Winnipeg | Indigenous Relations
Relations avec les Autochtones

JOURNEY OF RECONCILIATION
LES CHEMINS DE LA RÉCONCILIATION

WELCOMING WINNIPEG – Request Summary

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Request ID: 2021-008

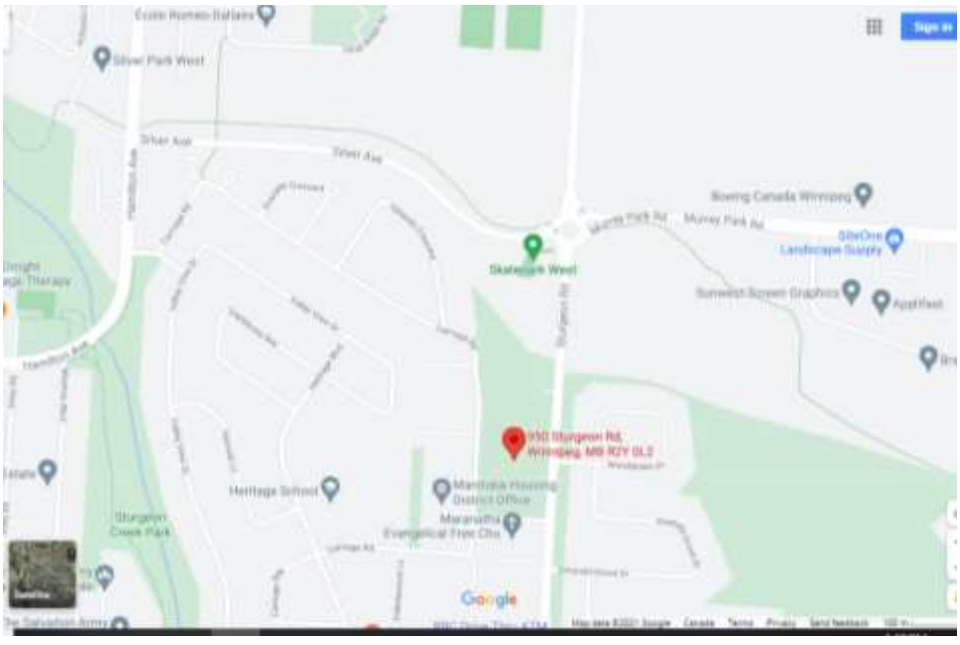
Name of Request: Renaming Skatepark West to Matt Jonsson Memorial Skatepark

Address: 950 Sturgeon Road (corner of Sturgeon Road and Silver Avenue)

Demonstrated Community Support:

- Petition submitted: No. Due to COVID due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and physical distancing precautions, the City has temporarily suspended this requirement.
- Letters of support provided: 2 letters/communications were received in support of this request.

Project Details:



How does this renaming contribute to a 'Welcoming Winnipeg', as defined in the policy and what kind of evidence/research can be provided to support this state

This renaming contributes to a Welcoming Winnipeg; it offers an educational opportunity as it honours a Winnipegger who, as a child, helped design this skatepark. As a young adult, Matt gave back to his community by volunteering as an assistant basketball coach at Sturgeon Heights Collegiate.

Does this site have historical significance to the Indigenous community? Research Support:

The City of Winnipeg, and the site of the skateboard park, is in Treaty No. 1 territory and the homeland of the Métis Nation.

The skateboard park is located in the St. James-Assiniboia ward.

Assiniboin (Nakota) First Nation

The Assiniboins were one of the main groups occupying Manitoba before the Europeans arrived. The Assiniboins were known historically as bison hunters. As the fur trade developed, they played major roles, including guides, traders, middlemen and provisioners of trading posts. When their population declined dramatically with the introduction of European-introduced diseases and the destruction of the bison herds, the Assiniboin shifted westward into Saskatchewan, Alberta and Manitoba. The name Assiniboin probably comes from the Cree term *Assee-nee-pay-tock* or *Assinipoet*. Assiniboin peoples have also been called *Nakota* referring to their language, or the *Hohe*. Geographical and community landmarks such as the Assiniboine River were named after the Assiniboin peoples.

The first permanent European agricultural settlement, in what is now Manitoba, was established on the Red River by Thomas Douglas, 5th Earl of Selkirk, in 1811. The settlement was located on a portion of Rupertsland which Selkirk acquired from the Hudson's Bay Company. Called Assiniboia, it was named for its indigenous population of Assiniboins. In 1811 Assiniboia compromised of 74 million acres and included parts of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Minnesota, and North and South Dakota. In 1818 the 49th parallel became the border between the United States and British North America, cutting off the southern half of Assiniboia.

Source: https://stjamesmuseum.com/st-james-assiniboia-history/

Additionally, it appears as though the skatepark is located on a former river lot (as of 1874), per the plan: https://www.flickr.com/photos/manitobamaps/2079199096

It looks like it may have been lot 32.

Additional support would need to be provided to confirm the accuracy of this research.

If this application is not supported, what would the negative impact on the community be? (If applicable)

This renaming is to honor the memory of our beloved Matt Jonsson, who as a child, helped design the skatepark. His untimely passing has affected an entire community and all people involved are in support of recognizing Matt's devotion to BMX and the Skatepark.

Any additional information the applicant would like the CCM to consider in making their recommendation.

On May 3, 2021, the Assiniboia Community Committee recommended to the Executive Policy Committee (EPC) that the Winnipeg Public Service be directed to report back on renaming Skatepark West to “Matt Jonsson Memorial Skatepark”.

DECISION MAKING HISTORY:

Moved by Councillor Gillingham,

WHEREAS Skatepark West, located at Silver Avenue and Sturgeon Road, was opened in 2007 and is a popular skatepark offering a safe location for youth to develop their BMX and skateboarding skills;

AND WHEREAS Matt Jonsson was involved in the design of Skatepark West, and was a vital member of the tight-knit BMX community who participated in many other aspects of the St. James community;

AND WHEREAS Matt Jonsson passed away in February 2021 after a tragic accident;

AND WHEREAS the area Councillor is working with the Jonsson family in their initiative to rename Skatepark West to “Matt Jonsson Memorial Skatepark”;

AND WHEREAS the Jonsson family will apply through the Welcoming Winnipeg review process as part of the name change request;

AND WHEREAS the “Skatepark West” name was related to the area in which the skatepark is located and was not named for any person, the name change would not detract from any historical significance associated to it;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Winnipeg Public Service be directed to report back on renaming Skatepark West to “Matt Jonsson Memorial Skatepark”.

On May 18, 2021, EPC laid the matter over for 30 days and acknowledged that this renaming would be undertaken through the Welcoming Winnipeg process.

Additional information (via news stories) below.

CBC article:

https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/matt-jonsson-basketball-winnipeg-death-1.5930919

Death of beloved Winnipeg basketball coach after freak accident a blow to the community, friends say

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Matt Jonsson, 24, was a committed assistant basketball coach, loving brother and son



Rachel Bergen · CBC News · Posted: Feb 28, 2021 6:00 AM CT | Last Updated: February 28



Matt Jonsson died last week after suffering a severe spinal injury in a freak accident. His family is remembering him as a kind-hearted, active young man. (Matt Jonsson Recovery/Facebook)

21 comments

Family and friends are mourning the loss of a 24-year-old Winnipeg man who passed away after suffering brain damage in a freak accident earlier this month.

On Feb. 6, Matt Jonsson hit his head on a low basement ceiling and suffered a severe spinal injury that left him paralyzed below the chest. He was hospitalized and put on a ventilator as doctors worked to stabilize the fracture and wait for the swelling to go down.

In that time, family members worked to raise money to renovate his home so it was wheelchair accessible.

"It's very hard. It's just very unexpected because in the beginning we were faced with him being paralyzed, which I was very upset about. But now in hindsight, I wish that that's all that was happening," said his mother Tish Jonsson.

Matt suffered severe brain damage as a result of the injury and doctors told his family he'd never wake up. He was taken off life support last week.



Matt Jonsson (right) was taken off life support on Feb. 20. (Matt Jonsson Recovery/Facebook)

For a man who loved to ride BMX and dirt bikes and play sports, the accident that took his life seems unfathomable.

"[Matt and his brother Cole] got hurt so many times and so many times that they should have broken their necks, I think. And then for a senseless thing like this to happen, I don't understand. I just don't understand it at all," Jonsson said.

She says her son was loved by many and will be remembered as a generous, sweet man who loved adventure.

Once Matt saw a $100 bill floating down the street and ran out of the house to grab it.

"My mother and I tried to convince him to put it in the bank, but he wasn't having it. He went to the skate park and he ordered pizza and drinks for everybody," Jonsson said.

"It didn't matter who it was. And I think that sums him up pretty good."

She says her son, whom she worked and lived with, always wrapped her in a big hug and told her how much he loved her.

Dedicated basketball player, coach

Evan Cox knew Matt as his teacher, coworker and friend.

Cox, who is a physical education teacher at Sturgeon Heights Collegiate, coached boys basketball when Matt was a student there. Last year, Matt joined Cox as an assistant coach on the girls basketball team at the school.

Ever since he was a player, Cox said Matt was driven.

"He kind of left a legacy of playing the game the right way, an insanely hard worker [who] dedicated so much of his time to just pursuing excellence, just trying to get better every single day," he said.

"I think he was doing the same thing to get the girls to have that kind of intensity, that kind of drive and focus and of building hope in them that they can try to get to where they want to get to."

Another coach, Stephen Tackie worked with Matt throughout high school and said he was a truly unique student.

"He recognized he was part of something bigger than himself, and I think he took that role on that he had to give back."

Matt was also instrumental in getting Skate Park West off the ground in Sturgeon Creek.

He went to planning meetings, worked to raise money to have it built and when it did open, he took first aid training and volunteered to keep watch in case anyone got hurt.

Jonsson says the money her family raised for Matt when he was in the hospital — nearly $87,000 — will go to building memorial benches at Skate Park West and starting a fund to help people play basketball who may not have the means.

"He touched so many people," Jonsson says. "We're going to use that money to honour him, to keep his legacy going."

CBC article:

https://winnipeg.ctvnews.ca/winnipeg-skatepark-could-be-renamed-to-honour-one-of-its-designers-who-died-this-year-1.5404594

Winnipeg skatepark could be renamed to honour one of its designers who died this year

Charles LefebvreSupervising News Producer - Digital
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Published Tuesday, April 27, 2021 3:37PM CST



Matt Jonsson is pictured in an undated image (Photo courtesy Shelby Kessen).

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WINNIPEG -- A Winnipeg city councillor is looking to rename a skatepark in the city to memorialize a man who helped design the park, and passed away following a tragic accident earlier this year.

Coun. Scott Gillingham (St. James) said he is working with the family of Matt Jonsson to rename Skatepark West to the Matt Jonsson Memorial Skatepark.

“Matt Jonsson had an impact on so many people in St. James, and renaming the park in his honour keeps his memory alive, and reminds us all of the power and impact that young people have,” Gillingham said.

Related Stories

- 'One of a kind': Support grows for Winnipeg man who broke his neck in shocking accident

Jonsson, an avid BMX rider, passed away in February at the age of 24 following a freak accident. He was hanging out with friends in his basement when he jumped up and hit his head on a low-hanging ceiling, breaking his neck. He suffered brain damage and died soon after the accident.

Matt was one of the committee members involved with the initial design of SkatePark West, along with his brother Cole, noting they helped design it.

“When Matt was young, around the age of nine, that was when the concept of the Skate Park began,” said Tish Jonsson, Matt’s mother.

Cole said renaming the park after his brother would mean a lot, and help keep his memory alive.

“We both run deep in the BMX community, and it’s a very tight-knit BMX community,” he said. “I think this means a lot to everyone, not just Matt. I think he’d be very proud.”

Gillingham plans to introduce the motion in May. If it is passed, a renaming ceremony will take place later this year.

-With files from CTV's Glenn Pismenny