

City of Toronto – Parks, Forestry & Recreation

New Parks at 5415 Dundas St. W.

Indigenous Advisory Circle 1 Meeting Summary

December 2023

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Contents

Introduction	2
Meeting Purpose	2
Attendance	2
Presentation	3
What We Heard	4
Next Steps	6
Contact Us	7

Introduction

This document provides a summary of the Indigenous Advisory Circle (IAC) meeting that was held virtually on Wednesday, October 25, 2023, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Visit [New Parks near Dundas Street West & Thomas Riley Road – City of Toronto](#) for more information about the project.

Meeting Purpose

The purpose of this meeting was to:

- Welcome and introduce IAC members and the project team
- Provide an overview of the project
- Answer IAC members' questions, gather comments, and discuss opportunities for Indigenous placekeeping in the two new parks

Attendance

Project Team Present

- Eli Bawuah, Senior Public Consultation Coordinator, City of Toronto
- William Skura, Senior Public Consultation Coordinator (Indigenous), City of Toronto
- Leigh Lichtenberg, Project Coordinator, City of Toronto

IAC Members Present

Seven (7) IAC members attended the meeting.

Presentation

The project team presented:

- An overview of the project background, engagement process, and timeline
- The location and size of the two new parks

A brief question and answer period followed the presentation.

Questions and Answers (Q&A)

Questions (Q) asked and comments (C) made by IAC members, and answers (A) from the project team are listed below. These are not presented verbatim.

Q. How much sunlight will the park receive, given the height of the surrounding buildings?

A. City policy mandates how much sunlight parks are required to get, but the City typically acquires land that receives as much sunlight as possible, mainly from the west. The project team can follow up with more details following the meeting.

C. Include traditional medicines in the cultural gardens. They don't need a lot of sunlight to grow. Garden could be located on west side of park to maximize sunlight.

Q. Can the garden also be used to grow vegetables and raspberry bushes?

A. A community group would need to volunteer to manage and maintain the garden. The project team will consider including a community garden if there is interest from the community (*some IAC participants mentioned they would be interested in pursuing this further*)

What We Heard

The discussion was facilitated using Miro, an interactive online white board. The Miro board defined a vision statement and guiding principles. It also highlighted Indigenous placekeeping opportunities, including design opportunities, volunteer park opportunity in horticulture, ceremonial spaces, and naturalized themed kids' playground with integrated planting, with precedent images of each.

The complete Miro board, including participants' suggestions and considerations for Indigenous placekeeping, is shown below and can be [accessed here](#).



The suggestions and considerations recorded on the Miro board have been summarized and arranged into themes below. The following has been paraphrased and grouped according to theme.

Natural features and materials:

- Include a community garden with medicinal plantings.
- Include (native) trees that provide medicinal opportunities.
- Include a sacred fire pit.
- Include more (rare) native plantings such as lady's slipper and moccasin flower.
- Arrange trees and plantings to form shapes, words, etc.
- Preferred wood and trees: sugar maple, balsam, white pine, pine, cedar, black spruce, birch.
- Include rocks (special mention of white rock) in the building materials.
- Prioritize the use of wood and other natural elements in the building materials.

Water/features:

- Water is a great way to connect with nature.
- Include a water feature such as a splash pad.
- Include a calming water fountain or feature for reflection (water fall wall?).
- A stream or natural [looking] water element to honour the water as the blood of mother earth [which is also our life blood].
- A more calming water feature that leans more towards a unique experience may allow for easier/appropriate integration of Indigenous practices (e.g. river stones).
- Consider the location of the water feature, especially if a splash pad is included.
- Rain barrel for watering garden, promoting mindfulness and sustainability.

Indigenous knowledge, stories and symbols, cultural signifiers:

- The focus of the park should highlight Indigenous cultures.
- Incorporate numbers significant to various Indigenous communities (e.g. Mohawk, Anishnawbe) as well as clan animals and other significant cultural symbolism into the built environment.
- Incorporate animals into the design of various amenities or other aspects of the physical space.
- Incorporate traditional poems and teachings throughout the park, possibly engraved or etched in the walls, wayfinding. Can be standalone art, or something more interactive.
- Share the truth of Indigenous history and stories in potential cultural markers, art, etc.
- Medicine wheel colours/directions/teachings (garden/plantings/playground)
- Birch bark canoe, red river cart, mural of the Metis sash (or integrate beadwork patterns)
- Focus on stories and lived experiences of folks Indigenous to Canada.
- Incorporate Ojibwe stories about the flowers into the park.
- Incorporate the Seven Grandfather teachings. Heritage markers? Design of amenities or other aspects of the physical space?
- Consider play elements that incorporate Indigenous culture; providing educational opportunities to the public.

- "Be mindful of the land."

Indigenous art:

- Include shadow art utilizing the built environment, plantings, and/or trees.
- Include murals. Look into Seventh Generation Image Makers.
- Include tactile designs. Possibly bead work? Lean more towards more traditional forms of art from various artists.
- If art is included, lean more towards something experiential & connected rather than a standalone piece.
- Art (e.g. moccasins). Consider Moccasin Identifier Project.
- Consider art that is community generated.
- Consider integrating art into the pathways and signage.
- stART Toronto has good examples to look into.

Other suggestions and considerations:

- Include permanent shade structure that has an interactive night element to it. Possibly light projections?
- Connect with local BIA and share interests in more Indigenous-focused programming for the parks and potentially parks within the surrounding area.
- Consider noise mitigating elements because of nearby busy roads.
- Provide honouraria for garden stewards.
- An inclusive space for the houseless. Seating without bars that prevent laying down, etc.

Next Steps

- Vision statement and guiding principles will be emailed to the IAC members for review and feedback.
- IAC members can email any additional ideas, comments, or suggestions to William.Skura@toronto.ca.
- The design teams will consider feedback from this IAC meeting and other community engagement activities to create a preferred design.
- The next IAC meeting is planned for Summer 2024.

Contact Us

For questions or comments related to this project, please contact:

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