

Ādisōke: A Bold Experiment in Library Cooperation

Barbara Clubb, Ottawa City Librarian, 1995–2012, retired
with Aynsley Morris and Ottawa Public Library–Communications

Ādisōke, the joint facility between the Ottawa Public Library (OPL) and the Library and Archives Canada (LAC) is set to open its doors in 2026.

- Ādisōke is designed to be a landmark destination built on the shared values of the two partner institutions.
- The facility will deliver a unique customer experience through Ottawa Public Library's Central facility and Library and Archives Canada's public services, exhibitions and events, which showcases Indigenous stories and histories, as well as Canadian heritage.
- The joint programming and services will make this a truly unique offering in Canada. It is envisioned as a modern, iconic facility that will respond to rapidly developing technology, growing customer expectations and changing demographics.
- Since 2019, the OPL-LAC Joint Facility Project Team has worked in partnership with the Anishinābe Algonquin Nation via the work of Elders and members of Kitigan Zibi Anishinābeg First Nation and the Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation to develop a unique and creative facility that is welcoming to all.

Name and how it came to be

Ādisōke phonetic spelling: adiso:kə

- Through several engagement sessions, members of the Kitigan Zibi Anishinābeg and Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation offered their knowledge and teachings. These conversations helped inspire the building's design.
- As the process unfolded, it became apparent that this new building, designed to be inclusive and welcoming to all, could also be given a name in Anishinābemowin Algonquin language.
- Naming is an honourable and powerful act: Elders are given the responsibility of selecting names that are meaningful for many generations to come. It is intended that the given name would bring the facility to life and ensure that the spirit and intent of the facility is honoured.
- After thoughtful consideration, the Host Nation and the OPL-LAC Project Team, chose the name Ādisōke — an Anishinābemowin word that refers to the telling of stories. Storytelling is the traditional means by which Indigenous peoples share knowledge, culture and history over generations.

Cost — City and LAC

Total project cost: \$326M

Breakdown of contributions:

City of Ottawa: \$110M

OPL: \$60M

LAC: \$136M

Parking garage \$20M (cost-recovery)

Size

- 216,000 square feet
- Located on Le Breton Flats facing the Ottawa River and the Gatineau Hills just minutes from downtown Ottawa and directly on the LRT line.
- OPL 61%, LAC 39%
- There are shared spaces within the facility, including the Central Gathering Space, the Multipurpose Space/Auditorium and a shared genealogy centre.
- Will welcome 5,000 people a day, 1.7 million people a year.

Architects

- The team of Diamond Schmitt Architects and KWC Architects was selected to design the facility.
- Diamond Schmitt Architects is an internationally recognized Canadian architecture firm established in 1975, with offices in Toronto, Vancouver and New York.
- KWC Architects is an Ottawa-based firm established in 1978.
- Both firms have won multiple awards, including Governor General's Medals in Architecture, OAA Awards of Excellence, American Library Association, and Ontario Library Association Awards of Excellence.

Special OPL features

- The Children's Discovery Centre will be a vibrant and playful environment that stimulates children's imaginations through creative and constructive play, and specialized programming.
 - This large area includes play spaces, a creation centre, an early literacy centre, computer stations, group and individual seating, a multipurpose room for education programs, the Children's Wigwam-inspired space for Storytime, and a collection of more than 20,000 items.
 - The Teen Centre one floor above will allow youth to explore ideas, unlock their creativity and discover their independence and autonomy in their own space. It will include maker spaces, and areas for performances, group gatherings and quiet study.
 - OPL's Adult Fiction Collection, the Demonstration Kitchen, and the restaurant will be located on the fifth floor. The OPL reading areas will be beautiful, light-filled spaces with large collections to browse, and places to sit comfortably and take in the fantastic views of Ottawa, the Ottawa River and the Gatineau hills.
 - The Civic Reception Room also on the fifth floor will be an ideal venue to host meetings, gatherings, receptions and events of all kinds. With its beautiful views from the top floor of the facility, this stunning room will be available for library programs and to rent for private events.
- Expected opening date: mid-2026.

Fundraising campaign — OPL

- Theme: Unlock Potential
- \$10 million fundraising goal: \$7.5 million for equipment, technology and furnishings; \$2.5 million for programming and pilot projects
- Fundraising campaign is to ensure Central Library is a lively community hub that will provide access to the latest creative technologies, spaces to work and study, high quality literacy programs, and exceptional collections.
- The Right Hon. Beverley McLachlin, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, is the Honorary Chair of the Ottawa Central Library fundraising campaign. Ms. McLachlin will act as an ambassador and spokesperson for the campaign.
- Quote from her: “I am thrilled to be taking on this role as Honorary Chair. As a jurist, writer, reader and strong advocate for lifelong learning and literacy, I believe public libraries are beacons of equal opportunities. They are spaces of connection where everyone, regardless of their background, can be an active part of their community, city and country.”



Architectural rendering for the Ottawa Public Library–Library and Archives Canada Joint Facility Interior Atrium A scheduled to open in 2026 on the Le Breton Flats

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