



Hamilton  
Public  
Library

*May 2023*

**A Vision for the  
Hamilton Discovery Centre**  
Paul Takala, Chief Librarian/CEO

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F R E E D O M T O D I S C O V E R

[HPL.CA](http://HPL.CA)



# HPL's Current Context

## Advancing Social Cohesion

- New Strategic Plan's Mission Statement – **Freedom to [Belong](#) and Discover** (May 2023)
- Library Board's current focus and commitment: “Although much about what we may face in the coming decade may not be clear, the need to work with others to contribute to Civic Renewal is no doubt urgent and should be woven into all our work.” (March 2022)
- Digitizing and make accessible documented history by engaging different communities in telling their stories in compelling ways
- Expanding emphasis on high quality exhibits and programs, supporting education

## Facility Renewal and Local History and Archive

- HPL has been on a 20 year journey to bring our facilities up to modern accessible standards
- Importance of [Local History and Archives \(LHA\)](#) to engage residents
  - Planned renovations to LHA paused to ensure alignment with City, a potential Hamilton Museum then the COVID-19 Pandemic
  - Shifting focal point of heritage exhibits to the Discovery Centre would attract a wider audience and be more impactful



# HPL's Vision for the Discovery Centre

- **Indigenous Gathering Space** - defined, led and staffed by local Indigenous people
- **Heritage Exhibits** – commitment to respectful access and preservation
- **Branch Library** – providing access and resources, base staffing
- **Food, Café & Event Space**
- Showcase for **sustainability** and learning about **environmental stewardship**
- **Aligns with COH** - Urban Indigenous Strategy, Our Future Hamilton, City Museum Strategy, West Harbour Secondary Plan “Setting Sail”



# Indigenous Gathering Spaces in other Libraries

First Nations Circle - Halifax Public Library



Thunderbird House – Edmonton Public Library



Ādisōke – Ottawa Public Library (Under construction)





# Heritage Exhibits & Indigenous Reconciliation

- Bringing together **newcomers**, **Indigenous** and **non-Indigenous** Hamiltonians to learn and celebrate the **richness of Indigenous cultures** and our **different histories**
- Canada is a signatory to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and HPL strives to ensure that we adhere to the rights related to cultural heritage that are guaranteed in the Declaration and that create space for the marginalized voices to share their own narratives.
- The more we are able to **expand our knowledge** and **learn about our histories** and the histories of others, the more we can **build mutual understanding** and respect.
- As a **Memory Institution** HPL is committed to working with other like-minded organizations and individuals committed to the following:
  1. It is our responsibility and promise to future generations to **preserve Hamilton's heritage content**.
  2. We intentionally and respectfully **surface the diverse stories** of Hamilton's past, **as told from** many voices and perspectives.
  3. **Justice, human rights**, and **sustainability** are advanced through equitable and respectful access to heritage.



# Advancing and Refining the Vision

## Program and Feasibility Studies

Library Board approved up to \$250K to support **feasibility** and **program studies**

- Extensive **consultations** to engage and refine the vision
- Identify **program needs**, potential space and facility **requirements**
- **Governance model**, mechanisms to manage areas of shared responsibilities
- **Capital** and **operating** budget **requirements**
- Estimate initial study to cost \$100K. The Library Board approved additional funds in anticipation of the potential need for **side studies** that, for example, **expand consultations**, look at **construction & engineering** options
- Mindful of current staff workload of the Indigenous Relations Office and Library

## Gaining Experience and Animating the Discovery Centre

- HPL currently hiring *Exhibit and Outreach Coordinator*
- Creating more engaging exhibits to gain experience, place at Discovery Centre and other locations
- Potential to work with Waterfront Shores during the next several years to animate the site with heritage exhibits and HPL programs