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Sent: Sunday, January 14, 2024 3:52 PM

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Subject: Prime Ministers Path on January 15 Council Agenda

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Hello Mayor Natasha and Councillors,

We are pleased to see Councillor Wilkinson's motion regarding the future of the Prime Ministers Path (PMP) on the agenda for your January 15 council meeting. Thank you Councillor Wilkinson.

The removal of the statues from the PMP in 2021 was a huge disappointment. In our opinion the entire project had merit on many levels:- artistic, historic, educational, economic, community pride - to name a few. We were appalled by the vandalism against the Macdonald statue and found it hard to believe that one or more of our then councillors viewed the defacing of a public work of art justifiable as a means of protest.

The council discussions that eventually led to the demise of the PMP were frustrating and divisive. In large measure this was due to the pandemic restrictions on public gatherings. Rather than meeting in person to respectfully share and discuss our views, passionate citizens with a variety of perspectives spoke via Zoom, like talking heads speaking into a vacuum with no response to indicate that anyone was listening.

The consultation process and final report of the First Peoples Group (FPG) were equally disappointing. This firm had an excellent reputation for their ability to bring together people with diverse views and to mediate productive and fruitful discussion. Again, primarily because of pandemic restrictions, this did not happen.

In the conclusion of their June 30, 2021 report the FPG state "*All Canadians, including citizens of Wilmot Township were shocked by the discoveries of some 1,000 Indigenous children in mass graves on the grounds of two Indian Residential Schools ...*" Indeed, archeologists using ground penetrating radar had very recently located approximately 1000 unmarked individual graves at these two schools. Neither were a mass grave and the technology is not capable of identifying bodies.

The death of any child at a residential school is a tragedy. The abominable treatment of Indigenous children at many of these schools is unforgivable. Somehow we must find a way to reconcile and move forward. The exaggerated referral by FPG to " 1,000

children in mass graves" will not help us do so. In our minds this kind of hyperbole undermines the value of the FPG report.

We hope that Councillor Wilkinson's motion will allow the citizens of Wilmot to put all of that behind us and start afresh. The motion refers to the PMP statues. It is not clear to us if that means only the statues currently in storage, or to the PMP as a whole, including the statues yet to be created. We hope it is the latter - the restoration and continuation of the PMP in Baden.

The two gentlemen who initiated this project, Jim Rodger and Dave Caputo, are both Wilmot Township residents. Perhaps they could be invited to share with all of us their initial vision for the PMP, including the education component, and how they had intended to involve Indigenous members of our community. This could be a good place to start over.

Again, Councillor Wilkinson, thank you for bringing the Prime Ministers Path back to the table.

Sincerely,

Dennis and Pat Mighton

[Dennis and Patricia Mighton](#)

