

City of Toronto – Parks, Forestry & Recreation

Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre

Phase 1: Build the Vision, Principles, and Big Moves

Indigenous Communities Sharing Meeting
Summary

November 2023



Contents

Introduction2

About this report.....2

Format of the meeting.....2

What We Heard - Key Themes in Feedback3

Detailed feedback.....4

Questions of clarification6

Next steps.....6

Appendix A. Meeting Agenda.....7

Introduction

The City of Toronto is designing a new Community Recreation Centre and Child Care Centre for the Lawrence Heights Community. The Community Recreation Centre will be one of the City's newest and largest community centres. Meaningful, community engagement is an important part of the process, and the City has launched a three-phase engagement process to help inform the design, features, and programming of the new Community Recreation Centre. The first phase of the process focused on creating a new community-led vision that will guide the project team as they prepare design options for the Community Recreation Centre.

This summary includes feedback shared in the first Indigenous Communities Sharing Meeting held virtually on Zoom on October 4, 2023.

For more information about the project and to review summaries of other Phase 1 community engagement sessions, visit the project webpage at toronto.ca/LawrenceHeights

About this report

This report summarizes feedback shared in the first Indigenous Communities Sharing Meeting held virtually on Zoom on October 4, 2023. It includes the following sections:

- Format of the meeting
- Key themes of feedback
- Detailed feedback
- Questions of clarification



Nbisiing Consulting and Third Party Public prepared this Summary and shared a draft with participants for review before finalizing it.

Format of the meeting

The meeting began with a brief welcome from Bob Goulais from Nbisiing Consulting, followed by an invocation and thanksgiving from Elder Shelley Charles. Alex Lavasidis from the City of Toronto offered a land acknowledgement. The City of Toronto and CS&P Architects (design consultants for the new Centre) then provided an overview presentation. Following the presentation, participants asked questions of clarification, and then convened into two small groups to review and share feedback on three key topics:

- A Draft Vision for the new Community Recreation Centre
- Draft Design Principles
- Draft Big Moves

The meeting was facilitated by Bob Goulais from Nbisiing Consulting, with support from Third Party Public (both are independent facilitators) along with staff from the City of Toronto and CS&P Architects.

The meeting was reserved for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities members, and representatives of Indigenous agencies, organisations, and community groups across Toronto. 27 people attended the meeting.

What We Heard - Key Themes in Feedback

Positive feedback and no major suggested changes to the draft Vision, Design Principles, and Big Moves. Participants said they would like to see the Seven Grandfather Teachings incorporated in both the programs and Design Principles. They also wanted to see the space designed to be inclusive of all genders, ages, and abilities.

Many suggestions for programming and activating the future Centre, including how to accommodate these suggestions in the building's design. Specific suggestions included: spaces for gathering (like ceremonies, drum circles, pow-wow social nights, smudging, performances, and dance) with good acoustics and acoustic separation; spaces for community learning; spaces for traditional crafting classes; quiet spaces indoors and outdoors for reflection; an outdoor space for sacred fires; and more.

Advice to integrate Indigenous art, design, and natural materials in the future Centre. Participants suggested incorporating lots of beautiful Indigenous art from local Indigenous artists and youth, considering how the space can be designed to be connected with Mother Earth and water. Other suggestions including having digital art on the exterior of the Centre, using wood and other natural materials to make the space more warm and welcoming for all nations, having a wampum belt design in the pool, having meeting rooms with Indigenous names, and many more.

Interest in seeing Indigenous people hired to run programs and bringing elders to do traditional teachings.

Interest in seeing more programs for youth, particularly youth ages 7-12 and teenagers.

Detailed feedback

Generally, participants were happy with the draft Vision, Design Principles, and Big Moves and had few comments or suggested changes. One participant suggested incorporating the Seven Grandfather Teachings in both the programs and Design Principles.

The detailed feedback below summarizes participants' comments and suggestions about overall design, programming, activities, and uses of the future centre.

Overall design

Participants suggested the City design the centre in a way that shows the connection to Mother Earth and water. They said it should:

- feel like it belongs on the land,
- use wood and other natural materials to make the space more warm and welcoming for all nations, and;
- have an open space with lots of windows and glass.

They also suggested the team look into Native Child and Family Service's Mount Dennis Hub to see the clan signs and how the space is set up.

Spaces for gathering and classes

Participants suggested the team design spaces that can support social gatherings like ceremonies, drum circles, pow-wow social nights, and other gatherings. They also suggested the City consider creating a circle room and ensure that spaces have good acoustics and acoustic separations. Specific suggestions space suggestions included:

- spaces for community learning, including space where people can learn from elders and have tea and bannock with aunties;
- a sweat lodge (but don't place it on the rooftop);
- spaces for performances, dance, and dance classes;
- a music room with instruments;
- a meeting room that connects to the kitchen;
- big rooms to fit enough people and equipment for programs like sewing;
- a youth gathering space that can be private and where youth can feel safe;
- a reading room / quiet space where people can read books and learn about Indigenous knowledge from around the world, as well as a quiet space for seniors to gather and have a tea or a break, and;
- multi-faith rooms for observances.

Art

Several participants suggested the future Centre should have a focus on art, saying it should showcase lots of beautiful Indigenous art by local Indigenous artists. They also suggested involving youth in putting art on the walls (to make the space more alive) and dedicating spaces for art exhibits.

Outdoor uses

Participants' advice about outdoor spaces included suggestions to include:

- an outdoor space that supports traditional activities, like ceremonies and sacred fires;
- digital art projected on the exterior of the Centre;
- spaces for gardening and planters to accommodate plants for medicinal purposes;
- raised planters on the roof;
- an outdoor mindfulness space or garden for reflection, and;
- space to grow Indigenous foods, including the Three Sisters.

Pool

Participants suggested the Centre include a therapy pool and that the team consider a wampum belt design in the pool.

Programming suggestions

Speaking about programming, participants said the City should hire Indigenous people to run programs in the Centre. Specific programs and classes they would like to see included:

- having visiting elders and artists come on a regular basis to connect people of all ages, provide cultural teachings, language classes, regalia-making classes, and much more;
- programs for youth, particularly those ages 7-12 and teenagers. Consider developing a youth advisory council, where youth can decide what programs they would like to have.
- language classes (e.g. Ojibwe and Cree) for youth and children in daycare
- food security programs and access to traditional foods (traditional foods are expensive to buy and to access);
- cooking classes;
- traditional crafting classes for all ages, like beadwork, regalia, drum, and dreamcatcher making, and soapstone carving, and;
- Indigenous sports clubs so people can work towards participation in the North American Indigenous Games (ex. kayaking, canoeing, archery, lacrosse, and track and field).

Finally, participants said the Centre should support host events for Indigenous communities, including Sharing Circles on various topics and regular cultural nights.

Other suggestions

Participants' other suggestions included suggestions to: provide a space to store medicines when harvested, consider including signs in Indigenous languages and wayfinding with digital elements, and name meetings rooms with Indigenous names.

Questions of clarification

Throughout the meeting participants asked questions of clarification. Responses from the project team or other City staff follow each question.

- **Will those who live in Toronto Community Housing buildings be offered new housing when the old buildings are demolished?** *Yes, all tenants who are in buildings that will be demolished will be relocated by Toronto Community Housing and will have an opportunity to move to the new units in this area.*
- **Will the pools have changerooms that are taking into consideration gender non-conforming, 2-Spirit and trans folks, and will washrooms be inclusive?** *Yes, it is City policy to include gender-neutral changerooms and washrooms. An example of gender-neutral changerooms and washrooms can be found in the Pam McConnell Aquatic Centre.*
- **Will there be an outdoor space for sacred fires?** *The project team will consider including outdoor space for sacred fires.*
- **Can there be a space for our medicines to grow and flourish?** *Yes, there is an opportunity to provide this type of space if the community requests it.*
- **Will there be comfortable seating for grandparents, elders, or others with accessibility needs?** *Yes, there will be seating outside and inside.*
- **Will there be environmental considerations to construction, and will it be LEED certified?** *Yes, this building will be designed to be net zero carbon certified and focus on reducing greenhouse gas emissions. All new City buildings have to meet the most recent version of the Toronto Green Standard, and a lot of the new recreation centres we have now, for example, use mass timber. We are going to look carefully at material selections and life cycle, and having an ultra high performance building. We may also have solar panels, though it's too early to say what exactly will be included.*
- **Will the building be constructed to accommodate smudging indoors?** *Yes, going forward all City buildings will be designed to accommodate smudging.*
- **The proposed program for the new CRC for Lawrence Heights is really beautiful — when will Scarborough receive something like this?** *There is a new community centre under construction in Scarborough located on Sheppard Avenue East near Morningside Avenue.*

Next steps

Feedback received at this meeting, along with feedback received in other community engagement activities (including community meetings and pop-ups), will be used to inform the design options that will be shared during Phase 2 of the community engagement process. Community engagement will wrap-up at the end of Phase 3 (planned for 2024), when the City will share and seek feedback on a final draft proposed design of the new Community Recreation Centre and Child Care Centre. An Indigenous Communities Sharing Meeting will take place in each of engagement phases 2 and 3. An Indigenous Design Consultant will also join the project team to inform the design work.

Appendix A. Meeting Agenda

Lawrence Heights Community Recreation Centre Phase 1 (of 3) Indigenous Community Sharing Meeting

Wednesday, October 4, 2023

6:30 – 8:00 p.m.

Meeting held virtually

Proposed meeting agenda

6:30 Welcome, invocation and thanksgiving, land acknowledgment

Bob Goulais, Nbisiing Consulting

Elder Shelley Charles

City of Toronto

6:40 Housekeeping, introduction, agenda review

Bob Goulais, Nbisiing Consulting

6:45 Overview presentation: a new Community Recreation Centre and Child Care Centre

City of Toronto

CS&P Architects

Questions of clarification

7:10 Discussion

Programming, Features, and Activities

1. What types of programming, features, and activities would you like to see for Indigenous community members at the CRC?

Vision, Principles and Big Moves

1. From an Indigenous perspective, what is your vision for the CRC?
2. What do you think Indigenous Design Principles for the CRC would need to include?
3. What Indigenous Big Moves would you like to see at the CRC?
4. Based on our discussion today, what would you add or change (if anything) to the Draft Vision, Design Principles, and Big Moves?

7:50 Wrap up and next steps

7:55 Closing invocation

8:00 Adjourn