



Naming Committee

Honouring People and Places in Our City

THE CITY OF
Edmonton

7th Floor, 10250 - 101 Street
Edmonton AB T5J 3P4
Phone: 780-496-6226 Fax: 780-496-6054

Winnifred Mary Stewart

(1908-1990)

Winnifred Stewart formed what is now known as the Winnifred Stewart Association. Her dedication to providing education and support for children with disabilities has helped turn despair, frustration, and social stigma into hope, understanding, and acceptance.

Winnifred Mary Stewart was born in Fernie, British Columbia on June 26, 1908. Shortly after her birth, the family moved to Edmonton and settled in the Clover Bar district. Winnifred went on to graduate as a Registered Nurse from the Nursing School of the Edmonton General Hospital in 1929.

Winnifred married Duncan Stewart in 1932, and two years later, she gave birth to their only son, Parker. Parker was born with Down Syndrome, and for the rest of her life, Winnifred would devote her time to experimental research and new teaching methods. At a time where experts did not realize the potential that individuals with developmental disabilities had, Winnifred patiently worked with Parker to prove experts wrong. She help Parker achieve a level of development that was previously considered impossible.

In 1953, Winnifred met with other parents who had children with developmental disabilities and formed what is now known as the Winnifred Stewart Association. This same year, the school was chartered and incorporated.

In 1954, Winnifred was invited to speak at the spring sitting of the Alberta Legislative Assembly. Within a few months, the education act was amended to allow for funding to the school. Shortly after, Winnifred became the driving force behind the establishment of Canada's first association for the teachers of the mentally handicapped and was instrumental in founding an Alberta association for mentally handicapped children.

It was also in 1954 that the City of Edmonton donated a parcel of land, located in the Inglewood district, to become the first school in Canada for children with disabilities. When it opened in 1961, families from all over Alberta and Saskatchewan relocated to Edmonton, enrolling their children in this special school.





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Winnifred witnessed the opening of the Western Industrial Research Training Centre, and institution inspired by her which served the mentally handicapped. It was unique in North America and began operations in 1968. During this time, Winnifred continuously worked with the University of Alberta, providing a practical workshop for research projects. She established close relationships with school divisions throughout Western Canada who used the curriculum and teaching methods that she was able to develop.

In 1974, Winnifred Stewart retired with her husband and son to Kelowna. While retired, Winnifred continued to advocate for the establishment of a Vocational Training Sheltered Workshop for the mentally handicapped. She saw the realization of that dream with the opening of Crewood Industries in 1979, and shortly after, students with disabilities were integrated into the regular Alberta Education system. The Winnifred Stewart Association then turned its focus to adults with developmental disabilities.

Throughout the years, Winnifred Stewart was honored many times for her life's work. In 1956, Winnifred Stewart was named Most Outstanding Person of the Year by Canada's Mental Health Association, and in 1966, she was named Edmonton's Citizen of the Year. The following year, she was the recipient of the Joseph P. Kennedy and Eunice Shriver Award. Winnifred Stewart became an Officer of the Order of Canada and received an Honorary Doctorate of Law Degree from the University of Alberta in 1972. While retired, she was honored with the Alberta Order of Excellence in 1985, and today, she is known as an Edmontonian of the Century.

Winnifred maintained a close connection with the association until she passed away on October 26, 1990. She realized her many goals by establishing a school for children with mental disabilities and working tirelessly to ensure that services could be provided to those in need.

*Written by: Danielle Ferchoff
January 2013*

CITATION ON FILE

"Winnifred Stewart," *Edmontonians of the Century*, (Edmonton: Corporate Identity Consulting Inc. 2004).

Winnifred Stewart Association, Support documents. Naming Committee application, December 2012. Sustainable Development, City of Edmonton.

The Alberta Order of Excellence, "Dr. Winnifred M. Stewart." Accessed December 10, 2012.

<http://www.lieutenantgovernor.ab.ca/aoe/community-service/winnifred-stewart/index.html>



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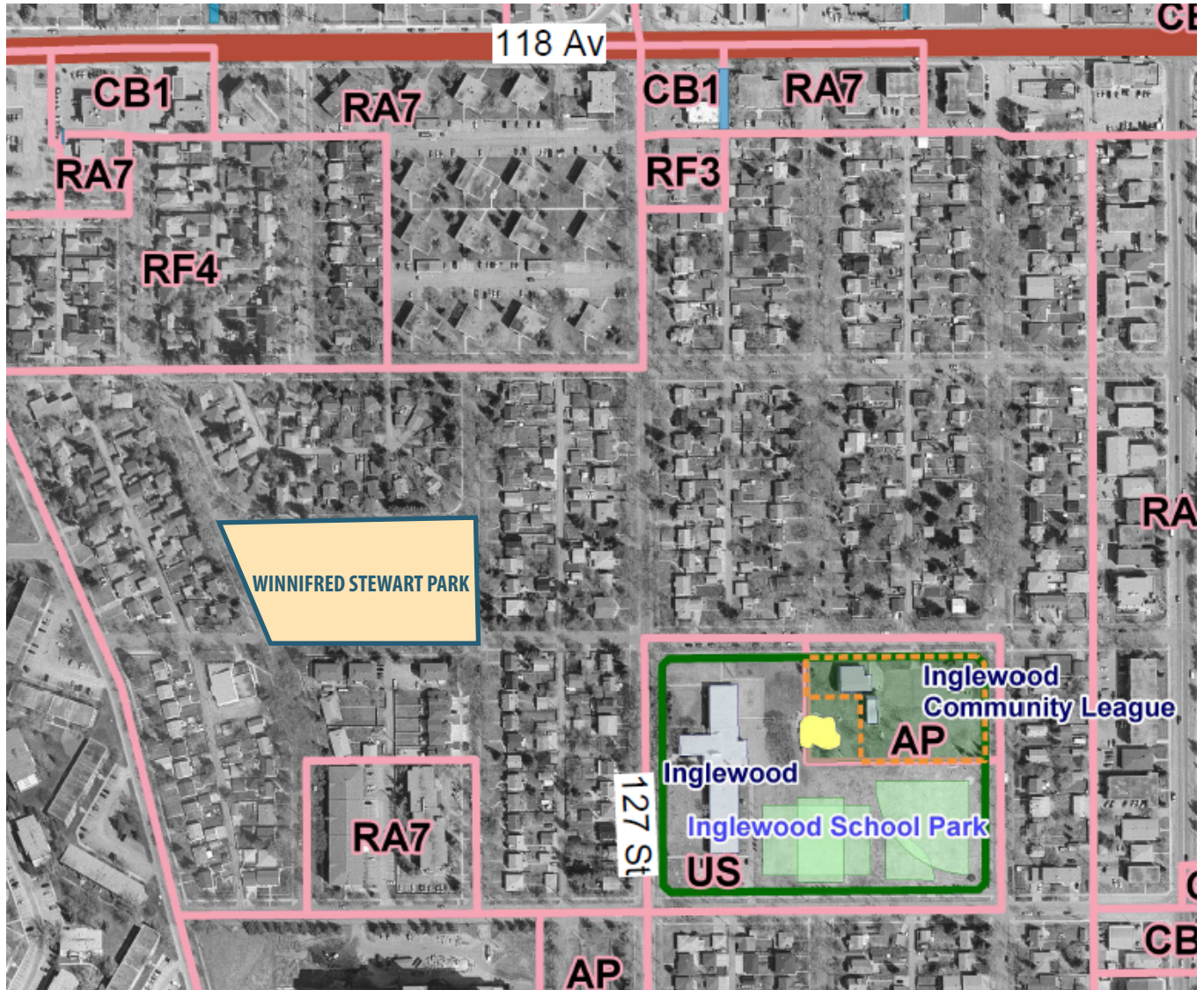
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WINNIFRED STEWART PARK

Inglewood Neighbourhood

January 21, 2013
Naming Committee Meeting