

City to undertake broad consultation on relocation of Pte. Alexander Watson statue

July 28, 2020 — The City will take a broad, consultative approach, in determining the details of relocation for a monument that has stood in front of City Hall for over 134 years.

On Monday evening City Council voted unanimously to consult several organizations in the development of a relocation plan for the statue of Pte. Alexander Watson that currently stands in front of City Hall.

As a militia volunteer Watson died in 1885 from wounds sustained during the Battle of Batoche. He was one of 8,000 soldiers sent by the Canadian government to stop the North-West Resistance headed by Metis leader Louis Riel.

Debate has been ongoing in the City related to the legacy of the statue, both related to its possible importance as a historical landmark, but also as it relates to a centuries-long history of racism and persecution in Canada. Individuals have recently petitioned for its removal citing its relation to these historic wrongs.

In an attempt to balance the need for truth and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, and the importance of the statue as an item of historical knowledge and education, Council has voted to relocate the statue, pending consultations with various organizations.

“The relocation of the statue from City Hall moves forward our commitment to building an inclusive and equitable city. City Hall is a place for everyone – a place that should celebrate all that we are as a community,” said Mayor Walter Sendzik. “City Council’s decision begins the process for important consultations that will take place in the coming months to guide us in relocating the statue and at the same time providing an opportunity for our community to gain a deeper understanding of Canada’s history and its impact on First Nations, Metis and Inuit.”

Organizations to be consulted ahead of development of a relocation plan include:

- Heritage Advisory Committee
- Public Art Advisory Committee
- Anti-Racism Advisory Committee
- Descendants of the Watson family
- Niagara Métis Council
- Métis National Council;
- Niagara Regional Native Centre

- The Historical Society of St. Catharines;
- Lincoln and Welland Regiment Association
- The National Inventory of Canadian Military Monuments and Veterans' Affairs
- St. Catharines MP Chris Bittle
- St. Catharines MPP Jennie Stevens
- Royal Canadian Legion Branch 24

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