

The History of 1JustCity

2010–2022

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BACKGROUND

Throughout most of the 20th century, the United Church of Canada initiated and financially supported a great deal of outreach and social justice work across Canada, including here in Winnipeg. By early 2000, most of the mission funds allocated to our region of Canada were being used to sustain five Winnipeg ministries: Northend Stella Community Ministry, Oak Table Community Ministry, Rainbow Ministry, St. Matthew's Maryland Community Ministry, and West Broadway Community Ministry. Some of these outreach organizations operated under ecumenical or interfaith boards, but all were very dependent on the United Church for their core funding. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, it became clear that the church funds were seriously diminishing and the future of these outreach groups was seriously at risk.

THE BEGINNING: 1HOPE WINNIPEG

In 2009, a small group of supporters out of Winnipeg Presbytery were fearful that all the ministries were in serious jeopardy and they began to discuss options to ensure future viability. Each of the 5 ministries were different — serving different communities, offering some similar (but many different) programs, and facing different challenges. The group quickly recognized that any initiative involving structural change required involvement and participation by the members of the 5 Ministry Boards. Representatives from the Presbytery and the 5 boards met to begin imagining an initiative where they could all work together and find a way forward. As such, 1Hope Winnipeg was born. The organization obtained small grants from various church sources, and 1Hope Winnipeg launched with a flash mob in downtown Winnipeg on October 28th, 2010.

Initially, 1Hope Winnipeg was understood to be:

- A fundraising and promotional committee supporting the 5 community ministries of Winnipeg Presbytery,
- Accountable to Winnipeg Presbytery,
- And responsible for campaigns allowing people to contribute money and /or time as deemed necessary by the community ministries.



A Steering Committee was established with representatives from Winnipeg Presbytery and the 5 ministries. This began a long journey, working towards a shared understanding of what this new initiative might mean for each ministry. Initially, everyone was interested in assistance and support for fund development. For some, the interest in working together ended there, while others had a vision of eventually being able to share staff, especially for administrative tasks. A few imagined an umbrella organization that would take over governance responsibilities. For several years, it felt as though for every 1 or 2 steps forward, they took at least one step back.

In early 2013, the following mission statement was created:

1Hope Winnipeg represents a group of non-profit organizations, initiated through Winnipeg Presbytery of the United Church of Canada, working together towards a brighter future by connecting with, supporting, and empowering the most disenfranchised people in our city.

Church Development Inc. (CDI), a separate investment and granting organization within Winnipeg Presbytery, expressed interest in contributing 3 years of funding toward hiring a part-time staff member with the goal of enabling 1Hope Winnipeg to expand their fundraising to a sustainable level.

After a year and a half of work and negotiations between the Steering Committee, the Presbytery, the 5 ministries, and the CDI, they came to an agreement about business plans, position descriptions, and the authority and accountability of the various groups in regards to staff and communication.

In August 2014, Tessa Blaikie was hired as 1Hope Winnipeg Fund Developer, accountable to the 1Hope Winnipeg Steering Committee but considered Presbytery staff, and supervised by the United Church Conference. That same summer, they discovered that the name 1Hope Winnipeg had never been trademarked and another organization had a stronger claim to it.



1JUSTCITY EVOLVES

In January 2015, the organization's name was changed to 1JustCity. Over the following year, the Steering Committee and the 5 ministries discussed and developed new vision and mission statements and approved a constitution in early 2016.

Mission: 1JustCity's mission is to strengthen, sustain, and catalyze social justice work in Winnipeg through the financial support of its member charities.

Vision: 1JustCity works towards a city that is founded on justice, where all are heard, all are welcome, all are cared for, all are celebrated, and all are working together toward an even better Winnipeg.

All partners agreed that fund development was the most urgent priority, although some continued to hold a wider vision for sharing responsibilities and resources under the 1JustCity umbrella. 1JustCity contracted the Mikuska Group to provide support and mentoring for fund development. In May of 2016, Karen Lumley was appointed as Chair.

By the summer of 2016, Rainbow Ministry closed down and 1JustCity was left with 4 partners. The remaining Board members developed a strategic plan for their new goals and action plans.

The winter of 2017 saw two very significant changes in the life and focus of 1JustCity. The organization partnered with Augustine United Church to create Just a Warm Sleep (JAWS), an emergency overnight warming shelter for nights when the temperatures hit below -10 Celsius between January and March. In addition, Northend Stella Community Ministry requested that, due to a serious decline in their volunteer leadership resources, their organization be integrated under the umbrella of 1JustCity effective June 30, 2017. This request was conditional on 1JustCity's commitment to hiring Indigenous staff members to lead, support, and work with Indigenous peoples and communities.



To prepare for this transition and with the assistance of local Indigenous leaders, Northend Stella planned an Action for Reconciliation Planning Day for the 1JustCity Board. The organization discussed the final details of an Indigenous Cultural Program in the Legacy of Northend Stella Community Ministry with the United Church Conference in the fall of 2017. An Indigenous Cultural Programmer was hired in April of 2018.

In the spring of 2017, work began on the incorporation of 1JustCity, which was approved that July. That same summer, the Board of St. Matthews Maryland Community Ministry, also facing a shortage of volunteer leadership, asked 1JustCity to consider taking over the governance of their ministry starting in January 2018. They began to prepare a service agreement which outlined how the ministry would function under 1JustCity. This took longer than anticipated but in May of 2018, Winnipeg Presbytery transferred St. Matthew's Maryland Community Ministry's governance to 1JustCity, effective July 1, 2018.

1JustCity was granted charitable status in February of 2018.

At that point in time, the ministries discussed again the long-term prospect of operating under 1JustCity's umbrella. They confirmed that all ministries would continue to work together, and 1JustCity would continue to support them financially. With no timeline set in stone, each ministry would decide if, when, and how they would be ready to make the transition under 1JustCity's operations.

In April of 2018, 1JustCity's Fund Development position changed to an Executive Director position with major fund development responsibilities. Tessa Blaikie Whitecloud became the first Executive Director of 1JustCity, and they held the first AGM of the incorporated organization on May 9, 2018. A primary focus through the spring and summer of 2018 involved establishing 1JustCity's administrative structure (including banking and payroll, bookkeeping, insurance, etc.) to finalize the transfer of responsibilities for finances and personnel from the United Church to 1JustCity. Karen Lumley resigned from her position as Chair in November 2018, and Jocelyne Nicolas was appointed the new Chair on December 1 of the same year.



In the winter of 2019, 1JustCity began working to move from an operational board to a governance board. Mikuska Group held training workshops to help ease the transition. In March, the lead staff of 1JustCity's partner charities who were not under the governance of 1JustCity were made ex-officio members of the 1JustCity Board. That same month, 1JustCity established a Policy Working Group to develop policies for approval by the Board.

In the late fall of 2019, West Broadway completed a visioning process and wanted to explore and negotiate the possibility of moving their governance to 1JustCity. Both Boards established Transition Committees and met with the assistance of external consultants.

By early winter of 2020, the 1JustCity Board began discussing the complexity of the growing organization as relationships with and amongst the member charities changed and the donor base expanded. Publicity often focused on the commonalities, while internal communication needed to work on respecting and honouring the differences. They concluded that as the organization grows and changes, it is important to respect, nurture, and support the historical relationships while working on outreach and involving the secular community. During this time, Indigenous Cultural Programming and staff increased at all sites.

COVID arrived in the spring of 2020. To adhere to the restrictions and shutdowns, 1JustCity shifted focus and found new ways to meet the communities' basic needs while working to keep them as safe as possible.

Networking between organizations doing similar work expanded greatly, meetings moved to Zoom, public health restrictions controlled the amount of indoor programming, and outdoor options were created when and where possible.

Meanwhile, the Transition Committees of West Broadway and 1JustCity continued to work together to seek an agreement on the question of membership in 1JustCity. The goal was to retain the involvement of West Broadway's original and supporting denominations while ensuring the size and diversity of the total membership of 1JustCity would be both manageable and sufficient to maintain accountability of the Board to the vision of the organization.



That fall, the 1JustCity Board began discussing succession planning and worked on developing new bylaws based on the discussions with West Broadway and the recognition of the increasing complexity of the organization.

On February 2, 2021, West Broadway Community Services Inc. dissolved their Board of Directors and the final West Broadway AGM was held on March 14, 2021.

The spring of 2021 brought many changes to 1JustCity. COVID vaccinations became widely available, and Oak Table moved into their new space (which had been under construction for months). Oak Table continued to have its own Board and governance structure. Oak Table and 1JustCity agreed to develop a Memorandum of Understanding to confirm the partner relationship between the two organizations, as the new bylaws didn't accurately reflect their relationship.

At 1JustCity's AGM of June 2, 2021, the new bylaws were approved and Gail Purcell was appointed as the new Chair.

Fall of 2021 brought even more changes. In September, the St. Matthews Maryland site changed their name to the West End Drop-In site, while continuing to be known as St. Matthews Maryland Community Ministry in writing to donors and to the church community. The West Broadway site decided to change their hours to late afternoon and start serving dinner instead of lunch.

In October, Tessa Blaikie Whitecloud resigned as Executive Director effective November 4, 2021. Glynis Quinn became the Interim Executive Director while the Board underwent a visioning and planning process. Former Board Chair, Jocelyne Nicolas successfully applied for pro-bono work from the Summit Group to assist with the Executive Director search process, and 1JustCity established a Search Committee.



In March 2022, the Board and staff participated in a short-term strategic plan using the PATH model. This plan identified three areas to focus on over the next two to three years. The three areas identified were:

- Expansion Possibilities for 1JustCity, including hours, services and supports, education and activities for our guests.
- Strengthening 1JustCity Through Understanding Our Story – Connecting to Ourselves by knowing who we are and what we do; making data informed decisions; determining what we need and have appropriate funding, and developing internal structures, processes, and language while honouring the independence and uniqueness of each site based on community needs.
- Building Expansion Platform for Broader Community including advocacy, education of the broader community, building awareness of 1JustCity, and assuring sustainable funding.

And so, the story continues...