

Naming the East Bayfront Community Recreation Centre

Date: August 15, 2025

To: Toronto and East York Community Council

From: Interim General Manager, Parks and Recreation

Wards: 10 - Spadina-Fort York

SUMMARY

This report responds to City Council's directive to initiate an Indigenous naming process for the new East Bayfront Community Recreation Centre at 261 Queens Quay E. The City, in collaboration with the Mississauga's of the Credit First Nation (MCFN) and urban Indigenous communities is undertaking a culturally respectful process to identify a meaningful Indigenous name rooted in community relationships and the spirit of the site. A final naming recommendation will be brought forward following engagement which will be followed by installation of new signage and ongoing interpretive actions to support understanding of the name's meaning and significance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Interim General Manager, Parks and Recreation recommends that:

1. Toronto and East York Community Council receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Funding for this process is included in the 2025 Capital Budget for Waterfront Revitalization and Parks and Recreation. There is available funding in the Waterfront Revitalization Initiative 2025 Capital Budget for the Indigenous community engagement for the East Bayfront CRC naming.

In addition, costs associated with installing signage related to the new name have been included in Parks and Recreation's 2025 Capital Budget. Total capital costs associated with the fabrication and installation of signage will be finalized once a new name is confirmed.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the information as presented in the Financial Impact Section.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on March 26 and 27, 2025, City Council adopted Item - 2025.TE20.45 - East Bayfront Community Recreation Centre Naming. Council directed the General Manager, Parks and Recreation, the Director, Indigenous Affairs Office and the Director, Waterfront Secretariat to engage with Treaty partners and urban Indigenous communities, in consultation with the local Councillor, and report back to the Toronto and East York Community Council in the second quarter of 2026 with a proposed name for the East Bayfront Community Recreation Centre, with a status update in the third quarter of 2025.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2025.TE20.45>

At its July 29, 2025 meeting, the Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee heard, and received for information, a presentation from the Parks and Recreation Division regarding the engagement plan for naming the East Bayfront Community Recreation Centre. The Advisory Committee provided input related to the East Bayfront renaming initiative as well as about naming approaches that the City is undertaking generally.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2025.AA7.2>

COMMENTS

Background

In alignment with the City of Toronto's Reconciliation Action Plan and its commitment to addressing the historic and ongoing erasure of Indigenous presence and culture, Parks and Recreation (P&R), in partnership with the Waterfront Secretariat (WS) and the Indigenous Affairs Office (IAO), has been asked to initiate a process to identify an Indigenous name for the new East Bayfront Community Recreation Centre on Toronto's waterfront.

Indigenous naming is a deeply meaningful and complex practice. It is not merely symbolic — it is a powerful act of recognition, reclamation, and visibility. A name can carry teachings, affirm relationships to land and water, and honour the diverse Nations and cultures who live here. Importantly, Indigenous names are not assigned — they are gifted by community, and often emerge through reflection, ceremony, and connection with the spirit of a place. For these reasons, naming of the East Bayfront Community Recreation Centre goes beyond naming, it is a relationship-building process, and an act of honouring Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and belonging.

While the East Bayfront Community Recreation Centre was not designed in collaboration with Indigenous communities, P&R recognizes that this naming process offers an opportunity to take a step toward righting past exclusions — not through prescriptive consultation or transactional input, but through relationship- and trust-building, reciprocity, and meaningful collaboration.

There is currently no standardized approach to Indigenous naming at the City of Toronto. Economic Development and Culture is in the process of developing a city-wide framework. In the absence of an approved protocol, P&R has worked in consultation with the WS and IAO to design a process grounded in cultural competency and guided by community insight. This approach draws on lessons learned from past naming processes — including those that led to the naming of Biidaasige Park and Ookwemin Minising — while also responding to the unique context, history, and potential of this site.

Rather than selecting a name in advance, the proposed process holds space for a slower, more relational approach. After the centre opens, Treaty partners, urban Indigenous organizations, Elders, artists, youth, and knowledge keepers will be invited into the space to spend time, reflect, and connect. The intent is for a name to emerge organically from these experiences — one that is rooted in the place itself and gifted by community. This approach affirms that Indigenous naming is not a task to be completed, but a gift to be invited, respected, and received with humility.

Plan for Naming the East Bayfront Community Recreation Centre

Parks and Recreation has engaged with the local Councillor, IAO, and WS, and to develop a work plan for engagement on the East Bayfront Community Recreation Centre Naming. This process was also presented to the Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee on June 10, 2025 and July 29, 2025, and the feedback from that body is incorporated into the principles and plan outlined below.

Engagement Principles

The proposed process outlined below has been designed based on the following principles:

- Relationship before results: Building meaningful, trust-based relationships takes time and care.
- Place-based understanding: Water is highly significant to Indigenous cultures. The name of the new community recreation centre should take this into account and reflect the spirit and experience of the place, located on Lake Ontario.
- Representation beyond treaty partners: The process should reflect the diversity of Indigenous Nations, cultures, and languages present in Toronto.
- Reciprocity and invitation: Indigenous knowledge and naming are gifts, not transactions.
- Transparency and shared vision: The role of the City should be to host, support, and listen — not to control or pre-determine.

Proposed Engagement Plan

Phase 1: Grounding and Preparation (Pre-engagement)

Timeline: 1–3 months

Start: June 2025 (Pre-Opening)

Objective: Lay the foundation for respectful engagement through internal readiness, alignment of partners, and early relationship-building.

Activities/Events	Anticipated Outcomes
Present to AAAC; email outreach to MCFN; meet with IAO and WS	Process participants are informed of the process and provide early input to shape the approach.
Identify cultural competency training (e.g., ELI or external provider); prepare staff	Project team and recreation staff are better equipped to engage respectfully with Indigenous communities.
Engage Indigenous orgs (e.g., TASSC); share plan and gather feedback	Key Indigenous organizations are aware of the initiative and willing to participate or advise.

Phase 2: Place-Based Relationship-Building

Timeline: 3–5 months

Anticipated Start: September 2025 (Post Opening)

Objective: Enable meaningful, creative engagement by inviting local Indigenous community members and the MCFN into the space and building relationships.

Activities/Events	Anticipated Outcomes
Opening Ceremony (e.g., smudging or water ceremony)	Engagement process begins in a good way, grounded in Indigenous cultural protocol.
Host small group visits; offer flexible engagement (e.g art-making, shared meal, storytelling)	Indigenous participants form personal connections to the space and begin to share reflections on its meaning.
In-person workshop to co-develop a Community Charter.	Shared expectations are established through a Charter that clarifies intentions, roles, and commitments with participants and ensures that Indigenous values are centred in the process.
Two-way learning workshops (staff ↔ community)	Staff cultural competency improves, and Indigenous community members better understand the City's role and processes. Strong foundation for a way forward.

Phase 3: Coordinating Insights and Honouring Naming

Timeline: 2–3 months

Anticipated Start: February 2026

Objective: Synthesize input and select a name that resonates with the local Indigenous community. Celebrate and communicate the new name.

Events	Anticipated Outcomes
In-person event with Indigenous partners/Elders to synthesize naming insights	Community-derived themes and 2–3 name options are surfaced for consideration.
Survey process participants on naming preference	Input is gathered from the Indigenous community to identify a preferred name that has broad support.
Communicate preferred name to MCFN	A final name is presented to the MCFN to gauge their support.
Council report with name recommendation	A final name is brought forward for Council approval.
Final Naming Ceremony	The name is honoured publicly in accordance with community protocols.
On-site pop-ups with interpretation of the name	Broader public gains understanding of the name's meaning and significance.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

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