

Eponymous Toronto District School Board school names

Nav Persaud, Shaan Bhambra, Sarah Waicus

Current school names

Values can be expressed through eponymous institutional names and other monuments to admired individuals. School names can help inspire children. Concerns about sexism and racism in school names have been raised in Toronto and elsewhere.

We abstracted school names from the TDSB website (<https://www.tdsb.on.ca/Find-your/School/By-Name>). We determined which schools were named after individuals and then performed a web and Wikipedia search for each namesake. We identified the gender of each namesake and whether or not the namesake is a racialized person.

We identified 578 school names. Most schools (445, 77 %) were not named after individuals. Of the 133 (23 %) schools named after an individual, most (117, 88 %) were named after a man. Of the 93 schools named after an individual where racialization could be determined, most (83, 89 %) were named after a white person. Among these 93, the most common identity was white man (73, 78 %), then white woman (10, 11 %), racialized man (6, 6 %) and racialized woman (4, 4 %).

Seven schools were named after someone named George and four after someone with the first name of Charles.

Some schools are named after individuals whose notable accomplishments are difficult to identify. Examples include William Burgess, H A Halbert, J G Workman, John G Althouse, C D Farquharson and C R Marchant. Maurice Cody was apparently the son of a prominent clergyman.

Some namesakes supported or advocated for racist policies such as John A. Macdonald, Egerton Ryerson, Wilfred Laurier, Winston Churchill, and William Osler. Some schools are named after individuals actively involved in colonization including Charles Gordon, Henry Hudson, Henry Kelsey, Frederick Temple Hamilton-Temple-Blackwood (Lord Dufferin), Alexander Mackenzie, and Samuel B. Steele. Stephen Leacock was a humorist who espoused racist and sexist views. Emily Carr has been criticized for appropriating Indigenous culture in her paintings.

Summary and future directions

Most schools are not named after an individual. Schools named after individuals are mostly named after white men. It is unclear why some individuals were selected to be honored with an eponymous school name. Some namesakes are associated with racism and sexism and their eponymous school names may not reflect the stated values of the Toronto District School Board and its stakeholders. It may be best to avoid naming schools after individuals and instead use place names such as the names of streets, parks and landmarks near to schools (see Appendix for three alternative names for each school). The Vancouver School Board has moved toward Indigenous place names in partnership with Indigenous people. Since it is difficult to find justifications for past school naming decisions, it could make sense to rename schools with questionable names and document the rationale so that school names can be revisited in the future based on evolving knowledge and values.

Appendix:

Alternative school names based on nearby street, park or landmark names

School name	Ward	Eponymous Individual	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
Adam Beck Junior Public School	Ward 16	Adam Beck	Swanwick	Lawlor	Kingswood
Agnes Macphail Public School	Ward 21	Agnes Macphail	Goldhawk	Pondtail	Hutchcroft
Alexander Muir/Gladstone Ave Junior and Senior Public School	Ward 9	Alexander Muir	Stonehouse	Argyle	Florence
Alexander Stirling Public School	Ward 22	Alexander Stirling	Plumrose	Fawcett	Caronia
Alvin Curling Public School	Ward 22	Alvin Curling	Rougeville	Antelope	Savanna
Anson S Taylor Junior Public School	Ward 21	Anson S Taylor	Chartwell	Rocksnest	Marrakesh
Banting and Best Public School	Ward 21	Frederick Banting; Charles Best	Echanted Hills	Eagledance	Dawnmist
Ben Heppner Vocal Music Academy	Ward 19	Ben Heppner	Greenlock	Montavista	Milford
Bliss Carman Senior Public School	Ward 18	Bliss Carman	Oakridge	Cree	Bellamy
Brock Public School	Ward 9	General Isaac Brock	Margueretta	Archer	Croatia
C D Farquharson Junior Public School	Ward 21	CD Farquharson	Terryhill	Stonewall	Redbud
C R Marchant Middle School	Ward 6	CR Marchant	Rosemount	Springmount	Wadsworth
Charles E Webster Public School	Ward 6	Charles E Webster	Clearview	Westacres	Trethgreen
Charles G Fraser Junior Public School	Ward 9	Charles G Fraser	Bellwoods	Manning	Euclid

Charles Gordon Senior Public School	Ward 17	Charles Gordon	Haileybury	Deerfield	Bonnechere
Charles H Best Junior Middle School	Ward 5	Charles H Best	Cedar Springs	Blue Forest	Terrydale
Chief Dan George Public School	Ward 22	Chief Dan Goerge	Grand River	Tideswell	Bonnydon
Churchill Heights Public School	Ward 19	Winston Churchill	Mountland	Stonehenge	Brimorton
Churchill Public School	Ward 12	Winston Churchill	Hazelglen	Claywood	Senlac
Claude Watson School for the Arts	Ward 12	Claude Watson	Hollywood	Elmwood	Spring Garden
D A Morrison Middle School	Ward 16	DA Morrison	Gledhill	Oak Park	Everett
da Vinci School	Ward 10	Leonardo da Vinci	Spadina	Chinatown	Oxford
David Hornell Junior School	Ward 3	David Hornell	Harbourview	Mimico	Manchester
David Lewis Public School	Ward 20	David Lewis	Fundy Bay	Sandy Haven	Seagrave
Diefenbaker Elementary School	Ward 15	John Diefenbaker	Northridge	Plains	Durant
Dr Marion Hilliard Senior Public School	Ward 21	Dr Marion Hilliard	Washburn	Unita Grove	Mammoth Hall
Duke of Connaught Junior and Senior Public School	Ward 15	Duke of Connaught	Woodfield	Cherry Nook	Ashdale
Earl Beatty Junior and Senior Public School	Ward 16	Earl Beatty	Woodlington	Wolverleigh	Glebeholme
Earl Grey Senior Public School	Ward 15	Earl Grey	Strathcona	Harcourt	Wroxeter
Earl Haig Public School	Ward 16	Earl Haig	Hillingdon	Thistlewood	Woodrow
Elizabeth Simcoe Junior Public School	Ward 19	Elizabeth Simcoe	Rogate	Sylvan	Catalina

Emily Carr Public School	Ward 22	Emily Carr	Stanbridge	Warwick	Duffort
Étienne Brûlé Junior School	Ward 3	Étienne Brûlé	Old Mill	Riverside	Riverview
F H Miller Junior Public School	Ward 9	FH Miller	Caledonia	Bronoco	Alessia
Fraser Mustard Early Learning Academy	Ward 11	Fraser Mustard	Overlea	Milepost	Banigan
General Crerar Public School	Ward 17	General Crerar	Asdean	Flintridge	Flora
General Mercer Junior Public School	Ward 9	General Mercer	Turnberry	Rowntree	Rockwell
George Anderson Public School	Ward 6	George Anderson	Woodridge	Arrowsmith	Colville
George B Little Public School	Ward 19	George B Little	Morningside	Botany Hill	Bow Valley
George P Mackie Junior Public School	Ward 19	George P Mackie	Heathfield	Duncombe	Greendowns
George Peck Public School	Ward 17	George Peck	Lancefield	Clearfield	Samya
George R Gauld Junior School	Ward 3	George R Gauld	Algoma	Melrose	Portland
George Syme Community School	Ward 6	George Syme	Mariposa	Pritchard	Corbett
George Webster Elementary School	Ward 16	George Webster	Donora	Munford	Brenton
Gordon A Brown Middle School	Ward 16	Gordon A Brown	Dalecrest	Rexleigh	Merritt
H A Halbert Junior Public School	Ward 18	HA Halbert	Dorset	Rockwood	Fenwood
H J Alexander Community School	Ward 6	HJ Alexander	Fern	Rosemount	Riverlea
Henry Hudson Senior Public School	Ward 19	Henry Hudson	Greenock	Heather Heights	Starlake

Henry Kelsey Senior Public School	Ward 21	Henry Kelsey	Huntingwood	Chartland	Mollard
J B Tyrrell Senior Public School	Ward 20	JB Tyrrell	Fairglen	Corinthian	Orangewood
J G Workman Public School	Ward 18	JG Workman	Kenmore	Edgely	Chesapeake
J R Wilcox Community School	Ward 8	JR Wilcox	Ava	Atlas	Alameda
Jack Miner Senior Public School	Ward 19	Jack Miner	Poplar	Scarcliff	Forsythia
James S Bell Junior Middle Sports and Wellness Academy	Ward 3	James S Bell	Walnut	Ash	Birchlea
Jean Augustine Girls' Leadership Academy	Ward 20	Jean Augustine	Portland	Newcastle	Windsor
Jean Lumb Public School	Ward 9	Jean Lumb	Canoe Landing	Lake Shore	Fort York
Jesse Ketchum Junior and Senior Public School	Ward 10	Jesse Ketchum	Hazleton	Berryman	Yorkville
John A Leslie Public School	Ward 18	John A Leslie	Aylesworth	Natal	Sandown
John Buchan Senior Public School	Ward 20	John Buchan	West Highland	Eaglestone	Bay Mills
John D Parker Junior School	Ward 1	John D Parker	Mount Olive	Silverstone	Plowshare
John English Junior Middle School	Ward 3	John English	Mimico	Wheatfield	Hillside
John Fisher Junior Public School	Ward 11	John Fisher	Keewatin	Roselawn	Redpath
John G Althouse Middle School	Ward 2	John AG Althouse	Blackdown	Firwood	Winterton
John G Diefenbaker Public School	Ward 22	John Diefenbaker	Red River	Sudbury Hill	Braymore

John McCrae Public School	Ward 17	John McCrae	Pringdale	Thicketwood	Carlake
John Ross Robertson Junior Public School	Ward 8	John Ross Robertson	Glengrove	Glencairn	Rosewell
John Wanless Junior Public School	Ward 8	John Wanless	Fairlawn	Brookdale	Melrose
Joseph Brant Public School	Ward 22	Joseph Brant	Heron Park	Deanscroft	Deek Shill
Joseph Howe Senior Public School	Ward 22	Joseph Howe	Golders Green	Winter Gardens	Ravine Park
King Edward Junior and Senior Public School	Ward 10	King Edward	Lippincott	Croft	Western
King George Junior Public School	Ward 7	King George	Runnymede	Old Mill	Magwood
Lester B Pearson Elementary School	Ward 13	Lester B Pearson	Ruddington	Bayview	Maxome
Lord Dufferin Junior and Senior Public School	Ward 10	Lord Dufferin	Cabbagetown	Regent	Parliament
Lord Lansdowne Junior Public School	Ward 10	Lord Lansdowne	Harbord	Spadina	Kensington
Lord Roberts Junior Public School	Ward 17	Lord Roberts	Treverton	Midland	Arsandco
Lucy Maud Montgomery Public School	Ward 22	Lucy Maud	Murison	Murison	Malvern Woods
Lucy McCormick Senior School	Ward 7	Lucy McCormick	West Bend	Pelham	Carlton
Mary Shadd Public School	Ward 22	Mary Shadd	Hupfield	Morningside Heights	Pennyhill
Maurice Cody Junior Public School	Ward 11	Maurice Cody	Cleveland	Cheston	Millwood
Milne Valley Middle School	Ward 14	David Milne	Underhill	Broadlands	Parkwoods

Nelson Mandela Park Public School	Ward 10	Nelson Mandela	Trefann Court	Sackville	Shuter
Norman Cook Junior Public School	Ward 18	Norman Cook	Scarborough Junction	Corvette	Greystone
Norman Ingram Public School	Ward 14	Norman Ingram	Duncairn	Berkinshaw	Bond
Pauline Johnson Junior Public School	Ward 20	Pauline Johnson	Eagleston	Dunmurray	Bay Mills
Percy Williams Junior Public School	Ward 21	Percy Williams	Sandhurst	Richmond	Heather
Pierre Laporte Middle School	Ward 5	Pierre Laporte	Humber	Victory	Roding
Princess Margaret Junior School	Ward 2	Princess Margaret	Tromley	Richview	Winterton
Queen Alexandra Middle School	Ward 15	Queen Alexandra	Broadview	Riverside	Degrassi
Queen Victoria Public School	Ward 7	Queen Victoria	Close Springhurst	Dunn	Tibet
R H McGregor Elementary School	Ward 15	RH McGregor	Mortimer	Coxwell	East York
R J Lang Elementary and Middle School	Ward 12	RJ Lang	Newtonbrook	Tefley	Hilda
Rene Gordon Health and Wellness Academy	Ward 14	Rene Gordon	Graydon Hall	York Height	Talbot
Robert Service Senior Public School	Ward 18	Robert Service	Glenshephard	Greystone	Brimley
Ryerson Community School	Ward 9	Egerton Ryerson	Bellevue Square	Kensington	Denison
Samuel Hearne Middle School	Ward 18	Samuel Hearne	Warden Woods	Oakridge	Madelaide
Sir Adam Beck Junior School	Ward 3	Sir Adam Beck	Etobicoke Valley	Orchard Heights	Delma

Sir Alexander Mackenzie Senior Public School	Ward 21	Sir Alexander Mackenzie	Brimley	Healthier	Garden Avenue
Sir Ernest MacMillan Senior Public School	Ward 20	Sir Ernest Macmillan	Huntsmill	Springhouse	McNicoll
Sir Samuel B Steele Junior Public School	Ward 20	Sir Samuel B Steele	Eagle Point	Warden Park	Bamburgh
St Andrew's Middle School	Ward 11	Saint Andrew the Apostle	Fenn	Bayview-York	York Mills
St George's Junior School	Ward 2	Saint George of Lydda	Kingsway	Humber Valley	Kipling
Terry Fox Public School	Ward 20	Terry Fox	Heart Lake	White Spruce	Sandalwood
Thomas L Wells Public School	Ward 22	Thomas L Wells	Nightstar	Birunthan	Morningside
Tom Longboat Junior Public School	Ward 21	Tom Longboat	Horseley Hill	Tapscott	Malvern
Walter Perry Junior Public School	Ward 18	Walter Perry	Falmouth	Eglinton East	Midland
William Burgess Elementary School	Ward 15	William Burgess	Torrens	Woodville	Rivercourt
William G Davis Junior Public School	Ward 22	William G Davis	Rouge Hill	Port Union	Golders Green
William G Miller Public School	Ward 22	William G Miller	Woodgrove	Ravenview	Manse Valley
William J McCordic School	Ward 16	William J McCordic	Balfour	Coleman	Maryland
A. Y. Jackson Secondary School	Ward 13	Alexander Young Jackson	Francine	Hillcrest	Duncan Creek
Albert Campbell Collegiate Institute	Ward 21	Albert Campbell	Brimley Woods	Agincourt	Sandhurst
C. W. Jefferys Collegiate Institute	Ward 4	C W Jefferys	Derrydowns	Dundee	Sentinel

David and Mary Thomson Collegiate Institute	Ward 17	David and Mary Thomson	Midland Park	Dorcot	Thomson
Dr Norman Bethune Collegiate Institute	Ward 20	Dr Norman Bethune	Fundy Bay	Bamburgh	Milliken
Earl Haig Secondary School	Ward 12	Earl Haig	Willowdale	Dudley	Hillcrest
George Harvey Collegiate Institute	Ward 6	George Harvey	Silverthorne	Kellesdale	Rotherham
George S. Henry Academy	Ward 14	George S Henry	Graydon Hall	York Heights	Don Mills
Georges Vanier Secondary School	Ward 13	Georges Vanier	Oriole	Don Valley	Godstone
John Polanyi Collegiate Institute	Ward 8	John Polanyi	Fairholme	Lawrence Manor	Flemington
Lester B. Pearson Collegiate Institute	Ward 21	Lester B Pearson	Tapscott	Mclevin Woods	Malvern
Marc Garneau Collegiate Institute	Ward 11	Marc Garneau	Don Mills	Overlea	Thornccliffe
R. H. King Academy	Ward 18	Reginald Harold King	Harewood	Cliffcrest	Brooklawn
SATEC @ W. A. Porter Collegiate Institute	Ward 18	William Arnot Porter (1893-1956)	Clairlea	Fairfax	Warden Woods
Sir John A. Macdonald Collegiate Institute	Ward 20	Sir John A Macdonald	North Bridlewood	Corinthian	L'Amoreaux
Sir Oliver Mowat Collegiate Institute	Ward 22	Sir Oliver Mowat	Bridgeport	Port Union	Rouge Hill
Sir Wilfrid Laurier Collegiate Institute	Ward 19	Sir Wildred Laurier	Guild	Livingston	Rowatson
Stephen Leacock Collegiate Institute	Ward 20	Stephen Leacock	Bay Mills	Huntingwood	West Highland
Ursula Franklin Academy	Ward 7	Ursula Franklin	Glenlake	Glendonwynne	Beresford

William Lyon Mackenzie Collegiate Institute	Ward 5	William Lyon Mackenzie	Tilplain	Bathurst Manor	Downsview
Winston Churchill Collegiate Institute	Ward 17	Winston Churchill	Lawrence East	Flora	Arsandco
Frank Oke Secondary School	Ward 6	Frank Oke	Rockcliffe	Black Creek	Alliance
Sir William Osler High School	Ward 20	Sir William Osler	Huntingwood	East Highland	Knott