



WINNIPEG POLICE SERVICE



The Province of Manitoba came into existence in 1870. A small provincial police force was formed at the time, headquartered in the village of Winnipeg at the junction of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers.

On November 8, 1873, the province of Manitoba passed the City of Winnipeg Act, with 1874 set as the official beginning for the capital of Manitoba.



The Winnipeg Police Force came into existence on February 23, 1874, and originally consisted of one chief constable, Ingram, a former member of the provincial police. On March 16, 1874, two additional constables were appointed.

In 1875 constable David B. Murray replaced Ingram as Chief of Police. Chief Murray worked hard to improve the police department and managed to get a small increase in manpower with the addition of two more constables to bring the force to five. He was also responsible for drawing up the first Rules and Regulations in 1876. As a result of a building boom, the size of the department increased to more than 30 officers in 1882. However, the officers worked 12 hours a day, 7 days a week, so turnover was a problem.

In 1883 a city police station and courthouse were built at James Avenue and King Street. This station served as police headquarters for the next twenty-five years. The similarly styled Mandarin Building now occupies this location.

In 1887 Sergeant John C. McRae replaced Murray as Chief of Police. When McRae took over morale was low as a result of cutbacks to the department. However, McRae, who started with the force in 1881 was a well-respected leader and guided the department until 1911. During this time the city grew to almost 120,000 people and the department increased to 108 members. A new police station was built on Rupert Avenue in 1908 and two subdivisions were opened in Fort Rouge and the North End in 1911.

Chief McRae was also responsible for other advancements in the department including the purchase of the first car in 1906, motorcycles in 1910, and a police signal system that became operational in 1913.

Donald MacPherson was appointed Chief of Police in 1911 to replace McRae. MacPherson continued to modernize the department and was responsible for establishing the first police training academy or school of instruction in 1912. He also arranged for the purchase of the first motorized ambulance and a patrol wagon in 1913.

From 1914 to 1918 the First World War brought a heavy strain on the department with some 152 officers leaving to join the army, 29 of whom gave their lives in service of their country. Of the survivors, only 78 men returned to the department.

In December 1916 the department hired Mary Dunn as the first official “woman police constable”. She was assigned to the Morality Department and her duties were described as “aiding women in distress” and “wayward children”. A second female was appointed in January 1917 and for many years the department authorized only 2 female constables.

In 1919 as the soldiers were returning from the War, unemployment was high and working conditions for those with jobs were poor with long hours and low pay. A city-wide strike was called. While the police union said they would not go on strike, the Police Commission refused to deal with the members unless they resigned from the union and signed an oath of allegiance. Chief MacPherson called all members into his office on June 9 and 10. A total of 252 members refused to sign the oath of allegiance and were dismissed. Only 22 signed the oath, effectively wiping out the entire department.

The next day, June 11, 1919, the Police Commission instructed Chief MacPherson to take a leave of absence. He refused and was dismissed. One of the 22 members who signed the oath was the Deputy Chief Chris Newton, who was subsequently appointed Chief of Police.

City Council asked for government help and a number of members of the Royal North West Mounted Police were brought to the city and several local military units were ordered to assist the local government. In addition, the Council authorized hiring a number of “Special Constables” at \$2.00 a day. At one point there were 1,400 Specials employed and Council authorized an increase to 2,000 if necessary.

After the city-wide strike, most of the "dismissed" police officers were permitted to rejoin the police force if they were now willing to sign the oath and quit the union, although they were permitted from an “Athletic Association”, the forerunner to the Winnipeg Police Association.

Chief Newton continued to keep the Winnipeg Police Force at the forefront of new police technology with the introduction of the first radio-equipped patrol cars in Canada in 1930. Unfortunately, the Depression saw unemployment soar and even the employees of the City were in danger of losing jobs until an agreement was worked out where all employees would take a 10% pay cut in 1931 and a further 10% in 1932. In addition, no hiring was permitted. These conditions remained for a number of years.

Chief Newton was resigned in 1934 and was replaced by George Smith, who was the Deputy Chief at that time and previously had been the interim Chief of the provincial police in 1921.

Chief Smith retired in 1947 with over 42 years' service. He was awarded an MBE by King George in recognition of his valuable service. His replacement was Charles McIver who was the Deputy Chief at the time.

Chief McIver retired in 1953 and was succeeded by his Deputy, Robert Taft. Chief Taft had taken leave during the war to serve with the Canadian Provost Corps and was kept on active duty after the war to help organize the new German police forces.

In 1959 Chief Taft authorized the reorganization of the police record systems into a modern and efficient Central Registry. This year also saw the establishment of the first "999" Emergency Telephone System in North America. The calls for police, fire, ambulance and eventually the poison centre became the responsibility of the police to answer. By now the size of the force was over 400 men and women.

The last thing that Chief Taft fought for was a new police station to replace the ageing Rupert Avenue building as well as the two sub-stations. Plans for a new Public Safety Building at Princess and William were begun before Chief Taft retired in 1965.

In 1966 the new Public Safety Building (which included the provincial remand centre) was open under Chief George Blow. Chief Blow stayed at the helm until 1970 when he retired after 39 years of service. His replacement was Superintendent Norman Stewart who would guide the department during the amalgamation of all of the various municipalities surrounding Winnipeg into a single city. This came to be on January 1, 1972, when the official amalgamation of these 13 communities created the unified City of Winnipeg:

1. The Metropolitan Corporation of Greater Winnipeg
2. Rural Municipality of Charleswood
3. City of East Kildonan
4. Rural Municipality of Fort Garry
5. Rural Municipality of North Kildonan
6. Rural Municipality of Old Kildonan
7. City of St. Boniface
8. City of St. James-Assiniboia (formerly RM of Assiniboia, Village of Brooklands and City of St. James)
9. City of St. Vital
10. City of Transcona
11. Town of Tuxedo
12. City of West Kildonan
13. City of Winnipeg

Though officially joined in 1972, the total amalgamation of all areas and their respective civic departments was not completed until 1974.



With the amalgamation, the size of the force nearly doubled, with the authorized strength totalling 1091 – consisting of 921 officers and 171 staff (not including 35 Commissionaires doing parking patrol).

One of the big changes not only to the department but to the justice system occurred in 1977 when the Remand Centre at the Public Safety Building were turned over to the province to become. This change in responsibility provided additional manpower back to street patrol.

In 1981 Chief Stewart handed over command of the force to Superintendent Kenneth Johnson, then in charge of the Morality Division. Chief Johnston retired in 1984 and was followed by Superintendent Herb Stephen as the next Chief of Police.

In December 1989 the department began a number of changes in their appearance with the issue of dark blue shirts, pants with wide red stripes and red hatbands. Police vehicles also changed from the familiar ‘black & whites’ to white cars with blue doors and then to all-white cars with door crests and other markings.

Chief Stephen resigned in 1991 and the department went through a lengthy period without a Chief. Deputy Chiefs Lawrence Klippenstein and Joseph Gallagher both acted in a higher capacity during this time. The selection committee eventually selected a retired RCMP officer, Dale Henry, to head the department in 1992

Chief Henry was determined to change and improve the image of the department and successfully oversaw the accreditation of the department, making it only the second agency in Canada to achieve this certification. Two other changes during this period were the adoption of the motto “Community Commitment” and a change in the name to the Winnipeg Police “Service” in 1995.

Chief Henry retired in early 1996 and was replaced by David A. Cassells, a former Deputy Chief with the Edmonton Police Service. Cassells remained as Chief for just over two years, before he retired and was replaced by Deputy Chief Jack Ewatski.

Chief Ewatski oversaw the Winnipeg Police until he retired in 2007. His replacement was Keith McCaskill, a former Inspector with the Winnipeg Police who had been working with the Law Enforcement Services at Manitoba Justice. Chief McCaskill’s father had also been a Chief with the St. James-Assiniboia Police Department before amalgamation from 1970-1974.

In 2012 Devon Clunis became the first black police chief in Canada, rising through the ranks to Superintendent. Chief Clunis retired in 2016. His replacement, and the current Chief of the Winnipeg Police, is Danny Smyth.