



Calgary Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee (CAUAC)

Cristi Adams
Chair, Calgary Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee
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27 November 2024

Re: AUA2024-38 Renaming of Fish Creek-Lacombe Station

To whom it may concern,

Thank you for engaging the Calgary Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee (CAUAC) on the work to investigate the renaming of Fish Creek-Lacombe station at the request of St Mary's University.

After the presentation of the proposed renaming from Steven Snell and Adis Samardzic at our June 11, 2024, board meeting, CAUAC discussed and researched the topic further. The renaming of Fish Creek-Lacombe Station does align with our efforts of "historic renaming processes in Calgary, and their links to Indian Residential Schools" captured within the *White Goose Flying* report, as Father Lacombe was instrumental in the founding of the Residential School system in Canada.

We, however, do not support the inclusion of the "St Mary's" name at the Fish Creek transit station, as St Mary's also holds relevance to the Indian Residential School system. The inclusion of the name goes against the intent of the *White Goose Flying* report recommendations and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) Calls to Action.

St. Mary's was the name of the residential school at Kainai from 1926 to 1988. Though the modern St. Mary's University is a separate institution, the St. Mary's Residential school at Cardston operated within the Catholic Diocese of Calgary. St. Mary's University is a private Catholic-run institution that now operates within the same diocese. These are not simply two unlinked entities that happen share the same name. They are two Catholic institutions, with the same name, that operated within the same Catholic ecclesiastical district, and with oversight of the same Catholic Bishop (Paul J. O'Bryne, 1968-1998).

In Canada there were three residential schools named "St. Mary's" that were operated by the Catholic church.

1. *St. Mary's, Cardston, Alberta (1898-1988)*

NCTR Summary: The Immaculate Conception Boarding School opened in 1898 on the Blood Reserve (Kainai) in what is today Alberta. It was replaced in 1926 with a new school, known as St. Mary's, near Cardston, Alberta. By the mid-1930s the school was experiencing overcrowding. In 1930, a government inspector said that the boys at both the Catholic and Anglican residential schools on the reserve were being worked like "slaves" from morning to night to support the schools. The school had a severe outbreak of measles in 1935 and an outbreak of spinal meningitis in 1956. The federal government took over the operation of the school in 1969 and closed it in 1988.

Number of deceased children reported on the NCTR memorial page: 40

2. *St. Mary's, Mission, British Columbia (1867-1984)*

NCTR Summary: Missionaries opened a boarding school at the St. Mary mission in the Fraser Valley in 1863. The school was relocated in 1882 and a new school was built in 1933. In its early years the school made little use of corporal punishment, but this policy was dropped as the school was increasingly integrated into the federal residential school system. The school closed in 1984. In 2004 a former school employee was convicted of 12 counts of indecent assault in relation to his time at the school and was sentenced to three years in prison.

Number of deceased children reported on the NCTR memorial page: 22

3. *St. Mary's (St. Anthony's), Kenora, Ontario (1897-1972)*

NCTR Summary: Opened in 1897 at Rat Portage in northwestern Ontario this school was first known as the Rat Portage Boarding School, then the Kenora Boarding School and then St. Anthony's Roman Catholic School. From 1938 it was known as St. Mary's School. Early in its history, the local band negotiated an agreement that students would not be converted to Catholicism against their parent's will. A fire destroyed one of the school residences in 1938. During the 1960s, the school began to integrate its students into the local day school system. The school closed in 1972.

Number of deceased children reported on the NCTR memorial page: 36

It is worth noting that there are survivors of St. Mary's, Cardston, who are living and working in Calgary. Here is an article discussing Blanche Bruisedhead's experiences at St. Mary's:

<https://www.galtmuseum.com/articles/a-student-at-st-marys-residential-school>.

We greatly appreciate The City of Calgary's continued thought and work on naming improvements as part of the TRC Calls to Action and the implementation of the *White Goose Flying* report. We look forward to future discussions.

Sincerely,

Cristi Adams

Cristi Adams
Chair, Calgary Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee

CTCAG – Calgary Transit Customer Advisory Group

To: Stephen Tauro, Communication & Information Lead

From: **Calgary Transit Customer Advisory Group (CTCAG):** Michael Storozhakov, Vern Gharabegian, Tracy Preece, William Lawrence, Abisola Adegbulugbe, Robert Ferguson

cc: Steven Snell, Supervisor, Mobility and Partnerships

Date: July 19, 2024

Re: Renaming of the Fish Creek-Lacombe LRT Station

Intent / Background

- The CTCAG was made aware of the Notice of Motion raised on February 13, 2024 to consider renaming Fish Creek-Lacombe Station to St. Mary's University–Fish Creek Station.
 - The CTCAG is a group of volunteers who are passionate about public transit. Our purpose is to provide Calgary Transit with insights and advice to improve the customer experience and the relationship with customers. A secondary purpose is to share the CTCAG's point of view with other groups and citizens including Council and Committees.
 - As part of our regular meetings, in April 2024, Steven Snell from Calgary Transit gave a presentation to the CTCAG about the potential renaming of Fish Creek-Lacombe Station.
 - **This memo/document constitutes the CTCAG's collective feedback to council regarding the initiative**
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Executive Summary – Recommendation from CTCAG

The CTAG doesn't believe there is a material benefit to renaming the LRT station and, thus, recommends maintaining the name of the current station as Fish Creek-Lacombe. The existing name is (1) a combination of the largest and most well-known landmark near the station, which is intuitive, to current and new/future system users (2) and honors a pioneer, Father Lacombe, who is a well-regarded part of Calgary's heritage.

We believe changing the name to include St. Mary's or any other designation will:

- (1) be less intuitive for the vast majority of Calgary Transit users,
 - (2) be less meaningful from a historical context perspective,
 - (3) be unlikely to increase Calgary Transit ridership and
 - (4) cost money that is better spent on other initiatives that can improve Calgary Transit users' experiences.
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Detailed Considerations

In April 2024, as part of our regular monthly CTCAG meetings, Steven Snell from Calgary Transit gave a presentation to the CTCAG about the potential renaming of Fish Creek-Lacombe Station.

During that hour-long presentation and following conversation, the following details were discussed:

- The Notice of Motion from City Council regarding this matter.
- The background regarding the name of the station in question, including its historical name and when changes were last made to its current name.
- Information regarding the station's location, including the review of photos, maps and satellite images of several features in the general proximity of the station. This included highlighting and discussing several local landmarks relative to the station in question.
- The historical significance of Father Lacombe, including his advocacy for Indigenous Rights, among other positive impacts on the local community.
- The validity and appropriateness of various naming options, including names incorporating St. Mary's University.
- Details regarding the on-line questionnaire / survey that was to be posted to the Calgary Transit's website to facilitate public engagement.
- Comparing / contrasting the context of renaming the station to incorporate St. Mary's vs. similar situations where a name has recently changed (e.g. Bow Valley College) as well as other educational institutions (University of Calgary and SAIT).
- Regarding St. Mary's, the CTCAG specifically discussed and noted:
 - The relatively far distance of St. Mary's to the station in question
 - Our perceptions that St. Mary's is not a relatively well-known landmark
 - Roughly what proportions of enrolled students use Calgary Transit vs. using free local parking provided at St. Mary's University

After the April meeting, several CTCAG members discussed the following details:

- The naming of stations adjacent to University of Calgary, SAIT and, recently Bow Valley, which have thousands of new and returning students being introduced to the C-train each year. Furthermore, we discussed the logical nature of labelling those stations accordingly. We also discussed the relatively small fraction of students at St. Mary's vs. those other institutions (Approximate enrollments below):
 - Bow Valley College (Downtown Campus) – 11,000 students (Source: [LINK](#))
 - SAIT – 14,000 (Source: [LINK](#))
 - University of Calgary – 33,000 (Source: [LINK](#))
 - St. Mary's University – 1,000 (Source: [LINK](#))
 - How University of Calgary, SAIT and Bow Valley campuses are clearly visible from their respective C-train stations, making them good geo-locators for people who are new to the system, infrequent riders, and tourists. This is not the case for St. Mary's, thus, naming the station after it would not fulfill any of these functions.
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Recommendation:

In conclusion, the CTCAG's recommendation is:

- **Do not incorporate “St. Mary’s” into the station’s name.**
- **Maintain the name “Fish Creek” in the station’s name** as it maintains the most geographically relevant landmark and, thus, the most intuitive name.
- **Maintain the reference to “Father Lacombe” in the station’s name** as it remains a reference to a positive historical figure that, to this day, remains worthy of honour and recognition of significant past contributions.
- Rather than renaming the station, save or deploy funding in a more constructive fashion. A name change will necessitate signage and communication costs / expenses that are unnecessary, consuming scarce funds that could be better spent adding value to Calgary Transit riders. For example, money could be spent on improving accessibility to stations, enhancing safety measures at ground level station crossings, improving system-wide safety or any many other high value projects.

Of note, although we were made aware of the upcoming on-line questionnaire / survey to gauge public opinion regarding the station’s name, the CTCAG is not aware of the results of the survey and, thus, our recommendations have not been influenced by public opinions that may have been expressed in that survey.