

Record of Discussion

Leslie Slip Lookout Park
Indigenous Community Sharing Meeting

April 27, 2020

Participants

- Jai King-Green, Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation
- Peggy Pitawanakwat, First Peoples @ Seneca, Indigenous Services at Seneca College
- Birgit Siber
- Suzanne Brunelle, Toronto-York Regional Métis Council
- Marcel Larouche, Toronto-York Region Métis Council
- Sheila Boudreau
- Caitlin Laforme, Mississaugas of the Credit
- Jean-Philippe Thivierge, Huron Wendat Nation

City of Toronto

- Councillor Paula Fletcher
- Susan Serran, Councillor Fletcher's Office
- Jennifer Tharp, CreateTO
- Hon Lu, CreateTO

Consultants

- Claude Cormier, Claude Cormier and Associates
- Marc Halle, Claude Cormier and Associates
- Carlos Portillo, Claude Cormier and Associates
- Bob Goulais, Nbisiing Consulting Inc.
- Lauren Sooley, LURA

Record of Discussion

Jai King-Green of the Mississaugas of the Credit introduced herself and offered an opening invocation and thanksgiving, followed by a song.

Bob Goulais introduced himself as the facilitator for the evening. The purpose of the session is to introduce the design concept for the Leslie Slip Lookout Park which is located in the Port Lands near Tommy Thompson Park. He then introduced Councillor Paula Fletcher for Toronto-Danforth.

Councillor Paula Fletcher provided greetings on behalf of the City, and words of appreciation for those who are participating in the meeting. She and her daughter drove to the Leslie Slip Lookout Park and provided the participants with a live "tour" of the park including an interesting

perspective of where the park entrance will be. Participants expressed their appreciation for the Councillor's tour stating that it shows she cares for the area and the park.

Each participant was asked to introduce themselves including the CreateTO team, the public engagement team and the design team from Claude Cormier and Associates. Each of the participants provided a brief introduction as well.

Marc Halle of Cormier and Associates shared the presentation on the screen.

Bob began the presentation by providing a brief overview of the Indigenous engagement approach including the guiding principles of respectful, meaningful and collaborative engagement.

Jennifer Tharp of CreateTO provided a brief overview of CreateTO, the agency of the City of Toronto that manages its 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 is located at 12 Leslie Street in the Toronto Port Lands. The area is two acres in size and is predominantly industrial in nature. They are proposing to make this an open space. Presently, the area is mainly industrial with some film uses and creative uses.

In late 2020, CreateTO held a design competition to select a design for the Leslie Slip Lookout Park. A jury selected Claude Cormier and Associates who is also working with Arup Engineering, GH3 architects and Dougan & Associates. At the beginning of 2021, they began reviewing schematic designs and having conversations with the public. In Fall 2021, they will put out the tender drawings and start the construction process. They anticipate opening the park in 2023.

Claude Cormier provided some context to his design speaking of the phenomenal view of the City, framed by the water channel. The small, two-acre site has tremendous potential to reconnect the former industrial site with the water's edge. He said they wanted to propose something that is universal and nature-driven.

Marc shared a fly-through video of the site and the design concept.

Claude described the design indicating that the building the participants saw in the earlier live "tour" would be torn down to open up the site. The site is forested along the back edges with trees and mounds throughout, with a public beach next to the water. The focal point of the design is the lookout structure that has a panoramic view in all directions. At the centre of the site is a central gathering space with four pathways converging in the middle.

Claude explained that the three mounds near the street will buffer the street noise and hide traffic. The plants would consist of Indigenous trees and shrubs. Near the beach would be a firepit for public use. The slope of the mound leading up to the lookout faces the water channel and the beach. On the outside of that mound and pathway, along the south edge of the site, would be a natural and forested area leading up to Tommy Thompson Park.

Claude spoke about the pathways that would serve as a bike trail as a major gateway into the park.

Marc provided a lot of detail on the design including the history of the site, its historic, industrial use and current condition of the site. He explained the measures proposed to address soil conditions including the use of the mounds that provide a cap for the soil underneath. He described how the spine pathway would connect the site and would include bike racks. He described a three-metre wide boardwalk on either side of the beach with picnic tables and a firepit in the sand. The design of the lookout resembles the industrial silos in the area but also incorporates arches and a view of the Toronto skyline.

Marc spoke about the design and use of park furniture making use of rough wood as benches. Around the centre of the park, near the lookout and near the beach, are gear-shaped seating platforms which references the industrial heritage of the park.

In closing, Mark spoke about the uses of the park to see sunsets, the night sky or for active programming, relaxation and beach use. It could be a place for ceremonies, large gatherings, outdoor movies or even larger gatherings.

Bob opened up the conversation to questions. One participant asked if there was any **Indigenous people as part of the design** team? Jennifer answered that they do not have Indigenous representation on the design team yet. There are opportunities to include an additional person on our team.

A participant asked if **black willow** would be considered as they are native to the area. Marc answered that this may be a possibility and it may be a good choice instead of a weeping willow. It is consistent with the character of the Don River. However, in the past, others have considered them and their price point, but ultimately were not approved.

One participant asked what is the goal or parameters of Indigenous placekeeping for the park? Bob stated that this was the purpose of the meeting and that suggestions would come from this dialogue.

Claude also responded that the goal is to obtain input and to merge it into the design, ensuring it is contextually fitting with the history of the site and that it is authentic to the evolution of the place. Much of this would come from the participants.

A participant suggested that an area could be planned to allow for water blessings with a **platform to access the water** and include a teaching plaque or information display.

A participant spoke about the purpose of **creating this as an Indigenous place**. For Indigenous peoples it is being welcomed and feeling that it is their place. It should be for remembering the past and celebrating the present and future. It should also be about making this space natural using native species and bringing it alive. They felt it was important to have

an **Indigenous artist or designer involved** early on to help make the Indigenous presence very strong.

When looking at the images, they are very strongly industrial. The symbolism of the industrial era may put people off. There is already too much concrete in Toronto and it feels oppressive.

A participant said they see **fire as sacred**. Several participants really appreciated the inclusion of the firepit. A participant stated: "To embrace the firepit with an industrial symbol it is almost like you are imprisoning it."

A participant suggest that it would be great to see the **four directions** incorporated into the lookout.

A participant commented that the emphasis seems to be on post-contact and settler history. It is very important that we talk about **pre-contact, Indigenous history**. It was kind of off-putting to see that Indigenous content was number six, really it should be number one!

Another participant agreed and was concerned over the over-representation of colonial history and industrial heritage. They expressed concern about the planting of **traditional medicines** and who will be taking care of these as they are sacred. She also offered a suggestion about using a **different colour of cement** rather than white. Finally, she offered a suggestion that signage be made in the **Anishinaabemowin** (Ojibwe) language.

In the chat, a participant suggested the park reflect Indigenous history rather than industrial history. Bob offered advice to the design team to reflect, not just the past and history, but **living culture**.

In the chat, a participant offered a suggestion to use the lookout and the doorways to each about the four directions and include **medicine wheel teachings**. They also suggested that the design could include **Indigenous gaming** instead of a huge checkerboard. Another participant suggested including winter sports. She would also like to see Indigenous trees being protected and reflected in storytelling.

Another participant shared about the **importance of water** as this was once wetland. Perhaps consider an interactive feature to acknowledge the water.

One participation suggestion a **connection to the sky world** has its teachings including the night sky.

A participant suggested that the park may want to acknowledge the history of the place in relation to **fishing**. Michi Saagiig people made use of the wetlands for medicine and relied extensively on fishing.

Another participant, said: "I'll be blunt, **scrap the industrial connection.**"

A participant suggested adorning the lookout in **climbing vines**. Chat comments came in speaking about acknowledgement of the fishing, the mounds and suggested taking a look at Serpent Mounds Park. Participants would appreciate the **mound teachings**.

A participant asked about the prevalence of **invasive species** and where that may be a factor or concern?

CreateTO answered stating that addressing invasive species and the health of the plants in the park will be a part of the ongoing maintenance that will be done by the City. Upon completion of the design and construction, the park will be handed back to Parks, Forestry and Recreation.

Additional comments included planting of **berry shrubs and trees** to bring back the birds.

A participant stated that the purpose of the park could be to **celebrate water**. If the beach cannot reach the water, perhaps the design of the park or public art can give the feeling of water and its importance to Indigenous peoples. They asked: "Who is the space for? Why are we doing this?"

One participant spoke about ensuring the park represented the **views and needs of youth** and ensure they feel valued. One project involving Elders and the Wandering Spirit School included creating a large mural. Through that, they will feel inspired by the **sacredness of water** and learn teachings at the same time. To bring the sacredness of water into the space.

Bob reiterated a participant's suggestion for a platform for water offerings and teaching and learning, but also using **art to represent the sacredness of water**.

Bob acknowledged the importance and the need to better reflect and involve the **voices of the youth** into placekeeping work.

A participant suggested that the youth may need space for a youth drumming circle. Three areas were suggested for a **drumming circles** including the grassy mound leading up to the lookout, on the lookout itself and around the fire provided the benches are not industrial representations. The lookout is almost like a stage and may have good acoustics and it may provide good energy up there.

Participants suggested that an **Indigenous content creator** explore re-design of the industrial "cog" or gear and benches design.

Bob invited participants to continue to send in these good design ideas via the online feedback form on the project website or sending email to: jtharp@createto.ca. He also committed to creating a discussion record and sharing that with the participants to ensure it is accurate.

A participant gave some context and shared that **these ideas need to be accurately represented**. The participants will know if is accurately represented at the next meeting.

They stated to be **mindful of the context** and suggested it will be important to bring on someone who is Indigenous to the design team.

Jennifer Tharp offered her thanks for the really great feedback today. She said it is not just about how they will incorporate these ideas into the design but how we present these back to the community. She offered thanks for the ideas and input to the park.

She said the team will take some time to figure out how they will move forward in terms of what they heard tonight. She didn't have a definitive answer on when they can bring somebody on board, whether that's an Indigenous artist or a designer. Hopefully by the next time we meet, we will have somebody on board.

Peggy offered a closing invocation provided in a good way.