

Native tour highlights history



Native tour highlights history. Don Jabokwoam lead a Native Bus Tour on Oct. 13. Here in Etienne Brule Park in Etobicoke, Jabokwoam explained how aboriginal people used the land and the tree on the site. The tour was organized by The Sustainability Network and Toronto Green Community. *Staff photo/ERIN HATFIELD*

- [Green community comes together with native network](#)

A recent tour of areas of the city with cultural significance to native peoples succeeded in bringing to light some of Toronto's history, said Paula Messina, the event's organizer.

"Some people were just blown away by the whole aboriginal history and the fact that they had never learned it in school," said Messina, executive director of Toronto Green Community. "The fact that this (aboriginal history) is a part of Canadian history that doesn't get talked about."

The Sustainability Network and Toronto Green Community held a Native Bus Tour of Toronto Thursday, Oct. 13. The tour highlighted areas of historical and cultural significance to aboriginal communities in Toronto. It was intended to bring people from the environmental sector and various other sectors together with aboriginal peoples in hopes of seeing future collaborations.

It began outside the Native Canadian Centre, 16 Spadina Rd., with a smudge ritual in which California sage, one of four sacred medicines aboriginal people use to clear their minds, was burned to bring minds together without negative energies.

Don Jabokwoam, who works at the Friendship Centre, hosted the tour, explaining along the route the significance of names such as Spadina, which he said is an Ojibwe word, meaning road or path at the base of the hill.

"Davenport doesn't follow a grid because it was a native people's pathway along the edge of the water 10,000 years ago," Jabokwoam said.

Toronto was always a centre of trade for native peoples, he said, because of its proximity to trading routes and waterways such as the Humber and Don rivers.

Jabokwoam explained how various trees were used. Rotting cedar, for example, was used to make a baby powder to prevent rash and the film found under the bark of a spruce tree was used to make porridge.

The tour contained stops at Baby Point and High Park before it travelled down Parkside Drive to Lake Shore Boulevard to Fort York ending at the Centre for Social Innovation on Spadina Avenue.

The tour was attended by representatives, both aboriginal and non aboriginal, from Evergreen, Working for Change, Volunteer Toronto, People With Lived Experiences, Greenpeace as well as a number of academics and professors.

Following the tour the group participated in an afternoon discussion forum.

"It went really well," Messina said. "People gave their thoughts of how it made them feel or what they learned."

Messina said the green community wasn't as represented as organizers hoped to be, but she felt the goal of connecting groups and getting them thinking about future collaborations was accomplished.

"We feel people were able to make links with each other," she said.

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