



Renaming Ryerson

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Presented by the Victoria University Students' Administrative Council

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This proposal was developed on Treaty 13 land, at the University of Toronto.

We would like to acknowledge this sacred land on which the University of Toronto operates. It has been a site of human activity for 15,000 years. This land is the territory of the Huron-Wendat and Petun First Nations, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River. The territory was the subject of the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and Confederacy of the Ojibwe and allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. Today, the meeting place of Toronto is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work in the community, on this territory.

*- Elders Circle, Council of Aboriginal Initiatives
(Council of Ontario Universities, n.d.) (Last revised November 6, 2014)*

Content warning: the following report mentions anti-Indigenous racism and includes quotes which use anti-Indigenous slurs.

Guiding Principles

From the beginning, this project has strived to center Victoria University and the University of Toronto's Indigenous communities. We have engaged in consultations in the spirit of listening to Indigenous voices first, asking questions second, and amplifying those voices third. At the same time, we have an appreciation for the knowledge of our non-Indigenous community members and endeavoured to open conversations with every level of administration. The nuance required here is not lost on us and we are proud to be entering this stage of the discussion having honoured the care, time, and respect it deserves.

That being said, **we stand firm in our resolution that Victoria should rename the Vic One stream and Burwash Hall house currently named after Egerton Ryerson.** The man he was has no place being celebrated in this age of truth and reconciliation. Our university should not put a key contributor to Canada's Residential School System on a pedestal any longer.

Here, at the outset of this document, we reflect on the Indigenous concept of *etuaptmumk*: the Mi'kmaw word for two-eyed seeing. *Etuaptmumk* is both a way of being and a theoretical framework. To explain the concept, we look to the words of Eskasoni Elder Albert Marshall:

Two-Eyed Seeing adamantly, respectfully and passionately asks that we bring together our different ways of knowing to motivate people, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike, to use all our understandings so that we can leave the world a better place and not compromise the opportunities for our youth (in the sense of seven generations) through our own inaction.¹ [emphasis added]

In our work, the idea of *etuaptmumk* drove us to continuously consider both perspectives; we prioritized "see[ing] from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, and from the other eye with the strengths of Western knowledges and ways of knowing".² As we learned we also saw the ways in which the Indigenous knowledge has been disregarded. In particular, we saw the way it has been erased from our understanding of Ryerson and his history.

Especially poignant in Elder Albert Marshall's quote is the affirmation that *our own inaction* can serve to foreclose opportunities for our youth and communities. To not act on this proposal would counter the principles Victoria University prides itself on. To not act would be contrary to

¹ Bartlett, C., Marshall, M., & Marshall, A. (2012). *Two-eyed seeing and other lessons learned within a co-learning journey of bringing together Indigenous and mainstream knowledges and ways of knowing*. *Journal of Environmental Studies and Sciences*, 2(4), 331-340.

² Iwama, M., Marshall, M., Marshall, A., & Bartlett, C. (2009). *Two-eyed seeing and the language of healing in community-based research*. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 32(2), 3-23.

the goals of truth and reconciliation in Canada. To not act would be to foreclose opportunities for Indigenous students.

With that in mind, the aims of this project are clear. First, we are seeking to increase access to education at Victoria, particularly for Indigenous students who are underrepresented in our universities despite being the fastest growing demographic in Canada.³ As we will see, honouring Ryerson's name at Victoria is a real barrier to Indigenous students. Second, we want to engage the Vic community with a true and balanced telling of the history of Egerton Ryerson; education should be a central goal of any future action. Thirdly, we are seeking to meaningfully address a harm that Victoria has inflicted on Indigenous communities. We do this in support of the guiding principles of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Specifically, we drew on the following:

3. Reconciliation **is a process of healing relationships that requires public truth sharing, apology, and commemoration** that acknowledge and redress past harms.
4. Reconciliation **requires constructive action on addressing the ongoing legacies of colonialism that have had destructive impacts on Aboriginal peoples' education**, cultures and languages, health, child welfare, administration of justice, and economic opportunities and prosperity.⁴ [emphasis added]

The action proposed here is one of the small steps forward we need to take to begin the long journey of decolonizing our institutions; and, as Rebecca Thomas tells us, when we embrace Indigenous ideologies in our educational institutions studies have shown that *all* students, settlers included, benefit academically.⁵

With all this in mind, we ask that you take a moment to embrace the philosophy of etuaptmumk; we ask that you read this proposal with two eyes open.

Thank you.

³ Statistics Canada. (2017). *Aboriginal peoples in Canada: Key results from the 2016 Census*. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/171025/dq171025a-eng.htm>

⁴ Truth and Reconciliation Commission. (2015). *Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report, Vol. 6*, pp. 15-17.

⁵ Thomas, R. (2016) *Etuaptmumk: Two-Eyed Seeing*. TedxNSCC Waterfront. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bA9EwcFbVfg>

Development Process

Many students in the Vic community first learned about the history of the Ryerson name and its association with Victoria by reading Stephanie Spagnuolo's featured piece "What's in a Name?" published in *The Strand* in April 2016. Spagnuolo was a student in the Ryerson Vic One stream when she wrote the piece. It is well-researched, well-written, and captures much of the nuance of the issue; she writes,

A re-naming of the Ryerson stream is not only something that the students within the courses themselves demand, it will also undoubtedly better the stream in perpetuating values that enhance rather than contradict the ethical and equitable principles that an effective teacher must embody.⁶

The student conversation around changing the Ryerson name became a central issue in the 2018 Spring VUSAC elections. **Several candidates currently in office were elected on platforms that centered lobbying the University to remove Ryerson's name from these spaces;** including the current Vice-President External, Vice-President Student Organizations, and Academic Commissioner.^{7 8 9} Many students engaged with the idea during the campaign period. As a result, **these elected student representatives have a strong mandate to vigorously pursue this goal of the Victoria College Union.**

The consultation process began via email; the Indigenous Studies Students' Union (ISSU), the Indigenous Education Network (IEN) at OISE, the Centre for Indigenous Studies, and First Nations House were all initial contacts. We received responses from all of these organizations and their feedback was formative in shaping our ideas for this proposal. Each response reaffirmed our commitment to pursuing a name change - every single one was in favour.

We learned through this process that allowing the name to remain would be to continue the insult and harm caused by Ryerson to Indigenous peoples. We also learned that allowing the name to remain could substantially impact the comfort of Indigenous students, faculty, and staff living and working at the University, to the point where they may feel they cannot attend this institution. Undoubtedly, keeping the Ryerson name impacts access. Overall, it was clear that this change would be an impactful step forward for reconciliation and the establishment respectful relationships with Indigenous community members.

Out of these initial consultations came a series of meetings with a representative of ISSU. The work done and knowledge shared over the course of these meetings has been indispensable to

⁶ Spagnuolo, S. (2016) *What's in a Name?* *The Strand*. <https://thestrand.ca/whats-in-a-name/>

⁷ Doell, A. (2018) *VUSAC Elections 2018: Devon Wilton, Vice-President External Candidate*. *The Strand*. <https://thestrand.ca/vusac-spring-elections-2018-devon-wilton-vp-external-candidate/>

⁸ King, G. *VUSAC Elections 2018: Zoe Ritchie, VPSO Candidate*. *The Strand*. <https://thestrand.ca/vusac-spring-elections-2018-devon-wilton-vp-external-candidate/>

⁹ Chen, K. (2018) *VUSAC Elections 2018: Cameron Davies, Academic and Professional Development Commissioner Candidate*.

our growing learning and understanding. Representatives of ISSU provided many of the suggestions featured in this proposal and, for this, we sincerely thank them.

Further, the initiative to rename the Ryerson House and Ryerson Stream has the full support of VUSAC, Victoria College's elected student government representing its more than 3,300 students. The initiative was discussed at open, regular VUSAC meetings throughout the summer and fall semesters, including at Fall Caucus and with money set aside to run a campaign related to the issue at our Winter Budget Meeting. The initiative was **officially endorsed by unanimous vote** of the VUSAC at the meeting held February 1st, 2019.

Remembering Ryerson

The effects of Egerton Ryerson's contributions to education in 19th century Canada, particularly at Victoria College, are felt in our lives and on our campus to this day. As an important figure in the founding of Victoria, and as Principal and President, Ryerson's personal contributions to this college are impressive. As Superintendent of Common Schools and an influential figure in education more broadly, his contributions to the education of settler students in 1800s Ontario significantly improved the state of education in the province, to the benefit of students today. **A holistic picture of Ryerson's work, however, would not be complete without an understanding of his contributions to, and advocacy for, residential schools for Indigenous children in Canada. This aspect of Ryerson's history has too often been ignored.** The harmful effects of this part of his work are still felt today. This section reviews the history of Ryerson's impacts on Victoria College, education in Canada, and the genesis of the Residential School System

Ryerson and Victoria College

In 1835, Ryerson was selected by the as-yet unincorporated Board of the Upper Canada Academy (precursor to Victoria College) to travel to England and secure a Royal Charter from the King's government, as well as a grant and other monetary contributions for the founding of the Academy.¹⁰ Ryerson was a pastor in Kingston, Ontario and a prominent member of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference, the religious organization founding the Academy.¹¹ Ryerson supported the movement to found the Academy within the Methodist Conference.¹² He was successful in England and the charter was granted on October 12, 1836.¹³

Returning to Canada, Ryerson was appointed Principal of Victoria College at Cobourg in 1840 but was inaugurated in 1842. He remained at Victoria only until October of 1844, when he departed once again for England.¹⁴ This time, he travelled to study the educational systems of Europe in preparation for his new role as Superintendent of Common Schools. He did not resign the principalship and, in his absence, Alexander MacNab served as acting Principal of the College and Deputy Superintendent.¹⁵ When Ryerson resigned in 1847, he was succeeded by MacNab.¹⁶ Ryerson would return to Victoria in 1850 as President,¹⁷ to be succeeded by Samuel Sobieski Nelles in 1854.¹⁸

¹⁰ Burwash, Nathaniel. "The history of Victoria College," Victoria College Press (c1927) p. 25.

¹¹ Ibid. pp. 25-26.

¹² Ibid. p. 25.

¹³ Ibid. p. 41.

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 116.

¹⁵ Sissons, Charles Bruce. "A history of Victoria University," University of Toronto Press (1952) p. 66.

¹⁶ Sissons, Charles Bruce. (1952) p. 77.

¹⁷ Burwash, Nathaniel. (c1927) p. 156.

¹⁸ Sissons, Charles Bruce. (1952) p. 77.

Lower Burwash Residence, constructed in 1931, consists of houses named for Samuel Sobieski Nelles, Richard Pinch Bowles, Alfred Gandier, William Caven and Egerton Ryerson.¹⁹ Four of these five white men served as Principal, President, Chancellor, or some combination thereof at Victoria or Emmanuel College.²⁰ Caven, the exception, was Principal of Knox College and a prominent figure in Presbyterianism.²¹ The Vic One streams honour Egerton Ryerson alongside Margaret Chambers, Northrop Frye, Paul Gooch, Lester Pearson, Augusta Stowe-Gullen, Norman Jewison and Arthur Schawlow.²² This list of six men and two women, all white, includes Nobel laureates, past Presidents and Chancellors of Victoria.

Ryerson and Education in Ontario

In his work outside Victoria, Ryerson was a frequent contributor to the founding of educational institutions. He contributed to the establishment of the Normal School, Toronto's first teacher's college, as well as precursor institutions to the Royal Ontario Museum and several Ontario Universities. Ryerson's contributions to a free and compulsory public education are noteworthy and laudable.²³

Ryerson was also influential and progressive in advocating for secular education for settler children. In 1843, while serving as Principal of Victoria College, Ryerson gave his opinion on the Separate Schools Act, clearly stating:

... no child shall be compelled to read any religious book or attend any religious exercise contrary to the wishes of his parents and guardians ... My Report on a system of Public Elementary Instruction for Upper Canada, as well as various decisions and opinions which I have given, amply show that I am far from advocating the establishment of denominational schools²⁴

This conviction is further evidenced in Ryerson's expectations of the Upper Canada Academy (later Victoria College). In 1836 while seeking the charter in England, Ryerson wrote to his colleagues that:

... in [the Academy] no sectarian restriction is imposed in the selection of teachers, nor in the attendance of students. I beg also that it may be borne in mind that the institution is not for the education of young men for the Methodist ministry, but it is purely literary in its character and objects²⁵

¹⁹ "Lower Burwash Hall" *Victoria College Residence Services Website*, accessed 21 January 2019. http://www.vic.utoronto.ca/students/residence/Residence_Admissions/Residence_Buildings/Lower_Burwash_Hall.htm

²⁰ Sissons, Charles Bruce. (1952) pp. 103, 108, 304, 307.

²¹ *Ibid.* p. 286.

²² "About Vic One" *Victoria College Vic One Website*, accessed 21 January 2019.

²³ Ryerson University's Aboriginal Education Council. "Egerton Ryerson, the Residential School System and Truth and Reconciliation," (August 2010) https://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/aec/pdfs/egerton%20ryerson_fullstatement.pdf. p. 1.

²⁴ Putman, J. H. "Egerton Ryerson and education in Upper Canada," William Briggs (1912) pp. 177-178, qtd. in Ryerson University's Aboriginal Education Council (2010) p. 1.

²⁵ Burwash, Nathaniel. (c1927) p. 37.

Ryerson's belief in the benefits of secular public education did not extend to the education of Indigenous youth, however. Instead, he publicly advocated for and contributed ideas to the design of a system of Christian "Industrial Schools" for Indigenous children, which we know today as Residential Schools.

Ryerson and Residential Schools

The Bagot Report of 1842 has been viewed as the "starting point" of the Residential School System.²⁶ The report promoted the creation of "as many manual labour or industrial schools" as possible.²⁷ Ryerson is noted as a "very influential supporter of residential education" for Indigenous children at the time the Bagot report was published.²⁸

In 1847, the Department of Indian Affairs sought Ryerson's opinion, as Chief Superintendent of Education in Upper Canada, on the implementation of the Industrial Schools described in the Bagot Report five years prior.²⁹ In a letter to George Vardon, Assistant Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Ryerson provided an influential endorsement of "Industrial Schools for the benefit of aboriginal Indian tribes."³⁰ **It is clear from this letter that Ryerson's belief in the importance of secular public education for children did not extend to Indigenous children.** He wrote that for an Indigenous person,

nothing can be done to improve and elevate his character and condition without the aid of religious feeling. This information must be superadded to all others to **make the Indian a sober and industrious man**³¹

Further, he states that

It is a fact established by numerous experiments, that **the North American Indian cannot be civilized or preserved in a state of civilization (including habits of industry and sobriety) except in connection with, if not by the influence of, not only religious instruction and sentiment but of religious feelings.**³²

The letter is dated the 26th of May, 1847. At that time, Ryerson had likely not yet formally resigned the Principalship at Victoria (he resigned "during the summer or early autumn of 1847").³³ He remained heavily involved in College business thereafter, even presenting graduates at commencement and giving an address at closing exercises in 1848, in which he

²⁶ Ryerson University's Aboriginal Education Council. (2010) p. 2.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Milloy, J. S. "A national crime: The Canadian government and the residential school system, 1879 to 1986" University of Manitoba Press (1999) p. 15, qtd. in Ryerson University's Aboriginal Education Council (2010) p. 2.

²⁹ Ryerson University's Aboriginal Education Council. (2010) p. 2.

³⁰ Ryerson, Egerton. "Report by Dr. Ryerson on industrial schools, appendix A." In *Statistics respecting Indian Schools*. Government Printing Bureau (1898) p. 73, qtd. in Ryerson University's Aboriginal Education Council (2010) p. 2.

³¹ Ryerson, Egerton (1847) p. 73, qtd. in Ryerson University's Aboriginal Education Council (2010) p. 3.

³² Ryerson, Egerton (1847) p. 73, qtd. in Ryerson University's Aboriginal Education Council (2010) p. 3.

³³ Sissons, Charles Bruce. (1952) p. 77.

emphasized that it was the “special character” of the Wesleyan Methodist Church “to uphold [Christian] doctrine to society at large and **extend the message to the heathen tribes**” and how this character remained present at Victoria College.”³⁴

To conclude his report, Ryerson writes that he “will be **ready at any time to do what [he] can to promote the objects of these contemplated industrial schools.**”³⁵

Ryerson’s influence and position ensured that his endorsement was taken seriously by the Department. The majority of his suggestions were implemented in the Residential School system.³⁶ His letter was also a supporting reference in Nicholas Flood Davin’s 1878 report to John A. MacDonald’s government, titled “Report on Industrial Schools for Indians and Half-Breeds.”³⁷ Prior to the 1878 report, four schools were operational. **It was Davin’s report, citing Ryerson’s, that convinced the MacDonald government to expand the system on a national scale.**³⁸ **The letter is now known as “The Ryerson Report,”** and is one of eight historical reports important to the Residential School System compiled by the Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, alongside the White Paper and the 1876 Indian Act.³⁹

Remembering Ryerson

Egerton Ryerson is praised for his contributions to public education in Ontario and those contributions should not be forgotten. By perpetuating this myth of who Ryerson was, we are choosing to ignore the ugly history of his contributions to the residential school system.

The Vic One website currently states:

[Ryerson’s] legacy as a **visionary and enthusiastic proponent of free, high-quality public education is an example to all students** seeking an undergraduate education with the goal of entering the teaching profession.

Ryerson’s highly influential beliefs ultimately led to fundamental changes in public education in Ontario, including separate schooling for indigenous pupils. While **Ryerson did not directly advocate for systems such as Residential Schools**, his ideas did serve as the basis from which these developed. Thus the Ryerson stream honours the visionary educator, but it also facilitates ample classroom discussion and interrogation of all injustices that may take place or may have taken place in the classroom...⁴⁰

³⁴ Ibid. pp. 79-81.

³⁵ Ryerson, Egerton (1847) p. 77, qtd. in Ryerson University’s Aboriginal Education Council (2010) p. 3.

³⁶ Ryerson University’s Aboriginal Education Council. (2010) p. 3.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ “Reports” *National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation Website*, accessed 21 January 2019. <http://nctr.ca/reports.php>.

⁴⁰ “Egerton Ryerson Stream” *Victoria College Vic One Website*, accessed 21 January 2019. http://www.vic.utoronto.ca/Future_Students/vicone/About/Ryerson.htm.

This euphemistic description is a blatant mistelling of the truth of Ryerson's life and work. If Victoria is to go on extolling Ryerson as an "example to all students," it must do so with an honest and whole understanding of who he was. We have written off his involvement in the residential school system as simply a footnote in his career for too long. In reality, it was one of the most impactful things he did.

Victoria College can no longer willingly participate in telling a false version of Ryerson's history. To continue doing so would violate the principles which guide this proposal, the Truth and Reconciliation process, and Victoria University as a whole.

Calls to Action

“9. Reconciliation requires political will, joint leadership, trust building, accountability, and transparency, as well as substantial investment of resources.”

- *Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report: Guiding Principles*⁴¹

Board of Regents

We call on the Victoria University Board of Regents to direct Victoria University to rename Ryerson House on or before 1 September 2019.

We ask that this be done through an open and consultative process. At minimum, this process should involve the following parties: U of T's First Nations House, Indigenous Studies Students' Union, Indigenous Education Network, Centre for Indigenous Studies, and the Director of Indigenous Initiatives, and the Victoria University Students' Administrative Council.

Finally, we ask that the Board formally recommend that the Victoria University Senate rename the Ryerson Vic One Stream on the same timeline and through the same consultative process.

Victoria University Senate

We call on the Victoria University Senate to rename the Ryerson Vic One Stream on or before 1 September 2019.

Again, we ask that this be done through an open and consultative process. At minimum, this process should involve the following parties: U of T's First Nations House, Indigenous Studies Students' Union, Indigenous Education Network, Centre for Indigenous Studies, and the Director of Indigenous Initiatives, and the Victoria University Students' Administrative Council.

⁴¹ Truth and Reconciliation Commission. (2015). pp. 15-17.

Societal Precedent

Canadian Educational Institutions

We draw on three examples from post-secondary institutions and two others from primary and secondary institutions.

University of Victoria changes name of residence building, Trutch Hall

On May 30, 2017 the University of Victoria's Board of Governors decided to rename Trutch Hall, a residence building. This decision was made in light of Sir Joseph W. Trutch's "attitude towards indigenous peoples" and in recognition that **"Students currently living in the Trutch residence or assigned to it in the future may feel uncomfortable or conflicted to be residing in or associated with the building as named". Further, the Board of Governors believe that "Renaming is not an attempt to erase history or diminish the accomplishments of historical figures, [...] Rather, the intent is to ensure that the UVic campus environment is aligned with our values."**⁴² It is time for U of T's Victoria to ensure that our campus similarly reflects our values.

One student activist involved in the years-long campaign made direct reference to the benefits the decision will have on how students identify with the space.^{43 44} In adopting President William Robins Presidential Priorities, we at Victoria University have acknowledged that space is an integral part of our student's experience. We should be leveraging our spaces to create communities of learning welcoming to all.

Ryerson University adds plaque near statue of Egerton Ryerson

In a direct move to advance the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Ryerson University installed a plaque near a campus statue of Egerton Ryerson in January of 2018. The plaque contextualizes history by including the following text:

⁴² University of Victoria. (2017). *Trutch name to be removed from residence*. University of Victoria News. <https://www.uvic.ca/news/topics/2017+trutch-residence-renaming+ring>.

⁴³ Britten, L. (2017) *UVic to rename Trutch building because of colonial politician's racist legacy*. CBC news. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/uvic-trutch-joseph-1.4147789?fbclid=IwAR3PSvoP540B9KuRHUn2I5O_Nbzva-eUzj69BBJYKd-TluswpURoVaBXRas

⁴⁴ Ogden, A. (2017) *Students lead push to rename Joseph Trutch Hall*. The Martlet. <http://www.martlet.ca/students-lead-push-to-rename-joseph-trutch-hall/>

This plaque serves as a reminder of Ryerson University's commitment to moving forward in the spirit of truth and reconciliation. Egerton Ryerson is widely known for his contributions to Ontario's public educational system. As Chief Superintendent of Education, **Ryerson's recommendations were instrumental in the design and implementation of the Indian Residential School System.** In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission reported that children in the schools were subjected to unthinkable abuse and neglect, to medical experimentation, punishment for the practice of cultures or languages and death. **The aim of the Residential School System was cultural genocide.**⁴⁵

McGill University students vote to change sports team name from Redmen

In November of 2018, over 4,600 McGill University students voted in favour of changing their varsity men's teams' names from the Redmen due to the irrefutable anti-Indigenous connotations of the name.⁴⁶ While this vote is non-binding for McGill's administration, **it is indicative of a national student movement to advance reconciliation by recognizing our universities' histories in full.**

Moreover, while it did not officially recommend changing the name of the sports team, **a McGill University report did acknowledge that "In some cases, renaming may be the sole satisfactory measure".**⁴⁷ This proposal is a direct response to one such case.

Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario calls for renaming of buildings currently named for Sir John A. Macdonald

August 2017 saw the largest teacher federation in Canada, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO), call for the renaming of all schools and buildings named after Sir John A. Macdonald due to his role as an architect of the residential school system.⁴⁸ In the words of the ETFO's President, **this motion asks school boards to recognize "the powerful impact our learning environments have on how our students see themselves."**⁴⁹ In

⁴⁵ Sloan, W. (2018) *Plaque unveiling a step towards truth and reconciliation.* Ryerson University News. <https://www.ryerson.ca/news-events/news/2018/07/plaque-unveiling-a-step-towards-truth-and-reconciliation/?fbclid=IwAR045Z918dYWywAinvUanDBYcjdpekrM5ilTpxMZDIvsMyXMuwAjLu64wul>

⁴⁶ Stevenson, V. (2018) *McGill students vote to change Redmen sports teams' name.* CBC News. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/mcgill-student-union-vote-in-favour-to-change-sports-team-name-1.4902637>

⁴⁷ Peritz, I. (2018). *McGill University report stops short of recommending a name change for sports teams.* <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-mcgill-university-report-stops-short-of-recommending-a-name-change-for/>

⁴⁸ The Canadian Press. (2017). *Teachers' union wants John A. Macdonald schools renamed.* Maclean's. <https://www.macleans.ca/news/teachers-union-john-a-macdonald-schools-renamed/>

⁴⁹ Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario. (2017). ETFO Media Room. www.etfo.ca/AboutETFO/MediaRoom/MediaReleases/pages/etfo%20passes%20motion%20to%20rename%20buildings%20named%20after%20sir%20john%20a-%20macdonald.aspx

presenting you with this proposal, we are asking our Board of Regents and Senate to do the same.

School Trustees in City of Regina's vote to rename Davin School

Motivated by complaints received regarding Nicholas Flood Davin's involvement in establishing residential schools, trustees of The Regina Public School Board voted to rename Davin School to Crescents School for the 2018-19 school year. Ahead of this vote, the school board engaged in online consultations with the community and received more than a thousand responses.^{50 51}

Canadian Communities

The following includes examples of the renaming of a parliamentary building, removal of two statues, name changes of a bridge and a road, and evidence to show the growing movement of recognizing Indigenous names for Canadian places.

Langevin Block, home to Prime Minister's Office, renamed in spirit of reconciliation

Hector-Louis Langevin argued that the residential school system be instituted during his time as Minister of Public Works.⁵² He is a large part of why the schools had a mandate to assimilate Indigenous children, seeing them as a "final solution" to the 'indian problem'.⁵³

In 2017, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced that Langevin Block, which houses the Prime Minister's Office, would be renamed to the Office of the Prime Minister and the Privy Council. In doing so, he acknowledged that the government had "heard from you [the public] and the TRC (Truth and Reconciliation Commission) and from many indigenous communities over the past year that **there is a deep pain in knowing that ... building carries a name so closely associated with the horror of residential schools**".⁵⁴ We are asking Victoria University's Board of Regents to acknowledge that same pain in our own community.

⁵⁰ CTV Regina. (2018) *School trustees vote to change name of Davin School*.

<https://regina.ctvnews.ca/school-trustees-vote-to-change-name-of-davin-school-1.3979962>

⁵¹ Martin, A. (2018). *Regina Public School Board to vote Tuesday on Davin School name change*. The Province.

<https://theprovince.com/news/local-news/regina-public-school-board-to-vote-tuesday-on-davin-school-name-change/wcm/e5eadd02-b7de-4d8f-b8f1-0243393f3a5a>

⁵² Kirkup, K. (2017). *Father of Confederation's name stripped from Prime Minister's Office Building*. CTV News.

<https://bc.ctvnews.ca/father-of-confederation-s-name-stripped-from-prime-minister-s-office-building-1.3469615?autoplay=true>

⁵³ The Truth Commission into Genocide in Canada. (2001). *Hidden From History: The Canadian Holocaust: The Untold Story of the Genocide of Aboriginal Peoples by Church and State in Canada*.

⁵⁴ Kirkup, K. (2017). *Father of Confederation's name stripped from Prime Minister's Office Building*.

Halifax statue of Edward Cornwallis removed in light of colonial history

Halifax's regional city council voted that a statue of Edward Cornwallis be removed from a prominent park in downtown Halifax. Cornwallis played an infamous role in a proclamation which offered a bounty for the scalps of Mi'kmaq people.⁵⁵

As part of the conversation, City Councillor Richard Zurawski made the compelling argument that **history is not made by statues, saying "That's why we pulled down Saddam Hussein. That's why we pulled down Lenin. History remains: it is written in books; it is discussed; it is in museums.** So if we want reconciliation, we pull down the statue immediately."⁵⁶ Even if Victoria University takes a key step toward reconciliation by renaming a residence and an academic stream, our school's history will live on in the archives at E.J. Pratt Library, in our classrooms, and in our community discussions.

Of the statue's removal, Mi'kmaq activist Rebecca Moore said, **"What it means to me is that it's really showing that violence against Indigenous people and Indigenous women is not OK and it's not acceptable and that we won't stand for it.** That's what it symbolizes to me."⁵⁷

British Columbia Law Society removes statue of Justice Begbie

The Law Society of British Columbia removed a statue of the first Chief Justice of BC, Justice Begbie, in 2017. Begbie notoriously sentenced six Indigenous chiefs to hanging for defending their land and people. They explicitly named the removal 'As a step toward reconciliation'.⁵⁸

"In this time of truth and reconciliation, Indigenous history and experiences can no longer be ignored," Tsilhqot'in Chief Joe Alphonse said in response to the removal.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Cecco, L. (2018). *Canada confronts colonial past as Halifax removes statue of city's founder*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/feb/06/canada-halifax-statue-edward-cornwallis>

⁵⁶ Patil, A. (2018) *Cornwallis statue to be removed from Halifax park after council vote*.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/cornwallis-statue-to-be-removed-from-halifax-park-1.451056>

⁵⁷ Canadian Press (2018). *Edward Cornwallis Statue Removed From Halifax Park*. Huffington Post.

https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2018/01/31/edward-cornwallis-statue-removed-from-halifax-park_a_23349534/

⁵⁸ Lazaruk, S. (2017) *Law Society will remove statue of B.C.'s 'hanging judge'*. Vancouver Sun.

<https://vancouversun.com/news/local-news/law-society-will-remove-statue-of-b-c-s-hanging-judge>

⁵⁹ Williams, L. (2017). *First Nation applauds B.C. law society for removing controversial statue*. The Globe and Mail.

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/first-nation-applauds-bc-law-society-for-removing-controversial-statue/article35198654/>

Calgary's Langevin bridge renamed Reconciliation Bridge

Yet another direct response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, Calgary's city council vote to rename Langevin Bridge to Reconciliation Bridge. Calgary's Mayor, Naheed Nenshi, said it is important to recognize "what impacts his name has on others in our community [...] It's about acknowledging that history is complicated."⁶⁰

Rod Hunter, a residential school survivor, spoke on the importance of names when he said, **"Renaming is something great for me because of what I went through and what some of my survivors went through. It means a great deal. It means thank you from our hearts for recognizing us and for reconciliation. In our language it means to change your mind and to change your heart and to be as one."**⁶¹

Colonization Road in Blind River renamed

In a decision that Chief Reg Niganobe of the Mississauga First Nation calls "a small step to healing for our people and building a relationship",⁶² the Town of Blind River renamed a street from 'Colonization Road'. It is now named in honour of an Indigenous artist who grew up in the town, Cecil Youngfox.

Indigenous languages replacing European ones on Canadian plazas, maps, parks

In 2018, two Vancouver public plazas were renamed as part of the city's efforts toward reconciliation. Formerly known as Vancouver Art Gallery North Plaza and the Queen Elizabeth Theatre Plaza, they now bear the names šxʷłexən Xwtl'a7shn and šxʷłənəq Xwtl'e7énk. The first denotes a place one is invited to and the second, a place where a cultural event occurs.

Renaming in the honour of Indigenous peoples was described as an opportunity to acknowledge the *living legacy* of Coast Salish Peoples.⁶³

⁶⁰ Lehmann, J. (2017) *Calgary's Langevin Bridge to be renamed Reconciliation Bridge*. The Globe and Mail.

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/alberta/calgarys-langevin-bridge-to-be-renamed-reconciliation-bridge/article33713816/>

⁶¹ de Castillo, C. K. (2018). *Calgary's Reconciliation Bridge renamed: "We can't change the past but we are not prisoners of it"*. Global News.

<https://globalnews.ca/news/4233952/calgarys-reconciliation-bridge-renamed-we-cant-change-the-past-but-we-are-not-prisoners-of-it/>

⁶² Louttit, L. (2017) *'It changes our history', meaningful street renaming*. CTV News.

⁶³ City of Vancouver. (2018). *In historic move, two high-profile public plazas given Indigenous names*. <https://vancouver.ca/news-calendar/two-high-profile-public-plazas-given-indigenous-names.aspx>

Following this, the Vancouver park board identified the next step toward reconciliation as honoring the Indigenous names of the city's parks and beaches by voting to work with the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations to identify new names for such sites.⁶⁴

From Montreal, which plans to rename a street known as Amherst and replace it with an Indigenous name, to Ottawa's renaming of River Street to Onigam (Algonquin for 'portage') Street, Indigenous names are reclaiming their rightful spaces on Canada's map. In fact, in 2017 over 600 Indigenous place names were added to the national registry.⁶⁵

Beyond Canada

A small sampling of name changes in post-secondary institutions outside of Canada.

Stanford University removes Spanish missionary's name from three buildings

Stanford has renamed two buildings and a mall on its campus that were named after a leader of the California mission system, which had violent impacts on Native Americans.⁶⁶

Yale renames undergraduate residence previously named for white supremacist

Yale's President announced that an undergraduate residence building previously named for a white supremacist would be renamed **because his legacy "fundamentally conflicts with Yale's mission and values"**.⁶⁷ Here, again, we see messaging reinforcing the fact that the names of our spaces are a reflection of our values.

Georgetown University renames two campus buildings that honoured racists

Georgetown University will rename two campus buildings, including naming one in honour of a runaway slave, as their previous names honour white supremacists.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Chan, C. (2018) *Park board votes to consider Indigenous names for Vancouver parks*. Vancouver Sun. <https://vancouversun.com/news/local-news/park-board-votes-to-consider-indigenous-names-for-vancouver-parks>

⁶⁵ The Economist. (2018) *On Canadian maps, indigenous names are replacing European ones*. <https://www.economist.com/the-americas/2018/01/04/on-canadian-maps-indigenous-names-are-replacing-european-ones>

⁶⁶ Ahmed, S. (2018). *Stanford is stripping the name of a Catholic saint over his treatment of Native Americans*. CNN Health. <https://www-m.cnn.com/2018/09/17/health/junipero-serra-stanford-building-name-trnd/index.html>

⁶⁷ Yale University News. (2017) *Yale changes Calhoun College's name to honor Grace Murray Hopper*. <https://news.yale.edu/2017/02/11/yale-change-calhoun-college-s-name-honor-grace-murray-hopper-0>

⁶⁸ CBS News. (2017) *Harvard University confronts historical ties to slavery*. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/harvard-university-confronts-historical-ties-to-slavery-with-conference-ta-nehisi-coates/>

University of Melbourne removes racist professor's name from building

A former University of Melbourne professor was discovered to be an influential force in the international eugenics movement. A building named after him has had a name change after a push by students and faculty.⁶⁹

Princeton students advocated for removal of Woodrow Wilson's name from buildings

Princeton students rallied to remove the name of Woodrow Wilson from a prominent campus building. Woodrow was a pro-slavery white supremacist. One student activist, Ozioma Obi-Onuoha, contextualized the advocacy efforts by saying **“we don't believe that removing his name is a form of erasure, because we're also asking for his history to be acknowledged permanently by the university, in its entirety.”**⁷⁰ At Victoria, we are not advocating for an erasure of history, but an acknowledgement of its complexity.

⁶⁹ BBC News. (2017). *The racist professor, the bones and a university naming row*.
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-39376013>

⁷⁰ Brait, E. (2015). *Princeton students demand removal of Woodrow Wilson's name from buildings*. The Guardian.
<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/nov/23/princeton-woodrow-wilson-racism-students-remove-name>

Visioning

Ryerson House

The scope of this proposal does not include offering a specific and complete picture of what the University should change the name of the house and stream to, nor does it attempt to govern the university's approach to doing so; rather, we are seeking a commitment to change and an assurance that it will come about in a timely manner with due consultation. To that end, we would like to offer several considerations gained from our consultations that we hope will be given thought as this project moves forward.

A New Name

Beyond an official name change, the true impact of this project necessitates that Ryerson House cease to be referred to as such on campus. The community, including administration and, most importantly, residence services should transition to affirming a new house name in both spirit and practice.

Selecting a new name for the house should be an open and collaborative process involving Indigenous community members, students, administration, and others. We hope that, although the other houses of Lower Burwash will retain their names, suggestions are not limited to similar options. For example, it might be valuable for Victoria to take this opportunity to honour an Indigenous woman, mindful that the other houses are named for white men. Further, we suggest that the process consider potential names besides prominent historical figures. "It was suggested to us by a representative of ISSU that naming the space in an Indigenous language of historical importance to the land would be valuable; for example, this could be a translation of a concept, or place name.

Physical Space

The name change should be reflected in the physical space at Ryerson House. Currently, the name is inscribed on the wall outside the door. This change does not necessarily require that the name be removed from the wall. One strong direction could be to erect a new sign or plaque, clearly indicating the new name of the house. This is one way to signal that history is being contextualized, not erased. Moreover, a commemorative plaque would be an invaluable addition to the space. It might describe the history of the name of the house, and why it was changed and when. It should include translations of the text in Indigenous languages. An element, like a plaque, which serves to tell the true history of the space, in the space, is crucial to the goals of this project, such as strengthening communal memory and helping to educate the community, without erasing or revising history.

We also encourage the University to consider more broadly what changes may be made to contribute to decolonizing the space - for example, a painted mural by an Indigenous artist on

the blank wall opposite Ryerson house was one possibility suggested. Moreover, the University should think broadly and deeply about what aspects of the space may prohibit Indigenous students from engaging with it freely. Undertaking any modifications to the building necessary to permit smudging in the space could be one important way to engage in this thinking. It is necessary to consider the space holistically for this project to succeed in making beneficial changes to our community beyond the changing of a name.

President's Portrait

Beyond recognition in the house and stream's names, Egerton Ryerson's portrait hangs in the A. B. B. Moore foyer of Old Vic, named for another past president. Ryerson's portrait is first in a line of portraits of all of Victoria's Presidents, hanging under the quote "education must take place in a community," a sentiment antithetical to the work of the Residential School System. This is another way the University continues to glorify Ryerson's memory. The University should consider any changes to this portrait's display that come as recommendations from its Indigenous community - this may include removal, relocation, or addition of a plaque adjacent to it.

Ryerson Stream

A New Name

We recommend that the stream be renamed through a consultative process analogous to that of the house. **We would urge that the University bear in mind that all eight Vic One streams are named for white people, six of whom are white men.** It would be valuable for Victoria to take this opportunity to honour an Indigenous woman when renaming the stream. One suggestion repeatedly brought forward in consultation was Dr. Cindy Blackstock, a member of the Gitksan First Nation with a notable career in child protection and Indigenous children's rights, with a focus on access to education.⁷¹

Other Considerations

Further changes to the stream may be considered to address the impact of honouring Ryerson's name, such as a curriculum focus on Indigenous education, or the history of the Residential School System. A monetary contribution from the University towards promoting Indigenous education was also suggested. One way to do this would be to establish a Board of Regents Scholarship that is awarded each year to an Indigenous student in the Vic One program.

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⁷¹ "Cindy Blackstock, Professor" *McGill University School of Social Work Website*, accessed 21 January 2019. <https://www.mcgill.ca/socialwork/people-0/faculty/cindy-blackstock>.

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