

"Wellington" is preferred name for school merger

By Brock Weir

200 years ago this year, the Duke of Wellington led the defeat of Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo. This week, however, he would have been able to notch another victory into his belt as the namesake of the soon-to-be-merged Aurora Senior Public School and George Street Public School.

'Wellington Public School' is the preferred name for the new entity when the two schools come together under one roof at the existing Aurora Senior Public School at 125 Wellington Street West this fall.

George Street Public School, which opened in 1957 as the first public school built to serve the growing Aurora community west of Yonge Street, now serves students in Kindergarten through Grade 3 and is set to close this June.

'Wellington Public School' was one of four names floated within the school community, taking local history and geography into consideration, according to Ken Arnott, principal of the two existing schools.

One name up for consideration was 'Red Willow Creek Public School', which pays tribute to the stream that flows near Aurora Senior Public School and under the York Region District School Board headquarters nearby.

'It is a bit of a mouthful,' said Mr. Arnott.

Next Option: Machell's Corners Public School, selected in tribute to the earliest days of what is now Aurora, formed on the four corners of Yonge and Wellington. The century-old disagreement over the correct pronunciation of 'Machell', however, was a strike against it.

Faring a little bit better was 'Aurora Village Public School', named after the technical name of the neighbourhood surrounding the school.

'We liked that name because the village idea ties in with the whole sense of community,' said Mr. Arnott. 'When we're bringing together both the George Street community and the Aurora Senior community, we thought 'village' had a nice application.'

It might take a village to raise a child, but never underestimate the power of the Duke of Wellington.

'The other one we came up with, the logical, practical, one was Wellington Public School,' he said. 'Staff who have been here a long time and the parents who have had kids go through for a number of years, there has always been confusion by the number of schools that have the 'Aurora' name on it like Aurora High, Aurora Heights, Aurora Grove and Aurora Senior. People often refer to us as 'the Aurora School on Wellington.''

While that might have been the 'logical, practical solution', a conversation with one of their history teachers who pointed out this year's bicentenary of the Battle of Waterloo, tipped the odds in Wellington's favour.

'We thought that was an interesting angle to build on as well, so he had suggestions as a history teacher that gave us a lot of ideas on what we could possibly be used as a mascot and it is all very exciting,' said Mr. Arnott.

Rest assured that as far as possible mascots go, they're shying away from the Wellington boot, looking instead towards the cavalry aspect of the Battle ' and they're ready to get a little wild with the ideas.

'Once we establish the name, we can have a bit more fun with what the colours are and the mascot,' he says. 'Aurora Senior has never had an official mascot. When you're at a school like ours that does host a lot of the athletic events, when you're building community and spirit for the kids, that is definitely something we're going to involve them with, and a contest around a mascot, what

colours we could do, and then we get into the whole idea of t-shirts and sports school wear.

?That will help bring the two schools together under one roof and build the community spirit of our school with a common name and a common theme.?

To mark its closing, George Street Public School is planning a ?celebration of life? in its honour on Saturday, May 23, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., welcoming current and former students, staff, and the community at large. If you have any photos, memories, or any other artefacts you would like to share to mark your time at George Street P.S., the party planners would like to hear from you. To share your suggestions, email george.street.ps@yrdsb.ca. To follow details of the closure and commemoration, visit georgestreetps.blogspot.com.