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: 2021-014

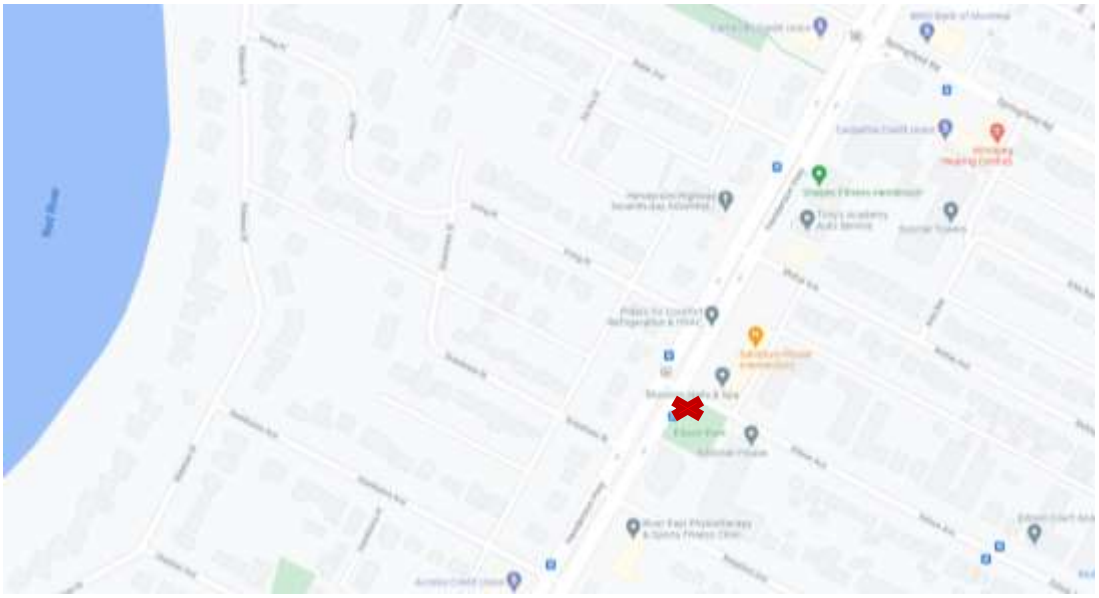
Name of Request: Renaming Edison Park to Matheson Millstones Park

Address: 1257 Henderson Highway

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: 1 letter/communication was received in support of this request.

Project Details:



Since 1966, two of the original millstones from the historic Matheson Mill have been located in this park. The Matheson Mill was built sometime between 1860 and 1870 by pioneer Alexander Matheson (1827-1911), son of Selkirk Settlers John Matheson and Ann Polson. He homesteaded at River Lot 60, where 1205 Kildonan Drive is now situated. He built his log house around 1873 and although the outer walls have been covered with stucco, it remains the oldest existing building on the east side of the Red River.

The mill was built on McLeod Creek (formerly known as Water Mill Creek) at the site of what is now 1025 Henderson Highway, north of the Curtis Hotel. It was the only mill in the north east area of the city and one of the rare water-powered mills operated in Manitoba during the 19th century. Power to operate the mill was provided by the waters of the creek confined behind a mill dam (near the current site of Brazier Street and Maxwell Place) turning a large water wheel. This mill was one of the first to successfully harness the energy of flowing water (hydro power) in the Canadian Northwest.

Alexander Matheson was also instrumental in forming the Lord Selkirk Settlers' Association and acted as its chaplain.

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

The Matheson family was prominent in developing the community and the applicant feels the renaming of the park would be a great way to recognize the contributions they made and bring attention to the millstones and the story of their origin.

When the millstones (pictured below) were moved to Edison Park, none of the descendants of Alexander Matheson, many of whom lived in North Kildonan at the time, were invited by the Municipality to attend and witness the installation. The applicant feels this was a grievous oversight and would like to correct this omission by renaming the park and having Matheson family descendants attend and participate in the renaming ceremony and unveiling.



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

In 1802, after a tour of northern Scotland during “The Clearances”, lowlander Thomas Douglas, 5th Earl of Selkirk, took up the plight of the dispossessed crofters. As an experienced farmer he envisioned agricultural colonies in British North America, and undertook to transplant groups of those highlanders who had lost their lands to sheep farmers.

In 1811 he embarked on establishing a colony in the western interior of Rupert’s Land, the domain of the Hudson’s Bay Company (H.B.C.). Enlisting the support of his brothers-in-law, Andrew Colvile and John Halkett, he purchased enough stock in the H.B.C. to negotiate a huge tract of land for his colony. On May 30, 1811, Selkirk was granted the territory of Assiniboia, an area of 116,000 square miles in the heart of the fur country. For the nominal sum of 10 shillings he agreed to recruit 200 servants for the Company annually for 10 years, and to develop an agricultural colony which would supply food for the fur trade posts. The colony would also serve as a place of permanent settlement for men who left the fur trade and wished to remain in the country rather than return to Britain.

By 1811, the area was home to the Anishinaabe, Cree traders and Métis buffalo hunters. There were also a community of permanent houses, the homes of retired fur

trade employees, known as “freemen”. These families supported themselves by hunting (especially bison) and farming. They were not consulted about Lord Selkirk’s plan to colonize this area.

As a result, between 1812 and 1816, substantial complaints were raised by many Indigenous leaders, dismissing the absurdity of an unknown outsider claiming to own their territory and threatening action against any outsider who would settle their lands.

On 18 July 1817, Chief Peguis and four other First Nations leaders, signed the first treaty of the region along with Lord Selkirk (Thomas Douglas), the first European to officially claim land in the settlement. Known as the Selkirk Treaty, it affirmed land to each of the six signatories. It allowed for the settlement of Scottish settlers in exchange for a substantial amount of tobacco as “an annual present”.

Sources:

https://thediscoverblog.com/tag/treaties/

https://www.lordselkirk.ca/the-settlers/

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

The new name and new sign would help tell **the historical story** of North East Winnipeg that has largely been forgotten, for present and future generations. Matheson's Water Mill was the location where the settlers of what became East Kildonan and North Kildonan ground their wheat in flour.

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

Edison Park was named for the street it was located on and not for anyone of importance in the area, the name change would not detract from any historical significance associated to it.

Edison Avenue was name for American inventor Thomas Alva Edison (1847-1931).

http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/winnipegstreets/index.shtml#e

On October 2, 2020, the East Kildonan-Transcona Community Committee recommended to the Standing Policy Committee on Protection, Community Services and Parks that the Winnipeg Public Service be directed to rename Edison Park to Matheson Millstones Park, subject to:

1. Funding for the signage being approved from the East Kildonan – Transcona Land Dedication Reserve (North Kildonan Ward allocation).

On October 19, 2020, the recommendation of the East Kildonan-Transcona Community Committee was referred by the Standing Policy Committee on Protection, Community Services and Parks to the Welcoming Winnipeg process.