THE UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG

22 November 2023

515 Portage Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 2E9

Dear Mayor Gillingham and Members of City Council,

Since 2020, members of the **Welcoming Winnipeg (WW) Committee of Community Members** (CCM) have provided recommendations to the Executive Policy Committee (EPC) and Council to "resolve the absence of Indigenous perspectives, experiences and contributions in the stories remembered and commemorated" and "help ensure that the contributions, experiences, and perspectives of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit are reflected truthfully in [Winnipeg's] stories, historical markers, and place names" (*Welcoming Winnipeg: Reconciling our History*, 2020). Recent actions by the EPC and Council have highlighted a **current disconnect between our work and the EPC and Council's understanding** of the policies and guidelines that steer our decisions. **We call on Mayor Gillingham and Council to bypass the EPC's November 14th recommendation to hold over the report *Welcoming Winnipeg – Naming/Renaming Assets After Individuals and Groups of People* to 2024, and accept the recommendations of the Public Service, for the reasons outlined below.**

Over the last year, the CCM and Indigenous Relations Division have spent a significant amount of time creating these guidelines in order to **facilitate the evaluation of a number of requests to name assets after individuals** that are in the queue. In the early stages of our work, the CCM determined a need to develop guidelines for evaluating requests for naming or re-naming municipal assets after individuals and groups that aligned with the Welcoming Winnipeg Initiative policy and the CCM's Terms of Reference. Based on a survey of existing naming policies in major Canadian cities (conducted by the Indigenous Relations Division) and other research, including public feedback on Welcoming Winnipeg applications**, the CCM determined that the best practice in heritage and municipal policies is to name or re-name municipal assets after individuals or groups only if those individuals are a) deceased or b) retired from their primary occupation**.

Earlier this year the Welcoming Winnipeg application to **rename Appletree-Bridgeland Drive North Park to Emeka Nnadi Park** was assessed by the CCM with these guidelines. The application did not align with the guidelines. The CCM proposed to the proponent of the application that the CCM and proponent work together to find an alternate name for the park that acknowledges newcomer histories *and* aligns with Welcoming Winnipeg policies and re-naming guidelines, but the proponent declined. The CCM sent forward a recommendation to EPC and Council against renaming the park to Emeka Nnadi Park when EPC and Council had yet

to be updated on the proposed guidelines. **For the first time since the CCM convened, the EPC and Council went against the CCM's recommendation** and approved the change of name. Following closely on this decision was Councilor Wyatt's motion to have the CCM assess his **proposal to re-name part of Abinojii Mikanah after former Premier Edward Schreyer.** This challenged the spirit of Council's previous direction to approve, in principle, the renaming of Bishop Grandin Boulevard to Abinojii Mikanah. Although street naming is not within the current scope of the CCM, Councilor Wyatt's proposal does not align with Welcoming Winnipeg's intention of resolving the absence of Indigenous perspectives or the proposed guidelines.

Reconciliation is a group project that can only move forward when good faith and communication are prioritized. The existing disconnect between the work of the CCM and EPC and Council is **creating barriers to the effective use of time and City resources** and, frankly, **barriers to good faith** amongst the members of the CCM. We **feel that it is vital that Mayor and Council are updated on our proposed guidelines related to naming *now***, and not in 2024. This report is needed to **evaluate requests to name or re-name after individuals or groups in a timely manner**, but also to make sure that **the CCM and EPC and Council are in alignment** in regards to the grounds for CCM recommendations. With that in mind, at our November 20th meeting, the CCM decided to pause evaluating Welcoming Winnipeg applications for naming and re-naming municipal assets for individuals or groups until Mayor and Council review the report *Welcoming Winnipeg – Naming/Renaming Assets After Individuals and Groups of People.*

We also request that, as Mayor and Council review our proposed guidelines and **evaluate future recommendations from the CCM**, they understand that **our role is to prioritize reconciliation through naming and heritage** in a city that has marginalized Indigenous histories and spaces for the past 150 years**. Our recommendations are rooted in our breadth of expertise and in best practices to re-center Indigenous histories and peoples in our city spaces.** The CCM and the Welcoming Winnipeg Policy are ***a municipal committee and policy that are unique in North America*; *this is work that Winnipeggers can be proud of, and that reflects positively on Winnipeg as a Human Rights Hub*.**

Elder Albert McLeod of the CCM is planning to **attend the Council meeting on Thursday November 23rd**, and can address any questions that Mayor Gillingham or Council members might have about the report and the work of the CCM.

Sincerely,

Dr. Erin Millions
Assistant Professor
Department of History, University of Winnipeg
on behalf of the Committee of Community Members, Welcoming Winnipeg Initiative

Reanna Merasty, Chair
Elder Mabel Horton, Co-Chair
Elder Albert McLeod
Dr. Mary LeMaitre
Honoure Black
Raymond Sokalski
Angelina Pelletier

cc: Indigenous Relations Division, City of Winnipeg