



June 1, 2022

**TO:** Park Board Chair and Commissioners  
**FROM:** General Manager – Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation  
**SUBJECT:** Name for New Park at Smithe & Richards – Host Nations Engagement Process

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## RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT the Vancouver Park Board approve the plan to receive a gifted name from the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations for the new downtown park located at Smithe & Richards Streets, to be formally presented at a special naming ceremony to be held at the park on Friday, June 17, 2022.
- B. THAT the Vancouver Park Board receive the update on the park naming process review and endorse the Interim Park Naming Process, as outlined in this report.

## REPORT SUMMARY

In May 2017, the Park Board received a [report](#) which outlined challenges with the Board's existing Park Naming Process when considering a process for the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations' (Host Nations) participation. To address this, the Board [approved recommendations](#) to suspend further naming processes until a new process could be developed with the Host Nations to support their self-determined language visibility and practices.

The new un-named park at the corner of Smithe and Richards streets, which occupies a city block in the heart of the downtown core, presented an opportunity to pilot an Indigenous naming process where the park would become the first in the City of Vancouver to be gifted a name in the hən̓q̓əmiñəm and Skwxwú7mesh languages.

In accordance with Indigenous protocol, and as communicated to Park Board staff through the Host Nations' park naming process, the park will be officially gifted its name through a naming ceremony. This ceremony is scheduled for June 17, 2022, at which time the park name and meaning will be made public. The public release of this information prior to the event would interfere with naming protocols and as such will not be shared in advance of the ceremony; however, the name has been confidentially shared with the Park Board at an In Camera meeting.

## BOARD AUTHORITY, POLICY, PREVIOUS DECISIONS/UPDATES

As per the Vancouver Charter, the Park Board has exclusive jurisdiction and control over all areas designated as permanent and temporary parks in the City of Vancouver, including the naming of parks as guided by the [Park Naming Process](#), adopted in 2007.

At its meeting of January 11, 2016, the Park Board [adopted eleven reconciliation strategies](#) in response to the Calls to Action provided by the Truth and Reconciliation of Commission of Canada (TRC) including the following:

- C. Review the donation of monuments, memorials, and public art processes and policies to ensure integration of Indigenous history, heritage values, and memory practices
- G. Acknowledge that Aboriginal rights include Aboriginal language rights; that preservation, revitalization and strengthening of Aboriginal languages and cultures are best managed by Aboriginal people and communities.

These strategies address critical themes identified by the TRC, including Language, Culture and Commemoration. Park naming provides the Park Board with an opportunity to support the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations' visibility on the land and honour their language sovereignty. The adopted strategies provided an initial framework for moving forward with Reconciliation, and have led to many initiatives exploring a new relationship with the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations specifically, as well as with the Urban Indigenous communities, including other First Nations, Métis, Inuit peoples in Vancouver.

On April 16, 2018, the Board adopted the [Reconciliation Mission, Vision, and Values](#) as a foundation for Reconciliation within the organization. The mission—to decolonize the Park Board—is an ambitious one, and has reframed much of the ongoing regular business of the Park Board, as well as internal staff cross-departmental relations. Also in April 2018, the Board approved a motion titled [Truth and Reconciliation with the Park Board's Colonial Roots](#), which directed staff to undertake “an analysis of the Park Board's colonial roots, as well as current practices, and report back with their findings and recommendations to acknowledge any and all injustices uncovered as part of the “truth-telling” phase”.

In July 2018, staff presented the initial findings of this analysis in a report titled [Exploring Park Board's Colonial Roots and Current Practices](#), and the Board approved recommendations for staff to undertake a comprehensive [Colonial Audit](#) in order to identify opportunities (short & long term) and specific ways to improve Park Board policies and practices with regard to Reconciliation. Data presented in the November 2021 [Colonial Audit: Interim Progress Report](#), illustrate the under-representation of Indigenous languages, place names and peoples.

On October 19, 2020, the Park Board approved the [VanPlay Framework](#), for Vancouver's [Parks and Recreation Services Master Plan](#). VanPlay [Goal 9](#) directs the Board to “seek truth as a foundation for Reconciliation”. The VanPlay [Playbook](#) directs Park Board to “focus reconciliation efforts on decolonizing the Park Board and relationship building with the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations”.

## **BACKGROUND**

Language is an essential part of culture and identity and it connects people to land and place. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states that “Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons” (Article 14). The TRC's Calls to Action 13 asserts that Aboriginal rights include Aboriginal language rights.

Since the TRC Final Report was published in 2015, the Park Board has been actively working to address the many impacts of colonization that it has jurisdiction over. Supporting *heñq'emih'em* and *Skw̓wú7mesh* to once again be heard and seen throughout these lands and waters is a powerful tool for reconciliation and affirming the rights of the Host Nations which can help to advance the Park Board's commitment to decolonization. In addition, recognizing the language

rights of Urban Indigenous people in Vancouver is also important to Reconciliation and redress, as part of the overall work to address the ongoing impacts of colonialism.

## **INDIGENOUS PARK NAMING PROCESS**

As there are few precedents for this work, Park Board staff proposed a pilot program to name the new urban park in downtown Vancouver. Staff approached the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations about their interest in engaging in a collaborative naming process for the new park at Smithe and Richards Streets as a means to pilot a new engagement and naming process that would ultimately inform proposed updates to the [Park Naming Process](#). All three Nations were supportive of the proposed pilot process and development of a collaborative park name.

Learning from the City of Vancouver's 2018 plaza naming experience, Park Board staff endeavored to create a transparent, culturally supportive and trauma-informed process. The park naming process sought to return decision-making to the original inhabitants of this land and bring visibility to the local Indigenous languages and cultures. The engagement process was framed around three core principles:

1. cultural safety;
2. relationship building; and
3. reciprocity.

Fundamental to this was contracting an Indigenous cultural liaison to support the development and implementation of the engagement process with the Host Nations.

### **Engagement Process**

1. **Process Overview.** In September 2020, the Park Naming Committee was convened with representation from Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations' language and culture staff and knowledge holders. Consulting Indigenous cultural planner, Kamala Todd and Park Board Decolonization, Arts & Culture staff also sat on the Naming Committee as non-voting members.

The Park Naming Committee engagement process was proposed to take place over six meetings, where half the meetings would have Park Board staff present, and the others only for Host Nations' staff and community members, with the Indigenous consultant's presence available on request. This created opportunities for the complex and sometimes triggering conversations about the impacts of colonialization, cultural visibility, and returning languages to the lands to take place in a more culturally supportive venue. It also made space for the Nations' to discuss their languages and conduct their naming processes according to their own protocols and practices.

At the outset of the engagement process, funding was discussed in a frank and transparent manner and expectations were shared on the potential for immediate and ongoing cultural programming.

Each Nation was paid at an expert honoraria rate for their time and commitment to the process, in accordance with the standard set by the Stanley Park Intergovernmental Working Group.

Park Naming Committee Members included:

- Vanessa Campbell, Program Assistant, Language and Culture Program, Musqueam Nation
- Larry Grant, Cultural Advisor, Musqueam Nation
- Samaya Jardey, Director of Language and Cultural Affairs, Squamish Nation
- Michelle George, Cultural and Technical Specialist, Treaty, Lands and Resources (TLR) Department, Tsleil-Waututh Nation, with Gabriel George, Director of TLR also attending some meetings and contributing to the naming process.

2. **Timeline.** The park naming process was initially planned to occur over 6 months, with one meeting per month, from September to February 2021; however, due to COVID-19 both the park completion and park naming process were delayed. This delay allowed for the park naming process to occur over a 16 month period and in the end supported better relationship building and minimized the harms that often come from compressed project timelines.
3. **Reciprocity.** At the outset of the process, the Host Nations' Park Naming Committee members were unanimous and clear in their request that the name be understood as a gift that should be met in reciprocity. Reciprocity for the park name was two-fold:
  - a. The pilot naming process be documented and shared so that other organizations can learn from this process.
  - b. That the name be reflected throughout the park in a diversity of arts and cultural expressions including language, public art, cultural programming, native plants and more.

### **Cultural Programming**

A challenge of this project was the timing of engagement with the Host Nations. Much of the new downtown park's development predated the Park Board's understanding of Reconciliation and thus the planning process for the park did not reflect the Park Board's current knowledge of best practices in engaging with the Host Nations. Further, as the Naming Committee was convened after the park construction was already substantially underway, the ability to change the design of the park and weave in Indigenous cultural expression was limited.

It is important to acknowledge that the original design process for the park missed the mark in reflecting the Host Nations and their continuity on their lands. Community representatives on the naming committee expressed the hurt that was caused by not being reflected or included in the park design, while still being asked for the significant gift of naming the park. The learning from this cultural harm can help to inform future processes, including park design and involving the Host Nations at the outset. Park Board staff have since begun implementing this practice of requesting involvement from First Nations at the outset of many projects, pending First Nations capacity and interest.

As part of healing the harms, there has been a commitment to ensure that cultural programming in the park would further expand and deepen the presence of the Host Nations. Staff from the Park Development and Planning, Policy and Environment teams worked closely with Decolonization, Arts & Culture staff to create and support opportunities for the Host Nations' culture to be reflected in the public realm of the park. For the park's ceremonial opening in June 2022, the following programs will be underway:

- i. **Public Art Program:** One of the early outcomes of the park naming process was the understanding that naming is a significant cultural practice. Staff learned that this

generous gift needs to be met in reciprocity, which could be done through cultural programming, including public art. To that end, staff have been working with the Park Naming Committee to develop a temporary public art installation by Host Nations' artists for the park opening. The intent is to develop a rotating public art program for Host Nations' artists that utilizes the skyframe infrastructure to display local Indigenous art.

- ii. **Indigenous Curator in Residence:** Through community partnerships and in collaboration with the Park Naming Committee, the Park Board will be piloting an Indigenous Curator in Residence program for the new downtown park in late summer to fall 2022.
- iii. **Indigenous Planting:** At the request of the Naming Committee, the park planting list was reviewed in consultation with traditional ecological knowledge holders from each of the Host Nations and 20% of the plants used in the park were changed to native plants, many of which are significant to and used in Indigenous culture, food and medicine.

Through a partnership with the Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association, the Park Board is contracting an Indigenous plant specialist to create a public guide to the park plants. The planting guide will be shared on various platforms including the Smithe & Richards Park website and/or to create talks and public tours in the park during the summer and fall of 2022.

- iv. **Playground Leader Program:** Starting in summer 2022, a playground leader program will offer free drop-in arts, cultural and recreational programs for children, youth and their families. As part of this program, staff will actively connect park users to park programs and experiences that celebrate and honour the cultures of the local First Nations. Priority hiring has been given to people who self-identify as Indigenous.

## DISCUSSION

### Land-based Naming

In preparation for the park naming process, the Park Naming Committee members were given detailed presentations, with renderings of the completed park design and site plans. The Committee took time to understand the neighbourhood and made individual site visits. While the naming conversations were held in private meetings without Park Board staff, Committee members later shared that the process they used was informed by a traditional approach, which referenced the land and how it was before the city was built.

### Initial Park Naming Key Findings

What emerged through this planning process was a **core principle of reciprocity**. Staff learned that a name is not something that can be requested but rather it is a gift that should be responded to in a reciprocal nature. Coast Salish peoples, including the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, hold reciprocity as a key cultural tenet. Reciprocity is integral to many of their ceremonies, as illustrated through their bighouse traditions and handshake protocols.

Place naming should be **grounded in the land**. This can be relational or physical but should always be about strengthening that connection to the land and understanding of where we are.

Rather than being directed by Park Board's priorities, naming should be **in collaboration with the Host Nations** to develop agreed-upon processes which honour protocols and the Nations' self-determination.

## FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The pilot naming process and public art were included in the project costs related to the Smithe & Richards park development. These included naming process honoraria and facilitation (\$25K); public art (\$50K); naming ceremony (\$25K).

## NEXT STEPS

Subject to Board approval, staff will continue to work with the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations to support the formal park naming ceremony and public art launch planned for June 17, 2022. A park name sign will also be installed in the park at a later date with the Unicode spellings for the gifted name. Sign design and location will be determined in the coming months.

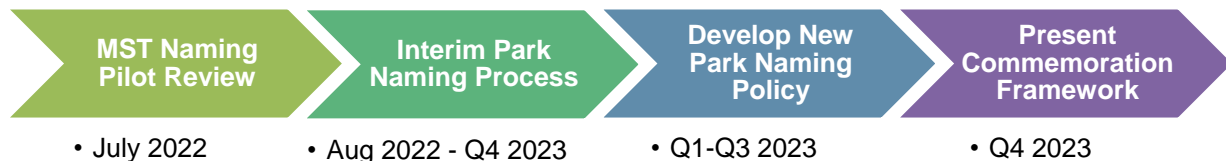
## Cultural Programs

Park Board staff have completed an open art call for three artists, one from each Nation, to create an original design inspired by the park's name. The designs will be printed on banners and hung from the skyframes as part of the inaugural local Indigenous temporary public art program, as well as used in the forthcoming park signage, which will welcome visitors to the park and display the park names in hən̓qəmiñəḥ and Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Snichim.

Indigenous cultural planner and film maker Kamala Todd is producing a short film on the meaning of the park name and pronunciation. The film will be published on the park website and social media channels to celebrate and educate the public on the park's name.

An Indigenous Curator in Residence program is currently under development and will be supported by the Decolonization, Arts & Culture team.

## Policy Updates and Alignments:



### 1) Interim Park Naming Process

- a) The MST pilot park naming process will conclude with a post-ceremony debrief in July 2022. Recommendations for the Interim Park Naming Process for Indigenous park naming will be reviewed with the Park Naming Committee.
- b) The Planning and Park Development team will provide a list of unnamed parks and Park Board assets for the Committee to identify priorities for naming via the interim process (from August 2022 to Q4 2023), with consideration to the key learnings from the pilot process including timeline and reciprocity.
  - i) **Timeline:** Naming needs to be considered at the earliest stage in a park planning and development process, with a minimum of 12 months allocated for a supportive naming process.
  - ii) **Reciprocity:** The Naming Committee should be paid for their time at an expert honoraria rate and the name should be woven into the park or Park Board asset through multiple cultural expressions (for example: public art, signage, programming).

- c) At the request of the Park Naming Committee, the recommendations and a discussion paper will be made publicly available to share our learnings.

## 2) Develop New Park Naming Policy

- a) Based on learnings from the Interim Park Naming Process, staff will develop a new park naming policy to present for Board consideration as part of the broader Commemoration Framework (report back targeted for Q4 2023).
- b) The proposed new Park Naming Policy will also consider alignment with the forthcoming [Co-Management Implementation Plan](#).

## CONCLUSION

Through the generosity of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh language staff and cultural leaders, a hə́nqəmiḥəm and Skwxwú7mesh name has been gifted to the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation from the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, for the downtown park located at Smithe and Richards Streets. This is a significant moment for Vancouver, in returning the language to the land, in such a prominent public space, where residents and visitors can be reminded of the depths of Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh cultural continuity on their lands.

General Manager's Office  
Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation  
Vancouver, BC

Prepared by:  
Julia Hulbert, Arts & Culture Planner II, Decolonization Arts & Culture

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