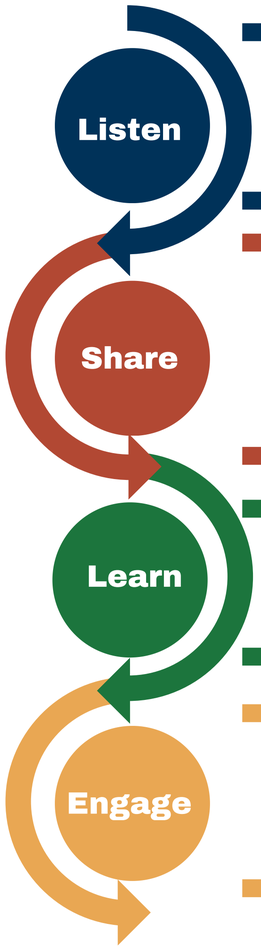
Wilmot's Prime Ministers Path: Collective Reflections, Future Directions

Project Overview

The Prime Ministers Path: Collective Reflections, Future Directions engagement initiative is an intentional undertaking by the Township of Wilmot to re-open the conversation about the Prime Ministers Path in an inclusive, community-driven way, and to reimagine the future of the statues and the Prime Ministers path in Wilmot. The project is guided by the following values:



LISTEN: Your voice matters, and we're here to listen. Throughout this engagement, we'll provide multiple avenues—whether in person, online, or through written feedback—to ensure that everyone who wants to be heard has a chance to share their thoughts. By creating a safe, respectful environment, we'll work to truly understand your experiences, concerns, and hopes for the Prime Ministers Path.

SHARE: We all have thoughts and ideas about our history and our future, and our community. We invite everyone to share their thoughts, ideas, and experiences openly. There is space in our community for differing thoughts and opinions, even if it's sometimes hard to be vulnerable and share them. Together, we will create brave spaces for honest and sometimes difficult conversations, where all perspectives are welcome and work to make sure that we respect eachother.

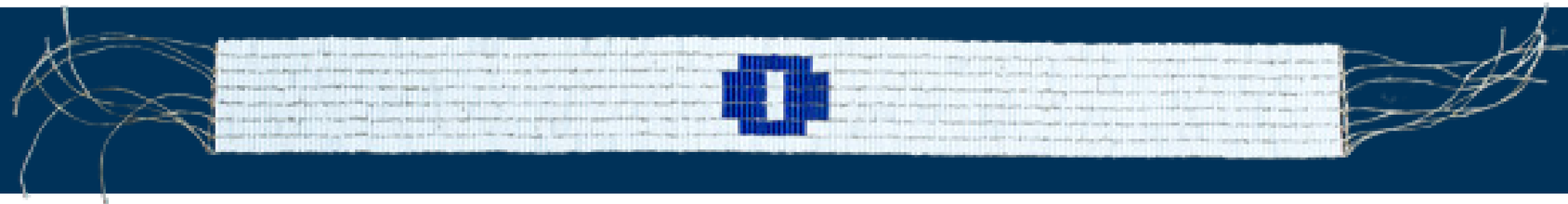
LEARN: Together, we'll grow in understanding and awareness. With themed discussions, educational resources, and knowledge sharing we aim to identify gaps in our collective understanding, and deepen our shared knowledge of the various histories connected to the Prime Ministers Path.

ENGAGE: You're invited to be part of process, and play an active role in the decision-making. Join us for community gatherings, Tea conversations, participate in the online polls to explore ideas and shape recommendations that reflect the community's values and will help to inform the future of the Prime Ministers Path.

Expected Outcomes

By March 2025, the Township of Wilmot will receive community-driven recommendations from the working group, based on broad public input. These recommendations, presented to Council, will guide the future of the Prime Ministers Path, aligning with the values of respect, inclusivity, and community cohesion. Through this process, residents can expect a transparent, respectful approach that fosters meaningful dialogue, ultimately aiming to build a shared vision for the Prime Ministers Path.

This Land...



Learn

Wilmot Township, and the land of the Prime Ministers Path, is located within the traditional territories of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, and Neutral peoples. There are three historical agreements that are relevant to this land that we are on.

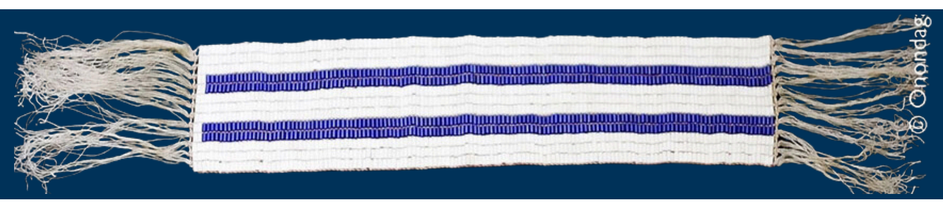
Pre-colonially, the people of this territory ratified **The Dish with One Spoon Wampum (see picture above) .** A wampum is an agreement, like a law, that gives permission for all people to use the resources of this region to live a good life, but requires that we only take what we need and leave the rest for others to also live a good life. This is an example of the way that Indigenous practice protects the sustainability of natural resources.

Later, during the time of European settlement, settlers were beginning to cultivate the lands that were protected by the Haudenosaunee. As a way to ensure diplomacy, the **Two Row Wampum (see picture below) and the Covenant Chain** agreement outlined three agreements between the sides: friendship, peace, and that they were bound to these two things forever.

Finally, **the Haldimand Treaty of 1784**, signed by Frederick Haldimand Captain General and Governor in Chief. This treaty was for the purchase of land between the great lakes. In return for the loss of Indigenous settlement on the purchase land, and because of the Haudenosaunee ally-ship against the Americans, the King commanded that 6 miles of land on either side of the Grand River – from the mouth of the river to Lake Eerie - would be in the possession of Indigenous peoples from then until forever, allowing for settlement and stewardship of that tract of land.

We recognize that all three of these agreements were forged and signed in perpetuity, making them still relevant and applicable today. As a settlement that is part of the Regional Municipality of Waterloo, we recognize that the Township of Wilmot is obligated to honour these treaties and agreements. We also recognize that these lands have been of the utmost importance to the Indigenous peoples who have been the stewards since time immemorial, and continue to live within and outside of our settler communities.

We are all treaty people and have collective and individual obligations to our neighbours, both Indigenous and settler, and to the agreements that were previously made about the land and how we share both space and resources.



Collective Reflections, Future Directions
Engagement Team

Engage



Benny Skinner

Benny (they/them) is a Two-Spirit decolonial thinker, educator, and human rights advocate living in the Great Lakes Regions of Turtle Island. On their father's side, they come from the community of Harbour Round in Ktaqmkuk (Newfoundland) that has mixed Mi'kmaq, Inuit, Keltic, and French ancestry. On their mother's side, they come from the Kapampangan people in Pampanga, Luzon (The Philippines).

Benny currently works as an Indigenous Research Advisor at the University of Waterloo, holding both a Bachelor of Arts in Peace and Conflict Studies and a Master of Arts in Global Governance. They are a research fellow at the Balsillie School of International Affairs, an ambassador for a number of human rights advocacy organizations. In their spare time they enjoy both playing and coaching rugby at a high level.

Denise Soueidan-O'Leary

Denise holds a BA in Sexuality, Marriage and Family Studies and Social Development Studies from the University of Waterloo, and a Bachelor of Social Work from Renison College at the University of Waterloo. She has studied social enterprise and social impact in Mexico, and spent time living and working with the disability community in orphanages in Ukraine. Locally, she spent nearly 10 years working with residents in Toronto's Regent Park to support local governance, positive stakeholder relations and inclusive local enconmy develoment. She is the founder of two social enterprises, focusing on employment training opportunities for high barriered youth.

Denise's superpowers are compassionate facilitation, and designing meaningful engagement. She seeks opportunities to weave the power of play and joy into her work, and is particularly interested in Community Wealth Building, collaborative social systems change, and strengthening community cohesion.



LURA
LISTEN · UNDERSTAND · RELATE · ADVANCE

Wilmot's Prime Ministers Path: How We Got Here

2013

Private citizens fundraised to commission statues of 22 Canadian Prime Ministers,

Initially proposed for Kitchener's Victoria Park, but was rejected due to opposition.

2015

Wilfrid Laurier University considered hosting the statues but removed the Sir John A. MacDonald statue after protests about his role in residential schools.

2016

Wilmot Council approved the installation of statues at Castle Kilbride, calling it the Prime Ministers Path, starting with Sir John A. MacDonald.

2017

Statues of Sir Robert Borden, William Lyon Mackenzie King, and Lester B. Pearson were installed.

2018

Kim Campbell's statue was added to the path.

2020

Spring: The Sir John A. MacDonald statue was vandalized, prompting sit-ins.

July: Wilmot Council launched a public engagement process.

In the Fall, John A Mac Donald Statue was removed.

The installation of additional statues was delayed due to COVID-19 and a review of the project.

2021

The First Peoples Group recommended removing the remaining statues and halting future expansion, following public consultation.

2024

March: Council approved a community engagement process to determine the future of the Prime Ministers Path.

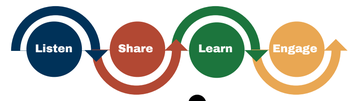
2024

September: Wilmot Council and Staff select Public engagement consulting team from LURA.

Now

Wilmot's Prime Ministers Path: Collective Reflections, Future Directions

Engagement Plan Launch



What We've Heard So Far

Listen

Between June 2020, and March 2024, local residents delegated to Wilmot Council on the issue of the Prime Ministers Path. Those delegations were documented in council notes, and have helped to shape how the **Prime Ministers Path: Collective Reflections, Future Directions** initiative came to be. This is a summary of what we heard in those delegations, and the Key themes that are important to the Wilmot Community.

INCLUSION

Inclusive Representation and Broader Community Consultation
A recurring theme in the delegations was the need for broader, more inclusive consultation, especially involving Indigenous voices. It was noted that key perspectives were overlooked. Many felt that Indigenous and marginalized communities deserve an active role in future decisions. This sentiment was echoed by other residents who called for a "balanced working group" to ensure that underrepresented voices are meaningfully included in shaping the project's direction.

"The least that you can do… listen, and receive valuable consultation from the residents of Wilmot, and the groups that were ignored when the project was pushed ahead without public input."

BALANCE

Balancing Historical Education with Contemporary Values and Inclusivity
Many residents voiced that the statues offer an opportunity to educate, yet also require additional context to prevent historical oversimplification. Suggestions were made to augment the educational experience by including statues or materials that reflect Indigenous and diverse perspectives. A proposal to add seating and signage to foster an environment where community members can come together to discuss the statues' complex legacies, turning the space into one of respectful discourse and reflection.

"The Sir John A Macdonald statue… with the two chairs set on either side… can be used to hold respectful discussions of varying views. What a great opportunity to talk about issues of the past and today!"

HEALING

Prioritizing Healing and Reconciliation
Delegates underscored the harm these statues can represent, especially for Indigenous communities affected by policies under leaders like Sir John A. Macdonald. Honoring the process of reconciliation requires actively listening to Indigenous voices and assessing whether these figures belong in shared public spaces. This theme reflects a larger push from residents who view the project as an opportunity to acknowledge past traumas and build community solidarity.

"When faced with something that is clearly traumatic for… Indigenous peoples, our leaders should stand up and protect those that need it most."

RESPONSIBILITY TRANSPARENCY

Financial Responsibility and Transparency
Financial considerations emerged as a practical concern, with residents questioning the costs associated with relocating or maintaining the statues. suggestions that the funds might be better allocated toward community-led projects focused on reconciliation. Several delegates argued for transparency regarding these expenditures, advocating for the council to ensure financial decisions are communicated openly and align with the broader community's values and goals.

"Please do not allow this vocal group to derail the Prime Ministers Path… We need to consider the financial and educational value of this project."

FAIR PROCESS

Structured, Transparent Decision-Making Process
Residents expressed a strong need for a clear, structured decision-making process, emphasizing transparency and community engagement in order to avoid hasty or uninformed decisions. A transparent, multi-step plan would allow for reflection and broader community input. Council's decisions should reflect the values of the entire Wilmot community, including those who might not have initially engaged with the project.

"The council should set a structured, thoughtful course for this decision—one that keeps the entire community in mind and allows time for meaningful engagement.

ERASURE VS ACCOUNTABILITY

Concerns Over Historical Erasure vs. Historical Accountability
"Erasing history" by removing statues, was raised, and a desire for a more responsible and contextualized approach to history. Options to keep the statues to allow for critical engagement with Canada's past were shared. Some were worried that removing them might sanitize or obscure important lessons. This theme reflects the community's tension between preserving history in its entirety and holding historical figures accountable for their actions within a broader educational framework.

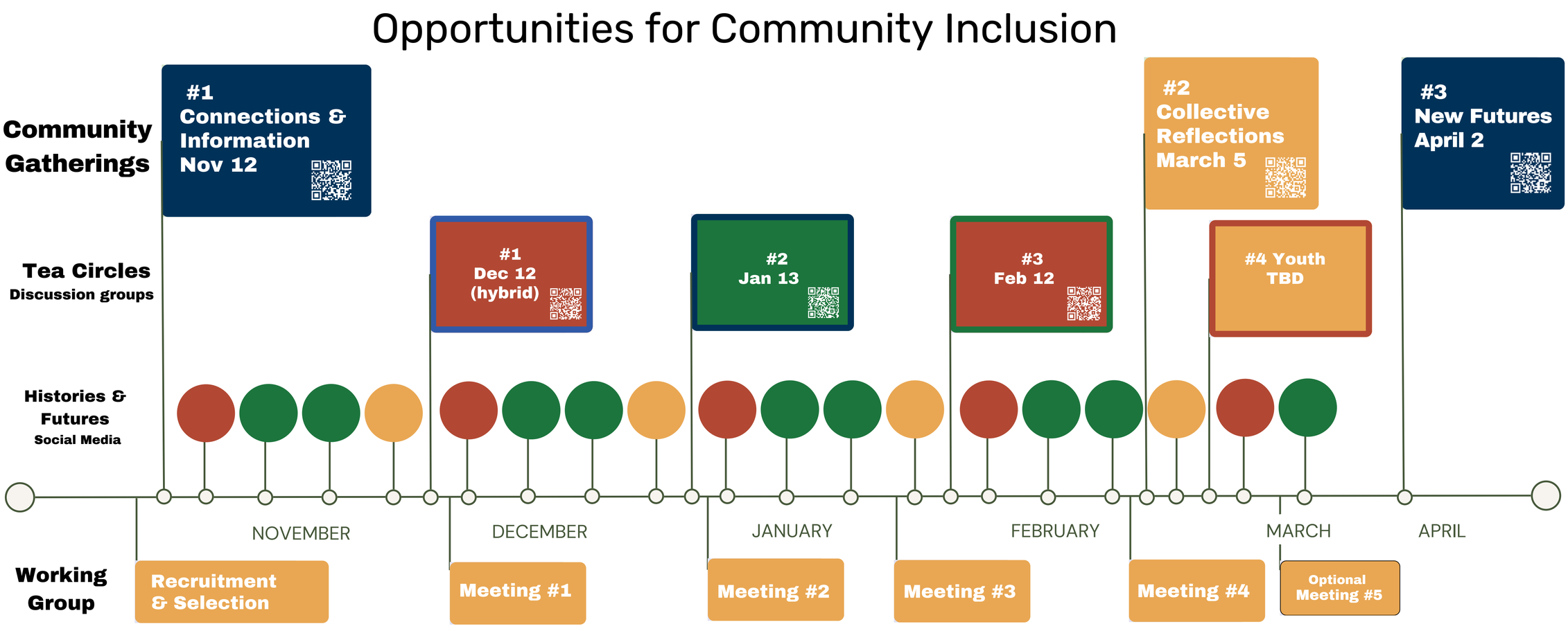
"The statues should not be taken down but rather contextualized so that we learn the whole story—positive and negative alike."

FUTURE

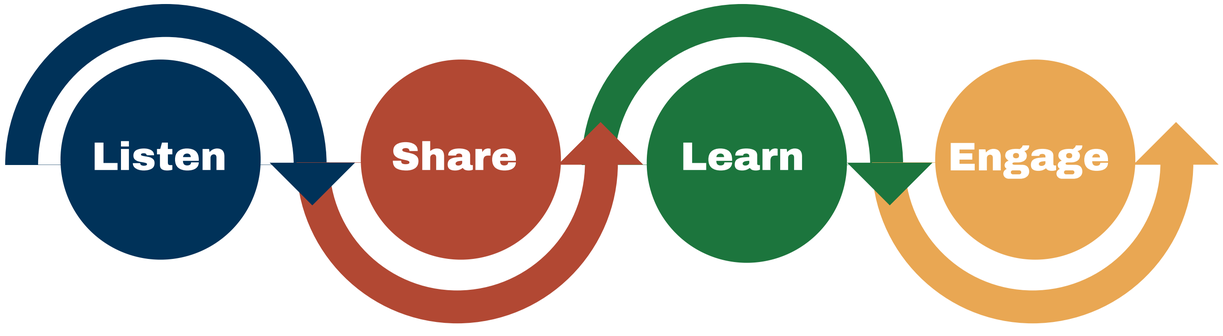
Desire for a Positive, Visionary Path Forward
There was a desire for Wilmot to become a leader in reconciling complex historical legacies within community spaces. Some delegates urged council to consider how the Prime Ministers Path could serve as a model for other communities grappling with similar issues. This vision is centered on Wilmot embracing its role as a place for meaningful, reconciliatory dialogue. Residents spoke about the potential for the project to set a precedent in Canada on how communities can address divisive historical narratives in ways that foster unity and understanding.

"We have a chance to lead by example, showing Canada how we can recognize our history while paving the way forward together."

Opportunities for Community Inclusion



Join the mailing list



Visit the Project Website

Community Agreement

Engage

1. Active & Open Listening

- Listen with patience and curiosity, aiming to understand before responding.
- Embrace differences as learning opportunities, seeking common ground.

2. Respectful Speech

- Use respectful language, avoid personal attacks, and address ideas rather than individuals.
- Speak from your own experience, using “I” statements to encourage understanding.

When you engage in this community initiative, you are taking on the collective responsibility to engage with respect, and curiosity, and a commitment to creating space for thoughtful dialogue. All differing perspectives are welcome here and we will all strive to engage in ways that foster understanding and community. By participating, we all agree to constructive engagement, both in-person and online to foster a respectful, open space where all opinions can be shared.

The 4 principals of our Community Agreement are listed here.

3. Responsible Social Media

- Post thoughtfully, avoiding divisive or harmful content.
- Use social media to build constructive dialogue, not division.

4. Accountability

- Take responsibility for your words and actions. If harm occurs, acknowledge it.
- Hold each other to these standards to keep our space safe and welcoming for all.

Please Note:
We will do our best to keep all channels of this project open for the duration of the project. In order to ensure that those channels remain safe for all, they will be monitored on a weekly basis. Posts that contain disrespectful language, or tone or inappropriate comments, the poster will be contacted and given 24 hours to edit the post, before it is removed permanently.

Join the Working Group

Engage

As part of the **Prime Ministers Path: Collective Reflections, Future Directions** initiative, we're forming a **working group** of up to 12 community members, representing a range of demographics and viewpoints. This group will explore history, listen to diverse perspectives, and collaborate to develop recommendations on the path's future. With support from LURA Consulting and the Township, the working group will work closely with the community, ensuring a respectful and balanced approach to the Future Direction of the Prime Ministers Path.

Scan for Expression of Interest Form

Working Group Responsibilities:

Listen to community voices and insights, ensuring all perspectives are considered.

Share your ideas and participate in open, collaborative discussions that build trust and understanding.

Learn about the historical and cultural significance of the Prime Ministers Path, including Indigenous and non-mainstream perspectives.

Engage with community members through public sessions and feedback opportunities to help shape final recommendations for the Council.

We encourage community members from all backgrounds to apply.

Wilmot's Prime Ministers Path:
Collective Reflections, Future Directions

Share

What are your thoughts and feelings about this project?

Use a sticky note to share your thoughts
Remember to engage Openly, Respectfully, Responsibly, and Accountably

Wilmot's Prime Ministers Path:
Collective Reflections, Future Directions

Share

What ideas do you have for the future of the Path?

Use a sticky note to share your thoughts
Remember to engage Openly, Respectfully, Responsibly, and Accountably