American Indian Regional Park and Trail Place Name Series and Draft Toolkit Information Item

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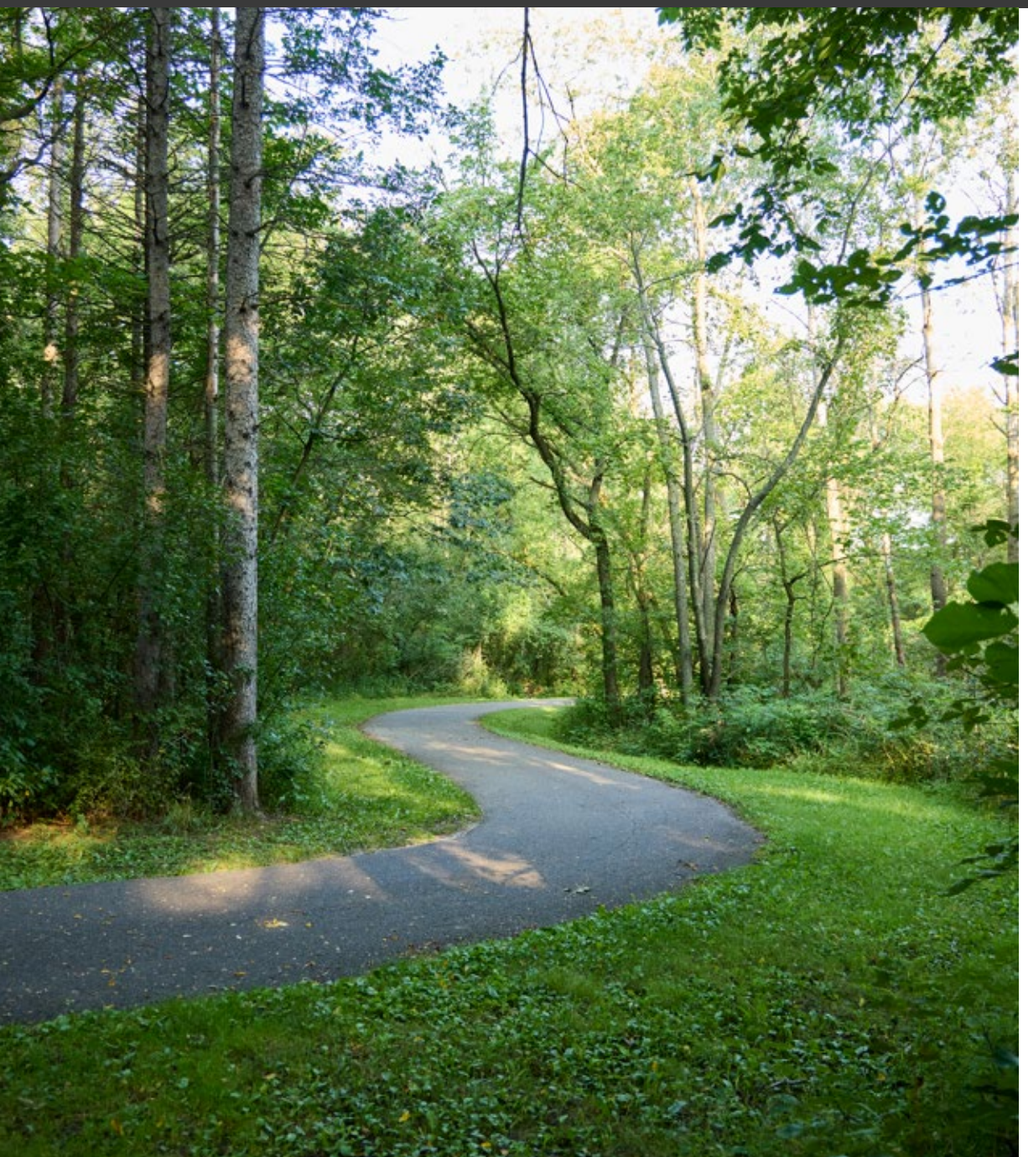
METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

Current Work and Work Plan Items – American Indian and Culture



Current Work

Place Names Series and Draft Toolkit for regional park and trail names.

Work Plan Items

- **Cultural resources inventory requirement** for long-range planning in partnership with key stakeholders. *2025-2026 Section 5, Action 1; Planning Handbook*
- **Cultural Landscape subclassification**, in coordination with American Indian Tribes, other cultural communities, and regional park implementing agencies. *2025-2026; Section 2, Action 1*
- **Inventory of and guidelines for harvestable fruits,** mushrooms, and other plants in partnership with regional park implementing agencies, American Indian groups, and other partners and interested stakeholders. *2026-2028; Section 7, Action 1*
- As part of a broader Met Council effort, **develop a training program and learning opportunities** to explore indigenous land management practices and other related topics. *2026-2028; Section 7, Action 1*

American Indian Park and Trail Place Name Series – Project Overview

Project Overview

- Regional park and trail place names are developed with extensive public engagement efforts.
- Led by Wakaŋ Tipi Awaŋyaŋkapi and the agency's Tribal Liaisons; with support provided by MPRB, Saint Paul, and Met Council.
- An intial effort focused on centering American Indian voices in park and trail place name processes.
- Four progressive engagements from May 2024 through 2026; culminating in an agency toolkit of cultural learnings.

Engagement Series

Four Perspectives

- **Knowledge Keepers**, Tribal State Historic Preservation Officers and Community Leaders (May 20, 2025)
- **Elders** experienced Dakota and Ojibwe voices (November 17, 2025)
- **Youth** perspectives on identity, tradition, and cultural continuity (2026) (Meeting or interviews)
- **Implementing Agencies** engaged in park or trail place name or other related American Indian or cultural projects (2026)

May 20th Meeting (LeMoine LaPointe's Notes)

Main Themes

- Dakota connection to land and place names
- Historical erasure and reclamation
- Cultural revitalization and language
- Consensus and community process
- Tangible benefits and broader impact
- Structural barriers and institutional critique
- Allyship and accountability

Second Place Names Meeting - November 17th and Next Steps

November 17th Meeting

Meeting highlighted elders' perspectives related to place names

- Q1: From a historical point of view, what considerations must we honor in the naming of natural lands and open spaces for future generations?
- Q2: In a community where many voices differ, how could we work together to share a vibrant path where all voices are heard and respected? What would it look like?

Next Steps

- Continue with the last two Place Name Engagements.
- Continue conversations with Implementing Agency Staff.
- Develop Toolkit of project learnings for Agency Staff.

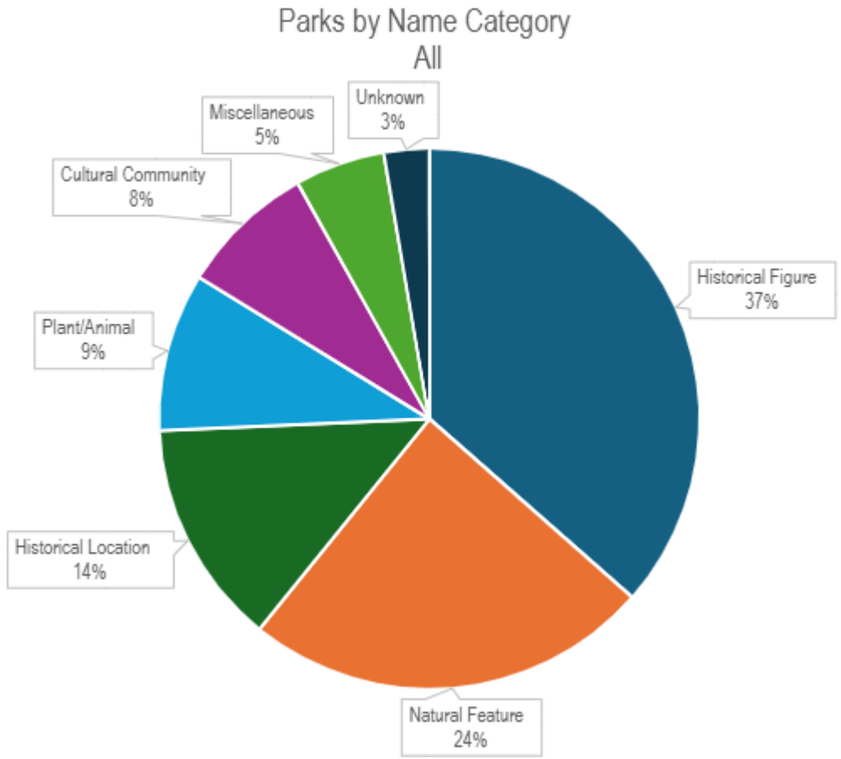
Draft Place Names Toolkit - Overview

This toolkit should:

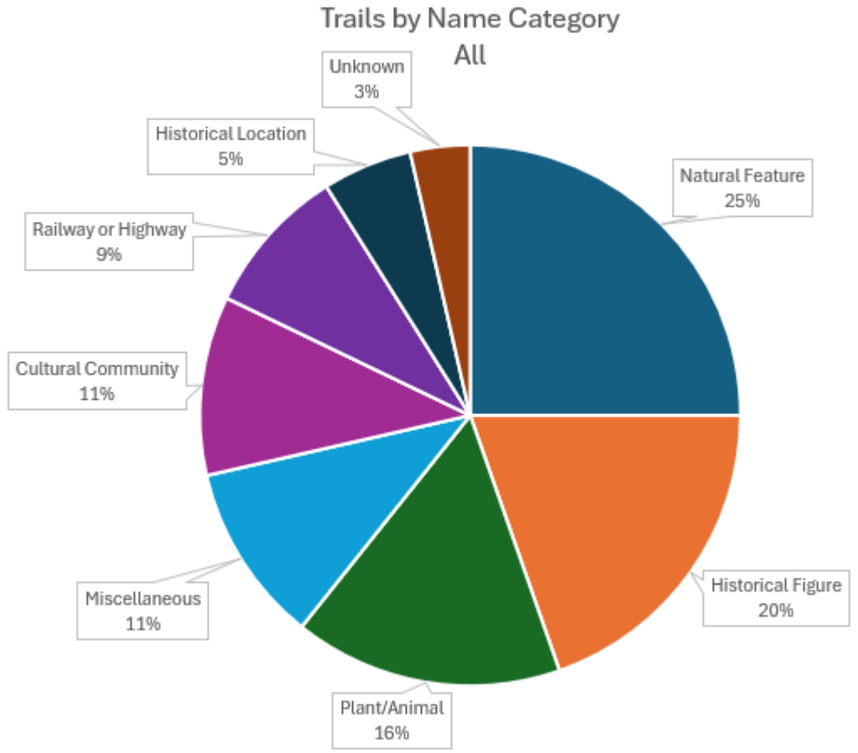
- Support an understanding of place name history, meaning, and processes.
- House the Place Names Listening Session meeting notes.
- Explore regional park and trail place names history and culture.

Draft Place Names Toolkit – Intial Findings

Regional Park and Trail Name by Category Types



Regional Park, Park Reserves, and Special Features



Regional Trails

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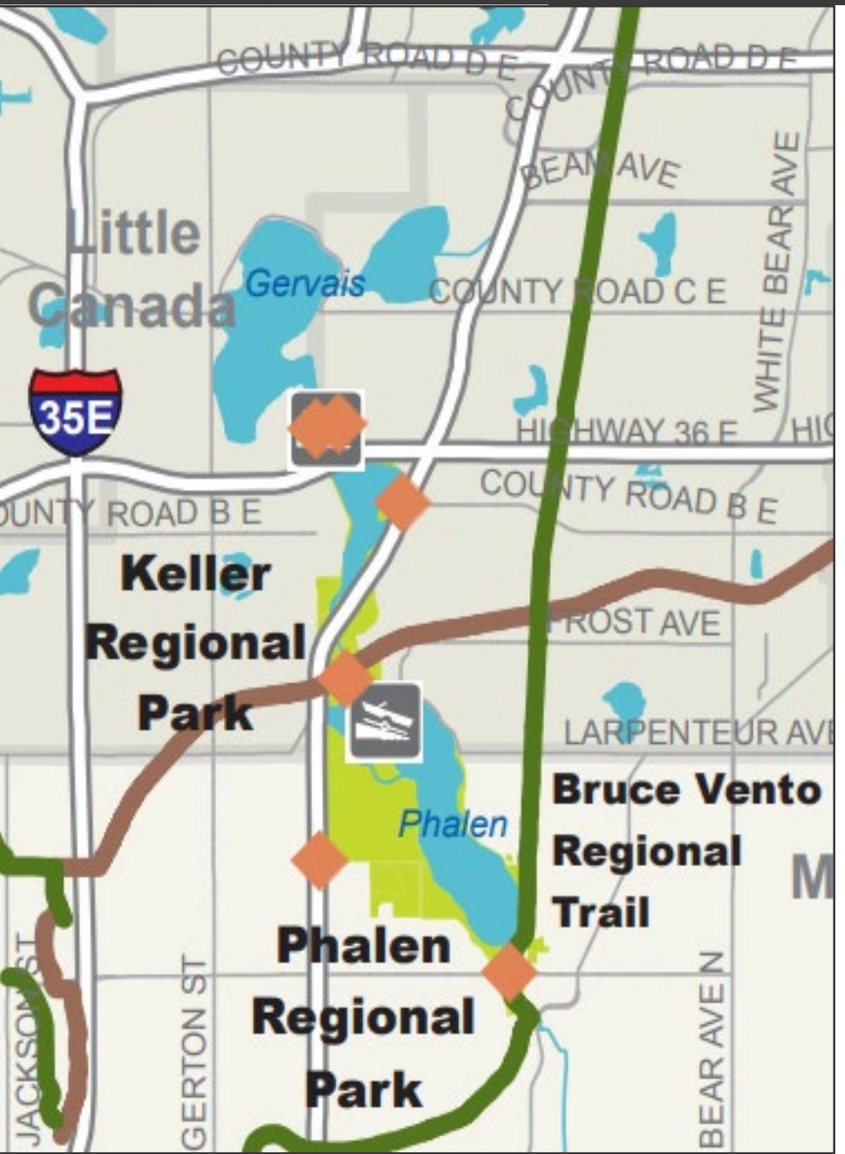
Regional Park Example – Historic Figures (colonial)



Phalen-Keller Regional Park

Lake Phalen

- Edward Phalen, Soldier at Fort Snelling and one of Saint Paul's first settlers (1839). Made several land claims.
- Tried for the murder of his friend John Hays. Acquitted for lack of evidence but convicted later for perjury.
- Fled to California in 1850 but killed by his companions.

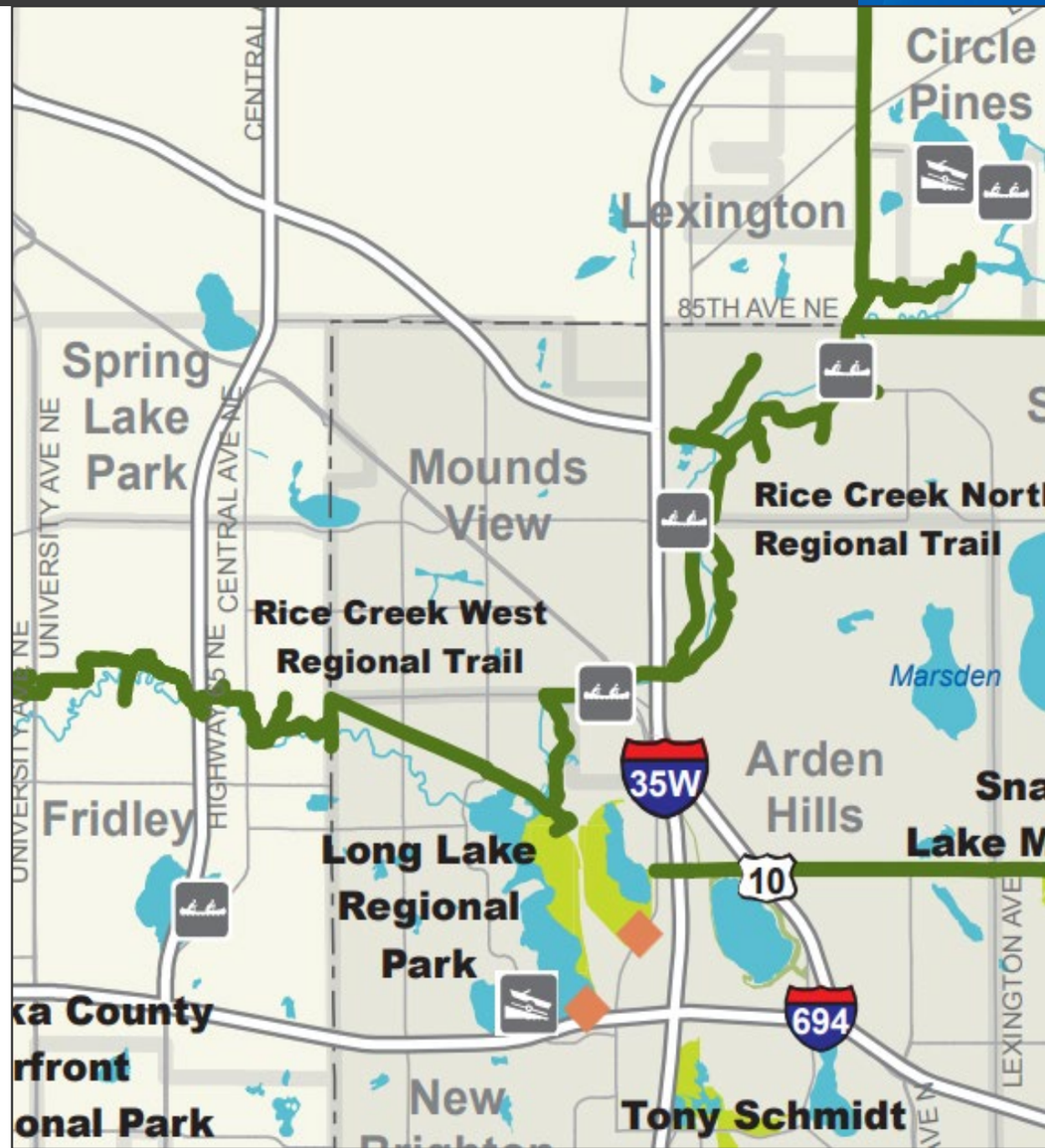
Lake Keller

- Herbert P. Keller, the 31st mayor of Saint Paul (1910-1914).
- First mayor to be born in the City of Saint Paul.

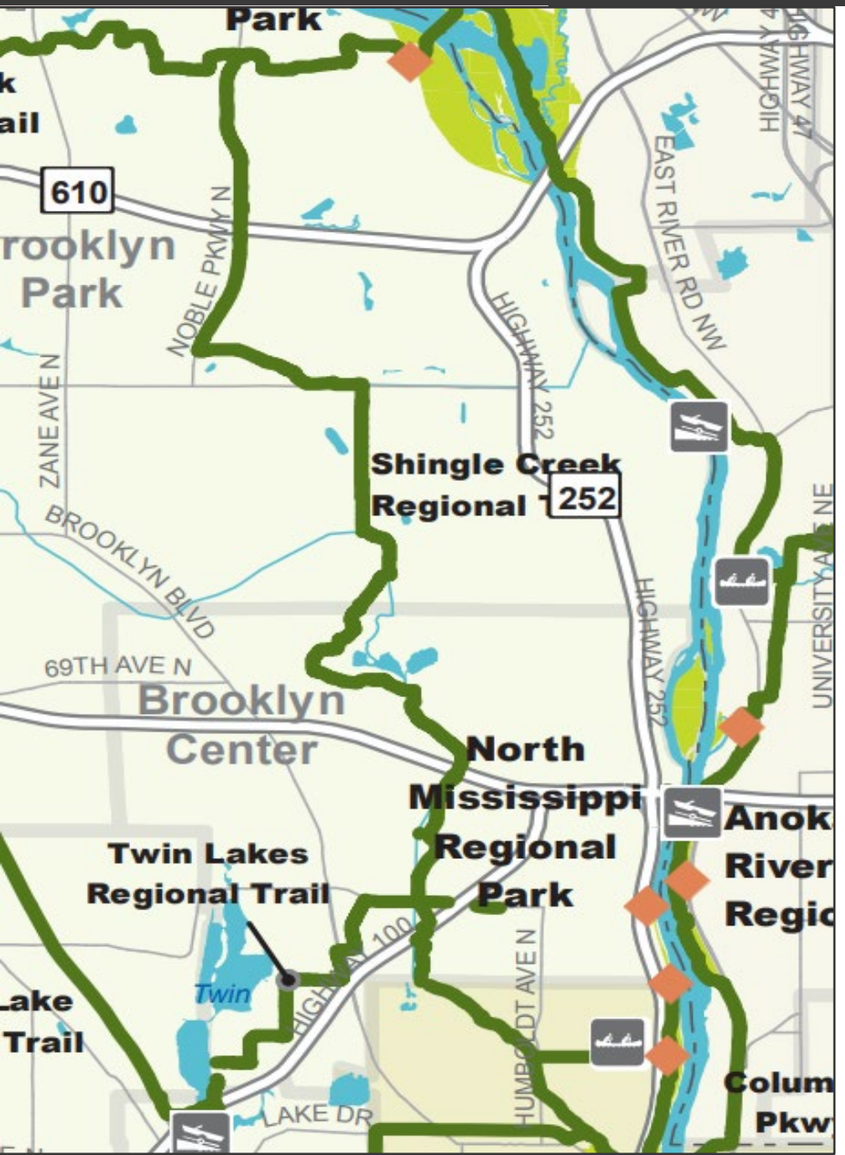
Regional Trail Example – Historic Figure (Colonial)

Rice Creek North and West Regional Trails; and Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve

- Rice Creek originally named after wild rice.
  - Psiŋta wakpadaŋ (Dakota) Panoominikaan-ziibi (Ojibwe).
- Settlers named it after Henry Mower Rice (1816-1894).
  - Fur trader, land speculator, and treaty negotiator (Ho-chuck).
  - Leader in creation of Minnesota Territory (1849) and future statehood (1857).
  - Served as one of Minnesota's first federal representatives.



Regional Trail Example – Historic Location



Shingle Creek Regional Trail

- Shingler's Creek – old shingle factory
- Originally hunting grounds and ritual site for migrating Indigenous groups
- Shingle factory built in 1862 alongside booming logging industry
- River became known as Shingler's Creek
- Factory was demolished to support the growing Minneapolis, Shingle Creek name remained.

MPOSC, AIAC, and Agency Advice

February Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission

Commissioners expressed interest in adding resources to the toolkit to improve accessibility as listed below:

- A map/database showing colonial and Indigenous names.
- Pronunciation aids for Indigenous names.

Agency Advice

- Support for the Toolkit
- Place name changes are not always within the power of agencies
- Toolkit requires more historical analysis and community engagement
- Add the original American Indian Names of each regional unit, if possible/practicable.

February 2026 American Indian Advisory Council Advice

3rd Engagement – Youth perspectives

- Work with Indigenous Peoples Taskforce to invite youth
- Include youth advisors
- Add cultural learning and stories about past renaming projects.

August 2025 American Indian Advisory Council Advice

Place Names Series

- Continue to have these dialogues and explore access and harvesting.
- Have a process to navigate consensus.
- Include both Ojibwe and Dakota voices.

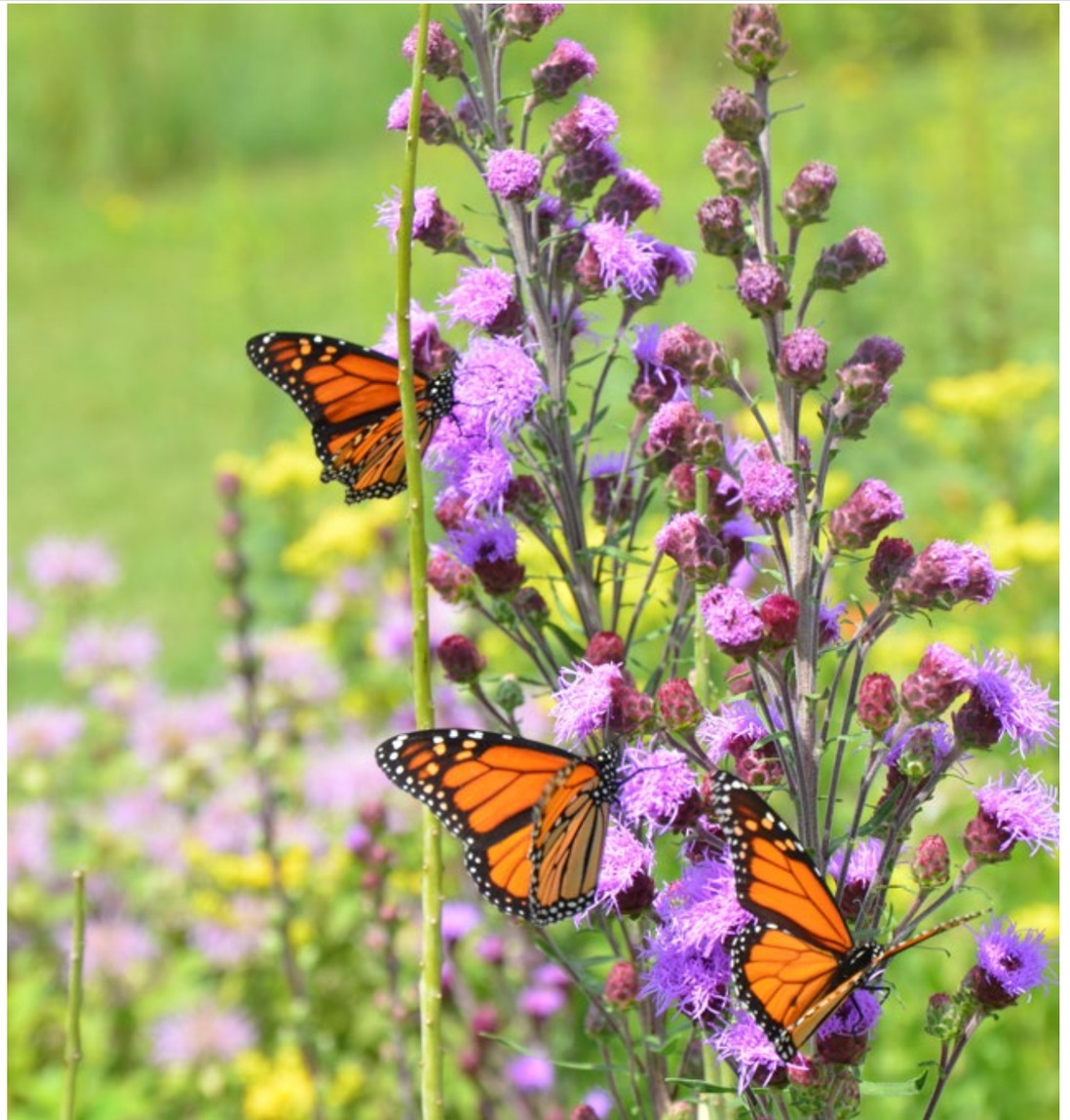
Draft Toolkit Status and Next Steps

Status

- First draft that includes initial findings
- Database format

Next Steps

- Continue with the last two Place Name Engagements.
- Establish and engage a Place Names Workgroup to continue developing toolkit.
- Initiate work with Implementing Agencies on the full slate of American Indian Advisory Council Section 9 Commitments.



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