



**FRIENDS OF
EGERTON
RYERSON**

9 May 2022

Rev Dr Richard Bott, moderator
United Church of Canada

Dear Dr Bott

May we introduce ourselves? We are members of Friends of Egerton Ryerson, and believe that he has been falsely convicted of responsibility for the abhorrent Canadian residential school system. He had nothing to do with it! Moreover, no serious sources, that is, those based on documents, ever said he did (we give a list on our website).

Even the Task Force at Ryerson University, which recommended dropping his name and removing his statue, acknowledged that he was NOT the architect of the residential school system, but then concluded (faulty logic) that since he was known for that, his name and the statue should go.

The university's president, Dr Lachemi, unfortunately, did much to make the association by placing a plaque next to Ryerson's statue that called him "instrumental" in its "design and implementation." Rather, Ryerson supported the voluntary, bilingual (Indigenous and English) schools Indigenous leaders, some of them Methodist ministers themselves wanted. Herewith the fallacious statement:

"Egerton Ryerson is widely known for his contributions to Ontario's public educational system. As Chief Superintendent of Education, Ryerson's recommendations were instrumental in the design and implementation of the Indian Residential School System. In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission reported that children in the schools were subjected to unthinkable abuse and neglect, to medical experimentation, punishment for the cultures or languages and death. The aim of the Residential School System was cultural genocide."

But Ryerson's work as Chief Superintendent of Education was on the regular public schools for Upper Canada, the future province of Ontario. Indian Affairs were initially under the Colonial Office in Britain, then, after Confederation, the federal government. The schools date to 1884, or two years after Ryerson's death.

Yes, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission did condemn the residential schools for "cultural genocide," but made it clear that Ryerson was not involved.

We regret that *Broadview* will not publish anything pro Ryerson. We realize that it is an independent magazine, not tied to the church, as the original *Christian Guardian* was. Two well qualified academics were turned down for articles, with one Indigenous journalist, himself a Ryerson graduate and former TRC Ambassador for the (Anglican) Diocese of Niagara. The one article it did publish, in 2018, was fairly positive, but was given a negative title, "Egerton Ryerson: The legacy of a tarnished hero."

We think that members of the United Church would be pleased to know that Ryerson was an honourable person who did good work and bears no responsibility for the terrible actions of those who in fact established those residential schools.

Those of us writing you today are all people of faith, lay people, United Church, Anglican, Presbyterian and Roman Catholic. Believers in “the communion of saints,” we see Ryerson as a brother in Christ. And did you know that he was named a “brother” by an Indigenous chief?

Would you send something out by email, or put something online on your website, to let people know that very different, well researched, information is available about Ryerson?

- Our website: friendsofegertonryerson.ca
- Email: friendsofegertonryerson@gmail.com

Yours sincerely,

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