How It Started

A Vision for Public Art & Education

Early Concept

The Prime Ministers' Path (PMP) was envisioned as a public art installation honouring all past Canadian Prime Ministers.

The goal was to promote education, tourism, and civic pride, creating a landmark attraction for Wilmot.

Did You Know...

that the project has gone through multiple naming iterations including The Statue Project (2013-2015); the Prime Ministers Statue Project (2015); The Prime Minister(s) Walk; The Prime Ministers' Path (2025)

"Our prime interest in it is the notion of leadership. When you put aside party lines, that as a country we've had very strong leadership but we've never really celebrated it"

Prime Ministers' Path Project Lead,
CBC News, Nov 27, 2013



Decision-Making & Location Changes

2013

Originally proposed in **Kitchener**, but faced local opposition.

2015

Wilfrid Laurier University in **Waterloo** began engaging with the project, but ended up withdrawing due to concerns expressed by campus community.

2016

Wilmot Township approved the installation at Castle Kilbride, seeing it as an opportunity for economic and educational engagement.

A Path of Reflection

A Community Conversation Emerges

The First Signs of Public Discontent:

- While some residents supported the PMP, criticism emerged regarding its lack of Indigenous representation and its potential to glorify figures with controversial legacies.
- Concerns were raised about Sir John A. Macdonald's policies toward Indigenous peoples, particularly regarding residential schools and systemic discrimination.

Community Conversations & Emerging Divisions:

2018-2019

A growing movement of Indigenous leaders, activists, and local residents questioned whether the PMP reflected Canada's history fully and fairly.

Petitions, town halls, and protests signaled a need for reassessment.

"I adore these statues. They are really lifelike and so fun to have Easter eggs to look for." - Online comment from community member, 2017

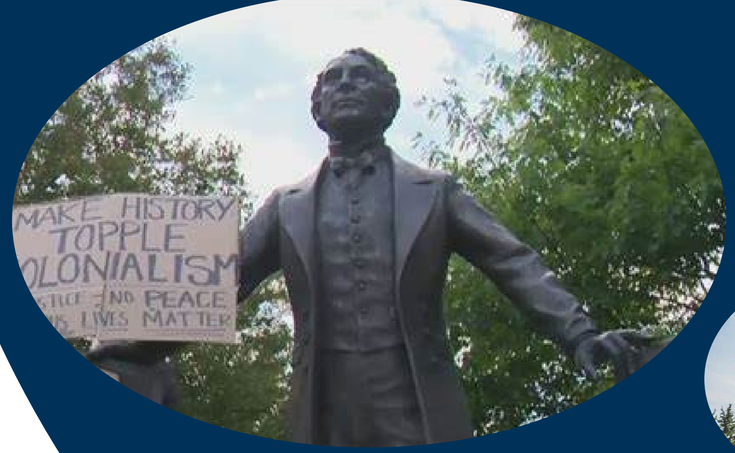
"Our Canadian history is really, really complicated and it is not taught properly in our education system...I don't want to shine a light on the people who don't deserve it." - Community member comment, Waterloo Region Record (2020)

Were you aware of these concerns when the PMP was first introduced?

"yes" = **green** dot sticker - "no" = **red** dot sticker

Listening & Taking Action

Wilmot's Response to Community Concerns







"As the findings from the public engagement conducted by the First Peoples Group indicated, the immediate removal of the remaining statues is a symbolic action for the Township to move foward on reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and work towards community cohesion and healing."
- Township of Wilmot (press release)

"The discussion of the Prime Ministers Path in Wilmot is one that encapsulates all of the above. It is complex and it is challenging, but it is a conversation that provides an opportunity for community members to learn from one another, to grow, and to form a deeper understanding and awareness of our shared history."
- The First Peoples Group Report


"Sir John A. Macdonald statue draws more protest"

One person was arrested during mostly peaceful rally seeking to have statue removed from park

John A. Macdonald
29 Jun 2020 +8 more CHRIS SETO

Wilmot's Official Review Process:

2020

Wilmot Township commissioned a review of the PMP's impact, facilitated by First Peoples Group (FPG).

2021

- The FPG report concluded that the PMP was causing harm and division and recommended statue removal.
- Wilmot's Council of the Day unanimously voted to remove the statues and pause any further installations.

Escalation of Public Pushback

- Painting & protests escalated as the debate over the PMP gained national media attention.
- Statues became a flashpoint for broader conversations about reconciliation, historical accountability, and public memory.

Current Status & Ongoing Reconciliation Work

- Statues were placed in storage, with a commitment to reimagining public history in a way that prioritizes inclusion and community dialogue.

The Lessons & Legacy of the Prime Ministers Path

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

This current initiative is the direct result of the March 2024 Wilmot Council decision to move forward with a working group to help shape the future of the path. The Township of Wilmot has embarked on a community engagement project with the intention that this work will form the future of Prime Ministers Path. It embodies the Township's commitment to transparency and is an opportunity to return to the principle of connecting deeply with community and community members. It is a step towards collaboration in the decision-making process in the Township of Wilmot.

Key Takeaways from the PMP Experience

The PMP highlighted the importance of consultation and co-creation when developing public history projects.

The PMP demonstrated the power of community dialogue and the need for ongoing reflection on historical narratives.

Steps Toward a New Approach

Wilmot has since prioritized inclusive historical engagement, working closely with the community to explore new ways of telling Canada's history.

The Prime Ministers' Path Working Group was formed to explore alternative approaches to public memory and reconciliation.

What have you learned through Prime Ministers Path process here in Wilmot?

If you could shape the way history is shared in public spaces, what stories or perspectives would you want to see prioritized?

What voices, events, or themes do you think are important as part of public history? How should they be brought to life?