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**Sent:** June 5, 2025 12:25 PM

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**Subject:** Sir John A. Macdonald's statue should stand, but not alone

**Wilmot Township Elected Representatives and Senior Staff:**

For your information and consideration, The Globe and Mail editorial below, published today, is relevant to the Township's current deliberations around the future of the Prime Ministers Path.

By way of this same communication, I hereby request that the Township's Municipal Clerk add this Correspondence to the Public Record.

Brendan Wycks

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Opinion

**Sir John A. Macdonald's statue should stand, but not alone**

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/editorials/article-john-as-statue-should-stand-but-not-alone/>

The Globe and Mail Editorial Board

Published 5 hours ago

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Boards encase a statue of Canada's first prime minister on the lawn of Queen's Park in Toronto. Cole Burston/The Globe and Mail

The statue of Sir John A. Macdonald in front of Ontario's legislature is [expected to return to public view](#) this summer after being vandalized five years ago. That's a good move, but it does not go far enough.

Without Macdonald, it's no stretch to say that the country we know would not exist. Canada's first prime minister was also the leading figure of Confederation. However, his legacy is [stained by the establishment](#) of a national residential school system aimed at stamping out Indigenous culture, causing generations of trauma.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has [called for memorials](#) to the schools in each provincial capital. So far, the best Ontario's legislature has done is a [display of children's shoes](#). The room is open only during scheduled tours and access requires passing through the building's security cordon.

To reflect Macdonald's legacy properly, remove the protective box now hiding his statue – and erect an equally prominent memorial to the victims of residential schools.

Let [First Nations](#) take the lead on how to commemorate that sorry history, in which thousands of children died and [more than 150,000](#) in total were victimized. Position Macdonald's statue so he is left to gaze at the memorial. And set the target of having it in place by Canada Day next year.

It's ambitious timing but long overdue. Raising a proper memorial in front of the legislature of Canada's biggest province would be a tangible apology for some of the harms the country has perpetrated. It would also be a promise – graven in stone or forged in metal – to engage more respectfully and honourably with Indigenous Canadians.

That honour and respect was in short supply in the 19th century.

Macdonald did give some Indigenous men with property [the right to vote](#). But his government also [banned native ceremonies](#) such as the potlatch, a prohibition that lasted 67 years, and supported the [executions](#) of Indigenous leaders who resisted Canadian sovereignty.

"We must grapple with the fact that Canada's first prime minister was both an important nation builder as well as a nation destroyer," University of Manitoba academics Niigaan Sinclair and Sean Carleton wrote in a January [opinion piece](#) for The Canadian Encyclopedia.

The long-running debate over Macdonald's legacy was accentuated by the global racial reckoning unleashed after George Floyd, an American Black man, was murdered by police in 2020. Protesters beheaded a Macdonald statue in Montreal and toppled one in Kingston. City leaders removed his likeness in Charlottetown and Regina.

Macdonald's detractors argued that these statues were honouring a racist unworthy of tribute. His supporters countered by pointing out that he made Confederation happen.

The first PM also spearheaded the grandiose goal of a railway pushed across thousands of kilometres of mountain, prairie, lakes and boreal forest. This was a condition of British Columbia joining the country and united a vast land from sea to sea. This had the benefit of blocking U.S. designs by opening up the west to loyal settlers.

In fact, Canada was born in part because of concern about U.S. expansionism. That's a legacy that cannot be overlooked as powerful voices in the United States talk again about absorbing Canada.

None of this will satisfy those who want Macdonald consigned to the ash heap of history. But it does illustrate that his legacy has multiple facets.

One argument for keeping in place controversial statues is that an explanatory plaque can be added to help further historical knowledge. In Ontario, the speaker of the

legislature is promising to retain a sign currently posted by the boxed-up Macdonald statue. However, this sign is little more than a bland statement about not being able to change the past. It says nothing about why Macdonald is so polarizing.

That's not good enough.

When the Macdonald statue at Ontario's legislature was unveiled in 1894, Confederation was fresh in public memory and his views on First Nations were unlikely to have given much pause. That can no longer be the case.

Honours for the first prime minister must not erase the victims of residential schools. Celebrate Macdonald for the good he achieved but do it beside a memorial showing proper respect for those he harmed. His statue should stand, but it should not stand alone.