

Andrew Lochhead

Toronto Resident, Creator of Let's Rename Dundas St. Petition

Remarks to City Council Executive - June 6, 2021

Re: Ex25.1 Recognition Review Project Update and Response to the Dundas Street Renaming Petition

ENC: Open Letter to Toronto City Council from Global Knowledge Keepers

Thank you Committee Members, Deputy Mayor's Minnan-Wong and Thomson and Mayor Tory for allowing me to address this committee once again.

As you all know, I am the creator of the Let's Rename Dundas Street Petition. Today, I want to speak to you about the tremendous opportunity we have before us as a city.

I'll begin this by sharing with you a story that I think really demonstrates that opportunity

Last week I had the opportunity to virtually attend a two day academic conference on Contested Histories, Monuments and Public Memory hosted at Swansea University.

I was actually in the middle of this conference when I found out about the recommendation to Rename Dundas. And then about Mayor Tory's subsequent endorsement and support of those recommendations.

I want you to know that it took no time at all before speakers at that very conference -- in Swansea! -- were holding up Toronto's plan as a paragon of best practices.

And with good reason.

City staff have created an exciting and dynamic set of proposals for a process to rename Dundas Street. They have also given us a robust Recognition Review framework and a plan for future commemorations.

This new framework appropriately centres Black and Indigenous voices, and those of other stakeholder groups. It relies on expert historical scholarship, shared learning experiences and creative, community-based solutions.

It is to be applauded and deserves consideration and the approval of City Council.

To show evidence of this worldwide support. I'd like to call your attention to the document submitted along with a copy of my remarks. It is an Open Letter signed by over 120 knowledge keepers from here in Canada and around the world.

The names on this list represent Elders, community leaders, artists, scholars, and others who have dedicated their life to the preservation, dissemination, and creation of knowledge.

This letter highlights the fact that the decisions you make here today will have a significant effect on similar calls to action from Black, Indigenous and other marginalized and/or racialized communities and their allies around the globe.

This is why it is imperative that Toronto act now and act urgently to address the embedded and systemic racism and colonial violence in our commemorative landscape.

Failure to do so risks continued harm to our citizens and to the global reputation of our city as one of courage and vision. If we want to be known as a city willing to face up to our past and embrace a future built on principles of equality and justice, we have a choice to make.

Now, some would have you believe that the choice in front of you is between renaming Dundas Street, or spending money directly in communities impacted by legacies of enslavement and the ongoing Canadian colonial project.

This is a false dichotomy.

We can afford to develop and implement innovative programs aimed at uplifting people. We can afford to rename Dundas Street. We can even afford to fully support local businesses impacted by this change. These are not either/or propositions.

In reality, the choice in front of you is about whose experiences of our city we privilege. How we prioritize spending. And what is the image we wish to project to the world.

Will we choose to welcome change and all the intangible benefits it brings? Benefits that cannot be found at the bottom of a balance sheet?

Will we choose to prioritize our commitments to diversity enshrined in our civic motto?

Will we choose to act on promises made to Black and Indigenous peoples and other communities of colour -- who have been calling for decades for an end to public celebrations of white supremacy and colonialism?

Will we choose what we know is right?

Or will we remain like our monuments: Preserved forever in bronze and brick, steel and stone?

Thank You.

ENCLOSURE 1

OPEN LETTER TO TORONTO CITY COUNCIL FROM GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE KEEPERS

Dear Toronto City Council,

We, the undersigned, represent a global contingent of community leaders, knowledge keepers, elders, scholars, and cultural workers. As persons who share a responsibility to create, disseminate, and preserve knowledge, we write to you to express our support for renaming Dundas Street.

The conclusions reached by City of Toronto staff that “[Henry Dundas’] actions and those of the British government he served contributed to the perpetuation of the enslavement of human beings” are clear and supported by substantial research and evidence. We commend the work done by City staff in engaging directly with a diverse range of knowledgeable sources to reach their conclusions.

All across the world, Black, Indigenous, other racialized and/or marginalized communities, and their allies have long been demanding meaningful action to confront the systemic racism, trauma, and violence embedded in public commemorative infrastructure. We stand in solidarity with these calls and believe that the City of Toronto has an obligation to listen to those voices and to act now to address these concerns. The decision City Council makes will have far-reaching impacts on similar proposals elsewhere. We implore you to demonstrate your leadership and commitment on this issue, and to your own civic motto of “Diversity Our Strength.”

The recent locating of mass or unmarked graves of nearly a thousand children at the sites of former Residential “Schools” in Tk’emlúps te Secwépemc, and Cowessess First Nations territory, and the horrific certainty that more such announcements are forthcoming, underscore the urgency with which we believe Toronto must act. Statues, street names, and commemorative infrastructure that celebrate the perpetrators of slavery, colonialism, and cultural genocide cannot stand whilst Black, Indigenous, and racialized and/or marginalized people continue to be discriminated against, assaulted, and killed as a result of white supremacy.

We support the proposed review, beyond the Dundas name, of all City assets, public monuments, commemorative initiatives, awards, and honours to better understand and respond to the systematic racism and discrimination embedded within them, as well as a revised public commemoration program.

It is imperative that these review frameworks are properly transparent and accessible, and include a meaningful community-led engagement process with key stakeholder groups that are deeply affected by systemic racism and discrimination, including (but not limited to) Black Lives Matter – Toronto, Indigenous Elders, cultural organizations, advocacy groups, and councils.

Black and Indigenous lives matter more than these outdated honourifics.

Sincerely,

Andrew Lochhead, PhD Student, X University

Audra Williams, Toronto

Diana Chan McNally, Toronto Drop In Network

James MacFarlane, Toronto

Amanda Merpaw, OISE, University of Toronto

Rad Popovic, Toronto

Dr. Lorraine York, McMaster University

Laura Scrimshaw, Toronto

Melanie Noble, Toronto

Sahana Gunaratnam, Toronto

Paige Wilson, MSc Student, University of Northern BC

Simone Honkanen Otis, Toronto

David Plowman, Artist/Producer, Toronto

William Taylor, Toronto

Thomas Aman, Artist, Toronto

Darren Reinhart, Cultural Worker/Dundas St. Resident

Dr. Ross Arnold, UCLA

Sibat Anam, McGill University

Brent Alexander, Coordinator, Glen Rhodes Food Bank

Stacy Gardner, Writer, Local Immigration Partnership

Prof. Stephanie Bunclark, Okanagan College

An G, Hospital Worker

Crystal Hawk M.Ed., Toronto

Thomas L. Colford, Actor, Toronto

Prof. Charles C. Dyer, University of Toronto

Christian Beermann, Sociologist, Univ. of Toronto

Molly Johnson, Artist, Toronto

Judy Land, Bloordale

tamara lee, Baby Point
Nathan Barnett, Toronto
Mark Zurawinski
Kiri Chan, Engineer, Toronto
Dr. Vanessa Godden, Artist/Curator Univ. of Toronto
Sarah Cullen, Artist, Mnissing
Samuel La France, Arts Admin, Toronto
keiko Hart, Artist, Toronto
Kevin Edmonds Ph.D, Caribbean Studies, U. of Toronto
denisha black, Toronto
Tereza Coutinho, West End, Toronto
Benjamin Dickerson, Guest
Robert Lukacs MSc., University of Toronto
Dr. Thembi Soddell, Artist/Academic,
Arthi Vivekanandan HBSc, University of Toronto
Jessica Pinney, RMIT School of Art
Brigita Gedgaudas, Lithuania
Patti Kastanias, NP, Toronto
Mani Mazinani, Artist
Christopher Tsang, Student, Wilfred Laurier University
Elizabeth Page-Gould, Assoc. Prof, U of Toronto
Brett Story, Artist, X University
James Knott
Mohit Kumar Mehta
Eliza Brandy, Archaeologist, Toronto
Kaeden O'Donnell, Church-Wellesley
Rachel DiSaia, Toronto
Laurie Stewart, Toronto
Kamini Murthy-Korteweg, Creative Destruction Lab
Karen Scora, Artist, Toronto

Gerry Smith, Artist, Toronto
Emily McCutcheon, Author
Tabitha Baumander, Toronto
Dr. Jeremiah Garsha, UK
Kathleen Grzybowski, Toronto
Prof. Blake Fitzpatrick, X University
Ms. Linda Sawka, Scarborough-Agincourt
Carly Friesen, Toronto
Noor Alé, Curator, Visual Arts Centre, Clarington
Jen Castro, Toronto
Carmelle Mohr, PhD Student, Pres. Scholar, UC Berkely
Elmer Bagares, Dundas Street Resident
Peter Morris, Artist, Ontario Coalition Against Poverty
Christopher Douglas, Toronto
Jonathan Hutchinson, Afro Caribbean Community
Zoe Orion, Toronto
Kristin Basmadjian, Toronto Downtown
Dr. Sarah May, Dept. History, Swansea University, Wales
Tasman Richardson, Artist, Toronto
Anna Synenko, Writer
Serena Stucke, Artist, New York City
Anne Bourne, Artist, Toronto
Sidi Chen, Artist, Chinatown, Vancouver
Christopher Willes, Artist & Cultural Worker, Public Recordings
Alexander Angus McKay, Artist, Windsor, Ontario
Holly Timpener, Artist, Montreal
Miranda Black MASc, Artist, Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte
Bill Burns, Artist, Toronto
Natalya Androsova Ph.D, Author, X University
Dr. Chris Glover, Canada

Nicole Nigro, Artist
Florencia Berinstein, Toronto
Sheri Nault, Artist, Metis
Layne Hinton, Artist/Curator, ArtSpin
Heather-Dawn Messias, Parent/Writer, Black Citizen
Dr. Rebekah Farrugia, Oakland University, Michigan
Fan Wu, Artist, Art Metropole
Rebecca Taylor, Artist, Dundas, Ontario
Virginia Green, Artist, Tsalagi Seminole
Dr. Luis-Manuel Garcia Mispireta, University of Birmingham, UK
Grandmother Ingrid Mayrhofer, Artist
Sean Meades, Director NORDIK Institute, Lecturer, Algoma U.
Rowena Katigbak, Artist, Filipina/o/x Community
June Pak, Artist & Educator, University of Toronto
Dr. Clelia Rodriguez, University of Toronto
Alisa Wing, Leslieville
Niloo Inalouei, Artist, Iranian-Canadian Community
Julie E René de Cotret, Artist/Curator, Franco-Ontarien
Dr. Stephanie Yorke, Canada
Brian Postalian, Theatre Artist
Jackie Timpener, Artist, Toronto
Brian McLachlan, Toronto
Milena Zasadzien, Senior City Planner, City of Los Angeles
Alana Bartol, Artist/Faculty, Alberta University of the Arts
Earl Miller, Writer/Editor, Toronto
Hannah Cheesman, Toronto
Signe Emdal, Artist, Denmark
Rev. Carrie Gates, Treaty 6 Territory
Assoc. Prof. Erika Supria Honisch, Stonybrook University
Assoc. Prof. Nerissa S. Balce, SUNY Stonybrook

Heather Jane, Parkdale

Tobaron Waxman, Intergenerational LGBT Artist Residency

Miggy Esteban, Ph.D Student, Social Justice Ed. U of T.

Eva Kolcze, Artist, Toronto

Rui Pires, Toronto

Elaine Cagulada, Social Justice Ed, U of T

JP King, Educator

Shannon Rae Stratton

Steven Richman, Teacher, Artist, Community Organizer

Kelly Dymont, Teacher

Jesselyn Dungo, TDSB

Jacqueline St.Pierre, Metis of Upper Detroit River / Apprentice and Helper to Elder Isabelle Meawasige, Serpent River FN

Judy Major-Girardin, Artist, McMaster University

Esther Phua

nic cooper, Artist

Rachel Prideaux, Canada

Lanrick Bennet Jr. , Toronto Danforth

Andrea Slavik, Artist/Educator, Windsor