

Mayor and Members of Council
Town of Fort Frances
320 Portage Avenue, Fort Frances, ON, P9A 3P9
town@fortfrances.ca

Dear Mayor and Members of Council,

My name is Cody Carmody, a former resident of Fort Frances, with long historical ties to the community and an everlasting love for Sunset Country. Although I have not lived in Fort Frances for over a decade now, I reflect on my upbringing in the town regularly and I owe much of my current self to my experiences growing up in the community. I emphasize my feelings for this town not for any persuasive points, but rather so my words are not dismissed as a non-resident. Fort Frances holds a special place in my heart and it will always be my home.

Further to this, my entire family does live in Fort Frances, and I still come home as often as I can and get just as excited every single time. I am also a proud Citizen of the Métis Nation, and I grew up living in the same family home for eighteen years until I moved away for school – my home on Colonization Road.

This letter is with regards to the motion being put forth by Councilor Douglas Judson, to start a process for the renaming of Colonization Roads East and West in Fort Frances, Ontario.

I'll start by saying I support the motion, so let's get that out of the way.

I do, however, have a few thoughts (I'll try to keep it short, but it's really not my style) that I can't seem to brush off while the motion is being considered.

First and foremost I want to admit that Colonization Road West has deep sentimental value to me. My first steps, first pet, first bike ride, first sleep over – virtually all my “firsts” that we humans tend to hold on to in some weird sentimental way took place on Colonization Road. I do not like the idea of this being taken away from me. It feels as if all these memories I hold dear to my heart are not only being altered by having a significant aspect of them changed, but also that they're somehow being tarnished in that I should be ashamed for holding my home, Colonization Road, so dear to my heart. I know this is all in my head and none of what I just wrote down is actually true – the name of the road does not change the experiences I had – but I'm a self-reflective person and I think there are times when sharing your feelings, regardless if rationale, adds value to the decision making process.

I also know that these emotions pale in comparison to the emotions many Indigenous people in our community feel every time they are forced to see or hear or drive down or even live on Colonization Road. As miniscule as it may seem, and perhaps is, I simply do not want the sentimental significance of the change to go unacknowledged.

Moving on, I do want to weigh in briefly on the way forward with this motion. I was hoping to acquire more insight into the context and perspectives of the matter at the *Colonization in Context* event being held on November 25th, but I just recently realized the event is taking place two days after Town Council is expected to vote on the motion. Given this, I want to preempt my below statements with the context that they're based on my personal and present understanding of things, and that I would have much preferred to hear the discussion at the November 25th event before providing my input.

The first issue I'd like to weigh in on is with regards to the renaming process of Colonization Road. The Resolution proposes an Ad-Hoc Committee to oversee the selection and implementation process for the name change, with which I take no issue. My concern, however, lies within the Ad-Hoc Committee itself. Specifically, I am not convinced that a committee that does not include any representation from the membership for which it is claiming to advocate (in the spirit of Reconciliation, as per the Committee's Terms of Reference and Section 27 of the Resolution) is the best approach to this decision.

As per the Whereases in the Resolution, "colonization is defined as 'the action or process of settling among and establishing control over the Indigenous people of an area' or 'the action of appropriating a place or domain for one's own use'". If the Town truly wanted to move away from colonial practices, would it not include some Indigenous representation in its decision making committee for a matter that so directly involves Indigenous people? "Nothing about us without us" comes to mind.

I can't help but feel it's somewhat performative to make a spectacle about renaming Colonization Road to reconcile with Indigenous community members while not having any Indigenous leadership on the decision making committee. I assume the intent is to include Indigenous voices through a submission process, while leaving the ultimate decision making authority in the hands of this Ad-Hoc Committee. Forgive me if this assumption is incorrect, but if accurate, this is still very colonial in nature and inarguably paternalistic. My sense, and fear, is that everyone's focus is on the name of the oppressive system rather than the system itself. I propose council consider a more collaborative, consensus-building approach to this very important decision.

The second matter I'd like to address has to do with the issue of what becomes of the existing road signs. I noticed in one of Councilor Judson's social media posts the proposal that the signs be provided to an individual on the condition that said individual pays for the replacement costs, an estimated \$2,600 to replace 13 road signs. I have my own personal thoughts about this, but I've decided to keep them to myself. Rather, I will look to my own advice that I've written above and will simply urge council to take a collaborative, consensus-building approach (which, in my view, would include Municipal, First Nation, and Métis leadership) to this aspect of the renaming process as well.

I want to make clear that my intent with this letter is not to take anything away from the motion. It's a commendable first step. However it would truly be a shame to miss this opportunity to show Canada – and ourselves – how a unique and historic community like ours, with First Nation, Métis, non-Indigenous citizens and immigrants, can work collaboratively in a truly non-colonial manner.

I do not want to see my childhood street changed. But I know it must be done. And if it must be done, my hope is that it is done right.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my letter. I look forward to watching this process unfold.

Respectfully,

Cody Carmody