



Statement by the Epekwitk Assembly of Councils on the status of the Sir John A. MacDonald statue.

Mayor Philip Brown
and Council
City of Charlottetown
199 Queen Street
Charlottetown, PE C1A 4B7

January 28th, 2021

RE: Sir John A MacDonald Statue

Dear Mayor and Council,

We feel compelled to write today to respond to recent correspondence received from the City, as well as discussions held at a meeting of the Economic Development, Tourism and Event Management Committee on January 20, 2021 regarding the Sir John A MacDonald statue, and a subsequent article in the Guardian on January 22, 2021.

We understood when we were asked for input following the City's decision to keep the statue last summer, that we were to provide recommendations on how that statue could be offset to address the situation in keeping with reconciliation objectives. What was not made clear was that the only intent to engage us was to assist in re-writing the existing plaque.

We had made five suggestions to amend the art installation and tell the true story of this individual and begin to address the trauma that its presence is continuing to perpetuate. In summary our recommendations involved the following:

- Revising the art installation with the addition of another figure, such as an Indigenous child or elder, to offset the existing one and therefore visibly represent his impact on Canada's Indigenous peoples.
- Fill in or seal off the empty space on the bench to remove any opportunity for the bench to be used for photo opportunities.
- Install signage or sufficiently large plaquing to ensure that those viewing the installation can clearly read and understand the devastating role that Sir John A. MacDonald played in the Indigenous history of Canada.
- If the artist engaged is not Indigenous, a Mi'kmaq artist should be contracted to serve as a consultant and provide guidance to the artist.
- The completion date for this work should be as soon as reasonably possible with elements in place by spring at the latest.



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We had hoped that while work was underway, signage would have been immediately placed on the bench to a) remove the photo opportunity and b) advise that a project is underway to amend the installation to tell the true and complete history of Sir John A. MacDonald and his role in the policies and laws which continue to have devastating impacts on the Indigenous Peoples of Canada.

While there may be other initiatives happening to revitalize other spaces in future years including Province House National Historic Site and nearby buildings to depict a cultural landscape of our shared history, this was not what this discussion was about, nor should it be. We were brought in to discuss the Sir John A MacDonald statue and options moving forward given the fact that City Council had already made the decision to keep the statue prior to any engagement.

We feel this matter has dragged on for too long and that simply re-writing the plaque (which is to involve engaging off Island scholars) is simply not acceptable and that other issues involving the statue, as noted, need to be addressed.

The Mayor has indicated there was a miscommunication by the City regarding the intent for engagement. As such, the Epekwitk Assembly of Councils, through L'nuey, remains open to future engagement. However, to be clear, the Assembly does not support the simple re-writing or addition of a small plaque to be an acceptable solution.

Yours in spirit,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chief Darlene Bernard".

Chief Darlene Bernard
Lennox Island First Nation

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chief Junior Gould".

Chief Junior Gould
Abegweit First Nation