

Indigenous Place-Making

Update to Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee
December 15, 2020

Jennifer Franks, Indigenous Affairs Office

"Reconciliation is only possible when we're on equal footing, the land is a great equalizer."

Chloe Dragon Smith
Chipewyan-European-Métis contributor
to the Canada Parks Council





Broad Support from City Council

City Council endorsed all Calls to Action in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada report, including those that focus on art, recreation and commemoration of residential schools.

EX10.16, December 2015

Parks and Environment Committee requested that staff develop “a framework for applying Indigenous place-making principles to [Parks, Forestry and Recreation capital] projects.”

PE20.3, May 2017, AA12.5, October 2017

City Council adopted the Downtown Official Plan Amendment for TOcore, including explicit policy direction regarding Indigenous cultural heritage and consultation.

PG29.4, May 2018



➤ Policy Levers

- [Official Plan](#) (See Heritage Conservation Policies in chapter 3.1.5)
- Our Common Ground
- [Parkland Strategy](#)
- [Toronto Biodiversity Strategy](#) (see actions 17 and 22)
- [Toronto Ravine Strategy](#) (see action 13)
- TO Core
- [Downtown East Action Plan 2023 Five Year Action Plan](#)
- Preliminary Indigenous Place-Making Framework (endorsed by AAC and Parks and Environment Committee)
- CoT Path to Reconciliation (in draft)



Indigenous Place-Making Framework Goals

- Expanding and ensuring presentation and commemoration of Indigenous histories and cultures
- Creating space – physically, and in process and policy – for ceremony, teaching and community.
- Strengthening Indigenous connections with lands and waters, both traditionally and contemporarily used
- Building capacity for land-based Indigenous engagement, and for greater cultural competency in City of Toronto staff.



➤ Place-making Framework: Four Focus Areas

- Public Art
- Places & Naming
- Policy & Capacity
- Engagement/Consultation



➤ Art

Art as a focus provides a focused opportunity for both short-term and long-term impact.

Examples of place-making in public art include:

- Murals
- Temporary installations
- Permanent installations that honour the significance of place

Leveraging existing programs such as Nuit Blanche, StreetART and the City's Year of Public Art to create opportunities for Indigenous artists.

Work with City Divisions and City Agencies to incorporate Indigenous art and engage with Indigenous artists in their projects (eg. Housing Now, ECC)





Places & Naming

Places

Advancing access to lands and water for Indigenous community to gather, conduct ceremony, grow medicines and traditional foods is essential for healing and community well-being.

IAO is working with Indigenous community and internally with City Divisions and Agencies to provide safe access to land-based programming that will have a positive impact on the physical, spiritual and mental well-being of community members.

Some examples include the Spirit Garden at Nathan Philip Square (led by Toronto Council Fire); working with the Humber River Collective and exploring opportunities on the land surrounding the Toronto Zoo.



► Places & Naming

Naming

The City of Toronto Property Naming Policy outlines the process for naming and re-naming properties on a property-by-property basis, but does not lend itself to a systemic view and a broader commitment to representation in our naming.

Indigenous names can work to address erasure of Indigenous People on this territory.

Naming can be a reactive or proactive (eg. Review of Dundas Street, Six Points Configuration, Wonscotonach Parklands and Ethennonnhawahstihnen' Park)



➤ Policy and Capacity

Our public realm is shaped not only by the physical space, but also by the policies and people who manage and animate it. We need to build capacity for place-making and create policies that enable Indigenous engagement with the public realm.

This includes guidelines on matters such as Sacred Fires and ceremony, decolonizing policy and legal instruments, growing and harvesting medicines in parks, and working internally with City colleagues to enhance capacity and understanding of Indigenous worldviews and approaches to working together.



➤ Engagement / Consultation

The need for a more consistent, authentic and meaningful approach to engagement on place-making projects has become clear in our conversations with Indigenous community.

Establishment of Indigenous Place-Making Advisory Circle

Engage with existing tables such as AAAC and TASSC early on.

Engage with diverse voices in the Indigenous community

Undertake and promote meaningful Indigenous engagement internally with City colleagues and non-Indigenous community organizations.





Further Work

- Undertake process to select members of the Indigenous Place-Making Advisory Circle to guide and advise on this work.
- Undertake a digital mapping exercise
- Better coordination between initiatives (leverage partnerships, existing projects); create stories; and better coordination internally within the City.
- Indigenous-led development of a proactive and comprehensive place-making strategy

