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April 13, 2021

RE: Item AA10.3 - Toronto Ravine Strategy Update and Developing Economic Opportunities for Indigenous Businesses

Dear Members of the Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Emery Village BIA in regards to *Item AA10.3 - Toronto Ravine Strategy Update and Developing Economic Opportunities for Indigenous Businesses* that your committee will be considering on April 16, 2021.

As you may know, the Emery BIA has partnered with the City of Toronto to develop the Unity Walk project, a First Nations park that will honour the Indigenous peoples who lived in and passed through Emery for 10,000 years prior to, and during, the early years of the Euro-Canadian settler culture. The park provides a valuable opportunity that can be incorporated into, and complement your work on, Toronto's ravine strategy.

The Unity Walk park project will be located in the Hydro One corridor south of Finch Ave W and east of Weston Rd in the north west quadrant of Toronto. The Ontario Archaeological Sites Database (OASD) maintained by the Ontario Ministry of Culture has identified the site as historically significant and has titled it Ak Gv-12. While records of this site are minimal, evidence gathered from surrounding archeological sites provide ample proof of all three historical peoples – Wendat, Haudenosaunee and Mississauga – living, at different times, in the immediate area and beyond to Lake Simcoe and Georgian Bay. The Emery BIA looked to celebrate this important history by developing the concept for the Unity Walk in consultation with the Mississaugas of New Credit First Nation, Six Nations of the Grand River and the Huron Wendat First Nation. The City of Toronto has submitted the park for approval of secondary land use by Hydro One and is currently in the final stages of approvals.

The Unity Walk park can directly support your objective to identify economic opportunities for indigenous businesses and initiatives that might support the Indigenous component of the ravine strategy. The park will celebrate and improve visibility of the rich and important history of the land, and those who passed through it, by creating interactive opportunities to educate the local community and the general public.

The park will feature three separate pathways, each of which will honour one of the three First Nations by displaying cultural highlights and depicting daily activities of their
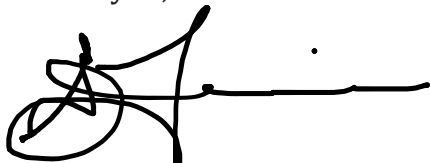
ancestors in the form of statues, interactive plaques, culturally significant plants and more. Some of the park's primary features will include:

- All pathways will lead to a centrally located "gathering circle" or "meeting place", also representing the three First Nations groups, that can be used for gatherings and events.
- The fourth larger path, which will meet the other three, will provide a cycle and walking trail that will connect to Toronto's broader cycling network.
- Historically significant plants will be grown throughout the park. These plants will be representative of the "three sisters" (corn, squash, bean) in addition to others of cultural and local significance.
- An "organic" playground will provide children and families of all ages with a space to play, interact and enjoy nature year-round.

All elements of the park provide opportunities for Indigenous businesses, artists and others to participate in its development and operations. Additionally, the BIA hopes to engage secondary school students from Emery Collegiate Institute, located directly south of the park, in the park's operations.
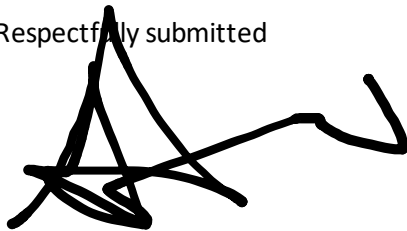
The Unity Walk park will help to highlight and enhance our city's existing park space and can provide a valuable place-making opportunity to connect the Emery of today with those who originally passed through our community so many years ago and their descendants. Please consider incorporating it into your strategy. I look forward to working together to further explore how our projects can complement one another.

Thank you,

Sandra Farina
Executive Director, Emery BIA

Respectfully submitted

Emery Village BIA Board of Management