



Procedure PR592 Naming Schools, Teams, and Special Purpose Areas: Critical Review Recommendation

To: Governance and Policy Committee

Date: 27 January, 2025

Report No.: 01-25-4830

Strategic Directions

- Commit to the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action.
- Belong - All students belong, are engaged, and valued in an inclusive environment.
- Achieve - All students reach high levels of achievement, success, and personal development.
- Thrive - All students graduate with the confidence, skills, and knowledge to thrive.
- Revitalize - All students and staff learn and work in inclusive, safe, and modern environments.

Equity as a guiding principle: Equity is foundational to all TDSB work and will be embedded throughout the strategic directions.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Dundas Junior Public School, Ryerson Community School and Sir John A Macdonald Collegiate Institute undergo the renaming process based on the revised Naming Schools, Teams, and Special Areas Procedure, PR529, be approved.

Context

In June 2023, the Board of Trustees approved the revision to the Naming Schools, Teams, and Special-Purpose Areas Policy (P047). On October 16, 2024 the accompanying procedure, PR592, was revised and presented at the Governance and

Policy Committee. As part of the revision, a section was added to PR592, the Revised Naming Schools, Teams, and Special-Purpose Area Procedure that provided for a proactive critical review of school names to be completed. This report provides Trustees with the recommendations from the Central Name Review Committee of the first 3 school names to go through the proactive school name review process.

Staff have completed the critical review and are recommending that the following schools engage in the renaming process:

- Dundas Junior Public School
- Ryerson Community School
- Sir John A Macdonald Collegiate Institute

This recommendation is based on the potential impact that these names may have on students and staff based on colonial history, anti-indigenous racism and their connection to systems of oppression. Appendix A provides a brief literature review outlining the basis for embarking on the renaming process for each school. This recommendation aligns with the April 2021 Board of Trustees approved staff and community Reference Group that initially recommended that Dundas Junior Public School, Ryerson Community School and Sir John A Macdonald Collegiate Institute engage in the school renaming process.

Action Plan and Associated Timeline

Subject to the Governance and Policy Committee's receipt, identified schools would be directed to engage in the school renaming process outlined by PR592, Revised Naming Schools, Teams, and Special-Purpose Areas Procedure.

Resource Implications

The procedure will be implemented within the existing budget framework..

Communications Considerations

Schools identified would engage in the school renaming process outlined by PR592, Revised Naming Schools, Teams, and Special-Purpose Areas Procedure.

The revised Naming Schools, Teams, and Special-Purpose Areas Procedure PR592 is posted on the TDSB's internal and external websites and communicated through Direct Line and the System Leaders' Bulletin.

Board Policy and Procedure Reference(s)

P047: Naming Schools, Teams, and Special-Purpose Areas Policy

PR592: Naming Schools, Teams, and Special Purpose Areas Procedure

Appendices

- Appendix A: Renaming of Schools in the TDSB: Literature Review

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it can have a positive impact on empowering community, developing relationships, and facilitating belonging ([Ryan, 2023](#)). For example, when in one TDSB school, a room was named after Leonard Braithwaite, the first Black Canadian to be elected to the Canadian legislature, it had a positive impact on Black students in the building.

“And it is our room, it’s the Leonard Braithwaite room, and from previous classes of the Leonard Braithwaite program there had been more opportunities to use it, to study, to do other things with. And as [another student] said, we don’t have a lot of safe space in the sense that’s dedicated to us for us. So if it was open more often, it has a lot of potential.” (Student)

The TDSB in its Multi Year Strategic Plan (MYSP) for 2024-2028 is committed to the implementation of [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada](#) Calls to Action ([TDSB, 2024](#)). School renamings in this regard are consistent with the TRC Calls to Action related to language, culture, education for reconciliation, and commemoration ([TRCC, 2015](#)). The MYSP also centers ‘Equity’ as a key principle ([TDSB, 2024](#)). For Indigenous, Black, and other historically minoritized students, staff, and community members, to exist within and/or establish positive relationships with schools commemorating individuals who had an explicit role in perpetuating their community’s cultural genocide or other types of systemic violence, such as sexual and gender-based violence and religious persecution serves as a potentially harmful microaggression (SHARE - Faculty of Education, Queen’s University, 2020).

Having to enter school buildings commemorating such individuals may even contribute to mental health triggers which negatively impact students, staff, or families’ ability to effectively participate in the school environment. Students, staff, and family members can carry firsthand and intergenerational trauma (e.g., residential school survivors), who experience school names affiliated with individuals like John A. MacDonald, Egerton Ryerson, and Henry Dundas very differently from other individuals. This phenomena encapsulated in a school name can inhibit one of the central functions of schools in serving their community.

Relevant Literature

Over the last few years, institutions across Canada (e.g., schools, universities, cities, public infrastructure, etc.) have been engaging in renaming efforts in response to Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation, and in an overall effort to advance inclusive spaces ([Canadian Press, 2021](#); [Macintosh, 2021](#)). To better support the TDSB in understanding the context for school renamings in relation to buildings named after John A MacDonald, Egerton Ryerson, and Henry Dundas, the following resources offer curated literature that can support schools in their renaming process. The curated material can also facilitate staff, student, or community learning in relation to these historical figures, along with pointing to further community dialogue about the relevance of renamings. The information provided below comes from a variety of sources and while not exhaustive, helps to provide context for renamings. These sources were not produced by the TDSB and are reflective of the publishing author/organization’s work.

John A. MacDonald

[**Austen, I. \(2017\). Canada, too, faces a reckoning with history and racism. *New York Times*, 166\(57704\).**](#)

The article reports on a debate on the issue of commemorating the legacy of Sir John A. MacDonald, the first Prime Minister of Canada, and also a figure deemed racist for his treatment of the country's Indigenous population.

[**Boily, F., Gray, C., Maracle, L., Moore, C., Reid, M.C., \(2019\). The trials of John A. *Canada's History*, 99\(1\), 20-31.**](#)

This source offers a series of essays which discuss John A. MacDonald's legacy in light of contemporary debates about his involvement in the Residential School policy, destruction of Indigenous culture, etc.

[**Casey, L. \(2021, July 7\). York Region school board removes Sir John A. MacDonald's name from school. *Globe and Mail*.**](#)

Overview of a YRDSB school renaming in relation to John A MacDonald, reflecting a broader movement toward healing and reconciliation.

[**Casey, L. \(2021, June 17\). Kingston to remove Sir John A. MacDonald statue from park, school to remove his name. *The National Post*.**](#)

Description of renaming efforts in Kingston commemorating John A. MacDonald in response to Calls to Action from Truth and Reconciliation.

[**Ferguson, R. MPPs schooled over tarnished statue. *Toronto Star*.**](#)

A First Nations equity consultant responds to a committee of MPPs who have been responsible for gathering input on the future of John A MacDonald's statue in Ottawa.

[**National Capital Commission. \(2023\). *Renaming the Parkway Summary Engagement Report*.**](#)

In 2023, the National Capital Commission renamed a parkway after MacDonald. This report speaks to the renaming initiative and surrounding public engagement.

[**York Region District School Board. \(2021\). *Renaming of Sir John A. MacDonald Public School in the City of Markham***](#)

In 2021 a school in the York Region District School Board worked to rename a school titled after MacDonald and this report outlines that decision.

[**Social Healing and Reconciliatory Education \(SHARE\), Faculty of Education, Queen's University. \(2020\). *Sir John A. MacDonald Fact Sheet*.**](#)

In 2020, Queen's University engaged in a process to rename the John A. MacDonald Law School building given MacDonald's role in Canada's Residential School policy among other reasons. The Faculty of Education prepared a fact sheet to facilitate community learning about reasons for the name change.

[**Social Healing and Reconciliatory Education \(SHARE\), Faculty of Education, Queen's University. \(2020\). John A MacDonald...\[Instagram Post\]**](#)

In 2020, Queen's University engaged in a process to rename the John A. MacDonald Law School building given MacDonald's role in Canada's Residential School policy among other reasons. The Faculty of Education prepared infographics to facilitate community learning about reasons for the name change.

[**Stephen, M. \(2021\). Burying Sir John A. MacDonald. Maclean's, 133\(12\).**](#)

The article discusses efforts across Canada working towards removal of statues or public signs commemorating John A. MacDonald as a result of his policies which adversely impacted Indigenous communities. The article discusses viewpoints of leaders supporting MacDonald's legacy (e.g., Erin O'Toole), along with Indigenous perspectives such as those of Mi'kmaq historian Daniel Paul.

[**The Canadian Encyclopedia. \(2017\). Sir John A. MacDonald.**](#)

The article describes Sir John A. MacDonald's biography as Canada's first prime minister and one of the architects of Confederation. It provides a balanced view as it highlights his role in nation-building and addressing the controversy surrounding his legacy, including his involvement in the establishment of the residential school system and the passage of the Indian Act.

Egerton Ryerson

[**Antonacci, J.P. \(2022, May 14\). Elementary school in Brantford drops Ryerson name. Hamilton Spectator.**](#)

The news article explains that Ryerson Heights Elementary in Brantford will be renamed Edith Monture Elementary School. The school, previously named after Egerton Ryerson, an educator whose views formed the development of the residential school system, will now honor Edith Monture, a pioneering Indigenous nurse and war veteran. The Grand Erie District School Board also announced the change, which came into affect after an extended process involving 250 name suggestions.

[**Brown, L. \(2016, May 20\). Murray Sinclair lauds Ryerson University for championing equity. Toronto Star.**](#)

In a speech to Ryerson University faculty, Sen. Murray Sinclair, former head of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, acknowledged the university's efforts to overcome its namesake Egerton Ryerson's racist legacy. Sinclair praised Ryerson University for its commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion. He highlighted the university's response to the TRC's recommendations, including plans for a mandatory curriculum on residential schools.

[**Doucet, B. \(2021, November 18\). 'Totally understandable': Cambridge school will be renamed to reflect area and Indigenous history.**](#)

The article explains that a Cambridge school will be renamed to better reflect the area's Indigenous history. The Waterloo Region District School Board approved the renaming of three

schools, prioritizing the removal of names associated with harm to the community; among these is Ryerson Public School, Sir John A. Macdonald Secondary School, and A. R. Kaufman Public School. The name change follows community discussions and growing recognition of the need to honor Indigenous contributions and history.

[Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board. \(2022, June 14\). Ryerson renaming decision.](#)

The letter from the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) informs the community of the decision to rename Ryerson Elementary School. It acknowledges that Egerton Ryerson's involvement in the residential school system has caused harm.

[Macintosh, M. \(2021, September 17\). Division seeks input in renaming Ryerson School. Winnipeg Free Press.](#)

The news article explains that the Pembina Trails School Division is seeking community input to rename Ryerson School, which is named after Egerton Ryerson, an architect of the residential school system. An online survey has been launched to gather suggestions from staff, families, and local residents. The division has received strong support, with over 600 submissions in one day, and is dedicating the last week of September to truth and reconciliation activities.

[Sossi, D. \(2022, May 2\). From Ryerson to Toronto Metropolitan University: What can we learn from the renaming? The Conversation.](#)

Dino Sossi's article examines the renaming of Ryerson University to Toronto Metropolitan University, prompted by the recommendations of Mash Khoh Wee Win (Standing Strong) Task Force. The renaming marks a step toward confronting the university's colonial past and recognizing the harm inflicted on Indigenous communities, particularly the controversial legacy of Egerton Ryerson.

[Toronto Metropolitan University. \(2022, April 26\). Ryerson University changing its name to Toronto Metropolitan University.](#)

The press release from Toronto Metropolitan University marks the new beginning of a new chapter, as the Ryerson University's Board of Governors has approved and announced its name change from Ryerson University to Toronto Metropolitan University. This decision follows recommendations from the Standing Strong (Mash Koh Wee Kah Pooh Win) Task Force, which reviewed the legacy of Egerton Ryerson. The new name aligns and better reflects the values of the institution as well as its vibrant and urban identity.

[The Canadian Encyclopedia. \(2024\). Egerton Ryerson.](#)

The Canadian Encyclopedia entry on Egerton Ryerson examines various dimensions of his life, exploring his contributions as an influential architect of Ontario's public education system, (advocated for free and universal schooling) and his controversial legacy. It notes that Ryerson's recommendations or his ideas contributed to the design of residential school system, which involved the forced assimilation of Indigenous children. This dual legacy has sparked heated debate, with Ryerson viewed both as a pioneer in education and controversial figure associated with colonial policies.

Henry Dundas

[Callan, I. \(2023\). Yonge-Dundas Square in Toronto to be renamed. Here's what it will be called. *Global News*.](#)

The article announces that the City of Toronto has moved forward with renaming some landmarks. A council resolution dictates that Yonge-Dundas Square in Toronto will be renamed Sankofa square as part of the city's efforts to address the legacy of Henry Dundas, who is scrutinized for delaying the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade. The renaming reflects a broader movement to reconsider public spaces and monuments associated with figures linked to colonialism.

[Centre for International and Higher Education. \(n.d.\). *Henry Dundas*.](#)

The Centre for International and Higher Education presented a symposium to assess the historical cases against Henry Dundas, examining his controversial role in slave trade. The site also features other peer-reviewed articles by various historians, offering a balanced grouping of both pro-and anti-Dundas perspectives.

[City of Toronto. *Renaming Dundas-linked city assets*.](#)

The City of Toronto was called upon (responding to the petition) to rename all city assets carrying the Dundas name (e.g., street names, squares, etc.). This link outlines the process the city engaged in (planning and strategy phase) for naming and renaming streets to confront anti-Black racism and historical discrimination.

[McCue, D., & Howden, C. \(2021, July 15\). Putting the "done" in "Dundas." The City of Toronto votes to rename a street named for a Scottish politician who helped prolong the slave trade. *Quebec Express*.](#)

The interview discusses the City of Toronto's decision to rename Dundas Street, reflecting growing efforts to confront systemic racism by removing controversial imperial names linked to colonialism. Melanie Newtwn, an associate professor of history at the University of Toronto, argues that human rights measure should take precedence over economic concerns.

[Spurr, B. \(2024, June 19\). Sankofa name change approved at heated vote. *Toronto Star*.](#)

The news article covers the approval of the Sankofa name change following a heated vote, where critics and supporters of the proposal presented their case. The term "Sankofa," symbolizes the importance of reflecting and learning from the past. The article also highlights the tensions arising during the vote, with some members opposing the change, while others emphasized its significance.

[Thompson, N. \(2020, June 10\). Petition to rename Dundas Street garners attention amid renewed focus on monuments. *Canadian Press*](#)

The article highlights a growing petition demanding the renaming of Dundas Street in Toronto. Advocates argue that renaming public spaces should reflect contemporary values rather than honouring the protectors of colonialism. It further adds that the issue of renewing streets or removing statues is not new, citing similar efforts involving political figures such as John A. Macdonald. The article also presents a counter perspective, suggesting that changing the name

would not erase Canada's history, it can serve as a learning opportunity to educate about historical complexities.

Toronto Public Library. (n.d.). *Recognition Review*. City of Toronto.

The Toronto public library curated a list of peer-reviewed academic research prepared by professional historians to better understand the legacy of Henry Dundas and its potential impact Black and Indigenous communities in Toronto. Toronto staff consulted with more than 20 academic experts in the areas of public history, Black Canadian studies and public commemoration to inform the city's response to the petition and support the Recognition Review project as a whole.

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