

WELCOMING WINNIPEG – Request Summary

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Request ID: 2022-008

Name of Request: Removing “Ten Commandments” Religious Monument from Assiniboine Park

Address: 55 Pavilion Crescent (Assiniboine Park)

Demonstrated Community Support:

- Petition submitted: No. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and physical distancing precautions, the City has temporarily suspended this requirement.
- Letters of support provided: Support from APC Management provided to undertake this process to determine whether or not the monument should stay or be removed.

Project Details:



Photo Source: <http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/sites/tencommandments.shtml>

Background

The Fraternal Order of Eagles (FOE), an international non-profit organization, unites fraternally in the spirit of liberty, truth, justice, and equality, to make human life more desirable by lessening its ills, and by promoting peace, prosperity, gladness and hope. As of 2019, membership is open to any person of good moral character, and believes in the existence of a supreme being, and is not a member of the Communist Party nor any organization which advocates the overthrow of the United States government. Currently, either gender can become a member of an Aerie, however, only women can become a member of an Auxiliary.

In the 1940s, E.J. Ruegemer, a Minnesota juvenile court judge and member of the Fraternal Order of Eagles, launched a nationwide campaign to monuments of the Ten Commandments in juvenile courts and public parks across the United States and Canada. His stated goal was to provide a moral foundation for troubled youth.

The Ten Commandments are a set of biblical principles relating to ethics and worship that play a fundamental role in Judaism and Christianity.

Although there is no official record of how many monuments were erected, estimates range from less than 100 to more than 2,000. Many monuments went up in public places like parks, city halls, and courthouses.

In 1965, the FOE Winnipeg Aerie #23 gifted to the “Metropolitan of Winnipeg”, a Ten Commandments monument which was erected in Assiniboine Park on Locomotive Drive.

In 2008, the City of Winnipeg Council entered into a 50-year lease with Assiniboine Park Conservancy (APC) with all assets within the park being owned by the city.

In the spring of 2017, the Ten Commandments monument was removed from Assiniboine Park when construction began on The Leaf – Canada’s Diversity Gardens. At the time, there was uncertainty about what should be done with the monument, so APC placed it in storage. When considering what to do with it, there were questions about whether the Park is still the best location for this type of religious monument.

In 2019, APC approached the Fraternal Order of Eagles (who donated the monument to the City in 1965) to see if they would be interested in moving the monument to a new location (at APC’s cost). Tentative arrangements to move the monument to a new location in the spring of 2020 were made and the City of Winnipeg was informed.

These plans were put on hold as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This winter, APC was advised that the FOE no longer wish to relocate the monument.

As the monument is a City-owned asset and the City passed the Welcoming Winnipeg: Reconciling our History Policy in January 2020, determining what is the appropriate next step for the “Ten Commandments” religious monument will be established through this process.

How does this request contribute to a ‘Welcoming Winnipeg’, as defined in the policy and what kind of evidence/research can be provided to support this statement:

While the religious monument is part of Winnipeg’s history, APC’s goal as a not for profit organization entrusted to steward Assiniboine Park and its assets is to nurture a sense of community within our Park that makes all feel welcome, accepted and comfortable to be themselves. APC has considered this matter very carefully, in light of recent debate about historical monuments, and believe that reinstalling the monument may make the Park feel less welcoming for some members of our community.

Alternatively, a member of the community has recently shared the following in support of keeping the monument in Assiniboine Park:

The 10 Commandment Monument is a very important monument in our society/world. Our whole legal system was built on it and also supports positive moral behaviour which has general application to all for all humanity. People of Christian, Jewish, and Muslim faiths who are strong supporters of this moral code would no longer feel fully accepted in the Assiniboine Park knowing that this very important monument, which has been in the park since 1965, was removed for no sound reason. Two thirds of Indigenous people claim to be Christians thus a certain level of moral belief could be maintained which would help reconciliation rather than hinder it. Removal of this monument would also be trending towards the dangerous precedent set by the Quebec Provincial Government's Bill 21 (Quebec's Secularism Bill which will probably be challenged in the Supreme Court of Canada).

Does this site have historical significance to the Indigenous community?
Research Support:

The Assiniboine River, flows north of Assiniboine Park and takes its name from the Assiniboine peoples, a name that has also been taken on by the Park.

Assiniboin (Nakota) First Nation

The Assiniboins were one of the main groups occupying Manitoba before the Europeans arrived. The Assiniboins were known historically as bison hunters. As the fur trade developed, they played major roles, including guides, traders, middlemen and provisioners of trading posts. When their population declined dramatically with the

introduction of European-introduced diseases and the destruction of the bison herds, the Assiniboin shifted westward into Saskatchewan, Alberta and Manitoba. The name Assiniboin probably comes from the Cree term *Assee-nee-pay-tock* or *Assinipoet* meaning people who cook by putting hot stones into rawhide-lined holes in the ground. Assiniboin peoples have also been called *Nakota* referring to their language, or the *Hohe*. Geographical and community landmarks such as the Assiniboine River were named after the Assiniboin peoples.

Source: <https://stjamesmuseum.com/st-james-assiniboia-history/>

What is now Assiniboine Park would have also been a part of the Red River Lot system (parish of St. Charles); please see map below:



If this application is not supported, what would the negative impact on the community be? (If applicable)

APC has considered this matter very carefully, in light of recent debate about historical monuments, and believe that reinstalling the monument may make the Park feel less welcoming for some members of our community.

Any additional information the applicant would like the CCM to consider in making their recommendation.



Indigenous Relations
Relations avec les Autochtones



JOURNEY OF RECONCILIATION
LES CHEMINS DE LA RÉCONCILIATION

A stone monument currently in Kildonan Park, consisting of two etched tablets of the Ten Commandments, was erected on 16 June 1968 by the Knights of Columbus, St. John Council 5369.