

Draft City of Toronto Principles for Commemoration in the Public Realm

As a first step in the development of a new commemorative framework for Toronto, City staff have prepared draft guiding principles for commemoration in the public realm based on initial findings from the Recognition Review, and best practices from other global cities. City staff will undertake a broad public engagement process to seek input on these principles, and will report back to Council with recommendations for a new commemorative framework in Q2 2022. The practical application of the principles will also be tested on the naming of selected civic assets.

1. Overview

The Principles for Commemoration are intended to inform how the City of Toronto commemorates public figures, places, and events in tangible physical assets located on City property in the public realm, with a focus on encouraging greater equity and inclusion in place-making, promoting a broader understanding of history and its legacy on communities, and confronting the legacy of colonialism and systemic racism.

Commemoration is an intentional act of acknowledging the memory of people, places, events and ideas. It can include positive and honorific celebrations of people, places and events, as well as the tragic, controversial and shameful dimensions of history. Acts of public commemoration – including the naming of streets, parks and other civic properties, and representation in monuments and plaques – reflect community values through how we choose to collectively honour the past.

The City of Toronto communicates a core value through its motto, "Diversity Our Strength". However, most commemorations in Toronto represent the stories of certain ethno-racial groups, genders, and socioeconomic classes, namely settler white males in positions of power. This historic imbalance has meant that other stories – including those of Indigenous and Black communities, women, 2SLGBTQ+ persons, and other equity-deserving groups – are not underrepresented in Toronto's urban fabric. A new approach to the commemoration of untold stories can foster greater equity and inclusion in place-making, leading to more welcoming public spaces, and a stronger sense of belonging for all.

2. Scope

The *Principles for Commemoration in the Public Realm* will guide the development, review and application of City policies and programs related to commemoration through tangible physical assets on City property. This includes policies and programs related to the naming and renaming of streets, parks, community centres and other civic facilities, the acquisition of new and stewardship of existing commemorative works in the City's public art and monuments collection, and interpretive plaque programs.

Forms of commemoration that are outside the scope of the principles include:

- Civic honours, awards and tributes
- Assets named in the context of sponsorships or donations, unless the proposed name or asset commemorates an historic figure or event
- Fee-for-service programs such as the Commemorative Tree and Bench Program
- Community-initiated memorials that are not owned or managed by the City
- Temporary community-initiated recognitions, including flag raising
- Programs commemorating the death of those who have lost their lives in the line of duty

3. Draft Principles

The following are draft principles, intended to guide decision-making and priority-setting for any commemorative work undertaken by the City that falls under the scope of this policy. Public engagement on these principles will occur in fall 2021 and results will inform the development of and/or revisions to the City's policies on commemoration.

Indigenous Place-Keeping

Commemorations should be grounded in the understanding and recognition that the City of Toronto is situated on the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat peoples, and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit, and the Williams Treaty signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands.

Commemoration is one tool to help to restore visibility to the Indigenous past, present and future of the land, creating a greater sense of place and belonging, and sparking dialogue about the legacy of colonialism, and a shared path forward. Recognition, naming and honouring is integral to Indigenous place-keeping and place-making, and help advance Indigenous self-determination, critical to the health and well-being of Indigenous People.

Diversity our strength

The urban landscape should reflect the diversity of Toronto residents and a more authentic account of Toronto history. To create public spaces that are more inclusive and representative of Toronto's diversity, new commemorations, including the naming and renaming of civic assets when a commemorative name is being considered, should prioritize telling the stories of groups that are currently underrepresented in civic spaces, including Indigenous Peoples as the traditional and historic stewards of this land, Black communities, racialized communities, women, 2SLGBTQ+ persons, and other equity-deserving groups.

The selection of a priority group for commemoration should be based on the connection of the proposed commemoration to the local area, as determined through a combination of community engagement and research.

Co-creation

Commemorations of significance to Indigenous, Black or equity-deserving communities should be guided by a principle of co-creation with members of these communities. A commitment to meaningful co-creation helps to share authority with communities through active engagement of community members in decision-making throughout the planning of the commemoration.

Proposed commemorations must have demonstrated community support, taking into account a broad range of voices, perspectives and experiences of local residents.

Demonstrated community support and community engagement

Proposed commemorations must have demonstrated community support, taking into account a broad range of voices, perspectives and experiences of local residents. When determining community support, it is important to consider the unequal impacts a commemoration may have on different groups. The voices of those groups that are or have historically been most impacted by the commemorated subject should be centred in community engagement processes, alongside the opinions of local residents and businesses. There should also be careful consideration of these voices when there is demonstrated support and some or significant opposition to a commemoration.

It is also important to recognize that no one community speaks with a single voice, and to consider the multiple opinions and lived experiences within communities when designing community engagement processes.

The type and extent of community engagement will vary depending on the type of commemoration. Examples could include letters of support, surveys, or community meetings.

Relevance to Toronto

Proposals for commemoration should have a historical or cultural connection to Toronto, with priority given to subjects with a clear connection to the local area in which the commemoration will be displayed. Subjects with a national or international significance may also be chosen for commemoration where there is a demonstrated connection for communities living in the local area.

Celebrating untold stories

To encourage the sharing of diverse stories, new commemorations should not duplicate subjects that are already commemorated elsewhere in Toronto. This

includes existing City-led commemorations and publicly-accessible commemorations on private properties. An exception to this is the geographic clustering of assets that share the same name, such as a park sharing the same commemorative name as a neighbouring street. Exceptions may also be considered for commemorations honouring the priority groups outlined above.

Historical and community research

A decision to commemorate a person, event, place or idea should be grounded in sound historical and/or community research that is carefully and ethically undertaken. Research should consider a range of primary and secondary sources, alongside traditional knowledge, oral histories, and community stories where such sources are applicable and available. Efforts should be undertaken to meaningfully communicate the social, cultural and/or historical context of a commemoration to a broad public audience.

Compliance with legislation, City By-laws and policies

No commemoration shall be considered that is contrary to Canadian laws, City By-laws, or City policies, including the Human Rights and Anti-Harassment / Discrimination Policy.

4. Addressing Legacy Issues in Commemorations

As community values evolve over time, there are occasions when older forms of commemoration no longer fit with the ethical standards of today. A change to a commemoration may be warranted when a review identifies significant new developments in research or scholarship on the commemorated subject; where the review identifies an absence of an integral part of the history of a subject in its commemoration; or where there is significant community support for making a change.

When a change to the commemoration is warranted, actions on legacy issues could take a three-Rs approach: **rename** (e.g., a street), **remove** (e.g., a monument), or **reinterpret** (e.g., a street name, monument, or artwork). Renaming, removing or reinterpreting a commemoration should not be seen as erasing history. Commemoration must be distinguished from history, as history is an evidence-based process of understanding the past. When a civic commemoration is removed, this represents a change in what we choose to collectively honour and remember in public spaces. Its subject will continue to be treated as historically significant, where historical evidence shows it to be of consequence.

Recognizing the importance of the historical record, older commemorations that have been removed from public display and the processes used to review them should be preserved and documented in the City's archival and historical collections for use in future scholarship and education on Toronto's history. Materials, artifacts or art works may also be transferred to other collections-based institutions in accordance with the Policies for City of Toronto Museum Collections.