

## Legacy Review - Sir John A. Macdonald Statue

<b>Date</b>	March 31, 2021
<b>To</b>	Mayor Masters and City Councillors
<b>From</b>	Executive Committee
<b>Service Area</b>	City Planning & Community Development
<b>Item #</b>	CR21-46

### RECOMMENDATION

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That City Council:

1. Direct Administration to relocate the Sir. John A. Macdonald Statue and place it into storage while consultations occur with partners and public on an appropriate future location, as well as an accompanying balanced educational programming and narrative.
2. Direct Administration to report back to City Council in Q1 of 2022 with the results of an engagement process to determine the final location of the statue.

### HISTORY

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At the March 22, 2021 meeting of the Executive Committee, the Committee, in **private** session, considered report E21-10 report from the City Planning & Community Development Division.

The Committee adopted a resolution to concur in the recommendations contained in the report, after removing recommendations #2 & 3 and amending 1 & 4 to read as follows:

1. Direct Administration to relocate the Sir. John A. Macdonald Statue and place it into storage while consultations occur with partners and public on an appropriate future location, as well as an accompanying balanced educational programming and narrative.

4. Approve these recommendations at its meeting on March 31, 2021.

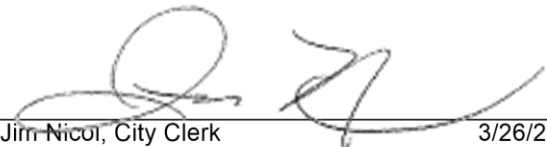
In addition, the Committee adopted the following amendment:

Direct Administration to report back to City Council in Q1 of 2022 with the results of an engagement process to determine the final location of the statue.

Recommendation #4 does not require City Council approval.

Respectfully submitted,

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



Jim Nicol, City Clerk 3/26/2021

**ATTACHMENTS**

E21-10 Legacy Review - Sir John A. Macdonald Statue

## Legacy Review - Sir John A. Macdonald Statue

<b>Date</b>	March 3, 2021
<b>To</b>	Executive Committee
<b>From</b>	City Planning & Community Development
<b>Service Area</b>	Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services
<b>Item No.</b>	E21-10

### RECOMMENDATION

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The Executive Committee recommends that City Council:

1. Direct Administration to remove the Sir John A. Macdonald Statue and place it into storage while consultations occur with partners on an appropriate future location.
2. Authorize the Executive Director of City Planning and Community Development or his or her designate to negotiate and approve any agreements required to relocate the statue should discussions with partners result in the identification of a more appropriate collection or location.
3. Authorize the City Clerk to execute the necessary agreements after review and approval by the City Solicitor.
4. Approve these recommendations at its meeting on March 10, 2021.

### ISSUE

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The first phase of the Sir John A. Macdonald Legacy Review is nearing completion. Through the research and conversations completed to date, Administration has determined that the existence of the statue, and in particular, its prominent placement in Victoria Park is viewed by many in the Indigenous community as a relic from a time prior to the City of Regina’s endorsement and commitment to Truth and Reconciliation. Specifically, the statue stands in commemoration of Sir John A. Macdonald’s legacy as a founder of Confederation and the first Prime Minister of Canada, but without context to support broad understanding of the impact of his policies on Indigenous peoples and other ethno-cultural communities. Further, Administration found that the location of the statue in Victoria Park and adjacent to City Square Plaza detracts from the primary function of these spaces as public gathering areas, and sites

where Council has prioritized opportunities for activation, cultural development and community building.

The next phase of the Legacy Review will focus on education and outreach initiatives through Regina.ca to build understanding of the legacy of Sir John A. Macdonald. Telling the full story of Macdonald's legacy and supporting Regina residents in increased understanding is an important part of the City's responsibilities as an institution engaged in Truth and Reconciliation. If the recommendations are approved the statue will be removed and placed in storage while Administration initiates more detailed planning and negotiation with potential partners on a new location, where it will be reinstalled with appropriate signage, interpretation, and educational programming.

## **IMPACTS**

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### **a) Alignment with corporate priorities.**

The Legacy Review and proposed course of action are strongly aligned with Regina's Cultural Plan, specifically the objective to Strengthen the Indigenous Community's Cultural Presence in Regina and direction that Regina's unique history and cultural diversity be celebrated in a way that tells the whole story of Regina. Further, the next phase of the review is strongly aligned with the approach of the Reconciliation Regina Community Action Plan, which focuses on relationships, respect, and opportunities for increased education and awareness.

### **b) Financial**

There will be budget implications to the communications and engagement approach as well as relocation of the statue and treatment of the site. These activities can be completed for between \$25,000 and \$35,000 and can be found in existing budgets within 2021 and 2022.

There are opportunities to expand the investment to allow for additional programming and interpretation, and additional public art. The annual public art capital budget allows for some flexibility but larger expenditures will be brought back to Council for review and approval.

## **OTHER OPTIONS**

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1. Relocating Statue to temporary storage while working with partners to identify an appropriate location (Recommended)

Consultation has resulted in several important findings regarding the current location of the statue in the Victoria Park, including that it makes some Indigenous people feel unwelcome in the Park. As an important location for community building and a location of major cultural events, including National Indigenous People's Day celebrations, it is important that the Park design be inclusive. Relocation, either to a partner organization who is able to support broader education and programming efforts to convey the full legacy of Sir John A. Macdonald, or to another City-owned public space that is less prominent, is the recommended starting point to this issue.

2. Removal of the Statue from public view

One option explored through the review has been permanent removal of the statue from public view, and either placing it in permanent storage or deaccessioning it from the City's Civic Art Collection and destroying it. For context, options of this nature must be explored carefully by a public collection. Art can and should generate a range of responses – in fact, some pieces are created specifically to be provocative and inspire creative thinking or debate in response to the issues of the day. Public dislike for a piece of art is not a sufficient test to equal permanent removal, and it can be difficult to identify the point at which these decisions move from strong collection management into censorship.

In the case of the Sir John A. Macdonald statue, Administration's assessment of the input from affected community members has been that there is a need for the City to participate more actively in telling the story of Macdonald's legacy. Instead of disposing of the piece, Administration will work with partners to add appropriate interpretation and programming, ensuring it can be a tool for education and outreach. Relocation and programming of the statue becomes part of the City's Reconciliation commitment and an opportunity for increased understanding between non-Indigenous and Indigenous residents.

### 3. Leave the Statue in its current location

Leaving the statue where it is and adding interpretive panels is another option considered through the review. This option is not recommended. The statue has been moved before and its current location does not carry significance in terms of the design of the piece or of the public space. Administration heard repeatedly from community members that the statue's placement presents a barrier to their use and enjoyment of the park, and for some is perceived as a violent reminder of generational trauma. Through relocation, Administration will work with partners ensure a future location is selected and designed in such a way that people will be able to visit only if they choose to and avoid the statue otherwise. Relocation also presents possibilities for a new treatment at the current site that contributes to further Reconciliation and healing.

## COMMUNICATIONS

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Prior to this item appearing on a public agenda, key stakeholders and those engaged in the process to date will be notified of the City's findings and next steps. Many members of the public have registered for updates through Regina.ca. A notice will be provided to these individuals when the report is public.

Administration has developed a communications and engagement approach to support the next objectives of the Legacy Review, specifically to encourage collective learning and sharing of experiences within the community.

## DISCUSSION

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*Sir John A. Macdonald Statue*

The Sir John A. Macdonald statue in Victoria Park is part of the City's Civic Art Collection. The statue was installed in 1967 in recognition of Canada's centennial. It was created by Sonia de Grandmaison who had moved to Canada from Russia and was based in Regina. The statue was cast at John Nugent's foundry near Lumsden.

#### *Civic Art and Cultural Collections Policy*

In 2019 City Council approved the Civic Art and Cultural Collections Policy to provide direction for stewardship of its public art collection, monuments, and pieces of cultural heritage. The policy contains guidance on how to review legacies that are seen to represent traumatic or harmful events or ideas:

#### *Review of Legacy Sculpture and Monuments*

- a. *In the service of truth telling, legacy sculpture and monuments may be contextualized, re-interpreted, replaced, or removed to increase understanding and visibility of the diverse peoples in Regina and their respective histories.*
- b. *Review of a legacy sculpture or monument may be initiated in response to:*
  - i. *Recognition of abuse of human rights or other harms by people or events commemorated in the legacy sculpture or monument.*
  - ii. *Research, inquiries, or other initiatives that uncover new information about historical figures or events commemorated in a legacy sculpture or monuments, or that call for increased visibility for different perspectives and experiences.*
  - iii. *Requests from Regina residents and cultural groups to address either of the above.*

#### *Legacy Review Process*

In response to requests from the local community and in alignment with national and international leading practices, the City of Regina initiated a review of the legacy represented by the statue in June 2020. The review acknowledges that to date the statue has stood in recognition of Macdonald's status and accomplishments, without appreciation for the harm done in furtherance of his vision and policies.

The objectives of the review are to:

- Gather community input on the options for response including adding context, interpretation, additional artwork, or removal of the statue
- Increase the community understanding of our diverse histories and experiences

#### *Phase 1 Summary*

Since June of 2020, Social & Cultural Development staff have had conversations with Indigenous artists, Regina cultural institutions, and academics and scholars about the Sir John A. Macdonald Statue. The discussions centered on the impact of Macdonald's legacy for residents of Regina and the surrounding area, the degree to which the statue recognizes these impacts, and the City's accountabilities and responsibilities as a public art collection and institution engaged in Reconciliation. Individuals and groups were selected for consultation because their art practice, area of study, or organizational mandate includes addressing harmful historical legacies and issues of reconciliation and reparation. These conversations have been sensitive and difficult for many who were engaged, but insights and advice were also given generously and with a shared objective to increase learning and understanding of difficult issues.

The project team along with representatives of Reconciliation Regina also met with First Nations Elders and Métis Old Ones. Because the review centers on issues that have broad implications for Indigenous communities, twelve Old Ones and Elders participated, representing the range of language groups found in the Treaty Four Territory.

In addition to working with stakeholders, the project team has completed a media review, additional research and reviewed and responded to numerous written submissions regarding the Macdonald statue and his legacy.

### Summary of Findings

#### *Statue creates barriers to access and participate fully in civic life within Victoria Park and City Square Plaza*

Many Indigenous peoples acutely feel that the statue represents both past harms against them by Canada, as well as the ongoing systems of colonial oppression that continue to impact them today. Participants in our conversations expressed that they experience pain, anxiety or other trauma by being confronted by the statue and will avoid being near it when possible.

#### *Presence or removal of the statue, as a single action, does not have an impact on full understanding of history*

A decision for the statue to remain or to be removed or relocated does not, on its own, have an impact on a broader understanding of history. While there has been a theme in public response that removal of the statue would “erase” history, in fact Administration found that the statue on its own tells an incomplete story. It recognizes Macdonald’s contributions as Canada’s first Prime Minister but overlooks the policies and initiatives that have had a negative impact on Indigenous peoples and other ethno-cultural communities.

#### *There is opportunity to increase understanding of Sir John A. Macdonald’s full legacy among Regina residents through public art and other media*

Participants in the review have noted that the statue has stood for decades in recognition of Macdonald’s role as an architect of Confederation and Canada’s first Prime Minister but fails to provide context on the impact of his government’s policies on Indigenous people. These policies include use of day schools and residential schools as tools of assimilation, relocation of Indigenous peoples away from traditional hunting and fishing areas to make room for European settlement, and an inadequate and often corrupt system for delivering rations to reserves. Chronic social and health issues experienced by many Indigenous people today can be linked back to these and other policies established by the Government of Canada while Macdonald was Prime Minister.<sup>1</sup> Macdonald also played a key role in the outcome of the trial of Métis leader Louis Riel, moving the trial to Regina where it was less likely to have Métis representation on the jury, and insisting the charge be high treason, connected to an obscure British law from 1342. This charge carried the death penalty

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<sup>1</sup> James Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*

whereas Canada's treason law did not.<sup>2</sup> Louis Riel was hanged in November of 1885 in Regina.

*Decisive action perceived as commitment to Reconciliation*

Removal or relocation of the statue is seen by the Indigenous community and others who understand Macdonald's legacy as a simple act that the City can take to demonstrate commitment to Reconciliation. The lack of clear action to date has been perceived by some as evidence that the City is not fully engaged in Reconciliation. Often this perception appeared to change during a conversation or engagement, as stakeholders became more familiar with the City's process and intentions and the strength of the policy direction that underpins our actions. However, participants made clear that they expect the City's process to include decisive action.

*Non-Indigenous organizations and institutions, including the City, must continue to take a leadership role in truth telling with regard to this and other harmful legacies*

While the review has relied heavily on Indigenous voices and input, it is critical that institutions like the City of Regina use their credibility and influence to support a broader understanding of history. Stakeholders emphasized the importance of mainstream institutions leading the way in efforts at truth telling and context setting with regard to historical wrongs against Indigenous peoples.

Administration also reviewed other aspects of Macdonald's legacy beyond the impact of his government's policies on Indigenous people. The treatment of immigrants from China stands out. The Chinese Head Tax was implemented in 1885 at \$50, eventually growing to \$500. The tax was in place until replaced by the Chinese Exclusion Act, which banned most Chinese immigration until 1947. These policies had a longstanding impact on the Chinese community in Canada; immigrants, mainly men, spent long years separated from their families, some never seeing their loved ones again. Lost cultural traditions occurred from this separation. The Chinese Canadian community continued to have the highest gender imbalance among any ethno-cultural group in Canada until the end of the Second World War<sup>3</sup>. Administration has extended an invitation to residents of Chinese descent to discuss further the impact of this legacy, and that invitation remains open. In the meantime, the results of our literature review will be incorporated into future outreach and education efforts.

*Phase 2: Recommended Course of Action*

Should Council approve the recommendation, the statue will be removed to temporary storage while a permanent location is identified, and programming and interpretation is developed. The Legacy Review will continue, with expanded outreach and engagement to increase learning and understanding.

*Statue Relocation*

In determining an appropriate location and/or potential partners, Administration will apply the following criteria:

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/history/EPISCONTENTSE1EP10CH4PA4LE.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Arlene Chan, *Chinese Head Tax in Canada*



- When exhibited, the statue will be in a location that is accessible to the public when they choose – i.e. It will not be exhibited along a well-used thoroughfare, public space, or location of major public events.
- When exhibited, the statue will be placed in appropriate context, with interpretive panels, online content, and/or programming that speaks to Macdonald's full legacy. Any partner that the City engages with on this project will need capacity to undertake appropriate activities to set context.

Planning is underway to develop options for landscape treatment or other interventions at the current site following removal of the statue. Concepts that have emerged through research and stakeholder discussions have included new public art and/or planting of traditional Indigenous medicines to support healing at the site and between Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents in Regina. More conversations with Elders and community members are required as planning continues. A further report will come back to Council with recommendations for this space.

#### *Education and Outreach Activities*

In addition to exploring relocation of the statue, the next phase of the Review will include outreach and engagement to:

- Communicate the findings of the Elder consultation and specific next steps to interested parties and the public.
- Continue to seek guidance from Indigenous residents, artists and elders on relocation efforts, interpretation and context setting, and programming opportunities for the statue.
- Clearly identify the intent of the John A. Macdonald Legacy Review and the City's responsibility in telling a complete story.
- Provide an accessible online space for conversation and educational information.
- Encourage participation on the Be Heard Regina Legacy Review page.
- Ensure Be Heard Regina is regularly reviewed and moderated to remove inappropriate or offensive comments or other materials if they appear.
- Provide updates to interested parties regarding the status of the Legacy Review.

While education and outreach activities will be mainly delivered through Regina.ca, the Cultural Development team will also continue exploring opportunities for response through public art and other media.

#### *Protocol Agreement*

A commitment was made to enact the Protocol Agreement with File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council for discussion of the Macdonald statue. This work is underway.

**DECISION HISTORY**

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The Civic Art & Cultural Collections Policy was approved by Council at the December 3, 2019 meeting (Report #CR19-110).

The recommendations contained within this report require City Council approval.

Respectfully Submitted,

Respectfully Submitted,



Laurie Shalley, Director, Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services

2/24/2021



Diana Hawryluk, Executive Director, City Planning & Community Dev.

2/25/2021

Prepared by: Emmaline Hill, Manager, Social & Cultural Development