



To the City of Edmonton Naming Committee,

Re: **Oliver Community League Name Change** – Letter of Support

## **Background**

The Oliver Community League (OCL) Board approves the final engagement report from the Heartstage Consulting Group in support of the application for the renaming of the Oliver neighbourhood. The collective Board supports and agrees with the report and is pleased to have the process come to a conclusion with a proposed name.

The neighbourhood of Oliver has a long history as a gathering place for Indigenous Communities. For centuries Nehiyaw (Cree) Plains peoples lived, hunted, bartered, built relationships, and stewarded the land. While the Papaschase Nation largely inhabited this land, many other nations would visit for connecting, trade, and building kinship. Similarly, the Métis were in this area during their buffalo hunts as well to connect and engage with the Cree Plains peoples. Kinship with one another, the land, and animals was as important for Indigenous peoples then as it is today.

In June 2020, the OCL Board moved, seconded and voted on the following motion:

*“The Oliver Community League Board of Directors opposes the name “Oliver” for our community because its namesake, Frank Oliver, spearheaded many harmful policies that directly targeted Indigenous communities, people of colour, newcomers, and people with disabilities. This namesake does not reflect the spirit of diversity and inclusion that our community represents.”*

The OCL Board voted in favour of the motion unanimously and started an important journey.

This motion helped kickstart the **#UncoverOliver** campaign.. The OCL, led by Indigenous communities, initiated the #UncoverOliver campaign to gather key information, spread awareness, gather community support and connect the community league with residents. The campaign ran for several months, educating our community as to who its namesake was, his recorded actions, and why the name came to be - uncovering the history of our community.

## **Oliver Community History**

In 1922 the residents of west Edmonton established the West End Community League. The Oliver Community League emerged out of this foundational organization in 1937, when the area was officially named Oliver. The neighbourhood name followed the naming of Oliver School, built in 1911 - both were named after Frank Oliver.



Frank Oliver (1853-1933) played a tremendous role in the political governance of the area at the turn of the 20th century via his roles as founder of the Edmonton Bulletin, Minister of Interior for Alberta and Superintendent General of Indian Affairs. Many of his political motivations were rooted in racism and anti-Indigeneity. The impacts of his political role in Canada were far-reaching and harmed a number of peoples including the Indigenous communities (specifically the Papaschase peoples) as well as Black and Chinese immigrants, among other communities.

In order to better reflect the story, the diversity, the hopes and aspirations of this neighbourhood, the OCL feels it is in the best interest of the neighbourhood to move forward with a name that better reflects the values of this neighbourhood.

While this community has been named Oliver for nearly 100 years, it is not uncommon for neighbourhood names to change over time. Prior to being named Oliver, the neighbourhood was known as the West End. And before it was named the West End, this area had been lived in and supported by Indigenous and other diverse communities for thousands of years (and continues to be). It is important to honour the long-standing history of this place while also looking forward to a future where all people feel safe and seen.

It is a very exciting and unique opportunity for a community and individuals with past and present experiences of a place to have a chance to name it. Today Oliver is a vibrant and diverse community full of residential areas, shops, businesses, and schools.

### **OCL Board Approval of a New Name**

In April 2023, the OCL Board moved, seconded and voted on the following motion:

*“On the recommendation of the Renaming Committee, the OCL Board accepts the Oliver Renaming Project's engagement, the What We Heard Report, and the Renaming Circle's proposed name.”*

The OCL Board voted in favour of the motion unanimously and are excited to have this momentous occasion.

The OCL Renaming Circle co-created the path for engaging the Indigenous community and broader public in identifying new potential names for the Oliver neighbourhood. The OCL Renaming Circle supported the analysis of the information gathered through engagement and worked to co-create a list of potential names for the community league. The Renaming Circle comprised of the following groups: at least 1 to 2 Elder, Indigenous community members and leaders (Enoch Cree Nation, Alexander First Nation, Alexis Nakoda Sioux Nation, Paul First Nation, Papaschase First Nation, Michel Band, Métis organizations), members from varied demographics, general public members,



and 1 OCL board member. The Renaming Circle met at a total of seven times from May 2022 to February 2023, including two pipe ceremonies.

The goal was to give as much agency as possible to the Renaming Circle to guide the process of identifying a new name for the Oliver Community League. It was important to the Oliver Community League, and to the process, that the Renaming Circle was Indigenous-centered and included a majority of Indigenous perspectives. It was also important to include perspectives from several of the racialized communities impacted by Frank Oliver's policies and legacies. The project team took a relationship-based and snowball approach to convening the Renaming Circle. Invitations were extended to a range of individuals and organizations. Some of the invited individuals and organizations declined to participate based on capacity or interest. Further details on who participated and who was invited can be found in the Engagement Report. The Renaming Circle was non-hierarchical and collaborative, using Indigenous ways of being and knowing to create a holistic, non-hierarchical, collaborative process that included not only Elders but also knowledge keepers, community leaders, and Oliver residents.

### **Proposed New Name**

We support the thorough process that was undertaken to engage folks in the community, the businesses and organizations. The consultation process with the Elder Renaming Circle was an honour to be a part of and helped guide the important work. The Elder Renaming Circle landed on the new community league name in nêhiyawêwin is **Wîhkwêntôwin, ᐃᓐᓃᓐᐅᓐᓃᓐᐅᓐᐅᓐ** - which translates in English to 'Circle of Friends'.

This new name can help move the community forward and build a better future. The new name captures a lot of the themes that were repeated throughout the engagement process: community, kindness, friendship, hanging out and exploring the green space in the neighbourhood, and so much more. This is a great step in the journey of reconciliation, and the OCL Board is excited to continue evolving to meet the needs of the community

In conclusion, we fully support the Heartstage Engagement report, application package, proposed name and look forward to working with all partners to change the name of the league for a more inclusive community.

Thank you,

Imran Ahmad, President  
On behalf of the Oliver Community League Board



## The Name

In nêhiyawêwin - Wîhkwêntôwin, ᐃᓄᐃᓄᐃᓄᐃᓄ

## The Meaning

In English this translates to 'Circle of Friends'.

This reflects community values, and the essence of what makes Wîhkwêntôwin a great neighbourhood to live in. The circle is significant to both Indigenous and Chinese communities within Wîhkwêntôwin, in the circular encampments of the Papaschase and the practice of eating in a circle together. It also represents togetherness, that folks are always welcome to join the circle and be a part of the community.

## Pronunciation

WE-KWEN-TO-WIN

## How It Happened

**Participants in the Renaming Circle included:** Jo-Ann Saddleback, Jerry Saddleback, Carola Cunningham, Gary Gairdner, Emily Riddle, Maureen Callihoo Ligtoet, Vernon Hagen, Junetta Jamerson, Lan Chan-Marples, George Quinn, Chief Bruneau, and a rotating representative of the Oliver Community League (Robyn Paches, Robyn Wilson, Carrie-Anne Cyre).

The Renaming Circle was non-hierarchical and collaborative, using Indigenous ways of being and knowing to create a holistic, non-hierarchical, collaborative process that included not only Elders but also knowledge keepers, community leaders, and Oliver residents.

# OLIVER COMMUNITY LEAGUE

## Boundary

