Welcoming Winnipeg – Renaming Skatepark West to Matt Jonsson Memorial Skatepark *Feedback Summary*

July 2021

Welcoming Winnipeg

The Welcoming Winnipeg initiative is just one aspect of the reconciliation process the City of Winnipeg is committed to, and will help ensure that the contributions, experiences, and perspectives of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit are reflected truthfully in our stories, historical markers, and place names.

To date, this has included Council passing a motion to adopt the Welcoming Winnipeg: Reconciling our History Policy. This policy was developed to guide the City in making decisions regarding requests to create new, add to or remove/rename historical markers and place names and resolve the absence of Indigenous perspectives, experiences and contributions in the stories remembered and commemorated.

This new process includes posting change requests on the City of Winnipeg website for two weeks, to provide the opportunity for residents to provide feedback by:

- Completing a short online survey;
- Calling 204-986-4549 and leaving a voice message;
- Registering to appear as a delegation before the Committee of Community Members.

Background

All City park renaming requests now go through the Welcoming Winnipeg process which is about ensuring a proactive lens of balance, inclusion and Indigenous perspectives is used when making changes to the City's historical markers and place names.

A request was submitted by a member of the public to rename Skatepark West to Matt Jonsson Memorial Skatepark. This park is located in the St. James ward. Details of the request can be found here.

Residents were invited to provide feedback from June 18, 2021 to July 1, 2021.

Following the collection of feedback, input was provided to the Committee of Community Members to make a recommendation for Council's consideration.

Promotion

Opportunities to provide input on the renaming were promoted using the following methods:

- City of Winnipeg website – posted June 18, 2021
- Welcoming Winnipeg e-mail distribution list with over 190 recipients – June 18, 2021
- Internal City of Winnipeg e-mail distribution list – June 30, 2021
- City of Winnipeg Facebook post with 27,345 followers – June 29, 2021
- City of Winnipeg Twitter post with 103,400 followers – June 29, 2021

What We Heard

35 responses were received through the online survey. 0 voice messages were received.

In response to the question: Do you think the Committee of Community Members should support this request?

- 30 respondents said yes
- 3 respondents said no
- 2 respondents said undecided

Examples of reasons identified for not supporting the change were:

"We should learn not to name parks after people. You never know their history and the negative things they have done that might surface in the future."

"There is nothing about this request that is aligned with reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, and it seems to show contempt for the purpose of Welcoming Winnipeg…"

"I'm against renaming the skate park to an individual because I feel that in light of current events regarding naming buildings to a particular individual, it all seems premature because who's to say later on in the future something will be discovered about the individual and then another renaming will be required. I suggest naming the park after something neutral or just leave it. Thank you."

To learn more about Welcoming Winnipeg please visit winnipeg.ca/WelcomingWinnipeg

Winnipeg

Examples of reasons identified for supporting the change were:

"This gesture will honour a young person who gave his time to help other youth engage in healthy activities. Perhaps with this small recognition, the story of his work can inspire others to carry on with his spirit of volunteerism."

"Matt Jonsson has had a positive influence on youth in this community. He is held in high esteem as an athletic coach and mentor. Youth that occupy this park cannot help but reflect on Matt's legacy as an athlete and the meaningful contribution he made on others."

"It would be fantastic if the name changed to honor Matt. He was a fantastic kid and was heavily involved in the basketball and BMX community. After he graduated he also came back to Sturgeon Heights Collegiate to coach basketball. He had a smile and laugh that lit up our gym. He was also a 'Joe' in my annual fundraiser 'Pros VS Joes'. He was a big part of this event which raised $15,000 and was used to make deluxe X-mas hampers for St. James School Division families in need that year. He also delivered some of these hampers to the families."

How Input was Considered

Below is a summary of changes that have been made, based on input.

What We Heard	How It Was Considered
Waste of time/resources to rename a park.	The Welcoming Winnipeg process was established and approved by Council to allow any resident to bring forward a request.
This request does not belong in the Welcoming Winnipeg process and should be directed to whatever naming/renaming process the City has in place.	Communication materials have been updated to inform the public that Welcoming Winnipeg is now the process through which the City makes changes to city-owned historical markers and place names, excluding streets.