

City of Toronto – Parks, Forestry & Recreation

Eglinton Park Master Plan Implementation

Indigenous Community Circle Meeting 3

February 2024



Project Team

City of Toronto

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Plant

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Trophic Design

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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.

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Introduction

This document provides a summary of the Indigenous Community Circle meeting held virtually on Wednesday, February 21, 2024 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. The Indigenous Community Circle was formed through outreach to members of the Indigenous Community Circle participants of the Centennial Park Playground and Water Play Area project. Additional grassroots outreach, including the circulation of a PDF flyer, led by Ridge Road Training and Consulting, and engagement with local Indigenous organizations and Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council (TASSC) sought to expand the opportunity to participate to relevant and interested Indigenous communities. More information about the project can be found on the [project webpage](#).

Meeting Purpose

The purpose of this meeting was to:

- Present preferred designs for Phase 1 of Master Plan
- Present Indigenous placemaking concepts and design options.
- Discuss the design options and ideas for Indigenous placemaking.
- Question and answer period.
- Share next steps.

Attendance

Indigenous Community Circle Project Staff Present

Members Present

- 11

- City of Toronto
 - Tonya Crawford, Senior Project Coordinator
 - Elijah Bawuah, Senior Project Coordinator
- Plant
 - Eric Klaver, Managing Partner | Landscape Architect
 - Julie Ourceau, Project Manager, Architectural Designer, & Landscape Architectural Intern
- Trophic Design
 - James Miller
- SAFFY
 - Casey Hinton, Senior Strategist
- Ridge Road Training & Consulting
 - Melissa Somer, Consultant
 - Anton Birioukov-Brant, Director

Presentation

Project staff presented:

- An overview of the Eglinton Park Master Plan Phase I
- Designs and concepts for Indigenous placemaking

Questions and Discussion

The project team presented the Eglinton Park Master Plan Phase I, as well as Indigenous designs and placekeeping features. The participants were asked to provide feedback on the design and the Indigenous placekeeping elements in the park. Guiding discussion questions included:

1. Do you have any questions, comments or concerns with the preferred design?
2. What aspect do you appreciate most for the community?
3. Do the Indigenous Placekeeping elements resonate with you? Why or why not?
4. Does the concept of the 21 Memory Stones resonate with you? Why or why not?
5. Is there a placekeeping approach you prefer?
6. How could we improve or enhance this Indigenous placekeeping element?

Discussion

Wall Panels

The 13 panels/poles can be connected to the 13 moon teachings. There was a suggestion to have panels and poles to interact with the rain through acoustics. Different metals and features can be used to have rain create different sounds and this would offer a way for people to engage with the park even when it is raining. It would encourage people to come and connect with the land on rainy days. This would give the park a voice and make it a living entity people can be a part of.

There was a concern that the wall panels can be perceived as literal walls, which is out of alignment with the park's overall design. There were suggestions to make sure the wall panels incorporated lace work and a degree of transparency.

Skate Spot

The skate spot was well-received, as there are not many skateparks in the area. There were discussions about using hydrophobic paint (i.e., paint that reacts to water) and painting Indigenous designs in the skate spot. Syllabics designed as street tagging could be painted in the skate spot. This paint would only be visible when it interacts with water (i.e., rain) and it will only be seen when people are not using the skate spot. It would open this place when it is not being traditionally used.

Contemporary Representation of Indigeneity

Participants felt that all people in what is now Toronto need to better understand how the original peoples lived and to incorporate those teachings into their lives. However, the participants were also quick to point out that the park needs to have contemporary representations of Indigeneity. There were concerns that Indigenous peoples are not recognized as Indigenous if they are not wearing regalia, and the participants wanted to push back against the historicization of Indigenous peoples. The participants recommended having modern and contemporary representations of Indigeneity through street art (i.e., tagging). Artists from different Indigenous communities could be invited to paint murals in the skate spot and basketball court. Having this artwork demonstrates that Indigenous peoples are part of the modern city and urban living experience. Indigenous peoples are a vibrant, flourishing, and diverse urban community in Toronto.

Placement of Stones

The Memory Stones were well received by the participants who spoke positively about incorporating information about the *Indian Act*, which was seen as a conversation starter. There were suggestions to be more intentional with the placement of the stones and to place them in

way that reflects the path of the mud creek. Likewise, some participants recommend placing more stones closer to Eglinton Street and to have more stones in the central part of the park.

A participant recommended referring to concepts similar to Land Back that arguably go further in provoking critical dialogue than the 21 references to the *Indian Act*. It was felt that a certain level of discomfort must be provoked for people to fully understand past and ongoing colonialism.

Planting

The participants had several suggestions concerning the different types of trees and plants that could be introduced into the park. There were recommendations for the planting of cedar trees, which have many teachings. Planting sweetgrass and healing plants was also proposed. A participant suggested planting mint and lavender to discourage rodents away from the edible plants in the Eglinton Park Community and Mashkiki Gitigaan (Medicine Wheel Garden).

General

General feedback is consolidated into point form below.

- Participants liked seeing the bike rail on the West Stairs, as it improves accessibility for bikes.
- In relation to incorporating QR codes within the park, the participants cautioned about the inaccessibility of QR codes to older individuals.
- There was a recommendation to construct a shed for gardening tools and firewood.
- A Sacred Fire pit was suggested.
- An opening ceremony is a must.

Questions

During the session, participants were invited to ask questions orally or in the chat. Below are the questions (Q) from the Indigenous Community Circle participants and responses (R) by the project team.

Q: Will any cedar trees to be planted?

R: There are no cedars currently included, but it is an excellent suggestion, and we will consider.

Q: How many screens are being placed?

R: The curved wall which forms the border is about 10 meters long. There are eight to nine 4 ft x 8 ft panels being installed. There are 13 posts that form the edge of the walkway leading up to the curved wall. Each one of these will have an inscription and an element of the flora and fauna.

Q: Would there be a sacred fire pit?

R: In this phase there is no fire pits proposed, there is a fire pit proposed in future phases. The community fire pit is not a sacred fire pit.

Q: Is there any accessible ramp at the staircase? Are there other access points?

R: The West slope is quite steep, unfortunately the only access up the slope is by stair. Installing a ramp would take out a lot of that slope and those trees in that slope. The design

aimed to have the least amount of disturbance to the slope. The designers used existing paths and stairs and threaded the stairs between the trees. It is not possible to do an accessible access without huge disturbance to the trees. Other existing slopes along the pathway are being changed to make them more accessible.

Q: Accessible washroom for all?

R: There are accessible washrooms in the North Toronto Community Centre that are available for the public.

Next Steps

- Staff shared that members could send additional ideas, comments, or suggestions to Tonya.Crawford@toronto.ca and/or abirioukovbrant@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.

Contact Us

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

Anton Birioukov-Brant

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