

## REPORT

# RECOMMENDATION FOR THE NAMING OF THE NEW ST. JOSEPH'S-ALEXANDER MCKAY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



SUBMITTED TO THE  
HALIFAX REGIONAL CENTRE FOR EDUCATION (HRCE)

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# **SJAM NAMING COMMITTEE REPORT**

## **Introduction**

St. Joseph's-Alexander McKay School was slated for major renovation in the Nova Scotia School Capital Plan (2019-2024) and is set to be replaced by 2023-2024 on the original school site at 5389 Russell Street in North End Halifax. As mandated by the HRCE Naming or Renaming Schools Policy when a school is being replaced, the St. Joseph's-Alexander McKay school administration established a committee of staff, parents/guardians and community members in January 2022. This committee volunteered to lead a community engagement process to gather, compile and analyze public input on what the replacement school should be named. Although the process did not require that the school name be changed necessarily, it did provide the school community with a unique opportunity to reflect on the rich history and identity of the school, and how the school is positioned as an important and multigenerational site of relationship and connection in the broader community. The engagement process was finished in June 2022, as summarized by the information below. It provided the committee with substantive data from which they could recommend a school name to HRCE for final decision.

## **Makeup of Naming Committee**

The St. Joseph's-Alexander McKay (SJAM) Elementary School Naming Committee was made up of a diverse range of stakeholders. When considering this process, it was important to ensure that voices leading the naming consultation process bring different perspectives to meetings and engagement activities. SJAM represents a cross section of experiences and the naming committee aimed to respect the diversity of its community.

## **Committee Composition**

- Creighton Barrett - Parent of SJAM student
- Cheyanne Gorman-Tolliver, Vice Principal, SJAM
- Amy Hunt - Principal, SJAM
- Jalana Lewis - Director, African Nova Scotian Community Engagement, Dalhousie, and community member
- Ashley Morton, Parent of SJAM student

## **SJAM Construction Project**

A replacement for SJAM is part of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's (EECD) 2019-2024 Nova Scotia School Capital Plan. Construction began in the summer of 2021 and is expected to wrap up in 2023. The replacement school will be built on the current school site. The School Steering Committee has been convened to give feedback to the government on the design process. During this construction project, SJAM moved temporarily in September 2021, to the former Beaufort School building in the south end of Halifax.

## **SJAM NAMING COMMITTEE REPORT**

### **Development of a New School Identity**

The construction project represents an unique opportunity to consider the school's identity and if the SJAM community has an appetite to think about what a new school identity may look like in the form of the school's name. Amy Hunt, the school principal, initiated a process to recommend potential names for the new school in early 2022.

In their January 2021 letter to family about the temporary relocation of SJAM, Elwin LeRoux, Regional Executive Director of Education noted "...SJAM is a part of the fabric of the North End."<sup>1</sup> This statement is indeed true of the school. It is important to pause and reflect on what makes SJAM such an important part of the community it serves and if it is time to update the name of the school during a time when the building is being replaced.

### **Consultation Timeline**

- ❖ Initial SJAM Naming Committee meeting - January 31, 2022
- ❖ SJAM Naming Committee meeting - February 8, 2022
- ❖ SJAM Naming Committee meeting - February 15, 2022
- ❖ Initial stakeholder survey - February 17, 2022
- ❖ SJAM students received printed copies of the survey to take home - February 17, 2022
- ❖ SJAM Naming Committee meeting - March 1, 2022
- ❖ SJAM students were encouraged to add their feedback on the name to a blank mural located in the school - March 21-April 21
- ❖ Stakeholder survey closed - April 13, 2022
- ❖ SJAM Naming Committee meeting - April 21, 2022
- ❖ SJAM Naming Committee reviewed submissions and shortlisted names - May 5, 2022
- ❖ Follow-up survey asking stakeholders to rank potential names for the new school launched - May 31, 2022
- ❖ Follow-up survey closed - June 10, 2022
- ❖ Report with recommendations submitted to HRCE - June 2022

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.hrce.ca/sites/default/files/hrsb/sjam\\_replacement-20jan2021.pdf](https://www.hrce.ca/sites/default/files/hrsb/sjam_replacement-20jan2021.pdf)

# **SJAM NAMING COMMITTEE REPORT**

## **Main Activities Associated with Public Consultation Process**

### Initial Stakeholder Survey

The survey was brief and circulated via Google Docs to the broader SJAM community. It was shared through the PowerSchool School Messenger system, as well as using school and community social media accounts, and the information was also sent home to families in student backpacks. The introductory paragraph outlined why the committee was asking for feedback and HRCE's naming process.

#### Survey Questions:

- Contact information (optional)
- What is your relationship to SJAM?
- Ranked top 3 name recommendations
- Reason for name recommendations

### Student Engagement

Students and their parents were encouraged to complete the survey via school announcements, the printed school newsletter, the school website and school social media channels.

Students were also encouraged to add their feedback in writing to a mural set up inside the school specifically for that purpose. Students used post-it notes to add their name suggestions to the mural.

### Naming Committee Email Address

The Naming Committee created an email address ([sjamname@gnspe.ca](mailto:sjamname@gnspe.ca)) for community members to share their thoughts, comments and questions regarding the process and potential renaming of the school. The inbox was monitored by Creighton, Ashley and Amy. A total of 18 emails were received during the engagement process.

### Follow-Up Survey

A brief follow-up survey was launched in May 2022. The purpose of this survey was to assist the Naming Committee with the task of creating a ranked short-list of potential names for the new school. Following the closure of the initial survey in April 2022, members of the Naming Committee felt that additional engagement was needed to assess the community's interest in names that were mentioned most often during the initial engagement steps.

#### Survey questions:

- Contact info (optional)
- Your relationship to SJAM
- The years/decade you were enrolled at SJAM (if a former student)
- Ranked name recommendation

## **SJAM NAMING COMMITTEE REPORT**

### **How the Naming Committee Reviewed Feedback**

Feedback from the initial surveys completed via Google Forms was automatically broken down by the web-based application. A member of the Naming Committee manually entered hand-written survey responses into Google Forms so all data was saved and tabulated in one place. A document that provided a qualitative and quantitative overview of survey feedback was then shared with committee members.

Feedback from the student mural was photographed (see images below), collected and then a member of the SJAM Naming Committee reviewed the feedback and presented an overview to committee members.

In reviewing this information taken from the initial survey, student mural and additional emails received from community members regarding the topic, SJAM Naming Committee members looked for the most popular suggestions and themes provided and the reasons given for recommendations.

All of this information was used to create a final follow-up survey that asked stakeholders to rank potential names for the new school. This survey was also available via Google Forms. A member of the Naming Committee prepared a four page document that summarized results of the second survey. This information was then used to create a ranked list of recommended names for the new school.

### **Summary of Feedback Received**

A total of 289 responses were received for the follow-up survey. Of those respondents, the majority identified as former students or as parents/caregivers. A total of 28 current students and 22 staff completed the survey. The options provided to be ranked were as follows (in alphabetical order):

- North End (e.g., North End Elementary School, North End Community School)
- SJAM (just the 4 letters)
- St. Joseph's-Alexander McKay Elementary School
- Viola Desmond (e.g., Viola Desmond Elementary School, Viola Desmond Academy)

In terms of survey results, 41% of stakeholders selected "St. Joseph's-Alexander McKay Elementary School" as their first choice, 22% selected "Viola Desmond" as their first choice, 22% selected "SJAM" as their first choice and 15% selected "North End" as their first choice.

It is important to note that of the 113 stakeholders who identified as "Former students", 74% of them ranked their first choice as "St. Joseph's-Alexander McKay". Of that same group, 38% selected "Viola Desmond" as their first choice. Former students were the largest stakeholder group to complete the follow-up survey. The "St. Joseph's-Alexander McKay" was not nearly as popular among any other stakeholder group.

For current students, 64% chose "SJAM" as their first choice for the new school's name, making it the most popular selection among that group. For staff, 32% ranked "SJAM" as their first choice and another 32% ranked "St. Joseph's-Alexander McKay" as their first choice. Among parents/caregivers, 38% chose "Viola Desmond" as their first choice.

## **SJAM NAMING COMMITTEE REPORT**

### **Recommended Names for the School in Order of Preference:**

- 1. St. Joseph's-Alexander McKay School (SJAM)**
- 2. Viola Desmond Elementary School**
- 3. North End Elementary School**

As a committee, we can clearly see in the collected data from both rounds of community engagement that both the full name of St. Joseph's-Alexander McKay School, as well as its popular acronym, SJAM, have a positive attachment among current and former students, as well as other survey respondents including staff and community members. For this reason, we recommend the original name and/or the acronym as the first choice for the name of the newly constructed school. Our second recommendation is Viola Desmond Elementary School, based on the survey data and the reflective comments of respondents who spoke to the importance of honouring the legacy of Viola Desmond and the predominant African Nova Scotian identity and demographic of the school community. Our third and final recommendation is North End Elementary School, which had the least amount of support from survey respondents, although was popular enough in the first round of engagement to be a fourth option in the second round. It is important to note that the daycare which will be housed within the new school building will be named North End Daycare, which echoes the desire of some respondents to have the school connected to and reflective of the rich identity of North End Halifax in which the school is centrally situated.



# SJAM NAMING COMMITTEE REPORT

## Initial Stakeholder Survey

### Contact Information

What is your relationship to SJAM

- Student
- Parent/Caregiver
- Staff
- Community Member

Name

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

Email address

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_



# SJAM NAMING COMMITTEE REPORT

**Name recommendation**

I think the naming committee should

- Keep the existing name (St. Joseph's-Alexander McKay School)
- Change the name

**First recommendation**

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

**Second recommendation**

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

**Third recommendation**

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

**Reason for name recommendations**

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

**Submit**

Clear form

## SJAM NAMING COMMITTEE REPORT

### Follow-up Stakeholder Survey

#### Contact Information

Name

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

What is your relationship to SJAM (select all that apply)

- Parent/Caregiver
- Staff
- Community Member
- Current student
- Former student

If you are former student, please indicate the years/decade you were enrolled at SJAM

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

**SJAM NAMING COMMITTEE REPORT**

**Name recommendation**

Rank the following names in order of preference \*

	First choice	Second choice	Third choice	Fourth choice
North End (e.g., North End Elementary School, North End Community School)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SJAM (just the 4 letters)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
St. Joseph's-Alexander McKay Elementary School	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Viola Desmond (e.g., Viola Desmond Elementary School, Viola Desmond Academy)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Reason for name recommendations

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

Submit

Clear form