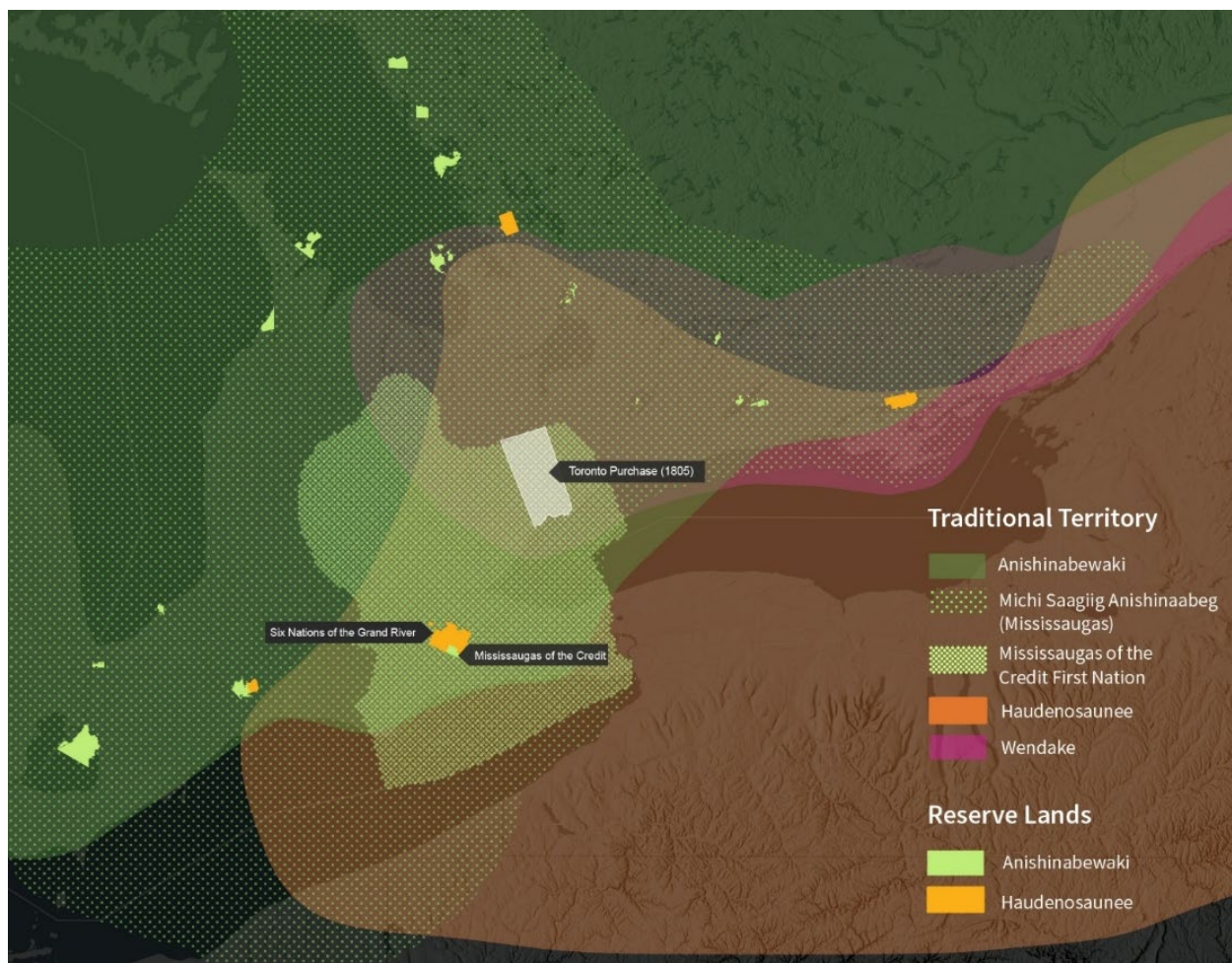


Cultural Heritage

Queen's Park North Revitalization Info Sheet

Indigenous Context



Territories Map composed by Heritage consultants ERA, territory boundaries provided by Native Land Digital.

This Info Sheet is part of a series of Info Sheets created to support the City-led engagement process for the revitalization of Queen's Park North. The content in this Info Sheet was provided by Janet Rosenberg & Studio Inc., ERA Architects Inc. and Trophic Design, firms retained by the Weston Foundations, and working collaboratively with the City of Toronto.

The area now known as Queen's Park North has long been a place of gathering, travel, and sustenance for Indigenous Peoples. It lies within the overlapping traditional territories of the Michi Saagiig Anishinaabeg, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, and the Wendat peoples. The region supported vibrant Indigenous ways of being based on harvest, trade, and traditional forms of social organization and governance that continue to influence this place through governance, kinship and cultural practice.

The City of Toronto acknowledges that these territories are currently covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit and the Williams Treaties signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands. All facets of its work are carried out on the traditional territories of many nations, including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. We honour the enduring care and stewardship of these lands and waters by Indigenous Nations and Peoples.

During the 1600s, conflict and shifting alliances among Indigenous Nations and European powers affected the Great Lakes region, including the Toronto area. Following this period, known as "The Beaver Wars", peace was reaffirmed through the Eternal Council Fire Wampum Belt, also known as The Chief Yellowhead (Musquakie) Belt. This belt was presented by the Haudenosaunee Confederacy to the Anishinaabeg, denoting enduring peace between the Nations and governance of the territory. The Dish With One Spoon Wampum, from the same era, further reflects this relationship — an agreement to share the land and its resources in peace and mutual care.

Land purchases and treaties with the Crown in the 1700s, 1800s and early 1900s were accompanied with expanding colonial settlement and the displacement of First Nations from traditional territories in Ontario. The treaties in many cases were not fully resolved until settlement decades later (e.g. Williams Treaties settlement in 2018) or remain subject to ongoing claims.

In 1840, the Anishinaabeg and Haudenosaunee renewed their longstanding alliance through a council gathering that reaffirmed their sovereignty, diplomatic relationship, and shared responsibilities under the Five Council Fires Wampum Belt, read by Chief Musquakie (Yellowhead). This renewal reflected a continued commitment to inter-Nation governance and peace — agreements that exist alongside, not beneath, treaties made with the Crown.

Land Subdivision and the Creation of King's College

The area now occupied by Queen's Park North is part of a natural region characterized by mixed woodland and creeks flowing into Lake Ontario.

In 1828, three Park Lots were acquired by King's College to serve as the site for their future campus. At the time, the lots were still outside the urban perimeter and characterised by field and remnant forest cover bisected by Taddle Creek in a north-south direction. Improvements to present day College Street and University Avenue provided ready access to the campus lots from the growing city to the south and the area became a popular place for recreational activities among Toronto's residents. In 1845, a wing of King's College was built on the campus lots as part of a grand vision that was never realized before the institution ceased to exist.

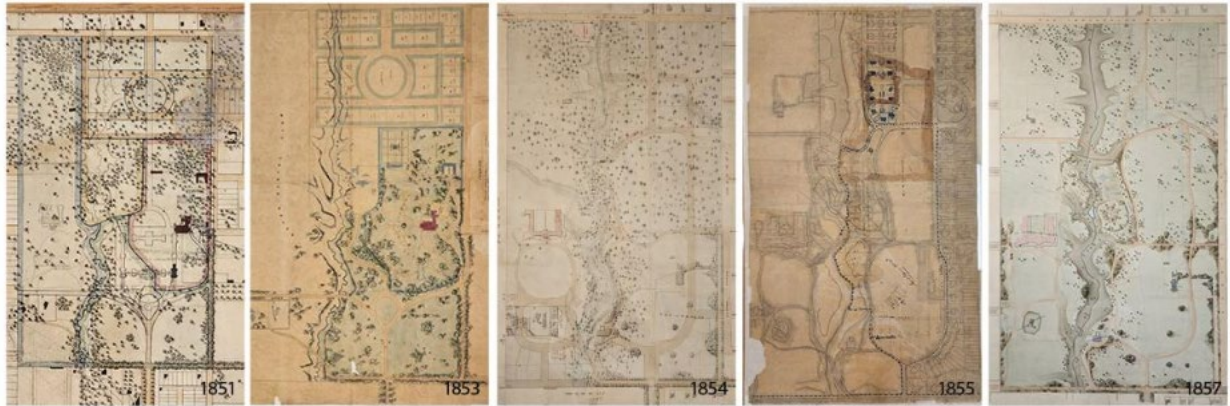


Photograph of Taddle Creek on the grounds of University College

University Park – Planning Explorations

In 1849, the newly elected government responsible for the Province of Canada voted to abolish King's College and replace it with the secular, non-denominational University of Toronto.

Landscape plans for the new university produced throughout the 1850s were inspired by the early public park movement that was developing in the UK at the time to advocate for urban green spaces as a necessary response to the effects of industrialization and rapid urban population growth on public health and wellbeing in the overcrowded and polluted cities of the time.



Different Architectural drawings and plans of University Park in Toronto, Ontario

A series of plans explored different possibilities including an experimental farm, botanical garden, and vice-regal residence. They incorporated key features of early public park design such as groupings of trees, grassy meadows and winding pathways. Plans dating to later in the 1850s assigned the land west of Taddle Creek to campus development and the land east of the creek as parkland.

Queen's Park – A Public Park

In 1858, the University of Toronto leased approximately 20 hectares (49 acres) of land east of Taddle Creek to the City of Toronto for use as an urban park to be named Queen's Park. The park was opened by Edward, Prince of Wales in 1860 and became the first public park in British North America, inspired by similar parks that had recently emerged in the UK and the United States.

The park quickly became a popular place of leisure, particularly for the nearby residents of the densely populated St John's Ward. Later, its appeal as a green space within the city led to the construction of stately homes along portions of the park's perimeter.

Beginning in the late 1800s, a number of monuments and memorials were added, leading the park to serve an increasingly commemorative function alongside its recreational function. As a popular public space, it also became a site for public storytelling, preaching, and free speech advocacy.

Institutional Neighbours



Institutions surrounding Queen's Park

Since its creation, a number of prominent institutions have been built around Queen's Park North. The addition of these institutions reduced the overall size of Queen's Park and gave it the character of a quadrangle.

Colleges affiliated with the University of Toronto were built west and east of the park. These include University College, Trinity College, Victoria College and St. Michael's College. Additional university buildings were added to the city block south-west of the park.

Between 1886 and 1892, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario was built in the southern half of Queen's Park following the Province's expropriation of university lands in the 1850s. This reduced the park to approximately half its former size and decreased its prominence given that it was now situated behind the south-facing legislature. A number of government offices were later added south-east of the park, adjacent to the legislature.

The Royal Ontario Museum was built immediately north of Queen's Park between 1910 and 1914 and was subsequently enlarged between 1931-32.

20th Century Changes



Examples from 1970–1998 of Queen's Park as a key site for public gatherings and demonstrations — including environmental vigils, protests, and GAYDAYS, a multi-day celebration of the Queer community.

By the mid-twentieth century, urban development and the expansion of city streets to accommodate growing volumes of vehicular traffic hardened the park's perimeter and separated it from its surroundings.

A central bandstand that acted as a gathering place and housed washrooms was removed by the city because it had become a draw for the homeless and meeting place for gay men. It was eventually replaced by a statue of King Edward VII in 1969.



City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1244, Item 3137

Queen's Park North pavilion and washroom building - replaced in 1969 by the King Edward VII statue. During the latter half of the twentieth century, heavy public use and poor upkeep caused a general degradation of the park and its natural features.

During this time, its proximity to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario meant that it had become a popular site for political protests and public demonstrations that sought to increase visibility for a variety of causes (e.g. education funding, LGBTQ+ rights and the environment).

The Park's Significance to the 2SLGBTQ+ Community

Queen's Park North has a long history as an important gathering space for 2SLGBTQ+ communities, hosting events, rallies, and public demonstrations. The project recognizes this history as an important part of the park's cultural heritage and current use.

In the early 1900s, the park became both a meeting place and a target of police surveillance. Even after Canada partially decriminalized gay sex in 1969, police patrols, raids, and the removal of park bushes in the 1970s showed how queer presence in public space was discouraged. Despite this, Queen's Park also grew into a powerful site

of pride and visibility. In 1974, Toronto's first Pride Week culminated in a march to Queen's Park, establishing the park as a symbolic gathering space for queer rights and celebration.

Today, Queen's Park remains an important and accessible space for 2SLGBTQ+ communities, continuing to serve as one of the few free public sites for a wide range of gatherings and demonstrations and a vital hub for expression, activism, and connection within the 2SLGBTQ+ community.

Present Day

Today, Queen's Park North is known for its large deciduous trees that form a canopy over an open lawn crossed by a network of paths that converge on the central statue. It remains well used by the public, for whom it continues to serve as a place for recreation and a refuge from the city where people can reconnect with nature. It also acts as a thoroughfare for pedestrians and a site of commemoration, social mobilization and the public expression of community identities.



Current photograph of Queens Park North