

# Centennial Park Master Plan Implementation

Indigenous Advisory Circle

Meeting #1

13 June 2024

City of Toronto, Parks, Forestry & Recreation

Saffy (Main Proponent)

Ridge Road Training & Consulting (Sub-Proponent)

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# Project Team

## City of Toronto

Tonya Crawford

Mark Goulart

William Skura

Cherie Ng (Consultant)

## SAFFY

Nadia Galati

Casey Hinton

## Ridge Road Training & Consulting

Dr. Anton Birioukov

Karissa Maracle

Dr. Mark Currie



This report has been prepared by SAFFY, a third-party strategy, research, and engagement consultant and The Ridge Road Indigenous Training & Consulting for the City of Toronto Parks, Forestry & Recreation.

# Table of Contents

- Centennial Park Master Plan Implementation ..... 0
- Project Team ..... 2
  - Centennial Park Master Plan Implementation: Indigenous Advisory Circle..... 4
  - Meeting Purpose..... 4
  - Meeting Introduction ..... 4
  - Overview of the IAC..... 5
  - Presentation ..... 5
  - Presentation (continued) ..... 6
  - Presentation (continued) ..... 8
  - Next Steps..... 11
- Participants ..... 12
  - City of Toronto ..... 12
  - Consulting Team..... 12
  - Community Members (13)..... 12
  - Thank You!..... 13

# Centennial Park Master Plan Implementation: Indigenous Advisory Circle

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This document provides a summary of the Indigenous Advisory Circle (IAC) meeting held virtually on Thursday, 13 June 2024 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. The Indigenous Advisory Circle was formed through direct outreach to a number of participants and through other participants responding to a call to participate that was posted and circulated via the City of Toronto website and various social media platforms. More information about the project can be found on the [project webpage](#).

## Meeting Purpose

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The purpose of this meeting was to:

- Review the Centennial Park Master Plan Overview
- Present Indigenous placemaking concepts and design options
- Discuss the current design options and ideas for Indigenous placemaking
- Engage in intermittent question and answer periods
- Share the process of the IAC meetings, the role of IAC participants, and next steps

## Meeting Introduction

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Karissa Maracle (RRTC) welcomes everyone introduces the meeting. She informs everyone that closed captioning is available for the meeting.

Tonya Crawford (City of Toronto) offered a Land Acknowledgement for the City of Toronto.

Karissa Maracle (RRTC) reviewed the meeting agenda to ensure that all participants were familiar with how the Circle discussion would be structured and when there would be opportunity for new IAC-member to ask questions and offer ideas and opinions.

Project team members present at the IAC introduced themselves: Mark Goulart (City of Toronto); Tonya Crawford (City of Toronto); William Skura (City of Toronto); Nadia Galati (Saffy); Cherie Ng (Consultant for City of Toronto); Mark Currie (RRTC); and Karissa Maracle (RRTC).

New members of the IAC (13) introduced themselves:

Brenda; Danielle; Evelyn; Lisa; Marley; Scott; Walter; Judy; Candace; Jordan; Cedar; Ginger; Jessica

## Overview of the IAC

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Karissa Maracle (RRTC) presented an overview of the Indigenous Advisory Circle aims, ongoing meeting details, community guidelines, and project team commitment.

### Questions About the IAC?

Brenda: Did you say we're meeting every two months?

Karissa: Yes, that's the aim.

## Presentation

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Mark Goulart (City of Toronto) presented an overview of the Indigenous history of Centennial Park, various sections of the landscape of the park, and the findings from the "What we heard: Indigenous Engagement" section of the current Master Plan (i.e., key themes, ideas, Indigenous objectives).

### Q&A

**Question:** Are medicine walks on the table?

**Response:** (Mark G.) Yes, the City is looking for input on how to effectively establish the space for that. Overall, anything can be on the table. That's what the City is here [at the IAC] for. There will be multiple stages of consultation, and the Master Plan is a guide, not set in stone.

(William) The park has many components. It is the largest geographic park in Toronto, so there are many projects within this project. The City and the IAC will have many opportunities to talk about all sorts of ideas.

**Question/Comment:** (Danielle) I hope the City is considering all seasons and weather for using park, and considering more audio and tactile ways of engaging with the space, perhaps options like audio tiles that represent Haudenosaunee symbols.

**Response:** (Mark and William) These are great ideas and there are a variety of ways the City has been considering this. The City is happy to hear other ideas.

**Question:** (Ginger in the chat) Is there space for soccer or lacrosse?

**Response:** (Tonya in the chat) @Ginger there will be a new space for soccer in the park. The recreational fields are being grouped by type.

**Question:** (Ginger) Could there be opportunities to use the park to address food security and sovereignty using traditional ways of growing?

(Brenda in the chat) Community garden?

(Danielle in the chat) Medicine garden and food gardens should be open to the community.

(Cedar) Connecting to Ginger, it would be great to see natural resources in the city space.

(Jessica) [I would suggest] a healing garden to pray, meditate, to ground yourself etc. [and a] Medicine garden honouring Native plants, medicine, and trees.

## Presentation (continued)

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Mark G. continued the presentation with section on ideas and images of recreation/sports spaces.

Mark G. turned the presentation over to Tonya, who introduced a discussion on Indigenous placekeeping

Tonya then turned the presentation back over to Mark G., who discussed ideas for an improved trail network and for returning waterways to more natural flow path not made from concrete.

### Q&A

**Question:** (Lisa in chat) Can we have a MMIWG2S memorial?

(Ginger in the chat) Water is female. It would be cool to name it after a female Indigenous, our women and honouring the matriarchs. (Danielle in the chat) Recognizing the spirit and personhood of water.

(Danielle in the chat) A space to honour lacrosse—the Creator’s game—both in play and in imagery in the art in the park.

**Question:** (Marley) What does accessibility look like for the children’s playground? It’s not entirely inclusive if there’s just one point of action (e.g., a single accessible swing) for the whole park.

**Response:** (Tonya) All playground surfaces will be accessible. The exact number of accessible swings isn’t known right now, but there will be a variety of styles of swings that will be accessible, along with other accessible equipment and hill pathways.

**Comment:** (Ginger in the chat) Inclusivity is great, but the forms of inclusivity aren’t in line with Indigenous connections to the land.

**Question:** (Marley) On placekeeping, is there a place for Elders to sit and access ceremonial spaces?

**Response:** Yes, all routes of travel are accessible for anyone using travel assistance equipment and there are resting spots.

**Comment:** (Brenda in the chat) [It would be good to have a] Pow-wow space with an arbor. Strawberries [in the garden] could be one way of honoring MMIWG2S.

**Question:** (Marley) Are we having ceremony when we start tearing up the soil to create change to this space? (Ginger in the chat) Everything is reciprocal. When you take you have to give back something of equal value.

**Response:** Where we have started construction, no, we haven’t, and we apologize, but we will be proceeding with ceremony for soil and trees.

**Question:** (Judy) Can you tell us who you’re consulting with? How you found them? As Indigenous people in the community, we like to know who is involved so we can work better with them.

**Response:** (William) The City recognizes the different First Nations connected to different parts of the Toronto area, so we are always working to connect with and build our relationships with those peoples.



**Question:** (Danielle in the chat) Ceremony for all changes becomes an opportunity for Indigenous Placekeeping, and lacrosse is of great importance and meaning. In addition to fixtures, wondering / thinking of highlighting the educational and contemporary importance in articulating Indigenous sovereignty and resilience in the stories that game shares.

**Response:** (Mark) The sports fields will not be limited to any one sport (e.g., soccer), so there will be space for lacrosse.

**Comment:** (Danielle in the chat) For ceremonial spaces both a sweat lodge and ceremonial space with a designated fire pit would be great. That is a process but one fire services has been very responsive to. Also having a firekeeper, storage place for the wood has been proven to be very helpful too.

## Presentation (continued)

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Karissa presented on Interpretive Signage & Iconography

### Q&A

**Question:** (Marley) Is the city getting bids or does the city just get to pick and choose who will do the work?

**Response:** (Mark) We put out Request for Proposals, but we have opportunity to commission artists as well. Any thoughts and ideas you have, we'll try to incorporate them. We want to do it right, so if we need to go back and augment things at times, we can do that.

(William) We try to work with Indigenous designers and architectural firms as much as possible.

**Comment:** (Judy) Would be great if we could be asked for input if there's a chance to design a sweat lodge.

**Comment to Participants:** (Karissa in the chat) During the summer, we are are hoping to organize one meeting to take place at the park, to include a tour and site visit.

# Additional Conversation/Feedback from 9 July 2024 IAC Participant

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**Skye:** How much leeway is there at the moment and how much do you see this [leeway] expanding across the process?

**William:** In terms of outcomes, a lot of the conversations we're having—in terms of language representation, food sovereignty, medicines (sacred and traditional), renaturalization, they've been gathering a lot of momentum. We've been talking about gathering space for ceremony and pow-wows. We've been talking about a sweat lodge, which the project team is considering. The how and the where is something we'll need to get into. Sacred fires as well. We're thinking about who's going to be connecting to this space, how it's going to be used and animated. Those are the things we're getting momentum on. We're having conversations about Indigenous space, not borrowed space. Indigenous space that non-Indigenous space can use, not the other way around. Folks also talk about lacrosse.

**Skye:** Yes, a lot of people are lacking community these days, and I'm excited to hear about bringing Indigenous and non-Indigenous people together.

In terms of language, there's often a tendency to do language representation through colonial practices. How is the language aspect happening? Is it just a plaque? Who's deciding? And what language?

**William:** We need to bring in the Elders and Knowledge Keepers and think and talk about what languages are being used and how, because there are many languages to honour and respect, especially with the history and the healing that takes place. We don't have the answers right now, but we're trying to have those conversations and be guided in the right way.

**Karissa:** In terms of how the languages are represented, we want to hear from the IAC members and see how we can combine different parts of what people are saying.

**Skye:** As an initial thought, having an English conversation and then sprinkling in Indigenous languages is a nice way to introduce and normalize the languages. Maybe a game for kids who are there to learn it and then they can pass it on to their families.

**William:** Children are sponges and can teach us a lot about inclusion in a real way. It's a great opportunity to teach.

**Skye:** I was also thinking about seed banks or a seed exchange.

**William:** There are seed banks and seed exchanges that exist, but I'm not involved with that personally and don't have that knowledge, so it's great that you're bringing that up.

**Skye:** Maybe a little free library for seeds. Low overhead, self-governed. Keeping the sustainability is important. Only take what you need and no invasive species.

**Karissa:** I wonder, Skye, if there's a central hub or a specific person we could connect with if we wanted to move forward or had questions about this.

**Skye:** I'll send you the Google doc with the names of people.

Also, what is the interest or possibility of getting recordings of people speaking the language that could be incorporated?

**William:** Some places have a QR code that links to videos. We're also hoping to use art as part of the place-keeping. And we're talking about including recordings of words of welcome in different languages.

**Skye:** This might be a bigger idea: maybe doing a sort of geo-caching for finding different Indigenous representations in the park?

**William:** Hoping we can get a sort of cultural mapping of the city, linking place-keeping spaces together so people can see the bigger picture of the city and tell that story in a good way.

**Skye:** Another "out there" idea: anybody into Augmented Reality (e.g., Pokemon GO)? Maybe there's something in that. Or doing curated pathways, like a guided tour of the park. When you create that sort of experience, it opens the doors to go explore.

**William:** Something else we're trying to do is restore that natural habitat.

**Skye:** It'll be nice to have the sounds of the animals.

**William:** We've covered a lot here. Is there anything else you wanted to touch on?

**Skye:** What are the key things that I should be keeping in mind ahead of the next meeting?

**Karissa:** You've got the right mindset already. Maybe thinking about examples you've seen of Indigenous place-keeping and spaces in general, things that will help people feel welcome. That would be very helpful.

# Next Steps

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Staff shared that members could send additional ideas, comments, or suggestions to [Tonya.Crawford@toronto.ca](mailto:Tonya.Crawford@toronto.ca) and/or [kmaracle@theridgeroad.com](mailto:kmaracle@theridgeroad.com)

Staff compiled a written summary of the meeting and distributed it to members for review.

Members had one week to provide suggested edits to the draft summary, after which the summary was finalized.

# Participants

## City of Toronto

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### **Parks, Forestry & Recreation**

Tonya Crawford, Senior Project Coordinator | Parks Development + Capital Projects

Mark Goulart, Senior Project Manager

William Skura, Senior Public Consultation Coordinator (Indigenous)

Cherie Ng, Consultant

## Consulting Team

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### **Saffy**

Nadia Galati, Principal

### **Ridge Road Training & Consulting**

Karissa Maracle

Dr. Mark Currie

## Community Members (13)

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Scott Sunday

Marley

Brenda Wastasecoot

Walter

Lisa

Danielle Hyde

Evelyn

Candace

Judy Rehaume

Jordan Lavalley

Ginger

Jessica

Giizhik Cedar

Skye R. Regan (9 July 2024 meeting)

## Thank You!

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We appreciate all the community members who engaged with us during the Indigenous Advisory Circle. Your questions, insights, and feedback have been invaluable in developing and refining our plans and practices for Centennial Park.