

## Leader Post- Emmaline

John A. Macdonald statue taken out of Victoria Park; Statue now placed in storage facility after pleas from Indigenous community

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Prior to 7 a.m. on a snowy Tuesday morning, city crews headed to Victoria Park and removed the statue of John A. Macdonald.

The statue was then taken and secured in one of the city's storage facilities, where it will remain until a consultation process provides a next step for what do to with it.

On March 31, city council voted 7-4 in favour of removing the statue of Canada's first prime minister following pleas from the Indigenous community and others to do so.

Consultations - which are to take place sometime in the coming year - are intended to, in part, discuss a way to strike a balance regarding Macdonald's full legacy, both as a founding father of the nation and as someone whose policies played a significant role in harms done to Indigenous and other ethnocultural communities in Canada.

Emmaline Hill, manager of social and cultural development with the city, said while the statue's removal went ahead without any spectators present, steps were taken to ensure some level of presence or ceremony wasn't required in keeping with reconciliation or the city's relationship with the Indigenous community.

"When we spoke to knowledge keepers that we've been working with, we made sure that that wasn't something that was required from their perspective," Hill said. "I think there will be more opportunities for public events and coming together around this issue and other issues, but the actual removal wasn't the place to do it."

She noted the statue weighs 1,100 pounds, meaning the city needed a fair amount of equipment to remove it. The weather only complicated matters.

"(We were) wanting to be as safe as possible and so doing it at a time when there wasn't a lot of traffic in that area downtown was preferable," Hill said. "So it was just about expedience and trying to make sure that we were being as safe as possible through the process."

The debate over the statue's removal included calls from some councillors for more public consultation prior to the statue's removal from the park.

"We have a duty to consult fully and inclusively," said Coun. Bob Hawkins (Ward 2) during the March meeting. "We have an obligation to listen before acting. If we do not allow the broader community to participate fully in the decision, which we are making today, we endanger reconciliation and that would be tragic."

But others countered by saying there had already been enough discussion.

"Given what we've heard today, I think it is incumbent on us as a city to side with the people who were harmed by Macdonald's policies or we side with Macdonald himself," said Ward 6 Coun. Daniel LeBlanc in March.

Earlier this month, the city launched an online space called Be Heard Regina for people to share their stories about Macdonald's legacy. Hill said that site has proven popular, with lots of engagement noted so far.

A followup report to council recommending a new location for the statue is expected by the first quarter of 2022 or earlier. - with files from Alec Salloum [hpolischuk@postmedia.com](mailto:hpolischuk@postmedia.com)