

Naming Edmonton and Open Data

April 2016

FACT sheet

A Lunch and Learn Companion Fact Sheet

With new technology, we have the ability to access and use large amounts of data and information on many different platforms. Now we're using that ability to tell a story about Edmonton.

What is Open Data?

The term *open data* refers to both data itself and a practice. The practice is governments and similar entities making data:

- ▶ available for free
- ▶ accessible to the public
- ▶ easy to reuse
- ▶ machine-readable (formats that can be understood by computers)

In the simplest terms, open data is data that can be used, re-used, and redistributed, freely, by anyone who can access it (City of Edmonton, 2016).

Governments have been one of the strongest advocates of open data. In fact, the City of Edmonton is a leader in open data, leading the charge in making data available to the public with their Open Data Portal. (City of Edmonton, 2016).

Open data portals make data easy to search. Data is consolidated from government agencies, citizens, and other contributors into databases for each project. Data is tagged so that it can come up in multiple searches. For example, a map of sandboxes will appear if you search sandboxes, or if you search snow removal (City of Edmonton, 2016).

Why Open Data?

Open data from government agencies allows citizens to see how decisions are made. It also gives citizens power and can improve relationships between citizens and public organizations. Any person accessing an open data catalogue can use the data to create useful information (City of Edmonton, 2016).

The city of Edmonton's open data catalogue contains data about libraries, locations of schools, municipal census results, road maintenance, types of trees, and more (City of Edmonton, 2016).

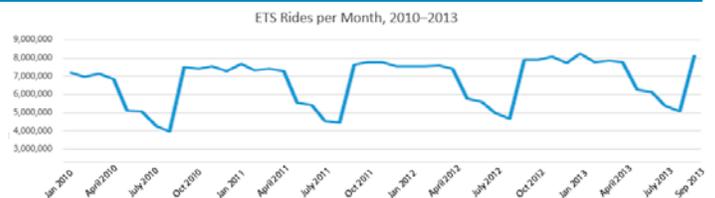
Edmonton's data will be "open by default" in order to enable Edmontonians to review and use city data for their own needs (City of Edmonton, 2016).

Additionally, citizens are encouraged to share what they have used open data for. And, Edmonton's open data portal, part of the Open City initiative, has tools to help developers create apps (City of Edmonton, 2011).

Finally, individuals, like our Lunch and Learn presenter Matthew Dance, are creating new and exciting open data sets to enhance what's available from the government.

Using Open Data

This chart about the number of ETS rides was created using Edmonton's open data portal. You can try it at <https://data.edmonton.ca> (City of Edmonton, 2013, November 4).



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Aboriginal Edmonton

People have been living in the area now known as Edmonton for the past 8,000 years. Edmonton currently has approximately 1,300 official place names (City of Edmonton, 2004), but only about 200 of them reflect our First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) heritage, and none of Edmonton's named places reflect a traditional First Nations or Métis understanding of geography; this is known as "Naming as Norming" (Dance, 2016c). Matthew Dance is striving to reintegrate a FNMI sense of place in Edmonton by creating the Aboriginal Edmonton open dataset.

This dataset names FNMI places, describes their locations in terms of official place names, and details the origins of their names. For example, Big Bear Park at 1312 109 St. is named after Plains Cree Chief Mistahimaskwa, or "Big Bear," who lived from ca. 1825–1888. While this park is in Bears paw, the name is not related to Stoney Chief Masgwaashid, whose English name, "Bear's Paw," lends its name to the neighbourhood (Dance, 2016c).



Naming Edmonton

Naming Edmonton is a crowd sourced project curated by Matthew Dance. Using the principles of open data, community building, and geocoding, *Naming Edmonton* will take information about

2,000 place names from Edmonton and transform that information into something amazing.

Taking the place names from *Naming Edmonton*: From Ada

to Zoie, *Naming Edmonton* is a chance to confirm details, geocode place names, and experiment with coding and hacking. A project that transcends Edmonton's history (like remembering lost places like the Rat Hole) and moves toward its futures (like mapping the transition from Namao Avenue to 97th Street), *Naming Edmonton* invites people of all skill levels and interests to join the project. You can learn as you go while bringing your own expertise and talent to the project.

Naming as Norming is about colonialism & settlers imposing western names on an already named landscapes. Buried FNMI histories.

– @mattdance

The Aboriginal Edmonton dataset is now available in Edmonton's Open City open data portal. Check it out at <https://data.edmonton.ca/Facilities-and-Structures/Aboriginal-Place-Names-of-Edmonton/59sa-iw7i>.

Is Open Data Safe?

Some people worry that open data may make us vulnerable to people with bad intentions, or may reduce our privacy. But, open data is not personal, and it's not commercial. Your private information is not shared via open data, and therefore can't be sold (Open Data Institute, n.d.a).

In fact, open data leads to real-world benefits. Economically, access to open data can allow people to create new products and services. It can also be used by the underemployed to practise tech skills to make them more employable (Hardinges & Tennon, 2015, November 2; Open Data Institute, n.d.b).

While the end goal of *Naming Edmonton* is "the development of an app that will make Edmonton's geographic history accessible to all," the beauty of this project is that, for those who participate, the work that goes into it is just as valuable as the end project (Dance, 2016b). Matthew is seeking volunteers who are interested in the following areas:

- ▶ app development
- ▶ coding
- ▶ coordinates, navigation, and digital mapping
- ▶ Edmonton's history
- ▶ geocoding
- ▶ geography
- ▶ hacking
- ▶ open data

For more information or to get involved, check out www.namingedmonton.com.

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