

City of Toronto – Parks Development & Capital Projects

Wabash Community Recreation Centre ENAGB Indigenous Youth Workshop Feedback Summary

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Project Background

The design of the new Wabash Community Recreation Centre will build on 20 years of planning and consultation work by both City staff and the local community, which has played a strong role in driving this project forward.

The City first identified the Wabash site in a 1999 report as one of five historically under-served areas. The site, including the former Canadian Linseed Oil Mill factory, was purchased by the City in 2000 in order to develop a community recreation centre.

Thanks to the advocacy and fundraising efforts by Friends of Sorauren Park and the local community, several improvements were made to the site, including renovations to the Field House in 2008, and the construction of the Town Square in 2014.

The City's new 20 year Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan again identified the community recreation centre project as a priority for the City, this time specifying that it should include:

- An indoor pool
- A gymnasium, and
- Flexible multi-purpose program spaces

More information is available on the [project webpage](#).

Youth Workshop Overview

Youth will be an important user group at the new community recreation centre. To ensure the centre is designed to be welcoming for Indigenous youth, the project team held an online youth workshop with ENAGB Youth Board Members.

The workshop lasted approximately 40 minutes and was hosted online using Google Jamboards, an interactive online platform that allows participants to vote, leave notes and questions throughout the workshop.

Summary of Feedback

Making the Centre Welcoming for Indigenous Youth

Indigenous youth feel welcome in spaces that are safe, clean, and purposely built for indigenous youth to feel comfortable in.

The culture at the centre, built by staff and community members could be welcoming to Indigenous Youth by taking a holistic approach to harm reduction. Staff should be trained in harm reduction, and should be welcoming to youth, including those who may be unhoused or experiencing addictions. For example, youth should not be turned away for "loitering" for hours, for using the showers during the day, or for taking naps inside the centre.

Features of the new, welcoming centre should include:

- Indoor and outdoor spaces that allow youth to participate in and hold ceremony. Suggestions include:
 - Indoor: Design for indoor Smudging Ceremonies
 - Outdoor: Build a Sacred Fire Pit outside of the centre. Would be best to locate this under a gazebo so it can be used in different weather conditions, and to provide shade. The size should allow for approximately 25 people to gather around the fire/under the gazebo. Need to include an easily accessible place to store wood for the fire.
 - There is a Sacred Fire Pit near Spadina and Bloor, but it is a very congested area with many people and vehicles moving closely by. It is better to set these areas away from the road as much as possible so there is more peace around the space.
 - Locate a medicinal garden nearby (or on the rooftop) that includes the four sacred medicines, Tobacco, Sage, Cedar, and Sweetgrass.
- Interpretive walls that tell the histories of Indigenous people and will educate the youth that access the space.
 - Example: Wampum Belt wall at Mohawk College. See: <https://www.mohawkcollege.ca/indigenous-students/our-spaces/wampum-belt>
 - Walls can include murals, which could be led by an adult Indigenous artists, supported by youth Indigenous Artists (a mentorship).
 - Example: Maple Leaf Sports Entertainment Centre (on Jarvis) has a beautiful mural completed by Indigenous artists.
 - A historian should be hired to develop an Indigenous history of the area. There could be a competition to select a historian, who could also work with a few youth as a mentorships through the process.
 - Suggestions for the historian include: Wanda Whitebird, Pauline Shirt, Vivian Recollet, Hopi Martin (lots of Historical knowledge around the Humber River), Duke Redbird (works with youth, schoolboards, and on building projects).
- Natural indoor spaces that let in lots of natural light, include plants and moss, and have running water features.
 - Various suggestions for colour including more muted, earthy colours, and purple (from Wampum Shells and the Six Nations flag).
- Various Indoor Spaces:
 - Non-programmed drop-in spaces where youth can relax, linger, and even take a nap. Youth should not be told to leave if they are napping, especially youth who may be experiencing homelessness. Through design, this means spaces that are

comfortable, have comfortable seating, and are easy for youth to access throughout the day. Through the culture of the space, this means training staff to ensure they are welcoming to all youth, including those experiencing homelessness.

- Board rooms and meeting spaces for 10-25 youth that can be easily booked for meetings and events.
- Co-working space for youth
- Small Maker space or workshop
 - For example, for leather working, or drum making. There should be space for storage and plenty of surface space for working.
- Mini Pow Wow and dancing spaces that include bouncy wooden floors. Round rooms are ideal for this. The space should also include circular benches, sound equipment, and good acoustics.
 - Example: Wabano Health Centre in Ottawa
 - There was discussion about potentially locating a Pow Wow space on the roof, but it was mentioned that some would prefer the space to be located on the ground. If outside, rain and shade structures should be provided.
- Day lockers

Programming & Activities

Programming suggestions included:

- Community sports leagues
- Maker space/workshops
- Leather working
- Drum making
- Dance
- Pow wows
- Traditional indigenous games like Lacrosse and Snow Snake