

Wilmot's Prime Ministers Path

Project summary and background

The concept of the Prime Ministers Path started in 2013 with a group of citizens raising money to honor Canada's political history. For more than 10 years, it has been a sensitive project that has stirred up thoughts and feelings for many community members. This initiative is the direct result of the March 2024 Council decision to move forward with a working group to help shape the future of the path. This engagement initiative embodies the Township's commitment to transparency and is an opportunity to return to the basics principal of connecting deeply with community, and community members, and a step towards making decision-making a collaborative effort in the town of Wilmot.

Purpose, Goals, and Objectives

Purpose:

The purpose of this engagement process is to **consult with the community** to gather diverse opinions and experiences regarding the Prime Ministers Path. This engagement will provide a platform for individuals to share their perspectives on the historical significance of the path and its potential future. By engaging a **working group**, the Township aims to foster increased awareness and cultural competency within Wilmot. Ultimately, the purpose is to provide Wilmot Township with community-driven recommendations for the future direction of the Prime Ministers Path, ensuring that the outcome reflects the values, thoughts, and feelings of all community members.

Goals:

- **Engage and Listen:** Provide opportunities for all community members to share their perspectives, concerns, and experiences about the path.
- **Educate:** Build community awareness around Canadian history, especially Indigenous histories, and how this intersects with the statues represented in the path.

- **Collaborate:** Work with the community to co-create solutions through a structured working group that will advise on the future of the path.
- **Include Youth:** Actively engage younger generations in the conversation by offering youth-specific opportunities for input.
- **Build Competency:** Strengthen cultural competency within the community, particularly around Indigenous history and reconciliation efforts.

Objectives:

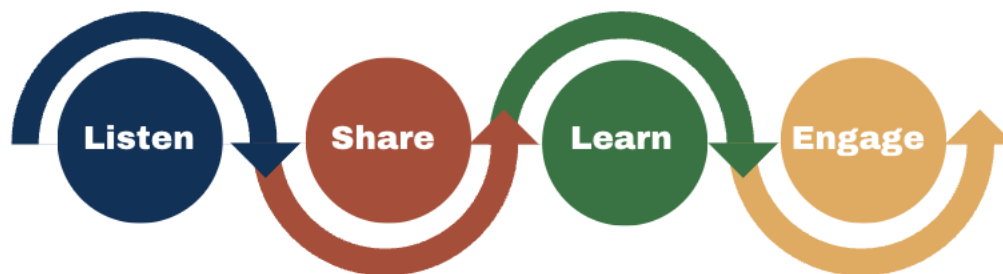
The primary objectives of this initiative are to establish a diverse and representative **working group**, facilitate broad **community participation** through meetings and social media outreach, and produce a set of actionable, **community-driven recommendations** for the future of the Prime Ministers Path.

Community Engagement

“Collective Reflections, Future Directions”

This plan is based on a layered approach to engagement to ensure inclusive participation, clear communication education, and transparency with the community.

Council interviews will allow for deep dives into council members' perspectives. **Public Information Sessions (PICs)** will provide large-scale opportunities for community feedback. **Working group meetings** will facilitate collaborative work between diverse stakeholders, and **monthly conversations** will create space for more focused, thematic discussions. **Social media campaigns** and **surveys** will be used to both share knowledge and gather input from those who cannot attend in-person events. Educational tools will be developed to support community understanding of the historical and cultural significance of the path.



Engagement Approach

1A. Council Interviews & Staff Survey

Before broader public engagement begins, it is essential to **interview each member of Wilmot Township's Council individually**. This will help establish the project team's foundational understanding of the project, the cultural sensitivities involved, and the council's desired outcomes. These interviews will offer a space for council members to share their personal thoughts and perspectives, allowing the team to shape an engagement approach that reflects the needs of Wilmot's political leadership. These interviews will also help align the council's expectations for the working group and the overall engagement process.

The Town project team will draft a survey, with the help of the LURA team, to survey the town staff on the history of the project. This will help us to understand what has happened in the past, and what the energy is around this project at the staff level.

1B. Initial Indigenous Engagement:

The first step in this engagement process will be to reach out to local Indigenous groups. These initial conversations will be handled by Benny, who will assess their capacity and willingness to participate, as well as invite them to join the working group and consultation sessions. Understanding the perspectives of Indigenous communities is a core priority, especially given the historical context surrounding Canada's political leaders and their impact on Indigenous peoples. If these groups are unable to fully engage due to capacity issues, Benny will act as a liaison, ensuring that their voices are still heard and respected through ongoing feedback loops. The ultimate goal here is to ensure that Indigenous perspectives are central to this process.

Here is an outline of the stages of Indigenous Engagement, accounting for proper cultural sensitivity and indigenous protocol.

Stage I: Informal E-Scan of Engagement Preferences

Duration: 2 Weeks (October 14 – 25)

Beginning stages will include less formal (coffee-chat-style) conversations across Indigenous community members to gather a sense of what their preferences for

engagement are. Additionally, these chats will inform who exactly we need to engage and why.

Stage II: Create Engagement Plan

Duration: 1 Week (October 28 – November 1)

Based on conversations, Indigenous Engagement lead will finalize the plan for Indigenous community members. This plan will also be shared publicly and across the community members we seek to engage.

Stage III: Crane System (Liaison-Style Engagement)

Indigenous Engagement Lead (Benny) acts as a liaison to collect information and bring feedback to the Working Group. Similar to how the Crane operated in traditional Anishinaabeg governance, the liaison is charged with building relationships, gathering sentiments, and advocating for the community's best interest at the decision-making table, as well as bring information back to the community members throughout the process. This system alleviates the demand load on Indigenous community leaders, most of whom are already overburdened with engagement requests. That said, this system relies on the Crane to build and maintain strong relational ties, and demonstrate their worthiness of being an information carry across groups of decision-makers.

2. Working Group:

A **working group** consisting of up to 12 individuals will be established to represent key stakeholders, including members from the Indigenous community, the original group of fundraisers, and local residents, and a variety of opinions.

The purpose of the working group is to collaborate and co-create recommendations for the Prime Ministers Path, ensuring that the community has a direct voice in shaping the path's future.

Recruitment will involve issuing an open call to community members. Through a simple registration process, applicants will provide demographic information to ensure that there is a demographically diverse group, and by providing a bit of information about why they are interested in being a part of the project so the facilitation team can ensure that the group members represent the range of thoughts and feelings that exist in the community.

The working group will meet **5 times** over the course of the engagement process, with meetings lasting 1.5 to 2 hours. These sessions will include a meal to encourage informal, open dialogue and community bonding to support the collaborative process.

Working Group Meeting Topics:

Meeting 1 – *Early Dec* - Gathering + Connection

Meeting 2 – *Early Jan* - Terms of reference creation, opening discussions

Meeting 3 - *Late Jan* - *Idea brainstorming*

Meeting 4 - *February* – Recommendation drafting for Community Gathering

Meeting 5 - *March* - Community Gathering follow up + Recommendation finalization

The working group's process will be informed by the information collected throughout the project engagement initiatives: Community Gatherings, Community Tea Circles, online engagement, Youth Gathering, and feedback received through the PMP email.

The Engagement Co-leads will collect the feedback from the community and organize it into thematic groupings and present it to the working group. The working group will use this as data to draft recommendations that will be shared back with the wider community for testing and feedback.

The feedback from the community will be shared with the working group to fine tune the recommendations before submitting them to council.

See process diagram on next page.

Community Input + Working Group Process Diagram



Considerations

If Indigenous groups lack capacity to be a part of the working group, Benny will act as the liaison, sharing ideas with the local indigenous groups, and bringing input back to the working group.

To ensure that those who want to be involved feel included, anyone who expresses interest in the working group, but does not become a part of it will be invited to be an engagement partner, helping to spread information and engagement opportunities to their community.

3. Public Engagement:

The public engagement initiative is designed to have multiple layers of engagement focusing on community connection, information, education, conversation, and input. Engagement activities will range from weekly, to quarterly

- **Gatherings (Public open houses):** Three large public meetings will be held to share information with the community and create opportunity for feedback and input.
 - **Gathering 1:** *November 12 2024* - An invitation for the community to come together, be introduced to the project and gather initial thoughts and input.
 - **Gathering 2:** *March 5 2025* Held just beyond midway through the engagement process to present ideas developed by the working group for community feedback and input.
 - **Gathering 3:** *April 2 2025* The final session will report back to the community with the working group's recommendations, with the opportunity for council to help design the engagement for specific feedback from the community.
- **Community Tea Circle (Monthly Conversations):** Four themed monthly conversations will be held in person, online, or in hybrid formats. These will explore community thoughts about the path, educational topics related to Indigenous and Canadian history, and youth-focused conversations. A special youth session, held at the local high school, will offer a pizza party and an informal environment for young people to share their ideas.
 - Session 1 (Dec, hybrid): Community reflections: the project, the community, history
 - Session 2 (Jan, in person): Cultural Competency, both sides of history
 - Session 3 (Jan, in person): Youth Engagement
 - Session 4 (Feb, hybrid): TBD based on community response

- **Heritage Moments (Social Media Outreach):** Weekly social media posts will focus on key engagement themes. Each month there will be 4 different posts:
 1. Community polls
 2. Knowledge-sharing around Indigenous perspectives
 3. Canadian history education
 4. Reflection prompts to encourage participation in the monthly conversations.
- **Community Connections (Email Comment Box):** a comment box will be open for local residents to share thoughts and ideas with the project team, as they wish to. The correspondence received will help to inform the social media content, the monthly conversations, the tone of outreach, and also provide data and input towards the process. An auto response will be set up to let residents know that the box is being monitored, and not all messages will be responded to directly. Opportunities for further engagement will be listed, as well.

Mutual Responsibility Agreement

Denise and Benny will draft a Mutual Responsibility Agreement that will set out guidelines for community conversations, outlining respectful communication, boundaries, outcomes of specific situations, and opportunities for further engagement.

The agreement will also outline the role and commitments of the Project team, and the Township, in the engagement process. This will demonstrate transparency and help to build trust in the process.

Engagement Timeline

The engagement will take place between October 2024 and April 2025.

1. **Information Gathering and Indigenous Engagement Phase (October 2024):**
Indigenous outreach, council interviews, and the formation of the working group happen in October to set the foundation for the engagement.
2. **Initial Public information session: “Community Gathering” (November 2024):**
Kick off the engagement with the community through a public gathering. The project will be introduced, and participants will have an opportunity to provide input and ideas. This will also be an opportunity to recruit working group members.
3. **Working Group Meetings (December – March 2025):** The working group will meet monthly to co-create recommendations.

4. **Monthly Conversations: “Community Tea Circles” (October 2024 - January 2025):** 4 Focused monthly conversations will cover themes such as community thoughts and input, Indigenous and Canadian history, and one session focused on specifically engaging youth. There will be online in-person and hybrid options.
5. **Idea Sharing Information Session: “Community Gathering #2”(Early March 2025):** at approximately the 60% point, the working group will share some of the ideas for the Prime Minister's Path with the community. The community will have an opportunity to provide feedback and input on the ideas, to help the Working Group refine and finalize the recommendations.
6. **Report to Council (March/April 2025)** LURA will prepare a report to council summarizing the engagement process, what we heard, and include recommendations from the working group on the way forward for the Prime Minister's Path.
7. **Final Public Information Session (April 2025):** A final session will report back on the recommendations developed throughout the process and either report on council's decision or be an opportunity for Council to engage with the community for any further feedback on the project.