

City of Toronto – Parks, Forestry & Recreation

70 Croatia Street Park

Phase 1: Towards a Vision

Indigenous Advisory Circle (IAC) Meeting #1
Summary Report

February 2024



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Overview

The first Indigenous Advisory Circle (IAC) meeting for the new park at 70 Croatia Street was held on Monday, January 22, 2024, from 6:00-8:00pm virtually on Webex. The purpose of the meeting was to:

- Introduce the project team and IAC members to each other.
- Review project context and details.
- Introduce the project and allow IAC members to ask questions.
- Gather members insights and feedback on the Park's vision, Indigenous placekeeping guiding principles, and big moves.

The document that follows provides an overview of the first meeting with IAC members.

The meeting agenda and attendance can be found in Appendices A and B

The full presentation slides can be found on the [project webpage](#).

Questions of Clarification

Following the summary, IAC members had an opportunity to ask the project team questions. Below is the list of questions received and the responses provided.

Q: Can restrooms be accommodated?

A: The City of Toronto will investigate whether public restrooms are feasible for the new park as part of the Phase 2 Design Options process.

Q: Is the school community involved in the engagement process

A: Yes. We have two representatives from the school on the Community Advisory Committee (CAC), including a student and a teacher. We are also hoping to do more engagement with them in the next stage of the project.

Q: Why did the City of Toronto decide to have an Indigenous Advisory Circle (IAC) for this park?

A: The City is adding more Indigenous placekeeping and engagement opportunities as part of our [Reconciliation Action Plan](#). We decided to include Indigenous placekeeping and an Indigenous Advisory Circle as this is a new park which is a relatively large size for new parks within the downtown, with sufficient budget.

Q: What is the eco club at the school nearby? Is there an opportunity to leverage overlap with Indigenous teaching/education/land-based learning?

A: We do not have specific details on the eco club at the school and its mandate but can connect folks if they are interested. We have a student and teacher from the school on the Community Advisory Committee (CAC).

Q: What is currently on the site

A: Currently the site is being used for construction staging.

Q: Will there be an outdoor seating area for people to eat [with their dogs]?

A: There will definitely be seating in the park. The type of seating will be determined through the community engagement process.

Q: Are there other members on this IAC that are not present today??

A: Yes, there are, they will be able to access the presentation, and are also able to join us for future gatherings.

Q: Who are the expected users of the park?

A: Future users are expected to include community members, school students, shoppers, and folks who work in the area.

Indigenous Placekeeping Discussion

IAC members were asked to review the draft vision statement below that was developed based on feedback received thus far.

“We envision the new park at 70 Croatia Street will be a green oasis with a mix of restful pockets, socializing hubs, and playful and dynamic spaces that provide a welcoming new space to the Bloor Dufferin community.”

The conversation naturally gravitated towards Indigenous Placekeeping and project team members decided to stop this activity to allow for more discussion time. IAC members spent the remainder of the meeting sharing input on the parks guiding principles and Indigenous placekeeping.

The full results of IAC members’ feedback for Activity #1 and #2 can be found in **Appendix C**.

Key Elements that were discussed include:

- Desire for a small stage or event space, which could be a temporary stage or arbor to host performances, ceremony or events:
 - Dufferin Grove has no permanent facilities so a stage area at Croatia St. could complement this
- Language Revitalization:
 - Include Indigenous names for plants and teachings
 - Should be done in a way that sparks delight and can educate on what was here before
 - Include Indigenous names for plants and teachings related to that plant, highlighting how language is a connection to the land
- Recognition of Truth and Reconciliation:
 - Could be through a more traditional acknowledgement such as a plaque
 - Could link to the play structure
 - Including an inscription of “Every Child Matters”
 - Using the colour orange as an element of the play structure (through the structure itself or surfacing)
 - Could include a carving or statue with children's shoes or moccasins
 - Could include orange plants
- Provide plantings indigenous to the area:
 - Milkweed, strawberries, and other berries suggested
 - If the four sacred medicines (sweetgrass, sage, cedar and tobacco) are planted, they should have protection and stewardship by an Indigenous group and not be considered property of the City of Toronto. Explore what partnerships may exist with Indigenous students
- Inclusive Gathering Spaces for All
 - Do not include anti-homeless architecture
- Consider connections to the nearby school
- Consider lighting that doesn't negatively effect wildlife

Next Steps

Upon conclusion of the agenda items, the project team thanked all members for their participation and time. It was noted that IAC members are welcome to submit additional questions and feedback via email. The next IAC meeting will be held during Phase 2 in spring/summer 2024.

Appendix A – Agenda

70 Croatia Street Park Indigenous Advisory Circle Meeting #1

Agenda

Date: January 22nd, 2024

Time: 6:00pm – 8:00pm

Location: Online, Webex

Time	Agenda Item
6:10pm	Welcome and Introductions
6:25pm	Presented an overview of the project process and context
6:40pm	Answered questions from the group
6:50pm	Shared engagement feedback received thus far
7:00pm	Discussed vision statement for the new park
7:30pm	Discussed guiding principles, placekeeping, and big moves for the new park
8:00pm	Shared next steps and adjourn

Appendix B – Attendance

Individual IAC Members: 5/7 present

Project Team Members (that were present):

- City of Toronto – Parks, Forestry & Recreation
 - Katie Black – Project Coordinator Landscape Architect
 - William Skura – Senior Public Consultation Coordinator (Indigenous)
- Trophic Design
 - James Miller – Indigenous Design Advisor
- STUDIO tla
 - Yvonne Battista – Principal, Landscape Architect
- Hazelview Investments
 - Chloé Valcin-Wright – Associate, Planning & Real Estate Development
- StrategyCorp Inc.
 - Roxanne D’Onofrio – Senior Consultant

Appendix C – Full Feedback (Notes)

* Each box represents one comment/feedback from IAC members. Notes have not been edited but grouped by theme to support the project team in analyzing feedback.

Placekeeping at 70 Croatia Street			
Questions			
<p><i>How do you envision Indigenous culture and ways of knowing and being reflected in the park?</i></p> <p><i>What is important for you? What should be prioritized? What should be avoided?</i></p> <p><i>How would you like to see our non-human relatives supported and reflected in the new park?</i></p> <p><i>How can we design the park to make it feel inviting?</i></p> <p><i>Is there something you wish the design team would keep in mind throughout the design process?</i></p>			
		Language revitalization & education/awareness	Language revitalization: top priority
		But needs to be true to the story of the site - tie park together Need to honour treaty rights holders	consider orange/red lighting at night instead of white (that doesn't affect wildlife negatively)
		Learning paths- Wabano in OTT	Language: Indigenous names for plants & teachings (Signage)
		Native planting & ways of knowing, being	Language: needs to be done in a way that brings back the heritage & educate in a fun/delightful way.
Inclusive, gathering spaces for all	Pow wow harbour/community gathering space- can be flexible space/inclusive space	Support for a pollinator garden and traditional medicine plants- sweet grass, tobacco, sage, strawberries, milkweed, berries	Truth & Reconciliation: residential schools system education: Moccasin Identifier? Can be with orange light/orange as a color palette, can be acknowledgement/signage with "every child matters" (Education is important)
Don't include anti-homeless design/infrastructure	Small event space with seating	Medicine should not be for the CoT but under stewardship of an Indigenous org. - potential to engage students on this (e.g., NCCT)	
		Bee balm: support bees/butterflies and pollinator	