

OPINION

A lake by any other name

The animal rights organization People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals recently earned a few chuckles and, I'm sure, a lot of eye rolls by suggesting the city of Ham Lake rename itself Yam Lake, after the nutritious and tasty tuber.

Apparently the early settlers thought the city's namesake lake looked like a ham, but PETA's president wrote to the mayor that it really looks more like a yam.

The letter was obviously a publicity stunt, a clever way to convey the group's pro-veggie message. I'm confident no one



at PETA had any illusions that the city would take the suggestion seriously, even if promising candied yams to the whole town was an enticing incentive.

But the discussion does highlight a topic our society continues to wrestle with: the importance of names and what to do

when a name falls out of favor or no longer reflects our values.

This year some residents of Coon Rapids reignited the question of changing the city's name because it contains a term that's used as a racial slur. To some people that idea sounds ridiculous, but to

others it's about cultivating an identity that is welcoming and inclusive.

And even though it's been years since the name of Lake Calhoun in Minneapolis became Bde Maka Ska, the dust has barely settled on the legal wrangling that followed.

People have pondered the significance of names for centuries. A rose by any other name would smell as sweet, Shakespeare's Juliet observed. A name is just a name, not the thing itself, she reasoned, and not worth fighting over. There's some truth in that.

On the other hand, names can be significant,

and words do have power to help or to harm. Language matters, and names may convey identity, heritage and values.

So what do we do when a name is offensive or hurtful to some people or when it's connected to something shameful in history?

Unfortunately, as with most issues in life, there's not a one-size-fits-all answer.

Is it sometimes appropriate to change a name to better reflect our values or minimize harm? Absolutely.

Sometimes there's good

reason to make a change, and saying it's always been this way doesn't justify doing nothing.

Is it possible, or even advisable, to change every name someone objects to? Of course not. But that doesn't mean we can't listen with openness and interest when someone tells us their sincere concerns.

As for Ham Lake, I think the early settlers and PETA both got it wrong. I think it looks like a giant State Fair turkey leg.

Drumstick Lake, anyone?

jonathan.young@apgecm.com

Summer programs

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The majority of students are pursuing credit recovery.

— Freedom School for American Indian Students: A six-week program for American Indian students in grades K-5. The program focuses on reading and limiting learning loss over the summer months. This is a partnership with The Children's Defense Fund.

— Enhanced options for High School EL students: High school summer programming will focus on supporting English language development and provide additional time to earn high school graduation credits. This is a four-week program that offers lunch and field trips. Note: Many EL students experience a longer high school timeline with their peers. This program is geared to assist EL students so they can graduate in four years with classmates.

— Middle School EL builds the basics: Students who qualify for EL services will participate in a three-period summer school program starting in August. Students will enjoy a literacy course or English language development course, a co-taught math course, and electives such as auto electronics, dance, or firefighting.

Peter Wiczorek, director of Northwest Passage High School in Coon Rapids, explained: "Northwest Passage High School will be partnering with Big City Mountaineering to offer two Boundary Waters Canoe Area trips. The fo-

cus of the expeditions will be on group dynamics and social skills as well as natural history and environmental education. We will be focusing more on the preservation of wilderness areas and current environmental issues more than biology, but we will be studying the Northern Shield ecosystem."

Some of the most intriguing opportunities are being offered via the Minnesota Office of Higher Education. They've awarded grants to groups around the state offering summer camps for youngsters grades 3-11, focusing on science, world languages, math, financial literacy/entrepreneurship and other fields. Meghan Flores, manager of state financial aid programs at MOHE, told me that a limited number of stipends are available that will allow students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch to pay for these camps — as of late May, more than 200 stipends were available. (More information about these camps is available here: t.ly/HDV9.)

Lain DeSalvo, competitive grants administrator at MOHE, explained that the agency also is using federal funds to support summer programs that help students prepare for college. (Information is found here: t.ly/WjAk.)

Families, students and educators trying to plan have faced enormous challenges over the last year due to the pandemic and responses to it. In response, on May 26, Bobbie Burnham, assistant commissioner for the Minnesota Department of Education, told me that the agency recommends that "families reach out to local

public schools and get children engaged this summer, regardless of age. (The summer programs offered) are a comprehensive effort to provide hands on learning and support the whole child."

The next day, EdAllies, a statewide advocacy group, hosted a press conference (online at facebook.com/edalliesmn) strongly encouraging MDE and local public schools to increase involvement of families and students in planning how millions of additional dollars will be spent to help more students succeed. EdAllies Mn and their colleagues focused especially on the importance of including Black, Indigenous, and people of color — who often are left out. They cited an example of a statewide meeting on serving students with special needs, where only one of 24 people was indigenous or a person of color.

Millions of dollars are providing a vast array of summer opportunities. There are many examples of educator creativity and community partnerships. I hope MDE will gather examples to help families, students and educators plan for an even better 2021-22 school year and 2022 summer. I also hope educators will listen and act on recommendations to work with and learn from families and students.

Joe Nathan, formerly a Minnesota public school educator and PTA president, directs the Center for School Change. Reactions welcome, joe@centerforschoolchange.org or [@joenathan9249](https://twitter.com/joenathan9249) on Twitter.

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Work zones

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whopping \$385. Good luck trying to argue to the judge that you can't afford such a hefty fine.

Certainly worse than a hefty fine would be killing or severely injuring a worker. In the fall of 2018 one worker was killed and another injured when a large commercial truck rear-ended a pickup slowing down in a Minnesota work zone. The pickup and its trailer spun into a relatively well-protected zone causing these casualties.

Here are the statistics for 2020, a year with presumably fewer drivers on the road due to the pandemic:

- Fatal work zone crashes: 8

- Fatal work zone fatalities: 9

- Injury crashes: 480

- Resulting injuries: 656

- Property damages crashes: 1,687

- Total crashes: 2,175

So, please, fellow citizens and drivers: Slow down. Obey the posted work zone speed limit. If not, maybe I'll see you in court.

Judge Steve Halsey of Wright County District Court is chambered in Buffalo and hosts "The District Court Show" on local cable TV public access channels throughout the 10th Judicial District. See excerpts at QCTV.org.