and restoring the cemetery site; constructing a new dressing room at the hockey rink; and fencing the garbage dump and the church/hall area.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL CARE

The placement of driveways for the new houses seriously disrupted drainage patterns along the village road resulting in flooding and large pools of standing water throughout the community. Over the last two years, village residents met with the municipal Councillor and with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) officers to discuss a solution to this problem. As a result of these discussions, culverts were installed or replaced along the east side of the road and at each new driveway on the westside. Further discussions with the municipal Councillor led to utilising the services of the dog catcher and the grading and clearing the entryway to the garbage dump. Self-conscious effort was placed on the total care of the village environment and through volunteer work efforts a visible community began to emerge. The name of each family was painted on a tire and staked into the ground at the entryway of each household. This symbol of identity was later selected by the women of Vogar Products to become part of their company logo. A large Vogar entry sign was constructed at the highway junction and each new business location was identified by a sign. A village directory map, locating every home, business and public facility was displayed at the newly constructed bus stop. All of the old homes left vacant by the relocation into the new housing were torn down and removed or renovated for alternate use. Villagers display a growing sense of pride at the signs of care that are maintained in the community and visitors who knew Vogar before have remarked on the improvement in village appearance.

#### VOLUNTEER EFFORTS

Taking a leadership position in any community intensifies the criticism, attacks, and responsibilities that one must face. This is even more true in a community like Vogar which does not have a history of strong community cohesion and leadership skills. Short term public works employment has in the past discouraged community involvement and set up an unrealistic pattern of paid sports supervision and public facility care. During the last several years Vogar has been reminded dramatically that successful community necessarily requires volunteered responsibilities and leadership efforts. Volunteer effort first focused on enabling sports and social events. Adults supervised youth at

dances, gym nights, and movie shows. They also organised the hockey and baseball teams, set up the sports day, and held fund raising raffles for community projects. People soon began to see the need for volunteer effort in other arenas. Equipment for community projects was lent and cared for and the grass at the hall and church yards and cemetery sites was mowed long before student summer programs began. Families have assisted senior citizens with water and wood supplies and with filling out forms and applications. In a community where civic pride and responsibility were not generally held values, significant examples of continued involvement and new participation have sustained and motivated care for the community.

# VOGAR

-  Business
-  New Houses
-  Renovated Houses
-  Public Facility
-  New Well
-  Sidewalk
-  New Fencing

Scale: 1 cm = 200 ft.

Cemetery

Hall

Church

Store

Cemetery

Park

School

Rink

Dump

Cemetery







NEW  
HOUSING





RENNOVATED  
COMMUNITY HALL



DRAINAGE DITCHES



HOME IMPROVEMENT

### C. TOWARD SOCIAL SELF-RELIANCE

INTENT: The intent of the villagers of Vogar was to move toward a new self-reliance in their village as a place of human community through structured village care provided by local services. This is being achieved by building and maintaining village housing, upgrading the physical environment, and providing on-the-job skills and management training.

CONTRADICTIONS: Although all underlying contradictions affect to a greater or lesser degree every area of village development, those which appear most directly related to the social dynamic had to do with limited facilities for community recreation and youth activities, haphazard use of external resources and services, and insufficient formal and practical education.

INDICATORS: Among the many indicators of rapid human development, the following three have been selected as representative:

1. Four small businesses are now owned and operated by Vogar residents. They maintain financial books, make management decisions, and plan and implement business decisions. In addition several men have developed basic business plans in preparing proposals for start up capital.
2. In the past three years sports teams have outfitted themselves and have received coaching on a regular basis. The new gym has provided opportunities for indoor winter sports. The community held its Sports Day, inviting other communities to compete in a baseball tournament.
3. Vogar residents have established working relationships with outside funding and advisory resources. They have met with school trustees, the municipal councillor, Manpower officials, the CMHC officer, and various other business consultants.

## MANAGEMENT TRAINING

Many of the recent activities and accomplishments in Vogar represent new experiences for the residents. In the midst of rapid economic development it became evident that very few people had received training or experience in accounting practices, making business decisions, management methods or preparing market studies or funding requests. It was essential for the sustained success and growth of the new businesses that the resident managers acquire these skills. The most common and effective way to implement business training was through a series of "on-the-job" and "first hand" experiences. At Vogar Products the Board of Directors learned to conduct business and planning meetings and to facilitate group decision making skills. The eight to ten families who have been involved directly in business research have become familiar with profitability requirements, market studies methods, and requirements for funding. All four business managers have, through responsibility for their own financial affairs, become proficient in maintaining reliable records and assisting the preparation of financial statements. In addition to this practical experience, several management seminars and consultations were held to clarify the requirements of ownership, the dynamics of cash flow and procedures for completing various forms. The comprehensive nature of the planning method and the complexity of community development issues required that leadership in the village become practised in detailed planning procedures and the step-by-step implementation of their plans. At leadership meetings, exposure and practise with reporting formats, brainstorming and gestalting procedures, chart building and writing methods was emphasised. Consequently meetings became more purposeful and participatory. Finally, because Vogar was visited by many people and because Vogar people made use of many outside resources to assist their development efforts, the presentation skills of a number of residents improved greatly. All of this training and experience proved to have not only practical benefits but also to instill a sense of competence and self-confidence in the leadership that carried over to other aspects of village life.

## RECREATION

In any small rural community recreational and leisure time opportunities are primarily those the community creates for itself. However, for many years Vogar did not have the facilities or adequate equipment to organise and sustain such opportunities. The people saw no way to overcome these obstacles until a group of parents decided to organise and manage a boys' hockey team. Eleven boys formed the Vogar Bobcats, and with the help of the parents' group were outfitted and participated in several regional tournaments. The new school was equipped with a gymnasium which made indoor sports available to the community for the first time. During the spring twenty to thirty youth used the gym regularly for volleyball and floor hockey games. The Voyageurs, the com-

munity youth group, sold refreshments during the games to raise money for the purchase of sports equipment for the gym. The adult residents of Vogar also became active in organising community sports events. A men's baseball team was created and outfitted. A recreation committee sponsored a community Sports Day that attracted regional baseball teams and held many small raffles to raise money for Vogar activities. In addition to sports, movies, socials, and talent nights gave people a chance to get together with their neighbours at the community hall and often young and old would dance the traditional Metis jigs into the early morning. With the opening of the R & L Pool Hall and snack bar, adults, youth, and children had a place to gather, talk, and enjoy games of pool during the long winter nights. In addition to fostering community cohesion, these types of recreational events allowed residents to grasp a growing sense of responsibility for the total life of the village.

#### EXTERNAL RESOURCES

Too often the Metis communities of Manitoba are not aware of or don't make use of the wide range of resources, both public and private, that are normally available to any community. With the development of locally owned small businesses in Vogar, owners established new relationships with lawyers, accountants, bankers and business advisors. Those involved with funding requests became familiar with government funding structures and procedures. The community was represented for the first time at the Metis Womens' Association annual meeting in April, 1978 and Vogar residents have participated in workshops and meetings in and out of Vogar with the school trustee, the municipal councillor, Manpower officials, the CMHC officer, and business consultants. More informally, encounters with media people and with visitors to the community, including two residents of the Cannonball Human Development Project in North Dakota, Canada World youth teams from Bolivia and Malaysia and campaigning politicians, have been occasions for depth dialogue. In addition to visitors into the village, community members have traveled to the Lorne project in New Brunswick and to the Fifth City project in Chicago. The rapid development of Vogar was noted by the Western Interlake Planning Group, and Vogar was selected as one of three settlements to be involved in land use planning. By establishing links with public and private support networks, Vogar has assured its access to the resources required for sustained development.



VOGAR BOBCATS



MANAGEMENT TRAINING



COMMUNITY DANCE







VOGAR  
P R O D U C T S

