

Indigenous Engagement

**For discussion by the Aboriginal Affairs Advisory
Committee**

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➤ Objectives

- Begin discussion of how engagement can ensure Indigenous voices are influencing discussions.
- Outline current or potential engagements that could be bolstered to enhance self-determination.
- Identify short-term actions to enhance engagement and self-determination in 2021.

➤ Background

- Engagement is a key component of Indigenous self-determination
 - Full self-determination is a longer journey
 - In the meantime, engagement can enhance Indigenous voices that influence decisions
- The Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council (TASSC) has made repeated calls for more seats at decision-making tables and improved engagement with the City of Toronto
 - Efforts to create those seats are on-going

➤ Examples of current engagement

- Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee
- Indigenous Heritage Engagement Project
- Interim Indigenous Place-making Circle
- Leadership Advisory Circle, Indigenous Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship
- George Street Revitalization Indigenous Advisory Circle
- Toronto Indigenous Community Advisory Board (Meeting in the Middle)
- Peer Jury, Indigenous Arts and Culture Partnership Fund



Proposed Principles of Engagement

(Adapted from Meeting in the Middle Strategy)

1. Follow cultural protocols (tobacco ties, smudging, Elders, Indigenous facilitator, etc).
2. Engage on a nation to nation basis.
3. Outcomes must be mutually beneficial.
4. Good engagement builds relationships.
5. Engagement should be Indigenous-led or co-planned.
6. Engagement should begin early in process.
7. Do research (identify history of land and key caretakers).
8. Engagement is a relational process.
9. Engage with community as often as possible, rather than individuals.
10. Process of engagement itself (not just the outcomes) must be mutually beneficial.
11. Be clear and transparent about time and resource issues.
12. Consider accessibility needs.

➤ Potential Considerations for Additional Engagement

- Some sectors are not well-engaged in the current system such as youth, the 2-spirited community, businesses, land stewards, etc.
- Some members of the Indigenous community ask to be engaged directly, rather than by proxy through organizations, elected representatives, etc.
- Indigenous community members who do not engage with Indigenous organizations or services may not have a voice
- Subject area expertise may be required for specific initiatives but not others (e.g. – a landscape architect for a place-making initiative wouldn't be needed for feedback on food security)

➤ Potential Methods for Additional Community Engagement

- Continue early efforts to establish an Elder, Knowledge Keeper, Youth Guidance Circle
- In partnership with the Indigenous community, the City could organize community town halls and workshops, enabling members of the broader Indigenous community to provide feedback on issues such as housing, mental health, community safety, economic recovery, place-making, etc.
- Establishment of electronic forums allowing Indigenous community members to provide feedback 24/7, allowing those who are unable to attend town halls or public meetings due to reasons such as health issues, lack of transportation, personal safety, etc. to provide feedback.

➤ Discussion

- What methods do you suggest to help the City engage with the Indigenous community in a manner that supports self-determination?
 - Town Halls? Sector specific circles (education, health, art, business, climate action, etc.)? Other ideas?
- What specific steps would you like to see the City take in 2021 to further self-determination through engagement?