

Point-Counterpoint: Should statues of Sir John A. MacDonald be removed?

In August of 2018, Victoria removed a statue of Sir John A. MacDonald from their city hall, as the controversial figure has a legacy of atrocities committed against Canada's Indigenous peoples. This has sparked debate nationwide about the memorialization of the country's first prime minister, specifically in Ottawa. So should statues of the country's first prime minister be removed in the name of reconciliation, or is this practice damaging to our history?

The statues should be removed, or at least moved

Although it's undeniable that Sir John A. MacDonald laid the foundation for Canada as it is today, he did so on the backs of Indigenous communities. He introduced residential schools, did little to help famines that ravaged in federal reserves, orchestrated mass executions, the list of atrocities goes on.

And that's the problem. There is absolutely no way that a small plaque right by MacDonald's statue on Parliament Hill will be able to bear all the information of the atrocious acts he committed. Nor will the tourists milling about the Hill care to stop and read it. We cannot erase history, but we must ensure that history is learned in the first place, in a way that is true, accurate and leaves no detail behind. Which is why I think the statues should be removed.

I don't believe MacDonald should be wiped from the history books, or that we should ignore his accomplishments and what he did for Canadian society. However, I do think we need to do better to teach about our colonial past, and what cost Indigenous communities paid at the hands of Canada's first prime minister.

Through placing the statues in museums and putting all the facts in the history books, we must also make sure this information is not only accessible to those who can afford to access such things. Having a public gallery, like the Ottawa Art Gallery by Rideau Center, where there is ample wall space to display information is a much better alternative to having him glorified on the top of a monument with Confederation below him.

—Hanna Methot, opinions editor

Chase, C., & Methot, H. (2018, September 17). "Point-Counterpoint: Should statues of Sir John A. Macdonald be removed?" *Fulcrum*.