

# Centennial Park Master Plan Update

## Meeting with Indigenous Community Leaders

Engagement Summary Report



July 29, 2020



(Image of concept rendering for the Centennial Park Master Plan Update, July 2020)

Prepared by:



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# **1.0 What is the Centennial Park Master Plan Update**

The City is working on a Master Plan Update for Centennial Park to guide infrastructure improvements and other changes over the next 20 years. The updated Master Plan will respond to programmatic needs as well as the realities of climate change by integrating a resilience lens (i.e., building and park operations, impacts of severe storms). The master planning process aims to engage a diverse set of users to better understand the different needs and preferences and better serve users of the park, including those from the local area and broader citywide users.

## **Indigenous Histories and the Centennial Park Master Plan Update**

Toronto sits upon the traditional territory of the Huron-Wendat Confederacy, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Anishnabek Nation and in particular the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. It is also home to diverse Indigenous peoples from across Canada, including the Metis and Inuit.

Toronto's Indigenous presence, both historically and contemporarily has largely gone unrecognized within the City's natural heritage and programming. In recent years, Toronto has recognized the importance of Indigenous land based histories and traditional ecological knowledge(s) in protecting and restoring the GTA's natural environments.

The Centennial Park revitalization team recognizes Indigenous communities' constitutionally protected rights to deal with Canada, provinces and territories on a Nation-to-Nation basis. Through the City's Parks and Environment Committee it is developing an "Indigenous Place-Making (Keeping) Framework" that reflects the City's commitment to the national Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action (TRC Report 2015).

## Report Summary

The purpose of this report is to summarize a meeting with Indigenous Community Leaders for the Centennial Park Master Plan Update that was held on July 29, 2020. This report provides an overview of the meeting, including objectives, the four themes or “stories” of Centennial Park identified by the Project Team and a summary of key feedback and findings from the consultation event.

## Meeting Details

**When:** July 29, 2020, 6:30 - 8:00 PM

**Where:** Virtually on Zoom

**Attendees:**

**Participants:** Estimated 15 Indigenous Community Leaders were present who were Elders, Knowledge Keepers, leaders, families, and entrepreneurs.

**Consultant Team:** PMA Landscape Architects, the landscape architecture team Trina Moyan Bell and PROCESS, engagement team

**City of Toronto:** Casey Morris, Senior Project Coordinator, Parks Forestry & Recreation  
Daniel Fusca, Manager, Public Consultation, Parks Forestry & Recreation  
David O’Hara, Project Manager, Capital Construction Special Projects  
Pablo Muñoz, Senior Consultation Coordinator, Parks Forestry & Recreation  
Alex Lavasidis, Senior Consultation Coordinator, Parks Forestry & Recreation

## KEY TAKEAWAYS:

### Meeting with Indigenous Community Leaders

The following section is a summary of key findings from the Centennial Park Master Plan Update's first meeting with Indigenous Community Leaders. These key messages emerge from the Detailed Summary of Feedback (see page 9) and were the items reiterated often or were deemed important by most participants.

**Ensure that the park reflects and honours** Indigeneity, the history of the land, the cosmology of original inhabitants of the land and the many indigenous communities that now call Etobicoke home.

**Educate park visitors on Indigenous culture, history, and stories.** Participants indicated that educational opportunities should be embedded throughout the park. Education should be easy for park users to access and the park should be seen as a “teacher”.

**Ensure that there is Indigenous representation and placekeeping** incorporated throughout the park. Participants indicated that language plays an important role and one suggestion was to include Indigenous languages on the Centennial Park interpretive signage and wayfinding.

**Create meaningful connections and relationships with Indigenous people.** Participants mentioned that this can take the form of Indigenous people owning or operating features of the park and gaining economic benefits, creating art or educational signage, and collaborating with Knowledge Keepers throughout the park.

**Restore balance in the park** by creating greater connectivity both within the park as well as connecting the park to other ecological areas in Toronto.

**Emphasize how important water is to Indigenous people** and use water features in the park as educational tools.

**Provide opportunities for Indigenous representation and teachings throughout the ecology of the park.** Some suggestions were to create an Indigenous flower garden, locate Indigenous medicine plants throughout the park, and create a garden into the geometric pattern of an Indigenous Medicine Wheel. *See more ideas for ecology on page 11.*

*Next, pages 4-6, provide the Indigenous Community Leaders Workshop Overview, the Meeting Objectives, and the Project Themes.*

**Figure 1: Meeting Participant's Scribble Illustration, "Connected Community"**



(Image of illustration called *Connected Community* created by Danielle Hyde in July 2020)

**Illustration description:**

"Extended Community;

Nothing in nature exists for itself. We are all operating in a chorus of relationships. Upholding these relations involves ongoing engagement if we are to address through our public spaces the conversation of decolonization and meaningful reconciliation. Reimagining Centennial Park's space requires we reconsider our treatment of the Land in relation to a city and approach design from the position of sharing this space with the environment to maintain the whole community". - Danielle Hyde



## Meeting Overview

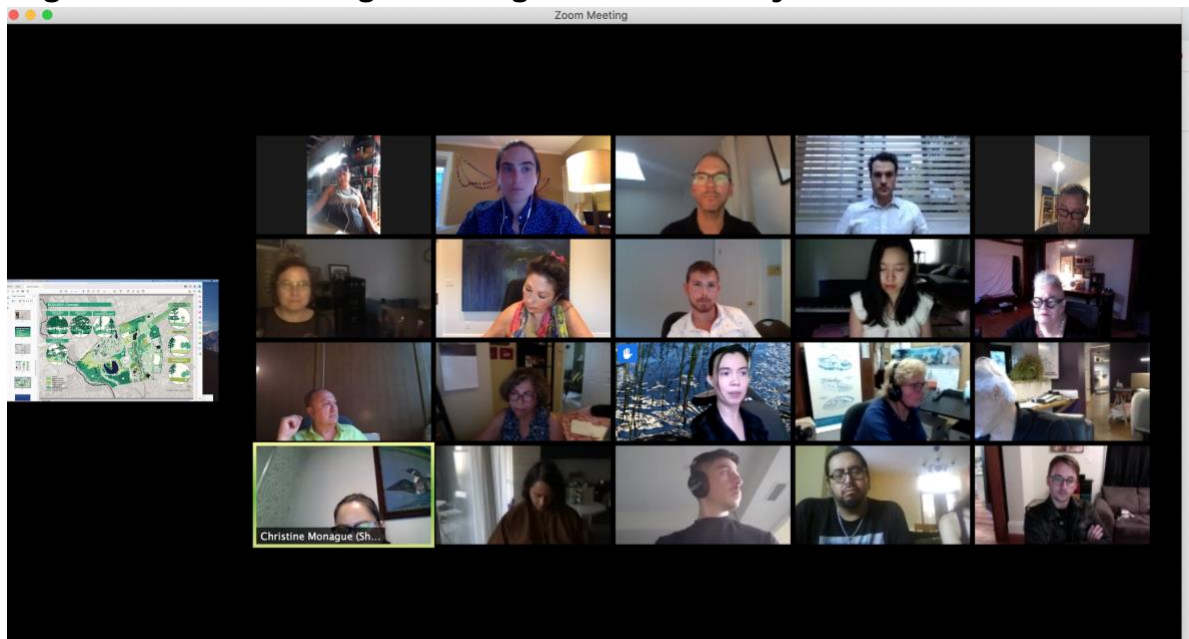
The virtual workshop took place over Zoom, see **Figure 2: Virtual Meeting with Indigenous Community Leaders on Zoom**. The workshop was led by Trina Moyan Bell. Trina is *nehiyaw* (Plains Cree) and the Indigenous consultant working on the Centennial Park Master Plan Update. Trina is committed to including the histories and current realities of Indigenous peoples within urban planning projects.

Indigenous Elder, Catherine Tammaro, opened and closed the workshop with a prayer. The workshop then began with a round of introductions from Indigenous participants followed by a brief introduction of the Project Team. Afterwards, the Design Team (PMA Landscape Architects) presented what the Project Team has heard to date from stakeholders and the public since March 2020 and presented the emerging design concepts for the Master Plan Update.

After the presentation, Trina Moyan Bell led a facilitated discussion to gain insights and feedback from participants for the Centennial Park Master Plan Update. They were asked to provide feedback on site-wide design concepts and site-specific ideas and options.

Participants were also invited to provide further commentary on Scribble Boards after the workshop concluded.

**Figure 2: Virtual Meeting with Indigenous Community Leaders on Zoom**



(Image of virtual Indigenous Community Leaders Workshop on Zoom, July 2020)

## Meeting Objectives

The objectives of the meeting with Indigenous Community Leaders include the following:

- Connect with Indigenous Community Leaders, learn about the Community Leaders and build relationships.
- Present what the Project Team has heard from the public and stakeholders since March 2020 and how this feedback has been incorporated into the design process and concept designs.
- Brainstorm ideas and get input on site-wide design concepts for:
  - Site-wide design concepts for Centennial Parks Four Stories: Culture, Movement, Water, and Ecology.
  - Site-specific design ideas and options for the Pond, the Hill, and the Centre of the Park.

## Centennial Park Master Plan Update: Project Themes

The Project Team developed four ‘stories’ or themes that are used to organize the design work of the Master Plan Update. The four stories/ these are as follows:

**Water:** The water story at Centennial Park is about the entire cycle – how it lands on the site, moves through the site and is absorbed by the site. Water is not only a necessary resource, for all flora and fauna, but can also be a source of play, beauty and contemplation. Consider the annoying puddles when it rains, the wetlands that support interesting wildlife, the ponds with the weeping willows and the creeks that are both buried and above ground.

**Ecology:** The ecology story of Centennial Park is not just about the natural environment – the trees, the habitats, the birds and rabbits – it’s about the system that links all of these together, successfully or not. Ecology takes into consideration the balance between all species and the environment, including how to ameliorate human impacts and prepare for the changing climate.

**Movement:** The movement story of Centennial Park is about all the forms of transport to and through the site. It is also about equal access for all, regardless of the mode of transport; whether you can walk, bike, drive a car, take the bus, need to take breaks often or need a smooth surface to move on. Movement is about the experience as we walk through Centennial Park; the sublime views of nature and water; and whether we know where you are going or not.

**Culture:** The culture story is about everything that contributes to the way of life in Centennial Park. It is about sports fields and playgrounds, picnicking under the



willows by the pond or visiting the Conservatory on a rainy day. It's also about community, and how Centennial Park can create, maintain and enhance it.

## **2.0 Question and Answers:**

Below is a summary of questions asked by Indigenous participants and the answer provided by the Project Team.

Questions: Who was in Centennial Park first? What are the archeological showings?

Answer: The City is currently assessing whether any prior archeological studies have been conducted on the Centennial Park site. If no studies have occurred a Stage 1 archeological study will be considered for the site.

Question: How will this Master Plan Update be successful, compared to other master plans in the past?

Answer: The success of this Master Plan Update will be in part due to a well thought out design and phasing plan. Working with stakeholders and community members to develop relationships to help provide equitable access to park facilities and programs is also paramount to the long term success of the park.

In addition to the design, the City has some funding tools that can be used to implement some of the Council approved facilities. Along with discussions and partnerships with other divisions the Master Plan can begin to guide the future of the park.

### **3.0 Detailed Summary of Feedback**

The following section summarizes Indigenous Community Leaders' feedback and insights for the Centennial Park Master Plan Update. It is organized based on major themes.

#### **Overview of Activity**

The activity was conducted as a round table discussion after the Design Team presented on the design concepts and what has been heard to date for the Master Plan Update. The facilitated round table discussion asked participants to provide feedback on the following:

- Site-wide design concepts for Centennial Parks Four Stories: Culture, Movement, Water, and Ecology.
- Site-specific design ideas and options for the Pond, the Hill, and the Centre of the Park.

**See below for the Indigenous Community Leaders' feedback from the round table discussion.**

## Site-Wide Feedback

Feedback from site-wide design concepts are organized based on Centennial Park's Four Stories: Culture, Movement, Water and Ecology.

**See below for Indigenous Community Leaders' ideas and feedback on site-wide design concepts:**

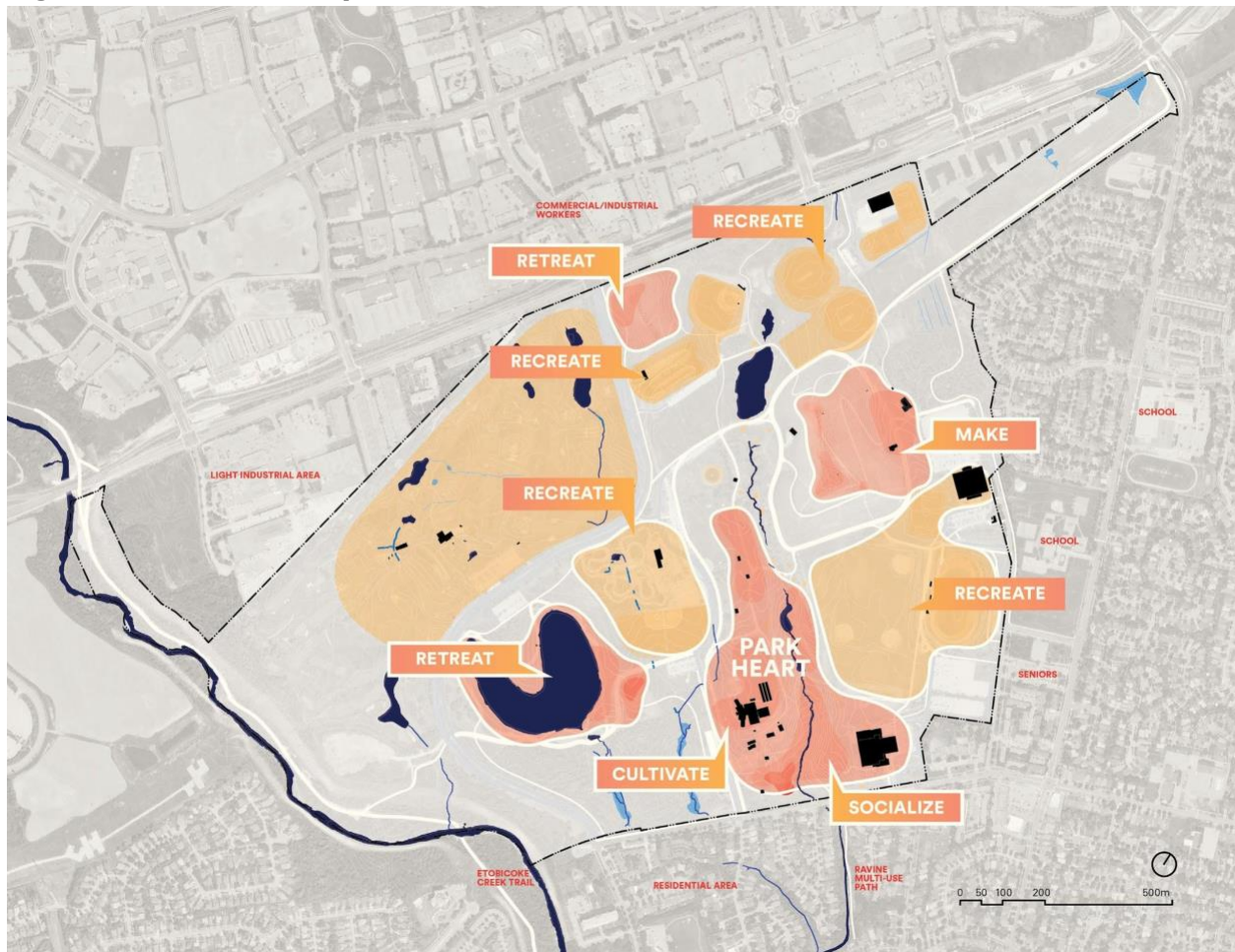
### **Culture**

- **Create opportunities for education about Indigenous culture, history, and stories.** Education should be easy to access and make people aware of who the Indigenous peoples are and the many stories of the land. Indigenous Community Leaders suggested the following ideas for incorporating Indigenous education throughout the park:
  - One participant suggested that the park should go beyond just a place for leisure and be perceived as a “teacher” or teaching space for visitors and park users.
  - One participant suggested including educational signage or benches that allow people to educate themselves in enjoyable ways.
  - One participant suggested that the [Moccasin identifier Project](#) should be incorporated on paths and trails.
- **Creating an interconnected park** that not only has a strong internal connection between different spaces and areas within the park but also connections to the wider ecological areas of Toronto. This will help restore the balance of the park.
- **Acknowledge and represent Indigenous peoples and their history.** Indigenous Community Leaders indicated that Toronto and Ontario are behind in how much Indigenous representation they incorporate into designs and decision making. They suggested looking at Vancouver and broader British Columbia as an example of how to better represent Indigenous people and history. One participant indicated language is important for this and can also create recognition of Indigenous peoples and can be a form of reconciliation. They suggested that the Centennial Park sign be in Indigenous languages in addition to English.
- **Build relationships and include Indigenous interests and people in meaningful ways.** Indigenous Community Leaders indicated that meaningful connections can come from the following:
  - Receiving financial compensation or portions of revenue generated from the park.
  - Hiring Indigenous people to work within the park.
  - Indigenous people, companies and organizations owning or operating features of the park.
  - Contributing Indigenous work and knowledge to the park.

- **Engage and feature strong Indigenous Women.** Many Indigenous women are involved in peacekeeping, farming, etc. and could contribute to the park.
- **Create places and opportunities for Indigenous Knowledge Keepers** to be involved in Centennial Park.
- **Create large-scale sculptures of historical chiefs** that led their people on these lands as well as depictions of what the local territory looked like before colonization.
- **Create a commercial aquarium** that showcases Ontario fish and staple fish and foods from Indigenous diets (across different communities). Another idea was to have opportunities for Indigenous peoples to own commercial aquarium space or have profits from it go back into the Indigenous community. The benefits of this place would be educational as well as economic.
- **Design shade structures in the shapes of birds, feathers etc.** The shadows of these structures will reflect bird and nature shapes on the ground.
- **Ensure health and wellness for both people and the land.**
- **Create sustainable programming.**
- **Rename Centennial Park** with an Indigenous name as a key statement of reconciliation.
- **Create an Indigenous art gallery** that is owned and operated by Indigenous people. A suggestion was to include a restaurant in the art gallery to provide economic viability.
- **Create a lacrosse field.**

For the presented concept for Culture, see **Figure 3: Culture Concept.**

**Figure 3: Culture Concept**



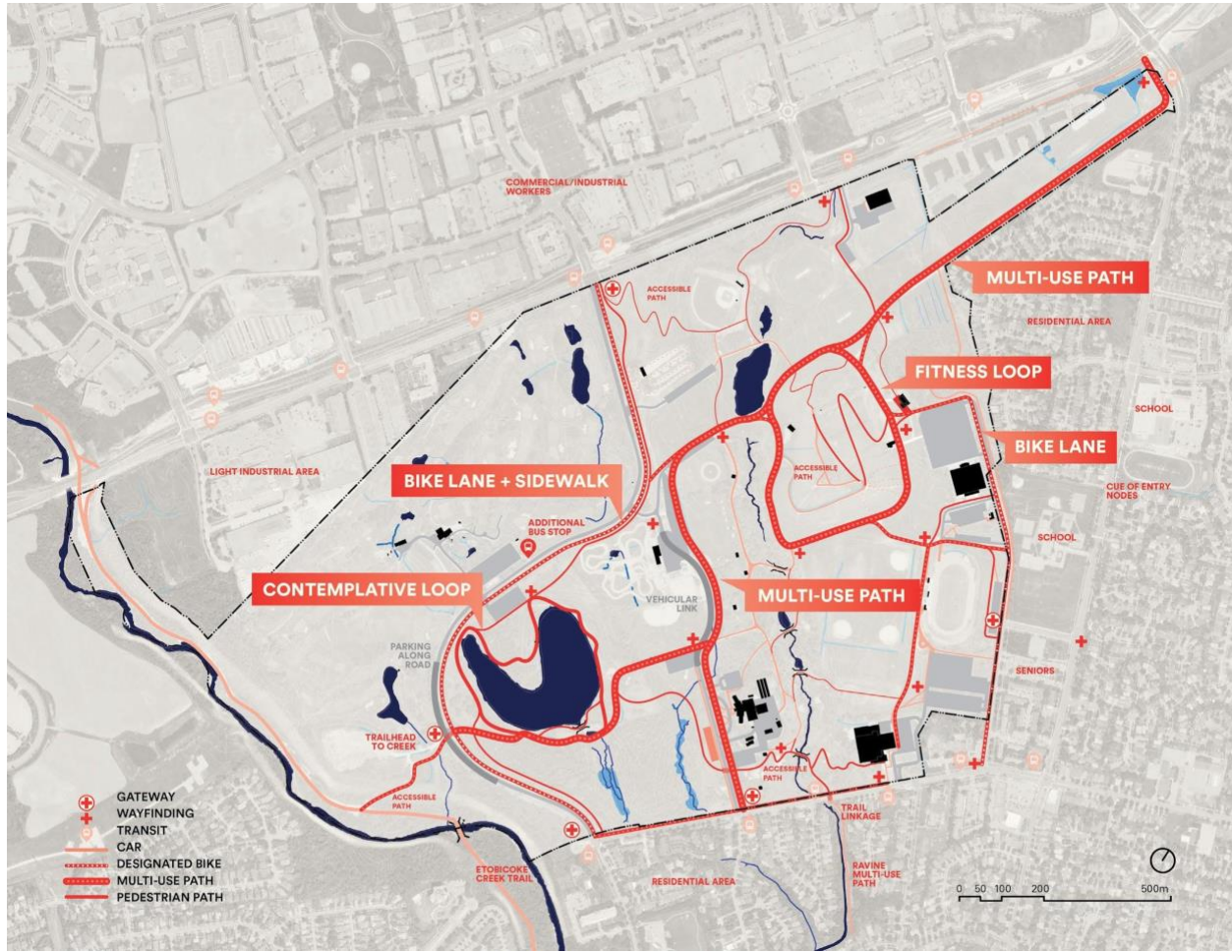
(Image of the Culture concept for the Master Plan Update over an aerial map of Centennial Park, July 2020)

## **Movement**

- **Include animal footprints on walkways** to create the feeling that animals are walking throughout the park.
- **Create greater east-west connections** to link important areas and ecologies. The current park feels like many disconnected parts.

For the presented concept for Movement, see **Figure 4: Movement Concept**.

**Figure 4: Movement Concept**



(Image of the Movement concept for the Master Plan Update over an aerial map of Centennial Park, July 2020)

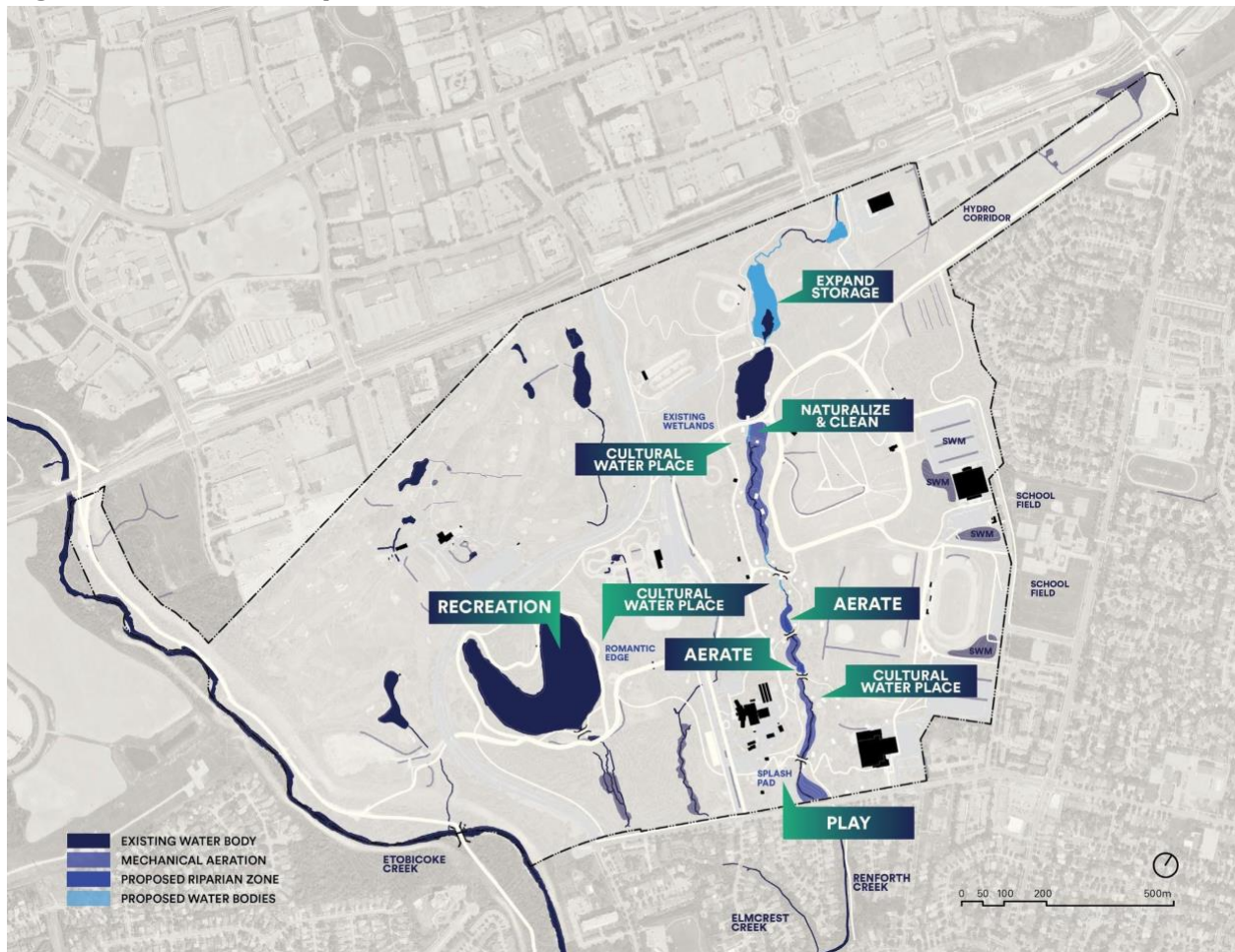
## **Water**

- **Create murals that connect to Indigenous languages.** For example, one Indigenous Community Leader mentioned that they are creating an art piece about water and its importance to Indigenous Community with over 116 translations of “water is life” in Indigenous languages. They suggested incorporating art in Centennial Park that is similar to this and connects to Indigenous language and culture.
- **Emphasize Etobicoke Creek** to the east of the park. There is an opportunity to incorporate stories and interventions with the creek environment.
- **Include wetlands** as they clean water from elements such as phosphorus and mercury. These elements have negatively impacted Indigenous communities.

For the presented concept for Water, see **Figure 5: Water Concept**.



**Figure 5: Water Concept**



(Image of the Water concept for the Master Plan Update over an aerial map of Centennial Park, July 2020)

## **Ecology:**

- **Create an Indigenous flower garden.** The following are ideas that can be included in the garden:
  - Hire Indigenous people to care for the garden.
  - Include interpretive signage that is created by Indigenous people.
  - Create the garden into the geometric pattern of the Medicine Wheel.
  - Create a Two-row Wampum Belt flower garden
  - Within the garden, explain how Indigenous groups come together to create cultural competency on the land.
  - Construct an artistic representation of the elements: fire, water, and earth. The feature should include native plants and brings what is “up-down” and what is “down-up” removing any centre.
- **Incorporate green infrastructure** such as rain gardens and green roofs that help with stormwater management and enhance the ecology of the park.
- **Incorporate a garden that fosters Indigenous connections to food.**
- **Create pollinator gardens** to improve local ecology.
- **Create peaceful and quiet places that are accessible** and allow people to rest, connect to nature and avoid experiences with sensory overload.
- **Revitalize ecological areas using Indigenous trees and plants** (i.e., Shagbark Hickory trees).
- **Include environmental advocacy.**
- **Incorporate [Miinikaan Innovation and Design principles](#).** Miinikaan is a consultancy that offers landscape design and garden installations. Miinikan (meaning 'the SEED' in Ojibwe) cultivates relationships between people and plants through education about food, medicine and habitats.
- **Incorporate Indigenous medicine planting throughout the park** to showcase Indigenous teachings, history, and nutrition.
- **Create the seeded meadow as part of the park environment.**

For the presented concept for Ecology, see **Figure 6: Ecology Concept.**

**Figure 6: Ecology Concept**



(Image of the Ecology concept for the Master Plan Update over an aerial map of Centennial Park, July 2020)



## Site-specific Feedback

Feedback is organized based on three site-specific design ideas and options for the Pond, the Hill, and the Centre of the Park.

**See below for Indigenous Community Leaders' ideas and feedback on site-specific design concepts:**

### **The Pond:**

- Water is very important to Indigenous peoples and the Pond provides an opportunity to be an **educational tool and connect people to the water.**
- **Naturalize the pond** and incorporate low-impact use.
- **Restore the wetlands.**
- **Create a feature that elevates the water.**

For the presented concept for the Pond, see **Figure 7: Low-impact and High-impact Pond Concept**

**Figure 7: Low-impact and High-impact Pond Concept**



(Image to the right is a rendering of the Low-Impact Pond concept and image to the left is a rendering of the High-Impact Pond concept, July 2020)

## **The Hill:**

- **Include the amphitheater as an Indigenous focused theatre and oral storytelling place.** Indigenous programming at the amphitheatre can allow people to learn about Indigenous history, nature, etc. This allows people to experience the history rather than read about it. Programming could include visuals rather than just words about Indigenous history and how it has evolved.
- **Create a fire pit** for sacred fires and one Indigenous Community Leader indicated that it should allow for gathering. Indigenous Community Leaders indicated that having a fire pit is very important.
- **Include a star viewing platform.**

For the presented concept for the Hill, see **Figure 8: Fitness Hub Hill Concept and Culture Hub Hill Concept.**

**Figure 8: Fitness Hub Hill Concept and Culture Hub Hill Concept.**



(Image to the right is a rendering of the Fitness Hub Hill concept and image to the left is a rendering of the Culture Hub Hill concept, July 2020)

### **The Heart of the Park:**

- **Incorporate Indigenous placekeeping** into the heart of the park.
- **Create interactive experiences** such as an abacus that allows people, including children, to play with it.

For the presented concept for the Heart of the Park, see **Figure 9: Node/Creek Concept and Path/Amphitheatre Concept**.

**Figure 9: Node/Creek Concept and Path/Amphitheatre Concept**



(Image to the right is a rendering of the Node/Creek Concept Heart of the Park concept and image to the left is a rendering of the Path/Amphitheatre Heart of the Park concept, July 2020)