THE WINNIPEG SCHOOL DIVISION

TO: The Chair and Members
    Winnipeg Public School Board

FROM: P.E. Clarke
    Chief Superintendent

RE: RENAMING OF CECIL RHODES SCHOOL

Motion, notice of which was given by Trustee Chen on June 15, 2020:

“That the administration begin a consultation process to engage students, parents/guardians and members of the community on the renaming of Cecil Rhodes School and that the results of the consultation be provided to the Board of Trustees not later than March 15th, 2021.”

Rationale:

The Winnipeg School Division Policy IGAB Diversity and Equity Education Policy states that: The Winnipeg School Division is committed to an educational philosophy that recognizes the fundamental equality of people of all origins, abilities, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, ethnic origin, ancestry, culture, socio-economic status etc.

The policy states in 7.1 that the WSD recognizes the need to create an inclusive environment in which all students, parents, staff and community members from diverse backgrounds feel welcome and included.

The WSD Policy AC Human Rights states that the Division is committed to dealing with institutional discrimination both within the Division and with those organizations outside the Division which offer services to its students.

The policy further states that the WSD shall promote Human Rights in its policies, procedures and practices.

Cecil Rhodes is a controversial figure, known for establishing the Rhodes Scholarship, he was also a white supremacist and settler colonialist. Many attribute him as being an architect of the Apartheid system in South Africa. Rhodes’ philosophy led to the subjugation and oppression of countless Africans.

Cecil Rhodes School is a diverse school, with many Black, Indigenous, and Filipino students attending.

Continuing to honour Cecil Rhodes sends the wrong message to these students and families. The Winnipeg School Division stands for equality for all students, and the name Cecil Rhodes does not reflect our Division’s policies of inclusion.
It is time to change the name of Cecil Rhodes School.

Recognizing the history that led to the naming of Cecil Rhodes School is important. We cannot and should not erase history. But the names of our schools reflect an identity upon students.

School names should deliver a sense of pride to students and staff. The continued name of a white supremacist will hurt students who Cecil Rhodes would have seen as lesser humans.

This motion requests the WSD to start the consultation process and to engage with students, staff, families, and community members to rename the school during the 2020-2021 school year. It would also be an opportunity to engage students in the classroom with discussions about racism and colonialism in Africa, the anti-Apartheid movement and Nelson Mandela, and similar struggles in Canada.

It is also recommended that other school communities give consideration to their school name which may be inappropriate due to world issues and advise the members of the Board of Trustees if there is a desire to reconsider their school name through a similar process.