



# Standing Strong Task Force Report & Recommendations

*Acknowledging the past, learning from  
the present, looking to the future*

August 18, 2021

**Mash Koh  
Wee Kah  
Pooh Win**

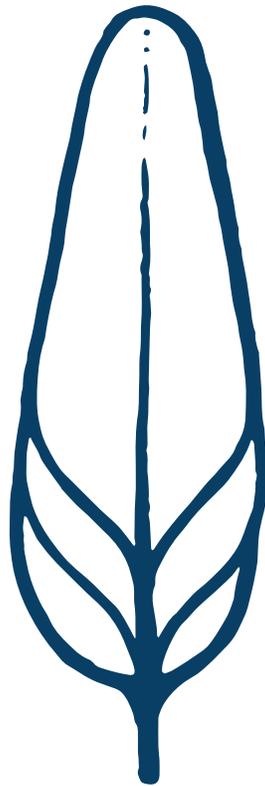
**Standing  
Strong  
Task Force**

**Thank you to our community members for the gift of their words through emails, letters and survey responses, some of which have been included in this report with all identifying information removed.**

Note: This report follows the guidance and conventions found in Gregory Younging, *Elements of Indigenous Style: A Guide for Writing By and About Indigenous Peoples* (Edmonton: Brush Education, 2018).



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# Acknowledgements

The Mash Koh Wee Kah Pooh Win (Standing Strong) Task Force's work was conducted entirely remotely. Adopting a virtual approach due to the COVID-19 pandemic presented some challenges while also creating opportunities for wider Task Force representation, presenter availability and community engagement that might not have been possible under different circumstances.

As co-Chairs, we are grateful for the opportunity provided to us by President Mohamed Lachemi to lead this project with a membership that brought together diverse perspectives and experiences with such intention. We are thankful for each Task Force member who demonstrated their commitment to our mandate through many hours of meetings over Zoom and through reading thousands of pages of materials. Our time together was spent learning, listening and thinking critically not only about the information that was gathered but also about the events unfolding during the months of the project. Together, we challenged each other, shared knowledge and imagined what the future could be.

Our work was grounded with a version of the following prayer—shared at the start of each meeting—reminding us of Indigenous values:

*First, let us give thanks for the day that has been offered to us - this opportunity to open our hearts and our minds to a new way of seeing and a new way of being.*

*We call on any ancestors or spirit helpers who would like to come with us, today on our continued work and ask that they watch over us, as well as our brothers and sisters that are on our streets, in our jails, our treatment centres, our shelters, our institutions and in our long-term care facilities.*

*Let us give thanks to any plants or animals that will give of themselves today so that we can move forward.*

*Let us give thanks to Mother Earth for all that she provides and ask her forgiveness for how we continue to treat her. Let us pray for the healing of her waters.*

*Let us give thanks to Father Sky for watching over us and tending to the star people reminding us of the many things we must tend to in a day.*



*And to Grandfather Sun who gives us the energy of life while reminding us that even too much of a good thing can be dangerous for us.*

*And to Grandmother Moon who, when she is full, lights our way in the darkness, and when she is in new moon, she reminds us that even in the darkness the light is there. She gently reminds us of the many phases that we will go through in a month.*

Thank you to all the community members who participated in our process through our survey, community conversations, emails, social media, open letters and media publications. Thank you to the individuals who presented to us, answered our questions and shared their wisdom.

Thank you to Rachel DiSaia for the exceptional vision and passion you bring to this work. We are deeply grateful. Thank you to Steven Liss and Denise O'Neil Green for your executive leadership and guidance. Thank you to Melanie Martin-Griem, Darrell Bowden, Heather Driscoll, Deidre Tylecki and the Argyle team for sharing your knowledge, skills and dedication. Thank you to our student research team who exceeded all expectations: Taylor Starr, Amina Dirie, Wyeth Robertson, Brittany Szczyglowski, Julianna Alton, Belinda Ha, Andrew Lochhead and Shruti Vyas.

And thank you to the many colleagues across the university who answered questions, provided feedback and helped us to communicate with our community members.

**We ask that every person who reads this report finds joy in learning, sees themselves represented, and joins us in optimism for our university's next chapter.**

Chi miigwetch

**Joanne Dallaire & Catherine Ellis**  
co-Chairs

## Task Force Membership



**Joanne Dallaire**  
Co-chair

Elder (Ke Shay Hayo) and Senior Advisor Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation for Ryerson University and a member of the university's Board of Governors



**Catherine Ellis**  
Co-chair

Chair and Associate Professor in the Department of History at Ryerson University and a member of the university's Board of Governors



**Frank Walwyn**

Partner, WeirFoulds LLP and Ryerson University Alumnus



**Tracey King**

Indigenous Human Resources Lead, Recruitment and Retention, at Ryerson University



**Gerald McMaster**

Professor and Tier 1 Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Visual Culture and Curatorial Practice, and Director of Wapatah Centre for Indigenous Visual Knowledge at OCAD University



**Heather Rollwagen**

Undergraduate Program Director and Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology at Ryerson University



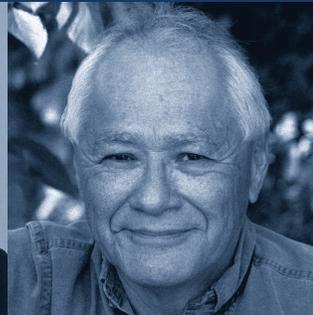
**Tay Rubman**

Undergraduate History student and a member of the university's Board of Governors



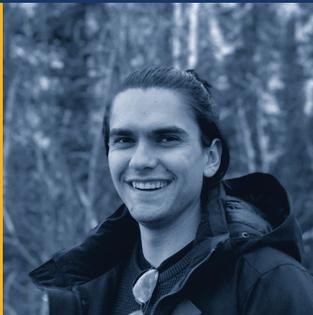
**Amorell Saunders N'Daw**

Partner and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Lead at Knightsbridge Robertson Surette and Ryerson University Alumna



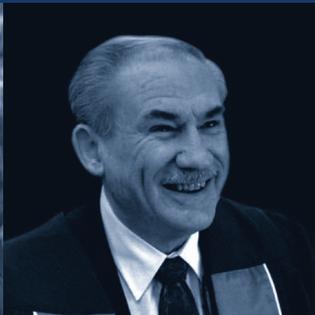
**T'hohahoken Michael Doxtater**

Associate Professor, Creative Indigenous Practices in the School of Creative Industries at Ryerson University



**Riley Kucheran**

Assistant Professor, Design Leadership in Ryerson's School of Fashion and PhD Candidate, Communication and Culture



**Dennis Mock**

Former Vice-President, Academic at Ryerson University, former President of Nipissing University



**Cecile Farnum**

Liaison Librarian with the Ryerson University Library



**Julia Spagnuolo**

Undergraduate Urban and Regional Planning student and a member of the university's Senate



**Natasha Henry**

President of the Ontario Black History Society



The Task Force membership reflects the diversity of the university community. The 14 members include students, faculty, staff, alumni and professionals from various fields such as human rights, history, public art, human resources and law.

## Approach

The Task Force approached its mandate through an Indigenous lens, guided by the belief that no one is above, no one is below, no one is ahead and no one is behind. Regardless of age, stage or position, everyone's voice is equally valued.

## Mandate

The mandate (appendix A) of the Task Force required us to:

1. Conduct thorough, open, transparent consultations with Ryerson students, faculty, staff, alumni and others.
2. Examine and more fully understand Egerton Ryerson's relationship with Indigenous Peoples, his links to the education system in Ontario, and his role in the development of residential schools in Canada, as well as interpret these findings in both their historical and modern context.
3. Examine how other universities have dealt with the issues of statuary, memorials, and requests to rename and identify best practices.
4. Develop principles to guide the recommended actions that Ryerson could take to respond to Egerton Ryerson's legacy and the findings of the consultations.
5. **Provide a final report to the President with recommendations and principles by end of summer 2021.**

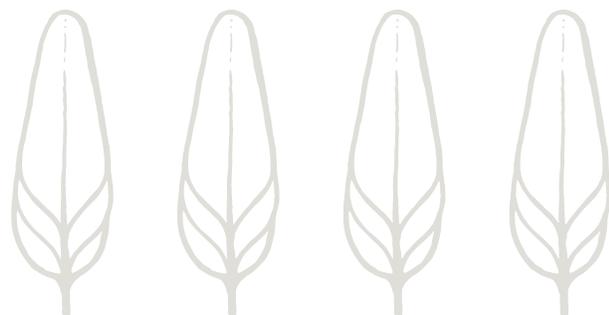


## Report appendices

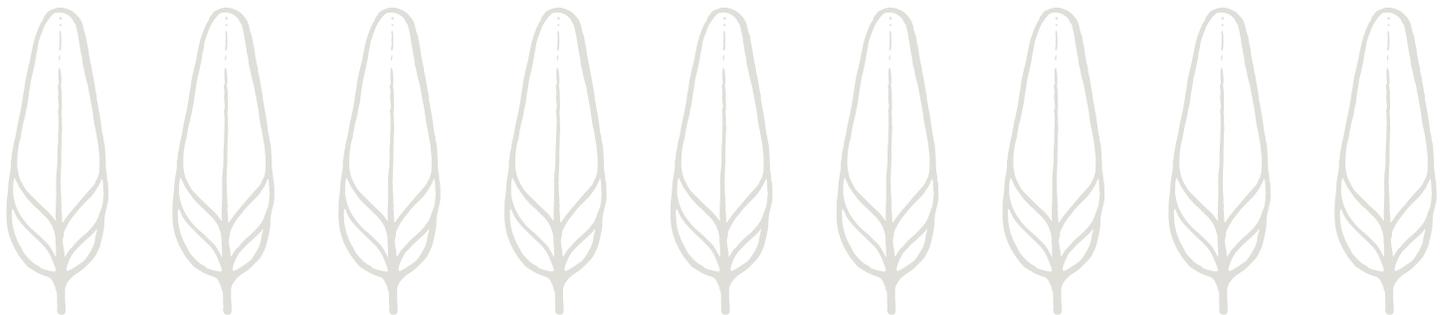
- A** Terms of reference
- B** What We Learned: Engagement Overview and Analysis report
- C** External scan
- D** Life and legacy of Egerton Ryerson
- E** Task Force reviewed documents, videos, podcasts and media publications

## Related documents

- > 2018 Truth and Reconciliation Community Consultation Summary Report
- > 2020 Anti-Black Racism Campus Climate Review Report



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01

# Report Overview





## Report overview

President Mohamed Lachemi struck the Mash Koh Wee Kah Pooh Win (Standing Strong) Task Force in November 2020 to seek an understanding of both Egerton Ryerson's life and legacy and the role of commemoration in our community.

For over a decade, students, faculty, staff and community activists – particularly Indigenous and Black community members – have completed paid and unpaid research on, and raised awareness about, these topics. They have also mobilized the community to participate in conversations about the ongoing trauma and pain caused by the commemoration of colonial figures. Our report recognizes the harm that has been caused by the university's failure to prioritize historical research and meaningful community engagement about Egerton Ryerson's work and legacy.

To fulfil our mandate, we identified three concurrent streams of work:

- › historical research
- › community engagement
- › the Task Force members' own learning and unlearning

We approached each of these streams with great intentionality. Our processes and approaches aimed to learn in new ways from historically excluded voices and to demonstrate respect for the value of each community member.

## Historical research

Our research team examined the ways in which the commemoration of colonial figures has been addressed around the world (appendix C). Guided by those findings, the research team then developed a detailed and contextualized timeline of Egerton Ryerson's life and legacy (appendix D). These materials enabled us to draw conclusions about Egerton Ryerson's relationships with Indigenous Peoples, the provincial education system, segregated and separate schools and the Indian Residential School System (page 40).

## Concepts of History and Legacy

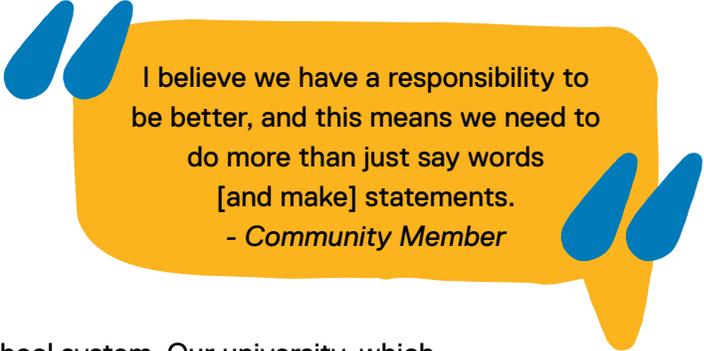
Our report captures distinctions between history and legacy.

**History** is an evidence-based and analytical understanding of the past.

**Legacy** is both the impact of something or someone, and the ways in which that impact is experienced, understood and remembered publicly by a variety of people over time.

Decisions to cease commemoration are based on whether a **legacy** aligns with present-day values. Such decisions do not intend to erase, hide, or deny history, but rather seek to reflect a more complete understanding of the past, celebrate current values and set aspirations for the future.

Our research also provided valuable insights into our own university's history of public commemoration of and affiliation with Egerton Ryerson. For example, in 1889 - seven years after his death - a statue of Egerton Ryerson was erected on Gould Street to commemorate his achievements as Superintendent of Education, particularly the development of Ontario's public school system. Our university, which now occupies the land where the statue stood, opened in 1948 as the Ryerson Institute of Technology. This name was chosen by the institution's founders with the intention of providing instant credibility and prestige for the new institution.



I believe we have a responsibility to be better, and this means we need to do more than just say words [and make] statements.  
- *Community Member*

## Community engagement

With assistance from Argyle Communications Inc., the Task Force launched an inclusive engagement period designed to capture the perspectives and ideas of community members through multiple avenues. Our two-month online survey and community conversation report-back period allowed us to learn from nearly 9000 students, faculty, staff, alumni and others about both Egerton Ryerson's legacy and how they felt commemoration should be guided at the university. Additionally, we reviewed hundreds of emails, open letters, op-eds and other media publications from June 2020 through June 30th, 2021. We welcomed all forms of participation to develop an understanding of common themes, concerns and suggestions for reform (pg 30) (appendix B).

## Learning and unlearning

From March to June 2021, scholars, Traditional Knowledge Keepers and various subject matter experts helped us, the Task Force members, deepen our understanding of:

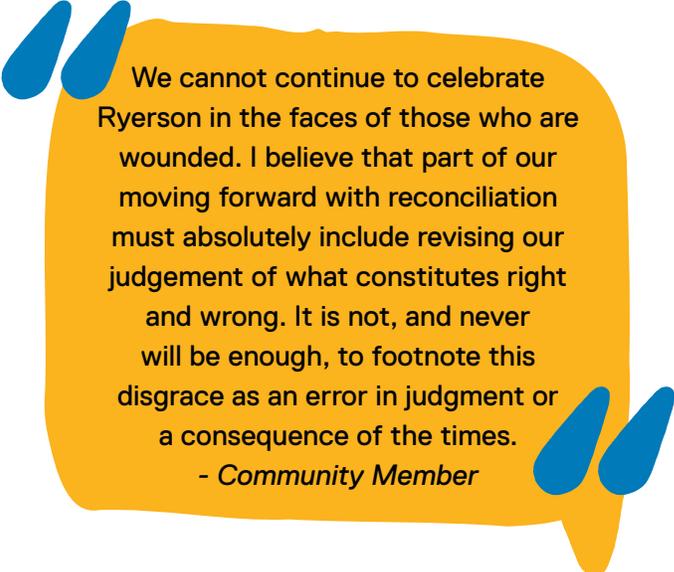
- > the life and legacy of Egerton Ryerson
- > statues as forms of public art and memorialization
- > the history of colonization
- > Traditional Knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and place-making
- > the naming of public spaces
- > the Indian Residential School System
- > the public education system
- > segregated and separate schooling
- > Truth and Reconciliation
- > the uses of commemoration

## Our recommendations

Our recommendations (pg. 16) reflect our learning and the voices of our community members. They also embody our university's commitment to being unapologetically bold, intentionally diverse and inclusive, dedicated to excellence, respectfully collaborative and a champion of sustainability.

Our understanding of the past was further informed by current events and overdue reckonings that highlighted racial injustice and the genocide of Indigenous Peoples. The ongoing global pandemic further stressed the presence of systemic inequities.

Our recommendations are future-oriented and reflect the kind of ancestors we wish to become for our next seven generations. Our historical research and community engagement provided a full picture of the past and present commemoration of Egerton Ryerson, yet our recommendations are not based on either vilification or vindication of the individual. As we developed recommendations for the future of the university, we concluded that older forms of commemoration no longer align with our commitment to inclusion and reconciliation. Therefore, our recommendations are shaped primarily by our understanding of the ongoing harm experienced by our community members.



We cannot continue to celebrate Ryerson in the faces of those who are wounded. I believe that part of our moving forward with reconciliation must absolutely include revising our judgement of what constitutes right and wrong. It is not, and never will be enough, to footnote this disgrace as an error in judgment or a consequence of the times.

- *Community Member*

### Principles of commemoration

We recommend five principles of commemoration for the university to embody with purpose and advance with courage. We believe that a commitment to transparency, respectful collaboration, purposeful representation, Truth and Reconciliation, humility and continuous learning will ensure that decisions about commemoration are made with integrity.

### Commemoration of Egerton Ryerson

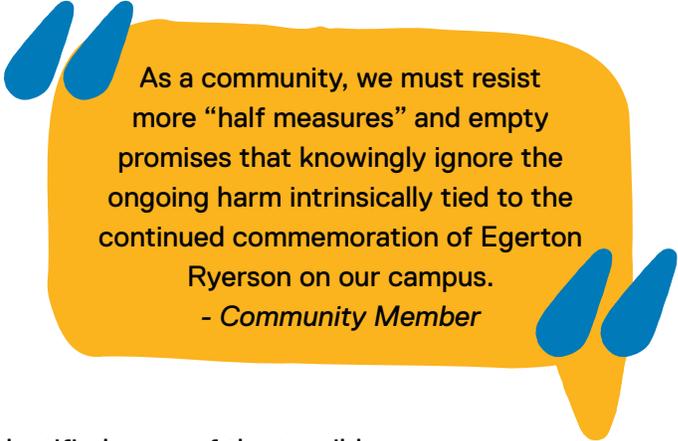
The institution we currently call Ryerson University has had four names since it was founded in 1948 as the Ryerson Institute of Technology. Each name change reflected both the institution's evolving roles in society and its aspirations for the future.

For 73 years, the university has maintained its commemoration of Egerton Ryerson and has benefited from the immediate and contemporary credibility his name provided. Since 1948, each member of the university's community has contributed to its growth and reputation as a dynamic institution. Many of these members have maintained that

the name “Ryerson” does not reflect the values that currently define us. Now, in 2021, these voices have inspired an institutional reassessment of Egerton Ryerson’s legacy. Accordingly, this Task Force recommends that the university rename the institution once again through a process that engages with community members and stakeholders.

### Responsibility to address colonial legacy

We recognize that a name change alone will not erase the systemic barriers and inequities that Indigenous and Black community members face within the institution. The university must also actively address the legacy of Egerton Ryerson and other colonial figures through meaningful financial, educational and cultural initiatives, as well as principles and practices for commemoration that uphold our institutional values.



As a community, we must resist more “half measures” and empty promises that knowingly ignore the ongoing harm intrinsically tied to the continued commemoration of Egerton Ryerson on our campus.  
- *Community Member*

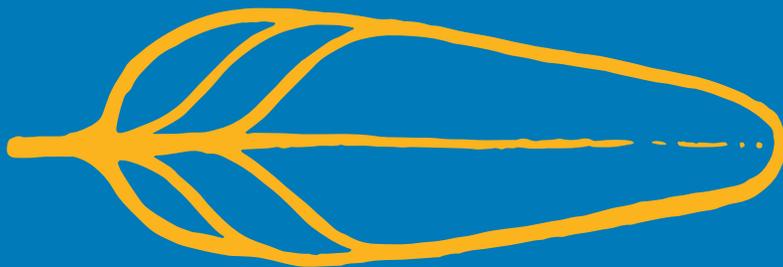
Through our recommendations, the Task Force has identified some of the tangible ways in which the university can both promote an understanding of truth and participate in the process of reconciliation. By increasing access to information, promoting Indigenous and Black academic scholarship and using public space for community-building, we are working toward the creation of an even more inclusive environment.

## Moving forward, guided by our values and principles

Our goal throughout this process was consensus from all Task Force members. This approach was informed by Indigenous understandings of consensus-building and a commitment to a reflective and respectful process that created an opportunity for every Task Force member to contribute and share their perspectives. Acting on our values, the Task Force fostered an environment where divergent perspectives and dissenting voices tested ideas and challenged assumptions. This report and its recommendations have been strengthened by this healthy discourse and committed debate.

Each of our recommendations purposefully addresses what we understand to be Ryerson’s ongoing impact and the scope of the university’s commemoration of him. Our overarching goal is to create a more inclusive campus culture and environment.

For as long as the university is named after Egerton Ryerson, our narrative will be centred on his legacy. Given that our namesake is increasingly recognized as a symbol of colonialism, our identity as an institution can no longer be disentangled from separate schools, segregation, the genocide of Indigenous Peoples and cultural erasure. With a new name, the university can boldly move forward, guided by our institutional values and principles of commemoration. We will have the opportunity to acknowledge and embrace both historical and current social justice movements, as well as the resilience, excellence, achievements and contributions of each and every community member.



02

# Recommendations





Our mandate required the Task Force to develop principles to guide commemoration at the university and to respond to the history and legacy of Egerton Ryerson within the context of the university's values. At the conclusion of our work, we respectfully submit the following recommendations.

## Principles of commemoration at the university

In alignment with the values of our university, we recommend that:

1. The university adopt the following **principles of commemoration**, which shall be embodied with purpose and advanced with courage to ensure that decisions about commemoration are made with integrity:

### **Transparency**

Decision-making processes related to commemoration are clear, accessible and communicated to the community.

### **Respectful collaboration**

Decisions about commemoration are informed by intentional community engagement and relationship-building.

### **Purposeful representation**

Commemoration across the university reflects the diversity of the campus and decisions are made in an equitable way that promotes inclusion.

### **Truth and Reconciliation**

Decisions about commemoration uphold commitments made by the university in response to documents such as the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Bill C-15 and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

### **Humility and continuous learning**

With a commitment to ongoing learning and dialogue, the university reviews decisions about commemoration and takes responsibility and corrective actions that reflect new understandings of truth and impact.

2. The university develop a policy and accompanying procedures to provide guidelines and clarify responsibilities for decisions about commemoration that align with the principles of commemoration.
3. The university establish a standing committee that:
  - › Reviews proposals and makes recommendations to decision-makers about commemoration and naming at the university; and
  - › Reviews existing forms of commemoration when necessary to ensure they are aligned with the principles of commemoration.

## Commemoration of Egerton Ryerson

Recognizing the harm caused to community members by the commemoration of Egerton Ryerson, the impossibility of upholding our institutional values while commemorating Egerton Ryerson and the necessity of advancing reconciliation, we recommend that:

4. The university rename the institution in a process that engages with community members and university stakeholders.
5. The university not reinstall, restore or replace the statue of Egerton Ryerson, and instead initiate an open call for proposals for the rehoming of the remaining pieces of the statue to promote educational initiatives.
6. The university reconsider the “Eggy” mascot.

## Responsibility to educate

Recognizing the incomplete understanding of Egerton Ryerson’s history, our nation’s past and present and the exclusion of Indigenous knowledge from curriculum, we recommend that:

7. The university share materials to recognize the legacy of Egerton Ryerson through:
  - › The establishment of a physical and interactive display that provides comprehensive and accessible information about the legacy of Egerton Ryerson and the period in which he was commemorated by the university.
  - › The creation of a website that disseminates the Task Force’s historical research findings about Egerton Ryerson’s life and legacy.
  - › The development of a brief informational video that provides historical information about Egerton Ryerson’s relationship with Indigenous Peoples, his relationship with the Ontario school system and his role in the development of residential schools.
  - › The identification of archives housed at other institutions to increase the accessibility of materials related to Egerton Ryerson.
8. The university continue to share materials to recognize the rich history of the university.
9. The university develop a plan to ensure all academic programs contain mandatory learning opportunities about Indigenous history and Indigenous and colonial relations for all students.
10. The university develop and require all faculty and staff to complete a training or education module about Indigenous history and about Indigenous and colonial relations and the Indian Residential School System.



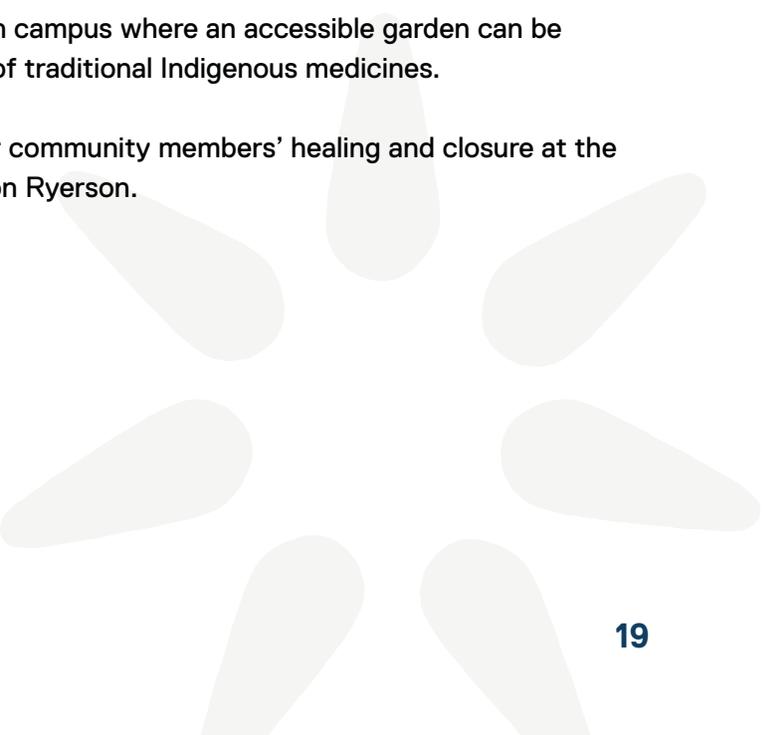
## Advancement and support of Indigenous and Black scholarship

As a commitment to equity and in recognition of the persistent barriers to equal opportunities for education and employment resulting in part from the Common School Acts (1849 & 1850), which Egerton Ryerson drafted and enacted as Superintendent of Education, we recommend that:

11. The university further explore the feasibility of academic units for Indigenous Studies and Black Studies.
12. The university strengthen efforts to recruit, retain and promote faculty and staff who self-identify as Indigenous and/or Black.
13. The university establish additional sustainable funding programs for:
  - › Indigenous undergraduate and graduate students
  - › Black undergraduate and graduate students
  - › Indigenous post-doctoral fellows
  - › Black post-doctoral fellows

## Use of public space

Recognizing the role of public space in bringing people together and our responsibility to care for the land and people that use this space, we recommend that:

14. The university develop a community-based, interactive public art installation space in a prominent location on campus.
  15. The university establish a space on campus where an accessible garden can be planted for the long-term growth of traditional Indigenous medicines.
  16. The university plan ceremonies for community members' healing and closure at the former site of the statue of Egerton Ryerson.
- 

## Acknowledgement of the land

Recognizing the lack of understanding of treaties and the ongoing impact of these treaties not being upheld, we recommend that:

17. The university consider a new university-wide protocol for land acknowledgements in consultation with community members.
18. The university develop educational materials and opportunities for all community members to learn about land acknowledgements.

## Fulfilment of previous commitments

In recognition of the transparency needed to repair our relationships with Indigenous and Black community members, we recommend that:

19. The university provide an update to the community about the implementation of recommendations contained in the 2018 [Truth and Reconciliation Community Consultation Summary Report](#) and the 2020 [Anti-Black Racism Campus Climate Review Report](#).

## Implementation

In recognition of the need for institutional transparency and accountability, we recommend that:

20. The university develop an action plan by January 31, 2022, to address and implement all of the Task Force's recommendations.
21. The university provide sufficient resources (both financial and administrative) to support, track and review the implementation of these recommendations.
22. The university provide annual updates to the community about the implementation of these recommendations.



03

# Background and context





Getting rid of the statue could potentially suggest the ignoring of history or rewriting of it to make it seem more palatable.

- *Community Member*

Over the past decade, the statue of Egerton Ryerson on the Ryerson University campus has become increasingly controversial. Community members and the university's Aboriginal Education Council (AEC) have engaged in various processes aimed at understanding and addressing Egerton Ryerson's connections to the development of residential schools for Indigenous children. That earlier work led to a number of actions, including the addition of a statement about the colonial

legacy of Egerton Ryerson on the university's website in 2010. In 2018, after extensive community consultations, the university released the Truth and Reconciliation at Ryerson: Building a Foundation for Generations to Come report. At the event marking its release, the university also unveiled a plaque to contextualize the role of Egerton Ryerson in the creation of Canada's residential school system. Later that year, the plaque was installed next to the statue. At the time, the plaque and statement were understood as significant steps in the university's journey toward reconciliation.

Public opinion regarding historical monuments is shifting rapidly around the world, particularly in relation to monuments that honour figures who operated in and benefited from colonialism and racism. Legacies are being re-considered through today's values and the lenses of social justice, anti-oppression and anti-racism. Many community members have stated that it is inconsistent and problematic for our campus to be home to a symbol that is perceived to be counter to the university's values.

Following protests in the summer of 2020, including the defacement of the statue of Egerton Ryerson and multiple petitions calling for its removal, university President Mohamed Lachemi appointed this Task Force.

“ For us, there is no debate about reconciling Ryerson's legacy.

It doesn't matter how many non-Indigenous historians send their fawning letters of support for Egerton. From an Indigenous student perspective, it cannot be reconciled.”

- **Open letter from 'Indigenous Students at X University'**

On May 28, 2021, the devastating news that the remains of 215 Indigenous children in unmarked graves had been recovered in Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc near Kamloops, British Columbia reverberated across the nation. The remains were located on the grounds of what was once Canada's largest residential school. This discovery led not only to ground penetrating radar investigations on the grounds of other residential schools but also to critical conversations across the community about the ongoing impacts of the residential school system.

The statue of Egerton Ryerson became the site of a memorial dedicated to the children whose remains had been uncovered. Hundreds of shoes, mostly in children's sizes, were left at the site.

On June 6th, 2021, more than 1000 people joined the Bring Our Children Home March, which travelled from Queen's Park to Gould Street. There, people gathered at the statue of Egerton Ryerson for a peaceful demonstration. Following the conclusion and disbursement of the attendees, a small group of people pulled down the statue. The head of the statue was removed and taken off-campus where it was plunged into Lake Ontario and then relocated to "1492 Land Back Lane," a current site of Indigenous land dispute.

President Mohamed Lachemi promptly released a statement, which read in part:

The statue will not be restored or replaced. The question of the statue was only one of many being considered by the Standing Strong (Mash Koh Wee Kah Pooh Win) Task Force, whose mandate includes consideration of the university's name, responding to the legacy of Egerton Ryerson, and other elements of commemoration on campus.



04

# Process of learning and unlearning





## Process and timeline

Before the Task Force began to meet regularly in January 2021, we started to read reports, articles and letters from a wide range of perspectives about statues and monuments, racism, residential schools, colonialism and slavery. As a group, we devised a process to fulfil our mandate and develop informed recommendations by identifying three concurrent streams of work:

- > historical research
- > community engagement
- > Task Force members' own learning (and unlearning)

We understood that while these streams would be addressed separately, they would also inform one another.

The original deadline for the final report was September 2021; however, we heard increasingly urgent calls for the Task Force's findings following the uncovering of unmarked graves at residential schools. In order to respond to the community's need without compromising our commitment to a complete and thorough process, we increased meeting times throughout June and July to commit to an earlier submission date that would ensure that the report was not only completed but also made publicly available before the start of the fall semester.

## Background and planning

Task Force members initially shared, reviewed and studied various documents, videos and podcasts in an effort to build a common foundational understanding of the intent and impact of colonization, a system built on a belief in European settler supremacy (appendix E).

Then, from January through March, we conducted our background research, planned the community engagement period and hired a team of research assistants to undertake a full study of the life and legacy of Egerton Ryerson.

## Historical research

The research team began their work by completing an extensive review of over 60 universities and municipalities that have undertaken similar conversations about statuary, naming and other forms of commemoration. While the decisions of other institutions could not direct our decisions, their methods of inquiry and findings guided our own approach. In April, our researchers began to work with historians, scholars, archivists and other knowledge keepers to develop a comprehensive understanding of the life and legacy of Egerton Ryerson (pg. 40, appendix D).

## Community Engagement

On March 16, 2021, with the assistance of an external firm, the Task Force launched our two-month engagement period with an online platform that outlined our work and invited the community to share information with us in three ways:

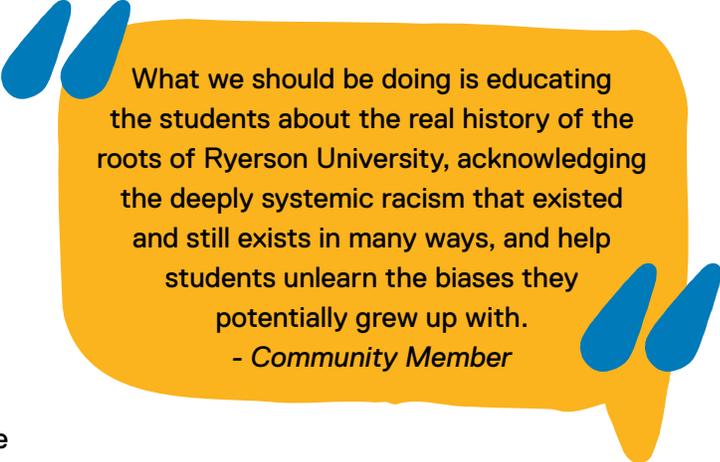
- › by completing a five-question open-ended survey
- › by hosting and reporting back from a community conversation
- › by emailing us directly

We also captured community perspectives from open letters, op-eds and other media coverage. We used these findings to develop an understanding of common themes, concerns, and ideas from students, faculty, staff, alumni and others (pg 30, appendix B).

## Learning and unlearning

Over the course of this project, it became abundantly clear that the education that many of us received failed to impart crucial information about our nation's past and present. Accordingly, while the Task Force met, we continued to share materials about related topics, including pieces speaking to our own project (appendix E).

From February through June 2021, the Task Force invited scholars, Elders, Traditional Knowledge Keepers and various subject-matter experts to present on topics that members identified as important to the task at hand. These presentations covered topics such as the life and legacy of Egerton Ryerson, statues as a form of public art, the history of colonization, the naming of public spaces, Traditional Knowledge of Indigenous Peoples, the Indian Residential School System, public education systems, segregated and separate schooling, Truth and Reconciliation



What we should be doing is educating the students about the real history of the roots of Ryerson University, acknowledging the deeply systemic racism that existed and still exists in many ways, and help students unlearn the biases they potentially grew up with.

- Community Member

and the uses of commemoration. These sessions were critical to ensuring that members were working with a common and shared understanding of key themes and issues. This approach provided opportunities for us to explore various perspectives on both commemoration in general and the commemoration of Egerton Ryerson specifically. Task Force members were invited to pose questions, share their own knowledge and perspectives and consider how the discussion informed the work ahead. Thank you to the following individuals for their time and expertise in speaking with us:

**Cheryl Trudeau**

Administrative Coordinator, Aboriginal Education Council

**Ron Stagg**

History Professor, Ryerson University

**Tonya Davidson**

Sociology Professor, Carleton University

**Paul Roth**

Director, Ryerson Image Centre

**Honourable Murray Sinclair**

Chair of the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission

**Chief Stacey Laforme**

Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation

**Melanie Newton**

History Professor, University of Toronto

**Natasha Henry**

President, Ontario Black History Society

**Tanya Senk**

System Superintendent of Indigenous Education, Toronto District School Board

**Afua Cooper**

Chair, Scholarly Panel on Lord Dalhousie's Relationship to Race and Slavery, Dalhousie University

**Ian Mishkel**

Vice-President University Advancement and Alumni Relations, Ryerson University

“ Education got us into this mess  
and education will get us out of it. ”

- Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair

## Discussions and deliberations

In June, we began to see preliminary findings from both the engagement period and the historical research. Informed by these findings and our months of learning, we began group discussions guided by Indigenous understandings of consensus-building. Namely, we engaged in brave and reflective dialogue about our interpretations of the findings and the recommendations we would put forward.

Consensus was not demonstrated by agreement across all members but rather by respectfully allowing and encouraging all perspectives and ideas to be shared and considered. Collaboratively, we discussed the intent, implications and importance of each idea, as well as the possible impacts of each recommendation.

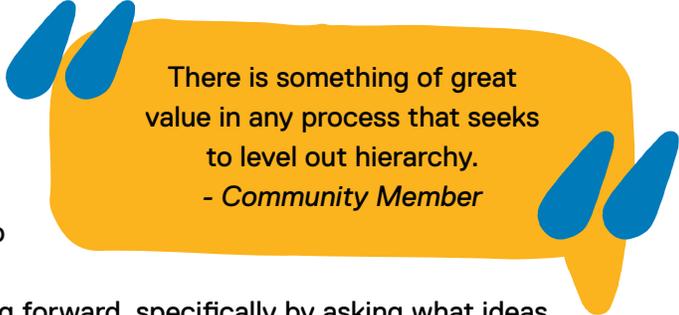
05

# Community Engagement



## Approach

Much work has been done at the university over the past decade with respect to Truth and Reconciliation. The Task Force sought to build on previous truth-telling by posing new questions that would help us focus on looking forward, specifically by asking what ideas participants had for the future and what principles should guide future decision-making.



There is something of great value in any process that seeks to level out hierarchy.  
- *Community Member*

A person's legacy is not limited to the facts of recorded history or the specific actions they undertook during their lifetime. Legacy is instead the sum of those facts, one's impact on the world, and how that impact is experienced, understood and remembered by a variety of people over time. There is no single or universal understanding or experience of someone's legacy.

To understand our community's views of Egerton Ryerson's legacy, it was important that we approached our engagement project without any intent to educate. Rather, we sought to learn about this legacy and its impacts directly from our participants. Accordingly, our consultation process did not include education or awareness-raising about the history of Egerton Ryerson specifically.

## External Support

The Task Force's formal engagement period and initial communications program was supported by Argyle Communications Inc. (Argyle). Argyle has over 30 years of experience leading engagement across the country, focusing on shaping public policy, developing public infrastructure and supporting diverse groups and communities that have historically been underrepresented.

While Argyle provided guidance, the engagement period was fully designed and directed by the Task Force. At the conclusion of the engagement period, Argyle led the data collection, coding and analysis process with assistance from a group of research assistants from the university. Argyle prepared a report for the Task Force entitled What We Learned: Engagement Overview and Analysis (appendix B).

## Participation options and access

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Task Force took the opportunities presented by the necessity of an entirely virtual environment to structure an engagement process that met people where they were, on their own time and without significant barriers to participation. As part of an inclusive engagement program, we offered several

mechanisms for the community to share their input. Our goal was to ensure that people could respond in a way that felt safe, comfortable and culturally relevant. The five engagement questions we developed were intended to guide community members without limiting what they could share with us. Participants could choose to share ideas through an online survey, by hosting or participating in a community conversation, or by emailing us directly. In addition to these options, we followed conversations as they happened on social media, through op-eds and other coverage in the media and in open letters that were shared in the university community.

### **Online survey**

Our five-question online survey was made available through CivilSpace, a user-friendly virtual engagement platform. It was open to any member of the public from March 16 to May 16, 2021. All questions were open-ended and optional, allowing participants to provide only the information they wanted. Seven optional demographic questions were also included to help us understand who was participating.

### **Community conversations**

We provided a conversation toolkit to support those who chose to facilitate their own discussions about commemoration and Egerton Ryerson. The toolkit included suggestions for effective virtual engagement, a conversation guide, and resources for accessibility support such as closed captioning and translation services. While community conversation hosts were not obligated to report back to the Task Force, the toolkit also recommended methods to record feedback should they wish to share.

### **Emails**

Community members began to send emails to the Task Force as soon as the group was formed and we have continued to receive them throughout the process. Emails received prior to May 16th, 2021, are captured in the What We Learned report (appendix B), while the emails we received between May 17th and June 30th, 2021, are included in the addendum to that report. Emails we received after June 30th helped shape our final decisions but have not been captured in a report. From May 17th onwards, nearly all the emails we received addressed either the statue of Egerton Ryerson or the name of the university.

## **Community outreach**

The Task Force engagement period was supported by tailored communications to the public and stakeholder groups, including public presentations by the co-Chairs on March 23 and April 8, 2021. These presentations provided the community with opportunities to learn about the Task Force's mandate, to ask questions about the process and learn how they could share further input. Video recordings of the presentations were made available on Youtube and shared on social media and the engagement portal.

To reach focus communities within the university and the broader public, we shared information and opportunities for engagement through a variety of communication techniques and channels, including “Ryerson Today,” Twitter, Facebook, direct email and stakeholder list emails. Community members were encouraged to connect with our Engagement Manager if they had any questions or required accommodations to participate.

## Crucial considerations

Given the sensitive nature of the project and public discourse on the subject, several key considerations were reflected through engagement planning.

Consideration	Description	Planning strategy
<b><u>Planning engagement within the context of longstanding conversations and history</u></b>	<i>The complex history and highly sensitive nature of the project, as well as past conversations, had to be considered when creating the engagement plan.</i>	The Task Force undertook an extensive media scan and audience analysis to better understand interests and concerns, and designed engagement to build on conversations that have been happening for years.
<b><u>Accommodating different levels of understanding</u></b>	<i>Participants had different understandings and opinions on this subject.</i>	The Task Force was created to provide an unbiased and informed approach to this project. All participants had equal access to background information and the conversation toolkit to host their own community conversations.
<b><u>Securing broad participation</u></b>	<i>It was important to receive as many perspectives as possible to help develop the strongest recommendations for the university.</i>	The promotional and communications plan was created to gather input from broad audiences, with a focus on the university community. We promoted through social media channels and email newsletter campaigns and we encouraged participants to share posters within their communities.

Consideration	Description	Planning strategy
<p><b><u>Working within a limited mandate for engagement</u></b></p>	<p><i>The Task Force’s mandate for this project is limited to providing recommendations to the university. All final decisions will be made by the university.</i></p>	<p>We supported the Task Force to manage community members in managing expectations and were open to sentiments of frustration, scepticism, and engagement fatigue. We clearly communicated the scope of engagement and were transparent about the emergent context to ensure that even those who had criticisms about the process understood what we were doing and why.</p>
<p><b><u>Designing online engagement due to COVID-19 restrictions</u></b></p>	<p><i>An online engagement program brought challenges related to adapting to technologies, screen fatigue and competing responsibilities at home.</i></p>	<p>Participants had the opportunity to host their own community conversations and were encouraged to use the conversation toolkit that provided resources to mitigate this challenge, including translation services and the option to complete a paper survey. The engagement period was also open for two full months to provide greater flexibility for respondents.</p>
<p><b><u>Other outreach challenges</u></b></p>	<p><i>Reaching important groups was challenging due to past history and trauma. We understood that sometimes those with the most direct and personal experiences might not wish to participate, especially if they risked being re-traumatized.</i></p>	<p>Whenever possible, supports were offered to participants along with resources to create a safe and welcoming environment.</p>

## Response trends

Engagement	Description	Number of participants
<b><u>Total</u></b>	<i>We engaged with over 11 000 individuals across all engagement mechanisms listed below.</i>	11 000+
<b><u>Online survey</u></b>	<i>The online survey was housed through an online portal (CivilSpace, a user-friendly virtual engagement platform) and open to any member of the public from March 16 to May 16, 2021. It included five open-ended questions and seven optional demographic questions; respondents could choose to answer as many questions as they wished.</i>	8566 total survey starts; 22 860 individual question responses
<b><u>Community presentations</u></b>	<i>The co-Chairs presented an outline of the Task Force mandate and engagement program to the broader university community through two presentations on March 23 and April 8, 2021.</i>	195+ participants plus YouTube video views
<b><u>Community conversations</u></b>	Participants were encouraged to host their own community conversations. A conversation toolkit was provided on the online engagement portal. It included five conversation starters, tips to access supports and resources, and a report-back form to return on the online portal, by email or by mail.	18+ community conversations with 250+ participants
<b><u>Direct communications to the Task Force</u></b>	<i>Any member of the Ryerson University community could send a direct message to the Task Force via email or written submission. These communications were logged as part of the engagement process and were included in analysis.</i>	250+ direct communications

## What we learned

Argyle used a qualitative content analysis approach to review each comment, identify overarching themes and then code comments to those themes. The themes that emerged helped us understand the various perspectives and concerns of participants.

The five guiding questions were designed to be open and reflective of a range of voices. Our approach sought to ensure that responses would capture the complexity of commemoration and reconciliation and that participants had space to share a range of perspectives, including comments, questions and suggestions to the university community about possible next steps.

## Questions and themes

### 1. What are your thoughts and ideas about the statue of Egerton Ryerson?

**The three themes that arose from participants were:**

- 1) remove the statue
- 2) keep the statue as is
- 3) keep the statue as is but add greater historical context.

By exploring the answers to question one, we were able to understand the nuanced and diverse reasoning behind these specific calls to action. While some wanted the statue to be removed due to the harm it caused to community members, others wanted the statue removed to preserve and protect the monument itself. Similarly, some people wanted the statue to be kept where it was with the defacement intact as a statement of community understanding, while others firmly believed it should be cleaned and celebrated as originally intended.

### 2. Given what you may know of Egerton Ryerson's legacy, how does that affect your view of commemoration today?

The dominant theme that emerged for this question was “no desire to commemorate Egerton Ryerson.” Common sub-themes included stances against commemorating a historical figure who caused harm, a desire to address the impacts of commemoration especially for Indigenous students, and questioning why Egerton Ryerson has been and continues to be commemorated in the context of the university's commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), as well as reconciliation. Answers to this question showed great concern for the impact that the commemoration of Egerton Ryerson has on both the university and on community members.



**3. In Fall 2021 the Task Force will present recommendations on commemoration to the Ryerson University President. In order to do this, the Task Force is building principles that will build on the vision and values of the university. Please tell us what you think of the draft principles below for future decision-making about commemoration.**

**Reconciliation:** we have a responsibility to better meet the needs of Indigenous Peoples by examining our education system and how we can do things differently

**Equity and inclusion:** we are deliberate in our pursuit to advance institutional equity for sovereignty-seeking Indigenous Peoples, as well as equity-deserving groups including Black and People of Colour communities

**Transparency:** in the spirit of trust-building, we must be open about our decision making

**Humility:** we humble ourselves to acknowledge that we are part of a greater whole, and we must take responsibility when we have erred

**Impact:** we must consider harm and achievement as critical factors for decisions on commemoration

**Integrity:** we embody these principles with intention and advance them with courage

- a. Thinking about these principles, what do you like?
- b. Thinking about these principles, what should be changed?
- c. Thinking about these principles, what else would you like to see included?

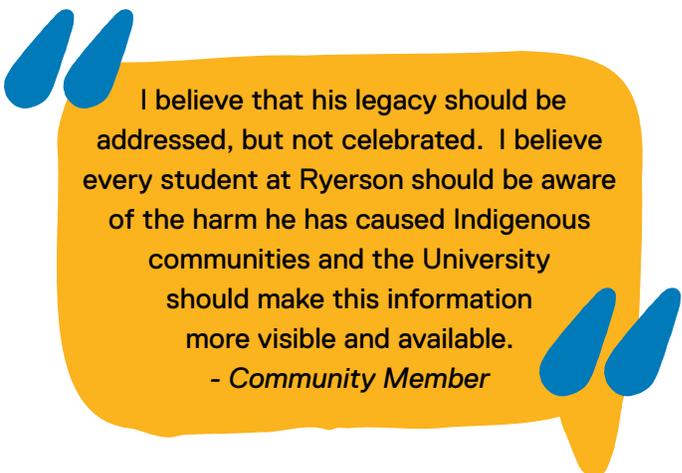
For this set of questions, some respondents reflected on the principles as a set, with the majority generally supporting them (e.g., acknowledging history without erasing it) and many expressing a desire to see a commitment to action, specifically to advance reconciliation and centre Indigenous voices in building a more complete understanding of history. We also received comments about specific principles, with commentary both on how these principles can underpin the engagement process and how they are interrelated (e.g., **transparency** as the guiding principle for this work, **humility** as the overarching principle to ground this work in **reconciliation**, and reconciliation as the leading principle to ensure accountability and action).

**4. Given the university’s commitment to reconciliation, what ideas do you have to address the legacy of Egerton Ryerson?**

In response to this question, the leading theme was agreement that there should be some effort towards reconciliation. Respondents felt that this effort should be accompanied by acknowledgment of past errors and include a commitment to moving forward in a conciliatory way. There was also a desire for the university to describe the concrete actions that it will take to support reconciliation by adopting greater accountability and strong action-oriented language. Additionally, we heard a desire for university leaders to formally reflect on their roles in advancing reconciliation, including personal and institutional declarations.

## 5. Is there anything else about the work of the Task Force you'd like to share with us?

Many of the responses to this question reiterated some of the sentiments from other questions. This included the desire for the university's name to be changed and an expression of urgency for the university to take action, though with a recognition that decision-making is fraught and complicated. Comments strongly indicated a positive sentiment toward the Task Force and gratitude for the important work it has undertaken. Additionally, we heard comments articulating a desire for the university to listen to and credit Indigenous individuals and organizations - many of whom have already been working toward change (e.g., Aboriginal Education Council) - and to take guidance from this work rather than beginning from scratch.



I believe that his legacy should be addressed, but not celebrated. I believe every student at Ryerson should be aware of the harm he has caused Indigenous communities and the University should make this information more visible and available.

- *Community Member*

## Emerging ideas and suggestions

One goal of our process was to generate ideas and suggestions from community members who have thoughtfully and creatively considered what the future could look like and how the university can demonstrate a commitment to both Truth and Reconciliation and to equity, diversity and inclusion. Lists of ideas were created to inform the Task Force's next steps and recommendations. While some of these ideas are reflected in our recommendations, the full lists are also available in the *What We Learned* report (appendix B).



06

# Egerton Ryerson's life and legacy



This overview of the life and legacy of Egerton Ryerson summarizes historical research conducted for the Task Force. Full research findings and bibliography are found in the “Historical Timeline: Life and Legacy of Egerton Ryerson” (Appendix D).

## Life of Egerton Ryerson

### Early Life

Egerton Ryerson was born on March 24, 1803, to Joseph Ryerson and Sarah Mehetabel Stickney in the township of Charlotteville, a few miles from Lake Erie in the County of Norfolk, Upper Canada. His family was descended from Dutch Huguenots who settled in New Amsterdam (New York) in the mid-17th century. Joseph Ryerson traced his lineage to a Dutch settler named Martin Ryerzoon (anglicized to “Ryerson” around 1700). Joseph remained loyal to Britain during the period of the American Revolution. In 1783, he moved first to New Brunswick and then to Upper Canada, where Loyalists were more welcome. As a Colonel of Militia and United Empire Loyalist, Joseph was given 2500 acres of land by the government of Upper Canada. He settled there as a farmer.

Egerton Ryerson was raised on the farm alongside his five brothers. His father was staunchly Anglican, but his mother had Methodist sympathies. At the age of 18, he chose to follow in his mother’s and older brothers’ footsteps and convert to the Methodist Church, much to his father’s dismay. The Methodist Church grew in importance in the first half of the 19th century, although membership was usually viewed as a radical choice and a challenge to the power of the Anglican Church in colonial government and society. Methodism shaped Ryerson’s adult life, and he worked tirelessly to promote the religion through his journalism, advocacy and missionary work.

### Ryerson’s Methodism and Relationships with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation

In 1825, Ryerson became a Methodist circuit preacher before he was fully ordained into the church in 1827. During this period, he spent one year working as a missionary to the Mississaugas of the Credit River, an experience he described as difficult but deeply valuable work. He drew on his farming background to appeal to the Mississaugas’ agricultural community and worked to integrate a settler mode of agriculture into their community, focusing on cultivating their first wheat and corn fields. Ryerson also helped

the community raise funds to complete a new school building, which the government of Upper Canada had refused to fund. In the Credit River school, children were taught by Mississauga Methodist missionaries and Mississauga teachers, occasionally supplemented by white teachers. These children learned to read and write using English and Anishinaabemowin primers and religious texts.

Reconciliation needs truth first. Is Ryerson supporting a research effort to assess and share evidence about Ryerson’s past and his historical significance?  
- Community Member

In his correspondence from this period, Ryerson made repeated observations about the school at Credit River and the role of education in his work. Reflecting in 1832 on the centrality of day schools to Christianization, he noted that “the schools to the missions are as important as a foundation is to a building.”<sup>1</sup> While Ryerson focused on education for religious purposes, recent historical scholarship has laid greater emphasis on uncovering and recognizing Indigenous self-determination in this period, pointing to the Mississaugas’ support for school-building and their use of education to petition the colonial government on land and treaty rights, to voice complaints about settler encroachments on their land and resources and to address the failure of the colonial government to follow through with annual payments.

One of the leaders of the Mississauga was Kahkewaquonaby (Peter Jones), a Methodist minister and a strong advocate for his community. Ryerson and Kahkewaquonaby met in the mid-1820s and formed a strong connection. Kahkewaquonaby led the Credit River Mission, which Ryerson supported as its first permanent Methodist minister. Ryerson arrived at the Credit River Mission Village in September 1826, and within eight months he could speak Anishinaabemowin to his congregants. The Mississaugas named their missionary “Cheechock,”<sup>2</sup> meaning a “bird on the wing,” because he was “constantly on the move among them.” “Cheechock” was an ogimaa (chief) of the Eagle doodem (an Anishinaabe category of kinship) who had died in 1810. The Mississaugas gave Ryerson this important name to recognize an alliance between the Mississaugas and Ryerson and to set out their expectations of him, namely that he protect the people and the land. Whether Ryerson understood the deeper significance of this gift, particularly from the Mississauga perspective of naming and doodem, is unknown; however, one indication that he may have appreciated the meaning was his decision in 1838 to advocate for Kahkewaquonaby’s petition to the Crown to confirm the Mississaugas’ legal title to their reserve lands.

Over the years, Kahkewaquonaby became one of Ryerson’s closest friends, as the pair fostered a productive working relationship and a deep mutual respect for one another. They both worked in various capacities with the Methodist Church and with Indigenous communities in Upper Canada. When Kahkewaquonaby fell gravely ill in 1856, Ryerson invited him to live in his home in Toronto for four weeks while he sought medical treatment. Ryerson was frequently at his bedside. After Kahkewaquonaby’s death on June 28, 1856, Ryerson preached at his funeral. A year later, when a stone was dedicated to Kahkewaquonaby by the Ojibwe and other Indigenous tribes, Ryerson wrote an inscription commemorating his life and service to the Methodist Church.

<sup>1</sup>Egerton Ryerson, *Christian Guardian*, February 22, 1832, cited in Thomas Peace, “Searching for Order in a Settlers’ World: Wendat and Mississauga Schooling, Politics, and Networks at the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century,” in *Violence, Order, and Unrest: A History of British North America, 1749–1876*, ed. Elizabeth Mancke, Jerry Bannister, Denis B. McKim, and Scott W. See (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019), 198.

<sup>2</sup>Darin Wybenga, “A Missionary at the Credit River in Historical Tidbits: Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation” (Pillar 5 Committee, Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, 2019).



## 1837 Aborigines Report

By the late 1820s, Ryerson had established a strong reputation through his impressive rhetoric and public defence of the Methodist Church in Upper Canada. His opinions and perspectives were highly valued by many, including government officials. In 1829, Ryerson was appointed founding editor of the Methodist *Christian Guardian*, a position he occupied until 1840. The *Christian Guardian* became a staple publication in Upper Canada and secured twelve thousand subscribers within its first three years under Ryerson's editorship.

In 1833, Ryerson made his first of several trips to England, initially to raise funds for a new Methodist Upper Canada Academy in Cobourg and to solidify a union between the Canadian Methodists and the British Wesleyans, which would provide security and legitimacy to the Methodist Church.

He returned to England in 1836 with three other missionaries: Mississauga Methodists Kahkewaquonaby and John Sunday, and linguist James Evans. From 1836 to 1838, the four men met with British parliamentary committees, Colonial Office officials, King William IV and Queen Victoria to appeal for additional protections for Indigenous People from British expansionism and settlers' illegal land acquisition. They also testified before the Parliamentary Select Committee on Aboriginal Tribes, which was conducting an inquiry into the mistreatment of Indigenous Peoples throughout the British Empire. In his testimony, which drew on his observations of the Mohawk who had settled on the Grand River, Ryerson maintained that religious training was the prerequisite for all other forms of education in the mission to "civilize" Indigenous Peoples, "the most vicious of the human race." Ryerson claimed that prior to conversion to Christianity, the Mohawk peoples were "ferocious," "vicious," "proverbially savage and revengeful" and often "a terror to their white neighbours."<sup>3</sup> This language contrasts with other representations of Ryerson's relationships with Indigenous Peoples, particularly the Mississaugas; however, it is consistent with some of the sentiments found in his Report on Industrial Schools a decade later.

The Select Committee's work resulted in the Aborigines Report (1837) and led to the creation of the Aborigines Protection Society, which sought to protect those "who have no power to protect themselves" by "diffusing correct information concerning the character and condition of the Aborigines; by appealing to the government ...; and by bringing popular opinion to exert its proper influence in advancing the cause of justice."<sup>4</sup> Ryerson participated in this initiative, which was considered at the time to be a humanitarian effort to secure money and defend the interests of Indigenous Peoples, although Methodist missionaries were often motivated by a defence of their perceived progress in "civilization" endeavours. In the late 1830s, the Aborigines Protection Society

<sup>3</sup> Aborigines Protection Society, *Report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Aboriginal Tribes (British Settlements)*, published for the Society by William Ball, Aldine Chambers, Paternoster Row, and Hatchard & Sons, Piccadilly (London, 1837), 66-67.

<sup>4</sup> Aborigines Protection Society, *Report of the Parliamentary Select Committee*, x.

endorsed residential schooling for Indigenous children, which historian Hope MacLean demonstrated to be “due directly to the influence of [William] Case, [Peter] Jones, [John] Sunday, and Egerton Ryerson.”<sup>5</sup>

### 1847 Report on Industrial Schools

In 1844, Ryerson was appointed Superintendent of the Common Schools of Canada West, a position he held for the next 32 years. This was the opportunity Ryerson had long sought to address the lack of uniformity, efficiency and oversight in existing schools. The role of Superintendent (and later Chief Superintendent) defined both the remainder of his career and his legacy.

Ryerson began with a 13-month tour of schools across Europe and the United States, which led him to conclude that the productivity, intelligence and morality of the people of different nations were directly connected to their education. In 1846, Ryerson published his Report on a System of Public Elementary Instruction for Upper Canada, in which he argued for a universal and compulsory primary education system founded on Christian faith and morality. That report became the basis of Upper Canada’s first major education legislation, the 1846 Common School Act, often known as “Ryerson’s Act.” This Act established structures for “common” (later public) school administration and inspection, curriculum, standardized textbooks, building design and maintenance. It also enabled the creation of teacher-training schools (“Normal Schools”) and funding through a tax levied on the parents of all school-age children.

In March 1847, the Assistant Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, George Vardon, requested Ryerson’s advice in developing a framework for new “manual labour schools” for Indigenous children. These schools were part of a larger plan to consolidate Indigenous populations in Munceytown, Alderville and Owen Sound, with boarding schools located nearby. Local chiefs agreed to fund three schools through annuities.

Ryerson’s response to Vardon came in the form of a report in May 1847, in which Ryerson made recommendations for how what he termed “industrial schools” should be established, operated and staffed, as well as how the Indigenous students should be taught in order to Christianize and “civilize” them. The school structure Ryerson recommended reflected his belief in racial hierarchy, implied through his presumption about the capacities of Indigenous people and his resulting assessment that their educational needs differed from students in common (or public) schools:

The North American Indian cannot be civilized or preserved in a state of civilization (including habits of industry and sobriety) except in connection with, if not by the influence of, not only religious instruction and sentiment but of religious feelings.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Hope MacLean, “Ojibwa Participation in Methodist Residential Schools,” *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 25, no. 1 (2005): 110-111.

<sup>6</sup> Egerton Ryerson, “Report on Industrial Schools, 26 May 1847,” in *Statistics Respecting Indian Schools* (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1898), 73.



Industrial school education did not reflect the interests of Indigenous People themselves in schooling, nor did it promote equality or self-determination. Rather, Ryerson's goal was to produce "industrious" Indigenous farmers through very long hours of manual labour, extensive religious teaching and limited academic instruction. Ryerson believed that it was "necessary that the pupils should reside together," and, therefore, he recommended a residential model of schooling.<sup>7</sup> Because he also believed the government was not best suited to providing the religious instruction that he prioritized, Ryerson recommended that considerable authority over the organization of industrial schools be granted to religious denominations, who should establish their responsibilities through agreements with the government. Ryerson concluded that governmental oversight should be very limited:

the interference or control of the Government should be confined to that which the government can do with most effect, and the least trouble, namely, to the right of inspecting the schools from time to time by an agent or agents of its own, to the right of having detailed reports of the schools as often as it shall think proper to require them, at least once or twice a year, and the right of continuing or withholding the grant made in aid of these schools.<sup>8</sup>

The Colonial Office subsequently ordered the creation of two new residential schools, Mount Elgin and Alnwick, which resulted in the implementation of virtually all of Ryerson's recommendations in the late 1840s.

Missionaries and colonial administrators initially considered these two schools to have been successful, but both experienced a rapid decline in hygiene and living conditions in the late 1850s. Attendance at the schools was not compulsory and enrolment dwindled as students fled and many parents chose not to send their children back due to the prevalence of disease, the amount of labour required of students and limited parental visits. In 1858, the "Commission to Investigate Indian Affairs" determined both schools had failed and recommended their grants be discontinued, blaming Indigenous children and parents for the schools' inability to convert and "civilize" as intended.

Although Ryerson claimed in his report that the objective of industrial schools was "identical with that of every good common school" with the addition of "agriculture, kitchen gardening, and mechanics,"<sup>9</sup> many of the recommendations he made in 1847 for industrial school structure and governance were distinct from provisions in the Common School Act of 1846, "Ryerson's Act." Ryerson intended industrial school education to produce "industrious" Indigenous farmers, while he intended common schools to produce responsible Christian citizens. Furthermore, Ryerson's Report on Industrial Schools was silent on many matters that he advocated for in common schools, such as standards

<sup>7</sup> Ryerson, "Report on Industrial Schools," 73.

<sup>8</sup> Ryerson, "Report on Industrial Schools," 74.

<sup>9</sup> Ryerson, "Report on Industrial Schools," 73.

for school building construction and administration, curriculum, textbooks and school libraries. While Ryerson was the Superintendent of Common Schools, not industrial schools, and he did not draft legislation related to the schooling of Indigenous children, his 1847 recommendations reinforced the continued separation of industrial schools and public schools.

Ryerson's 1847 Report was his most explicit contribution to Indigenous educational programs and industrial schools. It was also his final work on Indigenous education. Models of schooling to teach Indigenous children Christian religion, elementary academic education, agriculture and industry in Upper Canada existed decades before Ryerson's formal recommendations. As historian John Milloy has observed, the origins of the Canadian residential school system cannot be traced to a "single root."<sup>10</sup> The residential school model long predated Ryerson, beginning with the application of both a "civilization" program and residential schools for Indigenous People in the early seventeenth century by the French regime in North America, which was followed by its use in other parts of the continent. Frameworks for institutions similar to Ryerson's recommended model can be found in "civilization"-focused initiatives of the 1820s and beyond, including Sir Peregrine Maitland's proposal to the British colonial authorities to "civilize" Indigenous People through residential schools in 1820; General H.C. Darling's report to Lord Dalhousie in 1828, which amplified Maitland's plan; and the 1844 Bagot Commission report, which stressed that it was imperative for Indigenous People to be made into Christian farmers and Indigenous children to be separated from their communities. Thus, while most of Ryerson's recommendations were neither unique nor particularly original, his detailed framework for Indigenous Peoples' education in industrial schools had a great deal of influence given his position in society and government, which buttressed efforts to use schooling to Christianize and assimilate Indigenous People.

### **More than a Bystander: Ryerson and Segregated Schooling**

For over 30 years as Superintendent of Education, Ryerson laid the foundations of Ontario's public school system through both the drafting and the implementation of multiple pieces of education-related legislation. The Common School Act (1846) established the principles of school administration, curriculum, standardized textbooks, building design and maintenance, teaching standards and student age. It also facilitated the development of the Normal School for teacher training, which opened in 1847 in the former Government House. In 1851, the Normal School moved to land bounded by Gerrard, Church, Gould and Victoria Streets (the current site of the university's Kerr Hall Quadrangle), which Ryerson had purchased from Peter McGill for £4500. The Normal School later developed into the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE).

Ryerson also drafted the Bill that became the Common School Act (1850), which

<sup>10</sup> J. S. Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879 to 1986* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999), 13.



included a clause that allowed for separate schools to be based on race or religion, as well as for male and female students. Racial discrimination and prejudice persisted in Upper Canada following the abolition of slavery in British colonies in 1834. Despite legal prohibition against discrimination based on religion, race and language, many white people opposed the settlement of Black people in or near their communities and local trustees sometimes refused Black children entry into common schools. Black families in Hamilton and other areas of south-western Ontario (where much of the province's Black population lived at the time) protested to the Department of Education that their children were denied full access to schools despite their payment of taxes.

Although Ryerson recognized that the School Act of 1843 prevented the exclusion of children from common schools, he claimed he could do nothing to prevent such practices as Superintendent. For example, in response to Black families who appealed to him to address the exclusion of their children from school in London in 1847, Ryerson replied, "I have done what I could to remedy [this problem], but with only partial success. The caste of colour in this case is stronger than the law."<sup>11</sup> While Ryerson claimed that he favoured a single common school model for all and there is no evidence that Black families sought such legislation, the 1850 Act opened the door to separate schools for "coloured people," which were frequently underfunded and provided lower-quality education. Ryerson also subsequently recommended the creation of separate schools for lower-class students and deaf and blind students, and he opposed girls' attendance at grammar schools.

### **Legacy: The Afterlife of Egerton Ryerson**

The legacy of Ryerson's ideas - that is, the mark that he has left upon numerous communities within Canada - is evident in colonial policy and through enduring perspectives on religious conversion, education, the assimilation of Indigenous People and separate schools for Black students.

Just as many of the ideas in Ryerson's Report on Industrial Schools were in circulation before the 1840s, they were also in circulation for several decades afterwards, which has led to debates over Ryerson's legacy in connection with the post-Confederation residential school system. In particular, Ryerson's 1847 report has been linked with Nicholas Flood Davin's 1879 Report on Industrial Schools for Indians and Half-Breeds, which served as official justification for the residential school system that developed after Ryerson's death. There are undoubtedly similarities between the two reports, chiefly on the purposes of industrial school education, the centrality of religious education and the administrative structure of the schools. However, none are unique to either author. They reflect perspectives on education for Indigenous people that were prevalent throughout British colonies in the nineteenth century. Davin did not refer to Ryerson in his report, and he drew heavily on practices in American industrial boarding

<sup>11</sup> Ryerson to W. H. Draper, April 12, 1847, cited in Kristen McLaren, "'We Had No Desire to be Set Apart': Forced Segregation of Black Students in Canada West Public Schools and Myths of British Egalitarianism," *Social History/Histoire sociale* 37, no. 73 (2004): 36.

schools. He also made several recommendations that are not found in Ryerson's work, notably that industrial school education should be compulsory. Although no direct line can be drawn between Ryerson's and Davin's reports, their similarities reinforce John Milloy's conclusion that "the Imperial policy heritage of the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s, supplemented by federal legislation and programming in the first decade of Confederation, was both the context and the rationale for the development of residential schools."<sup>12</sup>

While the British North America Act of 1867 granted the provinces exclusive jurisdiction over education (Section 93), subject to certain provisions, the federal government had authority over "Indians, and Lands reserved for the Indians" (Section 91). From 1867 until his retirement as Chief Superintendent of Education in 1876 (when the position was replaced by a Minister of Education), Ryerson's plans for a system of common or public education were developed at the provincial level. The federal government had responsibility for Indigenous children's education and thus the residential school system from the 1880s until the closure of the last school in 1996. Nevertheless, as the Davin Report illustrated, the substance and rationale for Ryerson's recommended model of schooling for Indigenous children continued to be influential in the later development of Canada's residential school system. His 1847 Report was also cited by the federal Department of Indian Affairs in 1898, some 50 years after its original publication.<sup>13</sup>

Seven years after Ryerson's death in 1882, Senator John Macdonald first referred to him as the "architect" of a system of education:

What the architect is to the building that was Egerton Ryerson to our school system. His it was to lay the foundation upon which a structure might be at once the pride and the glory of our Province would be erected; his it was to lay these deep and broad and enduring. How wisely and how well he did his work. How well his efforts have been supplemented by the able band of workers who were associated with him, the splendid school system of our Province to-day abundantly testifies.<sup>14</sup>

Ryerson's statue and subsequent commemoration have been based upon a singular and positive understanding of his contributions to education. MacDonald drew on Ryerson's ties to education to tell a particular story - or myth - of the successes of Canada's nation-building project. That story is no longer accepted uncritically.

<sup>12</sup> Milloy, *A National Crime*, 15.

<sup>13</sup> Department of Indian Affairs, *Statistics Respecting Indian Schools with Dr Ryerson's Report of 1847 Attached* (Ottawa, 1898), 72-77.

<sup>14</sup> J. George Hodgins, *Ryerson Memorial Volume 1844-1876* (Toronto: Warwick and Sons, 1889), 21.



07

# Commemoration of Egerton Ryerson





## Commemoration

Commemoration is an act, event, installation, naming or declaration that is performed to remember, honour and give respect to a person or occurrence. Commemoration typically happens after death or marks the end of a period of time, such as the end of a war or the end of a finite term of leadership. At our university, this is frequently done in two different ways:

- 1. Naming of university entities** e.g., Kerr Hall, Eggy the mascot, Lincoln Alexander School of Law, Larissa Allen Employee Experience Award, Ryerson University
- 2. Installations** e.g., statue of Egerton Ryerson, Tree of Hope/December 6 memorial, The Normal School plaque

Generally speaking, commemoration tells more about the commemorators than it does about what is being commemorated by indicating what values and actions they have deemed important and worthy of being upheld.

### Commemoration is

- › Done in an effort to tell others what they should know and celebrate about a person, organization or event and
- › Dependent on a like-minded audience

It is important to note that while all naming of university entities and installations may appear to be the same, commemoration typically differs from philanthropic recognition, which is the naming of an entity after an individual or organization in recognition of gifts that have real or in-kind monetary value (e.g. the naming of a building in recognition of significant financial contribution to the institution or the naming of an endowed chair position).

In 1978, Goldwin French, the eleventh President of Victoria College (where Ryerson served as the founding President 1850-1854), observed that “Ryerson has become enshrined as the champion of religious and civil liberty and the founder of Ontario’s education system. ... It should be our aim now to begin disentangling the man from the myth and to acquire a more comprehensive grasp of his objectives. During this process, we may begin to discern that Ryerson was a complex and ambivalent character.”

The complexity and ambivalence of Ryerson as a public figure have rarely been featured in his commemoration. The height of Ryerson’s career as Superintendent of Education coincided with widespread changes, including the development of modern education systems closely tied to the colonial nationalist project. The rise of literacy and widespread use of print publications in this period contributed to the making of the modern state, bolstered by school curricula that legitimized the colonial state and civil institutions. Ryerson’s representation as a historical figure - the “architect” of the public education system in Ontario - was stamped with such ideals, and his identity was rapidly appropriated as a symbol of national success.

In 1884, Toronto marked the fiftieth anniversary of its incorporation in 1834 with a week-long celebration of the growing city that simultaneously reinforced its relationship to British imperial ideals and implicitly supported the erasure of its Indigenous past. The celebration included a parade with an education-themed float entitled “Toronto - A Seat of Learning.” The commemoration of Ryerson’s work and legacy became part of such efforts to connect the city with the expansion of public education.

## Statue

On May 24, 1889, Queen Victoria’s 70th birthday and seven years after Ryerson’s death, the statue of his likeness was unveiled on the grounds of the Education Department to commemorate his contributions to the development of the province’s educational system. Funds for the statue were raised through an appeal to Ontario school children and educators to honour “our common country and recognize our obligation to pay fitting homage to the great men of our Dominion.”



On July 18, 2020, protesters splashed paint on the statue of Egerton Ryerson, along with two other statues of colonial figures in Toronto. A banner placed around the base of the statue read, “Tear down monuments that represent slavery, colonialism, and violence.”

In the early 1950s, students at the Ryerson Institute of Technology fought a proposal to relocate the statue of their school’s namesake to Queen’s Park. At the end of the decade, the Normal School building was demolished to make way for the construction of Kerr Hall. The statue was relocated to the exterior southern wall of the new building on Gould Street, one of the most prominent and central locations on campus.

“In honouring him we do honour to our common country and recognize our obligation to pay fitting homage to the great men of our Dominion, whose names, with his, are inscribed high upon the roll of Canada’s famous sons.”

### - Appeal for Funds for Erection of the Statue, 1889

The statue remained in place while the land was used for the Normal School and then for military training during the Second World War. In 1948, as Howard Kerr was preparing to launch a new Institute of Technology on the site, the presence of the statue inspired Kerr to name it after Egerton Ryerson in order to imbue this new form of post-secondary education with immediate tradition and credibility.

“These statues are monuments that glorify the ugliest parts of our history and our present.”

- Syrus Marcus Ware



For over a hundred years, the statue was the subject of vandalism and mischief by community members, ranging from the intentional placement of objects on the statue and its defacement with paint. Such actions tended to be pranks, however, and not necessarily criticisms of the man.

Over the past decade, criticism of the continued commemoration of Egerton Ryerson has grown, with a particular focus on the statue. Following the release of the *Truth and Reconciliation at Ryerson* report in 2018, a decision was made to install a plaque next to the statue to acknowledge Egerton Ryerson's connection to the development of the Indian Residential School System.

While we do not universally condone or condemn the actions that were taken, we recognize the many ways our community members, including members of the Task Force, were impacted by the manner in which the statue came down. We particularly regret that the statue's fate was not determined through a transparent and community-based process and that the community did not have the opportunity to come together to process the outcome.

“ [Howard] Kerr was the one...who chose the name Ryerson. Why? He said: “we were looking for a name, something distinguished that wasn't being used by any other institution at our particular level. At first we were trying to get a very unique name. Nobody seemed to be able to think of any. Neither could I. Then we thought we should try and tie in history with it...Then I suggested Ryerson Institute of Technology because Ryerson was so well-known and his statue was there on the grounds.”

- John Downing, *History of Ryerson*, 1979

On May 28, 2021, following the uncovering of a mass of unmarked graves of Indigenous children on the site of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School, a memorial was established at the base of the statue. Hundreds of pairs of children's shoes, tokens of respect and culturally significant items were left to honour the children.

On June 6 2021, more than 1000 people joined the “Bring Our Children Home March,” which travelled from Queen's Park to Gould Street. There, people gathered at the statue of Egerton Ryerson for a peaceful demonstration. Following the conclusion and disbursement of the attendees, a small group of people pulled down the statue. The head of the statue

I've been a Ryerson community member (student and staff) for almost 20 years, and it's only in the last 10 years that I've learned more about Egerton Ryerson and the views he had regarding Indigenous Peoples. While he's credited with creating the Ontario education system, it is born from colonialism and the residential schools that were created were the equivalent to cultural genocide. I do not think we can honour one without holding the other to account.

- Community Member

was removed and taken off campus where it was plunged into Lake Ontario and then relocated to “1492 Land Back Lane,” a current site of Indigenous land dispute.

### University name

Howard Kerr’s account of the naming process indicates he was seeking a name that would set the new Institute of Technology apart and confer immediate credibility. The ongoing association between the university’s name, the statue and Egerton Ryerson himself has served as commemoration of the man.

Over the past decade, students, faculty and staff have repeatedly challenged the name of our university, questioned the appropriateness of the commemoration of Egerton Ryerson and demanded change.

In May 2021, the Yellowhead Institute at the university published a letter from Indigenous Students calling for the university to change its name. The letter encouraged the community to stand in solidarity by replacing “Ryerson” with an “X” to “remove Ryerson’s name and this symbol of cultural genocide and intergenerational trauma.” The publication of this letter aligned with a Globe & Mail op-ed published on the same day that reinforced these calls to action and sparked conversations that led to a number of students, alumni, faculty and staff changing the name of the university in their email signatures, LinkedIn profiles and social media affiliations with the university. In June 2021, hundreds of faculty and staff signed open letters calling for a name-change.

### University mascot

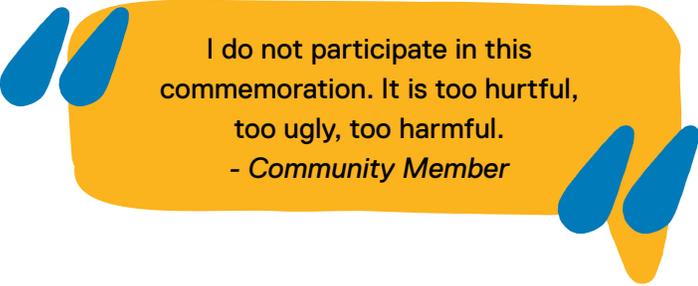
In 1961, Ryerson Institute of Technology acquired its first mascot, a live ram who lived on campus. The ram was chosen because it aligned with Egerton Ryerson’s zodiac sign, and the mascot was named “Eggy.” In the 1990s, the live ram was replaced by exclusive use of a mascot costume. In 2020, concerns from the university’s Athletics & Recreation Department about Eggy’s association with Egerton Ryerson led to a decision to pause the use of the mascot.

The naming of the Ryerson Institute of Technology in 1948 celebrated and commemorated Egerton Ryerson’s beliefs about public education and his role in establishing a school system that was founded on those beliefs. He was held up at that time as a symbol of superior education, success and Christian morality.

For many years, the university community generally accepted and agreed with the commemoration of Egerton Ryerson, at least in part because the community was composed predominantly of individuals who had benefited from the education system Ryerson developed. Now, however, as this same education system is rightly criticised for the harm it continues to inflict, Ryerson’s legacy has also more widely become the subject of scrutiny and criticism.

While some of Ryerson’s actions continue to be celebrated and commemorated by a number of community members, his legacy is indisputably harmful to many others. His

development and execution of education policies as Superintendent of Education cannot be disentangled from the current disproportionate suspension of Black students in public schools, over-representation of Indigenous students in “applied” streams in public high schools and under- and misrepresented cultures in the curriculum.



I do not participate in this commemoration. It is too hurtful, too ugly, too harmful.  
- *Community Member*

As a university, we therefore cannot deny the harm caused by continuing to commemorate Egerton Ryerson through the name of our institution. Our university must reflect our diverse community with a new name that looks towards the bold future outlined in our 2020-2030 Strategic Vision.

For as long as the university is named after Egerton Ryerson, our narrative will be centred on his legacy. Given that our namesake is increasingly recognized as a symbol of colonialism, our identity as an institution can no longer be disentangled from separate schools, segregation, the genocide of Indigenous Peoples and cultural erasure. With a new name, the university can boldly move forward, guided by our institutional values and principles of commemoration. We will have the opportunity to acknowledge and embrace both historical and current social justice movements, as well as the resilience, excellence, achievements and contributions of each and every community member.

08

# Ryerson University history



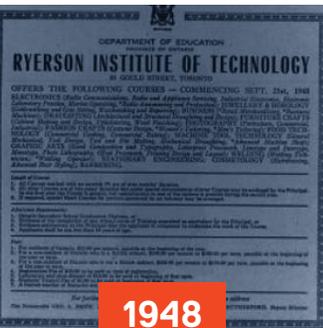
For over 60 years I have been very proud to be a Ryerson Alumni. Ryerson has always been forward thinking with its approach and development of programs to guide students to the needs of our society and to the growth of the students to become well respected individuals.

- Community Member

## Ryerson University history

With over 200 000 proud alumni, our institution has a rich and distinguished history. We were first known as Ryerson Institute of Technology (1948 - 1954), then Ryerson Polytechnic Institute (1954 - 1993), then Ryerson Polytechnic University (1993 - 2000), and currently Ryerson University (2000 - present).

Regardless of its name, our university has a legacy of growth, innovation, teaching, research and community-building. In order to continue our commitment to these values and ensure that this legacy not only endures but also evolves within the university's strategic vision, we must honour the past while looking boldly, bravely and optimistically to the future.



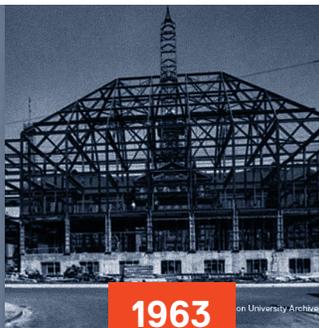
1948

Ryerson Institute of Technology is founded "as an experiment in post-secondary education and an alternative to the traditional apprenticeship system."



1954

The name of the institution officially changed to Ryerson Polytechnical Institute. The school also became independent of governmental bodies to now be regulated by a Board of Governors.



1963

Kerr Hall opens on the site of the former Toronto Normal School. A portion of the school's front façade was preserved in Kerr Hall Quadrangle.



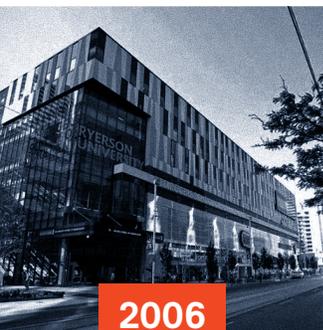
1973

Following the passing of Bill 97 in the Ontario Legislature enabling Ryerson Polytechnical Institute to grant degrees, the first degrees are awarded to nine Ryerson students.



1993

Ryerson Polytechnic University acquired full university status, opening the door for graduate programs and funded research.



2006

Ryerson opens the Ted Rogers School of Management building at Bay and Dundas and introduces its first MBA programs.



2008

Ryerson's Master Plan is approved by the Board of Governors, paving the way for an overhaul of the physical campus.



2012

Ryerson's Aboriginal student population presents Eagle Staff, the traditional flag of First Nations people, to the university.



2015

Ryerson is ranked as one of the Greater Toronto Area's top employers in Canada's Top 100 Employers competition.



2015

The Ryerson Student Learning Centre opens establishing a symbolic "front door" for the university campus.

