
Subject: Email - Communication - Karon Shmon - Outdoor Festival Site - CK 620-1

From: Web NoReply <web-noreply@Saskatoon.ca>

Sent: Thursday, February 18, 2021 3:56 PM

To: City Council <City.Council@Saskatoon.ca>

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--- Replies to this email will go to [REDACTED] ---

Submitted on Thursday, February 18, 2021 - 15:55

Submitted by user: Anonymous

Submitted values are:

Date Thursday, February 18, 2021

To His Worship the Mayor and Members of City Council

First Name Karon

Last Name Shmon

Phone Number (306) [REDACTED]

Email [REDACTED]

Address [REDACTED] Simpson Crescent

City Saskatoon

Province Saskatchewan

Postal Code [REDACTED]

Name of the organization or agency you are representing (if applicable)

Subject outdoor festival site

Meeting (if known)

Comments

I agree with the points covered in the editorial by Phil Tank "Reasons to doubt city's enthusiasm for festival site" (Saskatoon StarPhoenix, February 18, 2021). Friendship Park is very small indeed and removing trees from it will reduce its current beauty. It seems an irrational choice given that several larger, and equally if not better suited, sites were considered. I keep asking myself where everyone going to a festival there will park and why the site was chosen when the festivalgoers will have their backs to the river.

Of greater concern to me, as a Métis citizen of Saskatoon, is the welfare of the statue of Gabriel Dumont. The city has tried a number of times to relocate the statue and each time the Métis community has rejected the idea. On this last "consultation," previous concerns over this notion were not brought forward and only a few Métis stakeholders were invited to provide input. Given that only 804 people provided any overall input, this represents only three of every 10,000 people in our city, so this cannot be called community engagement.

People coming to festivals in Saskatoon already know they will require a means to get to it. For events held at the SaskTel Centre, buses are utilized to avoid traffic and parking issues. The same approach can be used to get people to an outdoor festival site somewhere besides tiny, culturally significant, naturally beautiful, Friendship Park.

As a prominent symbol of the Métis presence in the area long before the Temperance Colony folks or Chief Whitecap had ever seen the area we now call Saskatoon, the statue reminds both local residents and visitors that Saskatoon is part of the Métis Homeland. It is in a park aptly named "Friendship Park" and this echoes the hospitality the Indigenous peoples provided to one another and to travellers through the area. This statue is the result of the vision and advocacy of Dennis Fisher who worked with the Métis and other community members to ensure it came to be. It was installed in

May of 1985, a year that also commemorated the 100th Anniversary of the 1885 Resistance. This was well ahead of its time in paying tribute to the Métis struggle, to one of our great leaders, and to our presence in this area. The statue in its present location has become a sacred site for the Métis. We gather there for significant events. More importantly, on any given day, Métis citizens and visitors are affirmed of our belonging in Saskatoon simply by seeing it as we make our way when we pass by. It is a great comfort to know that the statue's presence means non-Métis residents will know more about us and about Gabriel Dumont.

I fear the statue will now stick out on a treeless area that is uninviting when no outdoor festival is occurring. I suspect the end goal of the festival site developers is to have the Métis community become so dissatisfied with how it will look and function as part of the outdoor festival site that we will concede to it being moved at some point in the future.

Saskatoon is fortunate to have such a beautiful river as part of its landscape. It is accessible to all thanks to the foresight of those who established the Meewasin Valley Authority. For this reason, a rethink of this outdoor festival site is in order. The strategies for public engagement also need to be improved. Relying on online notices to attract participation is inadequate and further marginalizes those without access to, or familiarity with, technology.

I believe reconciliation, and preserving what is left of the natural beauty of the downtown area are each much more laudable causes than an outdoor festival site, particularly one that has so many other options for a location.

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