

REPORT COMPILATION: AAAC RESTRUCTURING



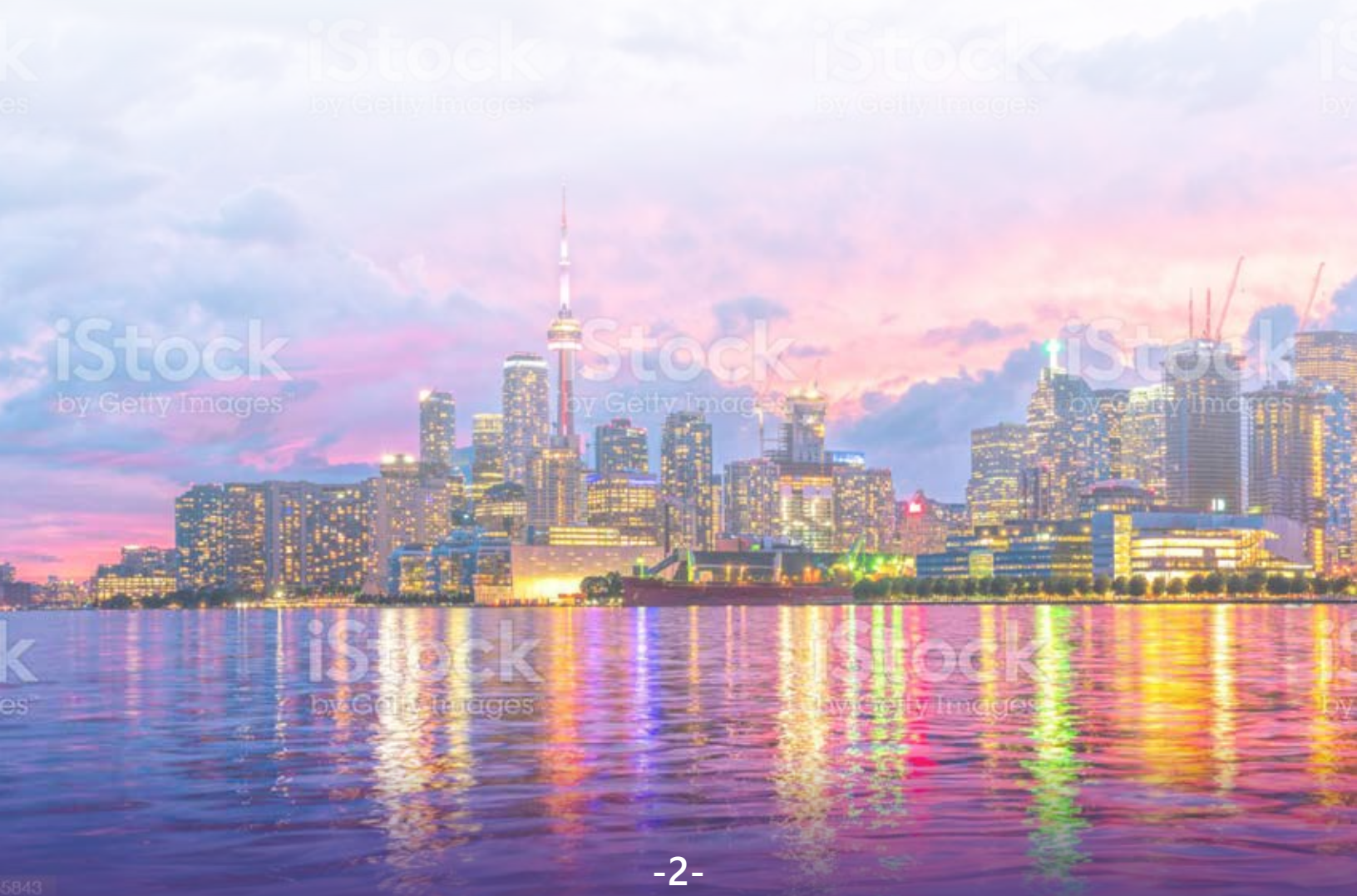
**AAAC MEMBER INTERVIEW REFLECTIONS
AAAC RESTRUCTURING SESSION
FINAL AAAC RESTRUCTURING RECOMMENDATIONS**

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REPORT:

AAAC MEMBER INTERVIEW REFLECTIONS

MAY 2023

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BACKGROUND

The Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee (AAAC) is a City of Toronto Council Advisory Body that is established by Council and includes one Council member and other members from the community. The AAAC and other Council Advisory Bodies follow similar rules, provide advice to Council, and are one way the City engages the public and subject matter experts on City and Council priorities. The AAAC has been operating for a long time in the same way and in the last Council term some AAAC members and the Indigenous community at large expressed concerns and requested changes to make it work better.

To reconsider how this Advisory body might operate, the City of Toronto has engaged Michelle Sault (Minokaw Consulting) to implement a review of its structure and potentially update its Terms of Reference. In the interim, City Council has re-established the AAAC for the 2022 to 2026 Council term and the City Manager and City Clerk will receive the facilitator's findings and report back to Council on the governance review. What follows is a report on AAAC member interviews—one aspect of the structural review that is currently underway.

All past and active AAAC members of the 2018-2022 AAAC were provided an opportunity to participate in a confidential interview with Michelle Sault and Shannon Speed (researcher/writer). A total of 17 semi-structured, but active, interviews were conducted between March 21, 2023, and May 5, 2023, the interviews ranged from approximately 20-80 minutes in length and followed an Interview Guide (see Appendix A).

The interview notes were used to formulate this report sharing the words, opinions, and experiences of 17 unique AAAC members, some of which includes disagreement; no statements are a reflection or representative of all AAAC member perceptions. The intention of this report is to provide some considerations for restructuring the AAAC based on suggestions from those with first-hand knowledge.

AAAC MEMBERSHIP

Based on public records there have been a total of at least 30 AAAC members active at different times (this number may be missing some Council members—as noted below, early records of the AAAC were unofficial/informal). For this report Michelle Sault, Minokaw Consulting, spoke with seventeen individuals connected with the AAAC. For privacy reasons, the City could not share a list of members' contact information, so the City invited AAAC members to contact Michelle directly to participate in interviews and other contact information was sought in the public realm – this made it challenging to contact some members. Responses to requests for an interview were mixed with some members being eager to share their experience and others wanting nothing to do with a restructuring process.

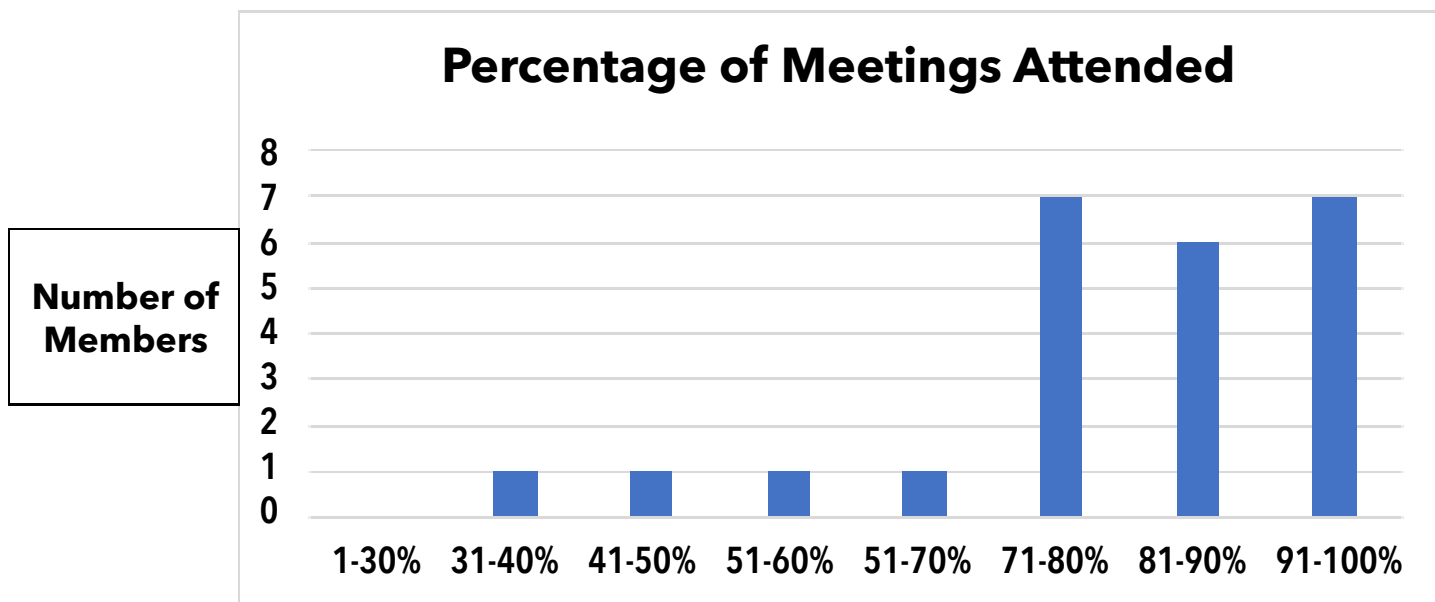
For the purposes of this report all interviewees are referred to as 'members' regardless of whether they are a current or past member.

MEETING ANALYSIS

Prior to conducting interviews, analysis of public records of the last eighteen AAAC meetings (August 29, 2019 - June 13, 2022) was carried out to provide insight into various aspects of AAAC business, such as membership and meeting proceedings. What follows is a summary of this analysis:

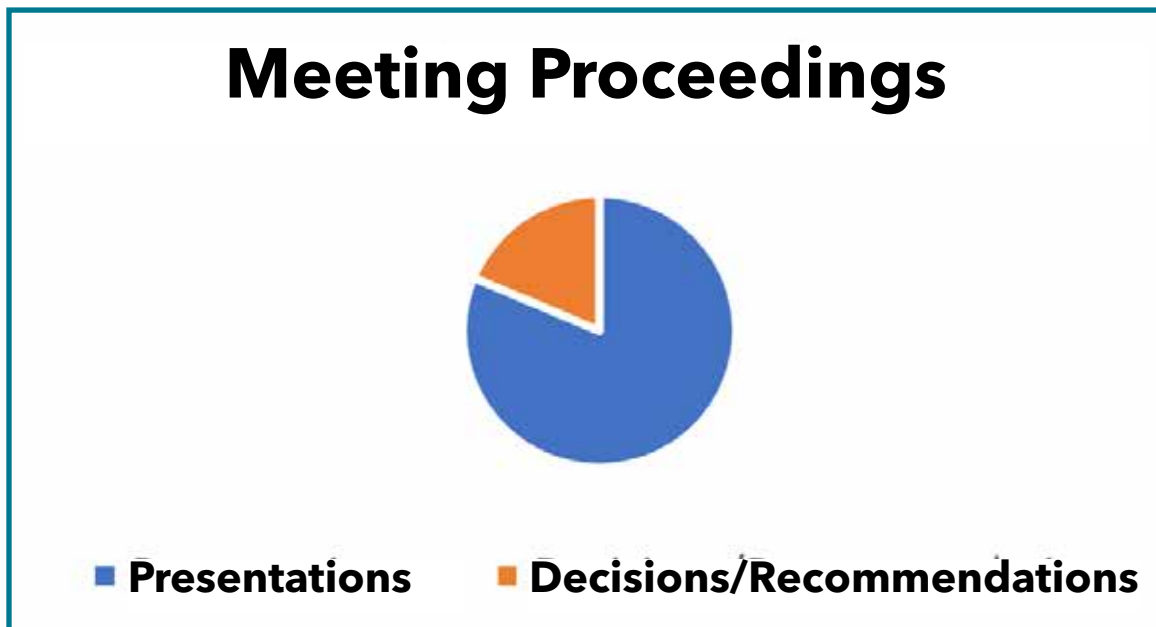
ATTENDANCE:

For members active during this period (total = 24), the percentage of meetings they attended since joining the AAAC ranged from 33% to 100% with most members (20) attending between 72% and 100% of meetings. This reflects the dedication of AAAC members to the committee work. Quorum was achieved for all except three meetings in the summer of 2021.



MEETING PROCEEDINGS:

As will be noted below and has been mentioned by members in AAAC meetings/minutes, there is a perception that more time is spent listening to presentations and receiving information than is spent in discussions for providing advice or making recommendations to Council. Analysis of the meeting minutes did not break down exact time spent on items, but strongly reflects this perception: Over the course of the 18 meetings analyzed there were 96 presentations and 22 decisions to put forward recommendations/advice, with 17 pertaining to business external to the AAAC (of the 22 decisions, 5 regarded AAAC protocol or Terms of Reference). This puts the average number of presentations/receiving information at 5.3 per meeting and the committee decisions/recommendations at 1.2 overall (or 0.8 external) per meeting. This is concerning in terms of efficient and appropriate use of member's time and expertise.



INTERVIEW REFLECTIONS

"We are looking down the road, not just for our children, grandchildren, or great-grandchildren; we are looking four generations past that."

"It's time to pick up our bundles. We have the opportunity to completely change this."

"That is the largest problem: this is a table without a declared purpose. An advisory is a checkbox—the AAAC just signs off on things and gives license for the City to proceed."

"We've been too busy rearranging the chairs on the deck of the Titanic to discuss the iceberg—what is really affecting our people."

"The AAAC needs a structural and relational reset—start in Ceremony and kindness and get the history out of the room."

"We need to decolonize."

"It is good that we have an opportunity to take a look at the structure of the AAAC instead of blindly continuing."

"We want to effect change, not just advise people."

"Nothing about the committee felt Indigenous."

"Are institutions like the City of Toronto ready to change and work for us instead of the other way around?"

"The AAAC has been working well for the City but hasn't advanced the progress of establishing a sovereign Indigenous intuition within the City."

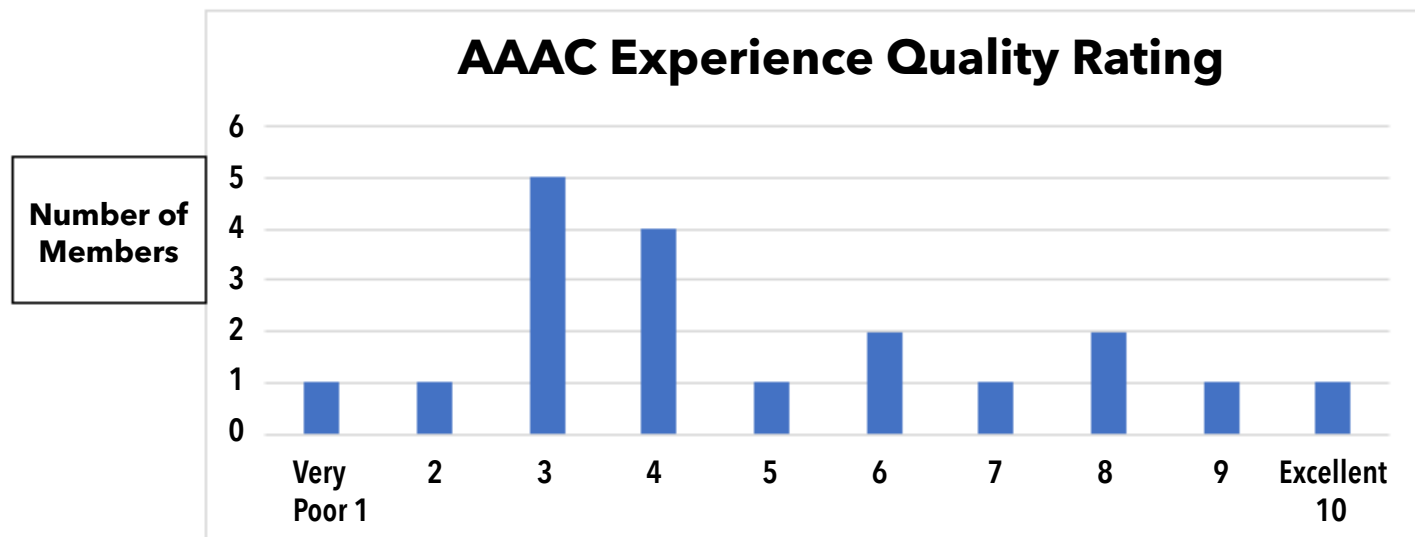
SCALED EXPERIENCE

Members were asked to respond to the following prompt:

On a scale of 1-10 (one being very poor and ten being excellent) how would you rate your experience serving on the AAAC?

This question was not intended to be statistically significant but acted as a jumping off point for members to qualify their experience and help with framing the conversation. Some rated their involvement differently depending on the 'era' of the AAAC, providing multiple ratings.

The compilation of responses are as follows:



Some members found the AAAC to be a waste of time (and have since left or plan on leaving), while others found it a productive venue in which they felt heard by the Council member on the AAAC.

HISTORICAL REFLECTIONS

One long-time AAAC member considers the origin of the AAAC to be embedded in the report of a *Task Force on Community Access and Equity* that culminated in 1999. The *Task Force* developed a final report titled “Diversity Our Strength, Access and Equity Our Goal.”¹ For this work Indigenous people were “lumped in” with other populations experiencing inequity in the City for which Council committees were created. The AAAC member noted how they, with others, lobbied for a decade, including for what is now the Indigenous Affairs Office (IAO), but none of the results have the “heft” or influence that was desired.

Multiple long-time AAAC members reflected on the time when Indigenous matters fell under the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion portfolio at the City. During this time a lone Indigenous staff person did a lot of the coordination work for the AAAC and was spoken of with appreciation and as a supporter—they knew how the City worked and navigated for the AAAC. During this time, the AAAC directed who they wanted to speak with, rather than City departments coming to the AAAC. It was widely recognized that the AAAC dynamics became unwieldy towards the end of the last term (2018-2022).

Many members mentioned how the COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted the AAAC. All members were heavily burdened, and the meetings being moved online created disconnect that did not exist pre-pandemic; sitting at a screen for long periods of time is draining (shorter more frequent meetings could help with this). Further, it was surmised that some behaviour taking place online would not have happened in person (e.g., deputants not following procedure, losing quorum², and overall questionable personal and professional conduct). It was suggested this detached and non-physical environment with a virtual smudge is not the proper setting for meaningful conversation. Words such as “discord” and “tension” were used to speak about the current relational environment, noting that members were not adhering to the Seven Grandfather Teachings despite being referred to within meetings.

¹The full version of this Report was not easily found; the executive summary is available at:

[https://www.toronto.ca/ext/digital_comm/inquiry/inquiry_site/cd/gg/add_pdf/77/Governance/Electronic Documents/City_of_Toronto_Material/Task_Force_on_Community_Access_and_Equity.pdf](https://www.toronto.ca/ext/digital_comm/inquiry/inquiry_site/cd/gg/add_pdf/77/Governance/Electronic_Documents/City_of_Toronto_Material/Task_Force_on_Community_Access_and_Equity.pdf)

²One AAAC members mentioned it was sometimes difficult to move on from a topic resulting in loss of quorum and inability to proceed and they viewed this as a “filibustering” tactic.

It was noted that the AAAC has had different ‘waves’ of productivity and influence, some of which are controversial. These include the creation of the Indigenous Affairs Office, acceptance of the Reconciliation Action Plan, land acknowledgements at City meetings, nation flags and a Spirit Garden at Nathan Phillips Square, and a City human resources Indigenous hiring strategy. Overall, there is some trepidation among AAAC members around whether the AAAC is truly “productive” or if there is not enough opportunity to provide advice and direct staff on policy development; a more organic relationship with City Council may help with this. It was suggested that some of the frustration with the AAAC is coming from a lack of decision-making power—bringing forward recommendations for which there is no concrete action is dissatisfying.³ One member suggested that theoretically there is opportunity for impact, but the format does not lend itself to change-making. Even AAAC members who are optimistic about their experience as an AAAC member recognize there is a need to make changes to AAAC structure and governance.

MEMBERSHIP

With Council Advisory Bodies like the AAAC, Council approves membership as part of its terms of reference, and the advisory bodies can propose changes. The 2019 AAAC Terms of Reference⁴ specify that it would be composed of 25 members with one Member of City Council and, with the exception of the Member of City Council, members are representatives of Aboriginal organizations. Specific organizations are not named. This composition reflected an organic process built over time as organizational leaders (or designates) of Indigenous (mostly social service) organizational leaders were invited to join the AAAC. Some other Council Advisory Bodies have terms of reference requiring organizational or representational members, but only one – the Toronto Film Board – currently identifies a specific organization as a member.

³Analysis of “follow-up” on AAAC recommendations was conducted for the past 18 meetings, however it is difficult to determine what action is being taken—some action may be embedded in presentations, but there is no clear note of this in meeting minutes. This lack of clarity is likely contributing to the dissatisfaction.

⁴<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/bylaws/ToRs/AAAC-ToR-EX1120-2020-12-17.pdf>

In 2021 efforts were made to expand AAAC membership to include community members who were not organizational leaders.

Some members expressed concerns about AAAC membership being expanded to include community members. Additionally, there was apprehension of membership becoming too large to include the voices of everyone—it was noted certain voices dominate these types of space and there is not always opportunity for others to speak up. While it is recognized that community input is important and needed, for some members opening up AAAC membership was not the answer. This issue brought forward multiple considerations that reflected significant discord among members along varying aspects:

- a. It was not carried out properly:** Multiple members indicated that they did not feel as if they were consulted regarding the change of membership to include community members who were not connected with organizations. It was suggested that the City Indigenous Affairs Office (IAO) made this decision and carried out the process unilaterally despite dissent from AAAC members, but it was also suggested that this move was in response to advocacy from an AAAC member. Members who were the most upset understood the process was being carried out covertly by the IAO,⁵ but this was countered by some members.
- b. Community members are not representative or accountable:** A recurring concern with the inclusion of community members is that their lack of connection to an organization makes them not representative of anyone but themselves. Organizational leaders have a client-base, community, or constituency that they advocate on behalf of and are accountable to a board of directors as a 'checks and balance' system; this ensures they are not self-serving. It was suggested that community members are already being represented by organizational leaders. Further, it was held that Council will be better supported by individuals with deep and wide-ranging knowledge about sectors that impact the lives of Indigenous people in the City rather than those with lived experience in one area; for these members individuality waters down the purpose of the AAAC.

⁵The appointment process would have been supported by the Clerk's Office, but it is common practice for City divisions, such as the IAO, to be consulted as part of the public appointment processes for connected Council committees.

- c. There was not any/enough onboarding:** For some members, there could be room for community members, but it should be as an associate member for a period (e.g., 1 term/4 years) before getting a vote. Some community members came in with no knowledge, orientation, or pre-existing relationships. The intention of the AAAC is to utilize specialized knowledge, context, and experience to try to shape policies promoting Indigenous communities in Toronto. One AAAC member noted that some community members were thrown in with no life jacket, having minimal understanding of municipal politics (formal and informal). It was suggested that for those who had never been a part of anything like this it is both disengaging and overwhelming to not be provided with some guidance going in.
- d. "Community" and "representation" are problematic terms:** It was suggested that when sitting on the AAAC even organizational leaders are merely representing themselves and their organization's sector and that without a democratic electoral process none are representing "community." It was noted that any claim to being representative of "community" is debateable as what is meant by "community" needs working out; in a diverse urban setting such as Toronto, Indigeneity has many configurations and needs. It was suggested that some community members who were at meetings and wanting to be AAAC members are more opinionated about their own experiences than they are knowledgeable and engaged; "community" is a catch phrase used for convenience that is often void of meaning.
- e. It was necessary to ensure quorum could be met:** There had been struggles with meeting quorum at AAAC meetings holding up the ability to move forward with advisement and committee business. The inclusion of more members to fill vacant seats makes it easier to meet quorum.
- f. There was a need for more diversity:** The early composition of the AAAC included mostly leaders from social service organizations. It was suggested that there needed to be a more abundance-focused representation by including experts in business/finance, academia/education, the arts, and healthcare/hospitals.

As noted above, in addition to opening membership, how extending membership was carried out was concerning for AAAC members. The usual process of a call for applicants, interviews, and Council approval was followed, but some felt they were just told it was happening, rather than being asked for their reflections. It was also suggested that one of the challenges with AAAC membership is that the mandate is unclear, so the committee does not know what it is trying to effect and who it needs to do it—one member characterized the AAAC as having an identity crisis. Overall, the perception is that the changes to membership were poorly thought-out and handled and this created an unsafe space for AAAC members.

There were mixed reflections on the assumed membership/designated seats for organizational leaders. While it was noted that they come with a breadth of expertise and knowledge that the City should be grateful to have, there is a power and privilege that misses community, grassroots, and youth perceptions. Some AAAC members noted that other members may not be fully engaged or are far enough in their career and influence to not value this opportunity for involvement; changes need to be made to ensure that all AAAC members want to be actively involved. A nomination process that could be instituted to make it representative and an honour for AAAC members to be involved was one suggestion.

STRUCTURE

Some members noted how the AAAC began as an unstructured Indigenous circle that accomplished things before becoming more heavily structured as a colonial Council Committee. In the earliest versions of the AAAC, it was indicated that equitable conversations were held, and everyone's opinion valued as problems and solutions were worked through. This was prior to the involvement of the Clerk's Office and when there was no formal public record of the work. It was helpful when the AAAC became resourced by the City, but this changed the way things functioned and put more confines around how the AAAC functioned. According to some members there was very little political or public scrutiny during this time, and it was a free exchange of ideas rather than formal business. It was suggested that when the shift happened, it became more challenging to get things done. It was suggested that currently the intent is right, but the execution is poor.

One member flagged a pivotal change being when the meetings became televised/ livestreamed there was much more control and organization over how the AAAC functioned. It was at this time that AAAC processes became especially colonial and began to function as board meetings. Prior to this, long-time members felt that the AAAC was able to tell the attached Council member what they wanted and it would be massaged into something that fit proposals that could be taken to Council.⁶ This approach was especially achievable when there was a strong Council representative and advocate acting as the AAAC Co-chair; multiple members spoke to this being an effective approach when an allied individual is in the position. This individual would act as a conduit for AAAC members. It was suggested that currently, the AAAC is having to pretzel itself to fit in to a restrictive way of doing business and it is painful being told what they must do, rather than being asked. Other members expressed appreciation for the strong organization in terms of having an agenda, sticking to it, and that the committee Co-chairs did well to ensure everyone was where they were supposed to be, and things ran smoothly.

INDIGENOUS WAYS:

There is a lot of conflict between the way that City, Council, and its advisories function and Indigenous ways of knowing and doing. One member stated that it is challenging to try to operate in the way that we trust and live within a colonial institution. It was suggested that there needs to be recognition that some of the divisiveness within the AAAC is a product of a system that has been designed to harm Indigenous people and relations; it would be ideal if members could be kinder and show more respect to one another and remember how to walk together in a good way as a community. Multiple members noted the importance of having a group that is collegial. Many members noted that the AAAC needs to be united, rather than trying to override one another; the group needs to come back to consensus, open conversation, and reground in spirit.

⁶This required using strategies such as calling a recess to wordsmith potential motions rather than doing it with the entire committee (a wormhole). This required a Chair who was knew these tactics and was confident in their authority.

There is no formal inclusion of an Elder to open and close AAAC meetings and hold up the group. It was noted that it seems members are forgetting what it means to smudge in a circle because there is an agenda waiting. Additionally, the room in which physical meetings were taking place does not support cohesion when members cannot truly connect, but rather can wave to one another across the large room, according to some members. It was held that there needs to be a balance between the understanding that this is an Indigenous circle operating in a colonial intuition; here needs to be a collective coming together over how to maintain spirit and Ceremony. Suggestions included:

- ◇ Rotating chairs that are more in keeping with a circle setting.
- ◇ Resident or rotating Elders or Knowledge Keepers (one male, one female) as AAAC members.
- ◇ Stronger youth representation (designated seat).
- ◇ Regular Ceremony to set the committee in a good way.
- ◇ Outlined consensus process (including how to manage abstentions and opposition).
- ◇ Eliminating the 'checkbox' approach in exchange for carrying out community-led consultation.
- ◇ A change of location/more intimate setting.

There were mixed reflections on how to 'hybridize' participation in an obviously and obligatory colonial institution. Some members acknowledged that it is a City process and participation in it is important for the better wellbeing of Indigenous residents in Toronto. Other members felt there could be some meeting in the middle by introducing (more) cultural practices into the AAAC, with some suggesting it is time to overhaul the entire concept with a 'for Indigenous by Indigenous' approach to relations with the City using territory to assert Sovereign Rights. One wise member suggested that the group should look to culture and teachings and the solution will come.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS OFFICE (IAO) INVOLVEMENT:

Currently, all Council Advisory Bodies receive meeting support from the City Clerk's Office and program support from a City division (department). The current approach to AAAC meetings involves the IAO proposing the contents of the agenda, in collaboration with the City Clerk's Office, and providing it to the co-chairs for review and any additions. The involvement of IAO used to be supplemental but has since become primary and it was indicated by some AAAC members that agenda items are not being filtered adequately. Multiple members mentioned the loaded agendas with items that would carry over across meetings with other items pushed infinitely as a result; this made it feel as if nothing was being accomplished. For many AAAC members, there was no clear direction and purpose in what was being asked of the AAAC regarding many agenda items over which the AAAC had no control—if someone wanted to be added to the agenda, they were added.

The exact relationship between the IAO, the AAAC, and Council seems to be unclear among membership. It was felt by some members that as the IAO gained more influence, the AAAC Terms of Reference became blurred, with some being followed and other unadhered to. Multiple members feel they are being presented to by City staff regarding decisions that have already been made. Members held that coming to the AAAC is merely checking a box⁷ of "Indigenous consultation" as a part of an inclusion and reconciliation agenda, and especially during the COVID-19 pandemic it became 'over consultation'; this is dangerous as it is a process that is not community-led. The AAAC is supposed to be a direct line between Council and Indigenous voices, but it does not function that way as members feel they have more contact with staff from varying departments who come to present.

According to some members, much of what is presented by City staff is interesting, important, and a reflection of valuable work, but listening is not necessarily an efficient use of time for members who are very busy at their organizations. Other members found the presentations have no substance, opportunity, alignment, or consideration of impacts for community and are an absolute waste of time. It was found by one member that often the City has already decided and the AAAC gets to "pick the colour, or decide up, down, left, or right—it is just window dressing." It is felt that the IAO is truly the Indigenous decision-maker for the City; it acts as a gatekeeper, but has no accountability to the AAAC for soliciting and taking advice making the AAAC not an equal partner when at the table with the City. According to one member, the IAO needs to do a better job of consulting with Indigenous communities in Toronto. Some members suggested the IAO be dissolved in favour of a new structure that is less beholden to the City ("strengthen the Office or redesign it"), as the IAO being a conduit from AAAC to the City is not trusted and a more direct line to the City is desired by some members.

⁷Members also used analogies of a "rubber stamp" and a "Boy Scout badge."

DEPUTATIONS/COMMUNITY INPUT:

The deputations of community members at AAAC meetings have presented challenges for AAAC members who do not perceive them as experts and believe they are representative of themselves rather than community. Multiple members flagged the inclusion of deputations as creating friction within the AAAC; some of this was due to deputants speaking out of turn and being unremovable in a digital setting. Some AAAC members also indicated that there was disregard for both the colonial structure and a circle and talking stick approach—some individuals took up more space than they should in meetings. It was noted that some AAAC members aligned with community members who were/are feeling excluded, but that these differences were not approached in a good way. Some respondents noted that the time-limits were problematic when pressuring community members to express themselves while timed, which is not in keeping with Indigenous ways. However, others suggested that some community members were just taking up space unnecessarily. It was pointed out that deputations are helpful for receiving input from community members, but the scrutiny some AAAC members faced was inappropriate for anyone in a non-elected position.

PROVIDING ADVICE:

Among members there is some slippage and lack of clarity around the AAAC being advisory in nature and being a decision-making body. However, the AAAC does have to decide on the advice or recommendations it puts forward. Members suggested that the AAAC tries to work by consensus and make sure that everyone can live with the decision, but if that is not achievable it turns to a vote. It was noted that the AAAC was rarely divided⁸ and could come to agreement on most things—both important things and so much that was inconsequential. However, there were times when the AAAC came to a vote and had to agree to a split vote; some members reflected that this created deeper division among members.

⁸Many members shared examples that showed some of the fragility of the politics in Indigenous communities in Toronto.

Some members fully understand how AAAC advice goes to Council, while others were not completely clear. It was noted that having a fully engaged Council member as a liaison is key to a meaningful connection. Some councillors have been more active and engaged than others. One suggestion was to have more than one Council member on the AAAC so that they can strategize and work together to move issues forward.

In past iterations of the AAAC it was helpful for a City Councillor to sit as an AAAC co-chair; this is one solution offered for future iterations, even if three co-chairs sit as a tribunal. It was suggested that councillors know the process and have a way to get things through at Council to support the AAAC. According to one AAAC member, it is difficult to get anything passed without an insider working on your behalf who knows where the money is and has connections with influential people in the City. Councillors have access that AAAC members do not and are a necessary partner and conduit. It was noted that in recent years the AAAC Council member has been relegated to sitting to the side instead of having a voice. Ideally, there will be an Indigenous representative on Council to act in their role, but there is no heavily Indigenous riding to help this along. It was noted that there is room in the City of Toronto Act to appoint a councillor. Having an Indigenous member of Council was mentioned as a key step forward for the City.

It was noted that there are too many presentations and that executive motions that did take place were often redirected to staff and taken out of the political realm—the AAAC is burdened with triviality. It was suggested that the presentations distract from the original purpose, perhaps because a dreamcatcher design is more interesting than urban politics. As noted earlier, on the staffing side there is no tracking of outcomes. According to some AAAC members, on the political side there is often more attention, impact, and ability to see issues through in a public space. In practice, the AAAC should be providing recommendations or advice to the Executive Committee, which then goes to City Council, but this is not what has been happening, according to some members, and the process should be cleaned up as there needs to be reciprocal accountability. It is felt that councillors or staff should be looping back to the AAAC to explain how advice has been implemented or speak to why they were unable to take it up.

ADDITIONAL REFLECTIONS

Community involvement is welcomed by AAAC members when invited and done in a good way. The voices of organizational leaders come with privilege and power and are already heard in other spaces and more opportunities need to be given to community members, according to some members; the formalized and colonial approach has caused community voices to get lost. According to one member it is challenging to align and empower both organizational leaders and, sometimes disgruntled, staff and clients using the same process of an advisory committee. Some AAAC members shared that community voices have come to meetings for the purpose of expressing dissatisfaction with organizations; their voices should be heard, but this is not the appropriate venue for airing grievances. One suggestion by a member is to give the AAAC the authority to call 'Town Hall' meetings to be hosted by the City for topics that require public input to let people speak in circle, or for the AAAC to recommend community referendums where appropriate; these are more fitting settings to hear from the public.

The AAAC membership strongly mirrors that of the Toronto Aboriginal Support Service Council (TASSC). This juxtaposition was explored, and it was explained by some members that TASSC was formed by Indigenous people while the AAAC was formed by City Hall. For these members, at TASSC, members take off their City Hall hats and put on their community organizational leader hats to worry about a multitude of pressing issues and while at the AAAC in their City Hall hats TASSC/AAAC members concern themselves with how the City gets things done. Importantly, TASSC is formed for, with, and by Indigenous people, while the other is formed specifically for the City and getting things done in that venue. It was flagged by members that it is possible that if the AAAC continues to struggle that TASSC could be the 'go-to' organization for the City.

SUMMARY OF CHANGES FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Control of the agenda (deciding what departments the AAAC wants to meet with—end tokenism)
2. Meaningful incorporation of culture (dedicated Elder)
3. Rotating (co-)chairs
4. Improved community consultation between the City and Indigenous community (separate from the AAAC).
5. Increased representation of Indigenous people on Council and among City staff (especially management).
6. Onboarding for all AAAC members (e.g., AAAC purpose, making motions (executive versus staff, consensus model, etc.)
7. Disband the AAAC: move City Indigenous consultation outside of colonial confines into a sovereign space—for Indigenous, by Indigenous (possibly plant within an Indigenous organization).
8. Tying membership to responsibility and commitment, perhaps dedicated pillars/sectors/clans, instead of assumed seats for organizations.
9. A nomination or open-forum community process for membership.
10. New authorities for the AAAC to include community ('town halls' and referendums).

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee

"Structural Review"

BACKGROUND

The Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee (AAAC) has been re-established: to provide advice to City Council of Toronto on the elimination of barriers faced by Aboriginal Peoples, including barriers related to City by-laws, policies, programs, and service delivery; to act as a liaison with external bodies on barriers to the participation of Aboriginal Peoples in public life; and to advance the achievement of social, cultural, economic, and spiritual well-being of Aboriginal Peoples.

Current and past AAAC members are being contacted and asked for their reflections as an exploration of the purpose, structure, and governance of this committee to provide advice to City Council for how the Committee could or should be established for future Council terms.

As a standing or past member of the AAAC, your knowledge of and insight of the inner workings of City Council and the Committee are invaluable to its future success.

QUESTIONS

1. Tell us about yourself and how long were you or have you been part of the AAAC?
2. On a scale of 1-10 (one being very poor and ten being excellent) how would you rate your experience serving on the AAAC?
3. Please share further your experiences and elaborate on areas you feel need to be addressed.
4. Do you intend to remain part of the AAAC until (at least) 2024, and will you participate in the restructuring sessions?

REPORT: AAAC RESTRUCTURING SESSION

MAY 16, 2023

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BACKGROUND

The Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee (AAAC) is a City of Toronto Council Advisory Body that is established by Council and includes one Council member and other members from the community. The AAAC and other Council Advisory Bodies follow similar rules, provide advice to Council, and are one way the City engages the public and subject matter experts on City and Council priorities. The AAAC has been operating for a long time in the same way and in the last Council term some AAAC members and the Indigenous community at large expressed concerns and requested changes to make it work better.

To reconsider how this Advisory body might operate, the City of Toronto engaged facilitator Michelle Sault (Minokaw Consulting) to implement a review of its structure and potentially update its Terms of Reference. In the interim, City Council has re-established the AAAC for the 2022 to 2026 Council term and the City Manager's and Clerk's Offices will receive the facilitator's findings and report back to Council on the governance review.

Past AAAC members and interested community members are being engaged through interviews, in-person sessions, and an online survey. Facilitator findings from 1-1 interviews with AAAC members are described in a separate Interview Report. What follows is a report on an in-person session for AAAC members held on May 16, 2023.

SETTING

Prior to the in-person session all past and active AAAC members of the 2018-2022 AAAC were provided an opportunity to participate in a confidential interview with Michelle Sault and researcher/writer Shannon Speed. A total of 17⁹ semi-structured active interviews were conducted between March 21, 2023, and May 5, 2023. During those interviews, members were asked if they would be interested in contributing to AAAC restructuring efforts and six declined because they were no longer connected to the AAAC or did not have the capacity for involvement. The other 11 individuals expressed interest in changing the structure of the AAAC for the better.

Emails and calendar invitations were sent for the in-person session held 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. May 16, 2023, at the Regent Park Community Centre in Toronto. Ten members accepted the invitation prior to the session (some of whom did not participate in interviews) and five declined. It was anticipated from the non-responses that six would not be in attendance and that there was a potential for two non-respondents to attend. Some members who had initially responded positively sent regrets the morning of the session. In total, four AAAC members attended the session. **These four member attendees had collegial discussions but did not come to formal consensus on the recommendations offered in this report.**

⁹Defining active AAAC membership was very challenging as some members on the 'active' list were active at some point in the last (2018-2022) term and have since stepped away, retired, or gone on leaves. Other 'active' members did not respond to multiple inquires even to decline involvement. At the time of writing there were 23 'active' members with 11 engaging in interviews. The additional six interviewees were past members, and one was otherwise affiliated.



MEETING PATHWAY

An agenda was not set ahead of the session as Michelle wanted members to determine what they thought was important to speak about. Some topics were suggested, including:

- ◇ Who/what the group who gathered for this session is [e.g., working group, subcommittee].
- ◇ Review of the Interview Report and its findings.
- ◇ Current Terms of Reference and Council considerations for the AAAC.
- ◇ Isolating key areas of discussion (e.g., appointments/membership/process).

Member attendees gathered in Circle and discussed the size and identity of the group. They determined the four members would proceed with the session with the understanding that they are not representative of AAAC membership. As individuals they each feel pulled to make changes to the structure of the AAAC.

PROCEEDINGS

The meeting was opened in a good way.

Session attendees decided to consider the Interview Report in order knowing it would lead to conversations covering multiple suggested topics.

The meeting was closed in a good way.

OUTCOMES

AAAC AGENDA

Member attendees concurred with the Interview Report that most of their meeting time is spent watching City staff presentations with minimal AAAC member involvement, decision-making, or advice-giving.¹⁰ All attendees joined the AAAC within the last term and understand from the Report that the tendency for presentations to dominate meeting agendas evolved over time. The seemingly greater satisfaction with past terms may reflect the context of proceedings changing over time.

Member attendees suggested a strategy of the Indigenous Affairs Office (IAO) filtering agenda items to subcommittees of experts. Under this model, subcommittees would decide and put their recommendation/advice forward to the larger committee for approval, or not, before forwarding a recommendation/advice to Council. This approach would ensure that AAAC members are engaging with material pertaining to their sector and experience. Further, the IAO would determine whether City presentations to the AAAC are relevant.

How agenda items come to the AAAC was unclear to at least one member attendee.¹¹ There are questions around whether the AAAC can determine what is important to it as there are many presentations that do not seem relevant to community. This member attendee indicates that there are many issues that are important to the community that are not coming to the AAAC.¹² Knowing why something is on the agenda is important to two member attendees who felt being an audience was not enough and City presenters should put forward some purpose or action related to the AAAC mandate.

Further, one member attendee indicated that there were often last-minute/night before changes to the AAAC agenda that left no time to review documents; members had to rely entirely on presentations taking in information. Another member attendee felt that hastiness this was due to City departments not being prepared and adjusting their presentations the night before, making minimal changes to what was presented to other advisories.

¹⁰Many members describe this as a 'check box' exercise for the City.

¹¹Under City of Toronto *Simplified Rules of Procedure for Advisory Bodies* (5.B.) The Advisory Secretary places items on the agenda if received from: (1.) a member of the advisory body; (2.) City Council; (3.) a Council Committee; (4.) a local board of the City; or (5.) a City Official.

One member attendee questioned the validity of having designated organizational leaders as representatives of community. They suggested community representation be devised through a nomination and election process for AAAC members. Rather than organizational leaders, the AAAC should be composed of community leaders. For this process, community members could nominate potential advisory members, who then decide if they want to accept the nomination and run for the position.¹³ Using this approach, the community decides who they would like to see at the table and are then accountable for their representation.¹⁴ Members would no longer be questioned around how or why they are representative. This approach ensures the importance and involvement of the community being served and is based on a clan system, incorporating Indigeneity in a merit-based process that is accountable and representative.

Another variation could be to have designated seats for groups or Nations (e.g., First Nations/Mohawk/Haudenosaunee/Anishinaabe, Inuit, Métis, based on representation within Toronto). Current AAAC membership reflects both social service sector representation and community representation (e.g., Toronto Inuit Association and Métis National Council).

Another member attendee questioned a nomination/election approach suggesting that sitting on the AAAC should not be a prized position that is sought after. Advisory membership should not be a reward or associated with status, but an opportunity for knowledgeable individuals to put forward input that is grounded in experience (skills over political motivation). From this perspective AAAC members bring a wealth of knowledge and experience but represent only their own viewpoint and not an entire community. Both this perspective and the nomination process are aligned in that they appeal to responsibility to community.

¹²Advisory members can add to the agenda, but not all members were aware of this opportunity and the AAAC agenda was already overloaded and often carrying over to the following meeting.

¹³According to the member attendee, this is one (of many) traditional approaches to determining leadership among Indigenous people.

¹⁴Currently the AAAC Terms of Reference state committee members are representative of Aboriginal organizations, but seats are not attached to specific organizations.

Another member attendee suggested that more diversity is needed within AAAC membership in terms of areas of expertise reflecting sectors. There are many different communities of need within the larger Indigenous community and areas of expertise to support meeting these needs include services such as health, education, and housing. One possible approach is to create portfolios and subcommittees among AAAC membership based on sectors. This approach can work in conjunction with the nomination process suggested above. It is understood that not all members will be experts in everything, and this will allow members to focus on their areas of knowledge and interest. Focused portfolios and subcommittees may also help to ensure members with necessary skillsets remain interested and engaged.

Member attendees suggested potential portfolios (with some disagreement) to think through how many members might be needed for a restructured AAAC. One member attendee suggested that the current committee composition of 25 members makes it difficult to include everyone’s voices. At meetings it seemed to be the same people speaking to the same things. Some suggested portfolios include:

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| ◇ Housing | ◇ Entrepreneurship |
| ◇ Health | ◇ Food security |
| ◇ Social services | ◇ Homelessness |
| ◇ 2SLGBTQIA+ | (could be merged with Housing) |
| ◇ Education | ◇ MMIWG2S+/Women |
| ◇ Arts | (may be controversial) |

One member attendee noted the challenge of holding multiple portfolios while having a job and community responsibilities; a larger membership may be needed to populate subcommittees. Potential members should be informed of the time commitment and responsibilities in advance. Another member attendee noted that the advisory can be functional with 10 members or 25 members depending on the agendas. They suggested it was not the number of advisors that has been the challenge for the AAAC, but the inundation of City presentations that took up too much time.

One member attendee recalled that the more recent decision to open up AAAC membership was made by AAAC members and not a unilateral undertaking by the IAO or City Clerk’s Office.¹⁵ According to member attendees this gap was flagged by AAAC members, so the City Clerk’s Office and the IAO supported a search for more members (including invitations to leaders of 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations and Eshkiniigjik Naandwechigegamig, Aabiish Gaa Binjibaaying (ENAGB)). Membership additions were approved by City Council in accordance with City process.

ADDITIONAL ADVISOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◇ Embed Indigenous worldviews in AAAC process and structure.
- ◇ Onboarding process for new AAAC members (not just an emailed information package).
- ◇ Shift from online back to in-person meetings with a hybrid option **ONLY** for those with transportation or childcare hardships AND/OR supports for transportation and childcare (allowance or reimbursement).
- ◇ Consistency in honoraria for all Council advisory committee members.¹⁶
- ◇ Meetings in a smaller room that is appropriate for the number of AAAC members.¹⁷
- ◇ Reasonable time for reviewing materials (no last-minute agenda changes).

Changes to the way decisions are made:

- ◇ Option to object or abstain and ask for more information (not just be recorded as a no/nay).¹⁸
- ◇ Utilize a consensus model that allows for members to determine when there is enough information to decide.

¹⁵Both perspectives were brought up during interview and are noted in the Interview Report.

¹⁶Council was piloting honoraria last term, and they were distributed inconsistently among AAAC members over the last term (compensating only some members is problematic, dysfunctional, and inequitable). Council has approved honoraria for all AAAC members (and other Council Advisory Bodies) for the 2022-2026 term.

¹⁷The current meeting room is too large and impersonal and does not lend itself to building relationships.

¹⁸Under City of Toronto *Simplified Rules of Procedure for Advisory Bodies* (8.1) "Members present must vote" and (8.2) "Not voting is a negative vote."

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The lack of influence of Council advisories was noted by member attendees with a suggestion from one member of changes to create space for an Indigenous member of City Council. Currently there is no strongly Indigenous riding (communities are spread throughout).¹⁹ This individual could also be the Council liaison for the AAAC—allies are wonderful, but do not have the same experience.

One member attendee expressed concern over some of the content of the Interview Report. They felt that filibustering/intentional loss of quorum did not take place, as was indicated by other AAAC members. Further, the assertion the Executive Directors are not engaged was incorrect. These statements were adjusted in an updated version of the Report.

NEXT STEPS

Member attendees agreed to meet again at the end of June, with hopefully more colleagues in attendance. Post-meeting Michelle decided to not proceed with this meeting due to AAAC Member disengagement with the restructuring process. A final report with recommendations to the City Manager's Office will include synthesized advice gathered from this session and interviews.

¹⁹There is opportunity to create a designated seat in the City or Toronto Act.



REPORT:

FINAL AAAC RESTRUCTURING RECOMMENDATIONS

JUNE, 2023

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BACKGROUND

The Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee (AAAC) is a City of Toronto Council Advisory Body that is established by Council and includes one Council member and other members from the community. The AAAC and other Council Advisory Bodies follow similar rules, provide advice to Council, and are one way the City engages the public and subject matter experts on City and Council priorities. The AAAC has been operating for a long time in the same way and in the last Council term some AAAC members and the Indigenous community at large expressed concerns and requested changes to make it work better.

To reconsider how this Advisory body might operate, the City of Toronto engaged Michelle Sault (Minokaw Consulting) to implement a review of its structure and potentially update its Terms of Reference. In the interim, City Council has re-established the AAAC for the 2022 to 2026 Council term and the City Manager and City Clerk will receive the facilitator's findings and report back to Council on the governance review.

What follows is a report of Final Restructuring Recommendations based on 17 AAAC member interviews held between March 21 and May 5, 2023, and an in-person restructuring session held on May 16, 2023 with four AAAC members in attendance. The report concludes with facilitator reflections on potential next steps for the City.

ADVISOR RECOMMENDATIONS

STRUCTURE

MEMBERSHIP:

The composition of the AAAC (or other entity) is a crucial consideration and top-of-mind for many AAAC members. Determining Council needs should be a primary aspect of moving forward with potentially restructuring membership; however, balance must be found between Council needs and community needs, while ensuring community is reflected by/ within membership (though not necessarily “represented”). Membership should be based on “expertise,” but this is a relative term and can range from personal lived experience to frontline work to sector leadership. Membership could be organized in a way that separates types and areas of expertise making it is clear to Council and staff where advice is coming from and what it is based on. (Note: avoid language that creates a hierarchy of expertise, e.g., “level” of expertise). Considerations of who members are accountable to and responsible for are also relevant.

- ◇ Determine whether “community representation” is the goal or if Council is looking for individual expertise and experience, and how broad (e.g., skills, assets, network, and knowledge needed for Council advice).
- ◇ Consider whether organizational accountability (e.g., to a Board of Directors) is desired/necessary.
- ◇ Twenty-five advisors is potentially unwieldy; consider consequences for meeting quorum and managing vacancies.
- ◇ Possible seats based on areas of expertise to create diversity:

- » Housing
- » Health
- » Social services
- » 2SLGBTQQIA+
- » Education
- » Arts
- » Entrepreneurship

- » Food security
- » Homelessness
(could be merged with Housing)
- » MMIWG2S+/Women
(may be controversial)
- » Business/Finance
- » Youth

- ◇ Potential to include seats for both organizational leaders and community members with lived experience (hybrid approach of organizational and community seats).
- ◇ Areas of expertise could be used as 'portfolio' or 'subcommittee' topics, populated by members and other relevant community members (mirror a clan system) and reporting to the wider committee.
- ◇ Possibility to set up membership with designated seats for groups or Nations (e.g., First Nations/ Mohawk/Haudenosaunee/Anishinaabe, Inuit, Métis, based on representation within Toronto).
- ◇ Structure of organizational seats with a subcommittee of community members.
- ◇ Consider appointing two Council members to the AAAC so they have the benefit of conferring—they should be strong and willing allies.

POPULATING THE AAAC:

The current public appoints process could be used to fill in seats that are left empty after canvassing current members for their continued commitment. Utilizing some unique approaches for creating connection and building relationships may be helpful (see Facilitator Recommendations: Specific Advice below). Alternatively, a fulsome nomination and electoral process could be implemented. There is potential to 'hybridize' the approach by requesting letters of support from applicants or opening a nomination process without the burden of a voting/elections. Additionally, depending on the structure (committees, subcommittees, designated seats) different approaches could be used for diverse components of the entity.

- ◇ Status quo/reinstatement—membership based on leadership positions held at Indigenous organizations (confirm interest of 'current' members then determine organizational or expertise gaps and how many open seats).
- ◇ Nomination and/or election process.
- ◇ Status quo call for new applicants based on areas of expertise (followed by interviews and Council approval).
- ◇ Note: Ensure the process is transparent/known to community.

OTHER BODIES:

The AAAC is an advisory body struck for and by Council and should function to serve its advice-seeking needs. If the City desires to create a different dynamic for receiving advice and recommendations from Indigenous community members another type of City entity could be created (task force, ad hoc, etc.). Another approach is to support a 'for Indigenous, by Indigenous' relationship with the City. If this is the intended direction, it should be (co-) designed and created with community leaders. At this time, much of the consultation being done by the City is not Indigenous-led (i.e., staff presentations to the AAAC) and this requires reconsideration for future initiatives.

- ◇ No reinstatement of the AAAC; Council seeks advice from Toronto Aboriginal Social Services Council (TASSC), or other legitimate bodies as needed.
- ◇ Strike ad hoc committees for specific topics.
- ◇ Neither the AAAC nor the Indigenous Affairs Office (IAO) have the influence initially desired by early changemakers; consider another type of body that has more authority in the City (reconciliatory action).
- ◇ 'For Indigenous, by Indigenous' relationship with the City—allow community leaders to determine the entity and relationship with the City.
- ◇ Reconsideration of the role of the IAO (strengthened or redesigned to be more in touch with Indigenous communities).

MEETING PROCEEDINGS/AGENDA:

An ongoing concern of AAAC members is the immense amount of time dedicated to listening to staff presentations that have no advice-seeking purpose. Reconsider how AAAC time is used. This may require changes to the expectation that City departments 'consult' on projects or that a new mechanism be put in place for Indigenous consultation (perhaps within the IAO). The Purpose of the AAAC of providing advice to City Council (not staff) needs revival (Terms of Reference A.3). Additionally, some AAAC members are not aware of their ability to add items to the agenda and direct their advice based on what they see as important. A bulky agenda that continually carries over does not lend itself to members feeling they should add to the work.

- ◇ Keep presentations to a minimum—any presentations should include a specific and direct ask related to the AAAC mandate (addressing barriers and advancing achievement of Indigenous Peoples).
- ◇ Address the liberty to add to the AAAC agenda (via narrowing the AAAC mandate OR overriding the Simplified Rules (5.1.B. OR 5.5.B.) using the TORs.
- ◇ Ensure advisory members are aware of their ability to add to the agenda (under the Simplified Rules).
- ◇ Considering a filtering process by/to the IAO; end 'over-consultation' that is not community-led.
- ◇ No last-minute changes to the agenda—ensure an appropriate amount of time for reviewing materials.

HOW THE AAAC GATHERS:

Online meetings over the last term were not conducive to collegial relationships and feeling connected to the work. (See also: Cultural Considerations: Inclusion of Indigenous Ways). Accessibility should be kept in mind for those who are unable to attend in person.

- ◇ Encourage and support in-person meetings with accessibility in mind; consider travel and childcare allowances; hybrid option if necessary.

ONBOARDING:

Lack of onboarding was flagged by both newer members and veteran members who felt newer members were struggling to understand processes and familiarize themselves with committee expectations. Even some more experienced members were not aware of what was within their purview as an advisory member. Create a process for all members to be (re) familiarized with the powers and expectations of advisory members.

- ◇ Create an interactive onboarding process (not just distributing a package); potential topics include:
 - » Purpose of the advisory
 - » Types of motions (Simplified Rules (7.)).
 - » Authority of advisors (e.g., alter the order of business, add to the agenda, as per TORs and Simplified Rules)
- ◇ Potential for “associate” membership for a term, prior to becoming a “full” member.
- ◇ Mentorship opportunity between veteran and new members.

COLONIAL CONFINES:

Status quo process for Council advisories conflicts with some ways that Indigenous People typically work and communicate. An approach of speaking in Circle allows for individuals to express themselves in honest and open ways, without fear of scrutiny. There is some concern that the publicity of AAAC meetings provides a podium for unfit and unnecessary conversations from multiple participants. Where possible, it may be advisable to allow the group to set their own terms for making decisions and documenting meeting proceedings.

- ◇ Advisory decisions regarding advice/recommendations to be done using consensus rather than voting.
- ◇ Institute a Circle format for gathering rather than formal business/board/Robert’s Rules approach.
- ◇ End deputant involvement—replace with periodic ‘City Hall’ meetings of the AAAC to hear community concerns (more respectful than timed-limited windows).
- ◇ Reconsider recording/livestreaming meetings.

COUNCIL ACCOUNTABILITY/AWARENESS OF AAAC INFLUENCE:

Advisory members are very unsure of the impact their time and effort have on community. It is possible the Purpose of the AAAC, and its underlying Mandate, need reconsideration or revitalization to support change. Additionally, Council (and/or staff) need to be held responsible and accountable for implementing advice or recommendations or justifying inaction.

- ◇ Create a feedback loop through which Council informs the AAAC of how advice or recommendations have been actioned, or if there has been no action, why not.

TERMS OF REFERENCE:

Note: These are addressed under other headings, but specific references to the TORs are flagged here.

- ◇ Clarify the AAAC mandate, or better adhere to advice being directed to City Council rather than City staff (create political influence, attention, and impact) (A.3. a-c).
- ◇ Reconsider if compilation of 25 members is appropriate (B.1.).
- ◇ Explore whether all Simplified Rules must be adhered to (e.g., Abstentions (8.), openness to public deputants (6.)).

CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

RESIDENT ELDER:

It is common practice for Indigenous groups to be held up by Elders or Knowledge Keepers who support cultural practices and emotional safety. These individuals must be able to address the group and contribute to discussion.

- ◇ Appoint Elders or Knowledge Keepers (one male, one female, could be resident or rotating) to open and close meetings and hold up the group; this should include opportunities for counsel/contact outside of meetings.
- ◇ Elder or Knowledge Keeper to have AAAC membership privileges/ability to speak at meetings.
- ◇ Initiate the reconstitution of the AAAC (or other body) in ceremony with Elders/Knowledge Keepers.

INCLUSION OF INDIGENOUS WAYS:

In addition to eliminating some colonial confines as noted above, considerations are necessary for introducing Indigenous approaches to meeting and deciding as a group. Members noted some ways to integrate better communication and collaboration within the AAAC.

- ◇ Rotating chairs that are more in keeping with a Circle setting OR co-chairs, potentially sitting as a 'tribunal' one being a/the City Councillor member.
- ◇ Stronger youth representation (designated seat).
- ◇ Regular Ceremony to set the committee in a good way.
- ◇ Agreed-upon/co-created consensus process (including how to manage opposition and abstentions).
- ◇ Eliminating the 'checkbox' approach in exchange for carrying out community-led consultation.
- ◇ A change of location/more intimate/circular setting (could still be at City Hall in a smaller room).

- ◇ Designated seat for an Indigenous City Councillor.

FACILITATOR RECOMMENDATIONS

DECISION POINTS:

Some key questions to guide reintroducing Indigenous advisement for the City/Council:

- ◇ Does a Council advisory still make sense? Or should It be another type of entity?
 - » If seeking social service input, it may make sense to create a relationship directly with TASSC (some tension, but a valid external social service body).
 - » Potential to utilize a/the advisory coming out of the IAO–Council questions could float directly from Council to these individuals.
- ◇ Is external engagement and community connection important?
 - » What is the balance between community involvement and expertise?
 - » Is the AAAC about what Indigenous People or Indigenous organizations need?
- ◇ Skills-based or sector-specific entity?
 - » What is an ideal committee for informing Council?
 - » What kind of advice will Council be seeking?
 - » What aligns with the Reconciliation Action Plan?
 - If Sector-specific, create a roster of experts without designated seats–automatic seats conflict with the Terms of Reference and four-year terms/lack of turnover.
- ◇ What number of advisors makes the most sense based on the expertise needed on the committee?
 - » Reflect on other Council advisories and determine whether 25 members is the norm.
- ◇ Does it make sense to put out a public call for advisor applicants?
 - » Provide current members with right of refusal and fill in the rest OR completely dissolve and start fresh.

Some key suggestions for approaching the restructuring of Indigenous advisement:

- ◇ Create a small working group of City colleagues to decide how to proceed: start with people who know the importance of this committee.
- ◇ The City has been inclusive through interviews, the AAAC session, and community engagements; collect this data and determine what the best group will be based on what community wants and Council needs.
- ◇ The AAAC is struck by Council and centralizes Council's needs; there should be a balance with community needs—a new/different entity may be more fitting for an Indigenous/community driven approach.
- ◇ Invite potential members using in-person visits or mailed letters (not emails) and start with a drop in for tea and snacks; those who show are interested—consider personalities, skills, connections, and relationships.
- ◇ Consider designating all seats as Indigenous-only (allies are great but can complicate things).
- ◇ Once the group is convened, start in Circle with Ceremony.
- ◇ Co-create a consensus decision-making model and potentially Terms of Reference (offer a draft to start).
- ◇ Build relationships between the City/IAO and Indigenous entities and organizations; set outside of roles and have in-person conversations over coffee or tea, mapping allies and delicate relationships.
- ◇ Resource: "The Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making."

