

DATE: May 17, 2022

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Renaming of Dan Knott School

ORIGINATOR: Kathy Muhlethaler, Assistant Superintendent, Operations and Learning Services

RESOURCE

STAFF: Clarice Anderson, Kim Holowatuk, Carla Stolte, Christopher Wright

REFERENCE: [EA.BP – Infrastructure Planning Principles](#)
[EF.AR – Naming of Schools](#)

ISSUE

To formally acknowledge the new name for Dan Knott School.

BACKGROUND

On September 8, 2020, the Board of Trustees passed a motion:

“That the Division rename Dan Knott and Oliver schools following a process where it seeks input from the community, following a process similar to the naming of new schools.”

The Oliver community is currently working with the City of Edmonton on a process to rename their community; therefore, the opportunity to rename Oliver School has not yet started.

Selecting a new name for Dan Knott School was initiated during the 2020-2021 school year, with a preliminary public engagement having taken place in March 2021. At the April 13, 2021, Caucus Committee meeting, Administration presented a short list of names received through the public input process, including several Indigenous terms put forward by members of the Dan Knott School community. Administration was asked to provide additional information on a potential process and timeline for the selection of an Indigenous term as the new name for Dan Knott school. Administration engaged colleagues at the City of Edmonton about the process undertaken to name municipal electoral wards. Conversations with the Division’s First Nations, Métis and Inuit unit were also undertaken, which resulted in advice relative to the engagement of Elders and community stakeholders.

The process culminated with a June 8, 2021, Caucus Committee decision to develop a ‘follow-up’ engagement that would result in an Indigenous term being selected as the name for Dan Knott School.

On November 30, 2021, Caucus Committee approved a process for selecting an Indigenous term as the new name for Dan Knott School. Engagement with Dan Knott students, staff and the greater geographical community took place in February 2022. Participants shared their values about their school and community. In February 2022, an Indigenous Naming Committee was created consisting of one Elder and three Indigenous Knowledge Keepers.

The process of the Indigenous naming included reviewing the information received from the school and community, uncovering the history of the land and its peoples (Attachment I), ceremony, and a visit to the school. The process and findings of the Indigenous Committee are described in Attachment II.

The committee completed their process in April 2022 and at a Caucus Committee meeting on April 19, 2022, the Board of Trustees approved the following:

That Dan Knott School be renamed kisêwâtisiwin – pronounced ki se wât si win.

CURRENT SITUATION

On May 10, 2022, a private “gifting” ceremony was held and the name **kisêwâtisiwin** was given to our Division, by the Indigenous Naming Committee, for use as the new name for Dan Knott School.

At the May 17, 2022, Board Meeting, the Board Chair will announce the new name.

KEY POINTS

- The process for selecting an Indigenous term as the name for Dan Knott School was developed in consultation with staff from the Division First Nations, Metis and Inuit unit.
- Within Indigenous culture, naming is a very important and meaningful process. Names can have a strong connection to land and it is often the importance, value and meaning that comes from the land that influences the selection of the name. The process included learning about the history of the land on which Dan Knott School is situated and bringing the school community together to share their values about their school and community.
- A small committee of Indigenous leaders was brought together and empowered to create their own process to come up with a meaningful, appropriate term to replace the name of Dan Knott School. The name approved by the Caucus Committee on April 19, 2022, is **kisêwâtisiwin** (pronounced ki se wât si win), meaning kindness, or the act of being kind. The process and information related to this term is outlined in Attachment II. A “gifting” ceremony, whereby the committee gave the new name to the Board of Trustees, took place on May 10, 2022.
- With support from Communications and Integrated Infrastructure Services, work to rebrand the school will begin immediately.

ATTACHMENTS and APPENDICES

ATTACHMENT I Land History
ATTACHMENT II Indigenous Committee Report

KH:kk

Dan Knott School: History

March 2022

SUMMARY

This report provides a brief summary of some of the information that was used by the Indigenous committee to better understand the context and history of the land on which Dan Knott School is situated. There are two sections: first, the history of the Papaschase Cree and how settlers impacted their nation including the forced surrender of their land, and second, the rich history and diversity of the area from thousands of years ago to present day.

Papaschase Cree

1850 - 1876

Around the year 1850, Chief Papaschase ('Pileated Woodpecker') and his Cree band traveled and hunted for bison around their homelands including Lesser Slave Lake, Fort Edmonton and Fort Assiniboia. As was the case for most First Nations in Alberta at the time, the main source of subsistence for the Plains Cree was bison. By the late 1870s, the bison population had been devastated which led to widespread starvation and famine for many First Nations. The Papaschase Cree was no different.

1877

In 1877, Chief Papaschase and his brother signed Treaty Six at Fort Edmonton. The signing of this document officially recognized the Papaschase band as a First Nation. Afterwards, the band became "employed" by the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC). Since the bison could no longer be relied upon as a form of subsistence, the Papaschase band had no real alternatives in order to survive and employment by the HBC was the only option for a stable economic alternative. As part of Treaty 6, the Papaschase Nation were given their own land on which to live and hunt. They settled just outside Fort Edmonton in and around the present-day community of Rosedale.

1880 - 1884

The process to create the Papaschase Reserve (No. 136) began in 1880 and took four years to complete. The Papaschase Band wanted their reserve to be near Fort Edmonton (where they were currently living), but that was prime real estate for the settlers. These settlers wrote a letter to the government, demanding that the Papaschase move their current settlement away from the fort.

A new location for the Papaschase reserve was finally chosen to be four miles south of Fort Edmonton. In order to determine the size of the reserve, it was government policy at the time to set the reserve boundaries in proportion to the number of people in the band. The surveyor at that time claimed there were fewer Papaschase members than there actually were. When Chief Papaschase realized they were not getting the land they were promised, he confronted Inspector Wadsworth from the Department of Indian Affairs. The dispute angered Inspector Wadsworth who then essentially removed 84 Papaschase members - almost a third of the total number - to a new 'list'. With fewer people assigned to the Papaschase Nation, the reserve land was shrunk to only 40 square miles. The Papaschase Cree moved to the new reserve on the south side of the river, the area on which Dan Knott School is currently situated. Despite moving the reserve far to the south, the settlers soon realized that if Edmonton were to expand, the reserve would have to be removed.

1887 - 1888

Just three years later in 1887, Wadsworth (the inspector from the Department of Indian Affairs) wrote a letter to the Indian Commissioner in Regina, who then wrote a letter to the Minister of Justice. In the letter, he explained that the Papaschase wished to withdraw from Treaty Six and surrender their reserve, which according to Cree oral history is not accurate. He also told the commissioner that the band had fewer members than when originally surveyed, and he believed the Papaschase band would be too wealthy in land in relation to their number and, therefore, the reserve must be reduced or removed. However, the Minister of Justice disagreed on all fronts and said that would be against the law.

So, the settlers tried a different tactic to get the land back. The remaining Papaschase were asked to 'surrender the land' so that it could be sold 'for their benefit'. They also tried to persuade the remaining members of Papaschase to leave the reserve and join Enoch. Those who did not agree to surrender their land and did not leave to join Enoch - including Chief Papaschase - were forcibly evicted. The document that was allegedly signed by members of the Papaschase Band was not written in a language they could understand, and the fact they were relinquishing their rights to live on the land was not made clear to them through the translator.

On November 19, 1888, a surrender for Indian Reserve 136 was obtained and signed by three adult male former members of the Papaschase Band who were living on the Enoch Reserve. Then and to this day, the descendants of the Papaschase Band plead that this surrender is invalid because it did not follow the specific procedures for the surrender of Indian reserves as outlined by the Indian Act of 1876. Over the next few years, the Papaschase Reserve lands were sold to third parties. Despite being sold on 'behalf of the Papaschase band', they have never received any principal money or interest from this sale.

After the forced surrender, many members joined the Enoch Band or left for the Lac La Biche area. Even more descendants left the area entirely and scattered across the country. Today, Papaschase descendants have been found from the West Coast of B.C. to as far as Ottawa.

Land History

There is a rich Indigenous history in the area that was once the Papaschase reserve and where Dan Knott School is located (1). Located between the North Saskatchewan River (2) to the north, Stoney Creek/Mill Creek (3) to the east and the Whitemud River (4) to the west, prior to white settlement this area was home to many lakes, rivers, animals as well as a central location for a variety of Indigenous nations.

The Prosser Site

The Prosser archeological site (5) was a significant area for Indigenous history in Edmonton. As the largest archeological site in Edmonton, over 1000 “pre-historic” artifacts were found in this location dating to 5000 B.C.-7000 B.C. Further archeological evidence points to an enduring history of Indigenous peoples living and thriving in this area can be found at Huntington Hills (6), Mount Pleasant (7), Fox Drive, and Belgravia Road.



¹ Monto, Tom. (2008). *Old Strathcona before the great depression*. Edmonton: Crang Publishing

“Wolf’s Track”

This area was part of the longest and oldest Indigenous trading road extending from the Arctic to South America. This Indigenous trail was named the “Wolf’s Track” by John McDougall. Calgary Trail was built over this trading route; however, over time it has been straightened out for the double lane.

Whitemud Creek

The Whitemud Creek (4) area was traditionally used by Indigenous nations as a lookout point for hunting and watching for incoming visitors. They used the white mud found in the area to purify skin ailments and to dye natural materials and paint. Whitemud Creek was named by Dr. James Hector, probably because the mud that was found there was used by settlers to whitewash buildings.²

An abundance of wildlife, medicine and good waters

Edmonton used to be a large watershed and this area houses three of the remaining watershed areas: Whitemud Creek, Mill Creek, Fulton Creek. Mill Creek, named after a flour mill that was established by William Bird, was known as Stoney Creek (*ka-as-sin-is-kak*) prior to its renaming in 1878. It was believed to be named Stoney Creek because the creek contained important stones for ceremony and cooking. This area, as well as others throughout Mill Woods and Strathcona, were known for large gatherings and ceremonies. The last Sundance in the Strathcona area was 1893.

Numerous lakes in the area of what was the Papaschase reserve have been drained and filled, such as Lendrum Lake (8) and Lake McKernan (9).

Mill Woods is connected to the Beaver Hills ecosystem. This area is unique in that it has an abundance of wildlife each season, including winter, which made it ideal for a winter camp. Seasonal wildlife includes³:

- Grouse
- Ducks
- Grebes
- Gophers
- Squirrel
- Chipmunks
- Porcupines
- Skunks
- Hare
- Bears
- Coyote
- Muskrat
- Mink
- Otter
- Deer
- Lynx
- Pelicans

Mill Woods is home to over 300 wildflower species including³:

- Wild bergamot
- Orange-red lily
- White water crowfoot
- Crocus-anemone
- Primrose
- Lady slippers
- Butter cups
- Wild asters
- Blue bells
- Wild rose

This area also has an abundance of³:

- Willow
- Mushrooms
- Saskatoons
- Raspberries
- Pincherries
- Strawberries
- Chokecherries
- Chamomile
- Wild mint
- White spruce
- Poplar
- Mineral salts

² Monto, Tom. (2008). *Old Strathcona before the great depression*. Edmonton: Crang Publishing

³ Book Committee. (1984). *South Edmonton Saga*. Edmonton: South Edmonton Papaschase Historical Society.

Naming Edmonton

Many Cree names and terms can be found in Mill Woods. According to the City of Edmonton Archives, in the early 1970's as the Mill Woods community was being developed, Council approved the use of Cree terms for two of the neighbourhoods: *tipaskan* (a reserve) and *kameyosek* (the beautiful). Since then, other Cree terms have been used to name neighbourhoods and other amenities in the area including: *ekota* (special place), *meyokumin* (good water), *meyonohk* (a good spot), *tawa* (you are welcome), *tukquanow park* (peace, health, prosperity and friendship), *menisa* (berry), and *satoo* (named after Chief Satoo, a brother of Chief Papaschase). Dr. Anne Anderson was part of the naming of communities in Mill Woods.



Development of Mill Woods

The development of Mill Woods began in 1971, where the price of an un-serviced 50-foot lot in Mill Woods was \$2,200, significantly less than other areas under development at the time. Approximately 1,000 people applied for the right to purchase one of the first 194 lots and the City drew names.

In the early years, there were numerous challenges with infrastructure: the sewage system, roads and the lack of mail delivery, public transit, schools, and recreation facilities. The development of Mill Woods proceeded much faster than expected and by 1976 there was only a ten-year supply of land remaining, not the 20-years anticipated, and the City began to revise its servicing standards, reducing sidewalks on both sides of the street, curbs, etc.

Beginning in 1973, a number of housing co-ops were built in the area. By the late 1970s, the population of Mill Woods reached 30,000 residents. Families in the late 1970s were insistent on building more schools in their community as schools were beyond capacity and could not support the population. Several families had to send their children to schools outside of their neighbourhood, as there was no room for those students in their neighborhood school.

Families were drawn to the area due to the natural park area, trees and creeks and ponds. Throughout the years, the Mill Woods community have banded together several times to petition the City to save green space, including an effort to buy land from developers to keep the natural tree lots in the area.

⁴ City of Edmonton. (2004). *Naming Edmonton from Ada to Zoie*. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press.

⁵ <https://www.millwoodshistory.org/mill-woods-development.html>

Indigenous Committee Report

What's in a Name?

There is this story. It's about a boy named Thunderboy Junior. Thunderboy Jr., is named after his father: Thunder Boy Senior. And although he loves his father, he wants his own name. A name that doesn't put him in his father's shadow, but rather one that reflects who he is. He wants a name that celebrates what he has and hopes to accomplish. This story is very much like the story of renaming Dan Knott School.

A name is not just a name. Names have meaning; they have spirit. Names are story. It's connection. A memory. A hope. A power. Names are not just things.

The Naming Committee

On February 16, 2022, the first meeting took place between EPSB representatives and members of the Indigenous Naming Committee. The meeting began with introductions; names and connections to land and people. The assignment: renaming Dan Knott School.

Much like the story of Thunderboy Jr., the school and students were living in the shadow of former Alderman and Mayor: Dan Knott. As the committee listened to how this project came to be, it was clear that students were aware of Dan Knott's association with the Ku Klux Klan. Young EPSB student Aimee, was one such student who questioned and challenged the existence of a school memorializing what he stood for. The committee commended Aimee's strength. We live in a time where we are consciously aware of the power of monuments and the stories they tell and don't tell. It was evident a new name must be chosen.

As part of the existing and longest traditions of this land, it was proposed that the next steps in the process of renaming the school, a pipe ceremony needed to take place. Aimee, the student responsible for beginning this process, was requested to be part of this process.

Everything is Related; There Are No Coincidences

On March 1, 2022 EPSB representatives and the Indigenous Naming Committee joined together with Aimee and her mother in ceremony. Meeting Aimee and her mother was important to the process. Two years had passed since she wrote her letter calling for the renaming of the school. Having her part of the process demonstrates the power of youth voice and our accountability as leaders to listen.

In accordance with nêhiyaw laws and ways of being, the pipe was lifted to ask Creator for a blessing for the work to continue and be done in a way that maintains harmony between all relations. From that moment on, all the work forwards would be done in a good way. The grandmother and grandfathers would also be part of the process providing support along the way to arriving at a new name for the school.

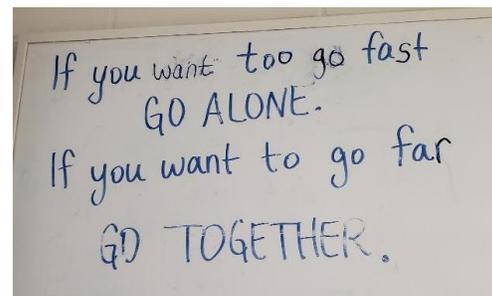
As the pipe ceremony closed, the next steps were discussed. It was decided that as part of the next steps, the committee must visit the school to observe the environment of the school.

On March 8, 2022 the committee and EPSB representatives visited the school. The school was filled with positive interactions between and amongst students and staff. The motto “Do Nice Be Kind” could be seen on most walls.

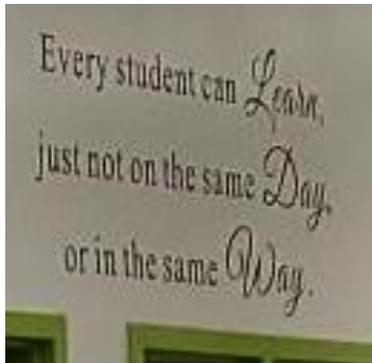


Messages of encouragement, togetherness, creativity, pride, and the Anishinaabe 7 grandfather teachings were evident throughout the school.

Examples of these messages included “Some of the most beautiful things grow in the most challenging places” and “If you want to go fast GO ALONE. If you want to go far GO TOGETHER.”



After the tour of the school, members of the committee gathered together in the library to share their observations. It was clear that students demonstrated the school motto of “Do Nice Be Kind.” The school population was very diverse and illustrated that students come from many cultures and backgrounds. Students were happy, kind, and thoughtful. Many students greeted us as we passed them in the hallways.



There was a sense of pride and consciousness in the artwork of the students. The school imbued a sense of community and care for one another. It was evident that the name of the school and the sense of community that staff and students built were not representative of one another.



As the committee began to discuss potential names, one name really stood out: *kisewâtsiwin* (the act of being kind in *nêhiyawêwin*). As Elder Whiskeyjack spoke to the presence of *kisewâtsiwin* in the school and student behaviours towards one another, another member of the committee realized they had that very word written on their t-shirt. In many Indigenous ways of being, there isn't much that can ever be chalked up to coincidence. Many of the committee members felt strongly that this character trait and act of kindness would be a good fit for what was witnessed that day.

As dialogue continued it was discussed that perhaps further research should be conducted on the traditional land use and relationships of the area. A visit to Dr. Anne Anderson school was also requested to observe how EPSB was incorporating Indigenous elements into school designs. What ensued over the corresponding weeks led to the realization that *kisewâtsiwin* was actualized in the spirit of the school and students.

Indigenous Languages Have Spirit: The Arrival of *kisewâtsiwin*

Leroy Little Bear (2000), shares:

Language embodies the way a society thinks. Through learning and speaking a particular language, an individual absorbs the collective thought processes of a people. Aboriginal languages are, for the most part, verb-rich languages that are process- or action-oriented. They are generally aimed at describing “happenings” rather than objects. The languages of Aboriginal peoples allow for the transcendence of boundaries. (p. 78).

In nêhiyawêwin the word kisewâtisiwin can best be translated into English as the act of being kind; however, what the word describes is the acting like you are connected or part of kisemanito (the great force in the universe). To act with kindness, is to treat yourself and others as though you are all sacred beings; to show compassion and love towards one another. In essence, kindness is not an attribute that can exist merely on its own but an action that reflects an acknowledgment of connection and relationship to others. The motto of the school “Do nice, Be kind”, models that kindness is an action not an object and that to be kind is also to do nice actions.

When the committee first met, they were asked how they might include student voice. As part of the consultation process with students, EPSB collected student thoughts about the school and what it meant to them. Their sentiments were illustrated in a word cloud. At the heart of the word cloud, kindness was in a large font; demonstrating the reverberation of what students felt about their school. It would seem that they were right. The act of kisewâtisiwin is the reflective spirit of the school.

Honouring the Spirit of Connection

The proposed name for the school of kisewâtisiwin connects the school to its traditional nêhiyaw roots, and the once intended location of the Papaschase reserve. It demonstrates that there is a place for Indigenous languages to be seen, spoken and heard in society. It is an invitation for other cultures to share their languages and descriptions of kindness. It is a celebration of the school's emergence out and away from its former namesake and affiliation to one that reflects positive connections. kisewâtisiwin is the story of the school. It's at the heart of its connections. It brings the opportunity for new memories and new hopes. It is a character and not a character.

Next Steps and Further Recommendations

As part of the next steps the committee recommends that if the name is accepted by the Board of Trustees, that a gifting ceremony take place between committee members and EPSB leadership. The committee also recommends that EPSB consider changing the school mascot to one that will not pay tribute to its former namesake's affiliation or roots in the KKK. The committee also recommends that a resource be created to share the meaning and proper pronunciation of kisewâtisiwin for the public to assist them in upholding the spirit and meaning of the name. The committee thanks EPSB for the opportunity to be part of this project.

References:

Little Bear, L. (2000). Jagged worldviews colliding, In M. Battiste (Ed.) *Reclaiming indigenous voice and vision*. UBC Press. Pp. 77-85.