

# Renaming the Parkway

Connecting Communities Through Storytelling

## Summary Engagement Report

December 2023

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## Summary

### About the Renaming Initiative

In September 2022, the National Capital Commission (NCC) initiated the name review process for the scenic route along the Ottawa River, once called the Sir John A. Macdonald Parkway (the parkway). Informed by the staff's analysis and advice<sup>1</sup> from the Advisory Committee on Toponymy (ACT), a recommendation to rename the parkway was made to the NCC's Board of Directors.

In January 2023, the Board of Directors agreed with staff advice to move forward with an Algonquin naming and engagement exercise. This approach was selected to reflect the longstanding and important relationship between the Algonquin Nation and the Ottawa River, along which the parkway runs.

An Algonquin naming and engagement exercise also aligns with the principles of the new NCC Toponymy Policy and is consistent with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action related to language, culture and commemoration. Over a period of six months, the Commission undertook a renaming process that built upon on-going collaboration between the Algonquin Nation and the NCC.

In winter 2023, the NCC engaged with the communities of Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation and the Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation to participate in an Algonquin naming and engagement exercise. The Algonquin Nation's voices and their strong connection to the land inspired a search for a name that would honour their heritage.

Understanding the significance of sharing the process with the public, the NCC conducted public engagement activities in May 2023. People were invited to share their personal experiences and answer questions about what made the parkway special to them and their communities.

In spring 2023, the ACT reviewed NCC staff recommendations on the new name and the next steps of the initiative. Committee members immersed themselves in the Algonquin stories, carefully considering the collective wisdom and feedback shared by the Algonquin workshop participants. The ACT's guidance and discussions helped shape the final recommendation provided by staff to the NCC Board of Directors.

In June 2023, the Board of Directors approved the new name for the parkway as **Kichi Zībī Mīkan**, which in English translates to "Great River Road."

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<sup>1</sup> The ACT is an advisory group of individuals with diverse expertise and passions who are tasked with reviewing naming and renaming propositions of NCC-managed assets and providing advice on other matters related to toponymy.

Informed by Algonquin knowledge, this new name was selected because it captured the essence of this cherished place.

The commemoration of the renaming process took place on September 29, 2023. The celebration brought together First Nation community members, elected officials, the public and NCC staff to honour the parkway's new name and showcase the naming and engagement process.

The story of the parkway renaming initiative will serve as a reminder of the importance of inclusivity, cultural respect, and the enduring power of shared narratives. The process reflects the NCC's commitment to shaping a future where the landscape reflects the heritage and stories of the Algonquin people.

### Algonquin Naming and Engagement Exercise

The Algonquin naming and engagement exercise was formally initiated on February 13, 2023, via a launch meeting. Both Chief Dylan Whiteduck and (former) Chief Wendy Jocko and representatives from the cultural centres of Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation and the Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation communities, as well as Elder Albert Dumont, attended and discussed the approach, timeline and planning required to successfully complete the exercise with NCC staff.

During the meeting, several key decisions were made for the renaming process:

- Firstly, it was decided that the name selection, recommendations and storytelling procedures would occur at the same time through a series of workshops scheduled for spring 2023. It was recommended that these workshops would be held at the Nawapon Indigenous Commons, situated at Algonquin College.
- Next, in order to ensure effective coordination and representation, the cultural centres of Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation and the Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation were responsible for identifying community members to actively participate in the workshops.
- Furthermore, recognizing the importance of respecting individual privacy and the sensitivity of shared stories, it was agreed that community members engaged in the workshops would have the authority to determine which stories could be disclosed to the wider public.
- Finally, while certain activities would be made accessible to NCC staff, it was acknowledged that specific activities within the workshops would be exclusively reserved for community members. This separation would ensure that community voices were prioritized and given space for open discussions.

These conditions outlined the practical steps and considerations for the workshops, fostering an environment of cultural respect and inclusivity in the parkway renaming process.

The objectives of this initiative included the following:

- to share information about the Toponymy Policy and the ACT with the Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation and the Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation communities;
- to determine a new name for the parkway that holds significance for both communities through collaborative efforts;
- to gather stories and traditional knowledge from the Algonquin Nation regarding the parkway corridor, including its connections to the river and the land; and
- to contribute to ongoing reconciliation efforts by engaging with and recognizing the perspectives, histories and contributions of the Algonquin Nation.

Two workshops took place in April, focusing on name suggestions, storytelling about the river and shoreline, and making final recommendations. Participants ensured the recommended name was shared and received the support of their communities.

The workshops had a total of ten participants, four from Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation and six from Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation.

At the end of the workshops, the name recommended by the participating Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation and the Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation community members was **Kichi Zībī Mīkan**, which translates to “Great River Road.”

Participants further recommended that the full name in Anishinābemowin, the Algonquin language, should be the most prominent language displayed on the panels installed along the parkway.

## New Name and Significance

Kichi Zībī Mīkan (pronounced MEE-kan) is significant to both communities as it is the name their ancestors first gave to the river (Kichi Zībī). The name is meant to connect Algonquin people to their history, language and culture.

Returning to the name originally given to the river is a way to pay respect to ancestors and their lived experiences. It also provides an opportunity to build awareness of the important role the river plays for the Algonquin Nation. Reclaiming the original Kichi Zībī name contributes to reconciliation efforts and acknowledges the reciprocal relationship between the Algonquin Nation and the river.

## Workshops: Hearing Algonquin Stories

During the workshops, stories were shared about the significance of the river, its connection to people, and the importance of preserving language and culture. Below are some stories that were brought forward during the workshops:

“When I think of the river, I think of our ancestors and how it has been used to divide our people. I look at this as an opportunity to connect our people to our language and culture. To connect the population around the waterways, the protection of the river and all the people within it.”

“When I think of the river, I think of the stories that were handed down by our parents. My family used to think of certain legends. One example is the story of Michikinebic (Mishi-Kinebik), the big snake that cleans the waterways and connects the lakes and big rivers. The river itself is winding like a snake.”

“The river gave a sense of connection, it was life blood. It served as a highway and permitted the visiting of relatives and gathering together for celebrations.”

“I became a schoolteacher at 18 years old. This was to help preserve and document our language. It was important in our community to preserve our language so it wouldn't be lost (...) The Creator gave us this language, it's descriptive.”

“Our communities are participating in Ojdibikan [meaning Anishinabe roots], the Indigenous archeological field school along the river. The field school is uncovering artifacts, but also giving a space to connect the artifacts with stories. It is filling in the blanks for students to understand their history and culture, and how the river connected communities.”

## Public Engagement Highlights

Public engagement activities were conducted to inform the public of the Algonquin naming exercise and gather stories about the parkway, the river and surrounding areas.

The following engagement activities were conducted:

- An online engagement activity took place from May 2 to May 21, 2023, and included a survey, discussion board and interactive map activity.
- An in-person public open house and dialogue session were also held on May 10, 2023.

The activities generated more than 350 engagements.

The public open house and dialogue session, held at Bayview Yards, provided an opportunity to share personal stories and experiences related to the parkway and Ottawa River. The open house included a self-paced activity with opportunities to learn about the process. The dialogue session included a welcome and land acknowledgement, NCC presentation, community conversations and shared impressions. The session concluded with a wrap-up and next steps.

The participants shared many observations, namely, that the parkway holds a special place in the hearts of Ottawa's residents, offering a sanctuary with natural beauty, history and shared experiences. It represents a unique connection between vibrant urban life and the serenity of the river that sustains the city. As we listen to the stories of those touched by this remarkable place, we are reminded of its transformative power and the importance of preserving and enhancing its accessibility for future generations. The parkway is not just a roadway; it is a symbol of community and the land people call home.

The key highlights of the engagements can be found below.

### ***What does reconciliation mean to you?***

During a segment led by Tony Quedent, an Elder currently residing in Kitigan Zibi, the group engaged in a thoughtful conversation about the true meaning of reconciliation in our lives. As the discussion unfolded, a recurring theme became apparent: the value of historical knowledge and recognition. There was growing acknowledgment of the significance of understanding the past, including the challenges, accomplishments and contributions of Indigenous peoples. The stories of resilience and cultural heritage evoked a deep sense of appreciation among the participants.

The gathering was not just about acknowledging history, but also about the mutual learning and respect that reconciliation demands. Education emerged as a critical aspect of reconciliation.

They understood the importance of an accurate and inclusive understanding of Algonquin peoples' experiences and histories, striving to ensure that future generations receive a comprehensive education.

Embracing inclusivity and collaboration was a cornerstone of their discussions. They recognized the significance of creating a society that respects and values the rights, cultures, and contributions of all individuals, including Indigenous peoples. By fostering an inclusive environment, they believed that meaningful dialogue, collaboration and understanding could thrive among different communities.

The words of Elder Tony Quedent resonated with the group as a reminder of the profound contributions of Indigenous peoples. He believed that Indigenous people played a significant role in making Canada a beautiful country, shaping its natural beauty and cultural richness.

The participants concluded that reconciliation is a complex and ongoing process. They acknowledged the challenges of trust coming from the effects of colonization and its impact on Algonquin communities, and on Indigenous peoples more broadly. However, despite this, they held a strong belief in the possibility of reconciliation. In their collective journey, they sought to bring together understanding, respect and mutual growth while embracing the opportunity to heal the wounds of the past and build a more harmonious future for all.

### ***What experiences have you had with the Ottawa River parkway that have left a lasting impact on you?***

Participants shared the following observations:

#### **Unforgettable memories**

The parkway has witnessed countless memorable moments, imprinting lasting impressions on the lives of those who have ventured on its paths. For some, it has been the backdrop of family walks, bike rides and even first dates. Others have created cherished memories with their children, capturing precious snapshots by the riverside. Evening walks with breathtaking sunsets and the soothing sounds of the flowing river have become a source of calm and connection for many.

#### **A place of resilience and history**

The parkway's rich history has left a mark on the community. The river's powerful current serves as a reminder of nature's force. Its shores and abundant wildlife offer a break from the hustle and bustle of urban life. People find comfort and inspiration on the parkway, connecting with the land's heritage and reflecting on their place within it.



### **A call for change and accessibility**

While the parkway holds cherished memories, there is a growing desire for change and inclusivity. Some community members emphasized the need to prioritize people over cars, reopening the parkway for pedestrians, cyclists and persons with disabilities.

By expanding accessibility and reducing the dominance of vehicles, the parkway can evolve into a space that promotes social and environmental sustainability.

### **A tapestry of voices**

From musicians serenading the riverside to families enjoying picnics and evening strolls, the parkway has brought people together in profound ways. It has become a stage for local artists and cultural events, resonating with Ottawa's arts scene. The parkway's attraction extends beyond recreation and an appreciation of nature; it acts as a cultural tapestry, weaving stories of diverse individuals into the fabric of the community.

### **Next Steps**

Through ongoing collaboration with representatives from various ethnocultural groups and through further analysis of its assets, the NCC aims to develop a comprehensive work plan for naming its assets in the future. The employee working group on Toponymy will also review any requests that are received to be analyzed and included in the work plan, as appropriate.

The employee working group will also continue to work with Algonquin community representatives on a future interpretation for the Kichi Zībī Mīkan linear park, as it relates to the naming of the parkway and other assets.

# Appendices

## Appendix A: Engagement Dashboard

**Total views**      **Topic connections**      **Completed surveys**      **Map comments**      **Noticeboard comments**



314



53



21



9



2

**Total public open house participants**



14

**Email correspondence**



13

**Poster board comments**



15

# Appendix B: Images from Online Engagement

## Homepage

The screenshot shows the homepage of an online engagement platform. At the top left is the NCC/CCN logo. The main heading is "Renaming the parkway: Connecting communities through storytelling" with the subtext "National Capital Commission (NCC)". Below this is the instruction "Share your stories about the parkway and surrounding area." There are buttons for "Disconnect", "Share", and "Invite". A "View image" button is also present. A blue bar displays "53 connections" and "314 views". On the right, there is a map of Ottawa with various colored regions and a "Manage" button. Below the map are tabs for "Why Participate", "Ways To Participate", and "Manage". A "How to participate" section lists steps: log in, read overview, explore opportunities, pin stories, share stories, and complete survey. An "Overview" section provides background on the parkway's history and the NCC's role in renaming it.

**Renaming the parkway: Connecting communities through storytelling**  
National Capital Commission (NCC)  
Share your stories about the parkway and surrounding area.

53 connections | 314 views

**How to participate**  
Log into your account to:

- read through the overview
- explore opportunities to get involved
- pin your stories on the map of the parkway
- share your stories on the noticeboard
- complete the survey (use a web browser for optimal viewing)

**Overview**  
For over 60 years, the Sir John A. Macdonald Parkway (the parkway) was named after the Ottawa River, because of its location along the waterway. The National Capital Commission (NCC) received many requests to rename the parkway from elected officials, members of the Algonquin Nation as well as community members. We also heard suggestions from the public about changing the name during public consultations on the Ottawa River South Shore Riverfront Park Plan. The new name will be chosen through an Indigenous naming and engagement

## Placeit Map


The screenshot shows the "Placeit Map" interface. At the top, there is a text box with instructions: "Map of the parkway | Place a pin on the map of the parkway to share your most significant memories. In this mapping exercise we would like you to: share your experiences or stories about the parkway and surrounding area, identify your favourite features of the parkway, the riverfront park or the river and react to the stories shared by others." Below the text is a satellite map of Ottawa, Ontario, with several red pins placed along the parkway and riverfront. The map shows various landmarks and neighborhoods.

Map of the parkway | Place a pin on the map of the parkway to share your most significant memories. In this mapping exercise we would like you to: share your experiences or stories about the parkway and surrounding area, identify your favourite features of the parkway, the riverfront park or the river and react to the stories shared by others.

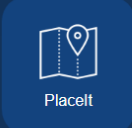
# Noticeboard

## Ways to Participate


You can participate in this engagement by:



Events



Placelt



Noticeboard

**Join the discussion! We invite you to reflect on your experiences and share your stories about the parkway and the surrounding area.**

1. What are your most significant memories and/or experiences about the parkway?
2. What makes this place so special to you and your community?
3. What do you most appreciate about the parkway, the riverfront park and/or the river?

Please ensure that all comments follow the NCC Rules of Engagement.

**Text**   Upload Image:   Upload Video   Upload Document

Have something to contribute? Say it here...

## Online Survey

### Questions

1. What memories and/or experiences would you like to share?

2. What makes this place so special to you and your community?

3. What do you most appreciate about the parkway, the riverfront park and/or the river?

Next

### Final comments

Do you have any other comments that you would like to share regarding the storytelling exercise?

- Yes
- No

Next

## Appendix C: Public Engagement Comments

The tables below contain samples of verbatim comments made by participants on the poster board during the public open house and dialogue session.

Table 1: What makes this place so special to you and your community? What do you most appreciate about the parkway, the riverfront park and/or the river?

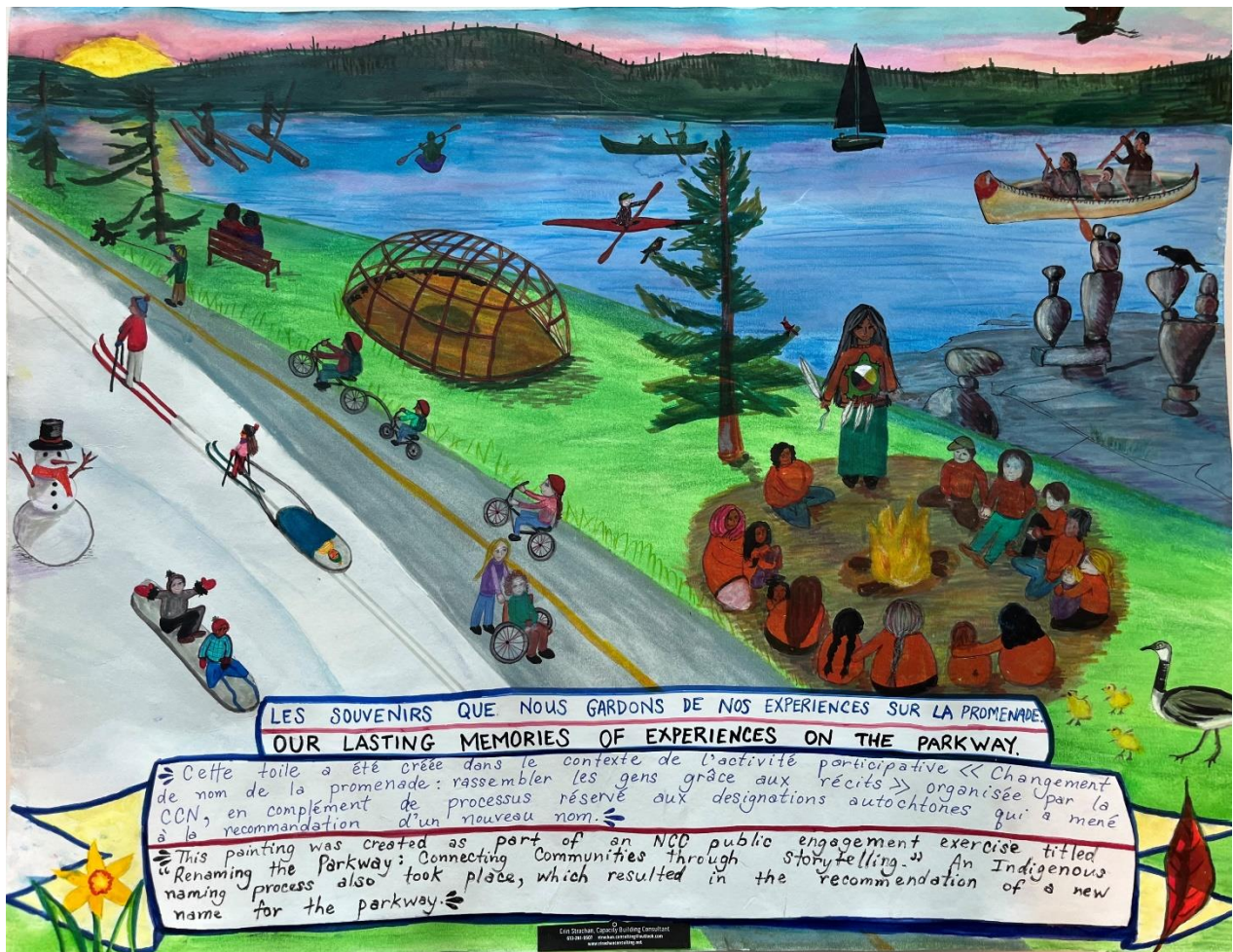
Topic(s)	Comment
Quality time	Family walks, family bikes, first date with my husband.
Quality time	Creating memorable moments with loved ones.
Active mobility Public enjoyment	Cycling and shopping at a Bistro.
Quality time	Family walks, going on a stroll with my daughter, pictures next to the beach.
Scenic views	Evening walks with my wife, enjoying beautiful sunsets across the river.
Improved access	Renaming the parkway is a step in the right direction now, listen to the public and reopen Gatineau Park parkway now.
Active mobility Public enjoyment	Cycling along the pathway with my family and stopping for ice cream at Beachconers.
Improved access Accessibility	End discrimination against seniors and people with disabilities, reopen Gatineau parkways now.
Scenic views	I love the scenic views! [translation]

Table 2: What experiences have you had with the parkway that have left a lasting impact on you?

Topic(s)	Comment
Quality time	Picnic with my family.
Active mobility Quality time	Evening walks with my dog. Beautiful.
Active mobility Public enjoyment	Morning sunrises/reading.
Active mobility History	Being by the river (walking, biking, sitting, reflecting) makes you feel connected to its long history.
History	The history of the region and the greatness of the river.
Nature Active mobility	Breathing in fresh air from the river, finishing a run. [translation]



## Appendix D: Graphic Illustration



The painting reflected above is the result of the public engagement exercise. During this exercise a graphic illustrator was tasked with capturing and visually representing the stories shared by the public and community members during the public open house and dialogue session. The live visual recording of comments was later refined and developed into the image reflected above.