

Understanding and Articulating McGill University's Relationship to its History

Working Group on Principles of Commemoration and Renaming

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Full membership to be determined.

Mandate

In recent years, universities across North America have been confronted by the necessity to reconcile past with present – to address a dissonance between certain thoughts, actions, and policies of earlier eras with current institutional identity, mission and aspiration. In particular, institutions have been pressed to rename buildings or awards that bear the names of historical figures whose legacies are at odds with modern expectations. In some cases, the name of the institution itself has been called into question. At McGill, it is the name of the mens' varsity sports teams, the Redmen, that has recently drawn critical attention.

McGill University has been a central pillar of Montreal society since its inception, and its graduates have influenced the development of the nation for nearly two hundred years. With our bicentennial approaching in 2021, we have an opportunity for both reflection and imagination. As we look ahead to our third century and build on the commitment that McGill will be a 21st-century global university, and as we celebrate two centuries of achievement, we must also engage in critical reflection.

The Working Group on Principles of Commemoration and Renaming is tasked with undertaking an examination of McGill's relationship (past and current) with underrepresented groups, in the context of a broad-reaching reflection of our institutional history, with a view to recommending a set of principles by which the University may be guided in its decision-making with respect to any future commemorative or renaming initiative. The working group will take cues from Universities that have already undertaken similar exercises (such as Yale University and Dalhousie University).

In completing this mandate, the Working Group will consult widely across the McGill community, including alumni. It will likewise consult with representative communities across Montreal. The final report and recommendations will be submitted to the Provost and Vice-Principal (Academic) by Thursday, 6 December 2018.