Appendix A

WELCOMING WINNIPEG POLICY

Thematic Interview Report to the Mayor

Prepared by: **Merrell-Ann S. Phare,** LL.M., M.F.A. / February 2025

WELCOMING WINNIPEG POLICY
Thematic Interview Report

Background

The City of Winnipeg's Welcoming Winnipeg: Reconciling our History Policy No. CO-014 ("WW Policy") has been in effect since January 30, 2020. From September to November 2024, at the request of Mayor Scott Gillingham, the author conducted a series of interviews with the:

- Mayor and his key staff;
- Majority of City Councillors;
- Interim Chief Administrative Officer and his key staff;
- Indigenous Relations Division (IRD); and,
- Committee of Community Members (CCM).

These interviews were conducted for the purpose of understanding and ascertaining possible recommendations for strengthening and supporting WW Policy outcomes. A small number of follow-up inquiries were made by the author, and documents including the WW Policy, the Committee of Community Members Terms of Reference, and a record of Council decision-making related to this matter were reviewed. A detailed policy analysis was specifically excluded from this review.

Notes from the interviews are confidential. Results have been greatly summarised here for the purpose of maintaining this confidentiality while providing sufficient context for the recommendations. All recommendations are the views of the author.

Considering the Recommendations

The recommendations are listed in order of proposed priority within each theme (and are colour coded in the summary table on the next page).

Implementing the first recommendation within each theme would address most existing concerns, which is important, given the need to address uncertainties and alleviate frustration levels as quickly as possible. This is achievable!

Welcoming Winnipeg Policy Thematic Interview Report:
SUMMARY LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

THEME 1: Policy Clarity

- **Clarify WW Policy purpose**
- Conduct coordinated policy review
- Clarify departmental leadership and responsibilities
- Set an Indigenous territories acknowledgement policy
- Determine commemorative naming policy
- Determine re/naming priorities

THEME 2: Political Leadership

- **Identify political and administrative leads**
- Develop comprehensive outreach program
- Explore role of community committees

THEME 3: Resourcing and Budgets

- **Provide necessary resources to IRD and departments**
- Conduct research to aid prioritization

THEME 4: Committee of Community Members

- **Review the Terms of Reference**
- Ensure relevant requests of CCM
- Ensure diverse membership
- Create yearly workplan
- Strengthen internal relationships
- Presentations to EPC and Council by IRD or lead department

THEME 5: Application Process

- **Refine the application process**
- Streamline application requirements
- Minimum standards for application completeness
- IRD provides application support

THEME 1: Policy Clarity

Observations from Interviews

There is strong support for the general purpose of the WW Policy. Despite frustration that has accumulated over these first five years of WW Policy implementation, and public sentiment that does not always prioritise these issues, most interviewed are of the view that this is critical work that must continue. Where concerns exist relating to the policy itself, they are related to the need for policy and process clarity.

The WW Policy has purpose statements that are not clear. This has resulted, in practice, in conflicting views as to whether the WW Policy requires all future naming and renaming ("re/naming") to resolve the absence of Indigenous perspectives, experiences and contributions, or whether the "lens" refers to an ongoing balance to be reached through re/naming over time. If the former, then on a go forward basis Indigenous perspectives, experiences and contributions must be reflected in all re/naming. If the latter, then each naming opportunity should consider but may not necessarily result in an Indigenous name (or addressing Indigenous perspectives, experiences and contributions).

The WW Policy has a general purpose of reconciliation and embeds these specific high level purpose statements:

- To "resolve the absence of Indigenous perspectives, experiences and contributions in the stories remembered and commemorated"
- To "ensure that contributions, experiences, and perspectives of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit are reflected truthfully in Winnipeg stories, historical markers, and place names"
- To create "balance to the previous stories told and the stories to be told"
- To ensure "a balanced and inclusive approach going forward"

Uncertainty as to how these purpose statements are to be read in their entirety has unfortunately resulted in circumstances where Indigenous perspectives, experiences and contributions have ended up in competition with non-Indigenous naming opportunities. Some are of the view that all current and future re/naming requests should be focused on addressing the first two goals listed above (addressing the absence of Indigenous presence), while others interpret the second two bullets as being indicative that the intent of the WW Policy is to ensure both Indigenous and non-Indigenous presence in re/naming (achieving a balance).

The WW Policy has been interpreted in a way that has led to process confusion. The WW Policy provides the following:

- **It is an umbrella policy meant to enhance and coordinate existing re/naming processes** for place names and historical markers (which it recognises "are disjointed and complex") and coordinate community input. Existing by-laws, policies and council motions concerned with this re/naming were to be amended to align with the WW Policy. This does not appear to have been completed.

- **It acts as a lens for existing processes for re/naming.** Departments in charge of those processes were to work with IRD to determine "if a WW Policy lens is required" in a re/naming initiative under that department's process. Only requests that do not have a formal process were to go first to IRD (in practice, it appears IRD directly receives most applications).

- **It establishes a new process** for requesting and implementing initiatives "to recognize and commemorate various historical people and events" (presumably the same thing as re/naming historical markers and place names). This is the process to be managed by IRD in the first instance (along with an impacted department, if any).

Policy coherence in this area was an identified goal that has yet to be achieved. Because most departments do not have expertise in Indigenous-related re/naming, the "lens" approach, in the absence of the required policy coherence, has contributed to a general bottleneck of applications in IRD (this is not of IRD's making).

Opportunities for re/naming have not been identified and prioritized. Under the current policy, all opportunities are considered equal, however, several questions were raised regarding the opportunity to reach consensus around prioritization of re/naming opportunities, the relative importance of requests that are submitted, and whether certain opportunities such as new development naming (some significant opportunities are upcoming) and parks re/naming (there are many parks, with many new ones to be created) could be considered.

A special concern was noted regarding commemorative re/naming (referring specifically to the lack of policy direction regarding whether naming is available for both historical and living persons, and the number and unequal distribution of Councillor driven applications). This focus of re/naming, more than any other, has suffered from the "competition" issue noted above.

Some applications require extensive support to be complete. The WW Policy indicates this support must be provided (by IRD, to all applicants in need) with no mechanism to do an initial assessment as to merit. Other applications have time pressure, but there is no opportunity to prioritize them ahead of other less pressing applications. Applications are submitted by anyone (including EPC and Councillors) at any time of the year and there is no direction in the WW Policy allowing anyone to address requests on anything other than a first come, first served basis.

IRD has submitted requests for policy refinement, particularly around commemorative naming, but this has not been approved by Council.

THEME 1: Policy Clarity

Recommendations

Clarify WW Policy purpose: It is critical to clarify the confusion in the policy purpose. It is recommended that it be made clear that all renaming is subject to the WW policy and that resolving the absence of Indigenous perspectives, experiences and contributions must always be considered (this is the "lens" requirement of the WW Policy). However, this resolution can be accomplished in a number of ways (for example, see the Indigenous Territories Marker Policy recommendation below, for example) and will not always result in the choosing of an Indigenous name.

Conduct Coordinated Policy Review: Conduct the coordinated review of six policies listed in WW Policy, with specific attention to ensuring overall policy coherence and alignment with the WW policy, creating a single process, if possible, with defined accountabilities and responsibilities.

Clarify Departmental Leadership and Responsibilities: The WW Policy establishes lead and support roles in re/naming and assigns responsibilities accordingly. It is recommended that the policy be followed so that IRD actions its role as the lead on requests that do not have a formal process, and that the other departments are accountable as per the WW Policy for re/naming under existing by-laws, policies and council motions.

Set Indigenous Territories Marker Policy: There is no place in Winnipeg where Indigenous presence did not exist; it is only a matter of the extent and nature of the presence. To streamline the decision-making significantly and reduce a key area of conflict (especially as regards requests involving commemorative naming for living persons), it should be a requirement to have at minimum a marker or plaque (developed by IRD) acknowledging Indigenous perspectives, experiences and contributions in every re/name case. This could apply even when Indigenous re/names are chosen because Indigenous perspectives, experiences and contributions to a place are complex and diverse.

Determine Commemorative Naming Policy: It should be clarified that the WW Policy applies to living individuals (and is subject to the Indigenous Territories Marker Policy). The Commemorative Naming policy must set out the process that will be employed if a living individual's legacy falls into disrepute. The policy should also set out a maximum number of commemorative naming opportunities that will be allowed each year (including those proposed by Councillors), and to ensure fairness, set the distribution of those commemorative naming opportunities (for example, a maximum number per a given an area each year).

Determine Re/Naming Priorities: Given the demands on Council, IRD and other departments, and Committee of Community Members (CCM), historical markers and place names that are a priority for re/naming should be identified and prioritised. This would help guide the work of the departments and would also assist with identification of budgets and work plans. Immediate opportunities suggested were park place names (this effort could align with the Greenspace and Biodiversity Plan and By-law co-development process) and new development area names.

THEME 2: Political Leadership

Observations from Interviews

WW Policy authority is with Council, but there has not been a coordinated effort of change management at the political or administrative levels. In large measure, policy implementation of the systemwide issue appears to have been largely left to IRD (informally, and with no budget, as discussed below).

There are structures that are under or not utilised. The CCM Terms of Reference identify a Reconciliation Leadership Team (RLT), but this team is not operational, and it is unclear whether it is comprised of political representatives, members of the administration, or both. There does not appear to be a role for community committees.

Councillors indicate that there is not a high level of support on this matter throughout their constituencies. The subject matter of the WW Policy is not without its controversy. There has been generally negative and demoralizing commentary from the public and Councillors do not have support in speaking to their constituents about these complex policy directions. The level of community support and involvement in this process is generally low.

Recommendations

Identify Political and Administrative Leads: Identify/designate a political lead for the WW Policy (supported by the Reconciliation Leadership Team (RLT), depending on its membership) to be an ongoing and persuasive champion of the policy and to insist and remind the public and leadership about the necessary related systems change needed to achieve the purpose of the policy. The office of the mayor is the best suited for this role. The CAO must lead the administrative accountability for the policy and should work with the RLT to ensure widespread understanding, acceptance and implementation of the WW Policy.

Develop Comprehensive Outreach Program: Both an internal and external outreach and education focus would be very helpful to ensure a common understanding of the policy (drivers, benefits, opportunities) and its requirements. The office of the mayor could lead a "shared histories" strategy aimed at the public, the City of Winnipeg administration, and Council. The CAO's office with IRD support could develop and lead implementation of an internal education and change management strategy.

Explore Role of Community Committees: While there currently does not appear to be a role for community committees in the WW Policy or process, their involvement might provide a way to distribute resources and create an increased level of fairness and support between Councillors, while increasing the level of community involvement. Community committees could also potentially play a role in discussing/defending recommendations that are brought to Council.

THEME 3:
Resourcing and Budgets

Observations from Interviews

IRD has not received resources, but the WW Policy requires it to do extensive work, including:

- Facilitate the application process (4.1.1),
- Support departments (4.1.2),
- Support applicants (3.2.2),
- Provide administration support to CCM (4.1.3).

Most of the administrative work for IRD appears to be related to completion of applications, especially the research and rationale development requirements of Step 2 - Due Diligence, and the process used to select the re/name (applicants may, but are not required to, submit a proposed re/name). Given the process clarifications needed, applications that should be going to other departments appear to be directed to IRD in first instance. This may be due to reduced or non-existent budgets of the other departments for this work (but this is unknown by the author). And, as noted above, there are no priorities to guide or assist with streamlining the processing of applications. Every application from any source becomes part of IRD's task list.

In the absence of an IRD budget, the CCM has done most of this work (including extensive research and work pursuant to cultural protocols and other processes for choosing the actual re/name). The CCM, supported by IRD, has worked hard to maintain a high level of directly related community support for the WW Policy, and it has worked diligently with non-existent resources (CCM is an external, volunteer committee). However, according to the responsibilities outlined in the WW Policy, IRD (and/or the relevant department) is supposed to be doing this work.

Recommendations

Provide Necessary Resources to IRD and Departments: IRD should be resourced to fulfill the WW Policy responsibilities that it has been given. These responsibilities are extensive and important and include managing and facilitating applications where it is the lead (no existing formalized process) and supporting lead departments in reviewing applications (where there is an existing formalized process). IRD's capacity to support policy implementation within the City of Winnipeg administration is critical. IRD should have the resources to hire dedicated staff within IRD to do research and applicant support work, engaging expert contractors, and implementing culturally mandated naming processes, where required.

Accountability: To ensure accountability, budgets, workplans, and timelines for yearly naming/renaming should be required from IRD and other relevant departments. However, it is difficult to estimate the budget IRD and other departments may require, given the open process set out in the WW Policy. Mechanisms that can create limits and/or priorities are recommended (see recommendations under Theme 5 – Application Process for details).

Conduct Research to Prioritize: IRD should be resourced to co-lead with the appropriate department(s) a joint initiative focussing on readiness for new parks or green spaces naming opportunities, such as those under the upcoming Greenspace and Natural Corridors Plan bylaw and a Biodiversity Policy.

IRD should be mandated to lead a research initiative focussed on how to prioritize re/naming in certain areas of importance or opportunity (such as re/naming parks and new development areas). CCM could play a key role in this initiative..

THEME 4:
Committee of Community Members

Observations from Interviews

The Committee of Community Members (CCM) is comprised of highly educated, dedicated, thorough, articulate and diligent members. It provides extensive volunteer services to IRD and the applicants in terms of research, education, understanding and following cultural protocol in Indigenous naming processes, and other support. The CCM receives administrative support from IRD, as required by the WW Policy. Given the number of applications, this is a significant expenditure of IRD and CCM effort.

All CCM members have deep knowledge of Indigenous peoples and histories, and the CCM composition meets the 50/50 Indigenous/non-Indigenous requirement of the WW Policy, but may not meet the requirement to "reflect Winnipeg's diverse population". The CCM Terms of Reference are confusing on this matter as some of the guidance to CCM in making their recommendations (s.10 iii) lists Indigenous naming priorities only (suggesting that CCM only considers indigenous re/naming). The CCM Terms of Reference (s.4 ii) require members to be selected by the Selection Committee (which includes IRD and Reconciliation Leadership Team members).

There has been one review by IRD of the CCM Terms of Reference, as mandated, and there have been no amendments or updates or subsequent reviews. There is no indication as to whether the CCM Terms of Reference were originally approved by the CAO, and there is no accountability structure or process directly linking the CCM to IRD to the CAO.

CCM has shared that it has concerns about the general level of understanding and support from Council for the work that it does. This is worrisome to CCM members given that the WW Policy is officially adopted policy, and it has suggested the Councillors should be strong advocates for their policy. It feels there has been a withdrawal of relationship with it as compared to the connections that it had with the previous administration, in particular, its inclusion by the previous mayor in what CCM or that mayor saw as related initiatives. It feels it has experienced racism and misogyny when presenting CCM recommendations to Council.

CCM considers it has a role in helping achieve what it sees as the overall goal of the WW Policy (which is, in their view, making Winnipeg a welcoming place for Indigenous people). The CCM would support having an expanded mandate to:

- take a more "holistic approach"
- put forward its own applications (which is currently a conflict of interest under CCM Terms of Reference)
- provide advice/guidance on matters outside of historical markers and place names.
- brought to Council.

THEME 4:
Committee of Community Members

Recommendations

Review the Terms of Reference: There should be a review of the Terms of Reference by the CAO and IRD given shifts between the Terms of Reference and the WW Policy, and the interest and suggestions of the CCM. As part of this review, clarity should be provided to CCM on their role in determining and managing the process of securing an Indigenous name, as neither the WW Policy nor the CCM Terms of Reference provide direction in that regard.

Ensure relevant requests of CCM: Conducting research, supporting the completion of applications, determining specific language and wording for markers or other aspects of the application, and verifying the accuracy of submitted information are IRD responsibilities that CCM has assisted with, but that have placed an inordinate demand on its members. As per the WW Policy, CCM should be reviewing application packages that are completed by IRD and/or departments. These packages should be inclusive of all information required for the CCM to make a recommendation to EPC. This would reduce the demands on CCM.

Ensure Diverse Membership: The Selection Committee should ensure that CCM knowledge and experience is balanced to reflect the diversity requirements set out in the Terms of Reference (for example, that it "must reflect Winnipeg's diverse population").

Create Yearly Workplan: Assuming IRD/departments are resourced to fulfil their responsibilities as set out under the WW Policy, they should be able to work with the CCM to develop a CCM yearly work plan and schedule. This would help all applicants (including Councillors) have increased predictability regarding the timing of the decision regarding applications in which they are interested and would help the CCM maintain its work plan.

Strengthen Internal Relationships: Given that the IRD and CCM are factors in the success of WW Policy implementation, an annual meeting with them and the Reconciliation Leadership Team could be very beneficial in terms of reviewing progress, planning future needs and opportunities, etc. Clear linkages should be structured between the CAO and IRD in terms of WW Policy accountability.

Presentations to EPC and Council by IRD or Lead Department: As per the WW Policy, CCM should forward recommendations to EPC and Council, but the lead department/IRD should present/defend those recommendations at EPC and Council, if required. There could be some connection and support at these key moments provided by the Reconciliation Leadership Team and as noted above, potentially community committees.

THEME 5: Application Process

Obervations from Interviews

The application process is always open to everybody. There is no limit to the number of applications or submissions that can be proposed by anyone.

Applications are addressed on a first come, first served basis as there is no prioritization authority or direction set out in the WW Policy. In 2022, Council did not concur with the Public Service's recommendation (authored by IRD) to add the following to section 3.2.2 of the WW Policy: *"In order to better meet the objectives of Welcoming Winnipeg, requests that are submitted through the online form may not be addressed on a "first come, first served" basis."*

Many applications (including those that are Councillor led) appear to be incomplete when compared with the stated requirements. For example, only one of six current requests have the required petition and two do not have the required letters of support. This means IRD is supporting almost every applicant in some way.

Recommendatons

Refine the Application Process: Continue with a public process for applications, but consider mechanisms so that IRD/departmental application support can be efficient, transparent, budgeted and reviewed, such as:

- Setting a specific time window for accepting applications (online, but also by Council/ Councillors/EPC given the need to for IRD/departments to budget and efficiently use resources they receive in a planned and accountable manner).
- Setting a cap on annual applications accepted (making clear that not all submitted applications will be accepted, and that this is dependent on resources, alignment of submissions with the WW Policy, and, assuming this occurs, re/naming priorities that have been set for the upcoming period).
- Ensuring applications are accepted only when in line with the WW Policy and process.
- The review process could include an early prioritisation mechanism. Currently prioritisation occurs at the tail end of the process through CCM and EPC review, and then Council decision-making, by which time significant effort has been expended by multiple parties.
- Setting a limit on the number of applications per submitter (Councillor, department, public and, even if allowed, by CCM) so the process cost is fairly distributed in terms of demands on resources.
- Applications could be structured to have mandatory items that must be completed by the applicant prior to IRD be required to provide further support. This may place somewhat of a greater burden on the applicant but would allow for a prioritisation mechanism to kick in, and for IRD to estimate the support budget needed to complete the application. A possible mandatory requirement would be written proof of a minimum significant amount of demonstrated community support. This should be something the submitter should be required to garner on their own without IRD or departmental support. Assuming this level of support can be demonstrated, then there is a rationale for IRD/departments to spend resources to help complete an application's detailed research aspects (for example) that could be very challenging for a citizen to address.
- Allowing IRD/departments to deviate from the first come first served model by having it apply only to completed applications. Unless an application is complete, or the application falls within identified re/naming priorities, the application would not have to be addressed in a first come first served manner.

THEME 5:
Application Process

- There could be a mechanism to allow for the public to merely suggest a potential renaming opportunity, rather than complete a full application (triggering the entire process). IRD/department would consider and determine if further attention is required.
- An accessible public registry of applications, applications materials, and status of requests.

Streamline Application Requirements: Given the number of applications that have been processed and the lessons that have been learned in reviewing and supporting applicants, it is recommended that a review be conducted to determine the continued utility of each of the existing elements of the required application, with a view to streamlining the process based on lessons learned. Also, the review should focus on providing greater definition of some of the criteria that are set out in the WW Policy (such as, what is enough research, what are key elements of rationale that are needed, what is a sufficient educational opportunity, what are the ways to show sufficient community support, etc.).

Minimum Standards for Application Completeness: The requirement to support applicants puts a significant strain on the system. IRD should be required to reject all applications that are not complete (or minimum standards for community support should be mandatory, as suggested above). If this does not occur, then IRD/departments must have a clear runway in a budgeting and workplan process so that they can secure the resources necessary to provide the required application completion support.

IRD Provides Application Support: Application support work should be conducted by IRD (where they are the lead, and/or when requested by departments) through IRD staff or contracted experts. Once the application is complete, the CCM can focus on providing their advice within a designated timeframe, enhancing overall efficiency.