

Submission – Diane Bousquet, Warming Souls with Soup

Expropriation and Rezoning of Lemay Forest (Item 1 - Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development – Notice of Motion)

Submitted: Fri, 03/21/2025 - 11:14

Delegation information
Committee you want to address
Council

Agenda item you want to address (number and title)
The Lemay forest

Support or oppose recommendations
I support the recommendations

Register as a delegation
In person

Submit comments in writing
Statement to Winnipeg City Hall: The Urgent Need to Protect Lemay Forest
Presented by: Diane Bousquet
Spirit Name: Shining Flowering Thunderbird Woman
Bear Clan, Métis Descent

Good morning, Mayor and Council Members,
My name is Diane Bousquet, my spirit name is Shining Flowering Thunderbird Woman. I am of the Bear Clan, a non-status Indigenous woman of Métis descent.
I stand here today carrying the voices of my ancestors, the wisdom of my elders, and the responsibility of speaking the truth—because for far too long, Indigenous voices have been ignored, silenced, and erased.
Lemay Forest is not just trees. It is not just land.
It is a burial ground.
It is a place of ceremony.
It is a place of memory.
It is sacred.
And today, it is under imminent threat of destruction.
The City of Winnipeg has a choice to make.
Will you stand with truth, with history, with justice?
Or will you stand with those who seek to erase all that remains?
The Sacred Significance of Lemay Forest
Do you hear the voices of the children in the wind?
Because they are here.
The trees hold their memories.
The soil cradles their bones.
3,383 children died here.
Over 700 mothers perished here.

They were not given dignity in life.

Will you deny them dignity in death?

For over 26 years, sweat lodges stood here, offering a space for healing, for prayer, for connection.

Now, those sweat lodges stand empty—silenced, erased, cleared away in the name of profit.

Developers have been allowed to move forward, not with consultation, not with respect, but with the same colonial violence that has scarred our people for generations.

This is not reconciliation. This is continued dispossession.

A History of Erasure

This is not new.

- The Canadian Museum for Human Rights was built on an ancient Indigenous burial ground.
- Indigenous cemeteries and sacred sites across this country have been paved over, turned into shopping malls, roads, and developments.
- Time and again, "progress" has come at the cost of Indigenous lives and memories.

But Lemay Forest does not have to be the next site of erasure.

This is your opportunity to break this cycle.

Legal and Ethical Responsibility

If this were a Christian cemetery, would we even be having this conversation?

Would the City stand by while developers desecrate the graves of settlers?

Under Canadian law:

- All activity on land suspected to contain human remains must cease immediately.
- Indigenous burial sites are to be protected and respected.
- Governments are legally and morally obligated to uphold the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's

Calls to Action.

Yet here we are.

Fighting.

Begging for what should already be protected.

This is not just about Indigenous rights—this is about basic human dignity.

A Developer Who Profits Off Our Pain

The developer behind this project has chosen to:

- Shut down Indigenous ceremonies.
- Threaten trespassing charges against those who have always belonged here.
- Turn sacred sweat lodges into a pay-to-pray scheme, banning those who speak out.
- Weaponize lawsuits to silence the voices of those resisting destruction.

This is not reconciliation. This is exploitation.

The developer claims to support reconciliation while profiting off our ceremonies and silencing those who resist.

This is not someone who can be trusted to uphold Indigenous rights.

The City has a duty to intervene.

A Call to Action

We are not asking for favors. We are demanding justice.

- Immediately expropriate Lemay Forest and designate it as protected land.
- Ensure its permanent preservation and public accessibility.
- Recognize and protect the burial sites that lie beneath this land.
- Restore Indigenous ceremonial rights to this space.
- Listen to the voices of Indigenous peoples and act with integrity.

This is not just about Lemay Forest.

This is about who Winnipeg chooses to be.

Will you be the leaders who stand for truth and justice?

Or will you allow another sacred place to be destroyed—another chapter in the long history of Indigenous erasure?

The world is watching.

The spirits are watching.

We will not be silent.

The time to act is now.

Thank you.

Public engagement (optional)

I consent to being contacted to participate in potential public engagement related to this matter.

Yes