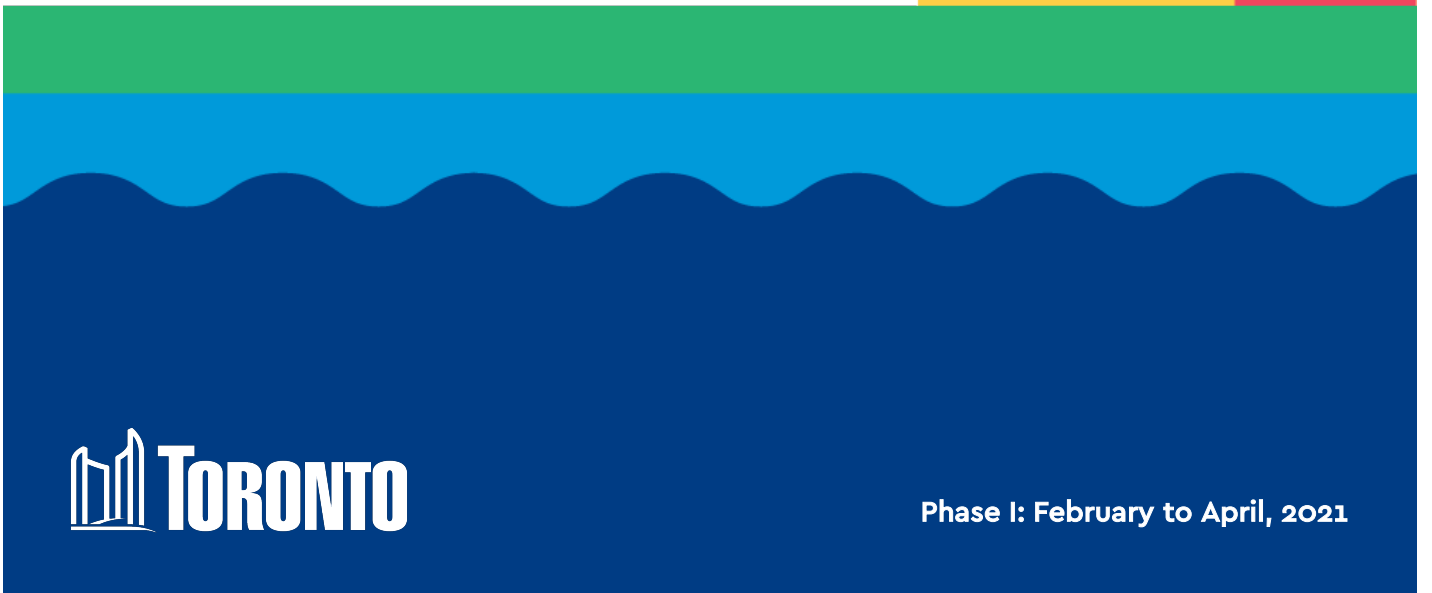




Indigenous engagement report



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Overview

The Toronto Islands have been a special, Indigenous place for millenia. For thousands of years, the Toronto Islands have been known as a place for healing and ceremony by many Indigenous nations. It has been known as Mnisiing (the Ojibwe word for ‘on the Islands’) to the treaty-rights holders, the Mississaugas of the Credit, long before it was called Hiawathas Island and is now commonly referred to as the Toronto Islands Park.

Given this significance, Indigenous engagement and placekeeping is a priority for the development of the Toronto Islands Park Master Plan.

Principles of Indigenous Engagement

The following principles inform and guide our approach to collaboration and partnership with First Nations, Métis and Inuit:

- **Respectful** – Approach to Indigenous engagement is culturally-appropriate and considerate of the particular needs and preferences Indigenous communities wish to be engaged.
- **Meaningful** – Engagement is considered effective and relevant from the perspective of those Indigenous communities engaged.
- **Collaborative** – Indigenous communities are involved in the planning, scheduling and implementation of various engagement activities.
- **Indigenous-led Engagement** – All community engagement meetings, events and activities are led by skilled and knowledgeable Indigenous people.
- **Diversity and Inclusion** – The approach to engagement is respectful of the incredible diversity of Indigenous communities, including the rights-holders, many diverse nations, Elders, Youth, Women and 2-Spirit people.
- **Indigenous Values Centered** – All engagements are guided by traditional Indigenous values including:
 - The Seven Grandfather Teachings – These are the core values of the Anishinaabe and include Love, Respect, Bravery, Honesty, Humility, Truth, Wisdom.
 - The Good Mind – The central philosophy and way of life of the Haudenosaunee (Six Nations) that signifies one’s own peace and ability to use our minds collectively for the good of all people.

Indigenous Communities

Indigenous engagement meetings, events and activities are planned to include members of the following Indigenous communities:

- **First Nations Rights-holders** – The Toronto Islands Park Master Plan will be reflective of the treaty rights-holder and those nations that call this territory their historic homelands.
- **Métis** – The Master Plan will also respect the consultation processes associated with the Métis Nation, including representatives from the Toronto-York Region Métis Council and members of their community.
- **Representative Indigenous Organizations** – Engagement includes the involvement of various Indigenous-led, Indigenous-serving organizations, across various segments of the community including the Toronto Inuit Association, 2-Spirited Peoples of the First Nations, Eshkiniigjik Naandwechigegamig Aabiish Gaa Binjibaaying (ENABG) , and Native Women’s Resource Centre of Toronto.
- **Indigenous-led, Indigenous-serving Agencies** – Community engagement is inclusive of the two local Friendship Centres, and the various social supports agencies, including those members of the Toronto Aboriginal Supports Services Council (TASSC).
- **First Nation, Métis and Inuit Community Members** – These include all community members who live, work or do business in Toronto and all those Indigenous people who use the Toronto Islands Park. The vision and voice of Indigenous communities is important to the input and ultimate success of the Toronto Islands Park Master Plan.

Engagement Processes

There are **3** phases of engagement for the Toronto Islands Park Master Plan, plus a Scoping and Planning phase and a final, celebration phase:

- **Scoping and Planning** – Pre-engagement focusing on a background of the Toronto Islands Park Master Plan and determine how communities want to be engaged.
- **Phase 1** – Explore the Vision, Values and Guiding Principles, and Drivers for Change
- **Phase 2** – Focusing on Big Ideas and Concept Plans
- **Phase 3** – Focusing on a Preliminary and Draft Master Plan
- **Celebration** – Sharing and celebrating the completion of the Master Plan

The Toronto Islands Park Master Plan team will use a wide range of strategies designed to be respectful, meaningful and effective in their approach to Indigenous engagement:

- Meetings with Rights-Holders – Ongoing meetings held with First Nations in each phase of the Master Plan project.
- Indigenous-focused Events – Including the Launch Ceremony held on March 17, 2021 and the Indigenous Placekeeping Forum held on April 28, 2021.
- Focus Groups – Meetings held with distinct segments of the Indigenous communities including Indigenous women, youth and 2-Spirit peoples.
- Placekeeping Meetings – These meetings will inform the Master Plan mandate for Indigenous placekeeping and include the Mississaugas of the Credit elders and knowledge holders and the City of Toronto’s Indigenous Placemaking Advisory Council.
- Indigenous Community Sharing Meetings – A community meeting that targets First Nation, Métis and Inuit community members. The hope is that this is opportunity for First Nations, Métis and Inuit to have dedicated, safe space to dialogue and collaborate. A traditional sharing circle is a more culturally-appropriate means of community engagement.

Mississaugas of Credit Placekeeping Dialogue

February 18, 2021

As a part of the City of Toronto's commitment to placekeeping in the Toronto Islands Park, a specific, dedicated engagement process was established with Elders and traditional knowledge holders from the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation (MCFN).

The first meeting was held on February 18 via virtual videoconference with six Elders, three Councillors, and four staff members from MCFN.

Vision

- **Toronto Island Park should feel more like an Indigenous place.** Participants made reference to the Islands feeling like home for Michi Saagiig and Indigenous peoples.
- **The Toronto Island Park should consider the land, water, flora and fauna over the needs of people.** Participants made specific references to the rights of the land, and the overuse by people and the need to keep the Islands natural.
- **We all have a role in being stewards of the Toronto Islands land and water alongside the original stewards of the land, Indigenous peoples.** Participants referred to making a commitment to the land and making good on the land and water acknowledgement used by the City.
- **The Island as a place for the Arts.** Participants expressed that the Island should showcase Indigenous art and artists.

Values

- **Indigenous Ways of Knowing** – The Toronto Islands Park Master Plan should be reflective of Indigenous worldview and perspectives of Creation. Participants spoke to the collective knowledge of the Michi Saagiig and reflecting Anishinaabe cosmology or universal and **natural law**. The Toronto Island Master Plan should not just consider the linear timeframe of the plan, but Indigenous concepts including reflections of the four seasons and seven generations.

- **Aboriginal and Treaty Rights are reflected and protected** – That decision-making that impacts the rights of Indigenous peoples requires **consent** which is consistent with the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Engagement will also require talking with the MCFN community about the Toronto Islands.
 - **Supporting Reconciliation** – The Toronto Islands Park Master Plan can be impactful and reflect a shared vision of Reconciliation.
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Guiding Principles

- **Respect and honour Indigenous perspectives of water.**
 - **Support habitat for traditional medicines and food plants.** Participants made specific references to the growing and harvesting of medicinal and food plants.
 - **Improve access and transportation to the Park.** Participants felt that Indigenous people should be able to access the island without costs. Bikes should be an important part of transportation.
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Drivers for Change

- **Indigenous placekeeping** was identified as the highest priority driver.
- **The Toronto Islands Park Master Plan should reflect the need to create space for ceremonial, healing and cultural uses.** Participants made specific reference to ceremonial and cultural uses including the Pan-Am Games, and Chief of Ontario Water Declaration, water ceremonies, places for pow-wow and round dances and ceremonial lodges including teaching lodges and sweat lodges.
- **The Toronto Islands Park Master Plan should include Indigenous languages in wayfinding and interpretation.** Participants made specific reference to use of Anishinaabemowin language in signage.
- **Make Indigenous history, identity and living culture more visible.** Participants spoke about the need to create further awareness of the treaty.
- **Consider economic opportunities for First Nations and Indigenous businesses.** Participants spoke about a cultural hub that includes a marketplace and place for artists.
- **Cultural spaces are also needed for use by Indigenous artists.** The Park can be a place for Indigenous artists and traditional forms of expression.

Indigenous Community Sharing Meeting

March 25, 2021

An important component of the Phase 1 Indigenous Engagement is the Indigenous Community Sharing Meeting – the most public means of reaching individual First Nation, Métis and Inuit community members and grassroots organizations from across the City. Invitations were extended to the First Nations rights-holders, representative Indigenous organizations and Indigenous-led, Indigenous-serving organizations and agencies. Invitations were also shared to Indigenous peoples via social media.

On the evening of March 25, seven individuals took part in the Indigenous Community Sharing Meeting that included a background and overview presentation from the Toronto Islands Park Master Plan team. A robust dialogue focused on concepts of Indigenous placekeeping, Vision, Values, Guiding Principles and the Drivers for Change.

Vision

- **Toronto Island Park should feel more like an Indigenous place.** Participants spoke of the need to allow for Indigenous peoples to stay and camp on the Toronto Islands.
- **The Toronto Island Park should consider the land, water, flora and fauna over the needs of people.** Participants spoke of the importance of water and honouring its significant. A participant spoke of the need to find good ways to look at the trees, plants and animals. We recognize that flooding and erosion is also a part of natural cycles. At some point, the City may need to look at transitioning out of the settler spaces that are flooding and removing them.
- **We all have a role in being stewards of the Toronto Islands land and water alongside the original stewards of the land, Indigenous peoples.** Specific comments included preserving the land in partnership with the treaty-rights holders.

Values

- **Indigenous Ways of Knowing** – The Toronto Islands Park Mast Plan should be reflective of Indigenous worldview and perspectives of Creation. This should be a place that is a land-based place for arts and storytelling and a place where Indigenous Peoples can connect to the Elders.
- **Aboriginal and Treaty Rights are reflected and protected.**

Guiding Principles

- **Reflect the diversity of Indigenous peoples in Toronto.** Participants spoke of honouring Indigenous nations with features of permanence. There was a suggestion to include Thunder Woman Healing Lodge Society into the discussions.
- **Improve access and transportation to and around the Park.** Participants spoke of the need to redesign the ferry experience including having space at the terminal and the ferries for Indigenous art and telling the story of Treaty 13. The Islands need to improve access for those who are differently-abled.
- **Support habitat for traditional medicines and food plants.** Participants suggested the idea of have a place to cultivate seeds and saplings for these plants and have a seed exchange. Specific suggestions including traditional grasses and wild rice. Children should be part of the learning and planting.

Drivers for Change

- **Indigenous Placekeeping.** This resonated most with participants. One participant said that this will ensure there is historical integrity of the place. Participants want to see this because this is a signature jewel park. Opportunities for placekeeping should be explore with a focus on intergenerational healing and learning.
- **The Toronto Islands Park Master Plan should reflect the need to create space for ceremonial, healing and cultural uses.** Specifically, there was dialogue about having cultural and land-based camps for learning and reconnecting with the land and water. There is a need for sacred fires. Participants spoke of a place to erect

ceremonial and teaching lodges. This should be a safe, cultural space. This cultural space will need to be flexible, multi-use ceremonial space.

- **Make Indigenous history, identity and living culture more visible.** Participants spoke of sharing Indigenous history. Suggestions including naming certain parts of the Islands after the Elders.
- **The Toronto Islands Park Master Plan should include Indigenous languages in wayfinding and interpretation.**
- **Consider economic opportunities for First Nations and Indigenous businesses.**
- **Aging Island Facilities and Infrastructure.** Specific comments referred to the space at Artscape.
- **'Taxed' Island Environment.** Participant spoke of the increased number of users and the need to protect more space.
- **The Island as a Place for Arts and Culture.** Cultural spaces are also needed for use by Indigenous artists.
- **The housing needs and homelessness need to be considered.**

2-Spirit Peoples Focus Group

March 29, 2021

The first of three recommended focus groups (arising out of pre-engagement recommendations) was for 2-Spirit peoples from Indigenous communities in Toronto. Eight participants provided input on the Vision, Values, Guiding Principles and Drivers for Change.

Vision

- **Toronto Island Park should feel more like an Indigenous place.** Specifically, the participants spoke of the Islands as a welcoming place that feels like home to the Elders. There should be Indigenous hospitality when people arrive there. This should include Indigenous agency rather than considering Indigenous peoples as visitors. Suggest referring to “Indigenous and visitor experiences”.
 - **The Toronto Island Park should consider the land, water, flora and fauna over the needs of people.** Participants spoke of the importance of keeping the island natural through the trails, plant life, trees and fresh air.
 - **We all have a role in being stewards of the Toronto Islands land and water alongside the original stewards of the land, Indigenous peoples.** Participant expressed that there should be importance of looking after the rest of Creation
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Values

- **Truth-Telling** – Tell the history of the land from the perspective of Indigenous peoples’ truth.
- **Safety** – The Toronto Islands Park needs to be **personally and culturally safe**. This may include a safe place to swim, change and even handle and cook foods with modern facilities at a cultural, ceremonial space. The Toronto Islands Park staff needs to consider cultural safety training.
- **Indigenous Ways of Knowing** – The Toronto Islands Park Master Plan should be reflective of Indigenous worldview and perspectives of Creation. Specific

references to the Seven Grandfather Teachings, Four Directions teachings and intergenerational knowledge sharing between Elders and youth.

- **Community and Family driven**
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Guiding Principles

- **Welcoming, inclusive space that reflects the diversity of Indigenous peoples in Toronto.** 2-Spirit people called for space to celebrate who they are, including their ceremonial needs, a place for singing and hosting a 2-Spirit pow-wow. Many 2-Spirit people don't have home communities to go back to. Consider a 2-Spirit artist residency at Artspace.
 - **The Island as a Place for Arts and Culture.** Consider Indigenous maker-space and opportunities for artists, workshop (i.e. hide tanning, ceramic, pottery pit firing, wood carving, canoe building). Consider an mural at the ferry docks on the Island.
 - Participants felt Indigenous people should have complimentary, barrier-free access to the Toronto Islands.
 - **The Island as a Place for Arts and Culture.** Consider Indigenous maker-space and opportunities for artists, workshop (i.e. hide tanning, ceramic, pottery pit firing, wood carving, canoe building). Consider a mural at the ferry docks on the Island.
 - Consider programs to allow for Indigenous sustainable harvesting, hosting a traditional garden with a focus on farm-to-table.
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Drivers for Change

- Two drivers, **Island Identity** and **Indigenous Placekeeping**, resonated most with participants.
- **The Toronto Islands Park Master Plan should reflect the need to create space for ceremonial, healing and cultural uses.** A participant spoke of the need for sacred fire space for 2-Spirit firekeepers who have been given, or can receive those teachings. The Islands should be a place of a place of learning and healing. This place should include intensive land-based cultural and language camps for Indigenous peoples. It should be a safe space for a sweat lodge.

- **Make Indigenous history, identity and living culture more visible.** Participant suggested having Indigenous art on the ferry and having Indigenous programming related to canoeing and canoe-making, and medicine walks. Consider commemoration including Mohawk athlete Tom Longboat. There should be means to teach and share with non-Indigenous visitors.
- **The Island as a Place for Arts and Culture.** Consider Indigenous maker-space and opportunities for artists, workshop (i.e. hide tanning, ceramic, pottery pit firing, wood carving, canoe building). Consider a mural at the ferry docks on the Island.
- **Ineffective Wayfinding and Information-Sharing.** Signage should provide effective ways so people don't get lost and where people can find Indigenous spaces and programming. Consider an Indigenous parks-keeper that shares Indigenous information.
- **The housing needs and needs of homeless kin need to be considered.**
- **The Toronto Islands Park Master Plan should include Indigenous languages in wayfinding and interpretation.** Signage should also be in Indigenous language including Anishinaabemowin, On:kwehonwe and Michif.
- **'Taxed' Island Environment.** Participant spoke of environmental impact on ecosystems (ex. trash) that is caused by tourism.

Indigenous Women's Focus Group

March 30, 2021

The second focus group provided a safe space for Indigenous women in Toronto. Ten participants provided input on the Vision, Values, Guiding Principles and Drivers for Change.

Vision

- **The Toronto Island Park should consider the land, water, flora and fauna over the needs of people.** A participant suggested passing laws to protect the Islands for the next seven generations. The Islands need to consider the honouring of water, through design and decision-making. Provide human rights to the Lake.
 - **Toronto Island Park should feel more like an Indigenous place.** This begins with the ferry ride over. Immediately, the experience should reflect being an Indigenous place. Canoes and canoe building can be a focus.
 - **We all have a role in being stewards of the Toronto Islands land and water alongside the original stewards of the land, Indigenous peoples.** Indigenous women's role in speaking for the water, leading water ceremonies must be reflected.
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Values

- **Truth-Telling** – Participants asked the City to consider a museum of Indigenous history. Include acknowledgment and monument space for missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and 2-Spirit people. Implementation of the recommendations of the National Inquiry into MMIWG2S.
- **Aboriginal and Treaty Rights are reflected and protected** – Including the right to camp and harvest within the park. Lands should be sold to Indigenous peoples first.
- **Indigenous Ways of Knowing** – The Toronto Islands Park Mast Plan should reflect the concept of seven generations, Anishinaabe law and the Seven Grandfather Teachings.

- **Co-Management** – That Indigenous youth have a voice or a governance Council for the Island.
 - **Environmental sustainability** – Including replenish the land.
 - **Safety** – The Park must be personally, and culturally safe for use by Indigenous women and families.
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Guiding Principles

- **Improve access and transportation to, and around the Park.** Participants advocated for easier access for all people, especially those with mobility issues to get around the park, perhaps a train. Consider a boardwalk.
 - **Welcoming, inclusive space that reflects the diversity of Indigenous peoples in Toronto.** One participant suggested a path with flat stones, with each stone honoring each Indigenous nation on Turtle Island. The Park should honour 2-Spirit peoples.
 - **Respect and honour Indigenous perspectives of water.** Indigenous women’s role in speaking for the water, leading water ceremonies must be reflected.
 - **Support habitat for traditional medicines and food plants.** Participants encouraged consideration of planting and stewarding traditional medicines and Indigenous plant species.
 - **Permanent funding for Indigenous involvement and programs.**
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Drivers for Change

- **Indigenous placekeeping.** Resonated most with participants. Specific comments included considering the overall design, with suggestions that it could be a medicine wheel concept. Design elements can include references to dodems (clans).
- **The Island as a Place for Arts and Culture.** Participants spoke about considerations for art, artspace, murals at the ferry docks, workshops on hide tanning, ceramic, pottery pit firing, wood carving, canoe building, carving, growing of medicines and wild rice, and falconry. Programming should include diverse Indigenous traditional

knowledge learning opportunities including water teachings, land-based learning, and wampum teachings.

- **The Toronto Islands Park Master Plan should reflect the need to create space for ceremonial, healing and cultural uses.** A participant spoke about space for sweat lodge, feasts, fasting and community space for activities like round dances, Elders gatherings, language camps and retreats. Perhaps consider a community hall space for winter months. Consider multi-purpose ceremonial space that can be used for a Anishinaabe teaching Lodge or a Haudenosaunee longhouse. Consider a land-based healing/day treatment program. The Island can also be a teaching place, including for City staff.
- **Make Indigenous history, identity and living culture more visible.** Participants suggested an authentic Indigenous village or a museum that reflects and honours Indigenous history. Reflect Indigenous culture in the designs on the ferry. Tell the story of migrations and demonstrate how Indigenous Peoples used the lands.
- **Consider economic opportunities for First Nations and Indigenous businesses.** Participants would like to see Indigenous Peoples employed in the Park, Indigenous crafts and marketplace, and having options to enjoy Indigenous foods. Including Indigenous businesses in construction and procurement.
- **The Toronto Islands Park Master Plan should include Indigenous languages in wayfinding and interpretation.** It is important for Indigenous Peoples to use the actual names of the places in the Park. Personal pronouns can be shown in many Indigenous languages.
- **'Taxed' Island Environment.** One suggestion is to consider elevated spaces to protect certain space from flooding.
- **The housing needs and needs of homeless kin need to be considered.** A suggestion included building small houses for short-term use by visitors, low-income families and immigrants. Include opportunities for Indigenous home ownership on the Island.

Indigenous Youth Focus Group

March 31, 2021

The third focus group provided a safe space for Indigenous youth in Toronto. Seven participants provided input on the vision, values, guiding principles and Drivers for Change.

Vision

- **Toronto Island Park should feel more like an Indigenous place.** Participants felt that it would be good to have more of a home, like having a cottage.
 - **The Toronto Island Park should consider the land, water, flora and fauna over the needs of people.** A participant suggested passing laws to protect the Islands for the next seven generations. The Islands need to consider the honouring of water, through design and decision-making. Provide human rights to the Lake.
 - **We all have a role in being stewards of the Toronto Islands land and water alongside the original stewards of the land, Indigenous peoples.** Indigenous women's role in speaking for the water, leading water ceremonies must be reflected.
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Values

- **Indigenous Ways of Knowing** - The Toronto Islands Park Master Plan should do something differently like planning for the next seven generations. We let the [the Islands] know that we love them through our actions and how we treat the land and how we treat one another. (“they love me so much that I can drink from this water”.) Ensuring the harvesting of medicines and the hosting of ceremonies are done respectfully. For a better future, our spirits need to be fed.
- **Respectful of one another.** Everyone is respected there, and the Earth is respected.
- **Environmental sustainability** - To manage and use the park in a sustainable way. Include the concept of “fun sustainability”.

Guiding Principles

- **Support habitat for traditional medicines and food plants.** Youth want to see traditional medicine grown in the Park. Perhaps elders teaching youth about medicines. Ensuring protocols are considered when harvesting medicines.
- **Improve access and transportation to, and around the Park.** To have natural paths to walk everywhere on the Islands. You may want to consider building a bridge or accessing the airport tunnel. Perhaps, paddleboats and canoes. To travel to and use the park for free.
- **Welcoming, inclusive space that reflects the diversity of Indigenous peoples in Toronto.** The park needs to be inclusive of everyone.

Drivers for Change

- The youth identified that **Indigenous Placekeeping, Visitor Experience and Programming, The Island as a Place for Arts and Culture** as the Drivers that resonated most.
- **The Toronto Islands Park Master Plan should reflect the need to create space for ceremonial, healing and cultural uses.** The community needs a secluded space for ceremonies near the water. A place is needed for sunrise and sunset ceremonies. Youth camps that included canoeing and ceremony. Space is needed for sacred fire. Youth workshops and programs offered on traditional teachings, making traditional food, and traditional games. Having a place where youth can reclaim their language and culture back.
- **Make Indigenous history, identity and living culture more visible.** Participant suggested honouring of Indigenous history and teaching it to visitors. Participants spoke about having art on the side of the ferry like the Chi-Cheemaun.
- **The Island as a Place for Arts and Culture.** This could be a place for totem poles and Indigenous art.
- **The Toronto Islands Park Master Plan should include Indigenous languages in wayfinding and interpretation.** Youth spoke to including signage in many Indigenous languages. To make sure Anishinaabemowin words are used.

- **Consider economic opportunities for First Nations and Indigenous businesses.** Youth offered an idea for a mentorship, employment program. A suggestion is to have an Indigenous-owned café or snack-shack that serves our food.
- **'Taxed' Island Environment.** A participant said that the flooding isn't good and absolutely, the flooding is a big problem.
- **Outdated Island Amenities.** Having more upkeep and better maintenance in place.
- **Visitor Experience and Programming.** Consider an Indigenous theme night.