



Wilmot Township's Prime Ministers Path to be removed

Accompanying recommendations to encourage community healing and cohesion

Baden, ON – Monday, July 5, 2021 - A special meeting of Council was held this evening to receive a report from First Peoples Group. A resolution, adopted by Township Council by unanimous vote, endorsed that the Township of Wilmot move forward with the recommendations outlined in the report provided by First Peoples Group. As such, the remaining statues will be removed from their current location in Baden, on the east portion of the Township's Administration Complex property.

On July 27, 2020, Township Council adopted a notice of motion to undertake public engagement regarding Baden's Prime Ministers Path. Sir John A. Macdonald, Canada's first prime minister, was an architect of the residential school system and was the catalyst for beginning a fulsome review of the Prime Ministers Path in Wilmot Township. In August of 2020, the statue of Macdonald was removed and put into storage while the community consultation was in progress.

First Peoples Group, an Indigenous advisory firm located in Ottawa, were engaged to design and lead a comprehensive engagement strategy. The strategy included community conversations and a broad online engagement for all Wilmot residents to provide input and feedback. In a "what we heard" report, First Peoples Group presented the voices of community members to reflect what was shared by the community and the resulting recommendations from this process. Two members of Council and several staff members were included in a working group that assisted First Peoples Group with communicating updates to Council and the public, endorsing the public engagement process, and providing resources, connections, and feedback throughout the process. The report was made public via the Council agenda that was posted on the Township website on June 30.

Staff will arrange for the immediate removal and temporary storage of the four remaining statues on the Prime Ministers Path and discontinue any future expansion or investment in the Path as it exists today.

Further, staff will be directed to report back to Council with an implementation plan for the incorporation of the remaining recommendations from First Peoples Group, including:

- a) 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.

- b) 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.

“On behalf of First Peoples Group, I would like to thank the residents of the Township of Wilmot for your participation in and passion for this community engagement process. We want to reiterate that we recognize that this has been a difficult conversation for the community, however the hard work has only just begun. We hope that courage and kindness guide your future engagements to move forward on these issues and remind you all that Wilmot has the potential to show Canada that healing and reconciliation can be achieved.”

- Guy Freedman, President, First Peoples Group

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Media Contacts:

Sandy Jackson, Acting CAO

sandy.jackson@wilmot.ca

519-634-8444 ext. 241

Dawn Mittelholtz, Director of Information and Legislative Services/Municipal Clerk

dawn.mittelholtz@wilmot.ca

519-634-8444 ext. 230