

Indigenous Advisory Circle Meeting #2 Summary Report

Parkland Strategy and the Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan

Phase 1: Indigenous Community Engagement

February 5, 2025

Dr. Kiera Brant-Birioukov, RRTC – Indigenous Engagement Lead

Dr. Anton Birioukov-Brant, RRTC – Indigenous Engagement Support

Gabrielle Ayotte, RRTC – Researcher and Writer





Attendees

City of Toronto Staff

Danielle DeMarsh (Host) (Parks Department)

Matt Bentley (Co-host) (Recreation Facilities)

Ridge Road Training & Consulting

Kiera Brant Birioukov (Co-Host)

Gabrielle Ayotte (Note Taker)

Indigenous Advisory Circle Members

Andrew M.

Jessica R.

Tonie O.

Reggie M.

Kyle M.

Cara M.

Kaiya C.

Overview of Indigenous Advisory Circle

The Indigenous Advisory Circle (IAC) consisted of 11 Indigenous members as of December 2024 – growing to 12 members in January 2025. It is comprised of individual Indigenous community members and Indigenous community members who also work with and represent Indigenous organizations in the City of Toronto. The purpose of the IAC to bring together members to and representatives from the City of Toronto's Parks & Recreation (P&R) division and Ridge Road Training & Consulting to provide comments, opinions, and suggestions for what features should be maintained, changed, and/or added to the Parkland Strategy and Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan. The IAC members' contributions help to ensure Indigenous peoples and communities feel represented, safe, and connected in recreation facilities and parks. The meeting was scheduled based on the availability of most members. Honoraria was offered to each IAC member who attended the meeting.

For more information about the project and the Parkland & Recreation Facilities Strategies: Community Engagement, please visit [Parkland & Recreation Facilities Strategies: Community Engagement](#)

Parks and Recreation Presentation

Because most IAC members in attendance were unable to attend the first IAC meeting, representatives from the City of Toronto's P&R division decided to re-present an overview of the Parkland Strategy and the Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan. This included:

- An introduction to the Parkland Strategy and Parks and Recreation Facilities Plan, including the Guiding Principles of these documents.
- The purpose and goals of the review process.
- How feedback will help shape the new plans.

The meeting facilitators then provided an update on the findings from the Indigenous community engagement process to date.

Key issues and themes included:

- Enhancing safety for Indigenous communities
- Increasing visual representation
- Developing Indigenous community centres
- Creating ceremonial sites and spaces
- Expanding educational and cultural programming
- Improving physical and financial accessibility
- Repairing and rebuilding relationship with Land

Post-Presentation Discussion Questions

1. Which of these themes or needs feel the most urgent to address? Why?
2. What would meaningful action look like to address these priorities?
3. What are potential barriers to implementation, and how might they be addressed?

Summary of Key Points/Themes Shared During Discussion at Meeting

Indigenous Place-Making & Representation:

- Members emphasized the distinction between equity (for all communities) and reconciliation (specific to Indigenous peoples).
- Concerns were raised about the lack of Indigenous place-making in facility designs, including the absence of Indigenous art, named spaces, and dedicated fire sites.
- Suggestions included marking buried rivers with Anishinaabe or Mississauga names.

Visual Representation

- A member highlighted the importance of multilingual signage, citing examples from Montagnais and French-speaking communities.

Indigenous Community Centre & Ceremonial Spaces

- A need for Elder spaces and sacred fire sites was stressed.
- Concerns were raised about safety and accessibility for Indigenous ceremonies, particularly fire keeping.

Afro-Indigenous Representation

- A member advocated for acknowledging Afro-Indigenous history, through a plaque recognizing the history of slavery in the area.
- Discussions addressed systemic barriers and the need for inclusive representation.

Top Priorities Identified:

- **Fire Spaces:** Establish safe, permanent locations for sacred fires.
- **Water Connection:** Strengthen cultural and spiritual connections to water bodies.
- **Indigenous Language Signage:** Integrate original place names in parks and public spaces.

Barriers and Solutions

- **Non-Indigenous Pushback:** Concerns over settler myths and resistance to Indigenous cultural practices.
- **Stigma & Systemic Biases:** Addressing historical racism in urban planning and within Business Improvement Areas (BIA).
- **Land Reclamation vs. Purchase:** Shift discussions on land acquisition toward reclamation and Indigenous stewardship.

Post-Meeting Process

During each IAC meeting, a representative from Ridge Road Training & Consulting (RRTC) records the comments and suggestions provided by the IAC members. These comments and suggestions are kept confidential (i.e., no names are attributed to specific comments, as shown in the previous section).

The notes are then formatted for easy readability and circulated to IAC members for review. They have one week to verify accuracy and suggest any additions. RRTC staff finalize the notes to ensure they accurately reflect the discussion before sharing them with the City's P&R representatives for public access.

While the notes are under review, P&R and RRTC representatives coordinate potential dates for the next IAC meeting. Once two to three options are selected, IAC indicate their availability within a week. The meeting is then scheduled based on majority preference and invitations are sent.