

Record of Discussion

Leslie Slip Lookout Park
Indigenous Community Sharing Meeting #2

December 1, 2021

Participants

- Diane Longboat, Turtle Clan and Mohawk Nation at Six Nations Grand River Territory
- Jai King-Green, Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation
- Wanda Whitebird, Mi'kmag Nation from Afton, Nova Scotia
- Katherine G.
- Taunya Paquette
- Tiffaney Malley
- Ishmam Rahman
- Waasmowin-Mnidoo
- Cynthia Brink
- Elisabeth Pohl
- Caitlin Laforme, Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation
- Theo Nazary, Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre

City of Toronto

- Councillor Paula Fletcher
- Susan Serran, Councillor Fletcher's Office
- Jennifer Franks, City of Toronto

CreateTO

- Jennifer Tharp, CreateTO
- Susan O'Neill, CreateTO

Consultants

- Claude Cormier, Claude Cormier + Associés
- Marc Halle, Claude Cormier + Associés
- Carlos Portillo, Claude Cormier + Associés
- Danny Roy, Brook McIlroy
- Dani Kastelein, Brook McIlroy
- Ryan Gorrie, Brook McIlroy
- Calvin Brook, Brook McIlroy
- Bob Goulais, Nbisiing Consulting Inc.
- Sayan Sivanesan, LURA Consulting

Record of Discussion

Diane Longboat of the Turtle Clan, Mohawk Nation, Six Nations of the Grand River introduced herself and offered an opening invocation and thanksgiving.

Jennifer Tharp of CreateTO offered her thanks to Diane for the beautiful invocation. She then provided a land acknowledgement as a settler on the traditional territory of many First Nations, and gave acknowledgement that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

Bob Goulais introduced himself as the facilitator for the evening and outlined the purpose of the session to share the refined design concept for the Leslie Slip Lookout Park and have a community dialogue on whether it is welcoming to Indigenous people. Bob also provided a brief overview of the Indigenous engagement approach including the guiding principles of respectful, meaningful, and collaborative engagement. He then introduced Councillor Paula Fletcher (Ward 14, Toronto-Danforth).

Councillor Fletcher provided greetings on behalf of the City, and words of appreciation for those who are participating in the meeting. She shared her observation that Indigenous placemaking used to be a gap in waterfront projects, and that she is happy to see that this is changing through projects like this one. She also shared that Lower Coxwell Avenue will be undergoing a name change to reflect the water as another example of Indigenous placemaking in the area.

Bob introduced the project team, including the CreateTO team, the public engagement team and the design team from Claude Cormier and Associés and Brook McIlroy.

Marc Halle of Claude Cormier and Associés shared the presentation on the screen.

Jennifer Tharp began the presentation by providing a brief overview of CreateTO, which manages the City of Toronto's real estate portfolio. They are continuously looking for new and better ways to use the City's real estate assets including under-utilized surplus lands and open spaces. The Leslie Slip Lookout Park, located at 12 Leslie Street in the Toronto Port Lands, is two acres in size and is predominantly industrial. Jennifer Tharp shared photos of what the sight looks like presently. The project proposes to make this parkland as part of the Port Lands Planning Framework that was approved by City Council in December 2017.

In late 2020, CreateTO held a design competition to select a Landscape Architect to prepare a conceptual design for the Leslie Slip Lookout Park. A jury selected Claude Cormier and Associés who is also working with Arup Engineering, gh3* and Dougan & Associates. The first public meeting and the first community sharing meeting to review the schematic design for the park were held in Spring 2021.

Jennifer Tharp gave a brief overview of the common themes that were heard at the Indigenous community sharing meeting in April as part of that process. The project team heard that they should include Indigenous members on the design team, respect the natural environment,

reflect the importance of water to the site and connection to fire, and consider the four directions and connections to the Sky World.

Marc then reviewed the design team's responses to the Indigenous community feedback. All industrial references and symbols have been removed in the new design. To show greater consideration for the natural environment, the new design uses only native species plantings in the park. The weeping willow species has been replaced by the black willow species based on a participant's suggestion. The design team is also taking a 'forest approach' to landscaping, rather than an individual tree approach. This includes working with Kayanase, an ecological restoration firm, to select specific species of native vegetation that will help rehabilitate the site into a forest ecosystem and a shrubs and dune ecosystem.

The design team has identified areas where ceremonial fires and gatherings could potentially take place and have incorporated a landing near the dock-wall to bring people closer to the water. To reflect the four directions and Sky World, the design team is considering designs where the four directions are incorporated into the lookout tower, which shape is inspired by a hollowed-out tree. Marc then shared that the firm Brook McIlroy was brought on to the design team to include Indigenous designers working on the Indigenous placemaking elements.

Danny Roy from Brook McIlroy spoke about the team members and work from the firm's Indigenous Design Studio. He then reviewed the six key themes that they identified to include in the Indigenous placemaking, which are connection to fire, connection to water, lookout tower, language, materiality, and plantings.

Danny explained that though the City may discourage public fire pits at the site, it may be possible to embed a design element that can only be used for Indigenous ceremonies with City permission, and this can take the shape of a fire bowl with circular stone seating. Structures that reflect light may be another way to bring connection to fire. Interpretive panels and signage around the dock-wall that tell stories of waterways and the Migration story can bring connection to water.

Danny described how the openings to the lookout tower can be adjusted so that they align with the four directions. Other ideas for Indigenous placemaking at the lookout tower may include incorporating the medicine wheel or Indigenous star maps into the base of the lookout structure, as well as incorporating artwork and murals at the base of the tower or embedding symbols into the texture of the concrete.

Danny explained that language can be represented in the Indigenous placemaking by working with Indigenous communities to identify words in signage and art. Language can also be iconography and motifs that represent concepts. The theme of materiality is about being intentional about the use of materials that is incorporated into the design. The theme of plantings is about the use of native plantings but also considering how Indigenous communities can have relationship with the plantings, by for example incorporating a small medicine garden.

Bob opened up the conversation to questions. One participant spoke about concerns they had around **accessibility**. The project needs to look at how people will get in and out of the site, and think about whether the lookout tower may trigger someone that has epilepsy. They shared that they have been working with the City of Toronto to create an accessible sweat lodge and have learnt a lot about how Indigenous people with accessibility challenges are not participating in ceremonies. They stated that: “accessibility of Indigenous people should not be an add-on – that needs to be the beginning.” The participant also stated that “I don’t know if I could access the lookout tower, don’t know how someone in a wheelchair could access that.” The participant suggested that a disability consultant or designer should be a part of the project.

Marc responded that there is an accessible pathway to the lookout tower, and that the slope transition has been kept within the appropriate range. Marc acknowledged that the participant’s other points such as epilepsy triggers need to be considered. The participant shared the request: “when you build a sacred fire, please make sure I can access it.”

A participant asked whether there will be information or references **acknowledging the Treaty lands and the rights-holders**. Jennifer Tharp answered that this is something they will look at.

The participant asked whether the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation will be **included on the ecological restoration process**. Jennifer Tharp stated that they are just at the beginning of having conversations with potential ecological consultants and will know more over the next couple of weeks.

One participant shared appreciation for the good work happening here and for having natural species in that territory. They shared that they use that territory a lot as a cyclist, and for the natural space. They asked where a cyclist can keep their bikes in the park and stated that they would like the **area for bicycle locking to reflect Indigenous design elements**. They also asked why a firepit cannot be booked at this site like at Trillium Park. Marc responded by noting the area in the refined concept design where the bike racks would be. He also explained that they would like to incorporate a publicly accessible bike repair station as well.

Another participant asked what are the parameters and timeframe for **consultation with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation** about the Indigenous design concepts. Jennifer Tharp answered that the next steps and timeline will depend on the design brief. Once the design brief is completed, an appropriate process can be determined.

Bob stated that this is the same answer for a comment in the chat that asks how the artwork will be commissioned, if there will be a public callout for Indigenous artists, how the selection will be handled, and if the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation could have a seat for that process.

A participant asked if there is a website which lists the membership of the “Indigenous Caucus”.

A participant asked if there is a website which lists the membership of the “Indigenous Caucus” referred to by Danny Roy. A discussion took place on what this Indigenous caucus was and whether it meant the Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee.

One participant gave thanks to the presenters and to the opening prayer. They then asked how there can be more regular engagement beyond the sharing meetings. They said: “we only hear about plans when there are meetings like this. The **process needs to specifically engage Treaty and rights-holders**”. They heard that there is housing being developed specifically for Indigenous men and stated that **Indigenous women who need support are consistently being left out**. They also stated that **Coxwell Avenue has two housing developments that are longstanding in the territory**, and these members are not being engaged in this process. The participant emphasized that rights-holders need to have a say.

Bob thanked the participant for the strong reminder that engagement must engage rightsholders and also the people who are being left out. The participant responded that it is imperative that City of Toronto implement the Calls for Justice in the **Missing and Murdered Indigenous Woman and Girls Final Report**.

Another participant asked if there any current seats in the Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee dedicated to Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. Jennifer Franks answered that there is currently not a dedicated seat for Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, but the committee dissolves every City Council election cycle and there will be an opportunity next year for new members to join.

Bob then invited Dani Kastelein of Brook McIlroy to share the design they made for a temporary mural. Dani shared their screen and took the participants through the mural design panel by panel. Dani explained that it is a stylized design of the Anishinaabe Migration story, and that they think this will be a good fit for the site given the relationship to water.

Bob asked participants to share what they like best about the design and what can be improved. One participant said: “I’m very moved. I don’t think that you’ve missed anything.” The participant concluded by saying: “I said at the beginning that I felt like we were an add on in this process, but this clearly shows that we are not.”

A participant commented that: “This is very beautiful. I really love it. The part that I loved the most was the harvesting and planting of the three sisters. And the final one where they are harvesting the rice. Thank you. It’s sad that it is not going to be preserved.”

Another participant said: “This depiction of our way of life is truly beautiful.” The participant then asked Councillor Fletcher if there is any way this mural can be preserved. They suggested that **ideally the mural can remain in the park**, but if not this should remain in the City of Toronto.

Bob thanked the participant for the question and asked CreateTO and Brook McIlroy if they could answer whether the mural can be preserved. Calvin Brook of Brook McIlroy asked if

Claude Cormier, as the park designer, can talk about how he sees the life of this mural in the park.

Claude responded that his team saw the mural design for the first time yesterday and were wowed. He responded that they would love to keep it in the park and supports that this should be preserved.

Bob read a comment from the chat that said: “although I am connected to traditional methodology, we need to **incorporate linkages to technology** for younger generations and international visitors so perhaps an app that guides.” Bob then asked participants to share if there was anything else they saw today that they like or additional thoughts they have for making Leslie Slip Lookout Park a welcoming place.

A participant suggested that as this year is Toronto’s Year of Public Art, hopefully Dani’s design can live on as part of that. The participant then stated that they were caught off guard by the **Turtle’s representation in the mural** as the Island of Montreal: “the way I see the Turtle is representing all of North America, so seeing it in that smaller representation kind of threw me off.”

Bob explained that in the Anishinaabe Migration stories, in the Prophecies, there is a specific “turtle-shaped island” along the Migration route. This is different that the story of Turtle Islands (North America). Bob suggested that perhaps this can be explained through interpretive signage. Bob then read a comment from the chat that suggested the design include **tactile music** so gifts such as autism are considered.

Another participant asked a question, but it could not be understood due to poor connection. Bob said that he would connect with the participant directly via email about their question.

Jennifer Tharp thanked attendees for their participation. The group was informed that Brook McIlroy will incorporate the feedback into the design brief, and that the design team will incorporate the feedback on the mural. She noted that the project is currently in the design development phase, that construction is expected to begin in 2022, and the park is expected to open in 2023. She concluded by inviting participants to contact her if they have any more comments by sending an email to: jtharp@createto.ca.

Bob offered thanks to the participants for their ideas and input. He committed to creating a discussion record and sharing that with the participants to ensure it is accurate.

Bob offered a closing invocation provided in a good way.