Welcoming Winnipeg – Renaming Wellington Park to Theodore Niizhota Fontaine Park

Feedback Summary

September 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 the Assiniboia Residential School Legacy Group to rename Wellington Park to Theodore Niizhota Fontaine Park. This park is located in the River Heights – Fort Garry ward. Details of the request can be found here.

Residents were invited to provide feedback from August 12, 2021 to August 26, 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 August 12, 2021
- Welcoming Winnipeg e-mail distribution list with over 190 recipients – August 16, 2021
- Internal City of Winnipeg e-mail distribution list – August 23, 2021
- City of Winnipeg Facebook post with 27,345 followers – August 19, 2021
- City of Winnipeg Twitter post with 103,400 followers – August 19, 2021

What We Heard

311 responses were received through the online survey. 2 voice messages were received.

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

- 299 respondents said yes
- 8 respondents said no
- 6 respondents said undecided

Examples of reasons identified for not supporting the change were:

"If you want to rename the park it should be to a neutral name, not another man's name of a different culture."

"Too obscure of a person; many other worthy Winnipegers are deserving of this recognition."

"Stop erasing history."

Examples of reasons identified for supporting the change were:

"Ted Fontaine was a wonderful man - having survived the residential school system to go on to initiate and support many worthy endeavours for Indigenous people. This would be a worthy recognition for a great man."

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

Winnipeg

"As most people in Winnipeg and particularly residents who have lived in River Heights and the south end in general did not know a residential school was in their midst I feel it's appropriate and timely to bring that history forward to today. It would contribute to a deeper understanding and move toward reconciling our past with a more desirable future. Theodore Fontaine's commitment to his community and reconciliation is absolutely worthy of this request."

"Renaming the park to honour Theodore Fontaine is not simply a gesture of respect or recognition. It is an opportunity to generate lasting dialogue across the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, not only in the River Heights and Crescentwood areas, but across Winnipeg. It is an opportunity for people to ask why...who was he...how should he be remembered...why didn't we know about this...how can we contribute to his lifelong work towards forgiveness, public education and reconciliation. Many families will already know Theodore through his many presentations in Winnipeg schools from K-12 and all levels of college and university education. Renaming the park will be a catalyst for them to help educate others and build community."

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.