

City of Toronto – Parks, Forestry & Recreation

# Eglinton Park

## Indigenous Garden Group

### Meeting 1

Meeting Summary

April 26th, 2023



## Introduction

This document provides a summary of the Indigenous garden group meeting that was held in person on Wednesday, April 26th, 2023 from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

### Indigenous Garden Group Members Present

- Paula M.
- Michelle L.

### Project Staff Present

- Elijah Bawuah, Senior Public Consultation Coordinator
- Tonya Crawford, Senior Project Coordinator, Capital Projects

## Presentation

Project staff presented:

- An overview of the Eglinton Park master plan implementation

## Questions and Discussion

The following provides a summary of the Indigenous garden group members' responses to discussion questions and further conversation that emerged from these prompts. These are not verbatim:

### General Summary/Observation

- Participants were generally excited for improvements, and didn't have any major comments or concerns regarding the park layout or features.

### Heritage Garden

- Preferred Option 1 (pollinator garden) - said it felt warmer, like being cradled, enjoy that it compliments the existing landscape

### Dog Area

- Appreciate having an OLA, as currently dogs cut through the garden and sometimes owners don't pick up dog waste
- Suggested bag dispensers to help mitigate this issue
- Not dog owners, no preference of concepts

### Skate Spot

- Not skaters, no preference of concept
- Wondered who seating in skate area would be used by (response: likely other skaters)
- Appreciated the shade and accessibility of the sidewalk
- Were very keen on the opportunity for mural artworks in the skatepark, particularly if they were Indigenous artists, opportunity for Indigenous history/storytelling, as otherwise the skate spot feels too grey/too concrete

- Paula mentioned some existing murals along Eglinton done by Indigenous artists, suggested it was a project led by Councillor Mike Cole
- Michelle reminded us that BMXers and other wheeled things (skates, scooters) should be considered

### **Skatepark Location & Features**

- The participants preferred Concept 1 for the skatepark, but did not express strong feelings on the skatepark features. The participants did say that murals depicting the history of the land (e.g., cornfields and water) could be incorporated into the skatepark.

### **Indigenous Placemaking**

- In addition to murals in the skatepark, suggested working with Indigenous youth organizations (like ENAGBY, who are currently stewarding some land along the Humber River and doing some revitalization)
- Terence (project team) knows Doug from this project and could connect the project team
- Like the history of mud creek
- Opportunity to incorporate and honour many Indigenous histories -though hesitant about which ones and how to decide - should be decided by more Indigenous folks
- Mentioned opportunities to include Indigenous languages, though again concerns about which/who decides
- Like the idea of connecting stories
- Expressed interested in a walkway that follows where creek would have been and interspersing narratives and stories throughout the park
- Participants believe that Indigenous people most likely settled here because of the river and would like to see that history reflected

### **Seating**

- Liked the look of the pebble/large stone seating but want to ensure there are seating options that are accessible and comfortable for all folks like seniors
- Stone seating is a nice reference to mud creek/hidden rivers

### **Planting/Tree Walk/Existing Garden**

- Like the idea of making this a discovery walk through the park, again pointing to Indigenous placekeeping as a part of that discovery with symbols, iconography, plaques, carved stones etc. marking histories/telling stories/informing about plants
- Their existing garden has a medicine wheel, Elder Catherine suggested in the past that they also plant sunflowers
- Sunflowers in a circle could be a good semi private gathering space, also Indigenous placekeeping (though project team wanted to ensure that people taking photos/instagram wouldn't climb in these gardens and ruin flowers)
- Sunflowers mentioned as protectors, that they offer benefits to other plants and they do currently plan some in their garden

- Talk of heirloom seeds for flowers and native species
- Existing gardening group does some seed sharing
- Talk of how dogs ruin sacred medicines - as well as people
- Participant shared a cultural teaching they received from an Elder: dogs need to be kept away from sacred medicines, would like to see more education in the park around sacred medicines
- Garden needs some kind of separation from rest of park to protect plants, but don't want it to feel too disconnected/unwelcome - balance
- Talk of low fence, shrubs, stones etc. to act as a wall/divider
- Need improvements to their existing garden (more seating, better sightlines/visibility, better shed for storage, delivery options for heavy things that are delivered like soil, as current inaccessible to roadways)
- Issue of people cutting through shrubbery, don't know what the solution is to people basically living on top of the garden, a lot of foot traffic in the space and dogs invading the space
- Around 80 people gather for large gardening events, would like to see an outdoor classroom or gathering area
- Gaps in shrubbery where people are walking through and then into the garden