



# **The Prime Minister's Path: Collective Reflections, Future Directions**

Historical Timeline

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Spring 2025

# Foreword: Understanding the Path to the Present

The history of the Prime Ministers' Path is layered and complex. It intersects public art, politics, reconciliation, and memory – raising urgent questions about whose stories we tell and how we choose to commemorate. As part of the *Collective Reflections, Future Directions* engagement process, this historical timeline is offered to help establish a shared understanding of how this project has evolved over time.

Between October 2024 and May 2025, at the direction of Wilmot Township Council, the Township undertook a public consultation and engagement initiative titled *The Prime Ministers' Path: Collective Reflections, Future Directions* (CRFD). Led by consultants Denise Soueidan-O'Leary and Benny Skinner, this process was designed to facilitate meaningful dialogue and gather diverse community perspectives on the future of the Prime Ministers' Path.

This historical timeline forms part of the CRFD engagement process. It presents publicly reported information in chronological order, supplemented by insights gathered through community engagement and an analysis of the broader sociopolitical context. The goal of this timeline is to help establish a shared understanding of how the Prime Ministers' Path has evolved over time – through policy decisions, public response, and ongoing community reflection.

Understanding the full picture is essential for moving forward with care and accountability. This document invites readers to reflect on what has brought us here and what possibilities lie ahead. As the Township continues to grapple with questions of history, identity, harm, and healing, having a collective grasp of the project's evolution is a necessary foundation for informed decision-making.

We acknowledge that this timeline is not exhaustive, and that there are many truths, experiences, and realities connected to the Prime Ministers' Path. While every effort has been made to compile as comprehensive and accurate a record as possible, any omissions are unintentional. This is one account – not the only one.

The project has gone through multiple naming iterations, including (in chronological order): *The Statue Project* (2013–2015); *The Prime Ministers Statue Project* (2015); *The Prime Minister(s) Walk*; and *The Prime Ministers' Path* (2025). The current engagement project is titled *Collective Reflections, Future Directions* and is abbreviated throughout this document as **CRFD**.

For more information on the engagement process, visit the Township of Wilmot website.

*This document contains sociopolitical commentary by Benny Skinner alongside accounts of public record*



# How it Started: a vision for art and public education

The origins of the Prime Ministers' Path can be traced back to 2013, when a private citizen in Kitchener commissioned bronze sculptures of Canada's prime ministers as part of a national commemorative project. Initially named *The Statue Project*, the initiative was born in the context of the upcoming Canada 150 celebrations. The intent was to honour all past prime ministers in a public space as a gesture of national pride.

The project's early ambitions aligned with a prevailing cultural narrative at the time—one that sought to reinforce patriotic identity through legacy projects. However, even in its earliest stages, the project began to surface tensions between national celebration and critical reflection, particularly in relation to historical legacies tied to colonialism, racism, and systemic harm.

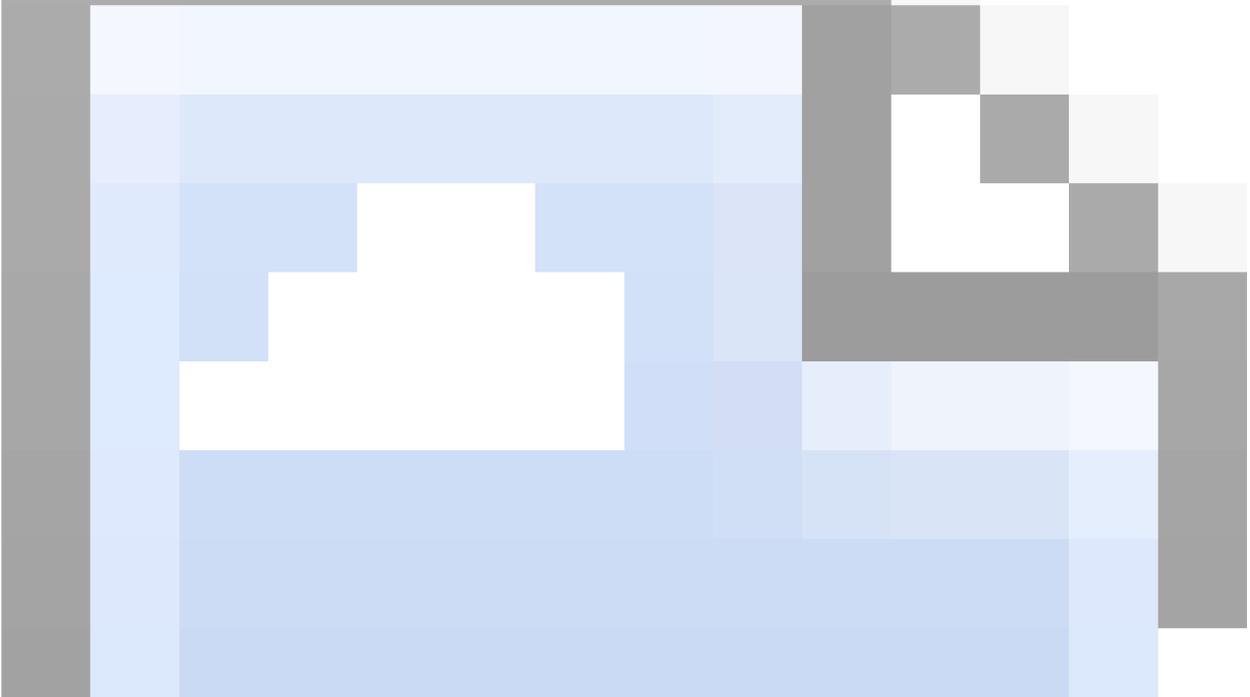
In 2014, following opposition in Kitchener and challenges securing an appropriate site, the project found a new potential home in Wilmot Township. Conversations between the private project organizers and Wilmot officials began, with Castle Kilbride—the Township's National Historic Site—suggested as a suitable setting. The statues were to be installed along a landscaped path on the property.

From 2014 to 2016, key decisions were made that shaped the trajectory of the project:

- **Municipal alignment:** The Township of Wilmot began to formally explore how it could support the statue installations. Staff reports and council discussions indicated growing interest in using the statues to promote tourism and civic pride.
- **Project branding:** In 2015, the project was renamed *The Prime Ministers Statue Project*, shifting from an individual initiative to a more publicly aligned effort, with backing from local officials and some community groups.
- **Lack of public consultation:** Notably, in these formative years, there was little evidence of broad community engagement or consultation—especially with Indigenous communities or groups likely to be impacted by commemorative decisions.
- **Statue installation begins:** In 2016, statues of Sir John A. Macdonald and Alexander Mackenzie were unveiled at Castle Kilbride, with official ceremonies and government representatives present.

During this period, broader political and social conversations in Canada were beginning to shift. The 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action had been released, and national dialogue around historical commemoration and reconciliation was intensifying. Despite this, early framing of the Prime Ministers' Path project largely omitted these perspectives, presenting the initiative as a neutral celebration of leadership.

This disconnect between the emerging national reckoning and the local implementation of a commemorative project sowed the seeds of later controversy. While the early years were marked by municipal support and limited public critique, they also set the stage for deeper questions about historical memory, inclusion, and whose stories are honoured in public space.



## 2013

### **Wednesday, November 27, 2013:**

CBC News Kitchener-Waterloo published an article reporting that the Prime Ministers' Path (known until 2015 as The Statue Project) may be erected in Kitchener's Victoria Park. It reported that the project's organizers were set to present their proposal to the City of Kitchener's planning and strategic initiatives team on Monday, December 2, 2013, describing the project as being "meant to be a Sesquicentennial project with national significance, to mark the 150th anniversary of Confederation in 2017, as well as a celebration of leadership and a tourist attraction for the region" (CBC News).

The article notes other envisioned components of the project, including:

- The inclusion of embedded iconographic symbols in the sculptures that would be symbolic of further information about each Prime Minister (commonly referred to as "Easter Eggs" as in, things to be searched for and found)
- Asking the City of Kitchener to considering contributing \$300,000 of funding out of the \$2 million budget to support infrastructural costs; the other \$1.7 million would be contributed by individual and corporate donations
- Asking the City of Kitchener to officially endorse the project
- Asking the City of Kitchener to provide tax receipts to project donors
- Canadian artists would be commissioned to design each statue to reflect a significant moment in each Prime Minister's term of service

The article concludes by noting that the City wanted to go through a public consultation process and consultations with various groups who may be particularly impacted before committing to funding the project.

### **Tuesday, December 3, 2013:**

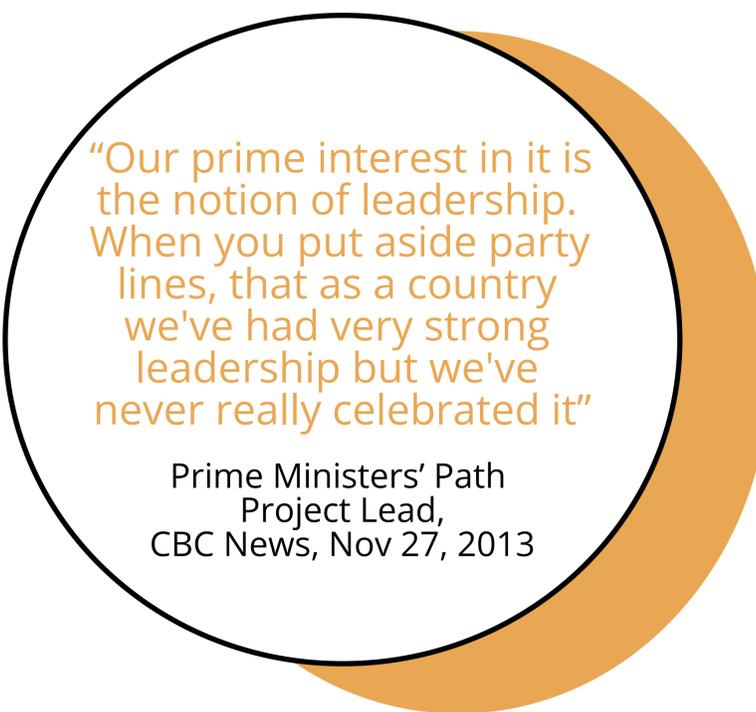
CTV News Kitchener published an article reporting that The Statues Project proposal had been presented to the City of Kitchener's planning and strategic initiatives team. It reported that Councillors were quite split over the proposal, with some anticipating the statues being painted or anonymously altered by members of the public. This specific sentiment was expressed in light of that particular Councillor's awareness of other incidences of protest that focused on items in public parks. The article reported that no decision would be expected until March 2014.

### **Friday, December 13, 2013:**

Waterloo Region Record published an opinion piece supporting The Statue Project, citing the beauty of sculptures and statues and expressing that they would "enhance the beauty of Victoria Park."

## **Political Context 2013**

- Idle No More movement across Canada of 2012-2013 saw thousands of protests, rallies, marches, teach-ins and blockades, often had more non-Indigenous attendees than Indigenous ones
- Indigenous people defending their land rights.
- Black and Indigenous solidarity against systemic racism and violence.
- Protests spread into US and many other countries around the world, highlighting ongoing injustices in Canada.
- MacLeans Oct 2020 issue (page 8)



"Our prime interest in it is the notion of leadership. When you put aside party lines, that as a country we've had very strong leadership but we've never really celebrated it"

Prime Ministers' Path  
Project Lead,  
CBC News, Nov 27, 2013

## Tuesday, January 28, 2014:

CTV News Kitchener published an article that reported that The Statue Project had split City of Kitchener Councillors, with some in favour of the project, some opposed to using public funds, and some against the statues all together. It was also reported in this article that city staff had prepared a master plan for the project, but the City Councillors opted to delay the presentation until after February 7, 2014, when an online public engagement survey was set to finish. By this time, more than 1,700 people had filled out the online survey.

## Wednesday, February 12, 2014:

Waterloo Region Record reported that “nearly 80% of survey respondents don’t want PMs in Victoria Park.” (The Record Local, Section B) Waterloo Region Record also reported that community members said that “a potential \$300,000 funding commitment from the city could be better spent on other projects or programs” (The Record Local, Section B).

Other sources have noted the communication surrounding the proposal funding felt misleading because it was originally proposed that both large-scale and small-scale donations from supporters were going to provide approximately \$2.7 million in funding for the project, and that the City of Kitchener was being asked to contribute \$300,000 of funding over 3 years to support some of the infrastructural work on the park - money that may very well have been spent on the park’s infrastructure anyways. The original proposal thus suggested that if the City of Kitchener was considering infrastructural work on Victoria Park in the upcoming years, the budget could be funneled into The Statues Project, which would completely revamp the park.

Ultimately, reports indicate that the City of Kitchener and the The Statue Project organizers presented a proposal of this nature to the public and conducted a survey to garner resident feedback.

Waterloo Region Record reported:

- ~2,500 responses to the online survey were recorded
- ~1789 folks answered no to “a question on whether the city should invest in the project”
- ~1900 people who specifically said that they do not support the proposal
- ~520 said that they do support the project

## Did you know...

The project has gone through multiple naming iterations including The Statue Project (2013-2015); the Prime Ministers Statue Project (2015); The Prime Minister(s) Walk; The Prime Ministers’ Path (2025)

The City of Kitchener Council used the results of this survey to make a decision on the project, coming to the conclusion that they would not take on the project. (The Record Local, Section B)

Finally, the article ends with a series of feedback quotes from both strong supporters and strong opposers to the The Statue Project. It is unclear if the selection of quotes was representative of dominant themes within the majority of feedback collected.

#### **Thursday, February 13, 2014:**

Waterloo Region Record reported that an organizer of The Statues Project said they would be surprised if City of Kitchener councillors approved the project after the negative results from the community engagement. They reported that the organizer talked about how the open-source education resource that was being developed could exist regardless of the statues, but that he wasn't "[closing] the door on the project" (The Record, Section B).

Waterloo Region Record also reported that another project organizer had noted that they were looking for a base upon which [they] could build as the true nature of the project developed. This is congruent with recent data collected being conducted through in the Collective Reflections, Future Directions (CRFD) community engagement project, with project involvees having noted and in this article that ideas were being developed during this time that would have potentially been important for residents to know about before being being polled. Waterloo Region Record's reporting of a quote by the Project Lead supports this: "I think that's the type of information people were lacking," he said. "If you leave it up to a poll...I think it would be divisive as standard course" (The Record, Section B). In addition, it appears that the organizers were under the impression that the City councillors would consider the survey results alongside a heritage impact assessment and design details before making a final decision. (The Record Local, Section B - article from February 12, 2014) the Project Founder wanted to take a close look at the responses and see if some concerns could be addressed. (The Record) Community members who had heard some of the plans for The Prime Ministers' Path (The Statue Project) have recently notified community engagement consultants Benny Skinner and Denise Soueidan-O'Leary that they were involve in the beginning stages of planning additions to the exhibit, including:

- The potential installation of an Indigenous medicine garden was to be supported in the park
- Potentially expanding to other political leaders
- Possibly building an amphitheater that would be used for leadership conferences and as gathering/event space

According to reports, the Kitchener City Councillors at the time made their decision based on the survey results before seeing the other analyses that were offered by the project team.

the Project Founder is reported in the article as expressing support for the political discussions around the statue proposal, (The Record) and has echoed that same sentiment in recent conversations with community engagement consultants Benny Skinner and Denise Soueidan-O'Leary.

#### **Friday, February 14, 2014:**

Waterloo Region Record published an editorial that was supportive of the project, but coming from a very specific point of view that could be seen as reinforcing a narrative of Canada's creation that erases critical historical realities about power and politics in the country.

For example, the article described the Canadian Prime Ministers as "democratically elected" (The Waterloo Region Record), which indicates that the particular point of view being presented is informed by the assumption that Canadian Prime Ministers were elected by a sizeable portion of the population in an inclusive electoral process. Though this narrative commonly-held due to the country's curricula, this assumption is at odds with history as understood by most contemporary Canadian Historical experts:

John A. Macdonald served as alderman of the British settlement of Kingston from 1843 to 1846. In 1844 when Britain moved the capital to Montreal (The Canadian Encyclopedia), Macdonald was voted (by an unknown number of the settlement's community members) into the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Canada, which was what the British Parliament named the territory that they claimed in the areas most commonly known now as the provinces of Ontario and Quebec. Alongside serving as prime minister for the Province of Canada in 1857 (Britannica), Macdonald was voted in as the Prime Minister of the Dominion of Canada in 1867 by only 735 (Parliament of Canada) out of the estimated 3.6 million (Statistics Canada) people living in the territory. Aside from the extremely small number of citizens who actually voted, only white men of status were permitted to vote in decisions such as these. This contributes to many peoples' challenging of whether the historical designation of political authority in Canada has been democratic.

Though an opinion piece, the article may have contributed to hostilities in the community about the project due to its unbalanced tone; for example, describing non-support for the project as "ungracious" and "foolish." (Waterloo Region Record).

#### **Wednesday, March 5, 2014:**

Waterloo Region Record published two articles on this day.

The first reported that The Statue Project would not happen in the City of Kitchener and detailed the disappointment by the Mayor at the time, as he supported the project, but the City Councillors ultimately voted not to take on the project (by a vote of 8-1) due to the results of their community engagement survey.

The second article was an editorial. The article was critical of non-support for the project, but made the point of being specifically critical of the Kitchener City Councillors' decision-making process rather than survey respondents.

### Friday, March 7, 2014:

Waterloo Region Record published two letters from Waterloo Region residents:

- The first was a Cambridge resident stating that Cambridge would be a great spot for The Statues Project.
- The second was a Kitchener resident supporting the City Councillors' decision to turn down The Statues Project.

## 2015

### Saturday, January 3, 2015:

Waterloo Region Record published an article about Macdonald's statue being unveiled during an upcoming Kitchener Rangers game that was set to take place at The Aud on Friday, January 9, 2015.

The Statue Project was written in the article as being intended to "celebrate Canada's Prime Ministers" (Waterloo Region Record), which aligns with much of the recent community

feedback of anxiety and discomfort towards the specific idea of a project celebrating the PMs. Other community members have noted that they don't see the project as celebratory, but language such as this in early stages may have contributed to the understanding of the project as intentionally celebratory. In a conversation with the sculptor commissioned to create the statue of Macdonald, the sculptor noted that artistically, bronze represents strength in togetherness (through its existence as a metal alloy) rather than celebration. Admittedly, this artistic symbolism of the sculpture materials may vary from culture to culture or may not be common knowledge until articulated in an explanation of the sculpture.

The Sculptor was awarded this commission based on her incredible talent for creating bronze statues and her specific knowledge on Macdonald's life from previous commissioned work, where she researched his personal and professional life extensively. She embedded "Easter Egg" carvings that Waterloo Region Record vaguely reported as iconographically telling the story of Macdonald's life. However, in recent community engagement opportunities, a few project involves have noted that the "Easter Eggs" tell of many of the negative things from Macdonald's leadership, in addition to things about his successes and personal life. This is also confirmed in a June 2015 article by CBC News, Kitchener-Waterloo.

The Prime Ministers' Path (PMP) was envisioned as a public art installation honouring all past Canadian Prime Ministers.

The goal was to promote education, tourism, and civic pride, creating a landmark attraction for Wilmot

### Early Concept of the PMP

Additionally, when recently asked by engagement project co-leads Benny Skinner and Denise Soueidan-O’Leary how she would feel if the statue was painted in red again, the sculptor replied simply: *“leave it.”*

The Sculptor expressed the importance of public engagement and conversations, hence her initial approach to the sculpture commission as “A Canadian Conversation” (the title of the finished statue) and understanding Macdonald’s role in fostering conversation around Canada’s nationhood.

The article highlights the Project Lead’s emphasis on the educational aspect of the project, and the importance of people knowing their Canadian history. It also reports the Project Lead explaining that the production of the first statue was intended to give people a better idea of what the statues would be like and look like.

The article mentions CreateScape Waterloo for the first time as the charity collecting donations for the project.

Finally, the article reported that the statue would be displayed in The Aud’s foyer for a month before being transferred to TheMuseum in Downtown Kitchener.

#### **Wednesday, January 8, 2015:**

The Ayr News published an article about the late Jim Rodger which elaborates on the statue of Macdonald. It focuses heavily on Jim’s personal life.

Waterloo Region Record published another editorial commending the “relentless determination” and “passion” of The Statue Project’s lead organizers and calls for applause and support for the project from the community.

#### **Friday, January 9, 2015:**

The statue of Macdonald was unveiled during the Kitchener Rangers game at The Aud.

#### **Saturday, January 10, 2015:**

The Record published an article that reported on the Macdonald statue’s unveiling at The Aud the night before. The article highlights comments from attendees who were particularly pleased by the statue’s unveiling, with the selected quotes noting themes such as patriotism, education, and honouring the PMs. It notes that the audience applauded the statue and sang happy birthday, as the game happened to fall on what would’ve been Macdonald’s 200th birthday.

It is notable at this point that one specific quote from the original City of Kitchener public engagement survey has been referenced in the majority of The Record's articles and editorials on The Statue Project since 2014. The quote reads: "We already celebrate dead, old white guys too often." It is unclear as to why this quote in particular is referenced at a disproportionate frequency in comparison to any other quotes from the engagement.

It is also notable that many of the articles accounted for in this timeline mention the project organizing team's intention of having all the Prime Minister's statues displayed by 2017 to coincide with the 150th anniversary of the confederation of the Dominion of Canada.

### **February 2015:**

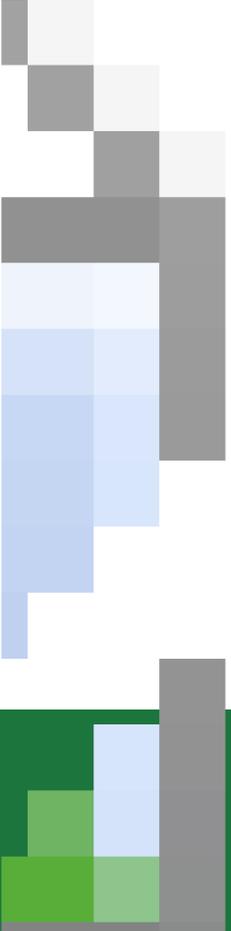
The Macdonald statue is moved from The Aud to The Museum in Downtown Kitchener and placed out in front of the building.

### **June 2015:**

The WLU Board of Governors decided to host the Prime Ministers Statues Project.

### **Tuesday, June 30, 2015:**

Wilfred Laurier University (WLU) is announced as the permanent landing site of The Statue Project, which is now being referred to in the media as the Prime Ministers Statues Project (CityNews Everywhere). The statue of Macdonald was moved from The Museum to the Quad on Wilfred Laurier University's campus, framed as a temporary spot until a permanent spot is found elsewhere on campus (CBC News Kitchener-Waterloo). WLU then-president and vice-chancellor was reported as being very supportive of the project, understanding it as "a community project that unites Canadian art and history in such a creative and thought provoking way," stating that there is no better place for the statues than a university campus and emphasizing the educational and discussion-provoking aspects of the project (CBC News Kitchener-Waterloo).



After being quoted again in a CBC News Kitchener-Waterloo article while stressing the importance of folks knowing Canadian history better, the Project Lead notes that the Prime Ministers were intended to act like "book marks" that will allow people to go into "chapters" of Canadian history. This sentiment has been echoed in recent community engagement feedback collected by consultants Denise Soueidan-O'Leary and Benny Skinner, as some community members note that the Prime Ministers could act merely as benchmarks for exploring the history of Canada, often noting the importance of including "the good, the bad, and the ugly."

### **Thursday, July 2, 2015:**

Waterloo Region Record published an article reporting on the announcement of WLU as the new permanent home of the Prime Ministers Statue Project (Waterloo Region Record, Section A). The article quoted a WLU alumni and PhD candidate at Western Ontario University's history department, who offered remarks to both WLU and Prime Ministers Statue Project leadership. It then reported that WLU then-president invited the researcher to be part of an advisory committee for the project, indicating that there was potential for the project to be expanded beyond just prime ministers. Based on the reporting in this article, it appears as though the plan for WLU was to accept the project and then develop it with the help of advisory committees as time went on.

### **Friday, July 3, 2015:**

Waterloo Region Record published an opinion piece about the Prime Ministers Statue Project that posits "just about every white Canadian of Macdonald's time" as racists and argues that the only way to properly judge Macdonald is "in comparison to the society he inhabited and its belief system" (The Record Local, Section B). Overall, this opinion piece was supportive of the Prime Minister's Statue Project and positions Macdonald as "the reason we have this country, as it is today" while contrarily claiming that "historians should strive to show us all points of view" (The Record Local, Section B).

### **Saturday, July 4, 2015:**

Waterloo Region Record published an editorial expressing that the Prime Ministers Statue Project "deserves support" (A10). The editorial is consistent with previous ones from Waterloo Region Record on the project, defending the project as well as the Prime Ministers themselves with arguments such as:

- Canada is "one of the best places in the world" for women, homosexuals, and transgender folks, scoring high on the United Nations' Human Development Index
- Canada "actively promotes [diversity] while embracing immigrants from every corner of the globe"
- The Prime Ministers were a product of their times and society that they lived in
- Macdonald "created this country"
- Macdonald "crafted [this country's] constitution"
- Macdonald "guided [Canada's] growth from Atlantic to Pacific Ocean while promoting about harmony between British and French Canadians"
- Macdonald "[fought] - unsuccessfully - for the right of women to vote in elections"

The arguments made in the editorial indicate an opinion that is informed by a body of knowledge about Canadian history that does not include the perspectives, views, feelings, stories, and knowledges of diverse populations that have historically lived in this geographical region.

### **Friday, July 31, 2015:**

Waterloo Region Record published an article reporting on an online petition aiming to stop the Prime Ministers Statue Project at WLU (The Record, B2). The article says that the petition collected hundreds of signatures (~627 at the time the article was written), quoting a professor at WLU who was “shocked” when he first heard the plans to bring the statues to campus and noting his citation of both “the lack of public and internal consultation with the university community” as well as “the current political and cultural climate” (The Record, B2).

The article noted again that:

- It was unknown/undetermined how much WLU would contribute financially
- The project had the potential to be expanded outside of Prime Ministers

### **Saturday, July 11, 2015:**

Waterloo Region Record published an Insight article by a Professor of Sociology and former Dean of Arts at WLU arguing that “Prime ministers’ statues have no place at WLU” (The Record Insight, A11). The article gives praise to the PhD student who appeared in previous articles, and gives credit to WLU then-president for acknowledging the controversy and its potential to “foster a more complete and open discussion” about Canada’s history. It also called a Waterloo Region Record editorial from July 5 “a bit more mean-spirited, suggesting that people who object to these statues just, well, don’t appreciate how wonderful Canada is.” The article also:

- Suggested that if provoking conversations about Canada’s history is a good thing, that there is probably better or more effective ways to do so
- Critiqued the idea that Macdonald should still be commemorated or celebrated for his successes because he was “a product of his time” by arguing it was a “Really, Really Bad Thing” for him to have “used his position of power to enact and enforce measures intentionally designed to starve and eliminate entire [Indigenous] populations”
- Pointed to news stories around the same time about political leaders in the US South thinking carefully about symbols that were adorned in public spaces for decades and deciding that they needed to come down due to their divisiveness

The article indicated that the author felt there was an “absence of any real campus-wide discussion” on the matter.

### **Wednesday, October 21, 2015:**

Waterloo Region Record published an article reporting on the WLU Senate wanting the Prime Ministers Statue Project cancelled (Record Local, B1-B4). The petition to stop the project created by a WLU professor had, by this time, gathered 810 signatures. The article reported that WLU Senate members shared concerns about the project and put forward a motion to cancel the project to be considered by the Board of Governors in November, 2015.

### **Wednesday, October 28, 2015:**

The Globe and Mail published an opinion piece by then-chair of Canadian studies at Trent University that critiques opposition to the Prime Ministers Statue Project at WLU. The author recognizes the accuracy of protestors' arguments that the Canadian government's treatment of Indigenous peoples "has often been abysmal...rife with horrific mistreatment, disinterest and disdain," agreeing that "facing this fact is a necessity." That said, the article then questions to what extent removing the statues would achieve the goal of facing Canada's horrible treatment of Indigenous peoples, and to what end. The author questions whether we should "go through our family photo albums and rip out the pictures of descendants who might have voted for them," if "Americans should take dynamite to Mount Rushmore," and so forth. The key closing arguments that the article makes are:

- "Once you begin, it is difficult to know where to stop."
- "History is complex."
- "Ultimately, the statues of the prime ministers should be placed because they were the leaders of our country and are de facto important."
- "The proposed statues have helped the protestors by putting their criticisms into the news...It is dialogue that matters."

### **Thursday, October 29, 2015:**

Toronto Star published an opinion piece by an Indigenous-identifying associate professor and historian at WLU (co-edited with another Indigenous scholar/author) arguing that "Prime minister statues have no place on [WLU] campus." The article was inaccurately speculative about the symbolism of the chairs in the statue of Macdonald, but pointed accurately to Macdonald's execution and imprisonment of important Indigenous political leaders, analytically connecting Macdonald's violent legacy toward Indigenous peoples to hardships and violence that Indigenous peoples experience contemporarily.

The author of the article also questioned the ability of "inflexible" bronze statues to create the linkages needed to build a historical knowledge in the public that includes Indigenous perspectives and experiences. That said, the author does acknowledge some agreement with the project organizers, specifically agreeing with sentiments previously reported on that expressed a need for people to know more about Canadian history. Still, the article challenges the selected method by the project team for educating the public, suggesting that there are much better ways of ensuring people get a comprehensive overview of Canadian history that doesn't erase Indigenous historical knowledge, stories, and perspectives.

### **November 2015:**

WLU then-president announced the creation of a special advisory committee to review the project. The committee held a public engagement process that received 81 written submissions, 13 community presentations and two invitee presentations (CBC News Kitchener-Waterloo).



## Political Context 2015

- The Liberal Party of Canada won the federal election by a landslide on Monday, October 19, 2015
- Waterloo Region experienced a political leadership overhaul, with three of four long-standing Conservative MPs being voted out and replaced by Liberals
- Conservative Harold Albrecht held onto his seat of Kitchener-Conestoga, which combines suburban Kitchener with the Townships of Woolwich, Wilmot and Wellesley. Notably, he only won against the Liberal Party candidate by 351 votes.
- Some media reports indicated that Conservatives across Canada were largely shut out of bigger cities but were strong in rural areas
- Canadian government reaction to Idle No More movement:
- Implemented an anti-terrorism bill C-51 that focused more on monitoring people here in Canada than threats from elsewhere
- Wet'suwet'en pipeline crisis
  - UN involvement, global coverage
- 2007 - 2015: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) worked for eight years on investigating pathways to reconciliation among former residential school students, their families, their communities, and all Canadians
- June 2015: The TRC held its closing event in Ottawa and presented the executive summary of the findings contained in its multi-volume final report, including 94 Calls to Action
- December 2015: The TRC released its entire 6-volume final report

## PMP Decision-Making & Location Changes

2013

Originally proposed in **Kitchener**, but faced local opposition.

2015

Wilfrid Laurier University in **Waterloo** began engaging with the project, but ended up withdrawing due to concerns expressed by campus community.

2016

**Wilmot** Township approved the installation at Castle Kilbride, seeing it as an opportunity for economic and educational engagement.

# 2016

## **January 2016:**

The WLU advisory committee tasked with reviewing the Prime Ministers Statue Project submitted a report that recommended the school withdraw from the project (CBC News Kitchener-Waterloo).

Friday, February 12, 2016:

CBC News Kitchener-Waterloo published an article reporting that WLU's Board of Governors voted on Wednesday, February 10, 2016 to withdraw from the Prime Ministers Statue Project. The article reports that WLU and the project team would have to discuss specific details of the withdrawal and the future plans for the statue of Macdonald.

## **Saturday, March 12, 2016:**

National Post published an article brutally criticizing the WLU Senate's motion to cancel the project (A16). Littered with a plethora of inaccessible language, insults, misinformation about Canadian history, and the direct reprimanding of Indigenous peoples for claiming harm at the hands of the Canadian government. This article is representative of a more extreme publicly-posted opinion piece regarding the project up until this point and yet appears analytically void of knowledge regarding the history of the project, the processes that led to the WLU Senate's motion, or what is accepted by expert Canadian historians as factual information about the country's history.

## **Saturday, April 2, 2016:**

Waterloo Region Record published an article reporting on the Prime Ministers Statue Project moving from WLU to Baden (Record Local, B1-B4). This article reported that the statues would be mounted at Castle Kilbride with the Mayor at the time on board, noting that the Wilmot Township Council was to consider it the following Monday.

## **Tuesday, April 5, 2016:**

Waterloo Region Record published an article reporting on Wilmot Township taking on the Prime Minister Statue Project (Record Local, B1-B2). The article reported that the Township of Wilmot Council unanimously voted to house the project on Monday, April 4, 2016. It also reported that the bronze statues would be "scattered along an urban walkway next to Castle Kilbride and Wilmot's administrative office." Moreover, it was reported for the first time that funds would be raised both privately as well as with the help of a few applicable government grants.

## **Wednesday, April 6, 2016:**

Waterloo Region Record published an editorial supporting Wilmot Township's taking on of the Prime Ministers Statue Project (A6). The article posited WLU's withdrawing from the project as a "failure of [WLU] political and intellectual elites to understand and appreciate something as basic, grounded, and central to Canada's history as its prime ministers," and further regarded the Wilmot Township Councillors' approval as "the sound judgement and level-headed thinking of rural, village and small-town politicians." Based on recent data collected by the CRFD community engagement project team, it appears that many in Wilmot Township feel as though this sort of polarizing language contributed to the growth of hostility around the project.

### **Wednesday, June 22, 2016:**

The New Hamburg Independent published an article (pages 1 & 13) reporting on the statue of Macdonald and its upcoming opening ceremony on June 30, 2016. The article notes some information about the project and details about the upcoming event. It also reports that a new Design and Curatorial Committee was picked earlier in June to help find artists to create the rest of the statues (13). The committee was reported as being made up of:

- Two members of CreateScape
- Two organizers from the project
- Two citizens of Wilmot Township
- One person from Heritage Wilmot
- One person from the Castle Kilbride Advisory Committee

The article reported that this group would take care of the project going forward in terms of design, funding, and grant applications.

The article also confirmed that the Township would not be putting taxpayer dollars into the project, and that landscaping work to prepare the site for Macdonald's statue was donated by a local company.

Notably, the article quotes one of the original project leads as having stated that the next steps for the project would be planned according to "what is going to capture the public's imagination" and that what they really wanted was for people to learn about Canadian history using the bookmarks of Canadian Prime Ministers while also not shying away from discussing controversial topics.

### **Monday, June 27, 2016:**

Waterloo Region Record published an article in anticipation of the erecting of Macdonald's statue the following week, on June 30. The article reports that up until its transfer, the statue had been (and would, for the next few days) be stored at WLU. It also reiterated previously reported information, including sharing details for the upcoming event once again (Record Local, B2).

### **Saturday, July 2, 2016:**

Waterloo Region Record published an article reporting on controversy around the statue project as being illuminative of Canada's history (Arts & Life, E2). The author reports that although they were strongly opposed to this project throughout its journey because of the artistic concept, they feel glad that "the bitterness seems to have subsided, and that the project is being warmly received in Wilmot." Overall, the article appears relatively well-balanced in its consideration of the perspectives of both the supporters and non-supporters of the project. Though some of the historical claims in the article regarding settler-Indigenous relations are either incorrect or fail to capture the nuances and complexities of the complex systems at play throughout Canada's history, the author does ebb and flow between arguments from both sides, concluding that "the non-Aboriginal people of Canada...are numerous...and have it in [their] power to do what none of those past 23 prime ministers of Canada was able to achieve" - in reference to "just and equitable dealings with Indigenous people."

Thursday, July 7, 2016:

Waterloo Region Record published an article recapping an overview of the project thus far and the opening ceremony for Macdonald's statue on Thursday, June 30, 2016 (Insight, A11). Though the article mostly maintains a celebratory, "happy ending" tone of approach to the story, the author does return to describing the WLU withdrawal as "depressing," claiming that "the requirements of inclusivity and diversity at one of Canada's premier institutions of higher learning now apparently involve banning evidence of historical figures considered unpleasant by anyone with a placard or Facebook account." This may be seen as some to be an inaccurate degradation of the decision-making process that was undertaken at WLU, based on the potent and passionate response on the relatively small university campus combined with the rounds of community engagement that occurred prior to the school's withdrawal.

Notably, the article mentions that the average age of attendees at the event appeared to be in the upper range.



# A Path of Reflection: A Community Conversation Emerges

Between 2017 and 2019, the Prime Ministers' Path moved from relative local obscurity into a more prominent—and controversial—position within Wilmot Township and beyond. What began as a quiet commemorative project became an increasingly visible symbol of contested historical narratives, triggering public debate, community discomfort, and calls for accountability.

## Expansion of the Path & Increasing Public Awareness

This period saw the continued installation of additional statues, with the Path expanding from two figures to five. The project's visual and physical presence at Castle Kilbride grew, attracting more public attention and media interest. While some residents viewed the Path as a source of pride and national heritage, others began to express concern over whose histories were being elevated and whose were being excluded or erased.

A key turning point came with the unveiling of the **William Lyon Mackenzie King** statue in 2019. King's legacy—including documented antisemitism and racist immigration policies—became a flashpoint for critique, particularly as the political climate in Canada was increasingly attuned to equity, anti-racism, and the need for critical historical reflection.

## National Reckoning & Local Friction

This period aligned with significant national events that reframed commemorative projects across the country:

- The **TRC Calls to Action** continued to inform public policy and dialogue.
- Protests and debates emerged across Canada around monuments to controversial figures, including statues of John A. Macdonald in major cities.
- A broader societal reckoning with colonial violence, systemic racism, and public memory gained traction.

Locally, these national conversations began to echo in Wilmot. Questions were raised about the suitability of celebrating all prime ministers equally, particularly without context or critique. Community members—including educators, faith leaders, and residents—began organizing conversations and circulating letters expressing discomfort with the uncritical nature of the Path.

## Lack of Inclusive Engagement

Despite mounting concerns, there was still no evidence of formal consultation with Indigenous communities or equity-deserving groups during this phase. The project continued largely under the stewardship of the original donors and Township staff, with minimal avenues for public input or collaborative re-envisioning.

While support for the statues persisted in some quarters, resistance was growing—grounded in calls for **transparency, historical accountability, and inclusion**. This period planted the seeds for a full-scale public engagement process, which would emerge in the years to come as pressure mounted and the Township was called to respond.

# 2017/2018

## **Tuesday, February 28, 2017:**

Waterloo Region Record published an article reporting that three more statues for what was now being referred to as the Prime Ministers' Walk in 2017 (Arts & Life, C1). The article frames the project as "immortaliz[ing]" the identity of the Prime Ministers in bronze, which some community members have recently critiqued as being problematic and uncomfortable during CRFD engagements.

## **Saturday, June 10, 2017:**

Waterloo Region Record published an article reporting that statues of Prime Ministers William Lyon Mackenzie King, Lester B. Pearson, and Robert Borden were selected by the project team to be produced next (Record Local, B1). The project is referred to as the Prime Ministers Path (PMP) as of this article. The article also reports on project details such as:

- The length of time it takes to produce a sculpture: approximately 8-10 months
- The cost of each sculpture: approximately \$100,000
- Two more PM statues anticipated in 2018

## **Wednesday, June 14, 2017:**

Waterloo Region Record published an editorial that describes the statues planned for 2017 as "Monumental birthday gifts" (Editorials & comment, A6). The tone overall is similar to previous editorials by the same newspaper.

## **Friday, June 30, 2017:**

Waterloo Region Record published an image of one of the sculptors looking at his sculpture of Mackenzie King after it was unveiled on Thursday, June 29, 2017. A sculpture of Lester B. Pearson was also unveiled (Record Local, B8).

## **Wednesday, July 5, 2017:**

The Ayr News published an article reporting on the unveiling of statues of Mackenzie King and Pearson (3). It highlighted some of the artistic details and nuances of the new statues, and reported on the project team's stressing of the importance of the educational resource that was being designed to go with them.

## **Friday, June 29, 2018:**

Waterloo Region Record published a picture from the unveiling of a statue of Kim Campbell on Thursday, June 28, 2018 (Record Local, A4).

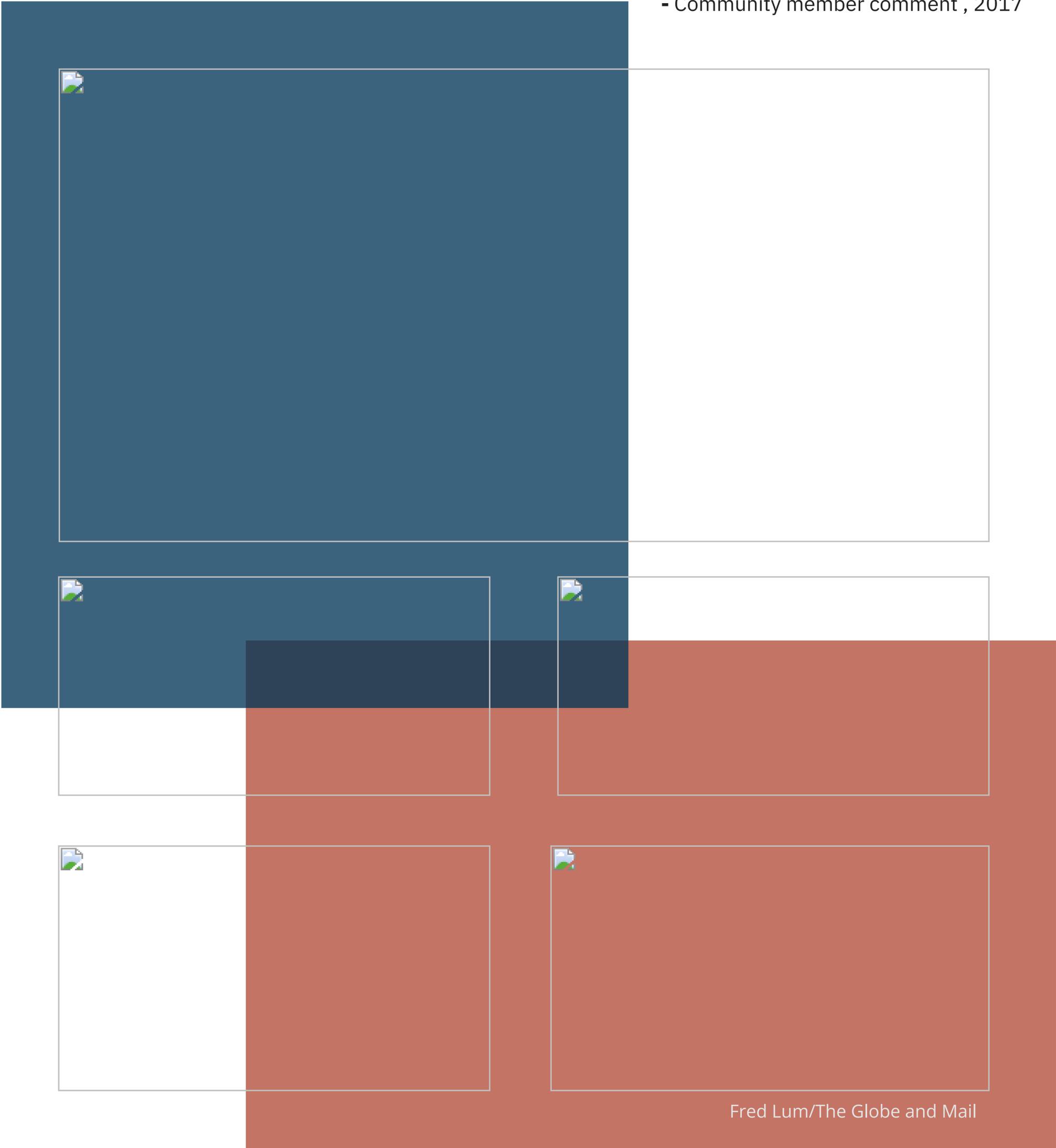
## **Saturday, June 30, 2018:**

The Globe and Mail published an opinion piece accompanying 9 images of the PMP statues that gives a brief overview of the project history (O5).



**“I adore these statues. They are really lifelike and so fun to have Easter eggs to look for.”**

- Community member comment , 2017



Fred Lum/The Globe and Mail



**“Our Canadian history is really, really complicated and it is not taught properly in our education system...I don’t want to shine a light on the people who don’t deserve it.” - Community member comment, 2020**

## Listening & Taking Action: Wilmot's response to community concerns

The years from 2020 onward marked a major turning point for the Prime Ministers Path (PMP) in Wilmot. Following a series of community concerns and national conversations on colonial legacies, the Township entered a new phase characterized by listening, reflection, and an evolving commitment to equity, inclusion, and truth-telling.

The immediate spark for change came in mid-2020, after the unveiling of the Sir John A. Macdonald statue. The statue's arrival—amid rising national consciousness of systemic racism and renewed calls for Truth and Reconciliation—provoked strong public response, both locally and across Canada. Many residents and advocacy groups voiced concerns about the glorification of harmful colonial figures, and the erasure of Indigenous histories. In response, Wilmot Council halted future installations and committed to re-evaluating the project.

This led to the Township's first formal engagement initiative, undertaken in 2021 with the First Peoples Group (FPG)—an Indigenous-led consulting firm. Their engagement emphasized the need for Indigenous perspectives to shape any future direction for the PMP. Through interviews and consultations, FPG provided a clear recommendation: the project had caused real harm and required deeper community dialogue and transformation. Their findings laid the groundwork for long-term systems change and highlighted the need for reparative action—not simply better storytelling.

In 2024, council approved a second public engagement initiative, and **Collective Reflections, Future Directions (CRFD)**, led by community consultants Denise Soueidan-O'Leary and Benny Skinner, was launched. This initiative focused on accessible, inclusive, and transparent engagement with residents, with an emphasis on relationship-building and shared understanding.

Structured activities included public gatherings, youth input, surveys, and creative listening circles. a Working Group of 12 community members was also formed. The project sought not only to gather opinions, but to create space for healing, learning, and imagining new possibilities together.

Across both initiatives, residents emphasized the need for meaningful representation of diverse histories, acknowledgment of harm, and a reframing of the space—not as a monument to leaders, but as a place for public education, reflection, and relationship-building. While some community members advocated for the statues' return, others proposed alternative visions: rotating exhibits, community art, augmented reality installations, and Indigenous stewardship of the site.

Taken together, the Township's actions from 2020 to 2025 represent a significant evolution—from celebrating political figures to confronting historical harm and committing to co-creation. While challenges and tensions remain, the process illustrates how deep listening, Indigenous leadership, and community dialogue can shape new paths forward.

## **Monday, June 8, 2020:**

The Castle Kilbride Staff Report indicated that the Curator/Director met with historian John English to assist with the coordination and presentation of a new event that would be hosted on site to support the initiatives of the PMP Committee. There is a note that says the event had been scheduled for June 20, 2020 but that it had be suspended until further notice.

## **Monday, June 22, 2020:**

Waterloo Region Record published an article reporting that Macdonald's statue was covered in red paint at some point over the weekend prior, during which National Indigenous Peoples' Day fell (A1-A2). The article included remarks of frustration by the Mayor, an image of a community member volunteer cleaning the paint off, and a note that this wasn't the first time the statue had been altered anonymously. It also noted a similar incident that happened to another statue of Macdonald in Charlottetown the week prior. The article closed off by recapping prior controversies that had followed the statue project since its conception in 2013.

## **Tuesday, June 23, 2020:**

The Township of Wilmot produced a press release about the red paint being put on the Macdonald statue. The release indicated that they removed the police-investigation-related tarp that previously covered the statue as a show of their commitment to an ongoing discussion of issues surrounding the Macdonald statues. It notes how the project had been developing, referencing the additional statues, educational resources, and the Easter Eggs. Furthermore, the release also indicates that the PMP Committee was encouraging of conversation and discussions on the matter, and that they had paused over the past year (presumably then, from summer 2019 - summer 2020) to reflect on expanding the project and ways to increase its relevance.

The release also notes that an inaugural "Prime Ministers Symposium" had been set to take place the weekend of June 19-21, 2020, but had been cancelled in March 2020 due to COVID-19. It states that the intention was to address and discuss the very issues that were arising around the PMP project.

### **Wednesday, June 24, 2020:**

Waterloo Region Record published an article in which they interviewed Indigenous women living in Waterloo Region (A1-A2). One woman, an employee from the Healing of the Seven Generations Indigenous wellness centre in Kitchener, hoped for a discussion about the racism Indigenous people face daily in Waterloo Region. The article reported that some of the women interviewed noted that for many in the Indigenous community, Macdonald symbolizes pain and hurt.

The article also reports that after the statue was cleaned on Monday, June 22, it was covered in paint again overnight that same day. The Township elected to cover the statue with a tarp rather than cleaning it again.

The article reported that one of the Township Councillors called on the municipality to pause the project until Indigenous groups were consulted. Her proposal was set to be voted on at the next Council meeting in July 2020. The article reports that this Councillor had started engaging with local Indigenous groups to become part of the discussion and learn more.

The article wraps with remarks on personal and group traumas that have been perpetuated by colonialism, and closes off with a statement that assures the reader that Waterloo Regional Police were investigating the painting of the statue.

### **Saturday, June 27, 2020:**

Waterloo Region Record posted an editorial that presented a relatively balanced opinion of the red paint situation (Editorials & Comment, B4). The editorial framed the painting of the statue as criminal, calling those responsible “vandals” and saying it was “the wrong way to encourage [reflection]”. However, it also noted that the controversy could not be settled “by members of an alt-right hate group who gathered at Macdonald’s statue later [that] week and taunted Indigenous people holding a silent vigil.”

The article goes on to state that it was crucial that the voices of Indigenous be heard, but also questioned where the community would stop if it were to start removing the statues, going on to list a bunch of famous memorialized Canadian figures who did problematic things.

Ultimately, the article calls for the democratic resolution of the situation and stresses the utmost importance in addressing the issues at hand. It leaves the reader with a final message:

*“At the end, this isn’t just about statues. It’s about where we are in Canada today. We need a broader view of our own history. We need to look at who teaches it and how it’s taught. Only then can we know where we’re going.”*

### **Monday, June 29, 2020:**

Waterloo Region Record published an article reporting that one person was arrested during a mostly peaceful rally seeking to have the statue removed from the park (A1). More than 45 people gathered near Castle Kilbride on Saturday, June 27, 2020 to protest the memorization of Macdonald. The one person who was arrested was reported as appearing to be a disrupter of the demonstration, swinging a waterbottle and shouting “Lies!” to interrupt the speeches that were being made by attendees. The person was later released without charges.

The article reports that protestors were standing “spaced out” around a fountain during the demonstration, likely to abide by pandemic gather advice. Earlier that morning, signs had been hung on the statue referencing statements Macdonald made in the House of Commons in the 1880s when he was promoting the creation of residential schools.

The article reports that some attendees were only there to listen, and some had ideas for where the statues might be better placed.

### **Thursday, July 2, 2020:**

Waterloo Region Record published an article that reported Wilmot Township agreeing to consult with Indigenous groups about the PMP (A2-A2). The article reports that the Wilmot Township Council had two emergency meetings that were closed to the public during the week, and that the Councillors announced it will invite Indigenous-identifying and other vulnerable community members to discuss Macdonald’s statue.

The article reported that nobody claimed responsibility for the paint, but that Indigenous people had repeatedly expressed that it was traumatic to encounter Macdonald’s likenesses due to deep-seeded pain and generations of suffering at the hands of the residential school system.

The article reported Indigenous members of the community being pleased with the invite. It also reported that the Township news release would also engage with the PMP project team.

Emphasizing the lack of public engagement with Wilmot residences, the article recalls a brief overview of some of the controversy that has surrounded the statue project since 2013.

## **July 27, 2020:**

The Township of Wilmot produced a resolution that called for the halting of the PMP project. In it, they acknowledged the traditional territories on which the Township and specifically, Castle Kilbride, are on - which is that of the Neutral, Haudenosaunee, and Anishinaabeg peoples. The resolution called for open and transparent dialogue to address concerns, generational suffering and factual historical omissions. Other notes include:

Citation of the Township's commitment to stand with all peoples who have, and continue to experience oppression and marginalization as per the Township's unified anti-racism statement and a media release on June 23, 2020.

## **October 2020:**

Macleans published an article about the PMP reporting that the project had become a "politically charged minefield as the legacies of the nation's leaders [were] reappraised according to contemporary standards" (16). The article gives a surface-level overview of the history of the PMP project.

## **Monday, November 2, 2020:**

The Township of Wilmot's Information and Legislative Services Staff Report (page 154-161) reported a few items:

Missing Portion of the Agreement: it notes that the Original Agreement between Createscape Waterloo Region and the Township of Wilmot was missing a small part of the clause regarding the transfer of the PM statues project assets.

Approval of Costs for the Storage of the Unfortunate Four: Confirmation that there was sufficient direction to staff for the inclusion of the costs to store the "Unfortunate Four" statues as part of the overall budget for the PMP consultation.

The Nature of the Educational Programs: noting that the Original Agreement between Createscape and the Township allocates the educational program/resources as the responsibility of the Township, the report indicates that regarding the resources, "it has been established that improvements are needed...[based on] feedback received thus far" and recommends that "methods or structure that would evaluate...the educational resources for the balanced historical perspective being requested may be included" in the project (155-156).

**"As the findings from the public engagement conducted by the First Peoples Group indicated, the immediate removal of the remaining statues is a symbolic action for the Township to move forward on reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and work towards community cohesion and healing."**

**- Township of Wilmot Press Release**



## Political Context 2020

- COVID-19 pandemic
- George Floyd's death
- Idle No More 2.0
- Black Live Matter (BLM)
  - A much larger and more powerful movement than the one in 2015
  - Led by Black and Indigenous peoples and supported by millions of Canadians across the country
  - Seeking to protect Canadians from corporate greed and destruction

“The discussion of the Prime Ministers Path in Wilmot is one that encapsulates all of the above. It is complex and it is challenging, but it is a conversation that provides an opportunity for community members to learn from one another, to grow, and to form a deeper understanding and awareness of our shared history.”

- The First Peoples Group Report

## 2021

The Township of Wilmot budgeted \$75,000 for the PMP removal, storage, and consultation process. (Township of Wilmot 2021 Capital Program)

### January 2021:

First Peoples Group was selected to design and conduct an engagement process to receive input from Township of Wilmot residents about the PMP. Over a 6-week period in Spring 2021, the First Peoples Group heard from around ~475 residents through several engagement activities.

### **Monday, March 22, 2021:**

The Township of Wilmot's 2021 Work Program indicated that the Township intended on submitting a grant application for a Community Support, Multiculturalism and Anti-racism Initiative to support the PMP consultation project (Item #27, #57, and #295).

### **April 26, 2021:**

Council Meeting Minutes reported contributions by the First Peoples Group (FPG) as well as delegates from the community.

### **Wednesday, June 30, 2021:**

The First Peoples Group, a well-established and well-regarded Indigenous advisory firm in Canada, submitted their final report on their engagement process and presented it to the public. In analyzing the comments collected and conversations had during their process, the firm identified the emergence of three major themes:

- A discussion on the educational value of the PMP project;
- How community cohesion has been affected by the PMP project;
- Lack of effective community engagement processes in Wilmot and opportunities to improve these processes in the future;

The FPG's recommendations were as follows:

- Immediately removing existing statues related to the PMP and to discontinue any future expansion or investment in the PMP as it exists today;
- Creating a working group comprised of a balanced representation of the individuals and communities within Wilmot Township to discuss, develop and suggest plans for the implementation of next steps centred in community cohesion and healing;
- Committing to transforming community engagement and consultation processes in Wilmot Township in a way that encourages greater openness, accountability and citizen participation in decision making.

The group also expressed that they do not believe that finding consensus on a project this polarizing is possible.

The report includes a section where the First Peoples Group sets the context regarding history and commemoration. This section acknowledges Canadians' valuation of their history and that it is important to know about the country's past. It then goes on to acknowledge that history can also be divisive and exclusionary, and that much of Canada's history does not address nor confront Canada's colonial legacy. Finally, the section does provide a reminder that since 2015, Canadians have been called upon by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada to increase their awareness about the legacy of residential schools and colonialism in Canada and face it.

Overall, the First Peoples Group report acknowledges the complexities of the discussions surrounding the PMP project and, considering limitations due to COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns as well as the short 6-month timeline that the engagement project operated within, the report considered the changing landscape of politics within Canadian borders while acknowledging the existence of the different sentiments across Wilmot Township. It appears as though the FPG recommendations were based on a fulsome analysis that not only included perspectives and preferences, but were proportionately informed by the intensity of sentiments in a sense that trauma responses are inevitably more serious and should be considered with more care than mere preferences for having the statues exist. The report also appears to be a very helpful precursor to the current ongoing engagement project, Collective Reflections, Future Directions (CRFD). The data, analyses, and recommendations will be considered by the CRFD project team as important, additional pre-collected data to build on throughout the engagement process.

Monday, July 5, 2021:

A special Council meeting was held to receive the First Peoples Group (FPG) report. A resolution was adopted by the Township Council via a unanimous vote that endorsed the Township moving forward with the FPG recommendations. The Council thus decided to remove the remaining statues from their public display (John A. Macdonald had already been removed in August 2020 while community consultation was ongoing).

The Township staff were to remove the statues and put them in temporary storage, discontinue any future expansion or investment in the path as it existed, and report back to Council with an implementation plan for the incorporation of the remaining recommendations from the FPG, including:

- Creating a working group to consider next steps.
- Transforming community engagement and consultation processes in Wilmot Township that encourages greater openness, accountability and citizen participation in decision-making.
- The media release also included a message of thanks from the FPG.

Wednesday, July 7, 2021:

Another press release by the Township of Wilmot reported that as of that morning, the PMP had been dismantled and placed into storage. It indicates that “the immediate removal of the remaining statues is a symbolic action for the Township to move forward on reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and work towards community cohesion and healing.”

## 2022

Monday, February 28, 2022:

The Township of Wilmot held a meeting and in it, they went over the 2022 Municipal Budget document. In it, Phase II of the PMP consultation was listed in the 2022 Capital Program with a budget of \$45,000.

## **October 25, 2022:**

An entirely new council was declared for Wilmot Township as a result of the election.

## **Sunday, October 30, 2022:**

CBC News reported that an entirely new council will be taking office in Wilmot Township.

Notably, multiple of the newly-elected councillors are reported to have mentioned their intent to refocus on/address issues within the jurisdiction, citing things such as “outside concerns” and “appeasing interest groups” as being something that they want to move away from. There was also mention of wanting to heal a “divide” that has been seen in the Township over the past little while.

Interestingly, community feedback data that the CRFD team has collected thus far indicates that many folks in the Township feel like the 2022 election was based principally upon rebuilding the Prime Minister’s Path.

# **2023/2024**

## **Monday, January 30, 2023:**

The Township of Wilmot conducted an ad hoc Budget Advisory Committee Meeting that was attended by the Mayor, alongside all five Council members. The un-audited 2022 capital program table indicated that the township’s spending on PMP consultation (to date) included:

- First Peoples’ Group consultation process: \$45,792
- Legal fees: \$12,657
- Costs for PMP removal: \$29,409
- Storage costs: \$14,653

## **Tuesday, January 16, 2024:**

CityNews reported that Wilmot Township passed a motion calling for staff to come up with options on how to proceed with the statues and asking staff to show what actions have been taken since the statues were taken down in 2021.

## **Wednesday, January 17, 2024:**

CBC News reported that Wilmot Township councillors said that discussion around the future of the PMP was needed. They are reported as being intent on making sure the community members in Wilmot feel like their voices are being heard, and that they want the Township to heal and come to an agreeable resolution.

**Wednesday, February 28, 2024:**

Waterloo Region Record reported that a 'balanced' working group was recommended to determine the fate of the PMP and that a referendum would cost upwards of \$116k.

**Tuesday, March 26, 2024:**

CityNews reported that Wilmot Township councillors have voted to move forward with a working group to help decide next steps for the PMP, requesting more information to be investigated for further engagement and alternative options suggestions. Council suggested that a firm would be hired using the CASMARI funding it was awarded in 2021.

The article also stated:

- A referendum would cost between \$116k - \$163k and would need at least 50% of the population to vote in order to make it binding
- The Township was, at the time, paying \$661.44/month to store the statues



**Wilmot's Prime Ministers Path:  
Collective Reflections, Future Directions**

**Listen** **Share** **Learn** **Engage**

**FIRST COMMUNITY GATHERING:  
CONNECTIONS & INFORMATION**

Join us for the Prime Ministers Path engagement kick off:  
Meet the Project Team Learn about the process Get involved

 **Tuesday, November 12, 2024**

 **4:30 PM - 8:00PM**

 **Wilmot Recreation Complex**  
Community Centre Room  
1291 Nafziger Road  
Baden, ON N3A 0C4



[REGISTER HERE](#)



## Prime Ministers Path: Collective Reflections, Future Directions

The 2024/2025 initiative was the direct result of the March 2024 Wilmot Council decision to move forward with a working group to help shape the future of the path. Wilmot Township chose to embark on a community engagement project with the intention of finding a path forward for the Prime Ministers Path. The Engagement initiative embodied the Township's new commitment to transparency and was an opportunity to reinvigorate the principle of connecting deeply with community and community members. It was a step towards collaborative decision-making in Wilmot Township.

### Steps Toward a New Approach

With this initiative, Wilmot prioritized inclusive historical engagement, working closely with the community to explore new ways of telling Canada's history

#### September 25, 2024:

Waterloo Region Record and New Hamburg Independent both reported that Land Use Research Associates Inc. (LURA) has been hired to lead a public engagement on the PMP.

#### Tuesday, November 12, 2024:

Engagement consultants Denise Soueidan-O'Leary and Benny Skinner hosted the first community gathering for the Collective Reflections, Future Directions (CRFD) project hosted their first Community Gathering at the Wilmot Recreation Complex.

