

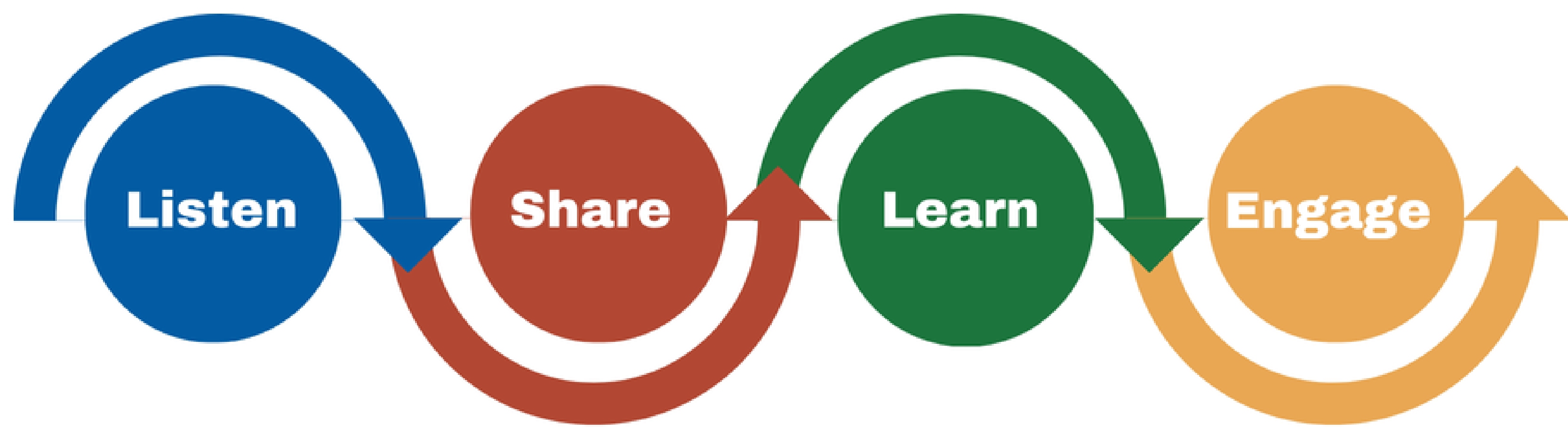


# Prime Ministers Path: Collective Reflections, Future Directions

## Engagement Report

October 2024 - May 2025

Prepared by:  
**Denise Soueidan-O'Leary**  
**Hasnaa Maher**  
**Benny Skinner**



## Executive Summary

The Prime Ministers Path: Collective Reflections, Future Directions initiative engaged more than 10,000 Wilmot residents in a comprehensive, community-led consultation process. Grounded in listening, learning, and healing, the project set out to reassess the future of the Prime Ministers Path in light of evolving community values, public concern, and ongoing calls for reconciliation.

This issue is complex. The statues, and the Path more broadly, represent very different things to different people. These symbols often evoke strong and polarized reactions. However, one message emerged clearly across the consultation: many residents are looking for a constructive, community-informed way forward.

Throughout the process, participants shared deep, diverse, and at times conflicting views about what should happen to the statues, the role education should play, and how Wilmot Township can respond meaningfully to both historical and present-day harm. Engagement activities included public gatherings, Working Group sessions, surveys, and Indigenous-led conversations informed by the Path of the Crane model.

In 2024, the Township committed to a new approach rooted in truth, accountability, and community voice. This report reflects seven months of dialogue. It brings together insights from over a dozen public and private engagement activities and hundreds of contributions from residents across Wilmot, all exploring one central question:

What should the future of the Prime Ministers Path be, in a way that recognizes both the pride and the pain of Canada's history?



Six key themes emerged consistently across the engagement process:

1. Governance & Project Oversight
2. Funding
3. Inclusion
4. Location
5. Education
6. Truth & Reconciliation.

These themes reflect a shared desire for transparency, respect, informed decision-making, justice and true Reconciliation.

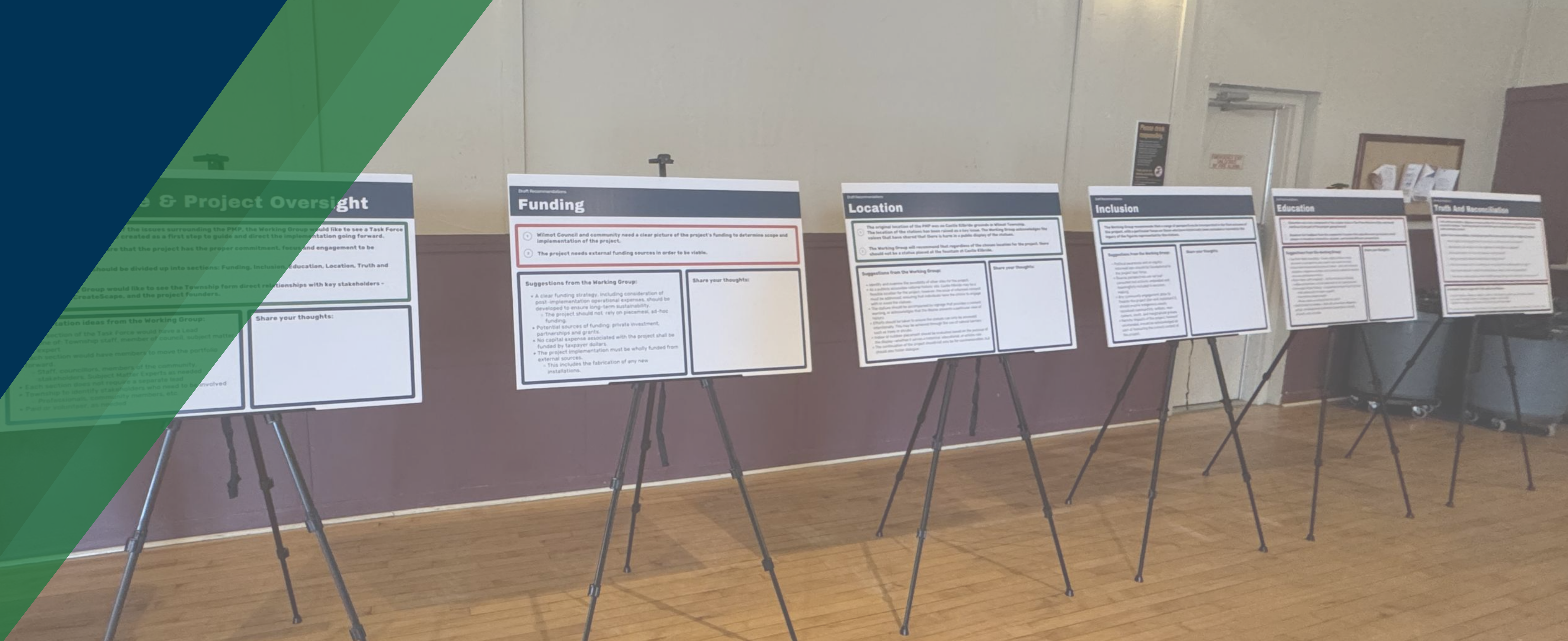
The Recommendations that came out of this initiative (listed in detail in the Recommendations report) are grounded in these six themes. They offer a way forward that centers community leadership, inclusive education, cultural safety, and the potential to create a truly reconciliatory public space.

This report gives an overview of the engagement activities, and what we heard from the community. It summarizes the community's diverse input that led to the Recommendations and pathways for the Wilmot Township's Prime Ministers Path Project to align with modern community goals.

This report was written by Denise Soueidan-O'Leary, Hasnaa Maher, and Benny Skinner, the community engagement team that was retained to deliver the community engagement.

This report is accompanied by:

- **The PMP Recommendations Report**
- **The PMP Historical Timeline Report**



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# Project Overview

## Project Description and Engagement Objectives

The Prime Ministers Path: Collective Reflections, Future Directions engagement initiative is an intentional undertaking by the Township of Wilmot to re-open the conversation about the Prime Ministers Path in an inclusive, community-driven way, and to reimagine the future of the statues and the Prime Ministers Path in Wilmot. The project is guided by 4 values, and they were presented to the community at the first Community Gathering on November 12, 2024:

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

**Project Overview**  
The Prime Ministers Path: Collective Reflections, Future Directions engagement initiative is an intentional undertaking by the Township of Wilmot to re-open the conversation about the Prime Ministers Path in an inclusive, community-driven way, and to reimagine the future of the statues and the Prime Ministers path in Wilmot. The project is guided by the following values:

Listen

Share

Learn

Engage

**LISTEN:** Your voice matters, and we're here to listen. Throughout this engagement, we'll provide multiple avenues—whether in person, online, or through written feedback—to ensure that everyone who wants to be heard has a chance to share their thoughts. By creating a safe, respectful environment, we'll work to truly understand your experiences, concerns, and hopes for the Prime Ministers Path.

**SHARE:** We all have thoughts and ideas about our history and our future, and our community. We invite everyone to share their thoughts, ideas, and experiences openly. There is space in our community for differing thoughts and opinions, even if it's sometimes hard to be vulnerable and share them. Together, we will create brave spaces for honest and sometimes difficult conversations, where all perspectives are welcome and work to make sure that we respect eachother.

**LEARN:** Together, we'll grow in understanding and awareness. With themed discussions, educational resources, and knowledge sharing we aim to identify gaps in our collective understanding, and deepen our shared knowledge of the various histories connected to the Prime Ministers Path.

**ENGAGE:** You're invited to be part of process, and play an active role in the decision-making. Join us for community gatherings, Tea conversations, participate in the online polls to explore ideas and shape recommendations that reflect the community's values and will help to inform the future of the Prime Ministers Path.

**Expected Outcomes**  
By March 2025, the Township of Wilmot will receive community-driven recommendations from the working group, based on broad public input. These recommendations, presented to Council, will guide the future of the Prime Ministers Path, aligning with the values of respect, inclusivity, and community cohesion. Through this process, residents can expect a transparent, respectful approach that fosters meaningful dialogue, ultimately aiming to build a shared vision for the Prime Ministers Path.

The intended outcome of this initiative was to provide Wilmot Township with community-driven recommendations for the future of the Prime Ministers Path. The Recommendations are based on broad public input received from the engagement process, and are the work of the Working Group that was brought together to synthesize the community voice.

These recommendations, presented to Council, will guide the future of the Prime Ministers Path, aligning with the values of respect, inclusivity, and community cohesion. Through this process, residents can expect a transparent, respectful approach that fosters meaningful dialogue, ultimately aiming to build a shared vision for the Prime Ministers Path.



Figure 1 - Engagement Timeline display board shared at community gatherings.

# Community Agreement

Engage

## 1. Active & Open Listening

- Listen with patience and curiosity, aiming to understand before responding.
- Embrace differences as learning opportunities, seeking common ground.

## 2. Respectful Speech

- Use respectful language, avoid personal attacks, and address ideas rather than individuals.
- Speak from your own experience, using “I” statements to encourage understanding.

**When you engage in this community initiative, you are taking on the collective responsibility to engage with respect, and curiosity, and a commitment to creating space for thoughtful dialogue. All differing perspectives are welcome here and we will all strive to engage in ways that foster understanding and community. By participating, we all agree to constructive engagement, both in-person and online to foster a respectful, open space where all opinions can be shared.**

**The 4 principals of our Community Agreement are listed here.**

## 3. Responsible Social Media

- Post thoughtfully, avoiding divisive or harmful content.
- Use social media to build constructive dialogue, not division.

## 4. Accountability

- Take responsibility for your words and actions. If harm occurs, acknowledge it.
- Hold each other to these standards to keep our space safe and welcoming for all.

**Please Note:**  
We will do our best to keep all channels of this project open for the duration of the project. In order to ensure that those channels remain safe for all, they will be monitored on a weekly basis. Posts that contain disrespectful language, or tone or inappropriate comments, the poster will be contacted and given 24 hours to edit the post, before it is removed permanently.

Figure 2 – Community Agreement display board shared at community gatherings.

2

# Acknowledging the Land & Our Collective History

The history of the locality that Wilmot Township occupies is complex, characterized by many social and political transformations since time immemorial. The Great Lakes Region of Turtle Island is originally the traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg, the Haudenosaunee, and other tribes and nations such as the Huron-Wendat, Aondironon, Wenrehronon, and the Ongniaahraronon. These histories are the reason why acknowledging the land is important.

This is the official land acknowledgement of the *Collective Reflections, Future Directions initiative*:

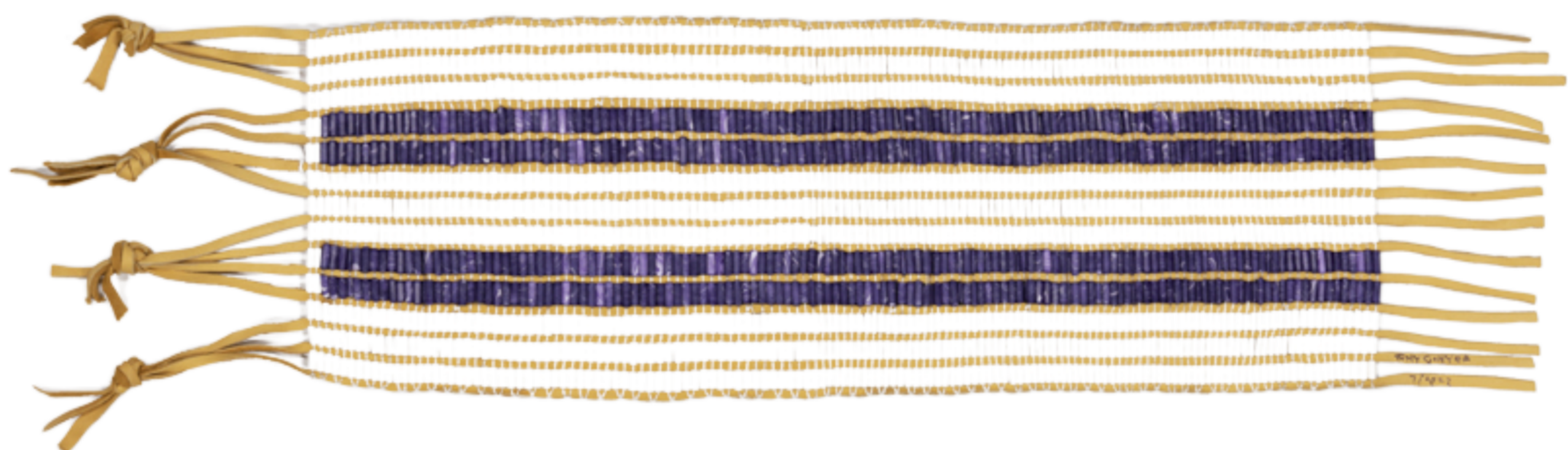
Wilmot Township, and the land on which the Prime Ministers Path stands, is located within the traditional territories of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, and Neutral peoples. This region has been home to Indigenous nations since time immemorial, and continues to hold deep cultural, spiritual, and political significance today.

Three historical agreements are particularly relevant to this land:

Pre-colonially, the people of this territory ratified The Dish with One Spoon Wampum . A wampum is an agreement, like a law, that gives permission for all people to use the resources of this region to live a good life, but requires that we only take what we need and leave the rest for others to also live a good life. This is an example of the way that Indigenous practice protects the sustainability of natural resources.

Later, during the time of European settlement, settlers were beginning to cultivate the lands that were protected by the Haudenosaunee. As a way to ensure diplomacy, the Two Row Wampum (see below) and the Covenant Chain agreement outlined three agreements between the sides: friendship, peace, and that they were bound to these two things forever.

Finally, the Haldimand Treaty of 1784, signed by Frederick Haldimand, Captain General and Governor in Chief. This treaty was for the purchase of land between the Great Lakes. In return for the loss of Indigenous settlement on the purchased land, and because of the Haudenosaunee ally-ship against the Americans, the King commanded that 6 miles of land on either side of the Grand River – from the mouth of the river to Lake Erie - would be in the possession of Indigenous peoples from then until forever, allowing for settlement and stewardship of that tract of land.





We recognize that all three of these agreements were forged and signed in perpetuity, making them still relevant and applicable today. As a settlement that is part of the Regional Municipality of Waterloo, we recognize that the Township of Wilmot is obligated to honour these treaties and agreements. We also recognize that these lands have been of the utmost importance to the Indigenous peoples who have been the stewards since time immemorial, and continue to live within and outside of our settler communities.

We are all treaty people, with collective and individual responsibilities to honor these agreements — and to work together toward relationships rooted in truth, respect, and shared responsibility.

Canada's history is not solely the story of nation-building through governance and Confederation. It is also the far older, deeper, and ongoing story of the land itself — and of the rich, complex histories of the peoples who have lived here for millennia. Understanding this fuller history is essential to any authentic conversation about the future.

These historical agreements were forged in the spirit of peace, stewardship, and coexistence, however, the promises embedded in these agreements were not always upheld throughout the period of British colonial expansion. The Crown's establishment of land claims across Turtle Island disregarded the sovereignty, rights, and governance systems of Indigenous nations.

In Wilmot Township, this history played out with particular force: designated by the British Monarchy as a Crown Reserve, Wilmot's lands were cleared, partitioned, and occupied, primarily by Mennonite and Amish settlers from Western Europe. As settlement expanded, the physical and governmental structures that emerged often ignored Indigenous customs, laws, and persistent resistance.

Through this process, the community has made it clear that the future of the Prime Ministers Path must hold space for the full breadth of our shared past: the pride and the pain, the governance of the nation-state, the enduring stewardship of the land, and the rights, histories, and contributions of Indigenous peoples.



# Engagement Tools

The following tools were integrated into the engagement plan to encourage full participation of the whole community, and to introduce this initiative as a collaborative process, more than just a community consultation on whether or not the statues should return:

**Collaborative Feedback Loop:** The engagement process was intentionally iterative, accounting for the community voice as a whole, but leveraging the nimbleness of the Working Group to synthesize big ideas and reach relative consensus. Through the engagement co-leads, feedback from community members was shared with the Working Group, who reflected on emerging themes and co-developed ideas in response. These ideas were then brought back to the wider public for further reflection and refinement. This back-and-forth approach ensured that the final recommendations were grounded in dialogue, shaped by a broad cross-section of the community, and responsive to both pride and pain that is embedded in this project.

**Inclusion of Marginalized Voices:** Intentional outreach was undertaken to include residents who have often been left out of formal consultation processes. Indigenous community members, racialized residents, 2SLGBTQ+ individuals, youth, and newcomers all played key roles in shaping the dialogue. The team emphasized relational trust-building, flexible participation options, and ongoing follow-up to ensure that contributions were not just heard but meaningfully integrated, and that there were options to participate that accommodated different levels of comfort and ability to participate.

**Naming and Tone of Engagement Activities:** Language matters. In recognition of the emotional and historical weight of the topic, traditional consultation terms like “focus groups” or “town halls” were deliberately avoided. Instead, engagement activities were named community gatherings and tea circles to signal a different tone, and represent the intention for a different outcome—one that prioritized connection, communication, healing, and relationship-building. This shift helped create spaces that invited participation and collaboration, rather than maintaining distance or formality, or reinforcing the prior binary of statues or no statues.





# In Person Engagement



## COMMUNITY GATHERINGS



Three Community Gatherings were planned: they were large scale, open invitation drop-in sessions to connect with the community. They provided an opportunity for the community to find out more about the project, share thoughts and ideas, and connect directly with the Engagement Team.

### GATHERINGS & THEMES

#### 1. Connections & Information

- Connect with the community
- Introduce the project team
- Share information
- Recruit for the Working Group
- Gather initial input and community thoughts

**96 ATTENDEES**

#### 2. Collective Reflections

- Share draft recommendations
- Gather community reflections
- Address questions or concerns

**73 ATTENDEES**

#### 3. New Futures

- Share the final Council decision
- Share next steps
- Gather final community input
- Address any questions or concerns

**ATTENDEES TBD**

**TOTAL ENGAGEMENT: 169 PEOPLE**



## COMMUNITY TEA CIRCLES

Unlike traditional public meetings, tea circles focused on listening rather than debate. The conversations were hosted and facilitated by the engagement co-leads and were guided by shared agreements to ensure safety, respect, and openness regardless of people’s positions. They offered a gentle and welcoming entry point for those who wanted to both share their thoughts and feelings, and hear from others in their community.

Three (3) tea circle meetings were hosted monthly between December 2024 and February 2025 to engage the community in themed discussion and conversation. These explored community thoughts about the path, and educational topics related to Indigenous and Canadian history.

**Tea Circle 1 - 38 Participants**

**Tea Circle 2 - 42 Participants**

**Tea Circle 3 - 53 Participants (online)**

**TOTAL ENGAGEMENT: 133 PEOPLE**

# Community Polls and Surveys

## COMMUNITY POLLS

Three online polls, and one virtual feedback opportunity were posted on the project webpage between December 2024 to March 2025 offering community members an opportunity to interact with the project independently, accessibly, and anonymously.

Social media engagement was a way to spread awareness of the project, and create micro-engagement opportunities.



November 21 -  
December 3, 2024  
**PMP EMOTIONS**  
Gather information regarding what emotions come up for the community about the PMP; past, present, and future

December 12 -  
December 18, 2024  
**WHAT DOES COMMUNITY MEAN TO YOU**  
Reflect on the unique ways residents define and experience community

December 12 -  
December 18, 2024  
**LEARNING EDGES**  
Gather information on what topics the community wants to know more about, what they feel they know a lot about, and what they want to learn about

March 7 –  
March 13, 2025  
**RECOMMENDATIONS FEEDBACK**  
An opportunity for community members that were unable to attend the in-person gathering to provide feedback on the recommendations


**TOTAL ENGAGEMENT: 78 PEOPLE**

## COMMUNITY SURVEY


A community survey was sent out with the interim property tax bill via direct mail and e-billing on February 8, 2025. The survey asked the community 10 questions about their general thoughts on the PMP project, and 6 demographic questions.

Community members could scan a QR code to fill in the online survey, obtain a paper copy from the township office, or call the township office to complete it over the phone.

**Survey Reach**



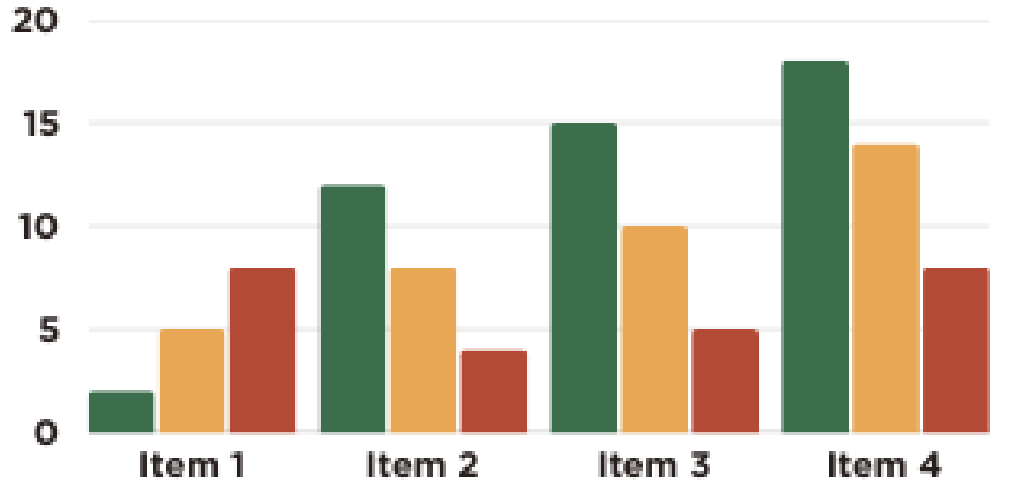
**6,271**  
Canada Post  
Tax bill insert



**1,279**  
Tax e-billing

**Total Reach: 7550**

**Survey Response**



Item	Online Responses	Paper Copies
Item 1	5	8
Item 2	12	4
Item 3	15	10
Item 4	18	7

**257**  
Online Responses

**4**  
Paper Copies

**Total Response: 267**

# PMP Special Groups

## THE WORKING GROUP

### Demographic Breakdown

*Age Group:*    *Gender:*  
20-29: 1        Male: 5  
30-39: 1        Female: 6  
40-49: 2        Two Spirit: 1  
50-59: 5  
60-64: 3

*Years in Township:*  
• Lifetime: 6  
• 10+ years: 5  
• 6-10 years: 1  
• Less than 6 years: 0

*Income:*  
• Under \$40,000: 2  
• \$40,000-\$90,000: 3  
• \$90,000-\$150,000: 4  
• \$150,000-\$250,000: 2  
• Unreported: 1

*Indigenous Members:*  
• 2 members

*PMP Outcome Position:*  
• Pro Path: 4  
• No Path: 4  
• Pro Path with Education: 4

### Purpose & Mandate

- The Prime Ministers Path (PMP) Working Group is a community-driven initiative to develop actionable recommendations on the future of the PMP in Wilmot Township
- The group aims to ensure that recommendations reflect historical understanding, community values, and principles of truth and reconciliation

### Composition & Guiding Principles

- 12 members representing diverse community perspectives, selected through an Expression of Interest (EOI) process
- Selection focused on inclusivity, demographic balance, and a diversity of perspectives
- The Working Group is guided by principles of respect, collaboration, transparency, and fact-based decision-making

### Objectives & Deliverables

- Create a respectful platform for dialogue that integrates community input
- Draft recommendations for public review (March 2025), refine them based on feedback, and submit final recommendations to Township Council (April 2025)
- Provide Council with options such as:
  - Removal, relocation, or contextualization of statues
  - Educational programming enhancements
  - Alternative solutions that align with community values

### Decision-Making Process

- Consensus-based approach with structured discussions and multiple decision-making levels

The goal of the Working Group was to bring together a diverse group of Wilmot residents with a range of lived experiences, relationships to the Prime Ministers Path.

From the 30 applicants, the final group of 12 was chosen through a blind selection process guided by a commitment to inclusion and respectful dialogue across difference, and specifically designed to be representative of Wilmot Township both demographically, and based on their perspectives on the future of the path, history, reconciliation, and public space.

Recruitment involved issuing an open call to community members. Through a simple registration process, applicants provided demographic information to ensure group diversity and a bit of information about why they were interested in being a part of the project so the facilitation team could ensure that the group members represented the range of thoughts and feelings that exist in the community.

All of the Working Group members were residents of Wilmot Township.

	Meeting Theme
December 2024	Gathering and Connection
January 2025	Terms of reference creation, opening discussions
January 2025	Idea Brainstorming
February 2025	Recommendation drafting for Community Gathering
February 2025	Recommendation drafting for Community Gathering II
March 2025	Community Gathering follow-up + Recommendation finalization
April 2025	Recommendation finalization follow-up +

# PMP PROJECT AMBASSADORS

The project team formed an ambassadors group of 15 community members, representing a range of demographics and viewpoints.

The Ambassadors were formed from the group of Working Group applicants that were not accepted; recognizing their desire to be deeply involved in the project.

The Ambassadors were on a special email list and received advanced project updates, and engagement reminders to share with their networks, in the hopes of building community trust, and increasing community participation.

The Ambassadors Group's responsibilities included the following:

- Distributing engagement information on personal platforms (Social media, email, word of mouth/friends and family)
- Answering questions about the process
- Reporting back information they received from the community
- Participate in the engagement activities
- Offer a community temperature check when making engagement decisions

## Ambassador Engagement:



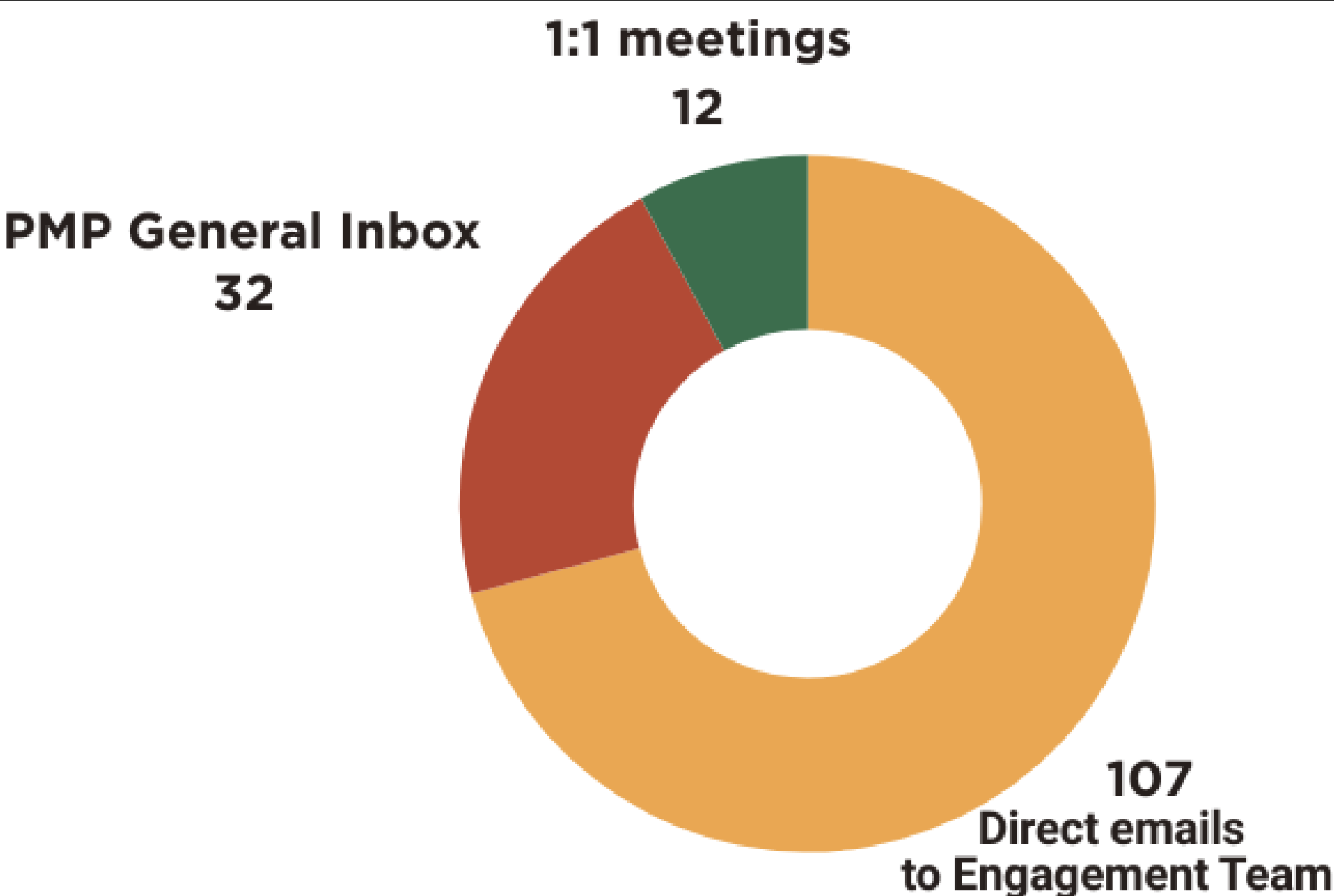
**1 meeting**  
Dec 2024



**9 Engagement Support**  
**Call-to-Action Emails**

# DIRECT ENGAGEMENT

In order to be as inclusive as possible, and offer direct or anonymous opportunities for community members to engage, a general mailbox was set up – [pmp@wilmot.ca](mailto:pmp@wilmot.ca) – and community members could reach out the engagement team directly and ask questions via email, or arrange a virtual or in person meeting.

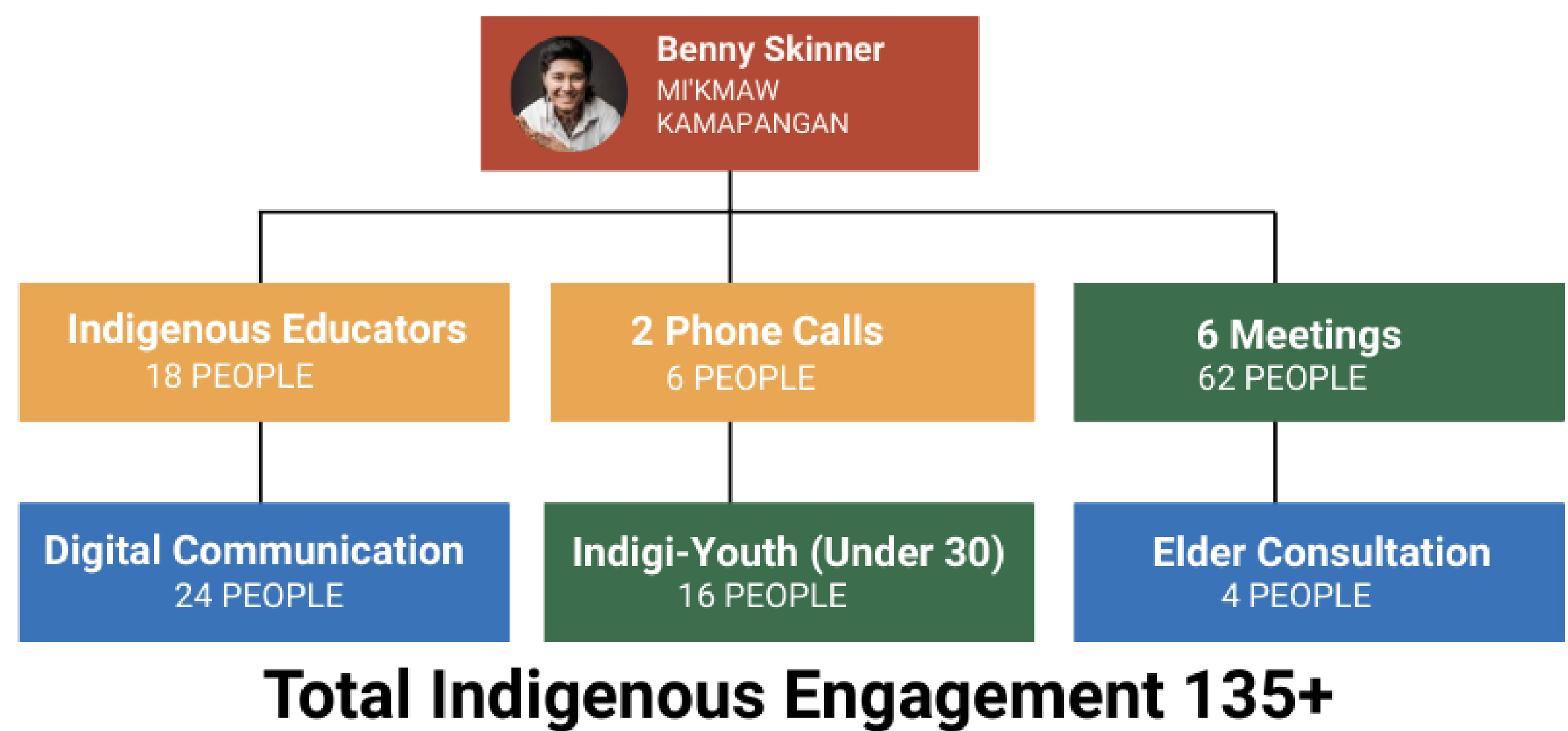


## INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT

Given the nature of the PMP's history, Indigenous engagement was seen as a critical early step in the project. Inspired by Anishinaabeg traditional governance stories shared with Mi'kmaw Kamapangan L'nu Benny Skinner by Anishinaabe friends and elders, an engagement mechanism called "The Crane" was built into the project plan.

Outreach strategies that were employed under this mechanism included:

- Asking for invitation to enter community spaces to gather data
- House visits for accessibility purposes
- Meetings, both virtual and in-person
- Digital communications including email and social media engagement
- Phone calls
- Proximal feedback submissions (similar to a small delegation or Council representation)



## YOUTH PARTICIPATION

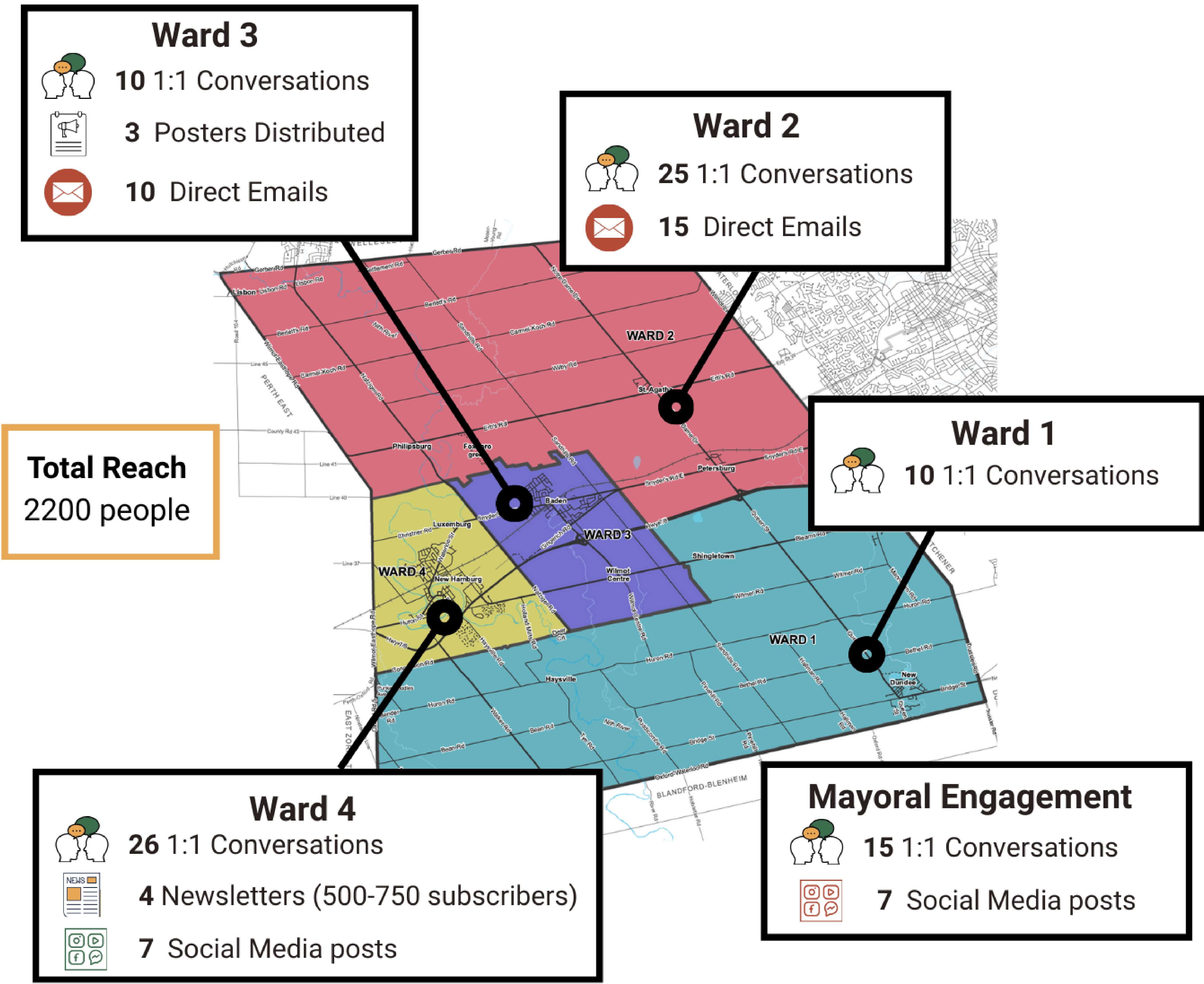
All engagement activities were open and accessible to youth participants. In addition, a dedicated visit to the local high school was held on April 9<sup>th</sup>, from 2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., offering a tailored opportunity for students to learn about the project and share their perspectives in a familiar and informal setting.

While youth engagement was limited during this stage of the process, this was not unexpected. Feedback suggests that young people may be more inclined to participate in future phases of the project, particularly when the discussion shifts toward practical applications and tangible next steps. As the project evolves, additional opportunities to engage youth in co-creation and implementation will be essential, and should be explored.



# Project Outreach

## COUNCILLOR LED WARD ENGAGEMENT



## TOWNSHIP OUTREACH

Activity	Reach	Engagement
PMP Newsletter 9 issues	~75 subscribers	675 people
Social Media: X 35 posts	7400 Views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>2 likes</li><li>6 reposts</li><li>2 comments</li></ul>
Social Media: Facebook 35 Posts	1700 Views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>109 likes</li><li>48 comments</li><li>80 shares</li></ul>
Engagement promotion: Newspaper Ads		3
Engagement Promotion: Radio Ads		3
Total Reach		9500+



# Media Coverage

The Prime Ministers Path project garnered extensive media attention throughout the engagement process, reflecting both local and national interest in the future of the statues and the broader community conversation. News coverage helped amplify community voices, inform the public about key milestones, and encourage participation across diverse platforms. The timeline of articles, interviews, and televised stories also reflects the transparency and public significance of this process.

Outlet	Date	Title
National Talk	September 25 2024	Public engagement on Wilmot’s prime minister statues to begin soon
The Record	September 25 2024	Public engagement on Wilmot’s prime minister statues to begin soon
The Record	November 8	Prime Ministers Path could still cement its place in Wilmot
CTV News at 6	November 12	Prime Ministers Path could still cement its place in Wilmot
CTV news	November 13 2024	Considering the future of a controversial project in Wilmot Township
City News Kitchener	November 12 2024	Live Coverage: Community Gathering #1
CBC News	Dec 9 2024	New working group to include Wilmot community members in Prime Ministers Path decision
CityNews Kitchener	February 5 2025	New recommendations on the way for Wilmot’s Prime Ministers’ Path
The Record	February 5 2025	Wilmot’s Prime Ministers Path working group recommendations expected in early March
CTV news	March 5 2025	Wilmot council to review criteria for future of Prime Ministers Path
The Record	March 8 2025	If the Wilmot Prime Ministers Path came back, who would pay?
National Post	March 11 2025	Ontario town at crossroads over future of John A. Macdonald statue
Radio Waterloo	April 3 2025	Consulting along the path of Baden’s prime ministers statue project



# What We Heard

The insights captured in this section reflect not only what the community shared but also how they want to move forward. These themes represent areas of alignment, tension, creativity, and care—and serve as the foundation for the Working Group’s Recommendations to Council.

The project team wishes to acknowledge that despite strong efforts, some voices were still missing from the process.

# Governance and Project Oversight

Community members emphasized the need for renewed structures that promote transparency, accountability, and shared leadership. Feedback consistently pointed to the importance of representative decision-making, inclusive oversight, and public trust. The following feedback was gathered.

## Decision-Making

- Create a permanent Steering Committee with formal terms, including Township residents, Indigenous representatives from local nations (Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, Mississaugas of the Credit), and subject matter experts (education, heritage, DEI).
- Break the project into portfolios by theme, each with a designated lead and clear accountability structure.
- Include representation from outside Wilmot, acknowledging the national scope of the PMs and historical narratives involved.
- There is concern over Township staff turnover, lack of continuity, and perceived detachment from the Wilmot community.
- Also a concern for township staff capacity

## Transparency and Accountability

- Academic and curatorial experts need to be involved to ensure quality and accountability in implementation.
- Use third-party facilitation and culturally safe practices to ensure emotionally supported, inclusive participation.
- Include evaluation mechanisms to monitor whether recommendations are being implemented as intended.

## Community-Led Structure

- Avoid privileging project founders or past decision-makers in the new structure; prioritize current residents and community stakeholders.
- Ensure all decision-making is community-driven, with published timelines, meeting notes, and a rationale for recommendations.
- Consider a community-elected advisory board or rotating citizen panel for additional oversight.
- Provide public training or resources on the committee's role, how to participate, and how decisions will be made, with a preference for consensus based models.

# Funding

The community voiced strong opinions about the role of public dollars, the need for transparency in financial planning, and the imperative to align funding sources with project values. Sustainability and clarity emerged as guiding principles. The following feedback was gathered:

## Funding Model Suggestions

- Prohibit capital and operational expenses from Township tax revenue, including indirect staff costs, unless explicitly approved by residents.
- Develop a detailed funding plan before implementation, including grants (Federal/Provincial), philanthropy and foundations, and community fundraising and sponsorship.
- Secure preliminary funding to resource the creation of a project plan
- Some advocated for 100% private funding, others for Township ownership with grant support, and some opposed private influence altogether.

## Transparency and Alignment with Community Values

- One participant shared, “This isn’t just about dollars — it’s an investment in people, healing, and community trust.”
- Clarify the total projected costs, including security, insurance, staffing, maintenance, and education program development.
- Disclose the source and influence of donors to prevent misalignment between funder goals and project values.
- Fund each project element on its own merit (e.g., education components, site upgrades) to encourage clarity and accountability.
- Explicitly connect funding asks to goals like healing, tourism, and education—not just statue preservation.

## Strategic and Sustainable Funding

- Consider a “funding first” model where implementation is paused until all necessary funds are secured
- Use equity-focused grant sources (e.g., Truth & Reconciliation funds, cultural heritage grants) that require inclusive content.
- Consider an ongoing legacy fund or endowment to ensure long-term viability of education, programming, and site maintenance.
- Develop a cost-benefit rationale tied to education, healing, and tourism, not just maintenance of art.

# Inclusion

Participants called for authentic inclusion—not just of voices, but of power and influence. There was a clear call to embed equity, uplift historically excluded stories, and ensure a sense of belonging throughout the process. The following feedback was gathered:

## Embedded Equity and Representation

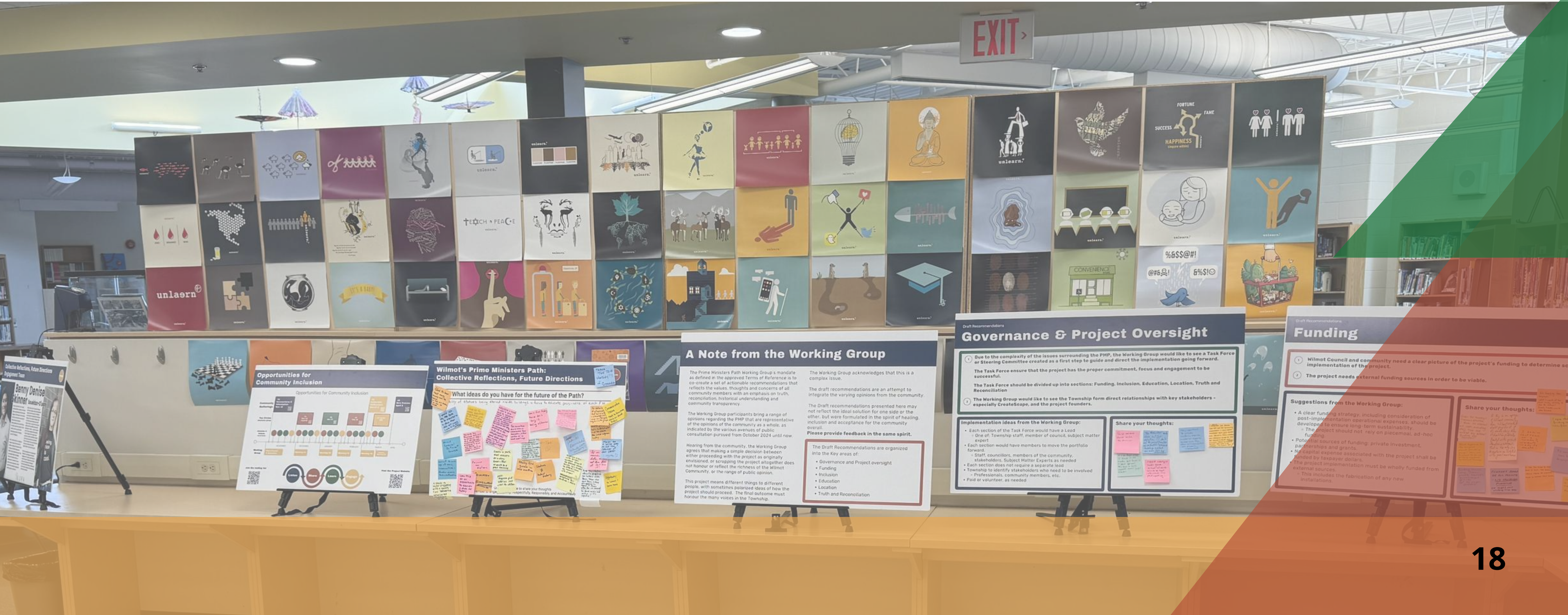
- Ensure meaningful participation from equity-deserving communities, including Indigenous nations, Black, Asian, and racialized residents, LGBTQ2S+ and Two-Spirit communities, youth, and newcomers.
- Avoid extractive or performative inclusion—compensate participation, share power, and provide emotional supports (e.g., counseling, cultural protocols, trauma-informed facilitation).
- Consider a rotating “Community Curator” role to update and revise content annually.
- Be mindful about how the project is perceived, and how it might impact marginalized participants in their own communities

## Expand Historical Narrative

Without Indigenous voices, this is not Canadian history. Without racialized and marginalized perspectives, this is not truth. -Participant

- Co-create content with communities historically excluded from dominant historical narratives: Chinese railroad workers, refugees and immigrant farmers, women’s suffrage activists, Métis resistance leaders, Black Loyalists, etc.
- Add parallel timelines or interpretive tools showing the impact of colonial leaders on different communities.
- Recognize that inclusion is not reconciliation—each has its own process, scope, and principles.

*Inclusion is about ensuring diverse communities have access to belonging within a system, while reconciliation is about transforming the system to restore respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in response to colonial harm.*



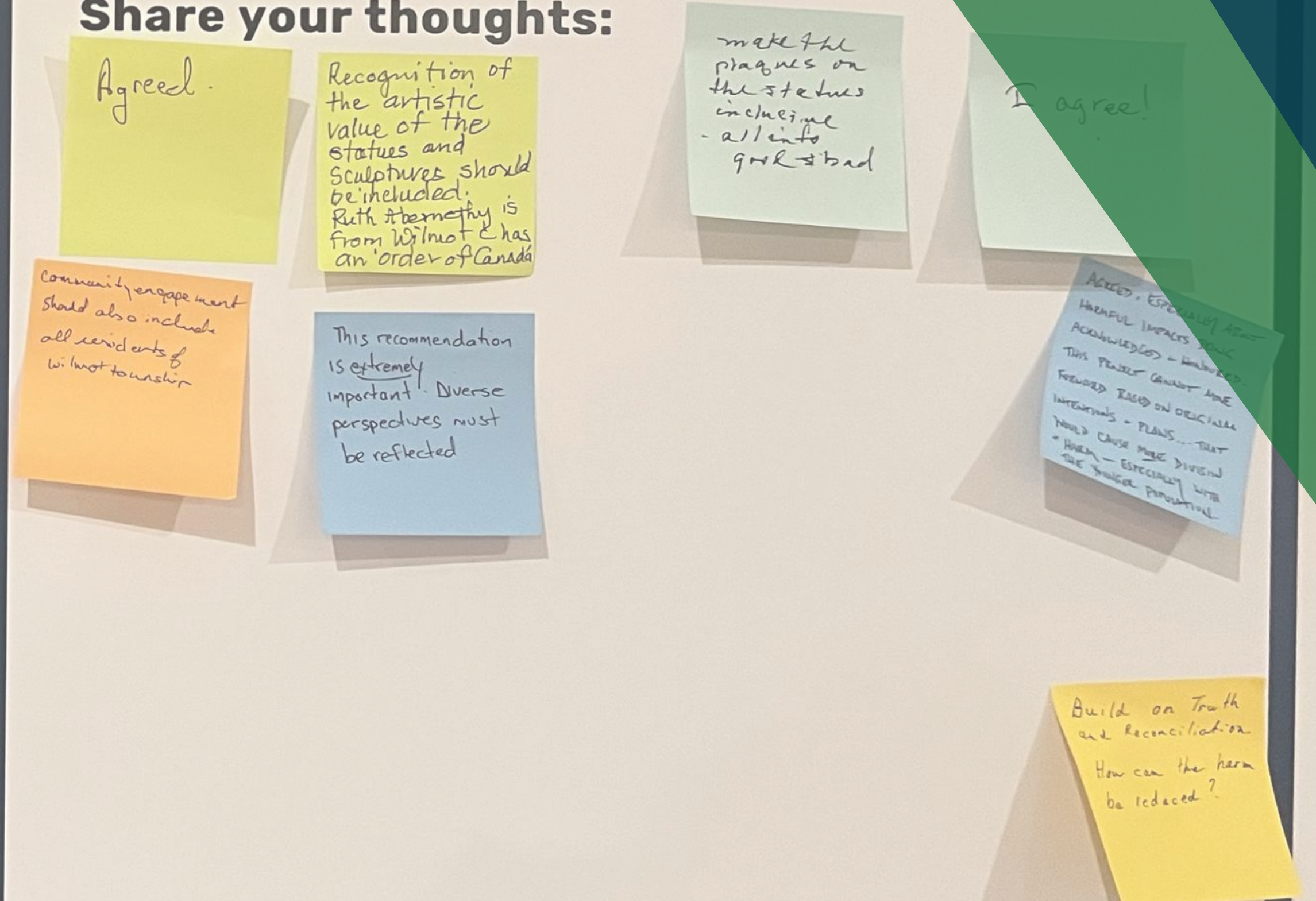
# Inclusion

**The Working Group recommends that a range of perspectives be incorporated in the final outcome of the project, with a particular focus on those who have historically been excluded or harmed by the legacy of the figures represented by the statues.**

## Suggestions from the Working Group:

- Political awareness and an equity-informed lens should be foundational to the project task force.
- Diverse perspectives are not just consulted but actively embedded and meaningfully included in decision-making.
- Any community engagement done to finalize the project plan and implement it should involve Indigenous voices, racialized communities, settlers, new comers, youth, and marginalized groups.
- Harmful impacts of the project, however unintended, should be acknowledged as part of honouring the current context of the project.

## Share your thoughts:



## Make Inclusion Visible and Measurable

- Require that Indigenous partners co-develop and officially endorse educational materials, installations, and final site concepts.
- Publicly report on diversity within project roles (e.g., facilitators, content creators, contractors).
- Avoid symbolic gestures—ensure influence, not just presence.
- Avoid centering settler interpretations of inclusion—instead, follow community-led definitions of meaningful involvement.
- Provide education to the broader public on why inclusive practices matter—beyond optics, it's a matter of ethics and accountability.

## Education

Education was seen as a central purpose of any future iteration of the project. Community members advocated for accessible, layered, and Indigenous-informed educational experiences that explore Canada's full history. There was a strong preference for “living”, crowd-sourced and open-data-informed storytelling.

The following feedback was gathered:

## Prioritizing Education

**” You can’t change history, but you can change how we learn from it. – Participant**

- Frame PMP as an education-first public history initiative, not a statue restoration project.
- Require that all educational programming is curated in collaboration with Indigenous and racialized educators and historians.
- Include a clear educational mission statement, with outcomes like improved historical literacy, critical thinking, and reconciliation awareness.

## Educational Content and Partnerships

- A balanced, comprehensive history must be presented, highlighting both achievements and harms of the Prime Ministers.
- Prioritize oral histories and lived experience—especially Indigenous, racialized, immigrant, and queer narratives.
- Design content for multiple formats and levels:
  - Youth: child-friendly timelines, activity books, oral storytelling.
  - Adults: articles, video interviews, walking tours.
  - Scholars: access to digitized archives, historical timelines, citations.
- Pilot residencies, school field trips, and summer lectures to deepen public learning.

## Delivery Mechanism Suggestions

- Interactive exhibits.
- Oral history installations.
- Performances and living tableaux.
- QR-coded plaques linked to curated content
- “Then vs Now” contextual signage
- Booklets for visitors
- Public programming: symposiums, exhibit talks, book clubs, reconciliation workshops.
- Online and open repositories



# Location

Residents called for approaches that allow for informed, intentional engagement with the statues. Respectful, reflective, and controlled environments were widely preferred. The following feedback was gathered:

## Informed Consent in Site Design

- Reintroduce statues only where viewers can choose to engage, not where they are passively encountered (e.g., no town square or fountain display).
- Use physical thresholds—bridges, winding paths, plantings, signage—to communicate that entering the statue space is optional and thoughtful.
- Include content warnings or context panels at the entrance to inform viewers about the nature of the exhibit and its potential to cause harm.
- Acknowledge the complexity of the exhibit, and the past harms.
- One participant shared, “Put them somewhere where people have to choose to go — not where they’re forced to walk past harm.”

## Alternative Sites and Formats

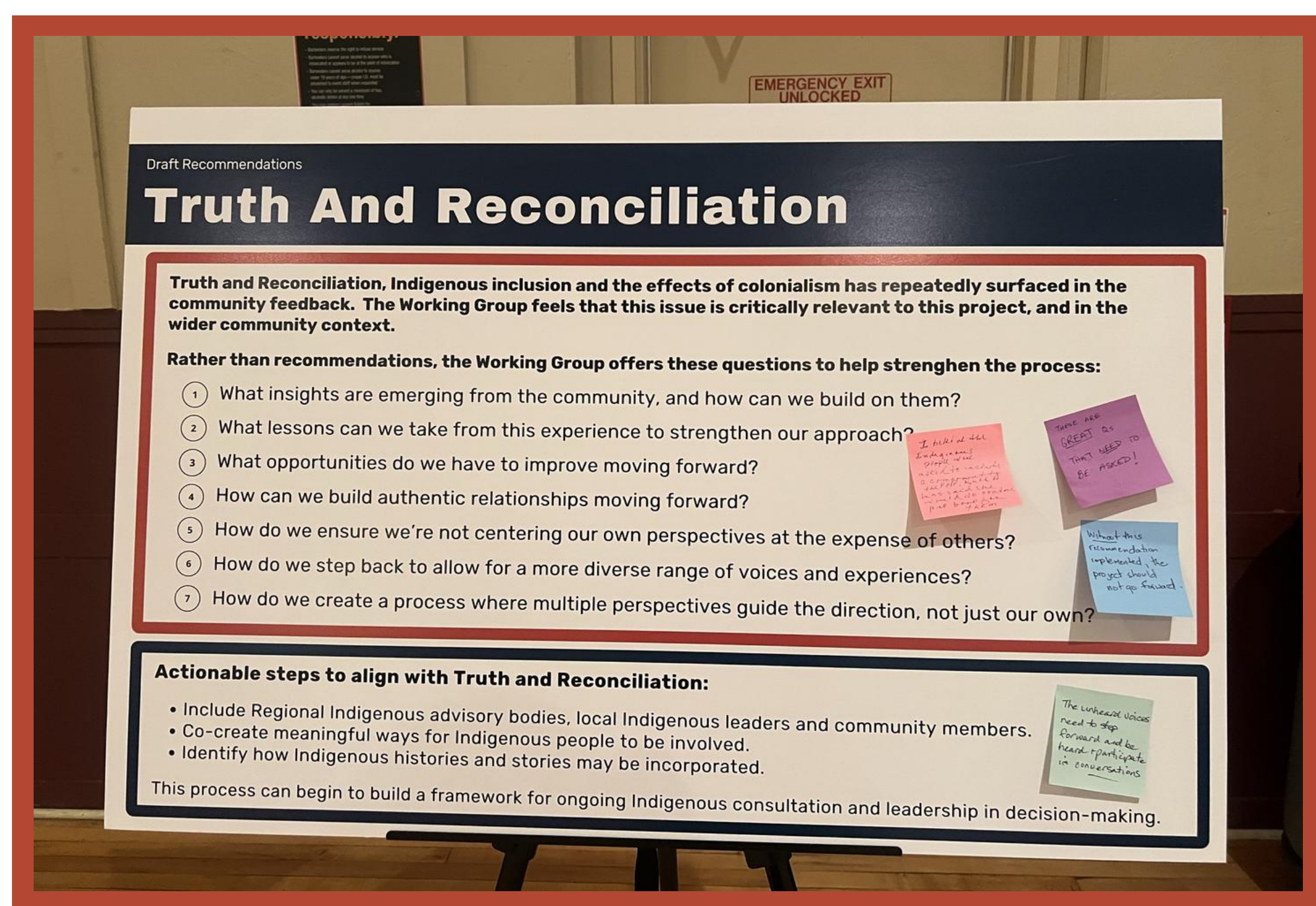
- Re-site statues to controlled environments, such as museums, indoor centers, gardened/fenced areas
- Allow for multiple locations, each statue telling a different story in a unique setting (e.g., businesses, post-secondary institutions, cultural centers).
- Use mobile exhibits or temporary installations that move through libraries, schools, or community halls.
- Consider a digital twin project—replicating the PMP online with videos, augmented reality, and curated commentary.
- Explicitly exclude the fountain at Castle Kilbride from any statue reinstatement, as widely opposed.

## Purposeful and Reflective Design

- Avoid framing statues as celebratory; instead, integrate them into critical historical reflection spaces, similar to installations at war memorials.
- Include Indigenous design elements (medicine gardens, water features, artwork) to set the tone of reflection and reconciliation.

# Truth & Reconciliation

Throughout the process, participants emphasized that reconciliation is not symbolic—it requires action, listening, and structural change. There was a collective acknowledgment that harm has occurred, and any future steps must be taken with care, respect, and Indigenous leadership. The following feedback was gathered:



## Acknowledge Harm

- Acknowledge that the statues, especially Sir John A. Macdonald, symbolize harm for many community members, particularly Indigenous folks.
- Publicly recognize the trauma of cultural genocide and systemic racism linked to Canadian leaders.
- Use the PMP as a site of reconciliation, not just memorialization—focus on process, not just outcome.
- Include elements such as “leave the paint” as a visual truth marker, SJAM laid on his side and plaques that highlight harms alongside achievements.

## Indigenous Engagement

- Ensure consultation with Indigenous communities drives all aspects of content, location, and education.
- Indigenous Nations must be consulted, resourced, and empowered to shape outcomes.
- Avoid performative “co-creation” models that erase power imbalances—relinquish decision-making power when appropriate.
- Add Indigenous statues, stories, or installations in parity with Prime Ministers.

## Alignment with TRC Calls to Action

- Treat the PMP as a case study in public-facing reconciliation, measuring progress against TRC calls, especially #79 (commemorative initiatives).
- Clearly state how reconciliation is being advanced—not just referenced—in governance, content, and implementation.
- Embed community healing opportunities, such as storytelling events, reconciliation workshops, and spaces for grief and reflection.



**If it does not move forward with Indigenous collaboration, it has no future.** — Participant

# Additional Insights

## Community Healing & Sharing

Many community members shared personal reflections, stories of pain, hope, and connection. While the discussions often focused on governance, location, and policy, the emotional weight of this project was unmistakable. For many, the Prime Ministers Path is not just about statues, it is about memory, harm, identity, and belonging.

### Hurt, Courage, and Listening

- Some participants shared that the statues, particularly of Sir John A. Macdonald, were a source of personal and generational pain, especially for Indigenous residents and allies.
- Others described feeling unheard or dismissed in earlier stages of the project's life — and expressed cautious hope that this new process was finally making room for true dialogue and emotional honesty.
- Residents reflected on the emotional exhaustion of polarized public debates and the impact of media attention and social division on their sense of community.
- There were moments of compassionate disagreement, where participants acknowledged that even those with opposing views were trying to hold onto something important to them — whether history, art, or healing.

### Moments of Connection and Growth

- Participants expressed gratitude for the opportunity to learn from others, especially Indigenous voices who shared stories of loss, survival, and resistance.
- Many shared feelings of responsibility and hope — a desire to “get this right” not just for Wilmot, but as a model of how communities can respond to difficult histories.
- The act of sitting together, in circle, listening, and being heard was described by several as healing in itself — a space where pain could be witnessed without dismissal, and where trust could begin to grow.

### A Need for Ongoing Healing

- Several participants called for spaces beyond statues — places for community reflection, ceremony, and reconciliation practices (e.g., gardens, storytelling spaces, workshops).
- There was a clear desire to move from debate to restoration, to build something together that acknowledges harm while cultivating care, learning, and connection.



The process has been more valuable than the product.

*Participant*

# Creative Ideas for Future Implementation

Community members emphasized the importance of healing spaces, emotional expression, and creativity as essential to the project's future. Many shared that the act of storytelling, art-making, and interactive design could help residents engage with the complexity of history in ways that feel safe, hopeful, and meaningful. The following creative ideas shared reflect a desire for transformation, not preservation, and for the space to become a site of ongoing dialogue, imagination, and care.

## Interactive Installations

- Include rotating art displays on empty platforms or plinths.
- Install a Speaker's Corner where residents can share their stories — live or pre-recorded.
- Use augmented reality to allow the statues and surrounding stories to evolve with public input.
- Create a digital “living history” archive where community members can upload stories, photos, and reflections.
- One participant shared, “What if the base became a space for new stories — not fixed in bronze, but open and alive?”

## Recontextualization & Symbolic Art

- Consider leaving or adding paint as a permanent marker of protest and change.
- Lay Sir John A. Macdonald on his side or replace with an outline that says: “Here once stood...”
- Commission Indigenous or youth artists to create counter-monuments or overlays on existing statues.
- One participant shared, “Keep the paint. That’s part of the story now too.”

## Healing-Centred Design

- Integrate medicine gardens, water features, or ceremonial spaces for rest, grief, and reflection.
- Build a literal bridge to any future statue site — to symbolize crossing into history with consent.
- Install a community agreement board with co-created guidelines for respect in the space:
  - “Conversation is welcome, aggression is not.”
  - “Read before you think. Think before you speak.”
- One participant shared, “Make it a place of peace, not just plaques.”



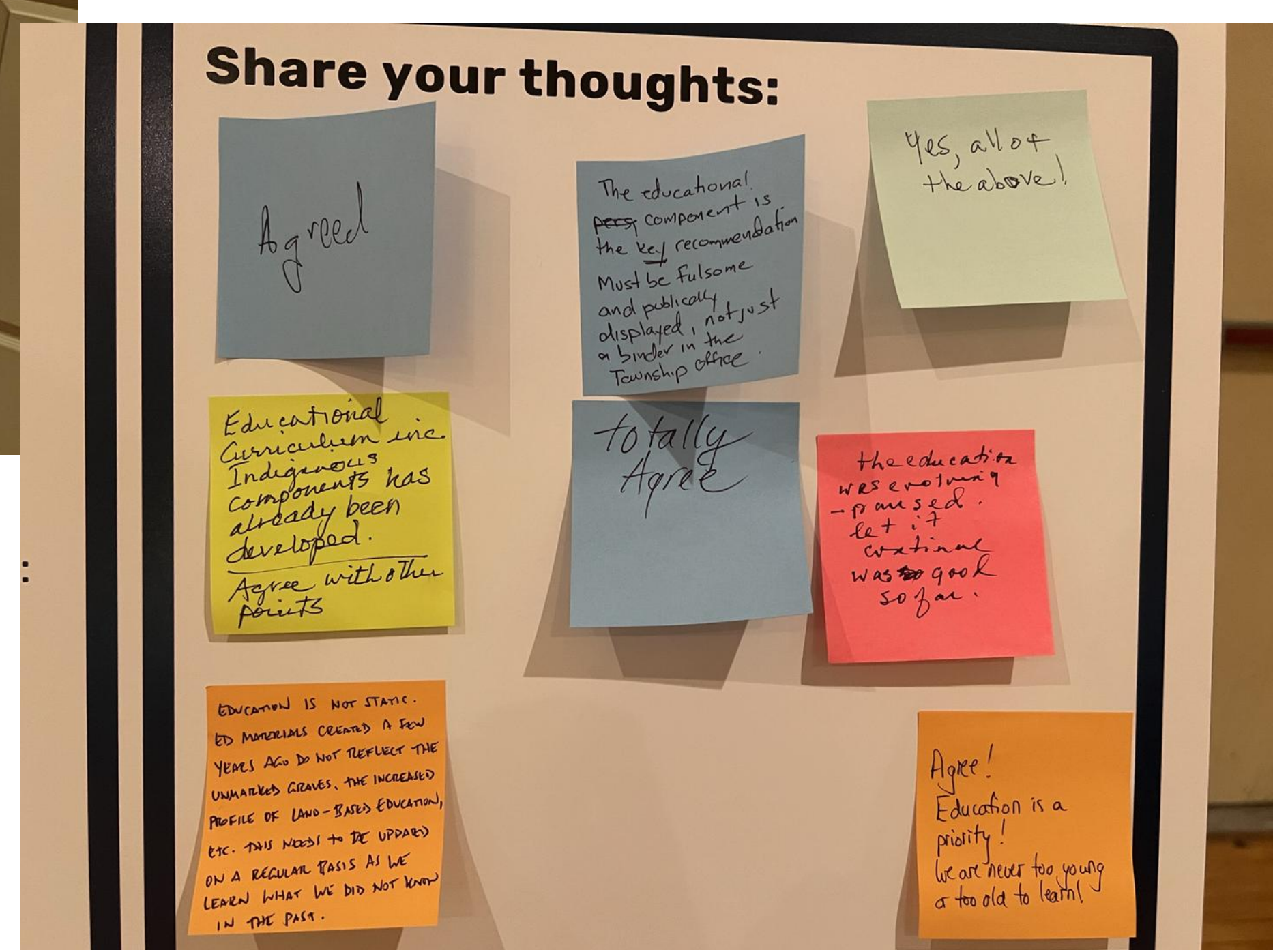
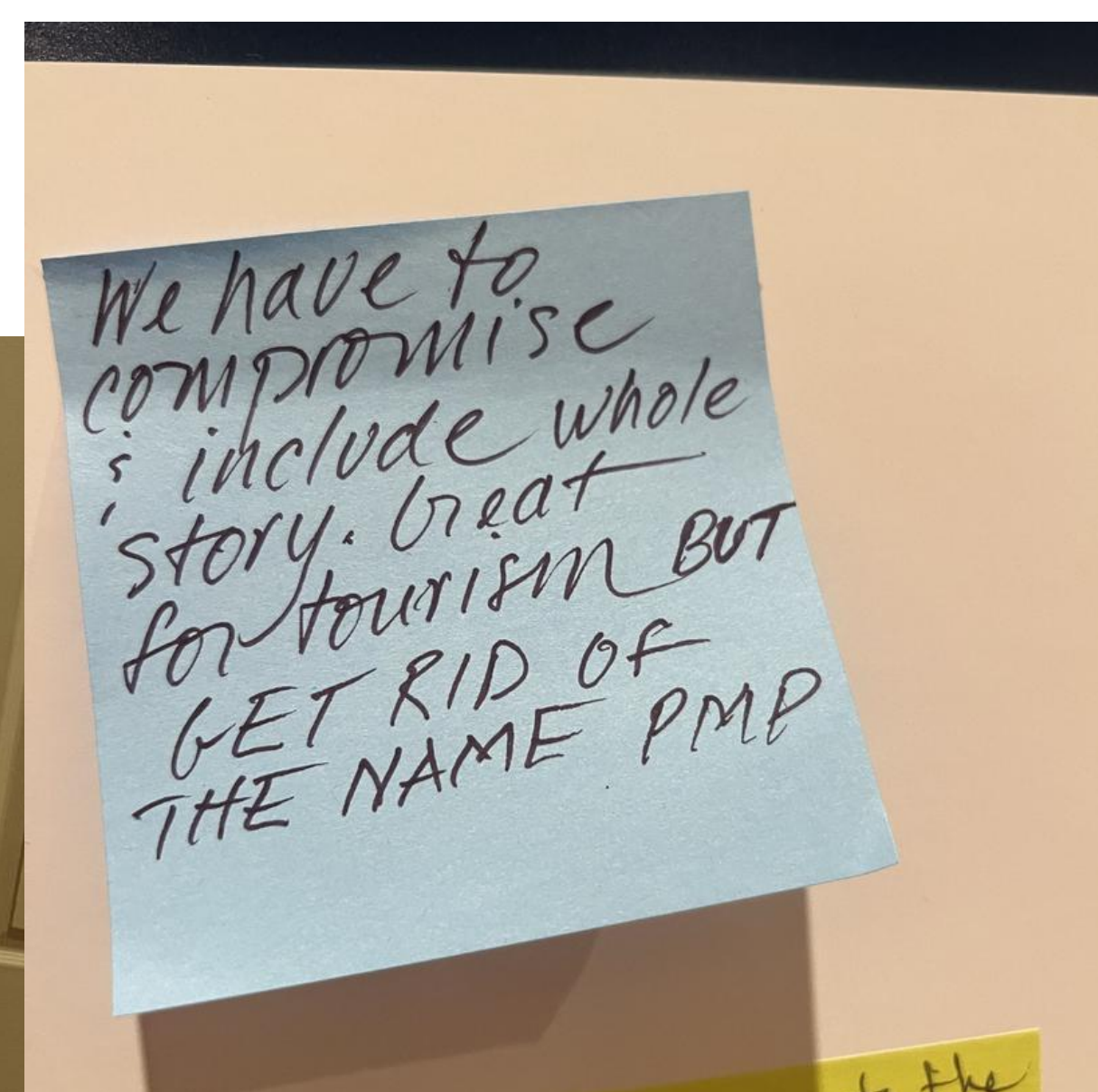
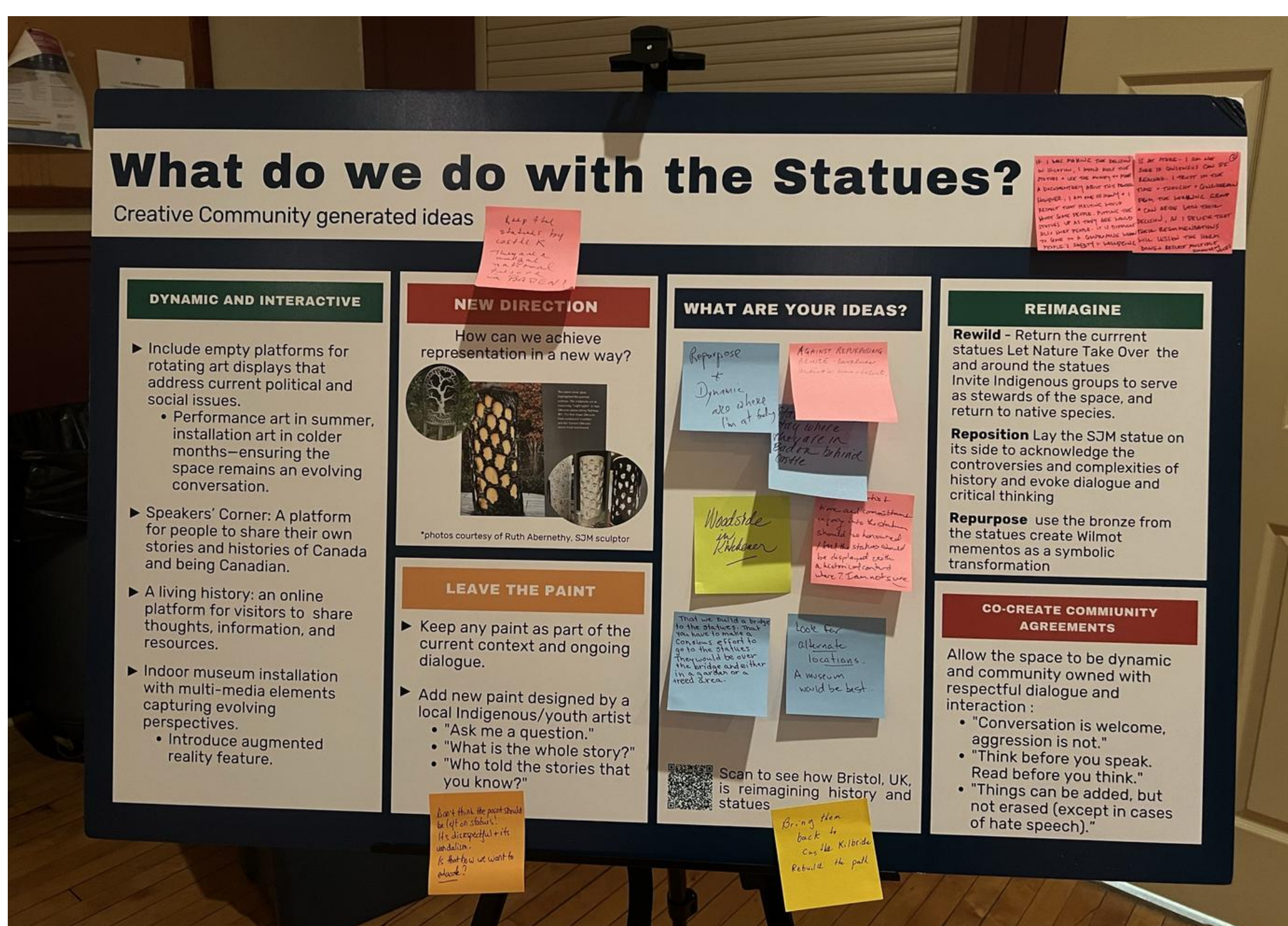
Creative imagining of the future Prime Ministers

## Creative Decomissioning

- Melt down statues to create a community reconciliation monument.
- Bury them as a time capsule, letting future generations decide how to interpret them.
- One participant shared, *"Give them back to the community – in a new form, one that reflects who we are now."*

## Ongoing Storytelling

- Host seasonal performance series: spoken word, dance, storytelling, panel talks on leadership and legacy.
- Use the space for public debate, historical interpretation, or intergenerational conversation circles.
- One participant shared, *"This space could be a stage for truth. Not just the truth of the past, but of where we go from here."*





# Final Reflections

The PMP Collective Reflections, Future Directions engagement process began in the shadow of a difficult and polarized community issue that was often framed as a stark binary on the future of the PMP: preserve it, or remove it. Over the course of seven months, through thousands of contributions, conversations, and courageous acts of participation, the community moved beyond this binary.

Residents of Wilmot Township came forward to live the values that guided this process: to listen, share, learn, and engage.

- They listened — not just to those they agreed with, but to neighbours with different perspectives, different histories, and different experiences of the Prime Ministers Path.
- They shared — their memories, their pride, their pain, their fears, and their hopes for what the future could hold.
- They learned — by taking part in tea circles, gatherings, and surveys that asked difficult questions and encouraged deeper reflection on history, identity, and belonging.
- They engaged — by trusting the process enough to return to a challenging conversation, by joining the Working Group, by filling out surveys, and by contributing ideas for a future shaped by community voice.

The Working Group saw themselves as a microcosm of the broader community: a small and diverse group grappling with the full complexity of history, identity, and reconciliation. In many ways, Wilmot Township itself stands as a reflection of Canada — a community seeking to find a way to hold both the pride and the pain of our shared history, without erasing or ignoring either.

The Recommendations that emerged from this process are not a singular solution, nor do they represent unanimous agreement. Instead, they attempt to honour the wide range of experiences, perspectives, and values present across Wilmot Township. They reflect a collective effort to imagine a future that is transparent, inclusive, and rooted in truth.

This process demonstrated that even in the face of polarization, communities can choose dialogue over division. They can choose to listen more deeply, share more honestly, learn more openly, and engage more fully. That choice is what Wilmot residents made again and again throughout this process, and is perhaps the strongest foundation on which to build the future of the Prime Ministers Path, and the future of Wilmot Township as a whole.



# Glossary of Terms

## Community Gathering

An open-invitation event where residents come together to share their perspectives, learn from one another, and contribute to community-wide conversations. Designed to foster connection and dialogue in a respectful and welcoming setting.

## Community Tea Circle

A small-group, informal conversation focused on reflection, storytelling, and listening. Often hosted in homes or community spaces, tea circles offer amore intimate and culturally sensitive alternative to traditional meetings like focus groups or town halls.

## Collective Reflections, Future Directions

The title of the public engagement initiative launched by Wilmot Township to reassess the future of the Prime Ministers Path. This name reflects the twin goals of learning from the past and shaping a shared vision for what comes next.

## Engagement

The process of inviting and including community members in shaping decisions that affect them. In this project, engagement involved a variety of methods to reach diverse participants and encourage meaningful participation.

## Equity-deserving Groups

Communities that have been historically excluded or marginalized in decision-making and resource allocation. This includes, but is not limited to, Indigenous peoples, racialized individuals, 2SLGBTQ+ people, people with disabilities, newcomers, and youth.

## Informed Consent in Design

An approach that emphasizes the need for transparent, inclusive, and participatory processes before decisions are made—particularly on topics involving cultural memory, public representation, or historical trauma.

## **Path of the Crane**

An Indigenous-led engagement and facilitation model used in this process. Rooted in cultural protocol and relational accountability, it centers Indigenous voices and ways of knowing while creating safe spaces for broader community participation.

Reconciliation is a long-term process of restoring relationships and addressing past and ongoing harms between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. In this context, reconciliation involves acknowledging history, centering Indigenous perspectives, and co-creating a future rooted in justice and respect.

## **Trauma-Informed Facilitation**

A practice of designing and leading conversations with sensitivity to the emotional and psychological impacts of trauma. This approach prioritizes participant safety, consent, choice, and respect throughout the engagement process.

## **Working Group**

A diverse body of community members convened to reflect on public input, explore tensions, and help shape direction. The group included residents with varied lived experiences and perspectives on the Prime Ministers Path and the broader themes it raises.