

Indigenous Heritage Engagement Project

Co-Development Dialogue

City of Toronto
Heritage Planning Services &
Museums and Heritage Services
December 3, 2019



“

The first thing we do is speak to the Spirit... tell the Spirit what we are doing... what we are here for... with thanks and gratitude.

Nehiyaw Elder Pauline Shirt

”

Overview

The City of Toronto's Heritage Preservation Services (HPS) and Museums and Heritage Services (MHS) are embarking on a new journey – working towards the co-development of an engagement of First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities with regard to two important heritage projects: the Toronto Heritage Survey and a proposed, new City of Toronto Museum.

The objective of this project is to move forward on the co-design and potential co-management of an Indigenous engagement process related to heritage projects, where Indigenous knowledge, perspectives and culture are given respect and consideration in City of Toronto heritage planning and development.

Over the past year, City Planning completed a City-wide Heritage Survey Feasibility Study that proposed a plan for Phase One of a Toronto Heritage Survey. In consultation with the Indigenous Affairs Office (IAO), City Planning staff confirmed that a heritage survey program must include a distinct engagement program for Indigenous communities. City Planning staff also engaged in partnership conversations with the City's Museums and Heritage Services unit, which was planning to engage Toronto's Indigenous communities in relation to a future City of Toronto Museum.

On the advice of the IAO, City Planning staff informed First Nations and Métis and Inuit organizations about the concept of an Indigenous Heritage Engagement Project, indicating that City Planning would connect again following Council's decision on the future of a City-wide Heritage Survey program. City Council adopted the Feasibility Study report in July.

The project would begin with a Co-Development Dialogue held on December 3, 2019 that was focussed solely on determining how best to engage representative Indigenous organizations and people and how the City can involve Indigenous communities in the development and delivery of the Indigenous Heritage Engagement project.

The City is here before any decisions have been made, to learn your objectives, how you wish to be engaged, and what success looks like to the First Nations, Métis and Inuit.

- Bob Goulais

An Indigenous Approach

The approach taken at the dialogue session was co-developed with the leadership and advice of an Indigenous facilitator. This culturally-sensitive approach was led in ceremony by a respected Elder who spoke to the inclusion of Spirit – a concept important to many First Nation, Métis and Inuit cultures.

The methodology of the dialogue was based on the custom of the *sharing circle*, where all participants sat in a circle and passed around the *talking stick*.

Everyone in the circle has an equal voice. Each participant has an opportunity to share with the group when the stick travels to them. There is no beginning of the circle, no head of the circle and each participant has the right to speak, be heard and to share in a good way.

In practice, sharing is voluntary. Some individual participants may have a lot of ideas to share, while others, may have less to share and prefer to listen.

Culturally, some individual participants may be uncomfortable with sharing in large groups. While others may be far more assertive and likely to share.

It was observed that, while not all participants shared, many participants were actively engaged and offered a means of non-verbal validation of the key points discussed.

“While some points were from a particular person, others engaged in the process in their own way,” said Audrey Rochette, an Indigenous Relations Consultant.

“Body language and head nodding occurred often while key points were discussed to show support and consensus.”

- Audrey Rochette

Participants

- Pauline Shirt, Elder
- Jai King-Green, Culture and Special Events Assistant, Mississaugas of the Credit
- Councillor Erma Ferrell, Mississaugas of the Credit
- Carolyn King, Mocassin Identifier Project, Mississaugas of the Credit
- Robbin Vanstone, Lands Office, Six Nations of the Grand River
- Senator Suzanne Brunelle, Toronto and York Region Métis Council
- Bryan Winters, Executive Director, Toronto Inuit Association
- Darryl Day, Youth Life Promotion, Tungasuvvingat Inuit
- Emma Steen, Outreach and Membership Coordinator, Aboriginal Curatorial Collective
- Jane Harrison, Manager, Anishnawbe Health Toronto
- Kimberly Nesbeth, Research and Policy Coordinator, Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council
- J'net Ayayqwayaksheelth, Indigenous Outreach and Learning Coordinator, Royal Ontario Museum
- Virginia Barter, Métis Historian and Writer
- Sarena Johnson, Storyteller: Content and Communications, Ryerson University
- Audrey Rochette, Indigenous Relations Consultant
- Kim Wheatley, Indigenous Cultural Consultant

For the City of Toronto:

- Cheryl Blackman, Director, Museums and Heritage Services
- Gregg Lintern, Chief Planner
- Gary Miedema, Project Manager, Heritage Preservation Services
- Jeff D'Hondt, Indigenous Affairs Office
- Wayne Reeves, Chief Curator, Museums and Heritage Services
- Alison Torrie-Lapaire, Project Manager, Archaeology
- Mary MacDonald, Senior Manager, Heritage Preservation Services
- Lorna Day, Director, Urban Design
- Leah Horzempa, Sister Circle Consulting
- Bob Goulais, Nbsiing Consulting Inc.

Opening in a Good Way

Elder Pauline Shirt was invited to open the discussion in a good way. She shared an opening prayer in Nehiyawewin (Cree language). Tobacco was given to participants as an offering on behalf of the City of Toronto, and all were encouraged and reminded to speak from the heart about what they are hoping to accomplish during the dialogue.

Overview and Introductions

Bob Goulais of Nipissing First Nation provided a brief overview of the City's intentions for setting the engagement, stating that there were "no objectives today other than to hear your thoughts."

During the introductions around the Circle, Gregg Lintern, Chief Planner for the City of Toronto reflected on his takeaway from Tanya Talaga's recent talk at a recent City Planning gathering, remembering when she spoke of the City's need to change how they think about fitting Indigenous "circles into your squares," meant both literally, figuratively, and metaphorically.

Cheryl Blackman, Director of Museums and Heritage Services then shared that this first circle is the "beginning and deepening of a very important conversation that involves each and every one of us."

Speaking from the Eastern Doorway to mark the start of a longer conversation, Bob reflected on the meaning of "heritage" and how it is interpreted across cultures. Discovering what heritage means in Indigenous worldview and perspectives is a natural place for the City of Toronto to start on this journey to meaningfully engage with Indigenous Peoples.

Heritage means our stories. Creation stories. Our cultures. Our living culture. It's our way of life.

- Bob Goulais

Indigenous concepts and experiences of heritage differ from common Western concepts, such as the following online definition: heritage is made up of “artifacts and tangible and intangible elements of culture that come from past generations.”

For Indigenous peoples, concepts of heritage relate less to static, materialist representations of the past, and more to past, present, and future stories and ways of life. To the extent that objects are considered heritage, Bob reflected that from an Anishinaabe perspective, it is because those objects have Spirit – because of who fashioned them and those who handled them.

Heritage means my moccasin travel. The way I have walked in a good way, and stumbled at times, but it's a beautiful journey.

- Elder Pauline Shirt

Heritage could be artifacts in museums...

It could be buildings like the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto...

It could be landscapes like the islands.

“

Before the birth of Toronto there
were people here. We were here,
and we're still here.

Carolyn King, Mississaugas of the Credit

”

Dialogue

Questions

1. How could the proposed engagement have value to the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit?

“The first step is **recognition and respect** for who we are as a people. We were here and we’re still here.” – Carolyn King

Indigenous Peoples engagement and leadership in the heritage work of the City “can reflect the **true history** of our stewardship of these lands. To **restore balance** and harmony” and reflect back the ways in which Indigenous Peoples have always approached engaging with the settlers, with ‘friendship and kindness.’

Involvement in this engagement process can also help with “**contemporizing** our presence and as a reminder that diverse Indigenous people are here, doing all kinds of work. Actually living what it means to **decolonize** in your colonial structures”
– Kim Wheatley

“It will give Indigenous communities a chance for their **voices to be heard** from their perspective.” – Robbin Vanstone

“Heritage often refers to things that are (only) fifty years old. We are having a **time immemorial** conversation about the original people since the beginning of time. We talk about ‘**living cultures**.’

“The value could also come from **raising awareness** with the 70,000-90,000 Indigenous people in the City about the services that are here for them. The urban agencies such as the Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council (TASSC), the grassroots and mainstream services available. We are still coming home after the Sixties Scoop. If the City can complement their programs with authentic Indigenous engagement, together, we can make a more wholesome **safety net** at large.”
– J’net Ayayqwayaksheelh

The outcome will be valuable if it is **directed by us...** inclusive and reflective.

Peace and **friendship**, that’s our true story.

No matter what has happened to us...we come back to that

Kindness.

“Reconciliation means nothing to me. But I know when good things are done with an **open heart and mind**. *That* I can understand” – Kim Wheatley

We are still here, and we have a **living connection** to the **Ancestors** and the **Land**.

We need to give voice to those cultural objects.

Settler communities don’t speak our languages and we need to change that because our language is **the language of Spirit**, and a lot of who we are comes from that unseen realm.

When we can’t even identify the Nation, person, family, territory that it came from, [then] **you shouldn’t have it** because all things are named in that way... and it’s questionable how it even arrived there.

“There are **Calls to Actions** that deal with museums and could be important to communities. According to recent reports, there is a lot of work to be done, with only 10 calls completed out of 94. It’s very dissapointing. So we can look at the calls for museums.

“When I went to the ROM for my undergrad, the First Peoples Gallery was very emotional for me. I saw Mukwa (Bear) and Migizi (Eagle) in a case, and I started to cry and speak Anishinaabemowin. When heritage is displayed through **objects in museums**, we see that some of those objects belonged to our Ancestors. I had a powerful sense of something in that work that I needed to find out.

“You want to uncover the history of those objects [in museums] and there is no history recorded.. it says “donated by” with **no way to identify** where these things are from.” – Audrey Rochette

“I visited the American Museum of Natural History, and there was a full display of Midewiwin Anishinaabe. “I come round the corner and see, on a cork board, is one of our burial bundles, pinned open. It **should be our people** that are looking after these things.” – Bob Goulais

“When I see our sacred objects, dissected and described in the colonizer’s language for curiosity and display, I too cried at the ROM because I could feel that none of those objects were being **provided ceremony**. When they are not named or taken care of and we aren’t even allowed to access them. This is a problem.

“I also think using the words we use for ourselves is important. We never, 500 years ago said, ‘Hi I’m an Indian’. We said our **names that tell the truth** about who we are.”
– Kim Wheatley

“We **honour the orality** of communication. You might think we are long-winded. We need to show respect and accomodation for that. I wonder if you realized how much we need to say when we see how much time we have for today. We need to “honour [those] who travel with us.

“Thinking about **authentic voice** and using [our] langauges. We should be doing Land acknowledgements in the language of the Nations whose territory it is.” – Kim Wheatley

“At an education day for the Moccasin Identifier Project at Fort York, a group of children came up to us and one little girl said ‘we do Land acknowledgements every day’ and they stood together and [recited] it. We said, ‘we are all Mississaugas’ and one replied, ‘**Oh... you’re real?**’

“In my experience, it’s about government and law. Did the City make it a bylaw or is it just an idea? **Entrenching the values** and approach into **City law** – I would be supportive of that.”
– Carolyn King

“Toronto is not the traditional territory of the Six Nations. Having said that, we did exert a great deal of power throughout Ontario during the beaver trade wars and of course, that part of our history should be recorded, ideally from our perspective. The name **Toronto** is, after all, derived from a **Haudenosaunee word**.”
– Robbin Vanstone

We can’t be bound by time.
The **Circle takes as long as it takes**. This dialogue will run its course.

We want to see **inclusion...**
we are trying to change the world, one moccasin at a time, and I think it’s possible.
– Carolyn King

How could the proposed engagement have value to the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit?

FOR CONSIDERATION:

1. There is significant value in entrenching the history, culture and presence of First Nations, Inuit and Metis people in the City of Toronto through an authentic, historic narrative in the voice of Indigenous peoples that contemporizes the presence of Indigenous peoples in the City.
2. There is value in telling the story and linking the historic presence of the Mississauga, Haudenosaunee and Wendat peoples, and the signing of the Treaties with the founding narrative of the City of Toronto. Indigenous people will be much more likely to accept a history that acknowledges its Indigenous history and truth about colonization.
3. There is value in undertaking research and cataloguing of important First Nations, Métis and Inuit culturally significant sites for the purposes of education and commemoration.
4. There is value in raising the overall awareness amongst residents and visitors of presence, culture and contributions of Indigenous people in the City of Toronto.
5. There is value in ensuring Indigenous cultural sites, and sacred items in museum collections are given proper respect through their care and documenting their true stories from the Indigenous perspective, and by Indigenous people.
6. There is significant value in meaningful engagement, collaboration and partnership between the City of Toronto and Indigenous peoples.

2. What do we need to know about the capacity, interests, and needs of the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities and organizations to approach ongoing engagement and relationship building in the right way?

“Bringing us in at the ground level is already serving our needs.

Nothing about us without us. We are capable of telling our own stories, and it is a right we have been denied.”

– Sarena Johnson

“We have knowledge keepers in our groups. I want to see a museum that is **interactive**. The Ancestors didn’t write it down. They repeated it over and over until we got it right. That’s what is needed. (They) demonstrated dance and told stories. Lots of people are visual learners. Interactive things are most memorable.” – Erma Ferrell

“We need **signage in our languages**. When we walk in, we want to mix the newcomer languages with our languages. Those words, greetings and visuals, are a way for community to **self-identify**. They need to see something that represents them, so visually they are stimulated to think ‘oh, I’m represented here’

“Let’s **not whitewash** the stories that Indigenous people give you. Allow people to be authentic in the way they tell stories.”
– J'net Ayayqwayaksheelh

We need “**authenticity**, whether it is a building or our workshops.” We also need the “hiring of our own people and to be paying them appropriately. Also, a lot of the time the *way* people are paid isn’t conventional. Sometimes Elder’s

What is it that we are giving back to communities? Where is the **reciprocity for them?**

– Audrey Rochette

Rather than fitting [our] **circles into a box**, we need to get out of that thinking. We have every right and the means to go about this in a different way... **outside of these shapes.**

– Jai King-Green

cheques aren't ready, and they have to wait months and months for the payment to come through."

– Jai King-Green

There **must be resources** in all project budgets for **Indigenous engagement.**

- Bob Goulais

"I'm not confident that the Toronto York Region Métis Council has the capacity. As we want to be engaged and find our people, the reality is the Council is made up of 9-10 **volunteers**. We aren't taking home any cash and we don't have the **human or financial resources** to do so much of what we would like to do. I often feel very bad when working with many organizations who I know are helping our Métis people because we ourselves have nothing to offer them. So I'm a little concerned about capacity."

– Suzanne Brunelle

"**Time** is important. **Resources** are important. For some of the smaller organizations like the Métis and even for some of the larger First Nations, we don't have heritage employees."

"Many of the Indigenous organizations in Toronto have staff that are unfamiliar with Indigenous knowledge so they may not always be a good "go-to" source. Some groups can be very "centric". I **caution** an over focus or inaccurate representation of true **territorial recognitions**.

"I think it is important to provide **contemporary components** that reflect Indigeneity as well." – Kim Wheatley

What do we need to know about the capacity, interests, and needs of the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities and organizations to approach ongoing engagement and relationship building in the right way?

FOR CONSIDERATION:

1. There would be significant interest and benefit to Indigenous peoples by procuring Indigenous knowledge holders and Indigenous historians to assist the City of Toronto, and their Indigenous partners through the city-wide heritage survey.
2. There is a desire amongst Indigenous people that their stories and narratives be told through an authentic voice.
3. Indigenous communities and their councils may not have the capacity to participate fully without capacity support funding. The City may want to consider investing in engagement and heritage capacity.

3. Who are the organizations and people with the skillsets and resources that we need to have around the governance table for this process?

The governance must be **diverse**.

– Kim Wheatley

There are people **outside the city limits** who also come here and share the connection to Toronto.

We might not get along at first because one voice wants to be heard and another voice wants to be heard. It can take **time for us to be cohesive**.

– Jai King-Green

“We should never have a meeting without **Elders**. We need their guidance and gifts. And you don’t get to name Elders for us. We as communities hold them up and support them. We need resources to support them well.

“We don’t have youth voice and we don’t have many young people here. We definitely need **youth voice**. There are so many young change makers, thirty and under. We need to actively seek them out. They are very busy and in high demand. So we can ask them who they would recommend.

“An **invitation** should be sent whether they show up or not. Anyone who can come will come and be prepared when people cannot show up.” – Kim Wheatley

“McMaster had a big opening [for a feasibility study] and people from all different departments, Elders and knowledge keepers came to the table. We were worried about calling them Elders, so we call them **Knowledge Keepers**. It wasn’t right for me to call them “Elders” because what someone may carry and know is one thing, they may not have that in another area. We need to be mindful of who we call Elders.” – Jai King-Green

“Often people think it’s just a gift to be able to come and have a voice – no. I’m bringing something you are not finding other places. I bring a lot of **time and experience**.

“We don’t necessarily come **financially prepared** to come at the last minute. Sometimes we can’t pay for parking. Sometimes we are waiting months and months to get (reimbursement) cheques.

I'm not doing this to make a living, I'm doing this to **make a difference.**" – Kim Wheatley

Participants suggested the following people be contacted for involvement in the Engagement Project:

- ▶ Brian Charles, wampum belt expert
- ▶ Alan Corbiere, Anishinaabe history expert
- ▶ Mawla Shawana, language teacher
- ▶ Kerry-Ann Charles. environment/legal expert
- ▶ Isaac Crosby, plant expert
- ▶ Michael Etherington, history expert
- ▶ Chief Dave Mowat, history expert
- ▶ Bob Watts, political professor

Just because someone self-identifies as a particular Nation, doesn't mean they have connection and commitment to the work...

respect
relationship
responsibility
reciprocity

...those are the people we need to come to the table.

- Kim Wheatley

Who are the organizations and people with the skillsets and resources that we need to have around the governance table for this process?

FOR CONSIDERATION:

1. Elders and Traditional Knowledge Holders must be a central part of Indigenous engagement and involved in both the City-wide heritage survey and development of the City of Toronto museum.
2. The City may need to invest in seeking First Nation, Métis and Inuit individuals who have skills as historians, storytellers and as Indigenous knowledge keepers in order to meet the expectations of Indigenous peoples.
3. Broader engagement sessions, targeting First Nations, Métis and Inuit community members can be used to enhance the input and voice of Indigenous people throughout the engagement process. Invitations can be sent out to the community-at-large and to representative Indigenous agencies in the City.
4. Community engagement participation must also reflect the diversity of Indigenous people in Toronto and include input from First Nations, Métis and Inuit from the West Coast, East Coast, the Plains, and the far north. Diversity must also include participation from 2SLGBTQQIA people, youth, women and Elders.
5. As part of the engagement process, representatives of Indigenous youth, Elders and Women and 2-Spirit people should be included and invited to take part in special focus groups.

4. What are some best governance structures and practices that can help to shape next steps? Who else can we turn to for advice?

“We need to explore **more protocol** in the process. For example, a protocol could be making sure the folks from the City are asking Indigenous folks to come in and educate. To foster a strong anti-oppressive culture.” – Emma Steen

“Lee Maracle says it is vital that we mentor **young people** about **ceremony** so they can learn by doing. To incorporate them into ceremony.” – J'net Ayayqwayaksheelh

“There is a lot of history of inviting us in, asking us to do all the labour, and re-traumatizing and reminding us of what it is to be racialized.” “As a **protocol**, this [background work] should be something **ongoing**.”

“The **“First Story”** are currently giving teachings to a group of youth about the history. It would be good to see them involved.” – Emma Steen

“We need some representation from the **West Coast**. There is a growing number in the City and we have a goal to have socials.” – J'net Ayayqwayaksheelh

“We need to get some ‘good-looking’ hires for systemic transformation. We need solid hires, not just contracts, baked into your operational budget.” – J'net Ayayqwayaksheelh

“A Heritage Engagement Project suggests there is a beginning and an end. But, more than that, it's the beginning of a **relationship**. Heritage is **always ongoing**.”

We need a **safe space**.

The best way for it to be safe is if we lead these things.

– Bob Goulais

We've “talked a lot about artefacts, but we need a good shared storyline, Indigenous and non.” We need “letters, documents, maps, photos...and **stories of people**.”

– Virginia Barter

We need to always be **mindful & intentional** with our language and the work we do.

– Bob Goulais

“Toronto is the capital of Ontario and a lot of decisions have been made here that affected the entire province and country. There is a **story that connects us all** to the important decisions that were made and how they impact the Indigenous communities.” – Virginia Barter

“We need a structure of **co-governance**. We cannot take a solely Western approach. Let’s take cues from **treaties and wampum teachings**, one of the ways we respected ancestral knowledge.” – Kim Wheatley

“Perhaps try to meet in **smaller groups**. You gathered some very strong, very powerful voices to your initial meeting, and I am afraid that as a result of that, some of the other voices did not have a chance to be heard.” – Robbin Vanstone

“It would have been helpful to have seen the presentations the City had prepared to give us an idea of what the City's vision is for this proposed project.” – Robbin Vanstone

There is a **process** and a **protocol** for everything...

do not forget that.

- Elder Pauline Shirt

We need to have meetings in

our spaces.

- J'net Ayayqwayaksheelh

4. What are some best governance structures and practices that can help to shape next steps? Who else can we turn to for advice?

FOR CONSIDERATION:

1. A governance-level *Heritage Engagement Steering Group* could be convened consisting of appointed representatives from these participating First Nations, Métis and Inuit organizations that will help guide development of an engagement process and refinement of strategies, documents and deliverables and engagement activities.
2. Timeframes need to be kept flexible and meet the needs of Indigenous peoples. Project timeframes should be discussed with the *Heritage Engagement Steering Group* for their input and ongoing advice on engagement processes.
3. Consider providing a modest honorarium and travel expenses to participants in the *Heritage Engagement Steering Group* to recognize their contributions and ongoing participation.
4. That the *Heritage Engagement Steering Group* be facilitated by a knowledgeable facilitator that can provide advice to the Indigenous Heritage Engagement Project.

“

Miigwetch, to ones
we called from
eastern,
southern,
western, &
northern doorways.

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