



June 11, 2020

Thoughts on Changing Names of Toronto Streets

I just signed the petition to change the name of Dundas Street. Here are some further thoughts.

The moment has come for changes like this. Too many of the major streets in Toronto are named after the worst of the Family Compact. Racism was not the only issue - like the awful and violent Jarvises, many of them were also the leaders of the anti-democratic movement.

I'm sure there will be many wonderful suggestions for a new name. Here is one:

If we want a historic name of people who fought hard on the other side it's worth remembering that in 1842 the leaders of the democratic movement in Canada - LaFontaine of Montreal & Baldwin of Toronto - were elected Vice-Presidents of the International Anti-Slavery Society based in Paris.

Another important street on which a lot of work has already been done by Indigenous leaders is Davenport Road - in reality *Gete-Onigaming*, meaning *old portage trail*, which runs east-west, between the Don and Humber rivers and beyond.

For thousands of years this was an incredibly important route of communications across what we now call Toronto. A number of Indigenous thinkers and activists like Jon Johnson, and the Ogimaa Mikana project, started by Hayden King and Sarah Blight, have done a lot of work on this. Some street signs already combine Davenport with *Gete-Onigaming*. But wouldn't the real answer be to simply change the street name back to its real name?

One of the fascinating things about *Gete-Onigaming* (Davenport Road) is that it follows the contours of the geography. One of the few streets not laid out in a grid by British military engineers.

Let's do it. Let's change Dundas. Let's reestablish *Gete-Onigaming*.