

Municipal Commemoration Policy

Approved by: City Council

Approval date: TBD

Effective date: TBD

Revision approved by:

Revision/Review date:

Policy statement

The City of Ottawa is committed to a contemporary and comprehensive approach to municipal commemoration: the act of remembering, honouring and sharing a community's collective memories (its histories, stories, and legacies) through various tangible and intangible commemorative forms.

The City honours the Anishinabe Algonquin Host Nation, and the diverse communities, cultures and local features that make Ottawa a unique place. This policy promotes commemorative practices that enhance truth, reconciliation, inclusion, and sustainable development.

Purpose

This policy provides clear objectives and principles to guide municipal commemoration and ensure consistent application in the administration and operation of all City of Ottawa commemorative activities.

It is also meant to guide individual commemorative and naming programs governed by their own departmental policies or procedures.

Per this policy, the City will:

- Diversify existing municipal commemorative practices.
- Support commemoration and naming programs with consideration of nominations for new commemorations
- Guide the consideration of requests related to renaming, program review, and contentious commemorations.
- Promote and facilitate public engagement with municipal commemorative programs and practices.

Application

This policy applies to all:

- City of Ottawa commemorative and naming programs and practices.
- Work related to municipal commemoration and naming on municipal land.
- Partner entities working in collaboration with the City on joint commemoration initiatives that fall within its scope.
- Commemorative practices of external parties on City land, including but not limited to diplomatic missions, non-profit organizations, cultural institutions, academia, communities, groups and individuals.

City of Ottawa Boards engaged in commemorative practice are encouraged to adopt this policy and be guided by its approach.

This policy does not apply to:

- Sponsorship naming rights made by the City, which are governed by the Sponsorship Policy.
- Commemoration initiatives on federal government lands in Ottawa, except for initiatives that involve the City of Ottawa, where this municipal policy shall apply to City participation.

Policy requirements

All City of Ottawa commemorations and commemorative practices on municipal land will be guided by the principles, goals and core themes of this Municipal Commemoration Policy as follows:

Guiding Principles

Local legacies – The City of Ottawa remains committed to presenting a full picture of Ottawa through commemoration and prioritizes themes from local Ottawa histories, stories and legacies.

Inclusion – The City of Ottawa promotes and enhances truth, reconciliation, diversity, inclusion, and sustainable development in municipal commemoration through existing programs and with innovative commemoration practices.

Openness and transparency – The City of Ottawa ensures openness through communication, consultation and collaboration in its commemoration practices, and will report on implementation progress regularly and transparently.

Cultural values and engagement – The City of Ottawa ensures that community cultural values are respected, and that appropriate engagement on municipal commemoration themes is undertaken.

Human rights, mutual respect, and sustainable development – The City of Ottawa adheres to human rights legislation (Ontario Human Rights Code, Canadian Human Rights Act, the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples), principles of mutual respect among communities, groups, and individuals, and sustainable development in its commemoration practices. It ensures proposed commemorative practices are not discriminatory or derogatory of colour, disability, ethnic origin, faith, gender identity or expression, political affiliation, race, sex, sexual orientation, etc.

Accurate information – The City of Ottawa ensures that its commemoration practices are based on accurate information, from reliable sources.

Accessibility – The City of Ottawa ensures equity of opportunity in an integrated manner for municipal commemoration. Adherence to all legislated standards under the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation* under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA, 2005), as well as the City of Ottawa Accessibility Policy will be met.

As per the City of Ottawa’s Accessible formats and communication supports procedure, all staff shall, upon request, and in consultation with the person making the request, provide or make arrangements to provide accessible formats and communication supports for persons with disabilities.

Renewal and continuous improvement – The City of Ottawa remains committed to continuous improvement of its commemoration practices, based on informed feedback.

Goals

- Work towards prioritizing commemorations of local Ottawa histories, stories and legacies with equitable representation of communities and cultures, and by promoting mechanisms that can increase the number of commemorations related to underrepresented residents in urban, suburban, and rural areas.
- Ensure municipal commemoration practices respectfully include the Anishinabe Algonquin Nation, on whose unceded territory Ottawa is built, in accordance with the Council-approved City of Ottawa – Anishinabe Algonquin Nation Civil Cultural Protocol.
- Promote and respectfully encourage the participation of Urban First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities in City of Ottawa commemoration practices (in accordance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples - UNDRIP).
- Enhance involvement of Black residents, peoples of colour, immigrants and newcomers, Francophones and other linguistic minorities, people who are differently abled, women, youth, 2SLGBTQQIA+, and other equity-deserving residents of Ottawa who have been historically under-represented in civic commemoration.

- Promote alternative commemoration and encourage public interaction with municipal commemoration practices, to foster constructive dialogue, combat vandalism and hate, and enhance mutual understanding.
- Promote adherence to United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in the context of City of Ottawa municipal commemorations. Promote constructive collaboration across municipal service areas engaged in commemorative activity.

Core themes

The City of Ottawa recognizes and celebrates the rich diversity of Ottawa’s histories, stories and legacies and understands the important role that seeing themselves reflected in commemoration plays in the lives of residents. Through available resources and mechanisms, this policy promotes:

- Nominations for new commemorations from under-represented communities.
- Diverse approaches to commemoration that reflect the intangible cultural heritages (or living heritages) of Ottawa – its peoples’ oral traditions, folk arts, rituals, ceremonies, and traditional knowledge, among others – and nurture creative and alternative commemorative forms.
- The presentation of a comprehensive and inclusive story of Ottawa through commemoration with themes related to Ottawa’s unique features as follows:
 - Ottawa rests on the unceded territory of the Anishinabe Algonquin Host Nation.
 - Ottawa is home to a diverse urban Indigenous community of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people.
 - Ottawa is home to diverse immigrant and other equity-deserving communities.
 - Ottawa contains a landscape that connects neighbouring urban, suburban and rural lifestyles.
 - Ottawa serves as both Canada’s National Capital and a multilingual, medium-sized North American city with French and English as official languages.
- Commemoration of elements from the following domains:
 - History of Ottawa
 - Geography of Ottawa
 - People of Ottawa
 - Heritage of Ottawa

(See *Survey of Past/Existing City of Ottawa Commemorative Programs*, Chapter 3 in References)

City of Ottawa Commemoration Database

The City of Ottawa will create, maintain, and regularly update a comprehensive, centralized Municipal Commemoration Database. In the interest of compiling, tracking, and monitoring municipal and municipally partnered commemorations in Ottawa, this database shall include records of:

- All new commemorative practices.
- Changes or alterations to existing commemorations.
- Links to inventories, lists, or registers owned by City's service areas and programs involved with commemoration.

All City service areas involved with municipal commemoration are required to collaborate on the creation and ongoing updating of this database.

The City shall make this database accessible through various platforms (e.g. Open Ottawa, Geo Ottawa) in the interest of awareness and focused research.

Public Engagement and Alternative Commemoration

The City of Ottawa is aware of the dynamic nature of commemorations and the potentials for creative interactions with them. It remains committed to ongoing public engagement on municipal commemoration.

The Commemoration Policy recognizes that commemoration is a living process and encourages residents' and visitors' ongoing engagement and interaction with commemorative objects and themes.

Where possible, City staff will engage with Ottawa residents and communities to determine satisfaction or concerns with municipal commemoration programs and practices.

Contentious Commemoration

Understandings and interpretations of collective memories may change over time and some previously accepted commemorations may become contentious.

In instances where an existing and proposed municipal commemoration is brought forward as contentious, the City shall investigate the request and, if determined as contentious, determine the most appropriate method to deal with it. The City will:

- Request advice from internal and external commemoration-focused bodies or informed individuals on methodology and approach to best reflect Ottawa's history.

- Respond to the request by announcing its decision to re-investigate, re-interpret, re-contextualize, or as a last option, rescind the contentious commemoration in question.

The City may also choose to support partner, stakeholder, or public dialogue around contentious commemoration on municipal lands.

Reporting

Each year, an annual, comprehensive report that identifies municipal commemoration activities of the past year will be distributed to City Council. This report will be a tool that can track and evaluate policy implementation.

Responsibilities

Recreation, Cultural and Facilities Services shall:

- Review and update this policy, in collaboration with internal and external stakeholders and partners, as needed.
- Develop recommendations on methods and procedures to implement the policy
- Oversee policy implementation in full collaboration with relevant municipal service areas and program owners.
- Respond to requests for support from municipal commemoration program owners.
- Coordinate the development of a comprehensive database of municipal commemorations, and its maintenance in collaboration with involved service areas, program owners, and staff.
- Receive and submit to the involved service areas and program owners, requests for review of existing City of Ottawa commemorations, or commemorative practices or programs and coordinate the preparation and submission of the City's response.
- Propose themes, forms, and methods to establish new municipal commemorations.
- Encourage and support public engagement and alternative commemoration in collaboration with internal and external stakeholders and partners.
- On an annual basis, compile a municipal commemoration report for distribution by the General Manager, RCFS, in consultation with relevant City of Ottawa service areas, and stakeholders and partners.

Recreation, Cultural and Facility Services Department (RCFS) shall:

- Report to Ottawa City Council on an annual basis on the previous year's municipal commemoration activity and recommendations for future consideration.

City of Ottawa Service Areas Responsible for Commemorative Programs shall:

- Administer and execute their own commemorative programs and practices in accordance with this policy.
- Assist in the development and maintenance of the commemoration database in coordination with the Cultural Development and Initiatives Unit.
- Ensure that requests for exemptions or scenarios not addressed in this policy are presented to their respective Director and General Manager, who must direct to the Cultural Development and Initiatives Unit.
- Maintain, on an annual basis, a record of all relevant commemorative activity and provide to the Cultural Development and Initiatives Unit for inclusion in the annual, comprehensive report specified in this policy.

(See *Definitions* for a non-exhaustive list of involved City of Ottawa service areas.)

Ottawa City Council shall:

- Approve this policy and any substantial amendments.
- Deliberate on and approve reports related to commemorations under this policy, as required.

Monitoring/Conventions

Recreation, Cultural and Facility Services Department (RCFS) is responsible for monitoring adherence to this policy.

Individual City of Ottawa service areas responsible for commemorative programs as defined in this policy, shall monitor fulfillment of their respective responsibilities outlined herein.

References

[Accessibility Policy, City of Ottawa](#)

[Accessible formats and communication supports procedure, City of Ottawa](#)

[Accountability and Transparency Policy, City of Ottawa](#)

[Bilingualism Policy, City of Ottawa](#)

[City of Ottawa Anti-Racism Strategy](#)

[City of Ottawa Reconciliation Action Plan](#)

[Code of Conduct for Members of Council, City of Ottawa](#)

[Commemorative Naming Policy, City of Ottawa](#)

[Contentious Commemoration – Recommendations](#) (Municipal Commemoration Policy Advisory Group, Working Group on Contentious Commemoration), 2023

[Employee Code of Conduct, City of Ottawa](#)

[Equity and Diversity Policy, City of Ottawa](#)

EVOQ Strategies and Archipel Research and Consulting (March 2023): [Report, Survey of Past/Existing City of Ottawa Commemorative Programs and Policies](#), [City of Ottawa Project No. EVOQ: S05016-21-00](#)

[Official Plan, approved Ottawa City Council](#)

[“Remembering Ottawa: Stories and Legacies” | Se souvenir d’Ottawa : ses patrimoines et ses legs | Participons Ottawa](#)

[Renewed Action Plan for Arts, Heritage, and Culture in Ottawa \(2013-2018\), approved Ottawa City Council 2012](#)

Legislative and Administrative Authorities

[Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act \(AODA\)](#)

[Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Constitution Act, 1982](#)

[Canadian Human Rights Act \(RSC\), 1985](#)

[Municipal Act, 2001](#)

[Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#)

[Ontario Human Rights Code](#)

[Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action](#)

[United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#)

[United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)

[United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)

Recordkeeping requirements

As per the Records Management Policy, Official Business Records generated because of the execution of this policy must be declared as such in the appropriate SharePoint site, RMS (Records Management System) or approved business system.

Definitions

Alternative commemoration — Includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Creative, artistic, and/or community-led commemoration that diversifies the practice and expands the domain of commemoration methods beyond the familiar statues, monuments, plaques, or signs.
- Interaction with an existing commemoration, especially through artistic or creative activity.

Collective memory — Is memory, knowledge, or information that communities have about their histories, stories, or legacies that they value, commemorate through artistic, symbolic, or other methods, and that they transfer to younger generations.

Commemoration — Refers to act of remembering, honouring and sharing a community's collective memories (its histories, stories, and legacies) through various commemorative forms such as monuments, plaques, names, performances, crafted objects, and events. Unless otherwise specified, 'commemoration' in this policy is used as an umbrella term that includes all forms of commemorative activity undertaken by the City of Ottawa.

Commemorative form — Is an umbrella term to cover any of, or any combination of objects, actions, structures, spaces, or natural elements employed to commemorate a collective memory. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- **Object:** plaques, flags, signs, murals, time capsules, books, photos, paintings, crafted objects, etc.
- **Action:** rituals, festive events, gatherings, parades, artistic performances, storytelling, commemorative walks, competitions, etc.
- **Structure:** statues, benches, monuments, memorials, totem structures, etc.
- **Space:** squares, neighbourhoods, landscapes, sacred spaces, cemeteries, etc.
- **Natural element:** trees, herbs, feathers, water, mountains, stones, etc.

Contentious commemoration — Means commemoration in the form of a name, object, monument, space, or ceremony with disputed, challenging, or possible negative meanings and context. Communities, groups, or individuals may disagree on the appropriateness of these commemorations and on whether they align or not with their collective memories. Contentious commemorations may be contested on the grounds of human rights, reconciliation, inclusion, mutual respect, or sustainable development.

Departmental policies — Relate to the administration and services offered by a particular department and may typically apply to multiple service areas within a department. These policies may operationalize a corporate administrative policy within a department and do not have City-wide application. The responsibility to develop, implement, update and monitor these policies resides within the operating department or its service area/branch.

Intangible Cultural Heritage — Also known as ‘living heritage’, is the cultural knowledge that is transmitted from generation to generation, often orally and non-formally. It includes oral traditions, folk arts, social practices, rituals and festive events, traditional knowledge, and traditional craftsmanship. A considerable number of ICH examples are commemorative in nature and have the potential to diversify municipal commemoration methods.

Service Areas Responsible for Commemorative Programs — Municipal departments, branches, and units that work in areas connected to Ottawa histories, stories, legacies, and collective memories, and adhere to this policy. Their commemorative programs are typically governed by individual departmental policies and/or procedures.

A non-exhaustive list of these service areas is as follows:

- City Archives
- City of Ottawa Museums
- Cultural Development and Initiatives
- Cultural Funding Support
- Gender and Race Equity, Inclusion, Indigenous Relations, and Social Development
- Heritage Planning
- Office of Protocol
- Parks and Facilities Planning
- Forestry Services (Public Works)
- Public Art Program
- RCFS Business, Technical and Support Services

Sustainable development — Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Commemoration has the potential to enhance sustainability in municipal practice as it contributes to identity building and placemaking, and it promotes dialogue.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) — Refers to the 17 goals promoted through the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in an urgent call for action by all countries. Commemoration is tied to Goals 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), 5 (Gender Equity), and 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).

Enquiries

For more information on this policy, contact:

Program Manager
Arts and Heritage Development Branch

Recreation, Cultural and Facility Services Department

Appendices

Appendix A: List of Current City of Ottawa Commemorative and Naming Programs

Naming:

- Commemorative Naming Policy for Municipal Parks, Streets and Facilities
- Street Naming / Municipal Addressing
- Commemorative Street Naming for Veterans
- Ottawa Public Library Commemorative Naming Policy (See reference to Boards in Application section)
- Sponsorship Policy (includes Naming Rights)

Dedication:

- Commemorative Benches
- Commemorative Trees Program
- Roadside Memorial Sign Program

Heritage Properties:

- Designated Individual Heritage Properties
- Designated Heritage Conservation Districts
- Heritage Register

Protocol:

- Flag-Raising
- Proclamations

Awards:

- Ottawa Heritage Awards
- Ottawa Public Library Order of Friendship (See reference to Boards in Application section)
- Granting Freedom of the City of Ottawa
- Key to the City
- Mayor's City Builder Award
- Order of Ottawa

Appendix B: Existing Types of Commemoration at the City of Ottawa

Formal and ad-hoc City of Ottawa commemorative programs have resulted in:

1. Permanent physical commemorations

Cemeteries, cenotaphs, columns, commemorative artwork, cornerstones, designated heritage properties and districts, fountains, gates, interpretive panels/pathways, memorial benches/gardens, monuments, murals, open space dedications, park and streetscape accessories, plaques, sculptures (statues), street signs, time capsules, tree plantings

2. Temporary physical commemorations

Roadside memorials

3. Commemorative events

Anniversaries, awards, ceremonial events, civic holidays, flag-raising, historical milestones, parades, proclamations, twinning of cities