



August 1, 2018

Service de la mise en valeur du territoire  
Direction de l'urbanisme  
Division du patrimoine  
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**RE: Request to rename rue Amherst & recommendation for suitable replacement**

Dear Madam or Sir,

On behalf of Kontinónhstats – Mohawk Language Custodian Association, located in Kanehsatà:ke, we would like to respectfully submit the name of an honourable man who lived and died in the not too distant past. Só:se Onahsakèn:rat, translated in English as Joseph Swan.

Onahsakèn:rat was born on September 4, 1845 and was sent by the Sulpicians to be educated at the Séminaire de Montréal when he was fifteen years old. He was hard working and completely fluent in Kanien'keha (Mohawk) and French and later learned English. He was a bright student and was seen as a future leader in Kanehsatà:ke.

It is noted in our historical anthology of Kanehsatà:ke that Onahsakèn:rat attended the Séminaire de Montréal with another famous Indigenous individual – Louis Riel. Both graduated and returned to their communities to become leaders for their people. Onahsakèn:rat for land rights of the Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawks) in Quebec and Louis Riel for land rights of the Métis at the Red River in Saskatchewan. Both became leaders in the same year, 1868 and the same month, July.

Sadly, Onahsakèn:rat died at the very young age of 35 years old on 7 February, 1881. He is buried at the Mount Royal Cemetery in Montreal with only a very small metal tomb marker between two large stone monoliths.

We believe that as we move forward together in this time of reconciliation, it is imperative that the city of Montreal consider renaming Amherst Street, after General Jeffery Amherst. While there is differing opinions regarding Amherst's direct role in the distribution of smallpox infected blankets to Indigenous Nations, he did approve.

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In his reply to Colonel Bouquet, Amherst wrote as a Post Script, "You will Do well to try to Inoculate the Indians by means of Blankets, as well as try Every other method that can serve to Extirpate this Execrable Race. I should be very glad your Scheme for Hunting them Down by Dogs could take Effect, but England is at too great a Distance to think of that at present."<sup>1</sup>

Historical facts gleaned from his letters to Colonel Henry Bouquet, Sir William Johnson, and to George Croghan all indicate that General Jeffery Amherst held strong genocidal intentions toward Indigenous Nations using biological warfare, even supporting the "Spaniard's Method" of hunting Indians with dogs. Amherst wrote to Sir William Johnson on 9 July 1763, "...Measures to be taken as would Bring about the Total Extirpation of those Indian Nations."<sup>2</sup> To continue to recognize General Amherst goes against all efforts of reconciliation and we sincerely hope that you will agree to rename this street designation.

The Mohawk Language Custodian Association (MLCA) has worked closely with the City of Montreal as we come together in reconciliation. Our three closest Mohawk communities and then Mayor Denis Corderre and others celebrated the renaming of a look-out Park on Mount Royal now called Tiohtía:ke Otsirakéhne on 10 June 2017.

We congratulate Mayor Valerie Plante on creating the new Commissioner of Indigenous Affairs within the City of Montreal and hope for a warm relationship to continue and flourish.

Sincerely,



Hilda Nicholas, President  
On behalf of Kontinónhstats – MLCA

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<sup>1</sup> Library of Congress, British Manuscript Project, Amherst to Bouquet, dated 16 July 1763, Microfilm reel 34/41, item 114.

<sup>2</sup> Library of Congress, British Manuscript Project, Amherst to Johnson, dated 9 July 1763, Microfilm reel 34/38, item 244.