



Project Report

Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee (AAAC) Indigenous Engagement

Prepared for
City of Toronto

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1 BACKGROUND

The City of Toronto Council established the Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee (AAAC), which is a Council Advisory body that includes Council members and the public.

The AAAC and other Council Advisory committees follow similar processes, provide advice to Council, and are just one of many ways the City engages the public and subject matter experts on City and Council priorities.

The AAAC has operated in the same way for many years. In the past Council term, some of the current AAAC members and the Indigenous community at large expressed concerns and requested changes to how the Committee works, including its membership and how it provides advice.

In alignment with reconciliatory values, Council is interested in seeking input from Indigenous leaders and the community. Work is underway to discuss and determine the restructuring of this Advisory Committee to ensure Indigenous reflections and advice have a place in the City of Toronto.

Prior to the inclusion of CIPS, the City of Toronto contracted with another Indigenous Consultant to lead the engagement process. Engagement dates and locations were advertised, a survey was published for community input, and interviews were conducted with the current AAAC members. Due to unforeseen circumstances, CIPS was contracted to complete the engagement and review the survey results.



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2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT

Due to the contract being requested mid-project, recruitment took place by the previous contractor and the City of Toronto on its website and social media. CIPS did share the engagement on its Facebook page for advertising.

2.2 ENGAGEMENT SESSION PROCESS

CIPS was requested to attend two in-person Open House Indigenous Engagement sessions held: May 30, 2023, at 2 Spirited People of the First Nations and June 13, 2023, at Regent Park Community Centre in Toronto.

2.3 ENGAGEMENT SESSION SNAPSHOT

2.3.1 ENGAGEMENT #1

Engagement 1	
Date and Time	May 30, 2023 – 1:00 p.m. EST – 7:00 p.m. EST
Facilitator	Tiffany Taylor, Indigenous Aware Coordinator Steve Toms, Project Support Activator – Indigenous Aware & Engagement
City of Toronto Support	Rich Whate, Sr. Corporate Management and Policy Consultant – City Manager's Office – Governance & Corporate Strategy
Participants	Walk in guests welcomed. The online survey was reviewed and CIPS noted comments from each guest.

2.3.2 ENGAGEMENT #2

ENGAGEMENT 2	
Date	June 13, 2023 – 1:00 p.m. EST – 7:00 p.m. EST
Facilitator	Tiffany Taylor, Indigenous Aware Coordinator Steve Toms, Project Support Activator – Indigenous Aware & Engagement
City of Toronto Support	Rich Whate, Sr. Corporate Management and Policy Consultant – City Manager's Office – Governance & Corporate Strategy
Participants	Walk in guests welcomed. The online survey was reviewed and CIPS noted comments from each guest.



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3 IN-PERSON ENGAGEMENT RESULTS

This section will give a brief overview of common themes and unique perspectives, along with highlighted recommendations by the CIPS Team. CIPS, along with participants, reviewed questions from the survey, and responses were noted.

3.1 QUESTIONS ON THE AAAC ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

1. What is your level of knowledge of the City of Toronto's council, committee, and advisory body processes?
2. What is your level of knowledge of Indigenous governance processes, protocols, and values?
3. Council Advisory Bodies like the Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee typically include 1-2 Members of the City Council and approximately 10-20 public members (a mix of individuals and organizational representatives). Who should be on Toronto's Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee?
4. In the last Council term, the Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee included 1 City Council member appointed by its Striking Committee and 23 public members (which includes organizations) who applied and were selected through the Public Appointments process and approved by Council. Going forward, how should public committee members obtain their seats?
5. In the 2018-2022 Council term, the Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee operated under these Terms of Reference, which outline membership, meeting procedures, and other elements. How should the Toronto City Council Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee be structured?

3.2 COMMON THEMES

The knowledge of the City of Toronto's council, committee and advisory body is known to most participants we engaged with during this process. However, some participants were unaware of the AAAC and unfamiliar with the mandate of the Committee.

Knowledge of Indigenous governance processes, protocols and values varies among the participants. All were very knowledgeable in their Indigenous values, culture, and traditions.



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The participants' responses varied regarding seat selection – from community selection to the current appointment process. A suggestion received is that the Indigenous Organizations nominate individuals or endorse individuals to be committee members.

All Indigenous voices are to be represented (First Nation, Metis, and Inuit) on the Committee.

The Committee needs a reset, ½ Organizational Leaders (Executive Directors) to be represented and the remaining ½ to be community members (Toronto Indigenous Population).

It was overwhelmingly heard that the structure is a colonial structure with intimidation. The meeting structure must be Indigitized and welcoming. Grassroots voices must be heard, Indigenous-led and less bureaucratic.

3.3 GAPS

The main gap found is the lack of communication, transparency, action and understanding.



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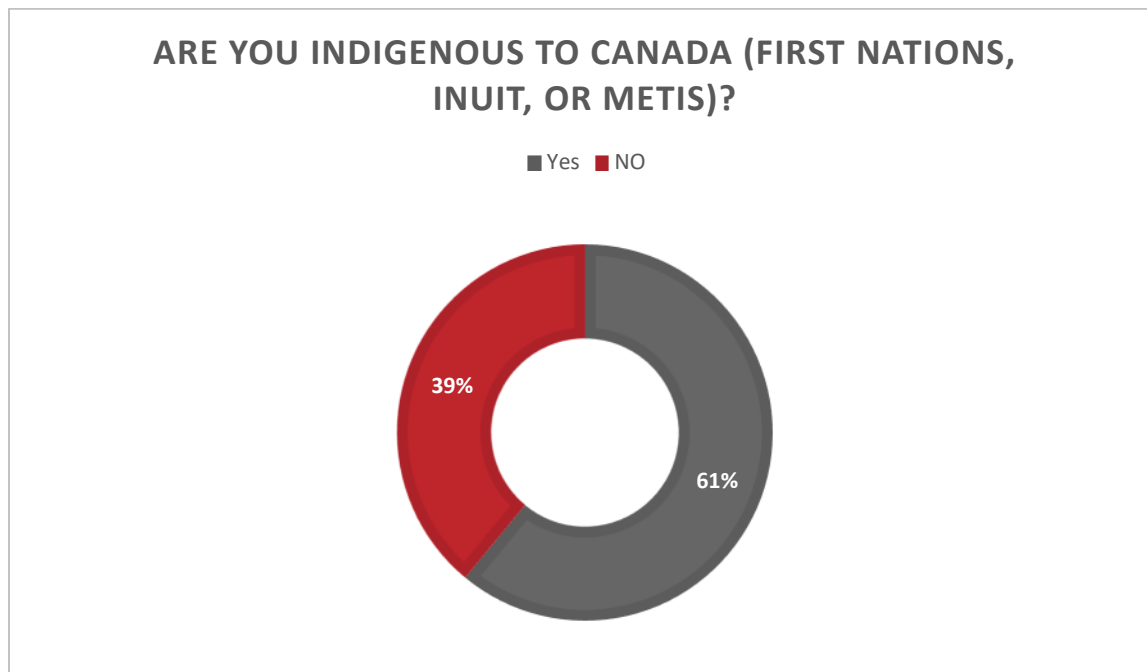
4 AAAC REVIEW - ONLINE SURVEY

The City of Toronto developed an online survey to receive feedback from residents about the City of Toronto Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee. From the 238 online survey respondents, 174 individuals completed the survey.

4.1 QUESTION 1

ARE YOU INDIGENOUS TO CANADA (FIRST NATIONS, INUIT, OR METIS)?

The survey found that 61% of the respondents identified as Indigenous to Canada.



4.1.1 CIPS RECOMMENDATION – TERMINOLOGY

CIPS recommends that the City of Toronto clearly define 'Indigenous' as to their adopted definition. There is no constitutional terminology for Indigenous people in Canada. The constitutional terminology of Aboriginal Peoples, as stated in Section 35 of the Constitution Act, includes First Nations, Inuit, and Métis, who are the original inhabitants of the land that is now Canada. The term Indigenous is also a relational word that shows people's connection to traditional territories as well as their experiences of colonization. A definition will clarify who would be considered to hold a seat on the AAAC.



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When the defined term of Indigenous is adopted, it is further recommended that the City of Toronto rename the Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee utilizing the Indigenous term moving forward.



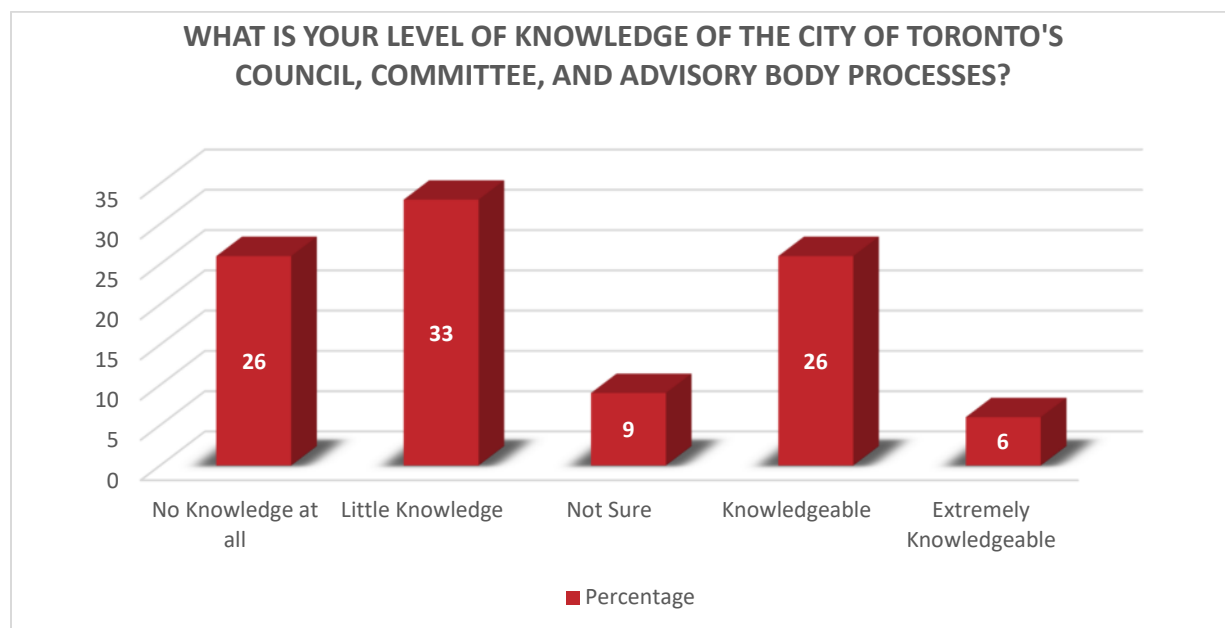
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4.2 QUESTION 2

WHAT IS YOUR LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE OF THE CITY OF TORONTO'S COUNCIL, COMMITTEE, AND ADVISORY BODY PROCESSES?

WHAT IS YOUR LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE OF THE CITY OF TORONTO'S COUNCIL, COMMITTEE, AND ADVISORY BODY PROCESSES?		
	Count of Responses	Percentage
No knowledge at all	57	26
Little Knowledge	72	33
Not sure	19	9
Knowledgeable	58	26
Extremely Knowledgeable	13	6

The survey found that most respondents had little to no knowledge of the City of Toronto's council, committee, and advisory body process. 32% responded that they were knowledgeable of the City of Toronto Committee and Advisory Body Processes, and it appears that several have been members of Committees in current or prior years or employed by the City of Toronto.





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4.2.1 CIPS RECOMMENDATION – INFORMATION DISSEMINATION

We are aware that the City of Toronto's population is expansive; however, it is recommended that an informational campaign take place to elevate the awareness of several items such as:

- Advisory Boards/Committee,
- What does Committee do,
- How to be involved (through the website, social media, transportation, voting locations, or other visible public locations)

Following the initial campaign, this informational program can shift towards continual awareness, providing information to the citizens of the City of Toronto about activities of the committees and new programs being planned within the City of Toronto.

Furthermore, it is recommended to reassess the level of knowledge of a sample of the City of Toronto population to ensure that the communication techniques and tactics are effective at reaching the intended audiences.

Quotes from respondents:

"I believe that I understand how City council works, and how councillors vote. I have observed how committees work, and I think I understand how they work as well. Advisory body processes are more opaque."

"I'm a settler, lived in Toronto 60 years. Have been 'involved' and want to be part of reconciliation."

"I know that Indigenous Affairs Office exists and also this advisory committee. I had assumed that AAC had been defunct due to the outdated name – surprised and wonder why the outdated term continues to be used."



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4.3 QUESTION 3

WHAT IS YOUR LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE OF INDIGENOUS GOVERNANCE PROCESSES, PROTOCOLS, AND VALUES?

Regarding the level of knowledge of Indigenous governance processes, protocols, and values, the majority of respondents had little knowledge. For those respondents that indicated they were knowledgeable, values, culture, and traditions are widely known; however, Indigenous governance was not widely known within the sample population.

4.3.1 CIPS RECOMMENDATION – CONTINUED AWARENESS

Although the City may have included this question with an intent to understand respondents' knowledge of alternative ways of running an AAAC, it is difficult to draw any conclusions from the responses. CIPS would recommend that the City of Toronto leadership, executives, and staff understand that multiple traditions and ceremonies exist within the Indigenous culture and that not all traditions and ceremonies are treated in the same way. Among Indigenous peoples, there is a similarity in the people's connection to the land and waters, as well as the honour of Indigenous Elders, Youth and Ceremonies.

CIPS recommends that the City of Toronto continue with Indigenous Awareness (including First Nation Governance Structures) learning opportunities and cultural ceremonies/teachings for its' Leadership, Executives, and Staff and extend these opportunities to committee members. Perhaps the AAAC can be a source of teaching opportunities to promote the cross-fertilization of committees and other levels of the City of Toronto organization.

Quote from respondents:

"Depending on Nation there can vary in differences. As Anishnaabe, our clans play a role in that we all carry a responsibility, purpose etc. within our communities just a brief attempt to explain as self governing peoples."



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4.4 QUESTION 4

COUNCIL ADVISORY BODIES LIKE THE ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS ADVISORY COMMITTEE TYPICALLY INCLUDE 1-2 MEMBERS OF CITY AND COUNCIL AND APPROXIMATELY 10-20 PUBLIC MEMBERS (A MIX OF INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES). WHO SHOULD BE ON TORONTO'S ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS ADVISORY COMMITTEE?



When asked who should be on the City of Toronto's Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee, 64% of the respondents agreed it should remain a mix of organizational leaders and community members.

The responses repeatedly stated having a dedicated seat for Elders/Knowledge Keepers. It is also important to note that most of the responses suggested having Elders, Indigenous individuals – grassroots, Indigenous organizations, and Indigenous lead the AAAC. The responses vary regarding the Indigenous organization leaders holding seats, from pushing their agenda to having power and control over knowing the barriers of Indigenous residents residing in the City of Toronto.

4.4.1 CIPS RECOMMENDATION – INDIGENOUS PARTICIPATION

"Nothing about us without us," it is essential to note that participants want the Committee to be Indigenous-led and to have Indigenous individuals sitting on the AAAC. When the City of Toronto defines Indigenous, it is recommended to have an Elder from each Indigenous group (First Nations, Inuit, and Métis) participate in establishing the definition to ensure the inclusion of all Indigenous peoples. It is also recommended to ensure that a Youth representative from each Indigenous group is represented. Including Elders and Youth represents a strong connection to Indigenous peoples' belief system, whereby knowledge of the past is transferred through Elders, and the future generations are present and included. Furthermore, this will ensure the majority of voices are heard and keep Indigenous organizations and Indigenous community representatives holding seats on the AAAC.



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Quotes from respondents:

"It is my humble belief that people of First Nations should sit on this committee as they are aware and know the people of their ancestry and know the issues that are faced from a Grassroot perspective. The people of First Nation should be on focus groups led by their own people and find out what is helpful and what approaches to meet."

"The decision making within the advisory should be made solely by Indigenous people. There are enough spaces for non-Indigenous people to have input. Council members should only be there to observe. Ask questions or give insight."



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4.5 QUESTION 5

IN THE LAST COUNCIL TERM, THE ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS ADVISORY COMMITTEE INCLUDED 1 CITY COUNCIL MEMBER APPOINTED BY ITS STRIKING COMMITTEE AND 23 PUBLIC MEMBERS (WHICH INCLUDES ORGANIZATIONS) WHO APPLIED AND WERE SELECTED THROUGH THE PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS PROCESS AND APPROVED BY COUNCIL. GOING FORWARD, HOW SHOULD PUBLIC COMMITTEE MEMBERS OBTAIN THEIR SEATS?

51% of the respondents agreed that a community-led selection process whereby membership on the Committee is recommended to Council for approval would be preferred. Throughout the engagement process, the term 'Grassroots' was repeatedly mentioned – it is felt by the community that community-led initiatives are more likely to have the voices of the community prioritized. It is felt that the application and appointment process does not work in its current state, as the community members are not part of this process, while they are the best informed to know who is best to serve on the Committee. However, respondents support having Indigenous organizational representatives hold seats on the Committee along with community members.



4.5.1 CIPS RECOMMENDATION – INDIGENOUS SELECTION PROCESS

The Indigenous organization's Board of Directors is recommended to appoint organizational representatives to the Committee. This establishes clear accountability for the representative to have their organization's mandate, the AAAC mandate, and the Indigenous community's needs represented.

Regarding community members' participation on the Committee, the responses from the survey supported having community members be represented. Furthermore, they agreed that the online process could be followed; however, it is recommended that the application be tailored to ensure grassroots, Indigenous (as defined) individuals be the



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only individuals considered and required that they identify as an Indigenous Elder/Knowledge Keeper or Youth.

The majority of responses in the survey state that a community selection process should occur. Regarding the community-led selection process, CIPS recommends that the following questions be considered:

- Who in the community votes?
- How is it determined who votes?
- Where is selection taking place?
- Are there ballots?
- How are individuals considered to have a seat?
- What capacity does a community member fill? Are they there to represent community members? Are they observers, decision makers?
- Are there credentials requirements?

CIPS recommends that the Indigenous organization participate in reviewing online applications received from community members and that these applications be provided to the community during the community-led selection process.

Quotes from respondents:

"Use all of the above. Have some appointments, some organizational seats, some community seats, and ensure that all areas of the city are represented even if they are not well organized and need recruitment, Include youth and elders, and members of vulnerable communities."

"Both designated organizational seats and community-led selection process should be used."



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4.6 QUESTION 6

IN THE 2018-2022 COUNCIL TERM, THE ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS ADVISORY COMMITTEE OPERATED UNDER THESE TERMS OF REFERENCE, WHICH OUTLINE MEMBERSHIP, MEETING PROCEDURES, AND OTHER ELEMENTS. HOW SHOULD THE TORONTO CITY COUNCIL ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS ADVISORY COMMITTEE BE STRUCTURED?

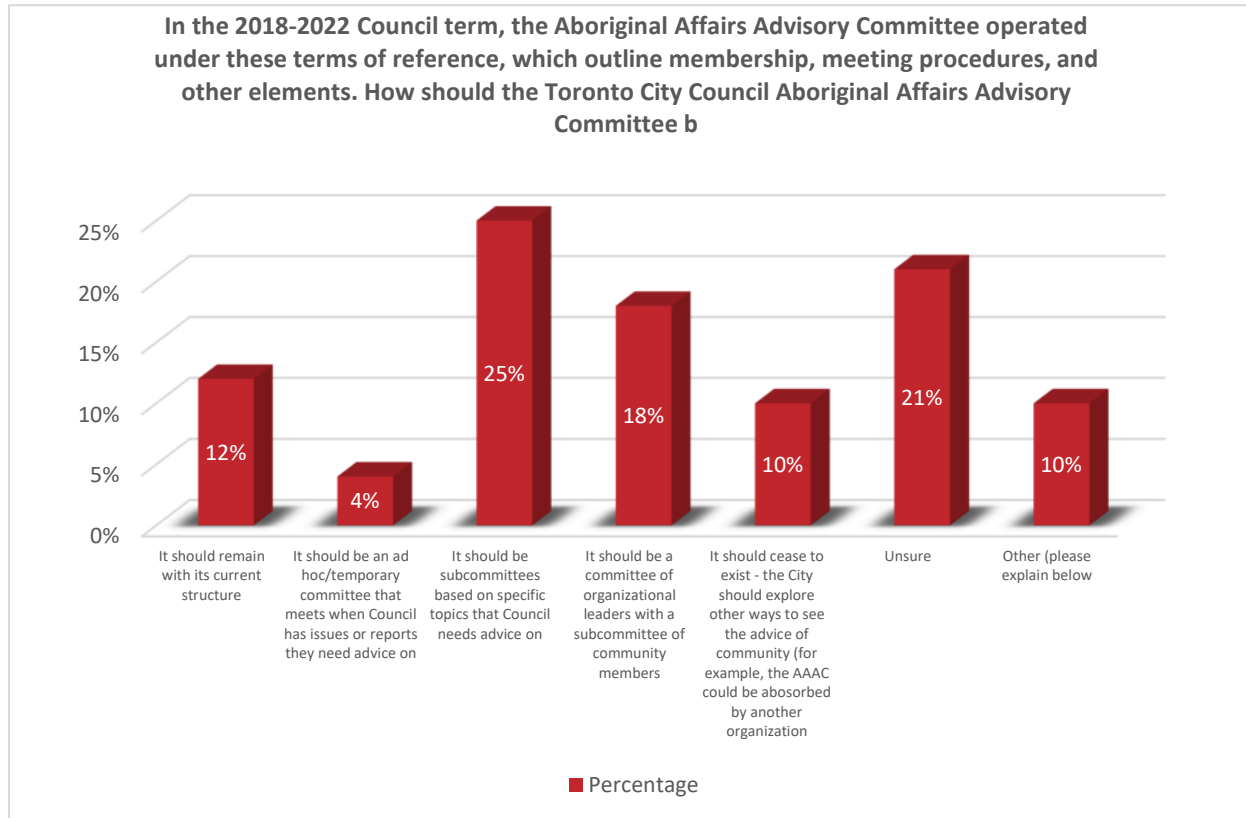
Responses to this question varied, and respondents could choose more than one option; the majority agree that it should have subcommittees based on specific topics that Council requests advice to be provided on.

In the 2018-2022 Council term, the Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee operated under these terms of reference, which outline membership, meeting procedures, and other elements. How should the Toronto City Council Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee be structured?		
	Count of Responses	Percentage
It should remain with its current structure	21	12
It should be an ad hoc/temporary committee that meets when Council has issues or reports they need advice on	7	4
It should be subcommittees based on specific topics that Council needs advice on	44	25
It should be a committee of organizational leaders with a subcommittee of community members	32	18
It should cease to exist - the City should explore other ways to see the advice of community (for example, the AAAC could be absorbed by another organization)	17	10
Unsure	37	21
Other (please explain below)	17	10

The comments section of this question provided mixed results that included keeping the structure the same, having sub-committees, being more community-led-centric, and feelings of tokenism.



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4.6.1 CIPS RECOMMENDATION – COMMITTEE UTILITY

Currently, when there are requirements for a duty to consult and accommodate, the required steps for engagement are taken as required by the appropriate laws and regulations. The AAAC's time should not be occupied by federally and provincially legislated acts, and the Committee should not be used to address the duty to consult and accommodate processes. However, the spirit of these laws and regulations should be honoured, avoiding the 'check box' clearance of these processes.

CIPS recommends that the City of Toronto utilize the AAAC to understand the needs of the Indigenous population in the City of Toronto and use the Committee as intended, assist with eliminating barriers for the Indigenous community and provide the Committee with a safe space to offer advice to the Council.

When the term 'grassroots' is mentioned, remember that the Indigenous peoples across Canada are oppressed in the top-down approach and have been dictated to for many



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years. Time must be taken to listen to the Indigenous voice and be proactive, not reactive or non-active.

Quotes from respondents:

"The committee should be a Standing Committee of Council, meeting monthly, publicly reporting on its work. It should not be 'advisory' but rather provide direction to City Council on Indigenous needs, priorities, barriers, or advancements."

"Greater range of voices identifying and managing the agenda."

"From the Grassroots and Up. Start from the street to the board rooms not like now is board rooms, agencies, people who are offended to sit next to the poor Grassroots Indigenous person at meetings. We need true representation at the Toronto City Council to have True Voice and Consultation as is the expectation of the recommendations in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for Municipalities."

"Having an Indigenous Elder on the committee is vital."



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5 CLOSING REMARKS

The City of Toronto, Leadership, Executive, and Staff must continue to embark on a reconciliation journey, which includes greater Indigenous Awareness across all levels of the organization, including its committees. This awareness is essential to enabling effective, clear, and transparent communication intra-organizationally and externally to the community. Building on communication, the City must consider how the organizational units and committees will continue within its governance framework to support fulfilling the different mandates.

The current mandate of the AAAC is to provide advice to the City of Toronto Council on:

- a) The elimination of barriers faced by Aboriginal peoples, including barriers related to City By-laws, policies, programs, and service delivery;
- b) Act as a liaison with external bodies on barriers to the participation of Aboriginal peoples in public life; and
- c) Advancing the achievement of the social, cultural, economic, and spiritual well-being of Aboriginal peoples.

Reflection on this mandate and consideration for how the AAAC may support the City of Toronto Council to understand both the positive and negative experiences of the Indigenous community within the City will be an illuminating effect for the essential need for Indigenous engagement and involvement in the many City of Toronto processes, committees, and advisory boards.

All documents are living documents and should to be reviewed periodically to update, recognize accomplishments, identify where more work is needed, strike what is no longer needed, make changes where necessary, etc. AAAC must recognize that Indigenous work is always evolving and the ability to adapt is crucial to success.

It must be understood that this engagement's outcomes demonstrate room for improvement within the City of Toronto. With change, it is essential to acknowledge that progress will not be accomplished immediately. Instead, by revisiting and monitoring progress as the City embarks on implementing the recommendations, it will be necessary to continually revisit and review the plan to align with the changing population, environment, and people.