



**City of Kingston
Information Report to Council
Report Number 19-244**

To: Mayor & Members of Council
From: Peter Huigenbos, Acting Commissioner, Community Services
Resource Staff: Colin Wiginton, Cultural Director, Cultural Services
Date of Meeting: September 3, 2019
Subject: Your Stories, Our Histories – Sir John A. 360 Engagement Events Update

Executive Summary:

This report provides council with an update on the Sir John A. 360 community engagement that has been underway, as part of the Your Stories, Our Histories project, since September of 2018. It also provides an overview of the events planned for the fall of 2019. The Sir John A. 360 engagement is a subset of the overarching Your Stories, Our Histories community consultation that is focused on fostering a more inclusive approach to Kingston history. Input received through these community consultations will inform the creation of a City of Kingston Cultural Heritage Strategy, a document that will help to guide community exhibitions, events, and programming at City held cultural venues and events across the city.

The upcoming Sir John A. 360 engagement events include a panel discussion on September 17 as well as two community workshops on October 16 and 17. Feedback will also continue to be received online through the Get Involved Kingston platform, through comment cards submitted in the Sir John A. Macdonald room at Kingston City Hall, and through direct mail to the project.

A final report on the input received through the Your Stories, Our Histories community consultation, which will include the feedback from the Sir John A. 360 engagement, will be brought to Council in the first quarter of 2020.

Recommendation:

This report is for information only.

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Authorizing Signatures:

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY COMMISSIONER

**Peter Huigenbos, Commissioner,
Commissioner, Community
Services**

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

**Lanie Hurdle, Interim Chief
Administrative Officer**

Consultation with the following Members of the Corporate Management Team:

Jim Keech, President & CEO, Utilities Kingston	Not required
Desirée Kennedy, Chief Financial Officer & City Treasurer	Not required
Sheila Kidd, Commissioner, Transportation & Public Works	Not required
Deanne Roberge, Acting Commissioner, Corporate Services	Not required

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Options/Discussion:

The [Kingston Culture Plan](#) approved in 2010 proposed that Kingston's most compelling cultural asset is its powerful historical narrative. The Kingston Culture Plan went on to suggest that Kingston's many stories need to be developed in compelling ways and told through a variety of means and opportunities. It also recognized that telling Kingston's stories is not the mandate of the City alone but that it is a shared responsibility that must involve the larger community.

Recommendation #3 in the Kingston Culture Plan specifically spoke to the need to develop a cultural heritage strategy that could be used to develop and support community programs, events and exhibitions that help tell Kingston's stories in all their diversity. The 'Your Stories, Our Histories' project that launched on September 6, 2018 is gathering community input that will assist staff in developing a Cultural Heritage Strategy for the City of Kingston.

'Your Stories, Our Histories' provides an opportunity for the community to contribute to the development of an inclusive and balanced historical narrative for Kingston that covers an increasingly diverse range of themes and topics. As part of this engagement Sir John A. Macdonald and his legacies are being considered in a more complete way in order to develop a more inclusive version of history that is appropriate to today.

With Council's approval ([Report 18-377](#)) staff contracted First Peoples Group, a consultancy team, to assist with the Your Stories, Our Histories ([Report 18-354](#)) and the Engage for Change ([Report 18-091](#)) projects. First Peoples Group specializes in inclusive engagement and facilitation practices with all levels of government, supporting community education on cultural topics, leading conflict resolution, mediation and negotiation with a focus on consensus building.

History is a complex thing and our relationship to historic places, people and events can change and adapt as we learn more about the past and the impacts of the past on the present. Many people in Kingston have ideas and perspectives on Sir John A. Macdonald and how Kingston as a City should best share his story and the story of those impacted by the decisions of his government. As part of the Your Stories, Our Histories community consultation staff are working to support a 360 degree review of Sir John A. Macdonald – his life in Kingston, and his legacy today and into the future.

The purpose of this engagement is not to erase history or to remove historic elements but to foster conversations that explore hard questions and identify gaps in how we share history. Input on Sir John A's history, his legacy and his relationship to Kingston began at the start of the overarching Your Stories, Our Histories Project in September of 2018. The feedback received through the Sir John A. 360 degree engagement events will be combined with the feedback received through the broader Your Stories, Our Histories engagement and incorporated by the City as it creates a City of Kingston cultural heritage strategy.

Over the last year staff have been formally collecting feedback related to Sir John A. Macdonald. This feedback has largely come through three core engagement channels. These include:

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- online feedback on the Get Involved Kingston engagement platform (2900 page visits and 57 stories shared);
- comment cards at Kingston City Hall as part of an installation in the Sir John A. Macdonald room (205 comments left); and
- emails and letters to project directly (15).

The analysis of this feedback is ongoing and will continue until the close of the Sir John A. 360 engagement on October 31, 2019. At this stage it is possible to identify some common perspectives and areas of consensus that are emerging across these engagement sources.

Recurrent comments and themes include:

- that Sir John A. Macdonald is a product of his time;
- that many people connect with John A. as a nation builder and want to acknowledge the good that they see in that;
- that the past needs to be understood in the context of the present;
- that there is a desire to balance history and to include additional viewpoints, perspectives and authority; and
- that reconciliation requires us to educate ourselves and others about Indigenous culture and history, the trauma and legacy of residential schools, the Indian Act, immigration policies, women's history, etc.

Next Steps Sir John A. 360 – Fall panel discussion and workshops

Moving into the fall of 2019, collection of feedback will continue through the previously established channels; and through two community workshops prompt by a panel discussion event.

Fall 2019

Public Engagement

- Comment cards at Kingston City Hall – ongoing
- Panel discussion event – September 17
- Community workshops – October 16 & 17
- Sir John A. 360° online engagement – Get Involved Kingston platform – September 3 to October 31

The panel discussion speakers have through their previous work each offered their thoughts on how we share and relate to the history of Sir John A. Macdonald. Most recently they each contributed an essay to the February 2019 edition of Canada's History. This edition of the magazine saw authors reflecting on how we might approach Sir John A. Macdonald as a historic figure who is now the centre of much debate and controversy. Three of these authors have agreed to share their thoughts and their ideas for how Kingston can add to the history we share about Macdonald. Specifically they have been asked to consider how we might position him in relation to the development of Kingston, the development of the Nation, and the legacy acts of his time that have continued to the present and that continue to shape our future. This facilitated panel discussion will be held on September 17 from 7-9pm in Duncan McArthur Auditorium at Queen's University.

Short bios of the three speakers as well as the panel moderator are provided below.

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Charlotte Gray, the author of 11 best-sellers about Canadian history and personalities. She advocated for Sir John A. Macdonald for the CBC program, "Who is the Greatest Canadian?" Charlotte lives in Ottawa and is a Member of the Order of Canada and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada.

Lee Maracle, an instructor at the University of Toronto in Indigenous Studies and First Nation's house. Maracle served as a Distinguished Visiting Scholar at the Universities of Toronto, Waterloo, Western Washington and Guelph University. Maracle received an Honorary Doctor of Letters from St. Thomas University, and an Honorary Doctor of Laws from the University of Waterloo. She is the recipient of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee medal and is an Officer of the Order of Canada.

Christopher Moore, writer, journalist, and blogger who has been described as Canada's most versatile writer of history. He is a contributing editor to *Canada's History* magazine, the winner of two Governor-General's Literary Awards, and the author of several books, including *1867: How the Fathers Made a Deal* and *Three Weeks in Quebec City: The Meeting that Made Canada*.

Bob Watts, is a Senior First Nations Advisor to First Peoples Group, the Chief of Staff to National Chief Perry Bellegarde and Adjunct Professor in the School of Policy Studies at Queen's University. He is the former Interim Executive Director of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which examined and made recommendations regarding the Indian Residential School era and its legacy. Bob will moderate the panel and the Q&A to follow.

This panel discussion is designed as a lead-in to two community workshops on October 16 and 17, where residents are invited to offer input regarding how we can best share the history and legacy of SJAM in the Kingston context. It is hoped that the ideas and positions shared by the speakers will inspire residents to continue to read, discuss, share and participate and to join us at an upcoming workshop or through one of the other feedback opportunities.

In late winter of 2019 staff will work with the consultants to analyze and combine all of the feedback received through the Sir John A. 360 and the Your Stories, Our Histories projects. Staff will bring a report back to council in the first quarter of 2020. This report will review the findings of the Your Stories, Our Histories and Sir John A. 360 engagement projects and make recommendations regarding how we develop and share more inclusive history as part of a new cultural heritage strategy.

Existing Policy/By-Law:

Not applicable

Notice Provisions:

Not applicable

Accessibility Considerations:

Not applicable

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Financial Considerations:

Not applicable

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Other City of Kingston Staff Consulted:

None

Exhibits Attached:

None