

What's in a name?

JOIN US IN RE-IMAGINING DEWDNEY AVENUE

Regina-based Buffalo People Arts Institute is inviting all residents to re-imagine Dewdney Avenue.

Dewdney Avenue was named after Edgar Dewdney, a late 19th-century Canadian politician and Indian Commissioner who used starvation tactics in an effort to bring indigenous people into submission. He withheld food rations during famine to force people onto reserves and to sign treaties, and to send their children to residential schools. Many Indigenous children, women, and men suffered and starved to death as a result of Dewdney's actions. Before and during this time, settlers had killed approximately 50 million buffalo on the prairies for food, sport, and to deny Indigenous people of their most important asset. The formerly enormous populations were reduced to only a few hundred buffalo.

The names of our streets, monuments, and institutions are typically reserved for people who were prominent figures in history and they should reflect the values we hold dear today. We don't believe that Dewdney's legacy is one worth celebrating.

The people of Regina deserve better. We want to see Dewdney Avenue renamed so that it reflects the values and identities of all of its citizens. We want all of our children to feel pride and belonging when they learn about the origins of our street names and other public spaces.

The City of Regina is currently reviewing its policies for renaming streets and parks due to the re-evaluation of the legacies of historical figures such as Dewdney.

To help inform this review, we invite you to:

- Write a letter of support for re-naming Dewdney Avenue; OR
- Sign a petition for re-naming Dewdney Avenue - <https://chn.ge/2OB6Jly>

Further details and contact information is on the reverse.



Cree Man near present-day Maple Creek, circa 1880

Photo credit: Natural Resources Canada, Geological Survey of Canada

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

If not Dewdney, then who or what?

We propose that the new street name be Buffalo or Paskwâwi-mostos or Tatanka or Pte or linnii Avenue (all which translate into Buffalo). Buffalo represents a connection to the land, identity and culture of the original people, hardships and resiliency, livelihood, and strength. The buffalo sustained Indigenous nations for millennia. Buffalo contributed to the settling of Canada as the meat, hides and fur were traded between Indigenous peoples and settlers and contributed to the survival of people in climates that were harsh and unforgiving.

Renaming would be a true reflection of honouring a legacy unnoticed for so many generations. It is also important to note that one of the calls to action in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report is to commemorate the contributions of Aboriginal peoples to Canada's history.

What's the big deal? Is a street name really that important?

To Indigenous people, Dewdney was a part of government intervention that resulted in the end of a thriving way of life. It is enormously important to acknowledge this.

In cities across Canada and around the world, people from all walks of life are reconsidering the names of certain streets, parks, and monuments. For example, this year the City of Saskatoon renamed one of their bridges to Chief Mistawasis, a northern plains leader known for his role in the 1876 Treaty 6 negotiations. In Vancouver, City Council and staff worked with three local First Nations to rename two large city plazas using local Indigenous languages. They are also looking at renaming streets.

Won't changing the name be erasing history?

No. We believe that honouring Dewdney in a street name is misleading about the full history of what happened to Indigenous peoples here. We believe this story needs to be told - either through interpretative elements within the city or in a museum - but that Dewdney himself should not be honoured in a street name.

Won't renaming be a hassle?

Street renaming can certainly be an inconvenience, but it is achievable and we believe it is worth it. Street renaming is not new to Regina. The City changed the name of South Railway Road to Saskatchewan Drive in the early 1980s, and other communities across Canada and around the world are doing the same.

We understand that this involves some compromise from residents and businesses on Dewdney Avenue, and we hope everyone can feel pride in being part of creating positive change in our community. Winnipeg-based Indigenous lawyer, Pam Palmater, has said that:

"If it doesn't feel uncomfortable, it's not real reconciliation."

We believe this is an important part of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Regina. We believe that we can achieve this together.

What is Buffalo People Arts Institute?

Buffalo People Arts Institute is a non-profit organization that is about sharing traditional Indigenous teachings and knowledge, and nurturing it every day so that Indigenous culture thrives. It seeks to raise the social consciousness of Indigenous people to make them aware of the power and strength they can draw from using blood memory and connection to the buffalo. We are leading this renaming initiative.

How can I help or learn more?

The most important way you can help is to write a letter of support, addressing it to Buffalo People Arts Institute. We will be creating a proposal that includes your letter of support, which will be sent to the City of Regina. Another option is to sign our petition on change.org: <https://chn.ge/2OB6Jly>

CONTACT US at the Buffalo People Arts Institute

Email - BuffaloPeople@gmail.com

Facebook - BuffaloPeopleArtsInstitute

Address: Suite 202, 2275 Albert Street, Regina, SK S4P 2V5

"A city is a book we read by wandering its streets, a text that favours one version of history and suppresses others, enlarges your identity or reduces it, makes you feel important or disposable, depending on who you are and what you are."

-Rebecca Solnit