

PEOPLE, POWER, & PARK THE



Archival Exhibits.

Installations. Projections.

A celebration of Allan Gardens as a green oasis
and gathering place for activists and community

Four days of FREE events!



PEOPLE, POWER, & THE PARK

Presented by



Office of
Social Innovation



INTRODUCTION

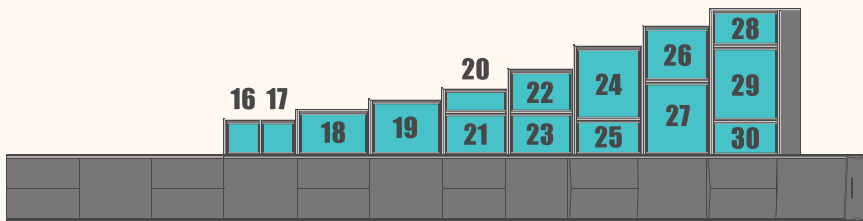
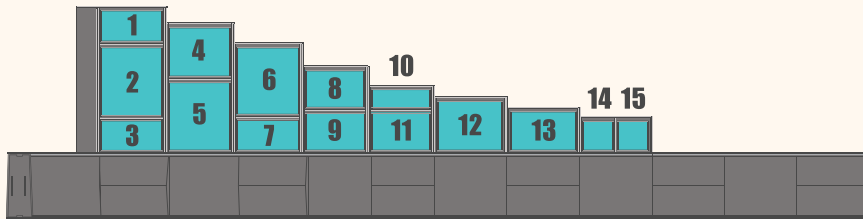
Over the past 125 years, Allan Gardens has played many roles. It has been a village commons, a city park, a speaker's corner, a community centre without walls. It has offered cooling shade in the summer, a storied greenhouse in the winter, a place to gather with others, or enjoy solace and solitude. And long before it was designated as private property, and then a city park, this was a place of great significance to Indigenous communities who have lived, gathered and held ceremonies here for millennia. And continue to do so.

It's impossible to overestimate the importance of this green space to the communities who come here. Allan Gardens Park is teeming with life – animal, vegetable, mineral, cultural, social and, famously, horticultural. And right from its establishment as an urban park, the Gardens has provided a platform for social justice movements -- from Suffragists and Oscar Wilde in the 19th century; to WWI veterans, anti-poverty advocates, environmental and gay rights champions in the 20th century; and MMIWG artists and activists and affordable housing advocates today. And like Milton Acorn's creative and determined campaign for freedom of speech, these protests have led the way to important advances in social justice.

People, Power & the Park provides a small glimpse into that history, into some of the individuals and groups that have gathered over the years, and have found refuge, pleasure, and power in community. We hope this glimpse helps to remind us that a public park is a common good, welcoming all.

This celebration of Allan Gardens Park has been the work of many - the local organizations keeping the neighbourhood safe and healthy in countless, vital ways; the residents and denizens of the park and its diverse neighbourhoods; and the students, staff and faculty of Toronto Metropolitan University who are committed to practising democracy, fostering civic engagement, and building a more just world.

ARCHIVAL INSTALLATION



1. Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto

The Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto, found on Gerrard St. across the street from Allan Gardens, provides a safe and welcoming environment for all Indigenous women and their children in the Greater Toronto Area. Our programs offer wrap around blanket services to address and support Basic Needs, Housing, Families, Advocacy, Employment, Education, Healing from Trauma, and Access to Ceremonies and Traditional Practitioners/ Healers.

Source: NWRCT Website

2. Rap 'n Rage Against the Cuts Sunday, October 1, 1995

Rap n' Rage was organized to protest against the 'Harris Cuts', a series of budgetary slashes to the Ontario welfare system. The concert drew over 400 attendees and multiple organizations including AIDS Action Now, Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights in Ontario, the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre, Low Income Families Together, and the Toronto Coalition Against Racism.

Source: Michelle Osborne, *The Eyeopener*

3. Sherbourne Health

At Sherbourne Health, we strive every day to meet the needs of the people and diverse communities we serve. Our teams offer clinical care, health promotion and education, outreach and social support, innovative youth programs and mental health services that work together to provide transformative care and support to 2SLGBTQ people, newcomers and people experiencing homelessness as well as those in downtown east Toronto neighbourhood.

Source: *Sherbourne Health Website*

4. Jobs, Justice, Climate Action July 5, 2015

Thousands from a variety of groups, including labour unions, Indigenous community groups, local and regional environmental groups, students, and many others marched from Queen's Park to Allan Gardens. They sought to bring awareness to climate change and its effect on the economy, as well as to protest growing social injustice and inequality among marginalized groups.

5. First Toronto Pride March August 1974

More than 100 people marched from Allan Gardens to Queen's Park in an effort to include sexual orientation in the Ontario Human Rights Code. This now-annual event continues to gain strength and size and to incorporate new partners and attendees each year.

Photo Courtesy of Charles Dobie

6. 1896 Mock Parliament

A group of suffragists, led by Emily Stowe, Lady Aberdeen and the Women's Christian Temperance Movement, held a mock Parliament in the Great Pavilion of Allan Gardens. The women "parliamentarians" entertained petitions from men's groups requesting the right to vote; to be permitted to be on city streets after 10PM; and to continue their teaching careers after marriage.

7. Safe Park Occupation, August 7-10, 1999

Organized by the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP) and supported by several University of Toronto students, a 'Safe Park' was created in Allan Gardens to support the homeless population and to protest housing inequality. Over one thousand people were fed, and 150 'housed' in a three-day occupation. The demonstration would continue on for several months, with a small number of protesters remaining within the park until March of 2000.

8. Friends of Allan Gardens

We aspire to grow the park and conservatory from their heritage roots as a horticultural garden of education, natural beauty, and cultural influence to become a year-round green oasis and vibrant destination at the heart of downtown Toronto. FOAG aims to share the stewardship of this land with Indigenous organizations and support groups throughout the city, and with our many benevolent society neighbours adjacent to the Gardens.

Source: FOAG Website

9. Black Lives Matter July 2, 2016

“Police and Pride Toronto activists spark a movement,”
Rinaldo Walcott, The Conversation.

Politically charged, community engaged, queer women marched, drummed, and rode bicycles to Allan Gardens, led by leaders from Black Lives Matter Toronto, this year’s Honoured Group at Pride Toronto. During the march, participants staged a powerful seated moment of silence in honour of those killed in the recent Orlando shootings.

10. One Dish Wampum

THE WAMPUM Describes a treaty between the Anishinabek and Haudenosaunee Confederacies. “The Peacemaker demonstrated the One Dish/One Spoon principle in an analogy to the fifty Haudenosaunee Roianeson (...) (or chiefs). Once the Five Nations agreed to unite, the Roianeson sat in a circle to listen to the Peacemaker. The Peacemaker expressed this principle by passing around a bowl of beaver tail, a delicacy among the People of the Longhouse. As the leaders sat in this circle of fifty, the Roianeson took only what they needed, knowing the bowl had to complete its circle. The One Dish demonstrated the collective responsibility of the people to share equally. The spoon revealed an additional symbol lesson here: to avoid a sharp instrument, such as a knife,

at a gathering of the people, because knives could cause the spilling of blood. Therefore employing sharp instruments or even sharp words was prohibited.”
Source: Royal Ontario Museum & Anishnabek Website

11. Allan Gardens Housing Protest, August, 1999

After almost 10 years, Toronto Police paid a \$100,000 settlement to Elan Ohayon, Alex Brown, and Oriel Varga, three housing activists and organizers who were arrested for participating in a peaceful protest in August 1999. This protest, which included sleepouts in the park every Friday, lasted for 120 nights. “The duration of the (legal) process highlights the continued problems in Toronto housing and the Ontario justice system,” Varga said.

Source: Global News December 29, 2008

12. Public Indecency Trial, 1979

Andrew Britton and Allan MacMurray met in Allan Gardens late one night and walked over to an area with trees and bushes located near the park’s greenhouses. They’d hardly had a chance to say anything to each other before they “both became aware of a couple of men peering at us through the bushes.” These men were police agents targeting gay men, who charged Britton and McMurray with ‘gross indecency’. They fought their charges and won due to a reasonable doubt as to whether the officer witnessed anything indecent.
Source: The Body Politic, September 1979

13. 2022 Artist in the Park

Michel Dumont was the inaugural Artist in Residence in Allan Gardens. A Queer Metis 2spirit disabled artist living in the Robinson Treaty area, spent the summer working in Allan Gardens on his powerful mosaic creations, including River of Pride. Working with shattered ceramic tiles is symbolic of Michel’s daily dealings with a shattered back and decades of PTSD, driving him to turn these struggles into something beautiful. As a son of an Indian Day School survivor, Michel also aims to honour his culture through his work.

14. c.1911 Joseph Williams

A long-serving, self-appointed caretaker of Allan Gardens.
Source: Friends of Allan Gardens

15/16. St. Luke’s United Church

Saint Luke’s United Church, the House of Friendship, is an Affirming Ministry, where all are welcome regardless of age, gender, race, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, differing abilities, or economic circumstances. They provide vital food assistance to people to over 1000 people every week.

17. Protest Resource for QTBIPOC

Created for Queer, Trans, Black, Indigenous, People of Colour and their allies, this booklet details safe protesting strategies, explains the legal rights of demonstrators, and shares support services available to the

public. Written by Gitanjali Lena and Vincent Wong with design, illustrations and comics by Pardis Pahlavanlu and additional graphics by Emma Nelson.

18. Dr. Oronhyatekha

The first practicing Indigenous MD in Canada, Oronhyatekha, or ‘Burning Cloud’, lived near Allan Gardens. He received his degree from Toronto School of Medicine, and his medical practice advertised “Indian cures and herbal medicine.” Born at Six Nations on August 10, 1841, he was baptized as Peter Martin but always preferred his Mohawk name; “There are thousands of Peter Martins,” he declared, “but there is only one Oronhyatekha.”

19. The Ontario Coalition Against Poverty

OACAP is a direct-action based anti-poverty organization formed in 1990. We are based in Toronto but work on issues that affect people across the province and are in solidarity with similar movements across the country and around the world.
Source: OCAP website

20. One Dish Wampum Agreement

(see #10 above)

21. Allan Gardens Housing Protest

(see #11 above)

22. Mizwe Biik Garden

Found across from Allan Gardens on Gerrard Street, Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment and Training was created in 1991 to meet the unique training and employment needs of Indigenous people. In the spring of 2022, a group including TMU's Office of Social Innovation, Friends of Allan Gardens, Spruce Lab, and Miinikaan Innovation and Design collaborated on the restoration and expansion of Mizwe Biik's gardens. This involved the use of Indigenous medicine plants chosen for their healing properties and for their range of bloom times, offering food for pollinators and other urban wildlife.

23. Anti-Fascist Riot May 30, 1965

"Thousands of people, some of them survivors of the German concentration camps, descended upon the park to protest a neo-Nazi rally, expected to attract about 50. In the end, it turned out to be eight, severely outmatched by an estimated 4,000 anti-Nazis. The hateful eight was led by William John Beattie, a 23-year-old who "barely made it out of his car," tried to run, but was grabbed and beaten by the "hate-filled" and "hysterical" mob.
Source: Toronto Star May 31, 1965

24. Annual Dyke March & Rally

Beginning as a grassroots march, the now-annual Dyke March invites lesbians of any gender identity and their allies to celebrate together. Several past iterations of the Dyke March have ended in Allan Gardens,

and the park grounds have hosted rallies, speakers, performers, community fairs, and after-parties to commemorate the event.

25. Allan Gardens Soccer Raid August 26, 1994

In response to complaints from local residents about drug use in the park, Toronto police herded sixty-five Black men playing their regular pick-up soccer game into the centre of the park, where they were made to sit on the grass with their hands behind the heads. No drugs were found on the players, but officers nonetheless issued three thousand dollars' worth of loitering tickets and warned the players that they would be arrested if they returned to the Park. They did return—just once. While a crowd of supporters circled the playing field, they played one last game in defiance; then never returned to the park.
Source: Gaetan Heroux

26. Slutwalk "The Red Umbrellas Brigade Edition" 2016

Founded in 1986, Maggie's Toronto Sex Worker's Action Project was established on the belief that sex work is real, legitimate and valuable work. Maggie's is one of Canada's oldest by and for sex worker support organizations, and one of the first sex worker organizations globally to receive government funding.
Source: Maggie's of Toronto Website

27. G-20 PROTEST June 26-27, 2010

Protesters representing more than two dozen causes and organizations formed a 100-person tent city pitched in downtown Allan Gardens, protesting the G-20 Summit. Their numbers grew when nearly 500 marchers unexpectedly arrived to join them, led by author and activist Naomi Klein. Organizer Gaetan Heroux said of the event; "The idea was to have a group of world leaders wining and dining in five-star hotels, sleeping very well at nighttime while five minutes away from them, there's a large group of people who don't have enough housing and don't have enough to eat."
Source: Gaetan Heroux

28. Workers' Ex-Servicemen's League (WESL), August 15, 1933

Organized by the WESL, a rally of over two thousand protested the effects of unemployment and government policy on men who formerly served in the armed forces, known as ex-servicemen. When they unfurled their banner, "Heroes 1914 – Bums 1933", scores of police on foot and horseback descended on the crowd, but they failed to disperse the thousands gathered.

29. Fight for free speech, Allan Gardens 1962

....no person shall publicly preach, lecture, proclaim or harangue in or on any City Park. This section shall

not apply to any person holding, conducting, or taking part in a religious meeting.

Toronto City By-law 21379

To protest the above-given bylaw, Canadian writer Milton Acorn, accompanied by several other poets, gathered by the statue of Robbie Burns to recite poetry. Their peaceful readings were continually disrupted by police enforcers, giving them tickets for violating the bylaw. The poets fought their charges in court and continued to return to Allan Gardens every Sunday to demonstrate. After months of public poetry readings and nation-wide publicity, the City of Toronto finally amended the bylaw to allow public speaking on April 4th, 1963.

30. Children beat the sweltering heat at the Allan Gardens fountain. Toronto Star

A water feature, fountain or wading pool continues to be one of the most urgently requested items by park community members as climate change continues to worsen.

BANNERS

Oronhyatekha, aka, Burning Cloud, aka Dr. O, aka Peter Martin, was the first practicing Indigenous M.D. in Canada. His home and practice were situated by Allan Gardens.

Lady Aberdeen As Vice-Regal Consort to Governor General from 1893 until 1898, Lady Aberdeen formed the National Council of Women in Canada, to advocate for the rights of women. She also became the first sponsor of the Women's Art Association of Canada and helped found the Victorian Order of Nurses. She was a principal organizer of the mock parliament held in Allan Gardens.

Cathy Crowe is a widely respected Canadian street nurse, educator, social justice activist, and filmmaker specializing in advocacy on homelessness in Canada. She is the author of *Dying for a Home: Homeless Activists Speak Out* and is a frequent commentator on issues related to health, homelessness, and affordable housing.

G20 Protester with a bandana covering his nose and mouth as protection against tear gas. Many protesters had their water, backpacks and goggles (also for protection against tear gas) taken from them by police as they arrived at Allan gardens.

John Clarke became involved with anti-poverty struggles when he helped to form a union of the unemployed in London, Ontario, in 1983. From 1990 to 2019, he was an organizer with the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP). He is presently Packer Visitor in Social Justice at York University.

Oscar Wilde One of the best-loved playwrights of the Victorian era, Oscar Wilde continues to be admired today for his searing wit. Wilde lectured in the Pavilion Hall of Allan Gardens. May 27, 1882.

Pink Triangle Originally used in concentration camps to identify gay prisoners, the pink triangle was reclaimed by the gay rights movement as a universal symbol of gay power and pride.

Jobs. Justice. Climate Action. was a spectacular demonstration of unity of dozens of groups, over 10,000 people representing multiple organizations who marched together in Toronto, July 5, 2015

Sex Work is Real Work is the rallying cry and manifesto for the movement seeking acceptance, safety, and labour protections for sex workers.

Housing For All is the blunt response to the grave and ever-worsening scourges of homelessness, poverty, and extreme income disparities.

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PEOPLE, POWER, & THE PARK

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Friends of Allan Gardens, Mackenzie House, Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment and Training, Mackenzie House Museum, Moccasin Identifier Project, Native Women's Resource Centre, Sherbourne Health, St. Luke's United Church, Yonge/Dundas BIA

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ARCHIVAL SOURCES AND CONSULTANTS

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People, Power, & the Park is part of Imagine the Park, an ongoing series of events in and around Allan Gardens, an initiative of the Office of Social Innovation, Toronto Metropolitan University.

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