
JACK HINTON, SISTER MACNAMARA AND ROSSBROOK HOUSE

Community Engagement

*Written by John Burchill, President
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Inspector John (Jack) Hinton #89 was born in Winnipeg on November 28, 1921. He grew up in West Kildonan and attended Centennial School (which also operated as a high school until West Kildonan Collegiate was built in 1954).

Jack's schooling was interrupted by World War II when he enlisted with the Canadian Active Service Force (CASF) at 17, joining the Royal Canadian Artillery on September 1, 1939. Originally trained as a Gunner, he was promoted to Bombardier and then to Lance Sergeant at 18. During the war, he was stationed in England, France, Italy (Sicily), Holland and Germany. After serving his country for 5½ years, Jack was honourably discharged on July 20, 1945, holding the rank of Battery Sergeant Major.

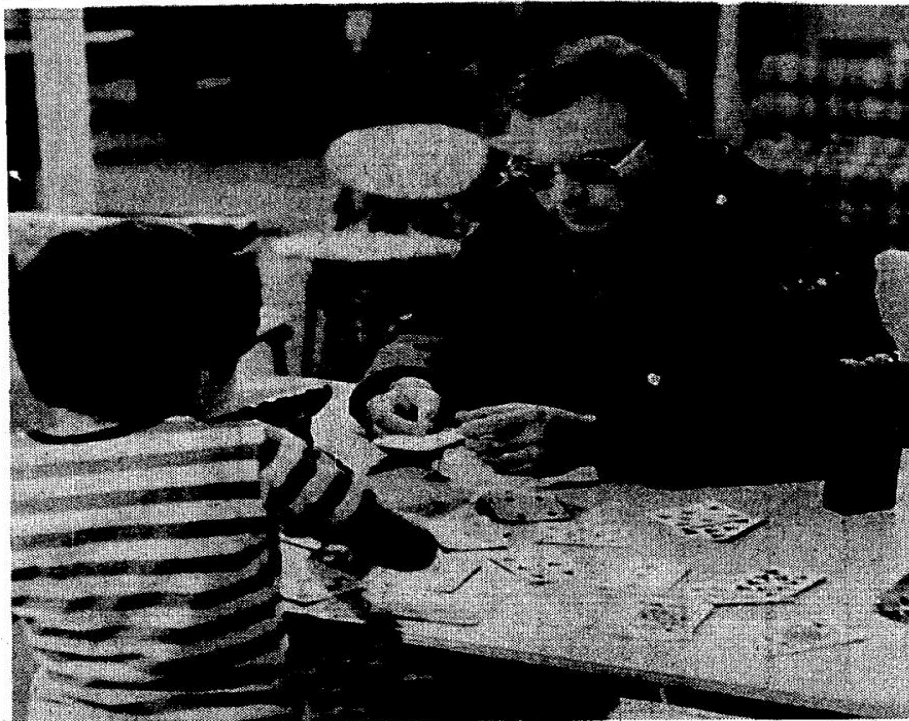
After his discharge, Jack applied to the Winnipeg Police, and he was hired on November 12, 1945, graduating from Recruit Class #4. Jack was promoted to Detective in 1952; Detective Sergeant in 1961; Sergeant in 1971, and on November 15, 1975, he was promoted to Inspector. Jack retired on May 2, 1981, after serving the citizens of Winnipeg for 36 years.

During his policing career, Jack worked in various divisions, including Fraud, Robbery/Homicide and Personnel, to name a few. When he was promoted to Inspector, his last few years were spent establishing the Community Relations Unit. The Police Expo, Block Parent Program and his involvement in *Rossbrook House* were some of his proudest accomplishments. In 1981, Jack received the Community Service Award from the City of Winnipeg and The Good Servant Award from the Canadian Council of Christians and Jews for his outstanding contribution to the community. Following his retirement, Jack served for a period of time as a Magistrate for the Province of Manitoba. He passed away on April 29, 2002, at the age of 80.

In November 1975 the first Community Relations Unit was created under Chief Norm Stewart to enhance police communication with members of the public and the media. As the department's first "Community Relations Officer," Hinton reported directly to the Chief of Police. His objective was to "*promote and maintain better citizen understanding of the police officer's role, stressing involvement with community groups, youth, ethnic and native groups, as well as the*

development of crime prevention programs. He is the department's liaison with the media, distributing information on such things as the police expo and other crime prevention matters. Within the department, his function is to encourage the understanding and importance of good community relations and service to the public, seeing that positive attitudes in these areas are established in our training programs”.

Several excellent programs, such as Block Parent and Operation Affirmative Action, were implemented. The primary objective of Operation Affirmative Action was to establish stronger connections with local community organizations, cultural centers, and religious institutions to engage the public and build trust with underrepresented communities. The concept of “neighbourhood” policing aimed to move away from traditional law enforcement approaches and focus on proactive problem-solving strategies to address crime and social issues.



— Photo by Dave Bonner
Winnipeg police Constable Ian Mann isn't goofing off. Playing cards with a child in the Rossbrook House juvenile drop-in centre at Sherbrook Street and Elgin Avenue is a part of the police department's successful affirmative action program designed to battle crime in the city's core area. The program has worked because it involves police on the beat becoming familiar and friendly with local people. See story on page 3.

Winnipeg Free Press, November 17, 1977

However, the unit was hampered by a lack of manpower and was unable to keep up with public demand. As such, in June 1981, the new Chief of Police, Ken Johnston, proposed to expand Community Relations into a 20-man unit, which called for adding ten more officers to the police department. In addition to these officers, the unit would take in five officers from the School Patrol Unit, previously working in the Traffic Division, and three officers from the School Liaison Unit, formerly with the Juvenile Division. These officers would continue their functions within the school system under the new Community Relations/Crime Prevention Unit.

Staff Sergeant Cal Hughes headed the expanded unit, and although for reasons of practicality, the manpower was divided into two groups, Crime Prevention and School Resources.

Today, community outreach and engagement remain one of [the strategic directions](#) for the Winnipeg Police Service in building stronger, healthier and safer communities. The Community Support Division and Community Support Units continue to carry on Hinton's work by actively engaging with citizens, providing meaningful support to individuals and connectivity with community groups and organizations.

Personal interactions between police officers and community members build mutual trust, essential to addressing neighbourhood problems and reducing crime. By actively partnering in community-based initiatives and consulting with diverse communities, the Service promotes community well-being, safety and crime prevention awareness.



[Sister Geraldine MacNamara](#) (“**Sister Mac**”) was born in Toronto on July 29, 1938. She grew up in Winnipeg, graduating from St. Mary’s Academy. She then attended the University of Manitoba, receiving degrees in Arts (1959) and Education (1965). She entered the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary in 1962 and took her vows in 1967. For ten years, she taught in Catholic schools at Flin Flon, Winnipeg, and St. Boniface, later attending the University of Manitoba Law School and receiving a law degree in 1974. In 1976, Sister Mac established Rossbrook House and served as its director until shortly before her death on February 20, 1984. In recognition of her community service, she was inducted into the Order of Canada in 1983.

Like Jack Hinton, Sister Mac had a vision for positive change and, through Rossbrook House, she touched the lives of countless individuals. The story of Rossbrook House begins with Sister Mac’s unwavering dedication to improving the lives of disadvantaged youth in Winnipeg. While articling with Legal Aid Manitoba, she was deeply concerned by the plight of inner-city youth she encountered who were vulnerable to negative influences and lacked supportive environments, dreamt of creating a safe and nurturing space for them. In 1976, with the support of the Catholic Church and private donors, Sister MacNamara’s dream became a reality when Rossbrook House officially opened its doors in the former United Church building at the corner of Ross and Sherbrook streets.

In her biography, “[Gem: The Life of Sister Mac](#),” she considered “*perhaps her biggest coup was convincing John (Jack) Hinton of the Winnipeg Police Force to be its first president*” (page 67).

[Rossbrook House](#) first opened as a drop-in center, providing a safe haven for children and teenagers facing difficult circumstances such as poverty, homelessness, and family issues. The center’s non-judgmental and inclusive approach allowed young people from diverse backgrounds to come together, forming a supportive community that transcended social and economic barriers.

As Rossbrook House gained recognition within the community, it attracted a growing number of volunteers and staff members dedicated to making a positive impact on the lives of Winnipeg’s youth. Sister Mac’s vision and leadership were instrumental in fostering an environment of trust and respect where young individuals felt valued and empowered to make positive choices.

Rossbrook House expanded its services and programs to meet the needs of the community it served. Educational support programs were established to help youth with their studies, promoting academic achievement and encouraging a sense of purpose and direction. At the request of the Winnipeg School Division, an alternative Junior High program was started in 1977. Today there are three off-campus school programs

- elementary program, Wi Wabigooni;
- junior high program, Eagles' Circle; and,
- high school program, Rising Sun.

Each of these off-campus school programs has a comfortable and informal atmosphere. The students work at their own pace and experience success along the way. The program includes Indigenous Perspectives integrated into their curricular areas.

Additionally, recreational activities, arts programs, and leadership initiatives were introduced, offering a range of opportunities for personal growth and development. The expansion of Rossbrook House also involved collaborations with other community organizations and government agencies. These partnerships allowed the center to access additional resources and funding, enabling them to extend their reach and support even more at-risk youth.

Rossbrook House has undoubtedly left an indelible mark on the lives of countless young individuals in Winnipeg. Through its various programs and activities, the center has helped many youths discover their potential, overcome challenges, and build essential life skills.

The safe and inclusive environment at Rossbrook House has prevented many young people from falling into a life of crime, drugs, and gang involvement. The center has acted as a second home for many by providing a supportive community, offering stability and love where it was previously lacking.

As early as 1977, the importance of Rossbrook House to the community in preventing crime was highlighted during the first-ever [National Conference on Diversion in Quebec City](#). The report noted that Rossbrook was located in the inner core of Winnipeg, serving a largely indigenous neighbourhood that was predominantly from a lower socio-economic background that included:

- a truancy rate of 30%;
- chronic long-term unemployment, regardless of prevailing economic conditions;
- housing stock that is inadequate in both quality and quantity;
- relatively high levels of criminal behaviour, both adult and juvenile;
- abuse of solvents, alcohol, and soft drugs;
- a bloated, fragmented social service delivery system;
- sporadic interventions by departments and agencies representing all three levels of government.

Even at this early stage, the report concluded that while there may be problems, even tragedies, in an undertaking such as Rossbrook House, there was promise, too. Rossbrook offered one example of how those personal resources, developed and directed, gave hope to the individual and to the society in which we live.

Rossbrook House's success stories are numerous, with countless alumni attributing their personal growth and achievements to the positive influence of the center. Many former visitors have become successful professionals, contributing positively to society and giving back to their communities.

Today, Rossbrook House stands as a testament to the power of one person's vision and determination to bring about positive change in the lives of others. Sister Geraldine MacNamara's unwavering commitment to Winnipeg's youth has led to the creation of a place that continues to inspire hope and transform lives where ... *"no child who does not want to be alone should ever have to be."*

Since Jack Hinton first sat on the board of Rossbrook House in 1976, members of the Winnipeg Police have continuously and without interruption volunteered to sit on the board since that time. This year Rossbrook House welcomed Staff Sergeant Phil Trudeau #2157 to the board. The others who have served over the past 47 years years include: ⁱ

Inspector Calvin Hughes #72
Superintendent John DeGroot #207
Inspector Gary Walker #719
Constable John Campbell #813
Staff Sergeant Boyd Campbell #848

Constable Randy James #1065
Superintendent Bill Fogg #1344
Superintendent Bruce Ormiston #1429
Constable Tammy Skrabek #1826
Deputy Chief Scot Halley #1856

Chief of Staff John Burchill #S1140



ⁱ Although I have only mentioned the police members, the composition of the board has crossed the spectrum from business and community leaders to judges, university professors, school teachers, politicians, justice officials, lawyers, and the current [Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba](#).