

Municipality of Kincardine Report – What We Heard

July 17, 2024

Submitted by: Dr. Laura Mae Lindo

Introduction

“It’s not about the monument. It’s never about the monument.”

Kincardine Resident, 2024

On August 13, 2023, the Council of the Municipality of Kincardine directed staff to prepare a report with recommendations for Council’s consideration related to the Secord Monument including possible options for public engagement.

Recognizing that the Municipality of Kincardine was one of many municipalities that had been asked to address the impact of commemorative monuments on their communities, staff consulted with municipalities that also have commemoration monuments. The purpose of these meetings was to learn about their public engagement process and obtain advice on how to manage the process successfully. Of the varied issues to tend to, the choice of a facilitator was noted by Municipalities as being critical to the success of any engagement process, and some advice was given regarding the choice of a facilitator. This included:

- Facilitator should not live in the community so as to remain neutral.
- Facilitator has previous experience facilitating community conversations about monuments/and or the commemoration of people.
- Facilitator has strong facilitation experience and presentation skills.
- Facilitator will include all opinions throughout the engagement process regardless of positions being taken.
- Facilitator has a positive track record in teaching inclusion and equity work.

Based upon these criteria, staff researched potential facilitators to advise on the process as well as to facilitate the community conversations. I remain humbled by this opportunity to be a bridge between the people of Kincardine and the Council of the Municipality of Kincardine who are currently tasked with making a decision about the monument to Dr. Solomon Secord.

On January 24, 2024, Council directed me to provide advice on the process and to assist in the facilitation of public engagement sessions that spoke to issues of equity, diversity and inclusion surrounding the Secord Monument. This engagement would assist Council in its decision-making process by ensuring that they had a deeper understanding of the needs of community members and where the tensions have arisen surrounding the ongoing debate about the Secord Monument.

Engagement sessions aimed to solicit and take seriously all opinions on the Secord Monument. Central to this engagement process was to foster an environment of inclusion and create

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opportunities for respectful conversations about the community residents thrive in and belong to. The engagement work included key components as seen in diagram 1 below.



Diagram 1: Overview of Decision-Making Process on the Secord Monument

A series of engagement sessions were conducted beginning with a survey open to all Kincardine residents (March 12 to March 31). Between April 2024 and May 2024, I conducted small group conversations with residents as well as one-on-one interviews with community members and interested Council members. Residents were also offered opportunities to email me directly to share their thoughts and opinions. Details of themes that evolved from the survey and community conversation sessions are discussed later in this report.

My personal and direct email address (lauramae@lauramaelindo.com) was shared in various ways and on various platforms with Municipality of Kincardine residents to ensure that interested residents had ample opportunities to provide their perspectives with me as the facilitator. Despite this, I received less than five emails from residents despite rising tensions surrounding the Secord Monument on social media where some discussions included references to the hiring of a facilitator by Council. Residents opted more often to reach out directly to municipal staff and those calls, emails, and other such communications were added to a tracking document which was regularly updated, and details shared with me. A dedicated webpage was developed for the [Secord Monument Engagement Sessions](#). When common questions arose, staff updated a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section thereby ensuring not only that residents were kept in the loop as the engagement process unfolded, but also that we could take seriously themes from questions coming forward to staff. While the website was maintained by staff, I reviewed all responses added to the page to ensure accuracy of process and to assist in maintaining as much transparency as possible via commonly asked questions.

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What follows is a report on what I heard framed first by the following information:

- A) **Purpose:** An explanation of the purpose of my role as facilitator as laid out by Municipality of Kincardine’s council.
- B) **History:** A brief history of issues raised at council about the Dr. Solomon Secord Monument.
- C) **Process:** An outline of the engagement strategies used to solicit information from residents to meet the objectives set out to me by council on January 24, 2024.

(A) Purpose

On January 24, 2024, Council directed me as the external consultant(s) to provide advice and initiate an engagement process with residents of Kincardine that was grounded in equity, diversity, and inclusion principles with an aim to assist Council in its own decision-making related to the Secord Monument.

It was directed that the facilitator hired would not be making a recommendation to Council about the fate of the Secord Monument. Rather, the facilitator was tasked with collecting and presenting information gathered from the community to assist council in its decision making.

“This engagement process is larger than just a discussion about the monument itself. It is a discussion that fundamentally encompasses equity and diversity and most significantly that of inclusion within our Municipality. This is the opportunity to be that change we want to be.” (Deputy Mayor Clarke, 2024)

Thus, engagement sessions and the final report were envisioned to provide opportunities for the public to explore and learn about the history of the Secord Monument and its impacts through shared perspectives. This was imagined allowing Municipality of Kincardine residents to consider new ideas and form new relationships which was also important to Council given the tensions that had existed in the municipality surrounding the Secord Monument prior to my hiring to facilitate this process.

I was advised that Council wanted to ensure that Dr. Secord, the subject of the Monument, was commemorated for his service to Kincardine while also taking seriously the issues that had been raised about the inscription on one of two monuments to Dr. Secord, the sundial, which had been erected in front of the library in downtown Kincardine but has been temporarily removed to facilitate construction in the area.

The final decision for the future of the Secord monument was to remain that of the Municipality of Kincardine’s Council.

(B) History

Dr. Solomon Secord was a doctor in Kincardine. Shortly after his death in 1910, two monuments were installed in his honour by his patients and friends. Both monuments were installed in Kincardine on Municipal properties.

The first monument was originally erected in downtown Kincardine before it was moved from its central location to the Kincardine cemetery in 1915 where it remains today. The inscription reads:

In memoriam to Solomon Secord, M.D. Erected by his friends to a man who was unalterably opposed to all forms of insincerity cant and hypocrisy. He loved children and animals and was rich in all the things worth while. His life was devoted to benevolence and charity and he still lives in the affection of the people. His last words were “give my love to everybody.”



Diagram 2: Secord Monument in Kincardine Cemetery

A second monument was installed shortly after the first monument and was mounted outside of the Kincardine Public library. The second monument is in the form of a sundial. The inscription on the second monument reads:

I mark the Sunny Hours.

To Solomon Secord, 1834-1910. Our family physician for 50 years. This memorial was erected by his loving friends. Served as surgeon with the Southern Army during

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the American Civil War. All that lived he loved, and without regard for fee or reward, he did his work for love of his fellows.”

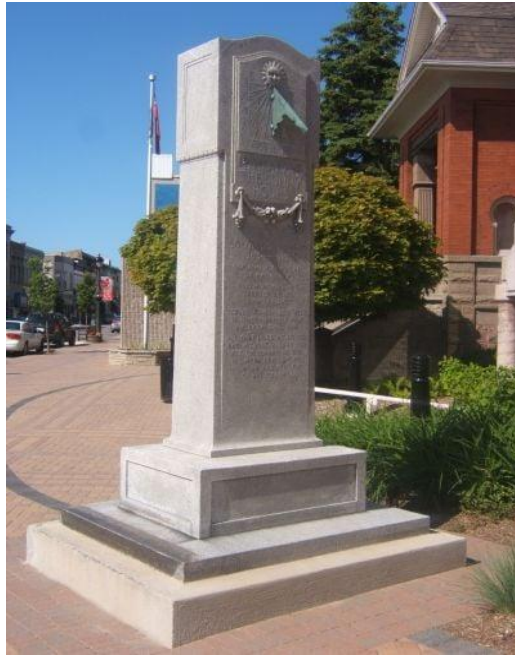


Diagram 3: Secord Monument featuring Sundial

The second Secord Monument was removed in the spring of 2023 due to the Queen Street reconstruction, which was a complete infrastructure replacement of the downtown core. With the new layout of the downtown, the second Secord Monument cannot be returned to its previous location. It is currently being stored in a secure location.

Over the years there have been requests to remove the second Secord Monument due to the reference to Secord’s service to the Southern Army during the American Civil War, as this war was fought to preserve slavery, a system that systematically oppressed and dehumanized Black people.

There have also been delegations to Council and decisions to keep the second Secord Monument in the original location with the original wording. Removing the monument or the wording was believed to be disrespecting Secord’s service to the community and erasing and denying history.

On August 13, 2023, the Council of the Municipality of Kincardine directed staff to prepare a report with recommendations for Council’s consideration related to the Secord Monument including possible options for public engagement. The desire was to engage in a process that would be grounded in equity, allowing voices from all sides of the public debate on the second Secord Monument to be heard, considered, and better understood.

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(C) Process

From the outset, a process was developed to engage with as many Municipality of Kincardine residents as possible. Given my commitment to responsive community engagement, however, I was also prepared to re-assess and amend the process when and if the strategies set out were not working effectively.

Initial Strategy and Updated Approach

The initial plan was to follow the following timeline:



Public Survey

The Public survey launched on March 12th and closed on March 31st after which a shorter, three-question survey was made available for anyone who wanted to participate. March also saw the finalizing of a strategy for the Group Interviews and Community Conversations scheduled for April.

To ensure we received responses from as many residents as possible, the survey was promoted in numerous places including being advertised in the newspaper, on social media, and on local radio. By the closing day, 475 people had completed and submitted a survey.

Group Interviews and Community Conversations

The first round of community conversations was scheduled to be held in person over the course of two days on April 18 and 19. These were not promoted to the community at large. Rather, these initial sessions were meant to allow me to engage with specific groups, organizations, and networks in Kincardine based on the feedback received on the survey. These groups included members of equity seeking groups, history and heritage groups, pro-monument groups, and

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people who self-identified through the survey as wanting to join in a conversation with me about the Secord Monument. Group sessions were scheduled to be in person in Kincardine.

Days before the sessions were scheduled to begin, however, likely due to a rise in tensions online surrounding the Secord Monument, a significant number of participants withdrew. Many who changed their mind about speaking to me explained that they no longer felt comfortable speaking in a larger group fearing a backlash like what they were witnessing online should they share their honest opinions. In response, we pivoted, offering one-on-one sessions and smaller conversations (approximately 5 or 6 people) first to the groups and organizations who had originally opted to speak with me, before offering the same opportunity to other individuals within their networks. To accommodate the switch and to keep costs down, the sessions were moved online. This shift resulted in an influx of people reaching out to join the conversations under the new structure.

In April 2024, after sessions with the public were completed for April 18th and 19th, we were forced to pause the process due to a death in my family. Upon my return in early May, however, we continued our outreach, scheduling two more days of sessions on May 29th and 30th to accommodate those who still wished to speak with me.

The May 29th and 30th sessions were promoted to the public via social media, in the newspaper, and updates regarding the new format were also circulated online and added to the [dedicated project page](#). Council was also offered time to speak with me one-on-one and councillor interviews were conducted during that period.

Community Conversation Date	Number of Participants
April 18, 2024	18
April 19, 2024	3
May 29, 2024	4
May 30, 2024	4
TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	29

Material Collected

- **Community Correspondence with Staff:** All correspondence with staff was tracked, noting whether people emailed or called in, and what issues they were raising or questioned they had. This document was updated to reflect correspondence received between the initial Public Engagement Survey launch (March 12, 2024) to the final day that Community Conversations were completed (May 30th). Following the closing of the Community Conversations, however, a small number of community members reached out to staff wanting to share their thoughts. I asked that their ideas and communications be forwarded to me and that staff continue to track any communications so that they could keep a running record of issues, questions, and/ or ideas for Council after my work was completed. As such, these ideas have also been incorporated into the report.
- **Documents:** Articles about Dr. Secord and the Secord Monument published in various news sources were collected and reviewed including, but not limited to those which

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residents shared with great care and frequency. An excel sheet was created listing all documents reviewed and each was coded to inform my analysis and report.

- **Historical Data:** When available, historical data was also collected. Outreach was also conducted with historical societies and historians to confirm what had been verified and teasing out, to the best of our ability, what had become community legend about a man who cared deeply for the residents of the Municipality of Kincardine.

Divisive Conversations: Fear of Engagement and Online Dialogues

Very soon after I was contracted to develop and guide the engagement process, tensions began to rise online in various forums and public spaces where the Secord Monument was being discussed. Community members from various sides of the debate began reaching out to share their worry about safety in the community as online conversations grew increasingly heated. In response, I used a harm reduction lens when imagining and adjusting the public engagement strategy (e.g., offering one-on-one sessions instead of mixed-group conversations with community members). It was crucial that all residents felt comfortable speaking with me, and I was committed to holding a space for conversations about the Secord Monument that would allow residents to share openly and honestly, knowing that their ideas would be taken seriously and their opinions on the matter were valid.

All community members, regardless of their views on controversial or challenging issues, must feel safe in their communities.

I wanted to reinforce this idea by ensuring that our conversations left residents feeling a sense of relief that there were spaces being created and supported by Council where they could express their opinions without fear of being publicly admonished or attacked.

Based on the feedback received from the people I spoke with throughout the engagement sessions, I believe that we were successful in accomplishing this goal.

About the Survey

Overview of Survey Results

On March 12, 2024, a public survey was launched to gather feedback from the community regarding the engagement process. Questions about the process were answered through a Frequently Asked Questions [FAQ] section on a [webpage dedicated to the Secord Monument](#) on the Municipality of Kincardine Website. My contact information was listed on the dedicated page to remind residents that I was available via email and via the process developed to share feedback or answer questions throughout my time working with the municipality.

To date, I have received 4 unsolicited emails from residents with questions about the process.

Some residents who responded to the call to join community conversations, however, have reached out to me directly to share additional information including, but not limited to, articles of

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interest (see **Appendix A**) as well as share additional insights as new ideas and experiences came to light.

475 people completed the online survey between March 12 – March 31, 2024.

The survey was confidential, asking for some demographic data which included the following questions:

- a) Name and Postal Code
- b) How Long have you lived in the Municipality of Kincardine:
- c) What race/ ethnicity to you identify with

As was explained in the FAQ section of the [webpage dedicated to the Secord Monument](#), a confidential survey was chosen for this stage in the engagement process for the following reasons:

- Confidential surveys are useful because of the ability they provide to drill down into results of the survey.
- It allows the results to be segmented and analyzed by groups. Based on the segmented data it provides information about where potential issues or solutions lie.
- A confidential experience rather than an anonymous survey promotes social civility and reduces the incidence of rude or hurtful responses.

Questions arose as to why we collected race and ethnicity on the survey. This was explained in the FAQ section of the [webpage dedicated to the Secord Monument](#) as follows:

An ethnicity survey question is often part of a survey's section where you ask for demographic information. Demographic questions help to clarify the characteristics of the population being surveyed (in this case, Municipality of Kincardine residents). Collecting this information not only allows us to ensure that we get representation from the diverse groups that make up your community, but it also helps us avoid assuming that survey participants are of a certain demographic.

This information is being kept confidential, and participants also had the choice to skip over the question if they preferred not to answer.

Samples of how this open-ended question could be answered were also provided in the FAQ section.

Prior to my analysis, confidential demographic data (Name, Postal Code) were removed from the document I received to conduct my analysis. As such, I was unable to connect race or ethnicity to specific responses, nor was I able to connect specific responses to particular community members. Responses from each question were put into a list, adding yet another layer that would ensure that it was impossible for me to connect responses to particular community members.

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Overall Findings

Demographic Questions

How long have you lived in the Municipality of Kincardine?

	Count	% of responses	%
More than 15 years	340		72%
I do not live in the Municipality of Kincardine	52		11%
5 to 10 years	36		8%
11 to 15 years	34		7%
Less than 5 years	17		4%
I live here seasonally	10		2%

N 475

All 475 participants [100%] responded to the first demographic question,

Most participants were long-time residents of the municipality of Kincardine, with 340 participants [72%] stating that they lived in the municipality of Kincardine for more than 15 years.

36 participants [8%] stated that they lived in the municipality of Kincardine for 5-10 years while 34 [7%] stated that they had lived in Kincardine for 11-15 years.

17 respondents stated that they lived in the municipality of Kincardine for less than 5 years [4%] and 10 of the respondents stated that they lived in Kincardine seasonally [2%].

Only 52 respondents [11%] stated that they did not live in the Municipality of Kincardine.

What race/ ethnicity do you identify with?

439 participants [92%] responded to the open-ended race/ ethnicity question.

The top 6 responses are listed below (see **Appendix B** for full results):

Race/ethnicity	Number	Per cent
White	259	55%
Caucasian	127	27%
Did not answer- left it blank	36	8%
Canadian	34	7%
Kincardine	26	5%
Human	19	4%

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As the facilitator tasked with exploring the needs of the residents of the Municipality of Kincardine as it relates not only to the Secord Monument, but also to one's sense of belonging given ongoing discussions about the Secord Monument that have become troubling within the Municipality of Kincardine and online, it was interesting to see the number of entries that did not take the demographic question seriously.

While it is true that some people contacted staff to discuss why this question was included, trying to understand how this question relates to the task at hand, the results above suggest that more work is needed in the municipality to help community residents understand why talking explicitly about race is okay, and, more specifically, what the impact is of avoiding this important conversation can be. The Ontario Human Rights Commission provides a powerful guide explaining how and why we collect human rights data including, but not limited to, race and ethnicity in their November 26, 2009 resource entitled [*Count me In! Collecting Human Rights-Based Data*](#).

Although some would argue that speaking about race is, in and of itself “racist” (a comment that did appear once in the responses to this question), it is important to emphasize for council that in a conversation that has centered upon an inscription about the American Civil War on the Secord Monument – a war that has and continues to be associated with the economic institution of slavery that resulted in the violent treatment of over 12.5 million people of African descent during the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade (see Dr. Henry Louis Gates Jr. (2014, January 6), [*How Many Africans Were Really Taken to the U.S During the Slave Trade?*](#) featured on *America's Black Holocaust Museum* website for more details) with only 10.7 million surviving the Middle Passage and arriving alive in North America, the Caribbean, and South America – it is of critical importance that we, as a community dedicated to actively building inclusive spaces in which to live, grow, and thrive, become courageous enough to talk about race. An open dialogue that allows people to ask questions, learn and grow, as well as gain the confidence to explore how race has and continues to shape our day-to-day lives whether we identify as white, Black, Indigenous, Brown or more generally as “racialized” or as a “Person of Colour.”

These conversations require great leadership to engage with and will be necessary as Council moves forward with its decision about the Secord Monument given what was shared in the survey, through the Community Conversations, and online in the public sphere.

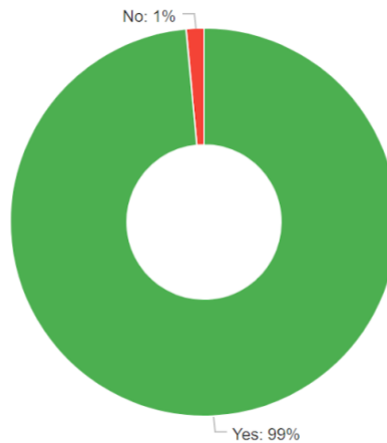
Have you heard about the Secord Monument?

473 participants [99%] began the survey by confirming that they had heard about the Secord Monument.

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N 473

473 participants [99 %] confirmed that they had heard of the Secord Monument.

Given that nearly all participants who engaged with the survey answered yes to this question, it was clear that they shared a common starting place: they knew of the monument prior to taking the survey and their feelings about the survey were based on pre-conceived ideas. More specifically, people did not engage with the survey to be educated on the issue, but rather were ready to share their opinions and seemed keen to ensure that their voices be heard throughout the process.

Key Themes – Survey Results

The survey consisted of the 6 open-ended questions.

Question No	Question from Survey	Number of Responses
1	Have you heard of the Secord Monument	473 participants [99%]
2	What questions do you have about the engagement process?	368 participants [77%]
3	Do you have any questions about the monument that you would like answered in the engagement process?	338 participants [71%]
4	Do you have any concerns about the monument that you would like to share?	417 participants [88%]
5	Who do you think we need to engage with in the conversation?	365 participants [77%]
6	Do you have any other comments?	386 participants [81%]
TOTAL RESPONSES:		2,347

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Of the 2,347 responses to the survey, 8 themes were teased out to help tell a story of the needs, opinions, and concerns of the community as it relates to the Secord Monument. Even more importantly, however, these themes aim to help Council gain more clarity on the key issues and concerns that stand in the way of ensuring that the Municipality of Kincardine becomes an intentionally inclusive and caring community in light of the ongoing tensions being witnessed online as the people of the Municipality of Kincardine await Council’s final decision on the second Secord Monument.

As a final note, the themes outlined below appeared in some way in all questions asked. These, in my humble opinion, best reflect the nuanced commentary from the people of Kincardine regarding the Secord Monument at this time.

1. Concerns About Bias in the Process

“One might wonder if the process is an arm of the cancel culture movement and the choice of the arbitrator is designed to please them, even though she might not be an uninvolved party. People are people.” (Survey Participant, March 2024)

Much of the concern about the potential of a biased process rested on the selection of a Black facilitator. Participants noted that I was both over and under-qualified, that it may be difficult for me to remain objective because of my race, and that, as an outsider, I may not be able to understand the historical weight many residents have placed on the Secord Monument as a legendary citizen who lived in the Municipality of Kincardine.

For many participants this concern was positioned as one of “outside” versus “insider” – I, as an outsider, could not understand the “insider” context. This narrative was then, for some, connected to the use of demographic data at the outset of the survey, suggesting that by asking about race I was demonstrating a bias of some sort.

“Why is this being done by an outsider who, based on their work background is likely to be biased.” (Survey Participant, March 2024)

Others connected the use of an outside facilitator to a sense of unnecessary analysis. For them, the decision about the monument was a clear one (though not all respondents shared what that decision should be), and they felt that the officials they had elected to Council should be well-positioned to decide on the outcome of the monument with some help from municipal staff or, in one response, a student researcher. In the case of the participants who worried about bias, feelings of the decision being “inevitable” also surfaced.

“Is it honest and unbiased because you hired a lady of colour and we don't know racial tendencies.” (Survey Participant, March 2024)

“Is there bias? While I believe this is an important issue to all residents of Kincardine, the majority of council have not been long-time residents here and the choice that was made for the facilitator leads me to wonder about bias.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

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Despite this, many felt the decision should be handled “in house,” raising further concerns that the use of a Black facilitator would also give rise to “racial tendencies.” While the racial tendencies were not made explicit, it appeared that the tendency referenced was to be biased towards one’s race and/ or to be dishonest in the analysis of what was heard based on one’s racial affiliation. In contrast, when participants discussed Dr. Secord, a white doctor in Kincardine and the subject of the monument who twice shared his medical expertise with the Southern Army during the American Civil War, many described him as honorable given that he would have certainly cared for the medical needs of Black and white, Northern or Southern individuals who were injured during the war. Thus, it appeared that for many residents the fear of bias was reserved for Black rather than for white people.

Although some recognized my qualifications to oversee this important dialogue while also sharing concerns that my analysis would be biased, several other participants noted that I was well-positioned to do the work, not because of my race, but because of my academic background. They trusted that Council had made the right selection to engage with the questions at hand and were confident in the process. In this case, they applauded the frank discussion – especially about an issue that had grown increasingly divisive in community – and were happy that we were soliciting feedback from a broad range of community members in this way as means of informing next steps in the process.

“Well thought out and inclusive.” (Survey Participant, March 2024)

Feeling that the process was transparent, some also noted that they understood why a mediator was necessary to help support Council’s desire to engage respectfully with residents who held vastly different opinions about the Secord Monument and its role in potentially perpetuating a dehumanizing vision of Black people through its reference to the Southern Army in the inscription on the second monument. Finding ways to ensure that communication between me as the facilitator and those who supported the monument’s return to a central location in town, desired a new location or inscription for the monument, and those who wanted it removed from Kincardine entirely was revealed by the emphasis on needing a moderator to help move the process forward.

Notably, while some participants focused on my racial identity to raise concerns about the process, given that I was selected to be the facilitator to help Council with this important work, I have not shared this theme to focus your attention on me personally. Despite the conflicting views on my qualifications to do this work, I do not take this personally. Rather, I see two further questions arising from the concerns raised by members of the community that Council must now grapple with.

Questions for Council:

- If people in the municipality believe that Black people have a propensity for bias (e.g., me as the chosen facilitator), while white people are deemed to be “neutral” (e.g., the deeply held belief that Dr. Secord would have helped people of all colours because he was a commendable doctor who took his profession seriously), what does this tell us about how race is understood in the Municipality of Kincardine?

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- If people in the Municipality of Kincardine are worried that speaking about race means that they are being “racist,” how can Council continue to engage meaningfully in a discussion about experiences of racism in the Municipality of Kincardine? How can they effectively guide the community through their fears when engaging in these discussion so as to facilitate honest, caring, and compassionate discussions about the people in the community and their experiences as people of colour?

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2. Fear of “Woke” Ideologies

“Why are we wasting money it's obvious that no matter what we think the council has already decided to appease a few.” (Survey Participant, March 2024)

The idea that it was a few residents who were concerned about the monument was reiterated throughout the survey results. The notion of “appeasing” some community members at the expense of listening to the broader community was also expressed through disdain for “activists” in the community.

“Why is council being ordered around by a few activists?” (Survey Participant, March 2024)

This idea of being under the influence of activists rather than thinking clearly about the issue was also reiterated through an insistence that “council should just decide.” In many of these responses, it was clear that there was a breakdown in communication between members of opposing sides of the Secord Monument discussion and worry that those who supported the monument’s return were not going to be treated fairly in the decision-making process. For these community members, engaging in this conversation represented caving rather than actively listening to those who wanted to “change history,” an idea that became another prominent theme in the survey data.

“I stand firm on my decision that it should be placed back to where it was removed in the same condition and inscription. If council caves into the demands of this small group of individuals pushing their own agenda then it will only inspire them to continue demanding more and more concessions. They will use this as a precedent.” (Survey Participant, March 2024)

“I have a concern that you will cave to the wokeness of 2024 and no return it to in front of the library. You can’t hide history and you can’t change it. If people don’t like certain aspects of his actions let that be a learning opportunity.” (Survey Participant, March 2024)

For some, emphasizing these ideas was best done by calling on buzzwords like “cancel culture” and “woke” ideas. A small number of participants spoke of “woke ideology,” and “ultra-leftist cancel culture,” words that have recently become a symbolic response to perceived gains being made by those who hope to acknowledge past harms – including the historical – and take intentional steps towards building more inclusive communities. Playing on the idea that one should be fearful of change, words like “invasion” were used to express a disdain for “outsiders” who are changing the way “insiders” have always existed. In a similar vein, some participants suggested that this “woke ideology” was inappropriate for a community like the Municipality of Kincardine.

“I dislike the cancel culture that this engages in and the negative impact of denying history. I support replacing the sundial monument in the general location it was remove from, that allows it to function as designed.” (Survey Participant, March 2024)

“The over-use of “woke ideology” and its associated language is not appropriate here in Kincardine. These ideas are imported from far away cities and even other countries where social problems are vastly different. Woke thinking is completely inappropriate in Kincardine.” (Survey Participant, March 2024)

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“We learn from the past and removing it completely is a woke move and I do not support it.” (Survey Participant, March 2024)

Others shared a similar sentiment, albeit using more indirect language to signal a concern that the issues being raised regarding the Secord Monument and, more specifically, the proposed removal of the second monument (i.e., the sundial), was being “blown way out of proportion.”

“I believe this issue (the proposed removal of the 2nd monument) has been blown way out of proportion.” (Survey Participant, March 2024)

This, if brought into conversation with the warnings that history cannot be erased or hidden (see Theme 4 below), suggests that Council is being asked to consider how they can support the people of the Municipality of Kincardine as they engage with the messiness of history. More specifically, these ideas serve as a reminder that many community members are experiencing intense feelings of fear and panic about change and will require support if Council aims to help them move towards a more curious approach to co-creating community. Reminders that all communities change and grow and an insistence that community members from all eras of the community’s history actively participate in co-creating community may assist in responding to a number of participants who asked why this conversation was necessary. Considering the impact of all options, including returning the monument, removing it from Kincardine, or simply updating or not updating the inscription on the plaque, among so many others, will be of critical importance given the number of residents who are struggling to feel grounded, heard, and cared for throughout this new moment of change.

In contrast, and perhaps in light of tensions like this that had already begun to play out in public forums at the time the survey was being disseminated, other participants, while sharing a desire to meet in person to discuss the issues surrounding the Secord Monument, raised questions as to how it could be guaranteed that the conversations would encourage “healthy dialogue.” They wanted to participate in engagement sessions that would foster deeper understanding of the importance of equity and inclusion initiatives in the Municipality of Kincardine and allow a space to hear from residents who may not hold the same opinion on this increasingly heated issue.

“How shall we foster a healthy dialogue so that we as a community can learn together through this excellent discussion around true Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion?” (Survey Participant, March 2024)

There should be public meetings for the entire community. Discussions out in the open, not behind closed doors. (Survey Participant, March 2024)

In fact, a number of participants supported the vision of Council to meaningfully engage in a dialogue that they believed had become about race and inclusion in the Municipality of Kincardine, and, despite raising concerns about the tenor that this conversation might take, remained open to hearing differing opinions. This suggests that some community members remain eager to engage in the co-creation of a community of care that can share differing opinions with respect and kindness no matter how much they may disagree. Calls to remember that Kincardine was a site for the Underground Railroad, for example, also deserve mention here.

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“Kincardine, where slavery was never practised, and where anti-slavery activities, such as the underground railway, to aid escaped slaves, was well established.” (Survey Participant, March 2024)

Deepening ones understanding of the impact of the institution of slavery and its evolution into Jim Crow laws on the land that is now called “Kincardine” is just as important to grapple with as is sharing the history of racial equity work that was potentially enacted through the Underground Railroad in the very same place. Seeing the nuance and messiness as an opportunity to help bring community together through education, then, may lead to powerful and unexpected partnerships that bring more people in Kincardine to a middle ground.

Thus, the varied experiences of racism and racial justice in the Municipality of Kincardine are a reminder that all spaces carry the potential of both injustice and justice within their boundaries. What matters most is devising and implementing a transparent strategy that allows community to becoming intentional with how they build their future together.

Questions for Council:

- It is clear that some understand the connection between the conversations about the Secord Monument and racial justice and/ or equity and inclusion work being initiated in the Municipality of Kincardine, while others are struggling to see the connection between these two important ideas. How might council assist community in better understanding that the conversation about the Secord Monument and the consequent response (especially those made in public) has now resulted in a decision that is larger than simply deciding what to do with the second Secord Monument? How can Council guide community through the challenging, and potentially fruitful conversation about inclusion in the Municipality of Kincardine?
- What might be needed to help bridge the gap between those who worry about “woke ideologies” and those that interpret “woke” as an awakening to new ideas and fresh opinions about how the world is structured? How might current understandings of these ideas be mobilized to address rising tensions in the Municipality of Kincardine as the discussion of the Secord Monument continues?
- How is “activism” being understood by the people of the Municipality of Kincardine and how can activism be re-imagined to better account for calls to address very real experiences of discrimination and/ or racism as they arise in the community?
- How can we ensure that discussions that create a space for people to share their experiences of racism and/ or discrimination in the community are taken at face value as a call in to assist in making all residents feel a much-needed sense of belonging?

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3. Call to Share Clear Decision-Making Criteria

“I understand the feelings from council members to want a thorough process to consult with the public. It is a worthwhile effort. I do have questions about the process, or at least the result of the process. How will the results of the survey and other phases of the engagement process be tabulated? Will council be presented with all of the feedback? Since it will not be a 'vote', how will council be able to determine the results? All of the questions below deal with the monument itself, not about what kind of a community we want to live in - therefore the results should not be expected to cover both of these areas.” (Survey Participant, March 2024)

It was apparent from the survey responses that most participants, if not all, understood that the facilitator was not tasked to decide on the outcome of the Secord Monument. However, given the survey’s focus on soliciting feedback on the engagement process, space was created for Municipality of Kincardine residents to speak to the types of issues they hoped would be tackled in the community conversations that would follow.

Even in the cases where the process was supported, questions were asked about how the final decision would be made. It seemed clear that participants knew that I, as the facilitator, was not tasked with making a final recommendation on the Secord Monument, but there seemed to be a lack of clarity about the criteria Council would use to take this final step once my report was submitted. This led some participants to request that the criteria for the final decision be made publicly available. However, while some agreed that it should be Council making the final decision, others wanted the public to vote in a referendum around the issue.

A sense of frustration also arose in the responses, with some feeling that it was a waste of money to set aside funding to help engage in a conversation about an issue that they were convinced had already been decided.

“Why are we spending \$15,000 or more of taxpayers’ money on this issue when we know the inevitable outcome given the current political and social climates?” (Survey Participant, March 2024)

Reference to the “current political and social climates” seemed to be pointing to a fear of “woke ideology” which also arose in some responses. Participants questioned the validity of claims that racism was experienced in the Municipality of Kincardine, asking for proof connecting those experiences to the monument and the monument’s location.

It should be open to all residents of Kincardine. I would like to have those demanding it to be removed because of racism to present what racist issues they have experienced as a result of this monument being located where it was. If there are in fact these issues should be investigated to verify the legitimacy and severity of them. During the time I have lived here and from prior before moving here I have never heard of any racist issues nor have I ever heard any issues about either of the monuments except for the one that was brought up by a US citizen who re-located here and made the request to have it removed and council at that time made an informed decision to have it remain and denied the US individuals request.

Questions about the “legitimacy” and “severity” of the claims of racism were juxtaposed with claims that they had never seen any racist incidents in the Municipality of Kincardine. Others

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insisted that the reference to the Civil War was to show Dr. Secord’s humanity. In this way a narrative was crafted that re-imagined Dr. Secord’s involvement in the American Civil War as a sign of his humanity because he was fighting for his family and friends in the South. Because the monument’s inscription did not mention the institution of slavery, then, participants suggested that there was little need to consider the issue at all. More specifically, this re-positioning of the Southern Army as a humanitarian cause served to romanticize Dr. Secord’s experiences at the expense of current residents who also shared experiences of racism in the Municipality of Kincardine, while supporting the idea that mentioning Dr. Secord’s service as a non-combatant made the side he opted to be enlisted with negligible.

In contrast, other participants pointed to the need to ensure that the process address xenophobia¹ in the community, mentioning that it would be important to speak to people from diverse groups living in the community. For these respondents, these conversations were not only necessary, but required people on all sides of the issue to come together and co-create a pathway forward.

I think this is an important topic for our community to discuss and also discouraged that it already seems to have become an us versus them vibe instead of a conversation. My question is how will this engagement process capture everyone’s thoughts and feelings and come to a different conclusion or narrative than is already occurring?

This, in contrast to worries about “woke ideology” infiltrating the community, however, raised new questions for Council to consider including rising community frustration that the Secord Monument was not taken into account during the planning phase of the spring of 2023 Queen Street reconstruction.

“When the plans for the “Big Dig” were made why was the replacement of the monument in front of the library not part of the plans?” (Survey Participant, 2024)

Many participants shared a deep annoyance with the process leading up to the Secord Monument’s removal. Participants asked why either the relocation of the monument or plans to return it to its original location were not taken into consideration prior to beginning construction.

“Why wasn’t the Monument taken into consideration when renovating our streetscape? Should have incorporated it in its original position!” (Survey Participant, 2024)

Questions arose as to what had changed in the original plans, with some participants speculating that perhaps there was never a plan to return the Secord Monument to its original location at all.

“At the meeting before construction began, we were told the monument would be returned to its prior location. This means that either this reply was untrue or a decision was made later to change the design. Who made this decision? What was the added cost for the design change? What level of approval was given for the change?” (Survey Participant, 2024)

¹ Xenophobia is a word used to describe a lack of acceptance of people who are perceived as “different” (e.g., newcomers to a community etc.). This can result in fear of people who are considered “other” or “outsiders” in the community.

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Given the frustration shared by some participants about what some considered a troubling planning oversight, some participants reiterated that they considered this new process to decide what to do with the Secord Monument a waste of taxpayer dollars. For others, their irritation resulted in asking why Council could not just decide on their own given they were elected to represent the people of Kincardine.

“Are we having to once again pay for the services of another expert to solve our issues when our own Council should be making decisions for us as we intended them to do when we marked the ballots with their names.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

Several participants reiterated that the monument should be returned to its original location, a suggestion that dismissed not only the concerns raised by other community members who responded to this question, but also seemed to question whether or not Council was being honest when they said that the Secord Monument could no longer be used as a sundial in the original location following the completion of the Queen Street reconstruction.

“Why was the return of the monument not in the reconstruction plans? It seems if no spot for the monument had been made when drawing up these plans, which we all know wasn’t just done last year, then our “esteemed” council had already made up their minds not to put it back. Why can’t mention of the Civil War be removed? I realize that will cost taxpayer money but maybe the \$15,000 spent on this survey could have been put towards that! What if I am offended by the cannons in the park, a symbol of war, are you going to remove them?” (Survey Participant, 2024)

“This subject was addressed before the reconstruction of Queen St. and yet the reconstruction of Queen St. was planned without space for the monument/sundial and no one seemed to respond truthfully about the future of the monument? I have an issue with that.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

Some, like the participant above, wondered whether any monument that was offensive to some would now be considered for removal, this comment tying in with those who requested to know how many complaints had been gathered by Council about the monument prior to the engagement sessions beginning. For others, the solution was simple: return the monument to its original location.

“How soon before it is put back where it belongs?” (Survey Participant, 2024)

The idea of “just put it back” ran through a number of responses, with many respondents arguing that there was nothing wrong with the monument or the inscription. They suggested that an issue was likely being created because the inscription was being taken out of context.

“My concern is that a small number of people are taking it out of context. It is laudable that Dr Secord, the abolitionist that he was, treated people in a war, irrespective of their personal beliefs. That is what it means to be a Dr. They treat people no matter their political beliefs or crimes. I have always read the inscription as a note about how he treated everyone. All that is needed is a plaque attached (or beside) to give more context and a valuable history lesson. Perhaps if there really isn’t a feasible spot in front of the library, then put it in the park across from old town hall. But wherever it is, it should still be capable of functioning as a sundial.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

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Both the contextual argument above and the request to “just put it back” seemed to be based on a desire to end the conversation once and for all. Participant responses suggested that they were tired of having this argument and were ready for the Municipality of Kincardine to move on.

I think the council of this municipality should get it together and quite wasting time and taxpayers money, make a decision on your own and move on!!!!!!!!!!!!!! (Survey Participant, 2024)

There has been more than enough discussion and indecision already. move on to something else. (Survey Participant, 2024)

Find a place in Kincardine and move on. (Survey Participant, 2024)

So much time, money and effort has been wasted on this discussion. Put it somewhere and MOVE ON. (Survey Participant, 2024)

Despite conflicting desires for the Second Monument’s final resting place, participants on all sides of the argument agreed that now was the time for Council to determine a pathway forward, some even applauding Council for taking the time to engage with residents once more. However, to regain the trust of community, laying out transparent criteria for the next stage of the process will be of great importance as Council strives to embed their decision in inclusive and equitable practices.

Questions for Council:

- What can Council do to re-build trust between Council and community members who feel that the process leading up to the current public engagement sessions did not sufficiently address the fate of the Second Monument?
- How can Council help community members to learn to take seriously issues raised by the Municipality of Kincardine residents when it comes to discrimination or the lack of sense of belonging? How can Council play a leading role in supporting the community in their own ongoing growth as a caring and compassionate community?
- How can Council ensure that the rise of tensions between “us” versus “them” or those with deeper roots in the Municipality of Kincardine and those newer to the community begin to build bridges to work together in creating a caring community where everyone can thrive? Might council be able to serve as a model for critical exchange across ideological difference for the rest of the town to see and learn from?

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4. We Can't Erase History

Despite calls to return the Secord Monument to its original location or find a new location and “move on,” it appeared that not everyone understood the nature of the issues being raised. Some asked why this had become an issue, asking for clarification as to what concerns were being made by community members and, presumably, what had prompted this discussion.

“What is wrong with it” (Survey Participant, 2024)

For some, the confusion remained tied to Dr. Secord's profession. In this case, some believed the monument was and should remain focused on his role as a local physician.

“I do not understand the issue of a Dr doing his duty to his society as was expected of him. It is his service to the population of Kincardine that the statue represents.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

“... When it's a monument to a doctor for the help and skills he has given in his years while alive I really don't see an issue.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

Others simply dismissed any critiques by stating “it is fine the way it is,” while other participants grew frustrated and angry with the question about Dr. Secord's beliefs about slavery.

“Do you understand that as a medic in the civil war this doctor treated people of every race and religion who were injured. His humanitarian activity extended to all people for his whole life. And participation as a medic I. The war was based on geography and not personal beliefs. He was required to help all people! Do your research!” (Survey Participant, 2024)

Fears of “erasing history” were also raised by several participants including both those who wanted the monument returned to a central location in town and those who wanted it removed to a museum outside of the Municipality of Kincardine. Some participants suggested that putting the Secord Monument back up with a new plaque would be a solution that could address everyone's concerns.

“Why can't we just put it in the same area it was, with a different plaque on it. Everyone wins” (Survey Participant, 2024)

“I do have a concern with the mention of the Civil War service for the South. I understand the offence that can cause among certain valued members of our community. I don't think celebrating the good that Dr Secord has done should have any association with his service to the South. However, it would seem the Doctor deserves to be celebrated for his contributions to our community and people in general. I think the reworded monument should reside in a suitable public place but not by the library. A change in location and different wording can signify we are moving in a respectful direction.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

However, this approach ran in stark contrast to those who raised deep concerns about the impact of the inscription's messaging on people of colour in Kincardine.

“I have concerns that the monument will be relocated and a whitewashed version of history will accompany it. In my opinion, the only option in preserving the monument would be if a museum were to take it and properly contextualize it. What I mean by that is to clearly state

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facts about the monument and Dr. Secord from the fiction that continues to take a front seat.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

“Reference to Confederate Army is front facing and racist as heck. Bad for our community, economy, vitality.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

“The effect the monument and what it represents to my friends and all people of color each time they pass. It is unwelcoming and contradicts what we say we represent as a community.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

“As a person of colour I do not feel we need to celebrate/ honour people who choose to segregate or oppress others due to race or religion.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

“I truly believe that putting the monument back in the public in a place like the library, a park, a hospital etc. is hurtful and impacts the entire community. Not just community members that are people of colour. Any tourist visiting can see that monument and the monument screams a strong message of “we support this man’s service to an army that fought to keep black people enslaved.” That’s not the vibe I want my community putting out, especially since we’re trying to work to be inclusive.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

Some participants shared the historical purpose and impact of monuments through their responses, challenging the “we can’t erase history” with a seeming call to better understand the historical tools that have been used to maintain dominance and oppression throughout the world.

“Monuments hold significant cultural and historical value, but those commemorating individuals who participated in the Confederate Army represent a painful legacy of oppression and racism. These monuments symbolize the defence of slavery and segregation. They glorify a cause rooted in the subjugation and dehumanization of Black people, perpetuating a narrative of inequality and injustice. By honoring Confederate soldiers, we disregard the suffering and trauma inflicted upon generations of African Americans. These monuments serve as reminders of a dark chapter in our history—one that should not be celebrated or revered. Instead, we must acknowledge the harm caused by these symbols and work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable society, where all individuals are treated with dignity and respect. It’s time to remove monuments that glorify the Confederacy and strive to build a future that reflects our shared values of unity and equality.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

“The monument serves no purpose to our community. It represents a time when celebration of individuals was served by status and privilege. I’m sure Dr Secord served this community well but his service to the confederacy although in question by force or choice has no place in our downtown.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

Participants argued that the premise for the notion of “erasing history” was flawed, drawing on a narrative of growth – both personal and global – emphasizing the need for communities to become more discerning regarding the monuments that do and do not reflect newly formed values.

“I don’t personally understand the perspective that the monument cannot be removed because that would erase history. Alignment with the Confederate South is now felt by many, including me, to be racist regardless of any personal views held by Dr. Secord. I don’t want my town to be associated with the only such monument in Canada because of what it means in the context of today’s values.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

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“I think the plaque does not represent the values of who we are, as a society now. I think it's important to be mindful of how this plaque as it's currently written makes it appear that Kincardine upholds racist ideology.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

Many participants questioned the historical accuracy of the conversations that had been held to date, suggesting that if Dr. Secord was an abolitionist as has been part of the legend behind the man, he would be unhappy with leaving the inscription on the second monument as written.

“If he was truly an abolitionist as those who want the monument to remain have stated, wouldn't he be mortified to have a plaque honouring his time in the confederate army? It needs to go.” (Survey Participant, March 2024)

“Regardless of how good Secord was at his job, it doesn't justify venerating someone who sided with the people fighting for their right to own slaves. If he really was an abolitionist as some claim, wouldn't he be ashamed of serving in the Confederate army? Why would his friends make a point of including it in the second plaque unless it was something he was proud of? But I don't accept the abolitionist argument anyway (not without proof). It would be the biggest oxymoron in history. An abolitionist wouldn't choose to serve in the Confederate army, even as a medic or to gain wartime medical experience. If being forced to serve, an abolitionist would refuse, would try to escape, would not travel hundreds of miles through a warzone after being captured by the side that wants to end slavery to get back to the side fighting to uphold slavery. And an abolitionist certainly wouldn't want to be known as someone who fought in 'the Southern Army'. If he can only be honoured with a couple sentences, why would he want to be remembered for that? For that matter, does Kincardine want to be known as the only place in Canada with a Confederate monument? What message does that send to residents and visitors? I have so many more concerns, but what we should be most concerned about is respecting the dignity of our Black residents and visitors, not catering to a vocal minority that oppose anything they deem as too progressive or 'woke'.” (Survey Participant, March 2024)

For some community members, it was a given that sufficient historical data has been shared that confirm that Dr. Secord was an abolitionist, despite the inscription on the second monument in his honour (i.e. the sundial monument) stating that he enlisted in the Southern Army.

“I am concerned that the engagement process is flawed by not ensuring that the monument in question is properly understood as to its meaning and purpose. The areas that have seemed to have ignited the controversy, is mentioning that Dr. Secord served in the Confederate Army, without any context. He was a non-combatant. He treated all wounded brought to him, confederate or union. He did NOT own slaves. He was an advocate for abolition. But, first and foremost, he was a 'Doctor'.” (Survey Participant, March 2024)

However, other participants requested access to primary data to confirm that this was in fact the case:

“Will the primary evidence and documents our local historian bases his abolitionist opinions on be made available to the public during this process? We're (the general public) taking one person at their word that Secord was an abolitionist, but the public should be able to view the evidence for themselves to draw their own conclusions during this process. To that point, I'd like to see all the evidence that is uncovered in this process for myself, rather than relying on conclusion drawn by another person, so if it's possible, can that evidence be scanned into a digital format and shared online?” (Survey Participant, March 2024)

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Requests like the latter were seemingly dismissed by many residents, with other survey participants appearing to take for granted that the stories that circulated about Dr. Secord being an abolitionist had been amply proven. They insisted that the proof was readily available to the public and had, in fact, been addressed in past Council meetings.

“In an article by Liz Dadson Sept 09-2018 the council at the time voted to keep the monument in place where it had rested for a hundred years. The arts, culture and heritage committee also found it appropriate of a local historical figure. Dr. Secord was reported to have abolitionist beliefs. Without any discussion one day Dr. Secord monument is there at the library, next day it's laying in the old mini golf park. Why?” (Survey Participant, March 2024)

“Solomon Secord is part of this town's history. His abolitionist position is well documented regardless of the fact that he chose to save Confederate lives during the Civil War. To remove this monument is counterproductive to the issues raised.” (Survey Participant, March 2024)

“The history of the man revered in the community tells the complete story. There are numerous historical documents which repeatedly state he was an abolitionist...” (Survey Participant, March 2024)

This justified claims that anything other than returning the Secord Monument to its original location or, should that not be possible, to a visible and central location in town was tantamount to “hiding from history.” With tensions already on the rise, some respondents called on the language of “cancel culture” and “woke ideologies” to express their displeasure with anyone who questioned the myth and legend of Dr. Secord, a Kincardine hero:

“Why don't you offer to inform the offended people on a one to one basis instead of offending all those who want to protect the history and legacy of this person, and not participate in cancelling history. History is knowledge.” (Survey Participant, March 2024)

“If anyone is wanting the monument removed and have not read his entire story in the Walker House, they are really not that interested in this town, and want it removed because of their ideological commitments. Why can't we add a plaque beside it that clarifies his story?” (Survey Participant, 2024)

This mirrors the comments from many other participants that the Secord Monument should be placed back where it was originally, and from here on in, it should be left alone. That said, some confusion also seemed to exist between which of the two monuments to Dr. Secord were inscribed by his friends and family, with many suggesting that the 2nd monument (i.e. the sundial) was placed in front of the library by his close friends and family when, in fact, the community monument for Dr. Secord was moved to the cemetery and replaced by the sundial in 1915. Though questions remain regarding this move, many believe that Hugh Clark, a Member of Provincial Parliament and later a Member of Parliament between approximately 1900 and 1920, would have had something to do with this decision. He, along with two other municipal representatives, were members of the Monument Committee at that time. It is assumed that the Monument Committee would have been responsible for obtaining the sundial, conceiving of the inscription, and moving the first monument from the central location in downtown Kincardine

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into the cemetery where it resides today. Local newspapers report the move of monuments to have occurred in September 1915.

“Why remove it at all? It is part of Kincardine, it honours a man who served this community with valour and distinction! Because of one word you are going to erase his memory and all the good things that he did for this town. SHAME ON YOU ALL!! Why don't the so called people who are offended, take the time and find out what he did for this area. This is one more example of the Woke, ultra Leftist cancel culture that is now invading our small town. I am a 7th Gen. Scot , AND DAM PROUD OF IT!!!!” (Survey Participant, March 2024)

“The monument was placed by a prior generation to honour a local resident for his contributions to Kincardine. It is unfortunate that the one phrase about the Civil War was included, but it was. Rather than attempt to erase his history entirely, it would be better to use this as an opportunity to educate. The Civil War happened. You cannot (or should not) try to erase that fact. Secord's involvement was as a surgeon, not a combatant. For us to pass judgment on him 150 years later is inappropriate.” (Survey Participant, March 2024)

“I am concerned that there is a group of extremist in the community who are trying to erase history by destroying a historically significant monument.” (Survey Participant, March 2024)

“Yes I feel that if we do not keep it we are doing a dis-service to its history... why does one negative action of an individual discredit all of the positive actions??” (Survey Participant, March 2024)

“My concern is that there is an attempt to 'cancel' Dr. Secord because he served in the Southern Army, while ignoring the decades of service to the citizens of Kincardine and area. He was a doctor!” (Survey Participant, March 2024)

Whether one believes in the truth or the legend of Dr. Secord’s abolitionist work, Council is left to find ways to become a bridge between varied deeply held beliefs – some deepened intensely by inter-generational stories told and shared over the years.

Questions for Council:

- How might Council encourage community members to approach those with differing opinions about the Secord Monument with care and compassion no matter what side of the argument they fall on?
- How might Council support an educational campaign that serves to honour the questions raised by community, and the need to continually re-evaluate history as historical societies teach us to do?

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5. Roots of Racism Must be Meaningfully Addressed

“This monument is offensive and racist to any person of any colour, race, or creed knowing Secord fought against human and civil rights. Why do we need to even question its removal or do this survey? Destroy it. There is no value to our children’s future to publicly praise this racist man in our community.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

Despite some participants simply responding that the monument should be returned to its original location, others stated just as clearly that the monument should either not return, or that it should not return in its original form because it represented – whether intentionally or not – a moment in history when Black people were dehumanized and treated violently all across the U.S. and in what would be known as “Canada” some two years later.² For the latter, suggestions that the inscription be amended were once again raised, with some participants making explicit comments to express why even this was an insufficiently critical response – especially for something that serves to “divide the community.”

“The people who think even amending the words is disrespectful towards Secord’s service to this community are not thinking about how venerating Secord in the civil war effort including his service in protecting the practise of slavery is disrespectful to the enslaved peoples.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

“I think it’s offensive due to Secord’s involvement in support of slavery, despite whatever else he may have done. The constant discussion of it divides the community in a bad way.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

For those who wanted the monument returned and were open to amending the inscription, issues were also raised about whether or not a central location was appropriate for a monument that was causing so much tension in the community .

“Is council open to including additionally signage, acknowledging the references to the civil war/slavery and that we do not condone this, but to remove it completely would be erasing history? Similar to the Disney disclaimers we know see on their older movies.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

“What can reasonably be done to keep the monument mostly intact while amending the racial undertones? Is that even possible? Are there other locations it can be placed?” (Survey Participant, 2024)

“If anyone is uncomfortable with it, it should be removed.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

² At the time of the American Civil War (1861-1865) “Canada” as we know it today did not yet exist. Known as “British North America” (and before that, “New France,” until the signing of the 1763 Treaty of Paris ceded New France to Britain) which consisted of parts of southern Ontario and southern Quebec. Separate colonies also existed (i.e., Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, British Columbia). Canada did not become a nation until 2 years later, on July 1, 1867. It has been well documented by historians that slavery was practiced in both New France and British North America (see Winks, R. (1997). *The Blacks in Canada: A History*, 2nd Edition. McGill-Queens University Press), and that Jim Crow laws that arose in the U.S. following the Emancipation Proclamation were also reflected on Canadian soil (see Dr. Henry-Dixon, Natasha. (2019, May 28). [*Racial Segregation of Black People in Canada*](#). The Canadian Encyclopedia.)

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Similar sentiments arose with some community members asking why there were two monuments to Dr. Secord and why the monument in question had to be placed downtown at all.

“Why it needs to be downtown?” (Survey Participant, 2024)

“Why do we need two monuments for the same person?” (Survey Participant, 2024)

“Within today's context, why this Canadian town would want any type of public association with the American civil war, it's oppression and slavery connection?” (Survey Participant, 2024)

“I feel that the monument downtown should not be placed back there. The inscription is offensive and hurtful to some of our community members. I also feel that one monument is enough and the monument in the cemetery is more appropriate.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

For those who sought to have the monument removed, the issue of concern was clearly articulated: the nod to the Southern Army was a powerful indicator of an old value system in the Municipality of Kincardine that most hoped community recognized and had moved away from.

“... why we are even entertaining the idea of reinstating it” (Survey Participant, 2024)

Given how far the Municipality of Kincardine had come, erecting the monument anywhere in the community would serve to subtly suggest that Kincardine today continues to hold dear values that dehumanize people of colour in general and, more specifically, Black people.

“I think it has become a very divisive issue. Many of those opposed to changing the monument or getting rid of it are also rejecting the idea that there is still racism in our community.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

This position resulted in explicit requests that Black community members be centered in any engagement process about the Secord Monument, suggesting further, then, that Council should take intentional steps to ensure that the voices of Black communities and the barriers to inclusion that they may raise are taken seriously at any decision-making table.

“I'd very much like input from our black community” (Survey Participant, 2024)

“What are the perspectives of descendants of those who were impacted by slavery and oppression, and how can their voices be amplified in the decision-making process? How can we ensure that the engagement process is accessible to all members of the community, including those with diverse backgrounds and experiences? What steps can be taken to educate the community about the historical significance and the broader context of systemic racism and oppression?” (Survey Participant, 2024)

Some participants also raised questions that suggested that more needs to be done to explain how and why the monuments were originally erected in the community given the tense dialogues that had ensued over the years.

“Why do we have this monument?” (Survey Participant, 2024)

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“Why was this monument ever put up? Why are we memorializing someone who believed in Slavery? What kind of message do we think this sends to newcomers and visitor to the Kincardine community and how could this ever make them feel safe?” (Survey Participant, 2024)

“Is there any understanding regarding why a second monument was erected?” (Survey Participant, 2024)

Others wondered if both monuments were necessary for the municipality and hoped that the engagement process would include soliciting feedback on that very question.

“We do not think it is necessary to have two monuments for one individual. The monument in the cemetery is sufficient in memory of the individual and is an appropriate location for anyone wishing to make private, respectful visitations. If there are individuals in the community who feel discomfort and/or disrespect for historical reasons (including the USA’s history of racial injustice and slavery and a civil war fraught to maintain slavery in that country), then their feelings and objections should be respected by not returning the monument 2 to outside the library or to any other highly visible public location. We see this as a fair and reasonable compromise.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

For others, however, in a seeming response to concerns that the monument re-connected the community with a racist time in North American history, some respondents asked that Council explain with more detail the specific number of complaints associated with the Second Monument.

“How many complaints did you get to remove the monument and how many to keep it where it is?” (Survey Participant, 2024)

For these participants, there was no request to track the nature of the complaint, or engagement with why someone might complain. Rather, they remained laser focused on the number of complaints that had come to the municipality. There seemed to be a deep worry that all of this commotion was a consequence of a small number of people who may or may not have the Council’s ear.

“Who are these people that want it removed and how many are objecting to the monument.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

While it is uncertain whether it is the nature of a complaint that makes it more or less important for Council to consider, or if the number of complaints about an issue is what drives Council to act, it appears that if Council can share transparent guidelines that can help community better understand why Council is acting on this issue right now, it may be of benefit to the Municipality of Kincardine community members.

Questions for Council:

- Should the number of complaints guide the process aimed to address the root causes of racism, or is it the nature of the complaint that has it taken more or less seriously at the Council table?

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- How might Council clarify and/ or better express their position on why the issue of the Secord Monument and its connection to building inclusive communities is being raised now to assist community members who worry about what is driving the process at this time?
- What has been done to date to ensure that community members are aware of why Council acts on some issues with more or less priority? What is it that moves Council to take a concern seriously when it is raised in community and how can we better share that information so that Municipality of Kincardine residents understand why the conversation about Secord Monument is taking place in the manner that it is today?

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6. Learning from History Requires Accurate Historical Records

“There are a lot of conflicting stories about Dr. Secord. Depending on a person's feelings towards Monument 2, we hear a mix of the following claims: - a staunch abolitionist (to the point where he was almost hanged) - was only 'press-ganged' into service with the Confederate army (and was not a - but after being captured by the Union, Dr. Secord escaped and willingly returned to rejoin the Confederate Army - he was only in the south for treating his TB. His Hippocratic oath and the social norms at the time 'required' he join a side in the conflict to 'serve people' and 'minimize the damage caused by war' - Some of these claims are clearly contradictory and as a result, I can never be sure if the person I'm talking to has the same *facts* as I do. As part of my decision-making process, I would like the process to include a collection of all these claims - all fact checked with citations and sources. Is each claim (true/false/unverifiable). This way, everyone has a common understanding going forward.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

Despite several people stating that fulsome historical research into Dr. Secord’s role in the Southern Army had already been completed and readily shared in community (i.e. he was a non-combatant and an abolitionist), time and again participants raised the need for more historical data to separate facts about Dr. Secord from the legend that he had become in town in order to truly learn from history.

“I do not have any questions about the monument, but I think there are a lot of anecdotal stories that people who support the continued celebration of the monument share and reshare as if they're fact. providing some clarification on that would be helpful but not necessary.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

“It would be nice to have a good historical record created of what Dr. Secord did during the Civil War. I know that he enlisted as a doctor. Was taken prisoner. Escaped. Then re-enlisted. Dr. Secord's factual record, not speculation is needed. It is hard to believe that an abolitionist would join the Confederate cause twice, if he was an abolitionist. That is difficult to understand.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

Others made specific requests for proof to support claims that Dr. Secord was an abolitionist.

“There's been quite a bit of community discussion about how Dr. Secord was 'opposed to slavery' and risked being murdered when he was in the states. This seems like lost cause/revisionist history to me.... I'd like to know where this information first was communicated and the context. (If it's true, I think he'd be disappointed by the inscription and that would be good rationale for removing it.)” (Survey Participant, 2024)

“Do we know for a fact that he was abolitionist? Do we have sources to prove he treated soldiers on both sides?” (Survey Participant, 2024)

Some participants also asked for factual data to explain why he would choose to fight for the Southern Army twice before returning home to Kincardine.

“Not so much the monument, but further detail about the reasons etc. for Dr Secord's situation in Georgia.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

“I would like to know all of the information and story about Dr Secord. Are we as a community making assumptions about him and the reason why he went to the south during

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the war. Do we know as a physician if he helped both sides of the war? It is my desire that whatever the outcome is, it is based on facts.” (Survey Participant, 2024, emphasis added)

For this group of participants, then, it was suggested that gaps still existed in the historical data that has been collected to date, a very common issue when working with historical narratives. Moreover, it became clear that many questions were also circulating about why the inscriptions on both monuments to Dr. Secord read so differently.

“Is there any other information about what the inscription was meant to communicate.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

“I have heard a lot of Dr. Secord's story but not too much about his friends. I wonder if it is possible to learn more about the differences in the two (different) inscriptions. I think the Monument 1 one is best and am curious why they thought to add his war service to the second. My guess would be they thought it was important- why would that be? What was it about the time and the story that those people wanted to honor their friends this way? Do those folks have descendants around we could ask, for example?” (Survey Participant, 2024)

Yet other participants suggested that historical accuracy also includes attempting to better understand why the monuments came to be – especially given the differing inscriptions.

“I wonder about the purpose of erecting the monument to begin with- it seems it was commissioned by private citizens. I wonder if there is a place for a private monument on public property. I also wonder the sentiment of those who erected the monument. If it was to acknowledge the service of Secord to Kincardine, I wonder why in the brief inscription it centres serving in the Southern Army during the American Civil War.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

Despite the concerns raised above, some participants emphasized that Canada was a “safe haven” for those enslaved during.

“Why are we judging a doctor for saving human life We have no context The American civil war was more relevant a hundred years ago when the monument was put up and they knew more than we do today. The people of that era experienced in real time. Canada was a safe haven for slaves. And if they still put the monument up in town square knowing the context, then that is saying the whole town was racist and confederate sympathizers.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

Why are we trying to destroy our history, my family dates back to the early 1800's in this area. Canada was never involved in Slavery. Ever hear of the underground railway, safe passage for slaves escaping their masters. (Survey Participant, 2024)

Moreover, some community members challenged the assumption that more historical fact-finding was necessary, pointing to “numerous historical documents” which claimed that Dr. Secord was an abolitionist.

“...as the history of the man revered in the community tells the complete story. There are numerous historical documents which repeatedly state he was an abolitionist.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

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“Why are we chastising the legacy of a man who did so much founding this community? He was non-combatant. He was an abolitionist. The wording on the monument says nothing of him being an active soldier, only that he served as a surgeon in the southern army.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

This sentiment was also shared by other participants who argued that a new plaque could easily be added to explain that Dr. Secord was actually a “healer of all, regardless of socio-economic status, gender, creed, and ethnicity.”

“How could we develop a plaque to help contextualize the history of Dr. Secord, so that the healer of all, regardless of socio-economic status, gender, creed, and ethnicity, is remembered? From the writings of historians this former Kincardine citizen spoke out against slavery. Somehow the truth needs to be better showcased.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

Even for those who felt that this conversation was a “waste of time,” there was openness to re-contextualizing the Secord Monument to better reflect what they believe is currently known about Dr. Secord.

“This was already dealt with years ago. This is a waste of time and money. However, changing the plaque to give a better description on the history is a great idea.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

For many, adding a plaque to the current monument would become a pathway to “learning from” history rather than “erasing history.”

“My concern is that we don't erase history but learn from it. You can still engage in a safe and respectable conversation with the monument on display.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

“History is itself. Times have changed, and people have evolved to become more tolerant of diversity. You can't change the inscription- just learn from it. Obviously, it generates healthy discussion.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

“I am concerned about the removal of historical data, failure to know history makes us susceptible to repeat it, good or bad.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

The notion of encouraging a “healthy discussion” about the negative aspects of our history – the ones from which we have most grown – was an idea that grounded Council's decision to engage community as it has, however, as we have seen online, the discourse has often grown increasingly divisive over time. This suggests that the community is looking to Council to step in and help change the trajectory of the current dialogues surrounding the Secord Monument.

Questions for Council:

- Given the nuances of history when told from the perspective of those enslaved and brought to Canadian soil, how might Council help educate community members in the Municipality of Kincardine about the challenges faced by Black community members post-emancipation from slavery and during the rise of Jim Crow? Using historical record

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as Council’s guide, what limitations may have existed in the Municipality of Kincardine for Black communities at that time that may impact their experiences in town today?

- Where can Council go to expand upon historical data about Dr. Secord and what can be done to ensure that this new information, if retrieved, is shared with the people of the Municipality of Kincardine? Even if the full legend of Dr. Secord is not able to be “proven” as often happens when relying on historical records that may or may not exist, how can Council help community separate fact from myth or legend?

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7. Honouring Ancestors in the Municipality of Kincardine

For many participants, their sense of self was deeply tied to the stories they had been told about the man behind the Secord Monument growing up in the Municipality of Kincardine. In this case, the call to put the monument back as closely to where it was erected prior to the Queen Street reconstruction.

Put it back as close as possible to where it was originally placed. (Survey Participant, 2024)

Put it back (Survey Participant, 2024)

The Secord monument should be returned to front of library. (Survey Participant, 2024)

Many pointed to the community that worked to erect the monument, suggesting that it was dishonourable for current Municipality of Kincardine community members or Council to remove or relocate it, labeling this “revisionist” in nature.

This individual's community deemed him worthy of permanent recognition. Removal of this monument is revisionist and counter to the intent of the community's recognition. (Survey Participant, 2024)

Questions of inclusivity were raised, with some participants comparing the Secord Monument to the mural at the Davidson Centre.

I would like the monument reinstalled in its original location at any cost, what gives council the right to remove history that was donated to the people of Kincardine, what about the mural at the Davidson centre is it inclusive or should we paint another one to include all the races of Kincardine people. (Survey Participant, 2024)

The emphasis on the monument being “put there by community” is worth noting. For many participants, the fight to keep the Secord Monument was one that mirrored and an act of honouring their ancestors. They struggled to see why others were not as empathetic to the deep roots they had in community and worried about a person being judged by their faults.

“It was put there by the community to honor him as a dedicated doctor nothing more. His oath would be to serve all, and that's what he did. We can't change the past, only learn from it. Put it back at the library and if need be, put a plaque near it explaining the civil war.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

“My concern is that it was just arbitrarily removed because a few people weren't happy. What about the majority of people who don't want to see history erased? We can't do anything about the past but learn from it. Remove mention of the Civil War, but this man honourably served the citizens of Kincardine and the monument should be put back.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

In contrast, other participants emphasized the community today, centering their attention on the present and future of the Municipality of Kincardine.

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“Times change. Ideas of what is acceptable need to be reevaluated as new information becomes available. A war was fought to end slavery. Celebrating those fighting to retain slavery is hard to justify. Who we choose to celebrate, sends a message about who we are and what we value to those who live here and those who visit. Surely there are other individuals more worthy of public recognition.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

Space was created to understand why some felt compelled to fight for the return of the Secord Monument and the priority for such engagement was also outlined.

“Top Priority: - Reaching and hearing from the people who experience negative feelings due to the current existence and location of Monument 2 Secondary: - The people who view (historical) Kincardine as a core part of their identity and perceive the monument as providing an important physical link to the community's past (connects people to the cultural heritage and achievements of their ancestors). and finally, 3) Council, as they ultimately make the decision and this very much a local-realpolitik issue.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

“As we grow and learn as a community, it is incumbent upon all of us to pay close attention to whose stories are centered and valued, and whose are not. Creating and promoting a safe, inclusive, accepting community requires us to reflect on the voices that have guided past decision-making and where we may need to make changes and invite new perspectives. Personally, I do not believe references to the Southern Army/Confederacy on a public monument in Kincardine reflect the values of belonging and inclusivity I wish to see promoted in our town. However, as a white woman (with all the privileges associated with this identity), I do not believe my voice is one that should be prioritized. I encourage the Municipality of Kincardine to solicit feedback specifically from racialized and minority groups before making decisions about the Secord Monument and any similar issues in the future.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

Thus, for many participants a sense of self and ancestry became the foundation from which they fought to preserve the monument, while, for others, a sense of honour to future generations led them to walk the path of “know better, do better.”

Questions for Council:

- How might Council help educate the community on inclusion in a way that allows them to co-create community spaces and better understand Council decisions to become intentional creators of caring and inclusive communities?
- What can be done with the leadership of Council to ensure that older generations of residents are recognized for and supported in their growth in an increasingly diverse community rather than be made to feel guilty of the deep ties they have in community?

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8. Identity and the Municipality of Kincardine Today

“... Several Scottish and Irish families’ descendants of early Ontario Pioneering heritage (of which I am one). An Italian engineer, a Hungarian engineer, Russians, Lithuanians, Polish, South Africans, Germans, on and on and on. All within half a mile of my house. I can only compare it to the experience later in life of living and studying on a University campus. This is Kincardine. We lived multi-culture before the term was coined. The woke concept of Multi-culture is actually divisive highlighting and encouraging racism. Everyone who came here accepted the predominately Christian society that the pioneers carved out of the wilderness. This town was the model of good.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

Many participants demonstrated a deep attachment to stories of Kincardine’s inception, speaking to the multicultural ethos that continues in the town today. For these participants, newcomers choosing to accept the social norms and values that were here, passed down from earliest settlers of the land, was what made the Municipality of Kincardine a wonderful place to grow.

In contrast, others wondered how to balance the perception of the current inscription on the second Secord Monument with the inclusive community they hoped it to be.

“Why in a community that on the cover is very inclusive and welcoming would be proud to show the Secord monument as it symbolizes the confederation.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

“Is this really the only Confederate monument in Canada? That would seem to be a dubious honour, bringing negative attention to our town.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

Does this monument reflect the values we communicate as a community in the future?
(Survey Participant, 2024)

This led some participants to ask for information about how other communities had dealt with historical monuments, suggesting that their insights about the process they had taken could be invaluable to the Municipality of Kincardine

“How many other monuments have historically been removed or otherwise altered? As a community, is our mindset to preserve our history or modernize? That perspective should guide this decision.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

Of note was the ongoing back and forth between those who remained deeply tied to critiquing the monument as a relic of the past and those participants who felt strongly that not erecting the monument once more would be tantamount to “erasing history.”

“Why do some folks feel so deeply connected to the monument? Why does its removal or inclusion of further context about the civil war frustrate some?” (Survey Participant, 2024)

“Instead of removing the monument, why not do the research and put a plaque with explanatory information. The war happened. We cannot change that. We can however address some of the issues and Dr Secord’s participation in the war. The Walker House has had guest speakers in to talk about Dr Secord’s dedication to all people. There are those that have researched his participation. I truly believe in education and by merely removing the monument, perhaps we are contributing to racism in a different way....we could be

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contributing to divisive thinking. Having information available hurts no one, educates some and makes others curious.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

Even as the Municipality of Kincardine’s identity was explored and challenged, a call for education was suggested from a number of participants. This led some to question the role of monuments in the community, a question that was asked of those who participated in the Community Conversations.

“What about all the other people in the community of Kincardine who have made a difference? Why don’t they are monuments? Just because someone had money to purchase one many, many years ago doesn’t mean it gets to stay forever. It feels so irrelevant!” (Survey Participant, 2024)

“There are many doctors who have served this community, the municipality of Kincardine, over the past 175 years. Why should this one doctor be honoured in this way with a monument? If, as it seems, his fame and thus the reason for this statue is because he served in the American Civil War on the confederate side, then this monument should no longer have a place within the community. Or is his fame because he served in the early years of this community? If so then the wording on the monument should be revised to reflect his endeavours within the community, along with other doctors/nurses from the early years of Kincardine's development.” (Survey Participant, 2024)

Developing new ways to come together with a shared vision of the Municipality of Kincardine is one way to help begin healing in community – especially considering the divisive conversations that have arisen while working through next steps for the Secord Monument. Navigating through this moment may be difficult, but I truly believe that Council has been gifted with an opportunity to lead the Municipality of Kincardine in a visioning exercise that helps them learn from the past and co-create a future where all residents thrive.

Questions for Council:

- What role should monuments play in the Municipality of Kincardine in 2024 and how can this new vision be used to support community as they grapple with historical monuments today?
- Given that monuments are not the only way that community members are celebrated, what other types of celebrations of local people might Council support to ensure that diverse communities are honoured in more official capacities?

About the Community Conversations

Background

Upon closing of the March 2024 survey, community conversations were organized for community members to engage with me directly. Questions were developed based on the survey results with an explicit aim to gather information from community that would provide council with greater insights into how Municipality of Kincardine residents were feeling about the monument. Notably, not being charged with deciding on what should be done with the tribute to Dr. Secord, I had the flexibility to explore key ideas as they were arising throughout the process. Most importantly, however, I was able to use the community conversations as space for more nuanced discussions about the impact of current dialogues associated with the Secord Monument on various communities within the municipality as well as to flesh out key themes as they arose in the Public Survey.

With the hope of hosting a more traditional townhall in or around May 2024, and recognizing the mounting tensions in the municipality as discussions about the Secord Monument moved into public online forums, the original plan was to host several conversations with key organizations and community groups who could help me better understand the discourse around the Secord Monument as well as the living history of Dr. Secord himself. Sessions were capped at a maximum of 15 people each, and it was imagined that participants sharing differing views would come together to engage in critical conversations about the monument and what it represents to the diverse communities living in the Municipality of Kincardine. The hope was that a space could be created where residents would be able to hear and learn from each other, a request that was also raised by various participants in the Public Survey. Staff assisted in developing these sessions on my behalf.

The initial call for attendees to participate in the mixed-group conversations about the Secord Monument was not publicly advertised. Instead, staff conducted outreach with specific groups that could assist me, as the facilitator, in better understanding the historical research and narratives around the monument and Dr. Secord. Requests were made to the Heritage Committee, Walker House, Bruce County Museum and Cultural Centre, Bruce County Historical Society, and Equity-deserving Groups in the municipality. Those who had reached out via the Public Survey requesting to participate in future community conversations were also invited to speak with me as part of these first sessions.

26 people registered for sessions scheduled in person on April 18th and 19th in the Municipality of Kincardine. However, as online conversations grew increasingly tense, a significant amount of people and groups revoked their registration. Potential participants cited several reasons for their decision to cancel including no longer feeling comfortable being involved in conversations that were becoming extremely divisive in public forums (e.g., comments sections on newspaper articles and in response to Facebook posts). As more and more people expressed with staff their discomfort with the direction that these conversations were taking online, community members explained that they feared being verbally attacked if and/ or when they shared their views publicly, no matter what those views were or who they were sharing them with.

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A few days before the sessions were to take place it became clear that, despite the critically important outreach being completed by staff, too few people and groups wanted to participate in a dialogue using this format. Historical societies, equity seeking groups, and groups formed from the Public Survey were all hesitant to participate in what they considered a “hot potato,” and it was suggested that this difficult decision should be dealt with at the municipal level alone. Some worried that the media would be present in the dialogue, and, despite staff reassuring them that media would not be invited to these initial conversations, the cancellations continued.

In response, and with a desire to engage as many people as possible, I suggested that we pivot, first moving the conversations virtually – especially given the uncertainty surrounding how many people would agree to join me in conversation and the last-minute cancellations we were experiencing. I then asked staff to reach back out to all individuals who had originally agreed to speak with me and offer them one-on-one conversations rather than participating in mixed-groups or speaking with me as a particular organization. This allowed individuals who were also part of historical societies to have an opportunity to engage in the process as individual residents if they so chose, rather than putting historical societies in the difficult position of having to pick a side while feeling pressured to speak “as the society.” With the new format, I also asked staff to review the Public Survey data once more and reach out again to anyone who had indicated that they wanted to speak with me or participate in public conversations as they arose. A request was also shared with Council to offer one-on-one meetings with me should they so desire. For those who still wanted to meet in a group setting, we also assured them that this, too, could be arranged.

The move to offering virtual, one-on-one interviews as well as smaller group meetings seemed to alleviate some of the concerns being raised with municipal staff. The [dedicated project page](#) was also updated with details regarding the opportunity to speak directly with me through these newly imagined Community Conversations and reminders that people could email me directly were also circulated.

By the end of the new round of participant recruitment conducted by staff, 21 people were scheduled to speak with me over the course of April 18th and 19th either in small group or one-on-one sessions as they requested.

Given how quickly we were forced to pivot in the hopes of ensuring that the community conversations organized in April would be fruitful, some residents were interested in joining me after April 19th. However, as staff began looking for new times to schedule additional conversations with potential participants, I was forced to pause the conversations due to a death in the family. While I was away, municipal staff continued to work diligently to ensure that community could have their opinions shared with me, developing a list of those who wished to meet with me when it was possible for me to re-start the community conversations, and offering to take notes of the points they wanted me to be aware of. These were all shared with me upon my return and have been included in my analysis of key themes.

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Community Conversation Date	Number of Participants
April 18, 2024	18
April 19, 2024	3
May 29, 2024	4
May 30, 2024	4
TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	29

By the end of May, I had engaged with 29 residents in community conversations. Each conversation was transcribed and coded, and all identifying information was removed from all transcripts to protect the privacy of each participant. Many participants suggested articles I should read, or shared documents with me that they felt would be useful to my examination and analysis. These were also coded. Thus, over 60 documents were compiled, reviewed, and analyzed to develop the final six themes shared below.

While traditional reports would provide information about responses to each question, the ongoing tension on the topic has led me to develop a slightly different method to present back what I heard. With a desire to protect the confidence of those that spoke to me either in small groups or one-on-one as well as those who emailed me information via municipal staff members, I have chosen to first share the guiding questions below followed by an introduction to each of the six themes derived from my analysis. Each theme will be supported by paraphrased details attributed to the participants rather than using direct quotes to ensure additional protection of participant identities. Of note is the way in which the themes from the community conversations served to add an additional nuance to the key themes that developed from the Public Survey.

Community Conversation Guiding Questions

Community Conversation – Guiding Questions

1. What does the Secord Monument mean to you?
2. What does the Secord Monument mean to the broader community (e.g., your friends, family etc.)?
3. Given the vast opinions on the impact of the Secord monument on communities in the Municipality of Kincardine, what role do you think monuments should play in the municipality?
4. Is there anything else you'd like to add? Or are there other possibilities we should consider (for the monument or for moving forward)?

Though the community conversations were devised to create a space for residents to share any details that they wanted with the facilitator, I thought it most effective to develop guiding questions that, while based on the information received in the Public Survey, also engaged with some of the ideas that were circulating in the conversations arising publicly during this period. It

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was also of great importance to me that I respected the time given to me by residents of Kincardine. To this end, questions were emailed by municipal staff to all participants prior to their meeting with me to give them enough time to consider their responses and gather their thoughts about a topic that was becoming increasingly more divisive in public spaces. [See **Appendix C**]

As the conversations online grew increasingly tense, I added an additional question which I introduced to residents during the session, allowing them to decline to respond if they did not feel comfortable answering in the moment. I also offered all participants the opportunity to email me with additional ideas or thoughts as they continued to reflect on the questions posed during the session. Notably, all participants chose to answer the additional question, offering ideas on next steps as they so engaged.

Additional Questions: What is lost/ gained if it is:

- A) Relocated?
- B) Restored to (close to) original location?
- C) Removed from Kincardine?

What follows are six key themes which derived from Community Conversations held in April and May 2024 as well as any community member's communications shared with me via municipal staff. Some participants provided me with more information to expand on key ideas following the Community Conversations and those were also taken into consideration as I developed the key themes outlined below.

Unlike the section of the report dedicated to the public survey where quotes were used to support the themes developed, what appears in the boxes in this section of the report are paraphrased ideas from individual participants using the code I provided to each conversation to indicate that this was an idea taken from a particular group and/ or individual community member. When drawing on articles and public posts which were shared with me, however, direct quotes are used given that the ideas shared exist in public spaces and confidentiality has already been waived in those cases. I have also quoted directly from emails received without reference to sender to protect their identities [See Appendix E for Document Codes].

Key Themes from Community Conversations

Community Conversations: Key Themes
1. Need for Community Healing
2. Centering Black Voices
3. Challenges Tying Identity to a Legend, Myth, or Historical Recollection
4. The Municipality We Want to Be
5. Learn More, Do Better
6. Navigating Complicated Histories

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1. Need for Community Healing

Participant C3 explained that some say the monument is immensely harmful due to reference to a war fought to maintain the enslavement of Black people as an economic driver, while others see the same monument as the “essence and heritage of Kincardine.” This tension needs deeper examination.

Participant C8 insisted that the Municipality of Kincardine needs to heal from this, and that an agreeable solution must be sought by Council.

Of the many themes that ran throughout the community conversations, the call for community healing was by far the most prominent. Based on widely opposed sentiments about the Secord Monument, the call for healing came from people speaking both for and against the monument’s return as well as those who shared more nuanced positions on the monument’s impact on community.

Given the vast array of opinions not only on the Secord Monument itself, but also on public discussions that had grown increasingly divisive as the process continued, some spoke of the healing process for the Municipality of Kincardine using aspirational terms:

Participant C7 described their aspirations for the Municipality of Kincardine: To be seen and experienced as welcoming is the goal. The participant wants their community to become a space where people can speak their minds freely without being attacked. They want to be respectfully engaged even if other community members disagree with their opinion(s). Unfortunately, right now people are scared to share their ideas because they don’t want to be cancelled. The Municipality of Kincardine needs to heal from this.

Some residents shared deeply held beliefs that tied their own personal and familial identity to the Secord Monument. For these participants, the healing process being called for was expressed as a need to find a way to preserve this part of history while creating more inclusive communities.

Participant C6 explained that some residents are attached to the stories being told about Dr. Secord and that this has led them to create an attachment between their own identity as long-time residents in the community and the Secord Monument. The participant explained that for these community members, then, any talk of change takes on much greater meaning.

Participant C10 explained the attachment some felt to the Secord Monument as being very deeply tied to their own sense of belonging as long-time residents. The participant explained that while newcomers to the community should have a say in the direction the community takes, there was a sense of belonging that is lost when one’s heritage is taken (e.g., removal of the Secord Monument). From that place of hurt and loss, long-time residents may say “if you don’t like it here as it is, why did you choose to live here?”

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Participant C12 explaining that Dr. Secord was also a local mason and, as a lodge member themselves, would have held a particular set of outstanding community values. This connection led the participant to want to protect Dr. Secord’s honour in his absence as well as ensure that Dr. Secord’s presence in community was well preserved. Dr. Secord is, for the participant, a reflection of all that is good in the community.

Other participants felt compelled to challenge the idea that their sense of identity was tied to the Secord Monument despite their deep familial roots in the community. They argued that most people had no idea about the monument’s inscription and felt that the monument no longer reflected current values in the Municipality of Kincardine. Healing for this group was focused on finding ways to ensure that community members impacted by the inscription were heard and that their needs were also met in the municipality.

Participant C6 explained that as a long-time resident in the Municipality of Kincardine, the Secord Monument had not taught them anything directly. Rather, meaning was created around the monument that was deeply tied to myths about Dr. Secord.

Participant C11 explained that as a long-time Kincardine resident, they had never read the Secord Monument’s inscription until it became controversial within the municipality, though they had looked at the sundial. They stated that they held no historical or familial attachment to Dr. Secord or the monument.

Notably, many participants explained that they had never read the inscription on the second Secord Monument until the controversy about it arose, suggesting that the physical monument which once represented a meeting place in the center of town had begun to represent controversy that community was now in need of healing from.

Participant C9 shared that as someone who had lived in the municipality for 30 years and knew what the monument said during that time, they understood the monument to be a meeting place for people. They explained that they were not convinced that people really knew what the sundial monument was about, nor had they read the inscription closely.

Participant C13 explained that monuments no longer have a place in communities today. The participant shared that most people they know do not know anything about the monument other than it being a sundial, and many were not aware of its historical or present significance to community members. They expressed gratitude for the opportunity to engage in a broader conversation with community about meaning and significance of the monument.

This nuanced and more complex understanding of what the Municipality of Kincardine was healing from poses a challenge to Council to seek the root causes of many of the tensions that exist in the municipality – some tensions, in fact, that go well beyond the discussion about the Secord Monument itself. For instance, some participants in the community conversations stated clearly that the issue for them revolved around fear of being branded “racist” if they took the position that the monument should be erected once more. These participants insisted that they

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were not racist, sharing feelings of hurt that their desire to commemorate a past resident was being misconstrued in this way, and many suggested that, as a compromise, the monument should be moved to a new location and re-contextualized.

Participant C12 explained that people who supported the return of the Secord Monument were not a group of racists who wanted to offend others in the community. Rather, they simply wanted to recognize a “great man at this time” who did good things in their community when he lived there.

Participant C1 emphasized that no matter what happens with the Secord Monument, it needs to be contextualized. They insisted that history must be read within a context, suggesting that as it stands the context is missing from the monument.

Participant C15 explained that local historian Graham Mahood had shared that Dr. Secord nearly died fighting against slavery, and that this piece of history seems to be missing from the current inscription. The participant suggested that residents were asking for clarity about who Dr. Secord was and what he stood for, noting that if local historians’ accounts were current, the people who drafted the inscription to Dr. Secord were not well-informed. The participant also expressed that there was no way that in 1911 people did not know that this was offensive and would recognize how this inscription would read, alluding to the political nature of monuments and inscriptions. They insisted that the monument must be contextualized so that the truth can be known.

In contrast, other participants focused on the political nature of monuments while articulating how and why they believed that the monument is paradoxically opening a door to racist thinking in a community that is striving to be inclusive.

Participant C13 shared that they had an uncomfortable feeling having a monument with this inscription in town. They questioned why it had to be there at all. They explained that changing the inscription does not change the intention behind celebrating such a troubling time in history in the first place.

Participant C4 struggled with the paradox expressed by some in the municipality that both acknowledged and praised Dr. Secord’s local service to community and also acknowledged that Dr. Secord enlisted with the Confederate Army. For the participant this meant that Dr. Secord would have been fighting to save those who thought it was okay to enslave Black people for the sake of maintaining a brutal and violent economic system. The participant asked how the Municipality of Kincardine can hold both truths at once without feeling troubled.

Participant C2 was disturbed by the conscious decision to erect a pro-confederacy message of any kind. While they understood requests to contextualizing the Secord Monument, they were uncertain about how viable that would be. The Participant pointed to an example of a similar attempt in Kingston, Ontario to contextualize a John A. McDonald monument, noting that they were unable to move forward because there was no agreement on what the re-contextualizing would be.

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Document HH: “[W]e need to move away from labeling people or fearing of being labelled “racist” and turn out attention to creating change that creates a community of care in Kincardine – one that listens openly to people of colour and come together to address those needs.”

Thus, the ideas of what the Municipality of Kincardine was healing from varied significantly depending on the role the Secord Monument played or did not play in one’s life. Despite this, and considering the rising tensions online surrounding the monument, many participants worried about how the community could come back together and collectively heal given how difficult it was for members of the municipality to understand why a nod to the Southern Army could be painful for Black community members.

Participant C11 shared that they did not think that the tensions in the municipality was about “bad people.” Rather, they believed some community members were having trouble understanding why the inscription was being interpreted so differently by Black communities and their allies. The participant insisted that if any segment of the population feels “lesser than” because of the inscription, it should be removed because everyone should feel welcome in the Municipality of Kincardine. The participant believed strongly that those who are most impacted by the inscription (i.e., Black community members) should have their needs centered in these discussions and they worried that fighting to keep a monument that references the Confederate Army as a point of pride in community will impact the broader reputation of the Municipality of Kincardine on the world stage.

Participant C5 stated that an educational program was needed in community that could cover what the American Civil War represented to Black and White Americans, as well as explore why and how this impacts communities today.

For many participants the pathway to healing would be found in educational sessions, the goals of which would not only increase one’s understanding of history, but also to create a space where community members begin recognizing the impact of history on the wellbeing of Black communities today. This step is crucial if the Municipality is to take concrete steps towards building a community of care for all residents.

Notably, not all calls for healing were focused on race. Some participants understood the reference to the confederacy in the inscription on the Secord Monument as a more general symbol of exclusion. This led them to share examples of exclusionary experiences which the municipality was also healing from. Participants drew my attention to a news story documenting the context in which workshops hosted by Canadian non-profit *Get REAL* were brought into the municipality.

Document G: “[Sandy] Blackwood and Fort Papalia founded Kincardine Pride seven years ago to promote inclusivity and diversity in response to some homophobic church preaching and slurs in town, she said.”

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Document G: In 2023, in response to workshops hosted by Get REAL, “a Canadian non-profit group focused on combatting 2SLGBTQ+ discrimination, racism, and bullying in schools, summer camps, and workplaces [...] a group of about 20 ‘prayer walkers’ met in Victoria Park to protest the workshops, according to Kincardine Pride director Dave Trumble, who was among a group of Pride members and supporters that also assembled in the park that day to counter-protest.

Document G: “According to Trumble, at last year’s Pride parade, he was told of teen participants being given the middle finger by attendees as they completed the route. ‘I know Kincardine has its warts, but grown adults doing that to students?’ Trumble questioned.”

Other participants shared that they were aware of times in the Municipality of Kincardine when community members had attempted to use mainstream political levers to embed discriminatory practices across the municipality, suggesting once again the need to recognize the political nature of the argument at hand.

Participant C3 explained that there remains a need to heal from examples of homophobia and the “anti-Pride” actions being dealt with in the community. They noted that community members were trying to get motions passed to restrict which flags could fly on municipal flagpoles to stop the Pride flag from flying. [See Scott Dunn, reporter, *Kincardine News*, June 4, 2023]

Document G: “Blackwood [co-founder of Kincardine Pride] noted a delegation to Kincardine council May 15 called for only government flags to fly at municipal offices. This echoed the controversy of Norwich Township council, southwest of Woodstock, which voted to allow government flags, thereby excluding Pride and any other non-governmental flags, in the face of reportedly hundreds who came to the meeting to support raising that Pride flag.”

By making this connection, then, community members made it clear that their healing from discrimination was not solely focused on individual actions, but also on system-wide decisions that, had they been allowed, would normalize inequities and a lack of care for marginalized communities across the municipality. It appeared that examples like this were, at least for some community members, a reflection of what was at stake in the current discussions surrounding the Second Monument.

2. Centering Black Voices

Many residents insisted that those who are negatively impacted by the economic institution of slavery – regardless of the institution’s role in the American Civil War – should be centered in the discussions about the Secord Monument. For this group, then, arguments that suggested that the institution of slavery were not integral to the American Civil War which had also been raised with me served to inadvertently silence the realities of Black people in community whose ancestry was likely unknown. Moreover, this line of thinking dismissed the realities of systemic racism post-emancipation (e.g., the introduction of Jim Crow Laws etc.)³.

Participant C14 felt that many community members did not want to believe that there was a real problem with racism in the Municipality of Kincardine or that this problem needed to be urgently addressed. Because racism today is often more subtle rather than overt (e.g., not supporting the creation of BIPOC student associations in schools), it makes it harder to see. In some ways, they explained, racism is experienced under the guise of kindness.

Participant C13 pointed to public posts on Facebook to explain that for some residents there was a clear gap in understanding the long-term and ongoing impacts of the institution of slavery on Black communities. They noted that many people do not believe racism exists in the Municipality of Kincardine, and insisted that what is at issue is much greater than simply speaking about the Secord Monument. This is conversation about who the community is and there is an urgent need for leadership to move the community forward in their healing. The Secord Monument, then, has become a symbol of division in the community.

Document HH: Examples of racism in community looked like: “...removed racist hate speech from municipal facilities... removed white supremacist posters from building in downtown Kincardine... use of social media to deflect and deny the existence of racism rather than come together to build an inclusive community...”

Centering the voices of Black community members, then, also reflected a care and respect for Black experiences that some felt was missing – especially in online commentary surrounding the Secord Monument. Despite this, some also shared that they had never seen racism in the community, a sentiment that was emphasized to a greater extent through the Public Survey.

Participant C8 explained that they had “never seen racism in the town” and that “this came out of nowhere” in 2018 and then again in 2021.

Thus, while some residents insisted that racism did not exist in the Municipality of Kincardine, others shared examples of experiences of racism in community. The latter served to support the details included in the *Municipality of Kincardine: Afrocentric Mural Backgrounder* entitled “*Our Vision and Hope for the Future*” document, leading some community members to reflect

³ For information on Jim Crow Laws in the United states, see [History.com’s Jim Crow Laws](#). For more details on Jim Crow Laws in the Canadian context, see historian Natasha Henry-Dixons [Racial Segregation of Black People in Canada. The Black Past in Guelph: Remembered and Reclaimed](#) also provides insights into Jim Crow Laws in the Canadian context.

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on the educational journey they had to engage with to finally see and understand how racism operated within the municipality. This type of educational journey, in fact, can also be understood as actively centering the needs of Black communities.

Participant C13 explained that they had engaged in their own learning journey about racism which helped them understand what “systemic racism” looked like. As such, they could no longer ignore or not see racism within the municipality. This gave them pause.

Participant C1 explained that after reading the inscription on the Secord Monument, they better understood the concerns being raised. They called for healing in community and argued that centering those who are harmed by the realities of the inscription now makes perfect sense to them. They insisted that the community needed to heal from the inscription’s nod to the American Civil War and that centering Black communities was necessary to beginning the healing process in the Municipality of Kincardine.

Many community members called for the explicit centering of Black community voices in any future discussion about the Secord Monument, hoping that this would help to take seriously the needs of Black community members if and / or when a healing process was devised. They recognized that without centering Black community members and their experiences when discussing the trans-Atlantic slave trade, it could inadvertently act as yet another dismissal of their calls to address racism in the Municipality of Kincardine.

Participant C3 emphasized that those who are most negatively impacted by the monument must be centered right now. This intentional centering, they felt, was an important part of community healing.

Throughout the community conversations examples of a more subtle form of racism was shared, as were sentiments that since the pandemic some people were feeling more emboldened to publicly express discriminatory views.

Participant C17 shared that since the pandemic some people in the Municipality of Kincardine appeared more emboldened, sharing hateful opinions and ideas more openly. They felt strongly that the return of the Secord Monument would become a symbol that disregard for communities of colour was tolerated in the municipality. In short, this decision would simply create a space for further hate.

Participant C14 explained that parents were having to help their children understand why community members would want a monument in their community that served as a reminder of a time when Black people were enslaved. They explained that the younger generation is disappointed to see good people in the community fight to keep something in the downtown core that symbolizes this period in history. They also shared a concern that more people were hiding their support for many of the hateful and/ or racist ideas that were circulating by arguing that the monument represents history. This argument made hate more palatable. They hoped that the elected officials could recognize that their leadership is needed to create a pathway to healing for the Municipality of Kincardine at this time.

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Participant C4 shared concerns about a radical group that was organizing in town during the Summer of 2020. They had put up posters in public spaces and Black Live Matters posters were the response. They worried that the response to the Secord Monument was “opening up old wounds” at a time when the municipality was already trying to heal.

Some community members aimed to honour the wishes of those who had raised concerns about the monument’s inscription, alluding to the need to expand upon who was commemorated or memorialized in town. Noting that women and Indigenous leaders were missing from public monuments, they questioned whose history was being foregrounded and why other leaders or events were not considered honourable enough to be granted such a privileged commemoration.

Participant C17 worried that the narrowly focused attention on one or two historical figures in the municipality was also part of the issue. They asked about places like the Ice House, wondering about its history, and also raised the need to share more details about the furniture sector and its role in creating socio-economic stratification in community. Telling these stories, they suggested, would allow for a more fulsome understanding of the municipality’s history.

Participant C4 noted that because Black and/ or Indigenous people were not being publicly honoured, commemorations like the Secord Monument represented an exclusionary vision of community’s historical memory. Who community chooses to honour is deeply connected to one’s sense of belonging.

Participant C3 suggested the need to examine why we name things after people more closely, troubling the idea of monetary gifts and/ or wealth being rational enough to name places and spaces after community members. The participant strongly encouraged the creation of a policy to clarify the terms of these types of decisions.

Many participants insisted that the needs of Black residents in the municipality were to be taken seriously, suggesting that a deeper exploration of, for example, the Underground Railroad and its passage through the municipality could help to tell their stories. This idea in fact may also lay the foundation for a more robust conversation around allyship among diverse communities who came together to ensure the safety of Black people fleeing the institution of slavery. To affirm Black existence is to understand and respect their voices and experiences historically, in the present, and in the future.

Participant C2 named that some history is missing from public commemorations in the municipality (e.g., underground railroad or the first Black councilman who moved to into the Municipality of Kincardine). They clarified that this means that the community is making very real choices about what history they are trying to preserve and what history is being silenced or ignored.

Participant C1 argued that an intentional pathway forward must be made – one that centers the needs of those who have experienced harm.

Document C: When people say they are harmed we should believe them.

3. Challenges tying identity to a legend, myth, or historical recollection

For many residents including, but not limited to, those raised in the Municipality of Kincardine but living elsewhere at the time of the consultation process, deep connections had been forged between their own identity as caring citizens and the values ascribed to Dr. Secord as shared with them through generations. Often telling the story of Dr. Secord as a legend who prided himself in serving those who could not afford medical care, it was clear that, for them, Dr. Secord genuinely represented a man who held strong, ethical values. Losing the monument would mean losing a sense of self.

Participant C17 acknowledged the need to recognize how deeply tied some community member’s identities were to the myth behind the monument and the legend of Dr. Secord. They emphasized the sense of loss many community members might feel – a sense of loss that may in fact be best understood as a type of grieving. They wondered about what type of support might be given to residents through the municipality if the grief becomes too overwhelming or if the decision was made to remove it entirely or in part from the community.

The legendary status that now shrouds Dr. Secord’s memory, however, appeared at times as a double-edged sword with stories of Dr. Secord often falling into the realm of myth and legend given the regular use of secondary sources to “prove” his good character and abolitionist tendencies. This care for Dr. Secord’s memory seemed to be at the root of an intense sense of loss as some community members grappled with the possibility that the monument may be removed permanently from its central location. Unfortunately, for some, this sense of potential loss was reflected back in some communications through seeing “us” versus “them” arguments that opened the door for troubling characterizations of Black community members.

Document E: “The Black community generalizes a lot. Anything related to the confederacy they generalize as bad thing. This was the time. [...] this is not a Confederate Flag. They are blowing this out of proportion.”

Document E: Many presidents had slaves and even after slavery was abolished issues between Black and white citizens continued. This was just a “sign of the times.”

Document E: “The Black community needs to understand this is the way it was. What is next giving back all the land to the natives?”

At issue was an intense apathy towards trying to understand why some people may consider enlisting in the Southern Army during the American Civil War problematic or even worthy of being worried about at all. This left some participants with a sense that it was not a fight for historical accuracy at play, but instead, a desire to hold onto a sense of nostalgia within the municipality.

Participant C13 suggested that what many residents who tied their identity to the monument were feeling was nostalgia about a historic community rather than a sense of history. They believed that if the monument was harmful to marginalized communities, the only option was to remove it from the municipality.

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Because of this, community members worried about engaging in conversations about the monument, given how deeply interconnected some community members' identities were to it. The resulting cancellations to join the Community Conversations, then, cannot be emphasized enough. Understanding the sense of loss on both sides of the issue is of great importance as Council contemplates the next steps for the Municipality of Kincardine.

Participant C7 spoke of the extreme feelings of loss at both ends of the spectrum for those engaged in dialogues about the Secord Monument. For pro-monument communities, there was a perceived loss of identity and history, and for those who were anti-monument, there was a perceived loss of care, dignity, and humanity if the monument were to be returned

Participant C17 also acknowledged that for other community members, a feeling as if a weight were removed from their shoulders might be the result of a decision to remove the monument. In this case, some community members would finally be assured that they do not have to engage in these conversations anymore or, to some extent at least, prove their humanity – especially not to their children who once walked by it each time they entered the library.

However, whether the discussions about Black community members is due to grief or loss or some other reason entirely, there remains an urgent need to interrogate the discriminatory ideas held and shared publicly – especially in online forums – that have and continue to impact the relationships among Municipality of Kincardine residents.

Participant C15 argued that it was not up to Black community members to end racism in the community. Rather, white community members were asked to use their position of influence and privilege to build more inclusive communities within the municipality. Ensuring that Black community leaders are treated with dignity and respect as they explain why this conversation is so necessary must also be at the heart of future steps to address racism in the Municipality of Kincardine. They recognized that nobody wanted to speak explicitly about racism in the municipality, but the participant felt strongly that engaging in clear and honest conversations about racism in the community was the only way to better understand what Black community members were going through and, even more importantly, fighting for. They believed that these discussions should be focused on educating and teaching about a difficult period of history when Black people were denied their rights.

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4. The Municipality We Want to Be

In direct contrast to those who made more explicit mention tying their sense of self to the Secord Monument through the Public Survey, many participants in the Community Conversations felt the Secord Monument reflected an archaic time when inclusion simply did not matter. For those who saw the monument as archaic, the concern was that if the municipality remained attached to a past that had denied the humanity of Black people, there was a potential of collapsing similar hateful views of Black community members into the current set of values held by community residents.

Participant C17 described the Secord Monument as “archaic” and “hateful” noting that it reflected the thinking about Black people by communities in the 1850s.

Participant C2 emphasized that in 2024, the municipality is not bound by older, 20th century values or ideals. The participant felt that this opened up an opportunity to consider what the Municipality of Kincardine stands for today and be clear on the message that they want to send to the broader community.

In response, several residents stated that there was an urgent need to re-examine who and what was being celebrated in the Municipality of Kincardine. This would ensure that public commemorations best reflected current values. Thinking specifically of the calls for healing from numerous participants, this further emphasizes the need for community leaders including, but not limited to, elected officials to make an intentional commitment to remain open to hearing the needs of those made uncomfortable with prominent, public displays and to believe those experiences when community members are courageous enough to share them. Acting as a model for inclusive leadership, then, is of critical importance.

Participant C16 explained that it was difficult to understand how some community members refused to consider the impact of the Secord Monument on Black communities. They believed that the fight to return the monument to its original location unchanged was a sign that some community members had “blinders on” because they refused to take seriously the feelings of other residents. The participant believed that these community members were refusing to admit that something in the municipality was problematic, and this left them feeling disappointed in the municipality.

Participant C15 emphasized that it took the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to bring the traumatic experiences of Indigenous communities to light. They suggested a similar approach was needed to share the history of harm and violence against Black communities with the broader public so as to begin on a pathway to true community-centered healing grounded in education.

Document EE: “[W]e know better now, so let’s do better. Let’s honour current heroes making community better rather than stay focused solely on the past.”

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Some community members suggested that any relocation of the monument be done in such a way that it allows for a more fulsome dialogue about both historical and current experiences of racism in the municipality. The ability to meaningfully grapple with difficult experiences then, was perceived as a sense of pride in the community because it was based on truly caring for all community members.

Participant C13 noted that if the Secord Monument were to be erected once more, the purpose of the space would have to be to contextualize the monument using proved historical records. In this way, the monument would act as an educational experience for visitors who would learn about the negative symbolism that the monument currently holds given the reference to the Southern Army. A tiny plaque alongside the monument would be insufficient in doing this important educational work.

Participant C8 believed that this moment needed to be embraced and learned from within the municipality

Participant C1 believed that there was value in approaching this issue through the lens of community-based learning. They suggested that this process is as important as the outcome because it is grounded in meaningful community engagement.

Others felt strongly that by contextualizing the Secord Monument, new opportunities to present a more inclusive vision of the municipality would be created. Thus, it was alluded to that a new context would demonstrate that the municipality was not afraid to meaningfully engage with complicated histories. Recognizing how troubling the online conversations had become, then, is also important to address.

Participant C9 hoped that someone would tackle the contextualizing project for the Secord Monument, believing that only a team of committed people would be required to do this work well. They felt this contextualizing would include explaining how people living in what would soon be known as “Canada” played a role in the American civil war. They also emphasized that the context had to be “carefully written” and provide a “sensitive” and “comprehensive” treatment of the historical details being shared with the public.

Participant C5 expressed grave concerns about public commentary, explaining that there was great difficulty moving forward in the municipality because the public conversations were far more damaging than the monument itself.

Participant C3 called for the monument to be “heavily recontextualized” if it was to be returned with an eye to truly considering what the impact of the monument is and why it remains in a public space.

Regardless of where community members fell on the spectrum of how they felt about the Secord Monument itself, the call for the need to heal from the divisive online conversations was

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reiterated time and again. I was told that people were starting to see great value in finding a common ground on this issue because they were no longer willing to support the trajectory that the conversations were now taking.

Participant C5 emphasized the need to acknowledge the impact of the divisive online, public discussions about the Secord Monument. They expressed a need for real attention to healing in the Municipality of Kincardine though they were uncertain about how to productively move forward.

Participant C6 insisted that, given the rising tensions, the status quo was no longer an option which made it difficult to suggest simply erecting the monument, unchanged, once more. They argued that something different had to be decided given the uprising of tensions in communities as this process began.

For some participants, the fact that the community was divided on what to do to address the reference to the Southern Army on the Secord Monument's inscription and, thus, the American Civil War, told its own story about the Municipality of Kincardine today. In this case, participants felt it was a direct commentary on the state of inclusion in the municipality. What was required, they felt, was decisive and intentional leadership to name and actively stand up against racism so as to protect and support the diverse residents within the municipality.

Participant C15 spoke explicitly to a stark division within community about what to do with the Secord Monument. They felt strongly that if the monument was returned, it would signal a lack of care or attention to addressing racism and inclusion in the community. Moreover, they insisted that there was a learning opportunity for community inherently attached to the pathway forward to the municipality.

Participant C14 suggested that if the monument was removed, the community could embark upon an important discussion – a discussion that could lead to real growth and healing as explanations were given about why removing the monument was the best choice for the community. They insisted that if intentional conversations were had alongside removing the monument and the symbol it represented to community, there would be a sense of hope for the municipality.

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5. Learn more, Do better

The notion of learning from history and doing better was a theme that arose throughout the Community Conversations. Some participants shared concrete examples, suggesting a deep sense of hope for the Municipality of Kincardine as they grappled with the Secord Monument. In the instances shared, community members recognized social harms and how the municipality addressed each:

- ***The removal of Confederate Flags from display at Walker House Museum:*** Board Members of the museum removed flags from the display about Dr. Solomon Secord after concerns raised. (Participant C9a)
- ***Community Living's name change:*** The organization was originally named “The Ontario Association for Retarded Children.” The organization was re-named “Community Living” after recognizing the evolution of community values and the desire to have the name reflect the type of community people wanted to be a part of. (Participant C1)
- ***The first Pride Parade:*** Possibly in response to homophobia in the municipality, Pride was a public demonstration that homophobia would not be tolerated. The first Pride Parade was well received and an exciting step for the municipality. (Participant C14)
- ***The Black Lives Matter march:*** A number of community members joined the Black Lives Matter March demonstrating their allyship and commitment to protecting Black lives (Participant C14).
- ***Accepting women's income for mortgage approvals:*** There was a time when women's income was not acknowledged and thus could not be considered as part of a mortgage application. This has since changed as more people have fought for women's rights. (Participant C16)
- ***No longer allowing the “N-word” in local print media:*** It was once acceptable to use the “n-word” (a derogatory word for Black people) in print media in the municipality, examples of which were shared with me. This practice has now stopped as more people have become aware of the power of words in building a sense of belonging. (Participant C28)
- ***Changing school mascot pre-1980 from “Kincardine Redmen” to “Kincardine Knights”:*** The school mascot name change was brought to my attention. I noted that this happened at a time when much work was being done in the broader community to ensure school mascots were inclusive given the number of mascot names that made use of derogatory references to Indigenous Peoples. (Document J)

A final example of change within the municipality was shared with me, and the participant gave me permission to quote them here given the powerful nature of the story shared.

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With permission of Participant:

“One other example is 15 years ago for the Blues Festival we had a band in from the southern states and we had them housed at a local hotel. In the lounge they had black minstrels in the lobby. The band made me aware how they were personally offended. The hotel had no measure of how this was offensive to them and how awful this could be.”

Each of these examples emphasized not only the need to believe the experiences of marginalized communities in the municipality, but also the need to act on those beliefs [see **Document I**].

For many participants, learning and growing looked like building their understanding of history rather than hiding from it, engaging in difficult conversations, and using these more challenging moments as educational opportunities [see **Document EE**].

Participant C4 felt that we miss an opportunity to learn from each other’s difference if we “tear down history” (i.e. remove the Secord Monument in its entirety). However, they also noted that monuments alone do not teach. Thus, an educational program of some kind would be a required addition to contextualize the monument, its place in history, what has changed today, and why this change was a necessary step in building an inclusive community.

Document EE: “We need to learn and grow. We should spend our time building our understanding instead of hiding from the past. Engaging in difficult conversations, no matter how hard they are, and use this as an educational opportunity. We need a stronger understanding of the nuances of the American Civil War.”

Document FF: “We cannot change our history, but we can choose what we endorse and who we promote as a symbol of our community.”

To this end, several participants emphasized education as the critical element to “do better.” For some, however, the educational piece did not require the monument to be physically present to be effective. Rather, the emphasis was on the importance of grappling with difficult histories.

Participant C3 insisted that education was used at various points in history to help communities move through dehumanizing experiences and effectively grapple with difficult moments in history. The participant pointed to Germany dealing with the history of the Nazis and France dealing with their violent colonial past as concrete examples. They noted that the most interesting pathways through challenging histories first named the tragedy and then explained it for educational purposes. The focus on education, the participant explained, would allow for the untangling of myth about Dr. Secord from what is deemed historically accurate (i.e., information that has historical documentation to support it).

Participant C14 suggested that the physical monument does not need to be preserved so much as the discussions that are happening around the monument (i.e. the community engagement) at this time in order to move forward in the municipality.

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However, for this educational piece to be effective, many participants emphasized the need for a common set of facts to work with about Dr. Secord.

Participant C3 argued that a “common set of facts” were required to better understand Dr. Secord. These facts, the participant suggested, would become a pathway to better community healing.

Participant C9 emphasized the urgent need to explore this history and trouble the sanitized version of Dr. Secord and, more specifically, of the American Civil War, that was often shared throughout the municipality. The participant noted that this would require being courageous enough to see Canadians as more than just a “nation of abolitionists” and to speak about much of the history that we don’t speak or teach about. Only then can we claim to understand a more fulsome account of history.

Participant C13 suggested that the museum was a better place for the Secord Monument because then the educational material developed around it would have to be historically accurate while contextualizing the history.

Participant C18 focused in on the need for a closer reading of the archives, explaining that at the time of the monument being erected the municipality was very Liberal. A conservative member wrote that Dr. Secord was an abolitionist and this was the only time that this has been written or attributed to Dr. Secord. The participant explained that upon further investigation, it was found that the Conservative representative was also in charge of the monument committee and may have been trying to leave his mark. For this participant, this is about clarifying rather than about erasing history.

6. Navigating Complicated Histories

For many participants in the Community Conversations, their comments pointed to the difficulty inherent in navigating complicated, and often violent, histories. For some, this meant there was a need for leadership that could help community members grapple with painful historical truths that troubled the myth surrounding Dr. Secord. And while some believed the desire to grapple with history was “woke ideology” at play, others believed that the real issue was the community’s inability to distinguish myth from fact.

Document CC: “You must see that the only way the world can heal from past error, such as slavery, is to move past it. Not to tear open a perceived wound so that it can fester and cause the present and the future more damage. Forgiving is the only healthy way forward. Do not dwell in victimhood. / in contrast, the woke ideology is the epitome of rehashing ancient wrongs and encouraging victimhood and hatred. It seems to be the entire opposite of the Christian attitude.”

Participant C2 referred to “town legend” that stated Dr. Secord was an abolitionist, noting that there was no concrete historical proof about this. The participant struggled to understand why, if Dr. Secord was in fact an abolitionist, his friends would write that he served the confederacy in any inscription to honour him.

Document C: Painful Truths – Painful Histories “At a time when Jim Crow and Lost Cause Ideology is in full swing, the placement of this Confederate Monument was purposeful. It was sending a message to anyone of colour. For us to be unwilling to see this or unwilling to learn, is very sad.” (public comment)

Document D: “Many articles have come out since this 1910 obituary to disprove some claims.”

Participant C5 argued that there was great uncertainty about which details were historically accurate and which were community myth.

Despite the lack of consensus on what about Dr. Secord had or had not been verified with primary facts, many participants in the Community Conversations seemed to shift the dialogue away from “changing history,” a worry that arose numerous times in the Public Survey, and towards understanding the “evolution of history.” This idea of evolution, in fact, is one that is supported by archivists and historians who suggest that any historical displays be regularly reviewed.

Participant C6 expressed an understanding that as communities grow and history evolves, communities may feel fear at the prospect of losing their identity as they know it. Thus, their fight for the status quo can also be understood as a fight to be seen or, as they described, to not be erased from history as the world moves on. The participant continued, explaining that historical associations who explore standards and ethics when it comes to monuments and monument building all agree that history is meant to be continually examined. The participant explained that this consistent review of historical projects allows for updates to occur as times change, a step that reflects the ethical standards for monuments.

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Many participants sought closure from these complicated histories by advocating for “dumping it in the lake” given the tension surrounding the monument and the inability to find a middle ground. This act of defiance suggests that a bold move is needed to bring closure to the Municipality of Kincardine. Other suggestions for the Second Monument included, moving it to the hospital, to Queen’s Lookout, to the Legion, to the Cemetery where it could be accompanied with a larger educational experience, to a museum to ensure proper historical context, or in Victoria Park. Some also advocated for its return to a prominent place in the downtown core. No location was unanimously suggested for the Second Monument.

Moving Forward: Challenges and Opportunities

On the goals of Council

Throughout my engagement with residents from the Municipality of Kincardine it has become increasingly clear that Council members desire care and compassion for all community members regardless of their beliefs about the Secord Monument. Council's goal has been to task me with delving more deeply into the needs of residents in the municipality with explicit instructions to leave the final decision about Secord Monument in their hands. Council's care for community has resonated with me, and I have embarked on this journey with an open heart and desire to better understand the multiplicity of debates surrounding the monument. I have also come to this work with experience of similar tensions in my own community of Waterloo Region and in Toronto during my tenure as a Member of Provincial Parliament for Kitchener Centre. In the case of the latter, the question posed was whether, if, and how Queen's Park, more affectionately known as "The People's House," could both hold symbols including monuments documenting Ontario's history and grow with community as Ontario's values shifted and changed. Given the space granted to me to approach this work from a new place, and the trust in my process to assist in getting to the roots of community needs, I believe that the residents of the Municipality of Kincardine remain in capable hands in their respective roles as elected leaders in the community. And Council remains very well supported. Staff have made it a priority to help me to create as many open pathways for community to communicate with me as possible, sharing my email with residents who call in, updating Frequently Asked Questions pages as the process has evolved, answering queries, monitoring social media, and holding a space even for those whose passion for this debate have resulted in heightened emotions and displays of concern as we have moved forward. When I experienced a deep loss amid the process, staff and council provided me with the space needed to honour my sister and return to this work. I believe that this care was afforded to me because Council and staff remain focused on leading the Municipality of Kincardine from a place of deep compassion too. Thank you for being such compassionate leaders throughout this challenging community dialogue.

On the root of tensions surrounding the Dr. Secord monument

The original monument was a headstone that currently sits in a cemetery. The issue of the second monument – one that mentions the Confederacy – has ignited a different kind of debate throughout the municipality and beyond. While many assume the issue is whether or not Dr. Secord was for or against slavery, the conversations I have had and research I have conducted suggest that this is rooted in another very important concern: that of the political nature of commemorations in the form of monuments or historical markers.

In the case of Dr. Secord, the second monument which is now at issue was erected in 1915, a time when a wave of memorials to the confederacy served as a purposeful political reminder that the values of the deep South had not changed. This included the relegation of Black people to the status of second-class citizen. Moreover, this marked a shift in public policy in the North America that embedded Jim Crow laws into various communities including across Canada. Given the presumed involvement of an elected official, MPP and later MP Hugh Clark, who as part of the Monument Committee would likely have been at least partially responsible for the

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removal of the first monument to the cemetery despite its inscription more authentically reflecting *why* the Municipality of Kincardine was honouring Dr. Secord (i.e., his humanitarian service in the town itself and his dedication to medicine for the people regardless of their social class or economic means), questions arise as to the political nature of monuments, their inscriptions, and their chosen location (in this case, on Municipal property). Thus, the call to create policies that deter elected officials from using their station to impose partisan ideals on the community may be one that assists in moving not only today’s council, but also future councillors towards a sense of leadership that centers the needs and desires of community. As Rose-Redwood & Alderman (2017) write in *Confederate Memorials and the Unjust Geography of Memory (Document K)*, “Any given spatial order is never as “natural” or permanent as it seems, since throughout history places have often been renamed and monuments replaced when different regimes come to power or when the values of a society change over time” (Rose-Redwood & Alderman, 2017). This serves as a reminder that monuments are never “value neutral”. They are, in fact, intentional, politically motivated venerations of people whose stories can be used to represent the current political climate. Rose-Redwood & Alderman (2017) continue, explaining that:

“One of these key lessons is that those with political power have long used place naming and other forms of commemoration as a means of legitimizing their own political ideology by giving it the appearance of spatial permanence and fixity in the landscape. This is precisely what white supremacists did during the Jim Crow era in an effort to naturalize white dominance through public commemoration.” (Rose-Redwood & Alderman, 2017)

In light of this, Council finds themselves making a decision about the Secord Monument at time in history when many communities are experiencing or have recently experienced the removal of monuments holding similar messaging today (see, *Sir John A. McDonald Statue Moved from Kingston, Ontario Park* (Dhanraj, 2021), *Despite Charlottesville violence, U.S. cities vow to remove Confederate statues* (Reuters, 2017), or *Confederate Plaque on Montreal Hudson’s Bay Story Removed* (Leavitt, 2017). For more on “erasing history” see Noakes (2023) *No, pulling down statues and renaming streets does not ‘erase history’* for more details). The conversation is not easy, however, many other places have or are currently navigating these very important conversations while also working towards developing an authentic sense of belonging within their respective communities

On re-centering Black communities in the discussion of abolitionists

Myths of abolitionist abound, with many perceptions that Abraham Lincoln worked intentionally and diligently to free Black people trapped in the institution of enslavement. However, as is made clear in his letter dated August 22, 1862 letter responding to an editorial by Horace Greeley in the New York Tribune:⁴

“My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any

⁴ Correspondence from Paul Culliton, Joint Media Group Inc. provided to Facilitator.

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slave I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone I would also do that. What I do about slavery and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union; and what I forbear, and I forbear because I do not believe it would help to save the Union.

“I have here stated my purpose according to my view of official duty; and I intend no modification of my oft-expressed personal wish that all men everywhere could be free.”

More specifically, the sentiment that slavery being abolished would only be fought for if it helped white Americans is one that leaves Black communities feeling unheard, unseen, and uncared for. To imagine their ancestors working under the conditions of slavery and know that political imagination did not care about their well-being as human beings is part of the inter-generational trauma that many Black communities continue to grapple with today. Thus, how they feel as they read about a monument that celebrates that war is just as painful as their experiences of conversations about what to do about the monument.

While education about the Civil War and the role of Canadians and Canada in supporting and/ or standing against the cause is one of many educational steps that the municipality can take, educational sessions that include understanding what communities have historically endured as the institution of slavery – one that aimed to center only the needs of white residents at the expense of the humanity of Black, Brown, and/ or Indigenous peoples as well as other people of colour – must also be unpacked and grappled with.

Today, in 2024, residents of the municipality have made it clear through the varied engagement sessions that they worry that their care for Dr. Secord’s memory is being interpreted as a lack of care for Black residents. (Notably, the race and/ or ethnic background of those who support not altering the monument’s inscription remains a non-issue in my analysis. Instead, the perception of what that position means to the sense of belonging of Black residents is what matters.)

Some have indicated that if a re-working of the inscription would signal care for both Dr. Secord and Black residents while opening a path to healing for all in the Municipality of Kincardine, they would be more than willing to support that step guided by Council. However, it is strongly encouraged that any new contextualizing of the monument inscription be completed alongside an educational program that explains *why* this route is being taken and *how* the reference to the Confederacy serves to alienate numerous members of the community from all sides of the debate about the Dr. Secord monument. Documenting a new collaborative community story that best supports the municipality today is also of great importance as is facilitating a better understanding of Jim Crow responses to Emancipation and other integration policies.

On history as a living archive

Despite our human desire to freeze people in their most glorious of times after their passing, historical societies and historians themselves have accepted the “living” nature of history. Stories are crafted around historical documents that aim to fill in the gap about our past and I believe

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strongly that, for the most part, these stories are crafted with a pure heart and clarity of purpose. However, no matter how deeply our stories are accepted in and around community, documents can appear years later that challenge the story and drive humanity to question all that they had thought before. Paradoxically, this process can be immeasurably exciting and deeply troubling all at once. People's identities as both individuals and community members get tied into legendary stories about their roots while newer residents try to carve out spaces within this living history to begin to tend to their own roots. Thus, as new information is brought forward, current residents face either an opportunity to grow, or a challenge to remain the same. Either way, these choices become more and more urgent as our values shift and community needs call upon developing a new way of being in relationship with each other. While some documentation has been found about Dr. Secord that resulted in the revision, for example, of details currently held and cared for by the museum in Kincardine, other historians have suggested that more documentation exists that may shed more light on the humanitarian deeds of Dr. Secord.⁵

Challenges

Divisive Online Communications

One of the greatest challenges as Council attempts to implement a pathway for community healing across the Municipality of Kincardine may well be addressing not the Secord Monument, but instead, the impact of online commentary which has, as noted throughout the report, become increasingly divisive. People for and against the return of the monument named feeling unsafe in community – especially in light of social media posts. This led to less engagement with portions of the engagement process where community may be asked to speak across differences.

Contextualizing Monument Inscription

Many suggested simply contextualizing the Secord Monument would be sufficient to address the concern. How this is done, however, may be more challenging than one might assume. It is recommended that Council explore where re-contextualizing has been done effectively to see what form this may have taken. I was directed to explore examples of recontextualizing of monuments in Italy that may be of interest to Council should they choose to explore this option (see Poggioli (2023) *Italy has kept its fascist monuments and buildings. The reasons are complex* for more details).

Opportunities

Framework for Public Commemorations

Many participants spoke of the need to consider how and when commemorations to individuals are erected in the municipality. Develop a Framework for Public Commemorations for the

⁵ In an email from Paul Culliton and provided to the facilitator, for example, discussions of journals and diaries that are from medical doctors during and after the American Civil War. Supporting the search for and examination of these documents to see whether, if, and how Dr. Secord appears in them may be helpful to flesh out his story.

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municipality may assist moving forward(see, for examples, [Canada’s Framework for History and Commemoration: National Historic Sites System Plan 2019](#) (see [Section 3.6 Historical Thinking: Engaging Canadians with History](#)). In an email provided to me from the Heritage Trust, it was acknowledged that “many communities and organisations working in the history and heritage field have been grappling with these questions and artifacts for a number of years, as efforts are made to be more representative, as well as ensuring that our public monuments and history historical interpretation tells accurate and complete story of our past. Kincardine is not alone in this challenge.” They suggested exploring the following resources [taken from email communication]:

<p>General Learning Resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ontario Heritage Trust has a webpage on our work to “expand the narrative,” or why it’s important to engage more diverse voices and traditions within the heritage field. The page has links to important perspectives and work the Trust has done to accomplish this: https://www.heritagetrust.on.ca/pages/our-stories/expanding-the-narrative • Parks Canada has produced a very useful resource on managing their resources, but it’s full of other lessons and principles for other organizations – the “Framework for History and Commemoration”: Framework for History and Commemoration: National Historic Sites System Plan 2019 (canada.ca) • Contested Histories – an academic group out of Europe which provides information and research on the issues of problematic and contested public places, spaces and naming. They have a great list of resources: https://contestedhistories.org/resources/ • Overview article on public commemoration and its challenges in Canada (from 2019 but some great links to divergent perspectives on the topic): https://jared-milne.medium.com/statues-memorials-and-the-canadian-identity-controversy-53dd1bc3931 • Overview article on public commemorations and public figures in Canada: https://c2cjournal.ca/2021/07/how-to-cool-canadas-overheated-statue-removal-business/
<p>Municipalities which have undertaken very public discussions and consultations around public monument</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Halifax and the Cornwallis statue review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ General overview of the background on the statue and process to review (Wikipedia): https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statue_of_Edward_Cornwallis#cite_note-24 ○ City of Halifax recommendation report on the statue: https://cdn.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-hall/regional-council/200721rc11110.pdf • City of Kitchener and a statue and park to Queen Victoria – the statue has now been covered in paint 6 times in protest as consultations and decisions have dragged on over several years <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Engage Kitchener (leading org.) website on the process and where it stands (publicly paused): https://www.engagewr.ca/queenvictoria ○ CBC story and overview: https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/kitchener-waterloo/queen-victoria-statue-second-community-engagement-phase-this-fall-1.6903061 • City of Kingston work to address history of Sir John A. Macdonald, including several public markers, plaques and statue(s) – they were successful in taking a number of actions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ City’s overview of the work: https://www.cityofkingston.ca/explore/culture-history/history/sir-john-a • City of Toronto and the review of Dundas Street and other City assets sharing his name <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ City of Toronto site on this work: https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/get-involved/community/recognition-review/renaming-undas-street/

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Overview article on the committee’s work and renaming of Dundas Square: https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/dundas-square-rename-toronto-1.7060097
Private, for-profit cultural heritage organizations that work in this field	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Lord Cultural Resources: https://www.lord.ca/● Jay Pitter Placemaking (have provided supports to municipalities dealing with problematic monuments in Canada and the US): http://www.jaypitter.com/● First Peoples Group (focused on Indigenous perspectives) - https://firstpeoplesgroup.com/● Know History https://www.knowhistory.ca/

Educational Opportunities

Participants in both the Public Survey and Community Conversations emphasized the need for an educational program to help bring community together. This would require investment in time and money verifying the historical accuracy of many of the stories shared about Dr. Secord and a courageous presentation back to the Municipality of Kincardine on what details are supported by either primary or secondary data. Holding community with care should these programs be developed will be of critical importance. Ensuring that a program of historical verification is also put in place that upholds the ethical principles of historical associations will also provide an opportunity for updates to displays as needed within the municipality.

Future Community Conversation Series

Given the interest in bringing community together to speak about these findings, it may be prudent to consider how to move towards that goal in light of online communications that have become increasingly heated. Some have used Vision Statements as a method to re-focus the attention of communities on the values that the municipality holds dear. Re-evaluating the inscription based on an agreed-upon set of community principles, for instance may act as a method for engaging across difference or, as is taught in Crucial Conversations conflict resolution programs, developing a “shared pool of meaning.” Others have turned to the notion of Social Infrastructure to create a community of care (see City of Vancouver’s [*Spaces to Thrive: Vancouver Social Infrastructure Strategy*](#) for inspiration). The Waterloo Region Community Foundation is currently exploring [*conversations on Social Infrastructure*](#) and could also provide some advice to Council should the need arise. Overall, this step requires re-building trust across the municipality and grounding conversations on a sense of compassionate kindness – especially when faced with challenges.

Resources

Researchers, Research Institutes, and Consultants

- [Dr. Christopher Taylor](#)
- [Dr. Dana Weiner](#)
- [Dr. Deirdre McCorkindale](#)
- [Archipel Research Consultants](#)
- [Grey Roots: Museum & Archives](#)
- [Ontario Black History Society](#)
- [Ontario Human Rights Commission](#)

Healing Resources and Community Leaders

- [Nicole Brown Faulknor](#): Mindfulness and Somatic Healing
- [Halton Black Voices Healing Projects](#): Community Healing Gardens.
- [For Black Communities, These Gardens Double as Sites of Healing](#). Iris McCloughan, The Slowdown, July 5, 2022.
- [Gardening and Growing Food a Form of Liberation for the Black Community](#). Shaylah Brown, TribLive, February 3, 2024.
- [Indigenous Healing Gardens: Creating Spaces for Learning, Connecting, and Reconciliation](#): Bruce Trail Conservancy
- [Indigenous Community & Healing Garden](#), Town of Ajax.
- [The Color of Food: How Gardens and Farms Can Help Us Heal from a History of Racism](#). Natasha Bowens, YES! November 3, 2015.
- [Gardening for Liberation: The Legacy of Black Gardeners and Gardens](#). National Wildlife Federation.
- Allyship Resources: [The Role of Allies in Canada’s Reconciliation: A Few Thoughts](#) (Wilfrid Laurier University)

Reports and Articles of Interest

- [Inhibited Growth: Examining Public Investment Gaps in Black infrastructure Needs](#). The Somali Centre for Culture and Recreation, Infrastructure Institute at the University of Toronto, December 2022.
- [Spaces to Thrive: Vancouver Social Infrastructure Strategy](#). City of Vancouver.
- [Practices of Care and Relationship-Building: A Qualitative Analysis of Urban Agriculture’s Impacts on Black People’s Agency and Wellbeing in Philadelphia](#). Ashley B. Gripper, March 9, 2023.
- Parks Canada’s *Framework for History and Commemoration: National Historic Sites System Plan 2019*, particularly section [3.6 Historical Thinking: Engaging Canadians with History](#).

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- Department of Canadian Heritage [*Public Art and Monuments*](#) team or the [Canadian Museum of History](#).
- [Canadian Museum Association](#)
- [Ontario Museum Association](#).
- MacIntosh, B. (2023). [Shaping Space: Co-creating culturally responsive public spaces](#). *Municipal World*, 133(5), 5–7.

Appendix A – Sample of Sources Reviewed

1. Alberga, H. (2024, March 11). [*Nazi military monument removed from Ontario cemetery.*](#) CTV News.
2. Dadson, L. (2018, September 6). [*Dr. Solomon Secord Monument to Remain in Kincardine's Main Street.*](#) The Kincardine Record.
3. Dhanraj, T. (2021, June 18). [*Sir John A. McDonald Statue Moved from Kingston, Ontario Park.*](#) CBC News.
4. Dunn, S. (2023, June 5). [*The 'Haters' Make Pride Events all the More Necessary, Organizer says.*](#) The Kincardine News.
5. Gates Jr., H.L. (2014, January 6). [*How Many Africans Were Really Taken to the U.S During the Slave Trade?*](#) America's Black Holocaust Museum.
6. Hartwick, W. (2024, May 29) [*Secord Monument should be Back Where it Belongs, Say Readers.*](#) Letter to the Editor. The Kincardine Record.
7. Henry-Dixon, Natasha. (2019, May 28). [*Racial Segregation of Black People in Canada.*](#) The Canadian Encyclopedia.
8. Hilborn, R. (2024, May 22) [*Once Upon a Time: Why did Solomon Secord go South?*](#) Sangeen Times.
9. Hristova, B. (2022, April 29). [*Hamilton Mayor Wants John A. McDonald Statue Reinstalled with Residential School Context.*](#) CBC News.
10. Leavitt, S. (2017, August 15). [*Confederate Plaque on Montreal Hudson's Bay Story Removed.*](#) CBC News.
11. Letter to the Editor. (2020, June 15). [*Racism in Kincardine.*](#) The Kincardine News.
12. Letter to the Editor. (2024 March 21). [*People Need to Know True History of Dr. Secord; Return Monument to Place of Honour.*](#) The Kincardine Record.
13. Letter to the Editor. (2024, January 23). [*Readers Respond to Letter about Fate of Dr. Solomon Secord Monument.*](#) The Kincardine Record.
14. Letter to the Editor. (2024 January 22). [*Cowardice of the Highest Order.*](#) The Kincardine Record.

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Submitted by: Dr. Laura Mae Lindo

15. Letter to the Editor. (2021, July 15). [Readers Respond to Letter About Fate of Dr. Solomon Secord Monument](#). The Kincardine Record.
16. MacKay, J. (2024, March 15). [Future of Kincardine Secord Monument Open for Discussion](#). CKNX NewsToday.
17. Miller, S. (2024, February 8). [Debate Reignited on Fate of Monument to Confederate Army Surgeon](#). CTV News London.
18. Noakes, T. (2023, January 26). [No, pulling down statues and renaming streets does not 'erase history'](#). TVO Today.
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21. Rose-Redwood, R. & Alderman, D. (2017, August 28). [Confederate Memorials and the Unjust Geography of Memory](#). CityLab.
22. Staff Writer. (2017, September 18). [Canada Unveils its First US Civil War Monument](#). BBC News.
23. Staff Writer. (2017, August 17). [Why the Fuss over Confederate Statues?](#) BBC News.
24. The Associate Press. (2023, December 17). [Confederate memorial to be removed in coming days from Arlington National Cemetery](#). CityNews.
25. Winks, R. (1997). *The Blacks in Canada: A History*, 2nd Edition. McGill-Queens University Press)
26. Zimonjic, P. (2017, August 18). [Buildings renamed, Monuments Fall in Recognition of oppression of Indigenous People](#). CBC News.

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Appendix B: Survey [Race/ Ethnicity Summary Table]

Race/ethnicity	Number	Per cent
All	1	
Ancestry British	1	
AngloSaxon	1	
Ashkenazi	1	
Asian	2	
Black	5	.01%
British	3	
Canadian	34	7%
Caucasian	127	27%
Did not answer- left it blank	36	8%
Do not wish to disclose	5	
Does not matter	21	4%
Dutch	1	
English	5	
European	2	
East Indian	1	
FN	1	
Home	1	
Human	19	4%
Indian	1	
Indigenous	2	
Irish	6	
Kincardine	26	5%
Mankind	1	
Metis	1	
Minority	1	
Mixed	5	
N/A	11	2%
Native	1	
None	3	
None of your business	1	
Race is racist	1	
Scottish	8	
South Asian	5	
Tiverton	1	
Wasp	3	
Welsch Canadian	1	
White	259	55%

Appendix C: Email from Staff to Interested Residents

The following is the email sent to all residents who requested a meeting with the facilitator. These guiding questions were developed to help focus the conversations and were based on survey results. Following a rise of tension online surrounding the monument, an additional question was added and introduced to all participants at the outset of the interview and asked explicitly for their response as a follow up to question 3 listed below:

Additional Question: What is lost/ gained if it is:

- A) Relocated?
- B) Restored to (close to) original location?
- C) Removed from Kincardine?

Community members had an option to skip the additional question, however all participants chose to respond.

Dr. Laura Mae Lindo is the facilitator the Municipality has hired for the engagement process. She will be leading the sessions this week. The intention of the conversations is not to reach consensus, rather it is to hear from a variety of perspectives in safe and respectful spaces.

Dr. Lindo will be asking you some of the following questions:

1. What does the Secord Monument mean to you?
2. What does the Secord Monument mean to the broader community (e.g., your friends, family etc.)?
3. Given the vast opinions on the impact of the Secord monument on communities in the Municipality of Kincardine, what role do you think monuments should play in the municipality?
4. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Logistics

You should have received a meeting invite with a zoom link for the meeting. If you have any troubles locating this, please let me know.

There will be staff taking notes at these sessions on the discussion only. Please note that your name will not be recorded or used in any report.

For more and ongoing information regarding the engagement process visit: <https://www.kincardine.ca/en/living-here/secord-monument.aspx>. There is also a backgrounder attached for your convenience.

Should you have any questions or concerns you can reach out to Laura Mae directly at lauramae@lauramaelindo.com or you can contact myself.

Appendix D: Secord Monument Backgrounder

Secord Monument

BACKGROUND

There are two monuments in the Municipality of Kincardine dedicated to Dr. Solomon Secord. Over 110 years ago, in the years following his death, patients and friends chose to put these up in his honour.

Monument 1

Kincardine Cemetery

Monument 1 is in the Kincardine Cemetery where it still stands today. Its inscription reads:

*In memoriam to Solomon Secord, M.D.
Erected by his friends to a man who was unalterably opposed to all forms of insincerity cant and hypocrisy. He loved children and animals and was rich in all things worth while. His life was devoted to benevolence and charity and he still lives in the affection of the people. His last words were "give my love to everybody."*

Monument 2

Public Library (currently in storage)

Monument 2, a sundial, was originally installed outside the Kincardine Branch of the Bruce County Library, reads:

I mark the Sunny Hours.

*To Solomon Secord, 1834-1910.
Our family physician for 50 years.
This memorial was erected by his loving friends. Served as surgeon with the Southern Army during the American Civil War. All that lived he loved, and without regard for fee or reward, he did his work for love of his fellows.*

Removed in the spring of 2023 due to the Queen Street reconstruction project, the second monument remains stored in a secure location. Following the construction, it is no longer possible to return the monument to its original location.

The Issue at Hand

Council's Considerations

Councils have received requests to remove the second monument due to the reference to Secord's service to the Southern (Confederate) Army during the American Civil War.

This war centered on slavery, a practice which systematically oppressed and dehumanized Black people.

The reference on the second monument, along with questions about Secord's role as a medic for the Confederate Army who fought to maintain the institute of slavery, raises concerns with members of the Kincardine community.

There has been no raising of concerns with respect to the cemetery monument where the inscription makes no reference to the American Civil War or Secord's participation.

Council has received requests to return monument 2 to outside the library. Concerns that removing the monument or amending the wording is disrespectful to Secord's service to the community are part of these requests. They also express concern for the erasing or denial of history.

With the Queen Street reconstruction project complete, Council is considering the needs and impact upon community of monument 2 due to the reference to the American Civil War.

Following a staff report, the current Council directed that an external consultant(s) be engaged to assist them with decision-making about the second monument.

Monuments Honouring Dr. Secord



Monument 1 currently located in the Kincardine Cemetery.



Monument 2 outside the Kincardine Branch of the Bruce County Library; currently in storage.

Public Engagement

Why it's important

Public engagement about monument 2 is very important to Council. Research into how other communities have worked through similar situations and the best way of moving ahead with a public engagement process was conducted. A common element to the success of the process for all of the communities interviewed was choosing the right facilitator.

Finding a Facilitator

Shared Advice

Advice from other municipalities about choosing a facilitator:

- Does not live in the community in order to remain neutral.
- Has previous experience facilitating community conversations about monuments/and or the commemoration of people.
- Has strong facilitation experience and presentation skills.
- Will include all opinions throughout the engagement process.
- Has a positive track record in teaching inclusion and equity work.

Staff have researched potential facilitators to advise on the process as well as facilitation of the community conversations. The top candidate has now been selected.



Dr. Laura Mae Lindo

Dr. Laura Mae Lindo is the consultant for the engagement process. She will work with the Municipality to provide opportunities for the public to explore history and impacts, share perspectives, consider new ideas, and form new relationships. This will all be important to Council's decision-making process.

Dr. Lindo is a respected educator who holds both a Master's and PhD in education. Dr. Lindo is a knowledgeable human rights advocate, and a respected ally to vulnerable communities. Most importantly, she is a courageous public speaker, ready, willing, and able to speak to issues often left unaddressed.

A former Member of Provincial Parliament for Kitchener Centre and Ontario's Official Opposition Critic for Anti-Racism and Equity as well as Colleges and Universities, Dr. Lindo was the inaugural Chair of Ontario's first Black Caucus. She is currently an Assistant Professor in Philosophy at the University of Waterloo.

Learn more about Dr. Lindo and her work at <https://lauramaelindo.com>

Engagement Process

Key Components - Phase 1

This engagement process is looking for all opinions on the second Secord monument. Central to this process is to foster an environment of inclusion that creates opportunities for safe and respectful conversations about the community we all belong to.

Public Survey - March 2024

Visit www.kincardine.ca/Secord-Survey to participate. The survey closes March 31, 2024.

Group Interviews - April 2024

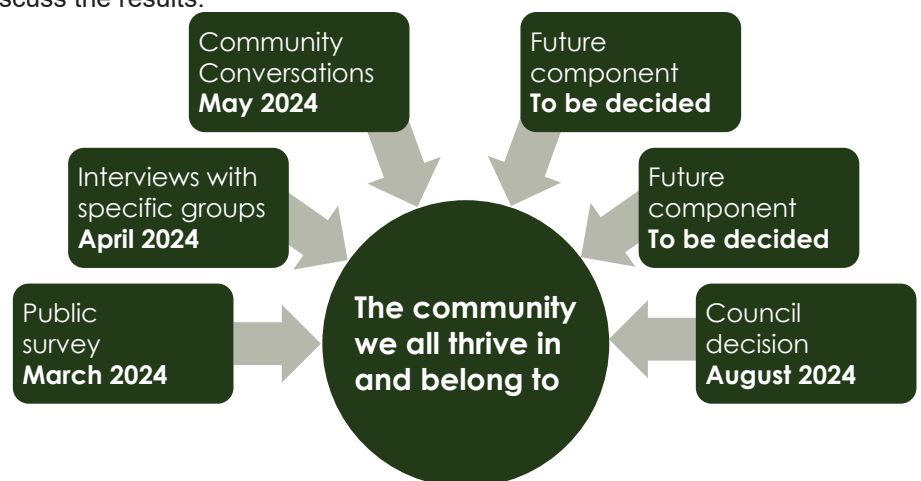
Specific group interviews with community groups will take place. Results of what is heard at these interviews will be posted online at www.kincardine.ca/Secord.

Community Conversations - May 2024

Results to date will be presented at these community conversations. The community will have the opportunity to discuss the results.

Future Components

As we hear the feedback throughout the process, future components and steps will be identified. A decision from Council is anticipated in August 2024.



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Appendix E: Document Coding Key

Code	Document Details
A	Email dated May 29, 2024
B	Email dated May 23, 2024
C	Article - Hilborn, R. (2024, May 22) <i>Once Upon a Time: Why did Solomon Secord go South?</i> Sangeen Times.
C (1)	Comments on article [C]
D	Email dated May 23, 2024
E	Email dated June 13, 2024
F	Article - MacKay, J. (2024, March 15). Future of Kincardine Secord Monument Open for Discussion. CKNX NewsToday.
G	Article - Dunn, S. (2023, June 5). The "haters" Make Pride Events all the More Necessary, Organizer says. The Kincardine News.
H	Article - Poggioli, Sylvia. (February 25, 2023) Italy has kept its fascist monuments and buildings. The reasons are complex. NPR. [Notes in Coding Doc]
I	Article - Letter to the Editor. (2020, June 15). Racism in Kincardine. The Kincardine News.
J	Article - Williams, Megan. (October 29, 2022). In Bolzano, northern Italy, a once-controversial symbol of fascism now educates. CBC News.
K	Article - Rose-Redwood, R. & Alderman, D. (2017, August 28). Confederate Memorials and the Unjust Geography of Memory. CityLab.
L	Article - Reuters, T. (2017, August 15). <i>Despite Charlottesville violence, U.S. cities vow to remove Confederate statues.</i> CBC News.
M	Article - The Associate Press. (2023, December 17). <i>Confederate memorial to be removed in coming days from Arlington National Cemetery.</i> CityNews.
N	Article - Zimonjic, P. (2017, August 18). Buildings renamed, Monuments Fall in Recognition of oppression of Indigenous People. CBC News.
O	Article - Noakes, T. (2023, January 26). No, pulling down statues and renaming streets does not ‘erase history’. TVO Today.
P	Article - Leavitt, S. (2017, August 15). Confederate Plaque on Montreal Hudson’s Bay Story Removed. CBC News.
Q	Article - Zimonjic, P. (2017, August 18). Buildings renamed, Monuments Fall in Recognition of oppression of Indigenous People. CBC News.
R	Article - Staff Writer. (2017, September 18). Canada Unveils its First US Civil War Monument. BBC News.
S	Article - Staff Writer. (2017, August 17). Why the Fuss over Confederate Statues? BBC News.
T	Article - Henry-Dixon, Natasha. (2019, May 28). Racial Segregation of Black People in Canada. The Canadian Encyclopedia.
U	Article - Hartwick, W. (2024, May 29) Secord Monument should be Back Where it Belongs, Say Readers. Letter to the Editor.

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V	Article - Miller, S. (2024, February 8). Debate Reignited on Fate of Monument to Confederate Army Surgeon. CTV News London.
W	Article - Letter to the Editor. (2024, January 23). Readers Respond to Letter about Fate of Dr. Solomon Secord Monument. The Kincardine Record.
X	Article - Letter to the Editor. (2024 March 21). People Need to Know True History of Dr. Secord; Return Monument to Place of Honour. The Kincardine Record.
Y	Article - Letter to the Editor. (2021, July 15). Readers Respond to Letter About Fate of Dr. Solomon Secord Monument. The Kincardine Record.
Z	Article - Letter to the Editor. (2024 January 22). Cowardice of the Highest Order. The Kincardine Record.
AA	National Museum of Civil War Medicine - Solomon Secord - History Timeline
BB	Email dated April 19, 2024
CC	Email Correspondence dated March 28- April 2, 2024
DD	Email Correspondence dated April 2, 2024
EE	Responses to Post-Survey Open Engagement Questions [March 31, 2024 to Present] - 4 entries
FF	Article - Dadson, L. (2018, September 6). <i>Dr. Solomon Secord Monument To Remain in Kincardine's Main Street</i> . The Kincardine Record.
GG	Article - Alberga, H. (2024, March 11). Nazi military monument removed from Ontario cemetery. CTV News.
HH	Municipality of Kincardine: Afrocentric Mural Backgrounder - "Our Vision and Hope for the Future"
II	Email dated June 9, 2024 [in lieu of joining a community conversation session]
JJ	Email dated May 31, 2024
KK	Public Facebook Post - March 15, 2024
LL	Email dated May 29, 2024
MM	Article - Gates Jr., H.L. (2014, January 6). How Many Africans Were Really Taken to the U.S During the Slave Trade? America's Black Holocaust Museum.