

Legacy Review

ISSUE

The Legacy Review Project reflects the City of Saskatoon's commitment to reconciliation, equity, diversity, and inclusion. The Legacy Project came about following City Council's 2021 decision to rename John A. Macdonald Road to miyo-wâhkôhtowin Road, and provides for a policy and systems change for greater diversity and inclusion in place naming and commemoration. This report addresses two of three deliverables of the Legacy Project, sharing lessons learned from the renaming of John A. Macdonald Road and recommending approval of the Saskatoon Place Identity Framework, enabling Administration to proceed with next steps.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Standing Policy Committee on Planning, Development and Community Services recommend to City Council:

1. That the lessons learned from the John A. Macdonald Road to miyo-wâhkôhtowin Road renaming be received as information; and,
2. That the Saskatoon Place Identity Framework be adopted as a guide to future place identity and place naming initiatives.

BACKGROUND

City Council, at its [Regular Business meeting](#) held on June 28, 2021, approved a process to rename John A. Macdonald Road to recognize the on-going harm in the community experienced due to the Indian Residential Schools System, enacted by the government of Canada's first Prime Minister. Following a multi-step process, the new name, miyo-wâhkôhtowin Road, was approved by City Council at its [Regular Business meeting](#) on September 27, 2023.

The Legacy Review Project (Legacy Project) was approved as a capital project as part of the 2022-2023 Operating and Capital Budget to develop a phased strategy to address naming, recognition, and commemorations, as well as other aspects that could contribute to improving the recognition of the histories and lived experiences of Indigenous peoples and other diverse communities throughout Saskatoon. The Legacy Project's three deliverables are:

- Lessons learned from the renaming of John A. Macdonald Road;
- The Saskatoon Place Identity Framework (the Framework); and,
- Proposed revisions to Council Policy C09-008 Naming of Civic Property and Development Areas.

These three elements collectively provide policy and systems change for greater diversity and inclusion in place naming and commemoration.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

The City of Saskatoon (City) has over 1,500 named streets, parks, buildings, landmarks, commemorations and monuments. In total, these named spaces, places and public assets reflect how Saskatoon has identified itself since its incorporation in 1906.

Saskatoon today has a population of over 300,000 residents of diverse backgrounds and lived experiences, from Indigenous peoples whose ancestors have been on this land since time immemorial, to those whose families have settled here from all over the world, since the start of the 20th Century. It was within this context that the Legacy Project sought out ways that city streets, spaces and places, landmarks and symbols better reflect those who live in Saskatoon and call it home today.

From John A. Macdonald to miyo-wâhkôhtowin Road

City Council's 2021 decision to rename John A. Macdonald Road reinforced the City's commitment to implementing Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action at a time when the public was learning of the ongoing harms and impacts of the Indian Residential School System in Canada. Like many jurisdictions, Saskatoon recognized that promoting and reclaiming Indigenous names in public space was an immediate way to take positive action.

Saskatoon was not alone in taking such action:

- In 2023, the National Capital Commission in Ottawa renamed the Sir John A. Macdonald Parkway as Kichi Zībī Mīkan.
- In Winnipeg, what was Bishop Grandin Boulevard was renamed Abinojii Mikanah.
- In Oshawa Ontario, Bagot Street was renamed Debwewin Miikan, (Truth Road in Anishinaabemowin).
- In Ontario's District of Muskoka, Muskoka Road 38 was officially renamed Kanien'kehá:ka Iohatátie (Mohawk People Road).

Lessons from the John A. Macdonald to miyo-wâhkôhtowin Road renaming are detailed in Appendix 1. These lessons informed the development of the Framework. Most importantly, this experience highlighted the need for sound process and policy to guide decision making concerning:

- When to rename;
- How to rename;
- Clarify who within the City is responsible for what; and,
- The need for effective and transparent communication, engagement and education concerning names and renaming.

Communication and Engagement

The Legacy Project was undertaken with the significant input and involvement of Rights Holders, community stakeholders, community organizations, equity-denied groups, developers, other Canadian municipalities, as well as individuals and sector experts from across the country.

Appendix 2 highlights those efforts specifically associated with the review and evaluation of the John A. Macdonald Road name change to miyo-wâhkôhtowin and the development of the Framework.

Saskatoon Place Identity Framework

Place identity is a concept that relates to how places are perceived, named and ultimately used. From a municipal government perspective, it involves the disciplines of urban planning, park development, recreation and culture and community development. By applying place identity practices, the proposed Framework (see Appendix 3) can benefit the City in naming public places, streets, parks, buildings, and bridges and determining how best to tell whose stories in public space through public art, monuments, commemorations, emblems, flags and other symbols.

Place identity is part of the fabric of a city. The Framework presents an opportunity for an improved and more inclusive approach to place identity within City processes by providing the foundation for a city-led program that will help to build a sense of belonging for all residents while both reflecting on the past and recognizing the perspectives of all residents, including newcomers. The Framework seeks to ensure that cultural or symbolic names are applied in a respectful manner that does not cause harm while also recognizing the diversity in our city. In doing so, the City can promote social cohesion and psychological safety for the residents of Saskatoon and also benefit from the economic gain of a city that is more inclusive and welcoming for both its residents and newcomers.

The Framework recommends key practices and actions to guide decisions to increase diversity in three aspects of place identity:

1. Place naming;
2. Landmarks and monuments; and
3. Emblems, symbols and flags.

To support its implementation, the Framework charts linkages to 24 existing civic policies, plans and related initiatives and creates an opportunity to develop a defined process for renaming in particular. Without a defined process, requests for renaming will be received and managed on an ad hoc basis; we lack any solidarity or cohesion of Saskatoon-as-place that represents its residents. Current community expectations around naming exceed the current resources for this activity.

Revisions to Policy C09-008, Naming of Civic Property and Development Areas (Civic Naming Policy)

A first step in moving forward with implementation of the Framework is to recommend revisions to the [Civic Naming Policy](#). The Civic Naming Policy includes an overview of the roles and responsibilities for the Civic Naming Committee, the process for new name submissions, and how names are to be applied to municipally-owned or controlled facilities, streets, suburban development areas, neighbourhoods and parks. The Civic Naming Policy also outlines special circumstances that require City Council

approval including requests for renaming, requests for special street names and naming contests.

The purpose of the Civic Naming Policy is to ensure screening of suggested names and consistency with Council naming guidelines, and to avoid duplication in naming. Central to the policy is a “Names Master List” comprised of suggestions by the public, developers, community organizations, and sometimes the City itself. The addition of names to this list includes adjudication by the Civic Naming Committee and recommendation to City Council. Names are then selected administratively, according to themes and priority, to apply to streets, neighbourhoods, parks, or civic facilities as needed.

Revisions to the Civic Naming Policy is intended to encourage strategic diversification in the names proposed, including historically underrepresented groups such as women, Indigenous peoples, visible minorities as well as other marginalized and often equity-denied groups in Saskatoon. Revisions to the Civic Naming Policy will also provide clarity on how names are applied from the “Names Master List”.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Legacy Review Project (Capital Project P.10041.01) was approved in 2022 with a budget of \$375,000. The project budget for the John A. Macdonald Road renaming is included in this capital project. Of this:

- Approximately \$60,000 of the total project costs was specific to the John A. Macdonald name change included supporting the road renaming committee, communications, education and goodwill payments to John A. Macdonald Road residents (both property owners and renters). This excludes the cost of multiple civic staff involved in the various aspects of work.
- \$115,000 was budgeted to the end of 2024 to develop the Framework and review the Civic Naming Policy.

The balance of \$200,000 is intended for the first stages of implementation of the Framework to establish a program. Further budget options to fund operation of the program will be brought forward through the 2026/2027 budget process as noted in the next steps of this report.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no privacy, legal or environmental implications identified. As the Legacy Project moves into its next and final stage, there will be a focus on communications with particular emphasis on a strong web-based presence.

NEXT STEPS

Should City Council approve the Framework, Administration will bring forward recommended changes to the Civic Naming Policy in a report to the Standing Policy Committee on Planning, Development and Community Services. Following that, Administration will communicate the goals of the Framework to both internal and external collaborators. A project manager will organize and implement the final phases

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of the Legacy Project and develop a program with the intention of moving toward full-time operational status by 2027. The Capital Project P.10041.01 funds will be used to implement the final phases of the Legacy Project and initiate its transition into an operating program. Budget requests to implement the Framework, including any required staffing resources, will be brought forward through the 2026/2027 budget process.

Should City Council choose not to adopt the Framework, Administration will not proceed with the implementation of the Framework and proposed changes to the Civic Naming Policy.

APPENDICES

1. John A. Macdonald Road Renaming – Lessons Learned
2. Summary of Community and Stakeholder Engagement Sessions
3. Saskatoon Place Identity Framework

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