

Presentation to Public Engagement Session
Task Force on Commemoration of Edward Cornwallis and
Recognition and Commemoration of Indigenous History

Build...not remove, not rename, not relegate...that's the focus of my remarks as we discuss our shared past and the way forward.

As a long-time resident of HRM I have followed and commented on the Cornwallis narrative. Regrettably, it has become a divisive issue. Collectively we can do better.

There are numerous narratives covering the rich and varied history of Halifax and our Province, including Indigenous and non-indigenous relations. Of particular significance are the divergent interpretations of the Peace and Friendship Treaties of the 1700s. In this regard, education in the broad context –based on facts, not emotion, not supposition—is the way forward.

Recommendations

- ***Recognition and Commemoration of Indigenous History in HRM:*** This is purview of the Mi'kmaw community to take the lead as to how best to recognize and commemorate their history and culture. However, I will offer the observation that several years ago I came across an informative historical essay by Don Awalt, "The Mi'kmaq and Point Pleasant Park." It recounts the history of the Mi'kmaw celebration of the annual "Spring Feast" held along the Northwest Arm. This, I suggest, is an example of a historical and cultural event that warrants public recognition.
- ***Commemoration of Edward Cornwallis:*** The differing perspectives involving Cornwallis require a recognized historical framework for meaningful discussion. His actions as Governor of Nova Scotia 1749-1752 need to be viewed in terms of context of time, namely the era as a whole and not focused solely on Cornwallis the individual. And this involves some give and take on all sides.

In reality, the 18th century was a violent period in northeastern North America, including Nova Scotia. Scalping and paying of bounties were commonplace among warring Indigenous and non-indigenous forces. Non-combatants, including women and children on all sides, became victims of the violence. Cornwallis as a military leader and civic administrator was one of many players involved in the conflicts. For some he has become a convenient symbol for the ills of the time.

Edward Cornwallis may not be in the same circle as Mother Teresa and her fellow saints...but I submit he does warrant public recognition:

--For establishing Halifax

--For protecting and defending the settlers who arrived with him, and

--For ensuring Halifax survived during a turbulent period to evolve, in time, as Canada's Atlantic Sentinel in war and peace and a world recognized port

- **Cornwallis Statue:** Polls in the last couple of years indicate the majority of residents want the Cornwallis name retained on municipal assets. If this is the wish of the majority and in keeping with our democratic tradition, return the statue to an appropriate and secure public venue in the downtown area. Relegating the statue to a museum or indefinite storage downgrades a significant aspect of Halifax's and Nova Scotia's history.
- **Cornwallis Park:** A number of "refreshed" names for the park have been offered that reflect a more inclusive interpretation of our shared history. For example, students at a Port Williams school have proposed a number of statues or similar works of art with appropriate narratives that relate the story of founding members and builders of the city and province, including Cornwallis.
- **Cornwallis Street:** In brief, maintain the name. Renaming streets and other public entities bearing the name of Cornwallis or other personalities of the past-- because in the view of some they do not reflect today's values and standards-- will impact both Indigenous and non-Indigenous names and communities.

In conclusion, these public engagements and the Task Force's ultimate recommendations present an opportunity to demonstrate to other jurisdictions facing similar historic and heritage challenges that respectful, fair, balanced, open-minded and evidence-based conversations about our shared past can help advance Reconciliation.

In the spirit of Reconciliation let's rise above recrimination and retribution. Let's build... and strengthen the ties that we share.

Leonard W. Canfield, Halifax, NS ... June 11, 2019