

New street signs put Toronto's Indigenous history front and centre

'By doing this, it shows that the First Nations people are still here. We're still on their land'

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The signs on some of Toronto's best-known streets are getting a makeover, but the names they bear aren't new — in fact, they're thousands of years old.

It's a movement begun at the height of the Idle No More movement in 2013 by artists and activists Hayden King and Susan Blight through a project called Ogimaa Mikana. As part of an effort to reclaim Toronto's Indigenous history, the two made stickers with Indigenous translations of Toronto street names, plastering them over the English signs.

- [Artist reclaims Toronto streets using Ojibway language](#)

Now, three years later, "official" signs are cropping up across the city, with four of Toronto's major streets now bearing signs with their Anishinaabe names.

"Official" signs went up today at Dupont/Spadina, Davenport/Spadina, Dupont/ Davenport. Or, Ishpadinaa & Gete-Onigaming. Go check them out!

— [@Hayden King](#)

The signs officially went up Friday as part of a joint initiative by Ogimaa Mikana and the Dupont by the Castle Business Improvement Area (BIA).

Stuart Grant, chair of the BIA, told CBC News the group was inspired to bring the signs to their area after seeing the hand-made ones by Ogimaa Mikana online. After taking the idea to the city, Grant says, the group started work on the signs' designs.

"These were the names thousands of years ago when the First Nations people were here," Grant told CBC News.

"By doing this, it shows that the First Nations people are still here. We're still on their land. We share it but we're still on their land," Grant said.

On its website, Ogimaa Mikana says it hopes "to restore Anishinaabemowin place-names to the streets, avenues, roads, paths and trails of Gichi Kiiwenging (Toronto)."

The group hopes the signs will expand throughout the city, "transforming a landscape that often obscures or makes invisible the presence of Indigenous peoples."

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