

John A. Macdonald Road Renaming

ISSUE

Through a process of discussion, relationship-building and sharing, the John A. Macdonald Road Renaming Advisory Committee was created and undertook a process to identify a proposed new name, as well as next steps for education, awareness, communications and engagement to support the change. Through this report, the proposed new name is both shared and recommended for approval.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Civic Naming Committee endorse the recommendation from the John A. Macdonald Road Renaming Advisory Committee and recommend to the Standing Policy Committee on Planning, Development and Community Services that:

1. The name miyo-wâhkôhtowin be added to the Names Master List and be endorsed for use as the new name for John A. Macdonald Road; and
2. This report be forwarded to City Council, recommending that:
 - a. The request to rename John A. Macdonald Road to miyo-wâhkôhtowin Road be approved; and
 - b. The City Solicitor's Office be directed to prepare the appropriate bylaw for the street name change.

BACKGROUND

City Council, at its Regular Business Meeting on June 28, 2021, resolved, in part:

- “1. That the Administration begin the process for the renaming of John A. Macdonald Road as a way to acknowledge the on-going harm in the community experienced by the IRSS (Indian Residential School System) and the role that John A. Macdonald played in this part of history;
2. That the renaming process include public education and public engagement including:
 - a. Consultation with Indigenous community leaders, residential school survivors and Elders and Knowledge Keepers;
 - b. Direct communication with John A. Macdonald Road residents;
 - c. Informing Confederation Park neighbourhood residents;
 - d. A wider community public education campaign; and
 - e. A look at options to manage any costs of changing names and what tools could be used to facilitate a change.”

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Why the Road is being Renamed

John A. Macdonald played a significant role in the development of Canada's Indian residential school system. Residential schools took Indigenous children away from their families, cultures and languages to assimilate them, so they would no longer exist as distinct peoples.

Residential schools were responsible for the hunger, neglect, abuse and death of thousands of Indigenous children in Canada. Indigenous families today continue to experience this pain, grief, loss and inter-generational trauma.

The Background and Process

In the fall of 2021, Administration met with the Saskatoon Survivor's Circle, a group of former residential school survivors. Administration was provided the following guidance:

- The importance of providing education on Canada's true history and the significance of renaming as a first step; and
- The importance for the engagement process to be developed with Survivors and Elders.

The Saskatoon Survivor's Circle provided Administration with names of Survivors to be part of the process going forward.

Given the importance of education, Administration met with Reconciliation Saskatoon's Learning Committee. Two meetings were held, one in October 2021 and one in January 2022, which included Administration, members of the Learning Committee, Elders, Survivors and youth. Administration was provided the following guidance:

- John A. Macdonald's racist policies and actions went beyond the Residential Schools and have had intergenerational impacts;
- It is important to also engage with youth and newcomers;
- Do not put undue stress or rely on the emotional labour of Survivors;
- Potential to use different seasons for different elements of the renaming process;
- The importance of protocol and ceremony being meaningful parts of the process but not done just for the sake of doing them; and
- Discussions on what did or did not work well with the Chief Mistawasis Bridge naming process.

A meeting facilitated by an Indigenous consultant was held on July 18, 2022, with Residential School Survivors, First Nation and Métis Elders as well as Indigenous youth. The focus of the meeting was to discuss the engagement and renaming process. They were asked to give their guidance on how engagement should occur, who should be involved as well as the importance of ceremony and protocol in the process.

John A. Macdonald Road Renaming

Based on the recommendations received, a John A. Macdonald Road Renaming Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee) was formed and comprised of First Nation and Métis Elders, Survivors, a Ceremonialist, First Nations and Métis Youth, a representative of the Confederation Park Community Association, a resident of John A. Macdonald Road, teachers from wâhkôhtowin School, representatives from the Chinese community and a representative from the Saskatchewan Intercultural Association.

The Advisory Committee met three times between February 2023 and April 2023. During those meetings, the Advisory Committee:

- Learned about the background and reasons for renaming the road;
- Learned about the City of Saskatoon's (City) naming policy and process;
- Received teachings from a ceremonialist on the circle-box teachings, which explains differences between Indigenous worldviews and the colonial systems;
- Gained a shared understanding about the role of ceremony in the renaming process and the importance of names and naming;
- Created a shared experience and built understanding of the impacts of colonialism, including how colonialism has not just impacted First Nations and Métis people but the Chinese community and newcomers as well; and
- Discussed the importance of educating people on what the recommended name means and why it was chosen.

Advisory Committee members were provided the opportunity to express their thoughts, feelings and ideas for the name change. Potential names were drawn from the Names Master List, names that were submitted to the City when the name change was first announced as well as names the Advisory Committee members brought forward themselves.

After discussion and sharing, the Advisory Committee was able to come to a consensus on a recommended name. The recommended new name for John A. Macdonald Road is miyo-wâhkôhtowin Road; miyo signifies "good" and wâhkôhtowin means "relationships" so the name signifies "good relationships".

The name miyo-wâhkôhtowin was chosen for several reasons:

- Residential schools contributed to a breakdown in communities and relationships and division; good relationships will bring us together;
- The school along the road already bears the name "wâhkôhtowin", so the community should be familiar with it;
- By naming it to be consistent with the school, it speaks to the importance of children and a better future;
- Residential schools took children away from their languages and cultures. The wâhkôhtowin School is home to the Nêhiyâwiwin Cree Language and Culture Program, which is bringing culture and language back;

- Some students at the school built a city as part of a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) activity where they spoke about houses and roads and called the road “wâhkôhtowin Road”, because the name is important to them; and
- It is a strong and empowering name.

Education and Awareness Activities

The following activities have occurred leading up to this report:

- June 28th Commemoration and Renaming on the Road to Reconciliation: A talk by Metis artist and educator David Garneau hosted by Broadway Theatre, presented by Reconciliation Saskatoon. This was an opportunity for residents to learn more about the importance of renaming and what similar work is happening across Canada.
- On July 26, 2023, a meeting with residents and property owners of John A. Macdonald Road will be held to explain the process of renaming as well as the meaning and importance of the recommended name.

In anticipation of approval of the recommended new name, the following activities are also being planned:

- September 28th Community BBQ at wahkohtowin School; and
- A future smudge walk along miyo-wâhkôhtowin Road.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Costs associated with the process for renaming, including the engagement, communications, education and support to residents, is being funded by the Capital Project P.10041 - Legacy Review Project. The process and learnings from this renaming will inform future activities in this project.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

The Standing Policy on Planning, Development and Community Services has delegated authority for the approval of names to be included on the Names Master List for naming City-owned or controlled facilities, streets, suburban development areas, parks or neighbourhoods.

To change the name of a street, City Council approval is required along with subsequent approval of a Street Name Change Bylaw to formally enact a street name change. Further, in order to legally change the name of John A. Macdonald Road to miyo-wâhkôhtowin Road, the affected registered plans will need to be changed which requires an application to Information Services Corporation. Part of this application includes the requirement for the bylaw to amend the street name. A recommendation is included to direct the City Solicitor to prepare this bylaw, and it will be brought to City Council at a subsequent meeting.

NEXT STEPS

Following approval, various actions will take place.

The following changes will be made to records, information and databases as a result of the name change:

- The Street Name Change Bylaw will be used by a surveyor, who will be hired by the City to update the required Plans of Subdivision for all affected properties for submissions to Information Service Corporation;
- Street name signs will be replaced;
- Map updates will be made to City mapping products; and
- Other agencies will be notified of the change in order to update their mapping and information databases as required.

Support will be available to residents of the road for changing their addresses with various agencies. Administration will work with external agencies to assist residents with the change of address. This will include a booklet to provide guidance as well as in-person support if required. Administration is currently working to limit costs to the homeowners throughout this process.

REPORT APPROVAL

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