

TORONTO STAFF REPORT

December 17, 2002

To: Toronto East York Community Council

From: Joe Halstead, Commissioner, Economic Development, Culture and Tourism

Subject: Wardell Park Renaming Proposal
Toronto Danforth - Ward 30

Purpose:

To grant authority for the renaming of Wardell Parkette to the Bruce Mackey Park.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

There are no financial implications resulting from the adoption of this report.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

- (1) the City- owned parkland known as Wardell Parkette be officially renamed as the Bruce Mackey Park; and
- (2) the appropriate City Officials be authorized and directed to take the necessary action to give effect thereto.

Background:

The recommendation to rename Wardell Parkette has come forward to honour a remarkable individual Mr. Bruce Mackey who touched and inspired many lives during his life span. Mr. Mackey was part of the inspiration of a Canadian film production known as the Degrassi series. This local production has received both Gemini Awards and American Emmy Awards. This series placed Toronto and more specifically the Degrassi neighbourhood on the international map where the television series is still being seen by viewers worldwide.

Bruce Mackey devoted over 30 years of his life to the Toronto District School Board as a teacher/librarian at Earl Grey Senior Public School. Bruce was involved with a myriad of

student and community activities and in doing so, he enhanced and enriched the lives of many people. He founded and supervised the Earl Grey Student Parliament; he revitalized the school yearbook and student newspaper, all of which helped forge a link between the residents and the students of the school. Bruce was a dedicated teacher and mentor, he spent many hours working with students before and after school hours, and he instilled in these young people a love and appreciation of their school and community.

Bruce was always open to take on additional projects outside of the classroom, this included taking on the leadership of the Parliament, where he organized fund-raising walkathons, whose theme and purpose was always community based. He used the time during his walkathons to teach students about the history of the East End of Toronto, as they walked its streets and ravines, pointing out historical and significant landmarks in the area. The funds raised for the Parliament went to local community organizations such as Nellies, Eastview Community Centre, and the Toronto Humane Society.

Through his teaching Bruce met and inspired Linda Schuyler, a colleague, who at that time was interested in filmmaking with her students. Their collaboration set the foundation for the Degrassi Street series, a Canadian production that was unmistakably set in downtown Toronto. Bruce opened his home on Degrassi Street as a make-shift film set and this is where The Kids of Degrassi Street series was born. The series reflected real children and real families of the Degrassi neighbourhood, which were both unique and original. Bruce volunteered his time, assisted Linda with story lines, advice and with his casting connections, but most importantly was a continual source of inspiration. Bruce played the part of a stern schoolteacher in the occasional program and he continued to be an unofficial advisor to Linda and her partner, Kit Hood. The series reflected Bruce's love of Toronto and his enthusiasm for the uniqueness of his East End community, which shined through all of the Degrassi shows.

In May 2002 the request to rename Wardell Parkette was brought forward by Ms. Nancy Sinclair, the Chair of the Playing With Time Foundation where Bruce Mackey was a past President and a voting member. Linda Schuyler and Kit Hood established this Foundation in the late 1980's providing thousands of dollars in scholarships funds to be used for educational and artistic pursuits. Today over 100 local young people who were involved with the Degrassi Repertory Company have benefited from this scholarship foundation. Up until his death Bruce avidly followed the careers of the "kids" and continued to play a mentorship role in some of their lives. He always encouraged these young people to explore the world, but to also give back to Toronto and to their own neighbourhoods.

Comments:

All the criteria set down by the Park Naming Policy approved by Council has been met. Heritage Preservation Services were advised of the renaming request, and reported that there is no historical importance to the name Wardell Parkette that would preclude changing it to commemorate Mr. Bruce Mackey. The Jimmie Simpson Community Advisory Council, and local area residents are in support of this renaming recommendation by the local Councillor and the Mackey family. Wardell Parkette is a significant location for the Mackey family and for his

friends and colleagues of The Playing With Time Foundation. This area is where Bruce Mackey had grown up and opened his home, community and heart for the entire world to see and know.

Conclusions:

That the name Wardell Parkette, located on Wardell Avenue be renamed the Bruce Mackey Park.

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