

Kennedy Park- Ionview Parkland Study

Indigenous Community Workshop Summary

Phase 2: Understanding Needs, Gaps, and Opportunities

June 2024





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Overview

The City of Toronto's Park, Forestry and Recreation (PFR) Division is undertaking a local parkland study within the Kennedy Park-Ionview area. The study will take a closer look at the parks and open spaces within these communities to better understand how people use and access these spaces and how these valuable spaces can be improved to better serve current and future generations.

On April 24, 2024, the City held a community workshop from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at Don Montgomery Community Recreation Centre for Indigenous community members and those who work with groups that serve Indigenous communities. The goals of the workshop were to provide the community with an overview of the [Kennedy Park-Ionview Local Parkland Study](#) process, and to invite people to share their experiences and ideas on parks in the area.

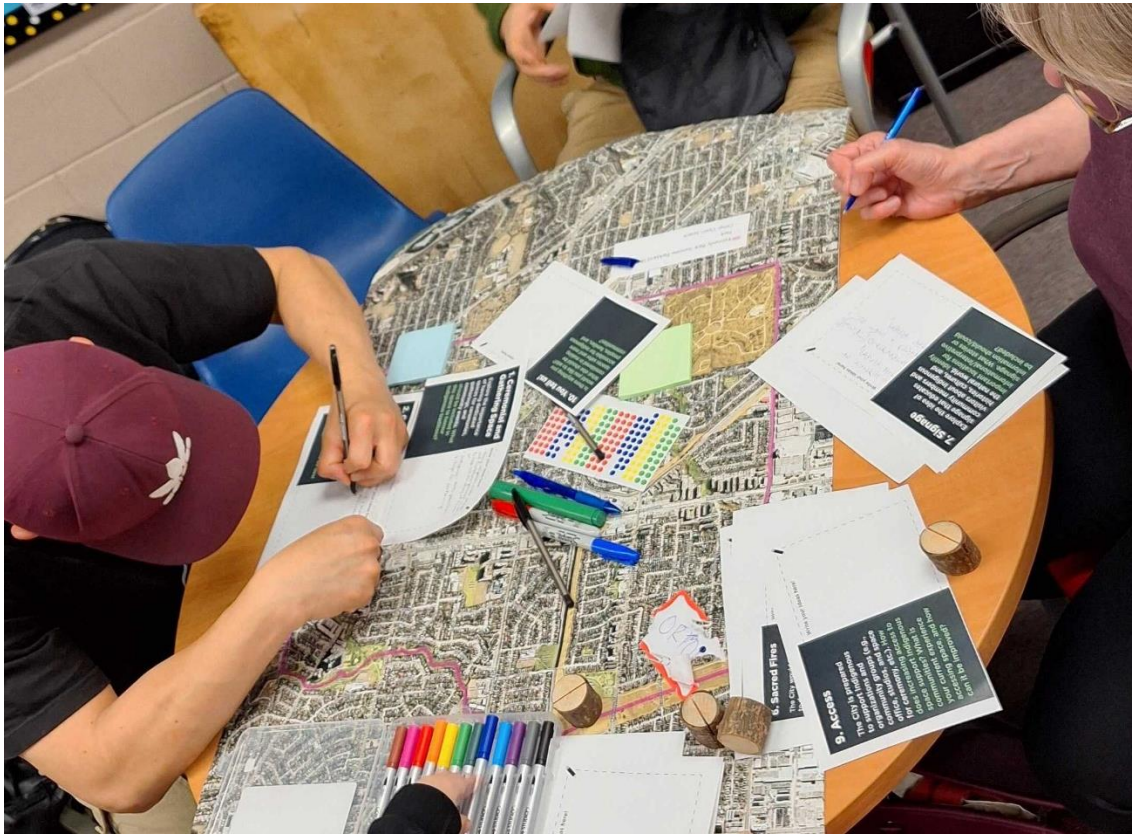
Hearing from Indigenous community members in the area will serve to guide reconciliation efforts and help illuminate a good way forward. Reconciliation at the City of Toronto is driven by the [Reconciliation Action Plan \(RAP\)](#), which was developed to guide the actions that the City will take to achieve truth, justice, and reconciliation. Honouring what we have heard and building on the knowledge that is shared reflects the values of the RAP, and will lead to better, safer outcomes for Indigenous peoples, families, and communities.

How We Reached People & Who Participated

The community was informed about the workshop through the project webpage, project e-updates list, a social media ad that ran from April 16-24, and outreach through the following community organizations and groups:

- Gabriel Dumont Non-profit Homes
- Heathy Healing Network
- Crosby Gitigaan
- Métis Nation of Ontario / Toronto York Region Métis Council
- Indigenous Affairs Office (City of Toronto)
- Ambe Maamowisdaa (City of Toronto)

A total of 30 participants attended the workshop. Participants were encouraged to sign up prior to the workshop date through an online survey, and were asked to indicate how many individuals would be included in their party. Most attendees registered in advance, while a few participants were welcomed to participate upon arrival. After the application survey had closed, 32 individual responses were registered, representing a total of 62 participant signups.



How People Shared Their Input & Ideas

Participants were invited to an accessible location to join the project team in sharing a bountiful meal prepared by local Indigenous caterer, Nookomis Kitchen. After enjoying the meal, one of the workshop participants led a sage smudging ceremony, while a member of the project team opened the meeting and facilitated an introduction circle. In the introduction circle, members of the project team and participants had a chance to properly introduce themselves to one another. Participants were also invited to share what they were hoping to gain from the workshop, and what their connection to the area was. Participants were seated in groups of four to six around circular tables.

Display boards (see Appendix B) were also located near the entrance of the space to help stimulate ideas and to provide further opportunities for input. Participants were invited to read through the vision statement (that was drafted as a result of a community workshop that took place in December 2023), and to provide thoughts and feedback directly on the boards.

The project team presented background information about the Study to help set the stage for the workshop and discussion. Participants were provided opportunities along the way to ask

questions and make comments. Once the presentation had concluded, participants were invited to discuss Placekeeping-related themes, and write thoughts and suggestions down on a series of cards. The cards reflected several themes to help stimulate discussion, based on information and knowledge that was shared in other, previous, City engagement sessions (see Appendix C). The themes were centred around ceremonial and gathering space, community gardening, native plants, naming, languages, sacred fires, signage, artwork, and access.

After participants had added their thoughts and comments on the cards, they participated in a mapping activity. The project team had laid out maps of the study area on each table and encouraged participants to highlight areas within the Kennedy-Ionview study area that could be connected to their cards. Participants also identified opportunities for improvements to existing parks, trails, and public spaces in the area by adding additional comments in the form of sticky-notes and colored dots. Members of the project team were engaged throughout the activity, providing groups with any additional information that could be helpful, and answering any questions they may have.

After completing both exercises, each table presented their findings back to the rest of the group, and elaborated on the information they had included. This presented an opportunity to share their views and aspirations, and to answer any questions that the project team and/or peers may have had. After each table shared their feedback, participants were thanked for their time and insight, and provided a cash honorarium before the workshop was formally concluded.

What Was Shared

Participants shared their stories of resilience, and expressed the challenges some Indigenous community members are experiencing in the area. They spoke to the need for more safe spaces for gathering and ceremony, and explained the importance of having these spaces. They described how having more access to land and water would help with healing – individually, and collectively. Some Indigenous communities around the study area are dealing with high levels of loss (life, connection), and it is important that the proper ceremonies can be held to honour each individual, and help the community heal. A detailed summary of comments provided through the activity cards is included in Appendix C.

“Colonization systematically removed land for gathering and ceremony. Returning land for these is necessary to begin honouring our ways of life and changing direction.”

“Access to green space can be an important way to help community deal with grief and healing.”

Spaces to gather, connect, teach, host Sacred Fires, and host sweats (sweat lodge) were highlighted. It was also important to note that some community members experience challenges when performing ceremonies, and participants advocated for respectful signage or other ways of acknowledging ceremonial practices that are in process – to increase safety for those performing them.

“Having the ability to have sacred fires is integral to our healing, connection, relationship, learning amongst ourselves and with the wider communities.”

“City should place a sign that explains protocol and acknowledgements of ceremony and gathering space for the people of TO.”

Participants shared thoughts about how parks could be improved, particularly around access and safety. They mentioned how the lack of appropriate lighting, and prevalence of blind spots in certain parks and trails prevent them from accessing the spaces. They also highlighted that connections between existing parks and trails could be improved for more ease-of-use and increased accessibility. Many participants shared that they would like to see more open green space, naturalized areas, Indigenous and medicinal plants, and food/community gardens.

“Parks can provide important spaces that support relationship building including relationships with food and building connections between land and food.”

“Food sovereignty is key; access to community gardens should be near transit options, near schools, near dense neighbourhoods, apartment buildings, near hospitals for in-patients who are healing.”

There were also many thoughts shared around representing Indigenous languages in our parks – whether that be through park naming (or, re-naming), on informational signage (like identifying flora and fauna), or street signs. Participants expressed that when more Indigenous languages are visible, Indigenous peoples feel safer, and more welcome in the spaces. An important theme of inclusivity - of all Indigenous Nations - was also highlighted. It was important for many participants that we honour the diversity of Indigenous Nations represented in this area (and across the City), and advocate for more unity between Indigenous community members. One participant stressed the importance of educating non-Indigenous folks about Treaties, and building more awareness about Indigenous peoples, traditions, and histories.

“Educational opportunities for treaty learning, especially with newcomers. Could be reflected through murals and public art.”

“(Yes!) Water features, pathways, doorways, gateways, forests. Nishnaabemowin, Haudenosaunee, Michif. Seeing our languages represented reminds us they exist and helps us learn and heal. Words act like mirrors.”

Participants also mentioned that they would like to see more important Indigenous figures and leaders (historical, or current) being honoured in our parks and public spaces. The telling (or, re-telling) of Indigenous histories and connection to the land was also a very significant sentiment that was shared. Participants thought that information and language could be also be represented on plaques, informational signage, or through artistic expression.

“Parks should have landmark spaces and trails should have signage that shares knowledge about the space. Signs should identify different plant life, focus on teaching children like in Tommy Thompson [Park].”

Participants thought to include more Indigenous artwork in the area, whether it be “street art”, sculptures, or more permanent art installations. Expressing Indigenous cultures through art helps promote them, while also making the spaces more inviting and accessible for Indigenous peoples. It also provides an opportunity for non-Indigenous folks to learn about the peoples, cultures, and teachings. There was a further conversation around teachings, and ways of expressing them through artwork and park design - to help preserve, and honour them.

“Having Indigenous made artscape and sculptures present in spaces to help tell the story of the area or Indigenous Arts Pavillion - a stage for performing. Build a lodge for ceremony. Writing grants for resources, community events, food, arts, firewood. Promotion through flyers, social media, create a site or page.”

By meaningfully including Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers, artists, and community members in the development of our parks and public spaces, we will learn how to co-create safer, more inclusive spaces for our current, and future generations.

Next Steps

Feedback from this workshop will help to identify specific needs, gaps and opportunities for improvements to parks and recreation facilities in the Kennedy Park-Ionview Parkland study area. These will be key inputs into the development of a Parks Plan.

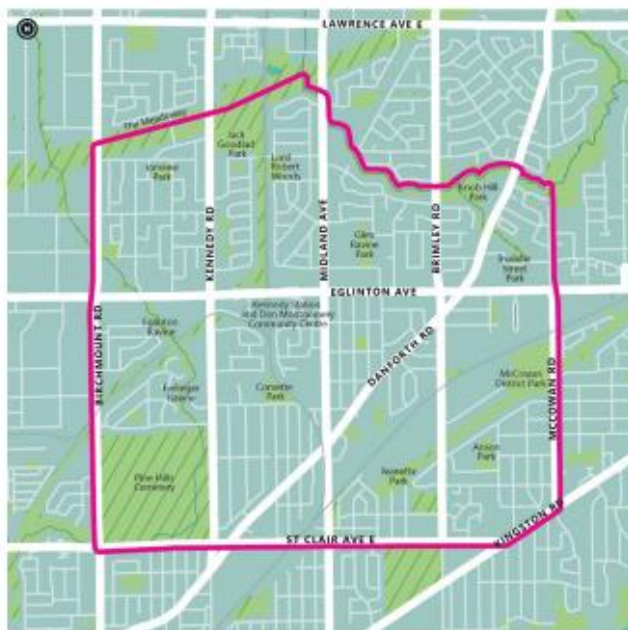
The project team will prepare a draft Parks Plan based on what we heard during Phase 1 and Phase 2 of community engagement. The draft Parks Plan will include an overall vision to guide investments in the park network, identify immediate opportunities for improvements that can be delivered quickly, and recommend longer-term priorities that may require more time and money to deliver. The draft Parks Plan will be shared online and presented at an upcoming Open House. A final Parks Plan, incorporating the last round of community feedback in Phase 3, is targeted for Fall 2024.

Appendix A: Outreach Flyer

Kennedy Park-Ionview Parkland Study

The City of Toronto is conducting a parkland study of the Kennedy Park and Ionview neighbourhoods by taking a closer look at the parks and outdoor spaces to identify opportunities for improvement. These improvements could include upgrades to existing parks, new parks, and better access and connections to parks and public spaces.

Image: Map showing parks and open spaces within the Study Area.



- Kennedy Park-Ionview Study Area
- Parks
- Other Open Spaces

Join us at for an in-person Indigenous Community Workshop!

Food, TTC tickets and an
honorarium will be provided.



Wednesday, April 24, 2024



6 to 8 PM



**Don Montgomery
Community Recreation Centre
(Senior's Lounge)
2467 Eglinton Ave E,
Scarborough**



Register Online at

www.toronto.ca/kennedyionview

OR

**Scan this image with your
smartphone camera.**



If you need help registering
for this event, contact

William.Skura@toronto.ca
(437) 220-5975



For more information visit www.toronto.ca/kennedyionview

What is a Parkland Study and what does it mean for you?

A Parkland Study is a project to take a closer look at the parks and open spaces within a specific area. The goals are to understand what is happening in the Study Area, what parks and open spaces are available, how people currently use them or want to use them, and how we can make the park spaces better for future generations.

Our intention is to include community voices in our planning work. Hearing from you means that we can get a better understanding about your ideas and vision for the Study Area. Your input is greatly appreciated and will directly contribute to shaping better park spaces – now, and in the future. The knowledge and guidance that you provide will have far-reaching, positive impacts on the community.

What to Expect at the Indigenous Community Workshop

The community workshop will be an opportunity to discuss the topic of parks and open spaces in the Kennedy Park-Ionview Study Area.

Here are some examples of questions that might frame our discussion. You are also invited to bring your own discussion questions to the workshop!

1. What is your current experience connecting to the area? Do you have any thoughts, hopes, or dreams for the space?
2. Do you have a sense of belonging in the parks and green spaces in the Kennedy Park-Ionview area?
3. What parks do you like? What do you like about them?
4. Are there any parks that you do not like?
5. Do you have any ideas for park improvements that will make them safer and more accessible for Indigenous community members and their families?
6. Do you have any thoughts you would like to share with the City that could help guide future park development in a good way?
7. Is there a particular park space in the area that holds significance to you and your community that you would like to talk about? Is there anything the City can do to support access?

What does the Parkland Study process look like and result it?




Appendix B: Display Board

Kennedy Park-Ionview Parkland Study

What do you think about this Draft Vision Statement?

Feel free to mark-up this board or add sticky notes
with your comments and ideas!

The parks network serving the Kennedy Park-Ionview community will be safe, accessible and welcoming to diverse people of all ages and abilities. The parks network will offer clean, beautiful, and well-maintained outdoor spaces that bring people together year-round, fostering social connection and a sense of belonging for everyone. Park visitors will be able to relax and experience nature through sustainable park design and improved access to ravines. A variety of amenities, recreational facilities and programs will reflect the needs and interests of the local community, ensuring that parks are inviting and multi-use spaces. It will be easy, comfortable and convenient to travel to, from and within the park network and to other community destinations.



Appendix C: Activity Cards & Detailed Comments

The following activity cards were provided to participants to gather feedback on key themes related to park improvements.

1. Ceremonial and Gathering Space

Explore the importance of having dedicated spaces for ceremonies, gatherings, and community events. **What should be included in this space to honour Indigenous traditions?**

Write your ideas here!



2. Community Gardening

Healthy foods and medicinal plants play a crucial role in physical and cultural health. Please describe important plant relatives and discuss how a community garden can promote sustainability and wellbeing. **Where could the gardens be best located?**

Write your ideas here!



3. Native Plants

Explore the significance of native plant species in restoring ecosystems. Where do these plantings thrive, and how may they contribute to greater environmental balance?

Write your ideas here!



4. Naming

Spaces throughout the city hold significance to Indigenous communities – both past, and present. What are your thoughts on highlighting Indigenous languages in park & place naming, and what could the outcomes be? How would it make you feel more connected to the space?

Write your ideas here!



5. Language

The City acknowledges the systematic erasure of Indigenous languages. How and where should language be represented in parks, and how can this help communities and their families? What languages could be highlighted?

Write your ideas here!



6. Sacred Fires

The City would like to develop a holistic approach to sacred fires. What barriers do you currently face in hosting fire ceremonies? Are there preferred locations in the community for hosting sacred fires? What else should be considered?

Write your ideas here!



7. Signage

Explore the idea of signage that educates community members and visitors about Indigenous histories, cultures, and the natural world. **Identify important locations for informational/interpretive signage. What stories or information should/could be included?**

Write your ideas here!



8. Artwork

Art can express and honour cultural identity, teachings, values, and more. **Explore the types of artworks you would like to see – whether it's murals, sculptures, or multimedia installations (or other forms)– and where these works could enhance community spaces.**

Write your ideas here!



9. Access

The City is prepared to support Indigenous organizations and community groups (e.g., office, studios, and space for ceremony, etc.). How does increasing access to space support Indigenous communities? What is your current experience accessing space, and how can it be improved?

Write your ideas here!



10. You tell us!

Is there anything you would you like to add? What else should be considered in making spaces safer and more accessible for Indigenous peoples, families, and communities?

Write your ideas here!



The following comments were provided by workshop participants on the activity cards under the themes ceremonial and gathering space, community gardening, native plants, naming, language, sacred fire, signage, art work, access to space, and other priorities.

#	Detailed Comment
1	Access to green space can be an important way to help community deal with grief and healing.
2	We should be adding parks as we're adding new people to communities
3	Basketball courts and park trails are very well-used
4	Would like to see places in parks that allow people to showcase their culture and history.
5	Fruit trees in parks can help to support affordable food options. Would like to see a 'discovery trail' with information on native plantings
6	Parks should have landmark spaces and trails should have signage that shares knowledge about the space. Signage should identify different plant life, focus on teaching children like in Tommy Thompson
7	There is conflict between dog owners and people with young kids, but there are also people with both dogs and young kids. Suggest more off-leash areas and other facilities like dog washing stations like what exists in Vancouver.
8	Parks can provide important spaces that support relationship building including relationships with food and building connections between land and food.
9	Educational opportunities for treaty learning, especially with newcomers. Could be reflected through murals and public art.
10	More community plots, medicinal gardens and more indigenous community garden spaces
11	Landmarks and gardening
12	More benches
13	Extra basketball Courts, more activities to do outside
14	More shady areas and spaces to have gatherings
15	I would like to hear other names
16	Different languages
17	More sculptures and more signage around the area
18	Increasing space would help by creating more opportunities for people by giving them space to do more community things.
19	Trails, forests, parks and ceremonial grounds
20	Spaces, signage and people
21	Use English, Ojibwa, Metis languages
22	I would like to see more events and activities in parks, indigenous garden spaces.
23	Communal medicine garden (sage, tobacco, sweetgrass + cedar)
24	Scarborough's very own High Park cherry blossom

#	Detailed Comment
25	Spaces for sacred fire. New development = chopped trees will go to fire.
26	Lodges, gazebos for community gathering
27	More indigenous names recognized. Look at stop signs on reservations, would be cool to see some sign in native (Ojibwe) language.
28	Medicine Garden (4 sacred medicines and other native plants). Perennial flowers
29	1X per year planting facilitated by the City for many parks (free seeds for the community)
30	Sunny areas in the park where no trees are
31	More indigenous artwork in park spaces, such as sculptures, murals, installations, made by indigenous peoples
32	Skate parks with graffiti walls
33	Lighting and facility security
34	Fire code and fire pits.
35	Skate park, art (graffiti), pavilion with washroom, well-lit spaces, look at Whitby McKinney Skate
36	Identifying the terrain and natural green spaces
37	English
38	Vegetable Gardens
39	People that are fresh in connecting with community cultural ceremony have issues maintaining space without signs to indicate sacred space.
40	Signage that indicates ceremonies are permitted under City's RAP, and signs to indicate "all-inclusive" or "private invitation only"
41	For funerals, needing an area that can be both open to the public as well as easily closed off (e.g. a circle).
42	No concrete or metal bowls for sacred fire pits.
43	Signage: Reconciliation Action Plan; No drug or alcohol use or smoking around fire pits.
44	Signage: that our ceremonies are critical for our healing, take pride in keeping the area clean and tidy.
45	Signage: to mention that not all ceremonies are open to the public, drawing correlations to other religious activities we wouldn't be invited to like bar mitzvahs and baptisms being private, is the same as us wishing to keep our naming, memorial, healing, and full moon ceremonies private.
46	Having the ability to have sacred fires is integral to our healing, connection, relationship, learning amongst ourselves and with the wider communities
47	Should be physically accessible and close to transit
48	Best located wherever they're most likely to be tended to, 'stewarded'. Should be accessible, close to existing community programming, schools, seniors residences.

#	Detailed Comment
49	Indigenous ceremonies and leaning about the practicing and teachings and healing.
50	Rename some of the parks using indigenous languages and names of significance.
51	Put gardens in parks and green spaces.
52	Plantings in ravines, parks and green spaces.
53	More cedar trees, plant gardens with sage birch trees and teakwood.
54	Cree, Ojibway, Odicree
55	Bathrooms, signs saying private or open to pubic, path ways easily accessible for elders.
56	Not enough wide spread knowledge about how to go about asking questions about Native community, more space.
57	Very important
58	Having Indigenous made artscape and sculptures present in spaces to help tell the story of the area or Indigenous Arts Pavillion - a stage for performing. Built a lodge for ceremony. Writing grants for resources, community events, food, arts, firewood. Promotion through flyers, social media, create a site or page.
59	Plant medicine wheel garden including the 4 sacred medicines (e.g., tobacco, sweetgrass, cedar, sage.
60	Hire an Indigenous Healer/Cultivator who has a lot of knowledge on plan, meds, trees to do workshop/tours.
61	With pro-nun-ci-a-tions written on signs or syllabics.
62	This is a hard one as there are several nations present in Tkaronto but Anishabee is the predominant peoples here in Southern Ontario.
63	City should place a sign that explains protocol and acknowledgements of ceremony and gathering space for the people of TO.
64	More people with disabilities can have access to transit and pavement trails to get to community park/space. Making maps. Invite City News to report the progress of building more parks (get the word out).
65	Some parks and even streets are named after Anishinaabe names and I think it would be cool to have some parks named after the families, Ojibwe, Cree, Six Nations Confederacy.
66	Have in several different locations so easy for many people as possible; easy to grow and hardy plants.
67	Would benefit climate change - naturalize plants, areas that don't need watering, mowing etc.
68	Multi-language signs to include local, predominant languages for entrance/welcome signs, areas of significance etc. With different demographics and cultures in the are - how will it all intersect?
69	How would this be managed to avoid non-ceremonial, unsanctioned fires? Central, open area, trees surrounding. Seating available for seniors, people with accessibility/mobility needs.

#	Detailed Comment
70	History of the Area, interesting trivia facts and info of the area, types of plants in area, educate visitors.
71	Sculptures and changing art to make the park experience more engaging, encourage and entice people to use the park pathways more often.
72	I feel that this city has been profiting off this land without even allowing Indigenous people to utilize these places that are sacred to many of us. A big part of reconciliation is making spaces for us to reclaim our identities. We need more open space to come together.
73	We had our right to practice our ceremonies and because of the lack of space to begin our healing has been nothing short of unfair. IF we had more space to have and honour our practices it would unify us all instead of keeping a division.
74	3 sisters are self-sufficient because each of them help one another with growth.
75	Having designated areas for the community to be able to sweat.
76	Murals and sculptures in parks by community collectives
77	Better access to ceremony; better gathering space; outdoor auditorium
78	Anishnabeg language and Haudeneshene [sic]
79	Currently lack of stories; need those stories documented and shared in park systems
80	
81	Lack of artwork
82	Easier mechanism for booking and accessing park and rec spaces; better access and infrastructure between parks
83	We are mid Scarborough; make this area a place people want to come visit
84	Food sovereignty is key; access to community gardens should be near transit options, near schools, near dense neighbourhoods, apartment buildings, near hospitals for in-patients who are healing
85	Yes! Water features, pathways, doorways, gateways, forests. Nishnaabemowin, Haudenosaunee, Michif. Seeing our languages represented reminds us they exist and helps us learn and heal. Words act like mirrors.
86	Balance is achieved in diversity. Monocultures destroy balance. Industrial cutting destroys ecosystems. Diverse, complex ecosystems provide homes for all species to access and are healthier for tolerating climate change.
87	Directions, street signs, plaques, park names
88	Colonization systematically removed land for gathering and ceremony. Returning land for these is necessary to begin honouring our ways of life and changing direction.
89	It's nice to see signs in different languages
90	Safe space for sacred fires is essential for ceremony and remembrance
91	Indigenous signage helps tell a story of the first peoples

#	Detailed Comment
92	Artwork like skateboard park is cool
93	Access is a must for ceremony even in winter
94	Make this happen ASAP
95	A structure for ceremony that is safe space to gather
96	With food insecurity we need more garden space
97	Native plants are important and add a sense of connection with the Creator
98	Around community centres
99	Native plants help to support native animals, by enhancing their natural habitat
100	I think universal symbols should be used so more people can understand and learn the significance of Indigenous symbols
101	More Indigenous murals, arts
102	Community garden fresh fruits and vegetables and parks and slides