



Response to Strategic Planning Insights

IJC EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM AND
STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

MARCH 2026

Looking Ahead Together

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM/STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

As part of our commitment to strategic planning, over the past several months, we have listened closely to staff, participants, partners, and board members through focus groups, interviews, and surveys. Your honesty, care, and commitment to IJC's mission shine through every page of the insights gathered. We want to begin by expressing our gratitude – your voices are shaping the future of this organization.

The feedback reflects an organization with deep strengths, a powerful sense of purpose, and a shared desire to grow thoughtfully and sustainably. It also highlights areas where we must continue to evolve. We welcome this. Growth requires reflection, and reflection requires courage – something our team demonstrates every day.



LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This report was produced on Indigenous lands where IJC works alongside Indigenous and non-Indigenous families, staff, and communities. Our offices are located on Treaty 1 territory – the original lands of the Anishinaabeg, Inineew, Anishineew, Dakota, and Dene Peoples, and the homeland of the Métis Nation.

Our History as Context:

IJC'S FAITH-BASED ROOTS

Southeastern Manitoba is home to a large population of Mennonites, with communities diverse in their cultures and beliefs, but united through their focus on peace, justice, voluntary service, and humanitarian aid.

The Mennonite people are a part of the Christian church, migrating to Canada from Europe in the 1870's after facing severe persecution. In Christian faith, the ministry of Jesus Christ is characterized by love for the poor, the marginalized, true relationship, and setting an example of servant leadership.

Initiatives for Just Communities is derived from the Mennonite Central Committee, who works to share God's love and compassion for all people locally and across the world.

In Manitoba, the work is focused on relieving injustice; to develop people's inherent strengths; and to foster peace at the heart of communities. The work also creates and supports communities that embody justice, dignity and compassion.

Looking forward also requires reflection on the past and in this report we honour those who have come before us making it possible to continue to carry out the mission of the founding members of this community.

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IJC recognizes the need to grow and remain accessible to those who need it most by offering unconditional acceptance for individuals of all faiths, beliefs, and ethnicities. It is especially mindful of Indigenous people who have endured great hardship and who seek to reconnect with their culture. IJC understands that true healing involves supporting physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being, while empowering individuals to make their own choices and build genuine hope for their future.



Janet Plenert, Board Chair of MCC Manitoba, presents Minister of Families Nahanni Fontaine with a quilt at El'dad Ranch.

IJC is evolving, building on the foundations of faith set out by those who have come before us. IJC's evolution is the living out of those faith-based roots in action.

As we acknowledge and embrace that fact the majority of IJC participants in many programs are of First Nations ancestry, we recognize that it is imperative to provide culturally safe care, and in effect take on the role of decolonization of IJCs principles and practices.

As the Rev Canon Dr Murray Still, IJC board chair, notes, "Decolonization of our agency is happening as Indigenous participants find healing and transformation in their Indigenous traditions.

"As our support staff assists participants, especially with their Circle of Care plans based on the Medicine Wheel teachings, these same staff are learning the value of Indigenous traditions and land-based teachings. This in turn makes them more compassionate care givers and in the process are reconciling with participants. When a mutual understanding occurs, reconciliation happens and those transformed want to turn around and help others. This in turn results in formation of community where no one is left behind and all are loved and treated with respect. The act of decolonization occurs when faith is put into action in this way."

What You Told Us We Do Well

Across all feedback sources, five strengths emerged consistently. These strengths are not abstract concepts — they are lived out daily in your work and in the experiences of participants. They are the foundation on which we will continue to build.

PARTICIPANT-CENTERED AND INDIVIDUALIZED SUPPORTS

Staff and partners repeatedly described IJC as “participant-centered,” “flexible,” and “meeting people where they are at.” One respondent shared that IJC “provides compassionate, individualized support that meets participants where they are.”

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE AND INDIGENOUS APPROACHES

Our commitment to restorative practices and the ongoing work to Indigenize programming were highlighted as meaningful strengths. As one respondent noted, “We never kick out participants. We restore relationships when there is a conflict.”

STAFF COMMITMENT AND TEAM CULTURE

The dedication, passion, and collaboration of our staff were among the most celebrated strengths. Respondents described IJC staff as “caring,” “committed,” and “going above and beyond.”

ORGANIZATIONAL ADAPTABILITY AND LEARNING

IJC was described as “nimble,” “creative,” and open to new ideas. Staff shared that “everyone’s input, ideas, concerns, and advice is welcomed with open arms.”

STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND LEADERSHIP SUPPORTS

Many of you emphasized the value of training, mentorship, and opportunities for growth. One respondent noted, “There is always someone to coach you and mentor you 1-1.”



Addressing Concerns with Clarity and Commitment

DIVERSITY IN LEADERSHIP

Some respondents expressed concern about diversity and representation in leadership. We want to acknowledge this feedback openly. It is essential that every staff member sees themselves reflected in the organization's leadership and feels confident in our commitment to equity.

At the same time, we want to correct a misperception:

IJC's leadership team is more diverse — culturally, professionally, and experientially — than many may realize. Our senior leadership team reflects a range of diverse identities and experiences, including individuals of different genders, members of minority groups, persons with disabilities, and Métis people.

We are proud of the representation that exists today, and we are equally committed to strengthening it further. Diversity is not a destination; it is an ongoing practice.



HIRING AND PROMOTION PRACTICES

We also heard concerns about transparency and fairness in hiring and promotions in the past. Some respondents felt that positions were “predetermined” or not accessible to all.

Did you know that....

IJC follows established human resources best practices, including transparent job posting processes, structured interviews, and competency-based evaluations. Positions are not pre-awarded, and all hiring decisions are made based on fairness, equity, and organizational needs.

That said, perception is important. To address this, we will strengthen communication around our hiring processes and ensure staff have a clear understanding of how decisions are made.

Mission, Vision, and Values

WHAT WE HEARD AND WHAT COMES NEXT

As part of the insights process, respondents shared thoughtful reflections on IJC's mission, vision, and values. The feedback shows strong alignment with the heart of who we are — and also a desire to evolve these statements so they better reflect our growth, our cultural commitments, and the full scope of our work.

MISSION FEEDBACK

Most respondents felt the mission reflects IJC's work, but many suggested it could be more holistic, empowering, and reflective of our expanded services. Staff emphasized the importance of language that speaks to healing, wrap-around supports, cultural and spiritual wellbeing, and the reality that not all participants are justice-involved.

For example, one respondent shared that the mission should “honor holistic needs ... fostering healing, purpose, and belonging.”

IJC's mission is to come alongside people living with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders and intellectual disabilities, and those currently or previously incarcerated, to further individual and communal well-being.

**IJC's Vision:
Everyone belongs and flourishes in community.
No one walks alone.**

VISION FEEDBACK

Respondents value the heart of our current vision — belonging, flourishing, and walking together — while suggesting additions around purpose, culture, and realism about what can be achieved. As one person noted, “We create communities where everyone belongs, grows, and walks together.”

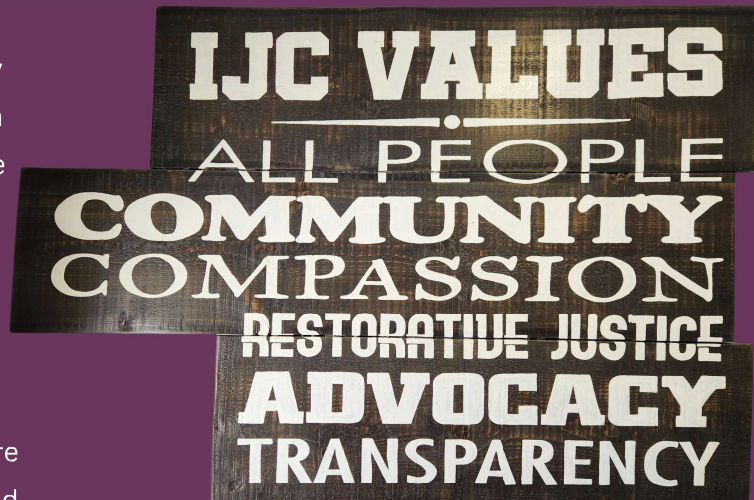
Mission, Vision, and Values

WHAT WE HEARD AND WHAT COMES NEXT

VALUES FEEDBACK

Overall, respondents feel IJC mostly lives its values. At the same time, they identified opportunities to strengthen clarity around transparency, reinforce values during times of change, and consider adding concepts such as safety, professionalism, empowerment, and cultural humility.

Some also expressed a desire for more education and shared practice around how values apply to both staff and participants.



NEXT STEP:

A TIME-LIMITED WORKING GROUP TO REFRESH OUR MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

In response to this feedback, we will be forming a small, time-determined working group to help update IJC’s mission, vision, and values. This group will work collaboratively to ensure these foundational statements reflect who we are today and who we aspire to be.

Brittany Pedden, Director of Human Resources, will be facilitating this process.

This is an exciting opportunity for us to shape our shared identity TOGETHER — grounded in our strengths, informed by your insights, and aligned with our future direction.

Strategic Priorities Based on Feedback

1

ORGANIZATION EFFECTIVENESS

Strengthen people, structures, systems, and leadership to support staff wellbeing, effective operations, and long-term organizational sustainability.

2

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY AND PACE OF CHANGE

IJC's ability to maintain long-term financial health while managing growth, innovation, and transformation at a realistic and responsible speed.

3

ENHANCED PARTICIPANT SUPPORTS

Strengthening program quality, expanding housing and clinical supports, and ensuring equitable access across all services.

4

PARTNERSHIPS, PROFILE, AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Increase IJC's visibility and strengthen community partnerships to expand collaboration, enhance service coordination, and deliver more focused and impactful support to individuals.

These four areas will be fully operationalized into our upcoming IJC strategic plan with the first version presented at the upcoming IJC AJM in June of 2026. In this document, which is ever evolving, you will see clear goals, timelines, and accountability measures as this work unfolds.

We also want to assure all staff that we will be creating ongoing access points for all interested staff, board members and participants to be involved in this ongoing work over the upcoming years. As we see IJC grow and evolve, we honour the founding roots of the organization created not only by MCC Manitoba, but by the many hundreds of staff and participants who have and will continue to support the ongoing restorative healing work of the IJC into the future.

Moving Forward Together

The insights gathered thus far in our strategic planning reflect an organization with extraordinary heart — one that is deeply committed to participants, to community, and to each other. We are proud of the strengths you have built and grateful for the honesty with which you have shared your challenges.

As we move forward, we do so with optimism and determination.

We will continue to listen.

We will continue to learn.

And we will continue to build an IJC where everyone belongs, everyone grows, and no one walks alone.

Thank you for your dedication, your courage, and your belief in what we can achieve together.

— IJC Executive Leadership Team and Strategic Planning Committee





315 PTH 52 Mitchell MB R5G 0Z2 | 100-555 Broadway, Winnipeg, MB R3C 0W4.
Phone: 204-326-1050 | Email: info@initiativesjc.org