

Burlington School Renamed after Indigenous Education Activist

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BURLINGTON, Ont., Nov. 30, 2021 – The Halton District School Board has announced the new name of Ryerson Public School at an unveiling event on Tuesday, Nov. 30. The school will be named after Elsie Marie Knott, advocate for education and the Ojibwe language.



Ryerson Public School in Burlington, before and after the renaming.

The announcement comes five months after a unanimous vote, part of a Canada-wide move to rename schools bearing the name of Adolphus Egerton Ryerson. The 19th-century educator is now widely disgraced for his ties to the Canadian Indian Residential school system.

The Board strongly supported the choice of an Indigenous leader with ties to education. “A number of outstanding candidates were proposed,” says Board Director of Education Curtis Ennis, “but the vote shows that Elsie Knott stood out—not just as a leader and path-breaker but as an advocate of culturally-inclusive education.”

In September, after consultation with leaders of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and Métis communities, the Board invited students, parents and members of the public to submit proposed names. The Board of Trustees held the final vote on Nov. 13.

“Elsie Knott is an excellent choice,” says R. Stacey LaForme, Chief of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. “She was the first female First Nations chief in Canada and the founder of an Ojibwe language program, but she was also a school bus driver. Her dedication to education and to Indigenous heritage and language is an inspiration. My hope is that students will learn more about her legacy.”

The Burlington school’s renaming is just one of many now underway in the region, where parks and public spaces named after Ryerson are also in need of new names. For more information about the Halton Board’s renaming policy, visit: <https://www.hdsb.ca/schools/Pages/Our%20Schools/School-Renaming-HDSB.aspx>.

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