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

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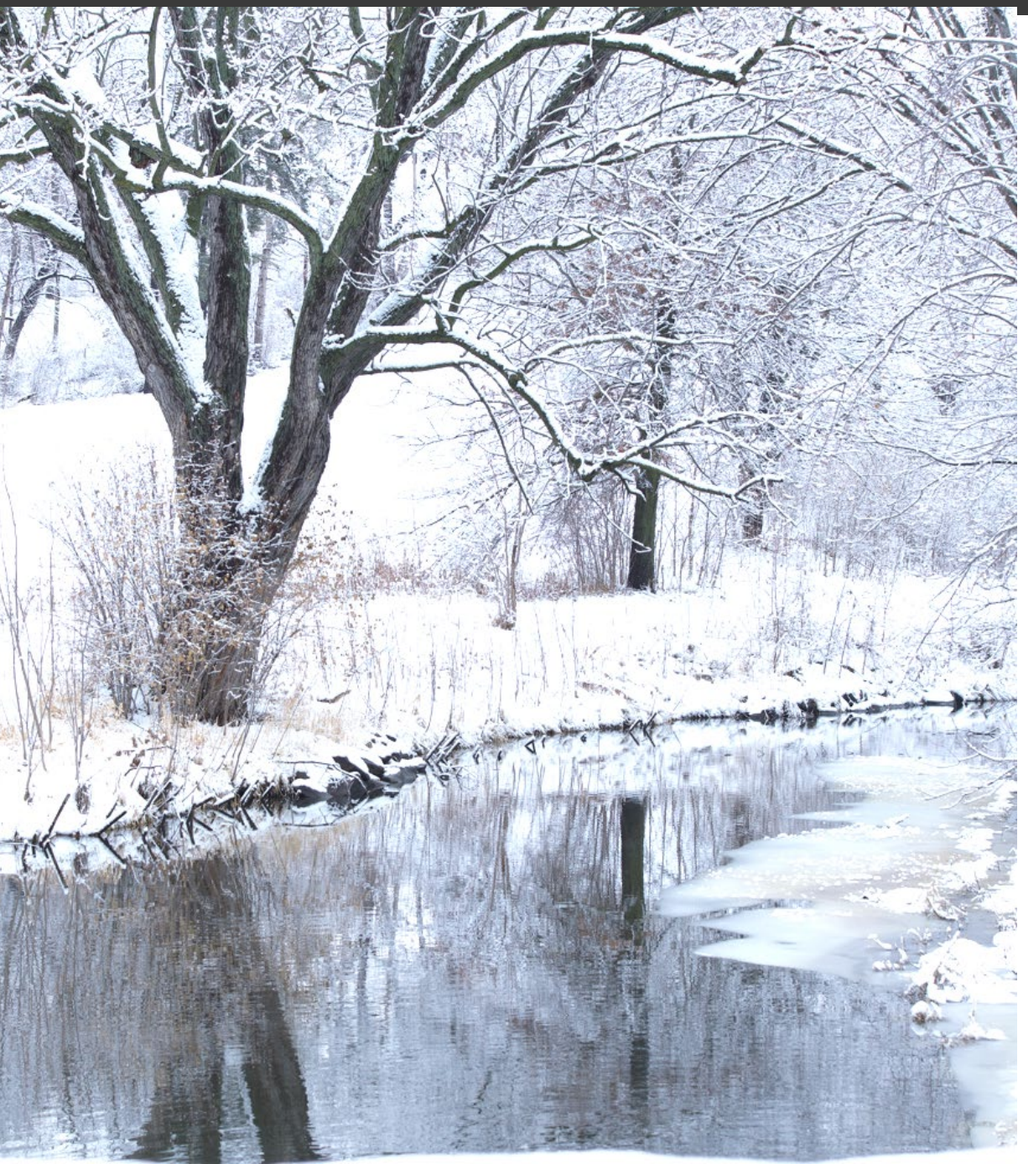
METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

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

- Regional park and trail place names are developed with extensive public engagement efforts.
- Collaboration between Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, City of Saint Paul, Metropolitan 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 Ojibway 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 (Lamoine LaPoint's Notes)

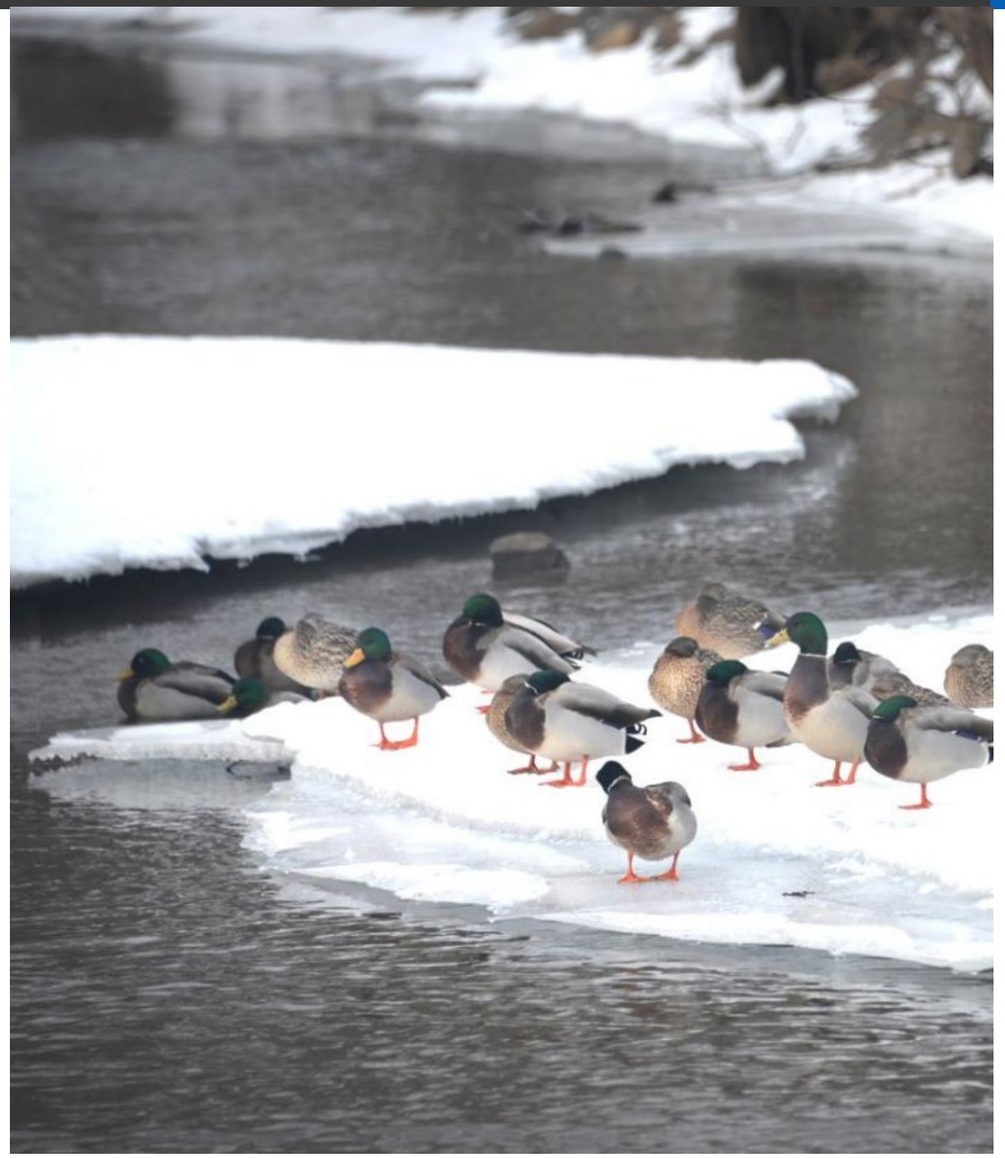
Main Themes

Dakota Connection to Land and Place Names: From a Dakota perspective, place names reflect relational worldviews rather than ownership… Participants emphasized the concept of Dakota people as "spatial thinkers" with a continuous relationship to the landscape…

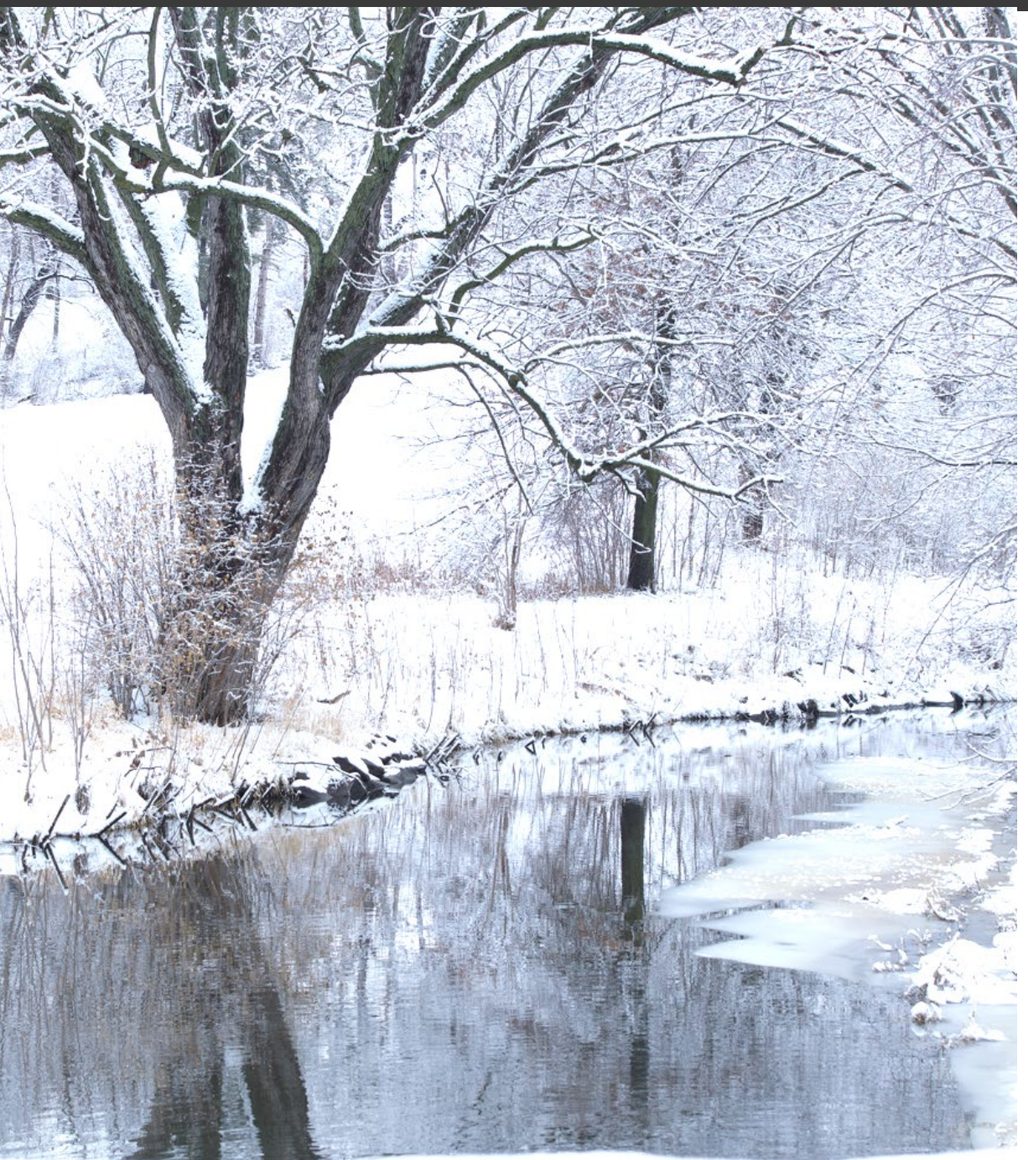
Historical Erasure and Reclamation: The current landscape carries the weight of systemic erasure of Dakota people through settler renaming and urban development.

Cultural Revitalization and Language: The Dakota language is central to place naming and is seen as a vehicle to honor ancestors and restore the worldview…

Consensus and Community Process: …. Historically, Dakota people practiced consensus and pluralism, accepting multiple truths and perspectives, meaning that not all Dakota people will agree on every detail due to diverse experiences, dialects, and bands….



May 20th Meeting Notes Continued



Main Themes

Tangible Benefits and Broader Impact: Renaming efforts are seen as more than symbolic; they are opportunities for public education, cultural resurgence, relational accountability, healing, and reconciliation….

Structural Barriers and Institutional Critique: Participants expressed deep frustration with repetitive and "extractive engagement," where the community is repeatedly asked for input without visible action or follow-through from government institutions….

Allyship and Accountability: Allies were called upon to listen, follow Indigenous leadership, and use their positions within institutions to support…

Second Place Names Meeting - November 17th and Next Steps

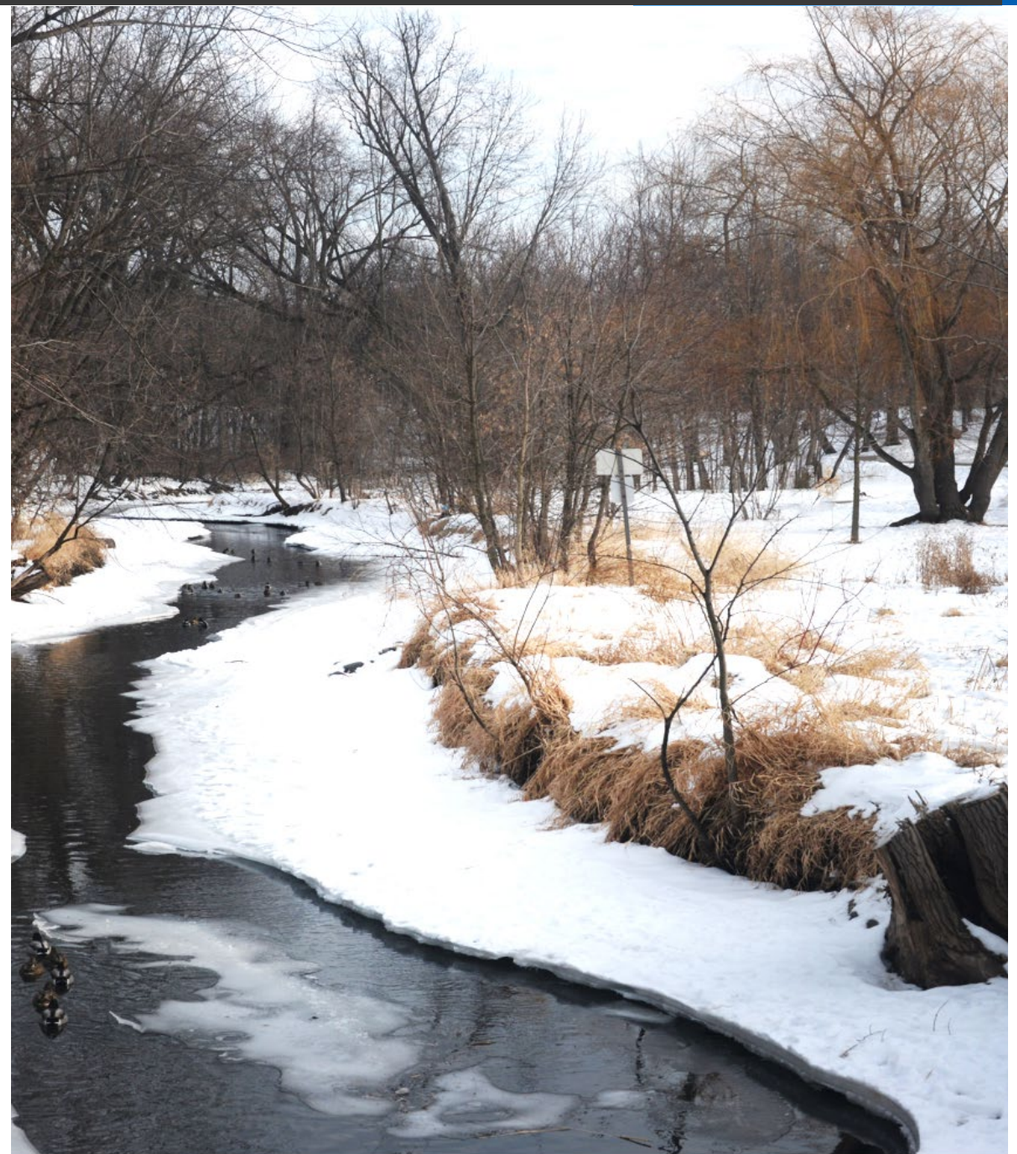
November 17th Meeting

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.
- Have deeper conversations with Implementing Agency Staff.



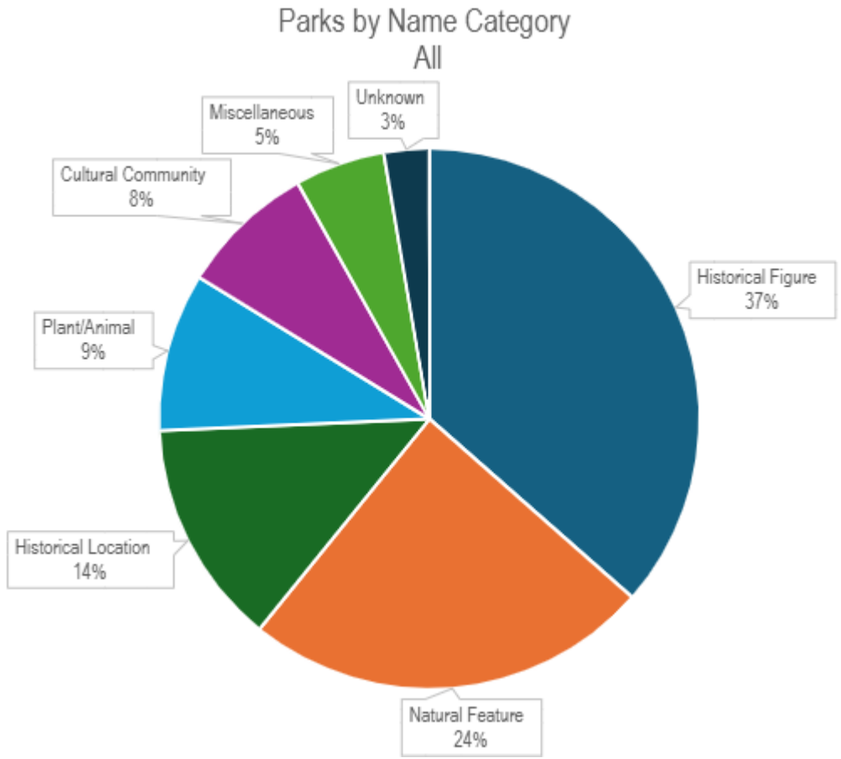
Draft Place Names Toolkit - Overview

This toolkit should:

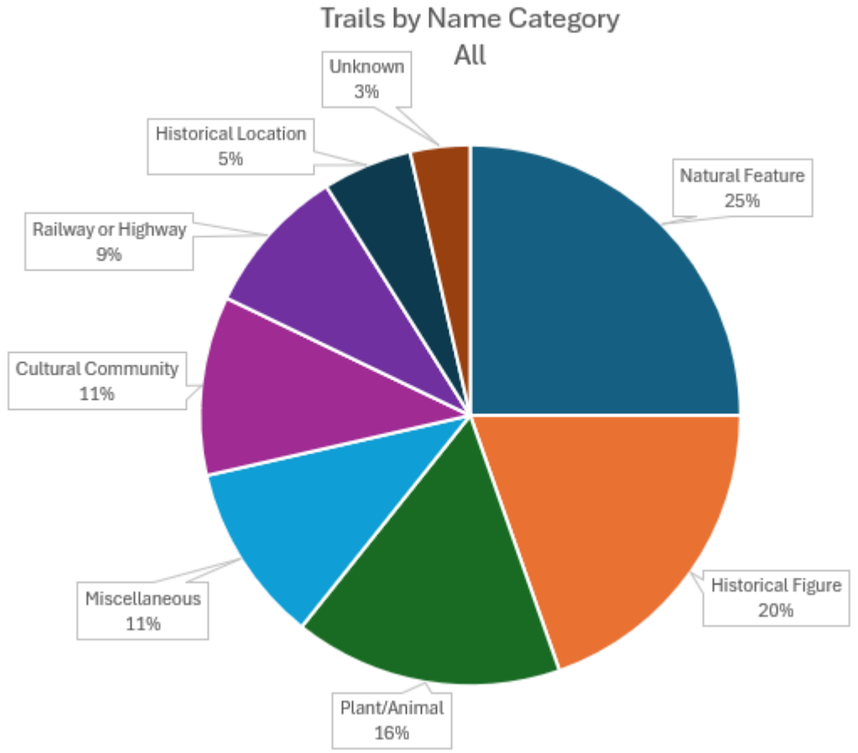
- Support an understanding of place name history, meaning, and processes.
- House the Place Names Listening Session meeting notes.
- Explore regional park and trail place names history and culture.
- Include case studies of other place names projects around the metro.

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 – Cultural Community (Ojibwe)

Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park

- Lake Nokomis is named after Nokomis, the grandmother of both Nanabozho in Ojibwe traditional stories and Hiawatha.
- Lake Hiawatha is named after Hiawatha, the protagonist of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem *The Song of Hiawatha.*
- Though *The Song of Hiawatha* is a fictional story written in 1855 by a white European, its based off Ojibwe oral traditions and characters like that of Nanabozho.

Regional Park Example – Historic Figure (Colonial)

Lake George Regional Park

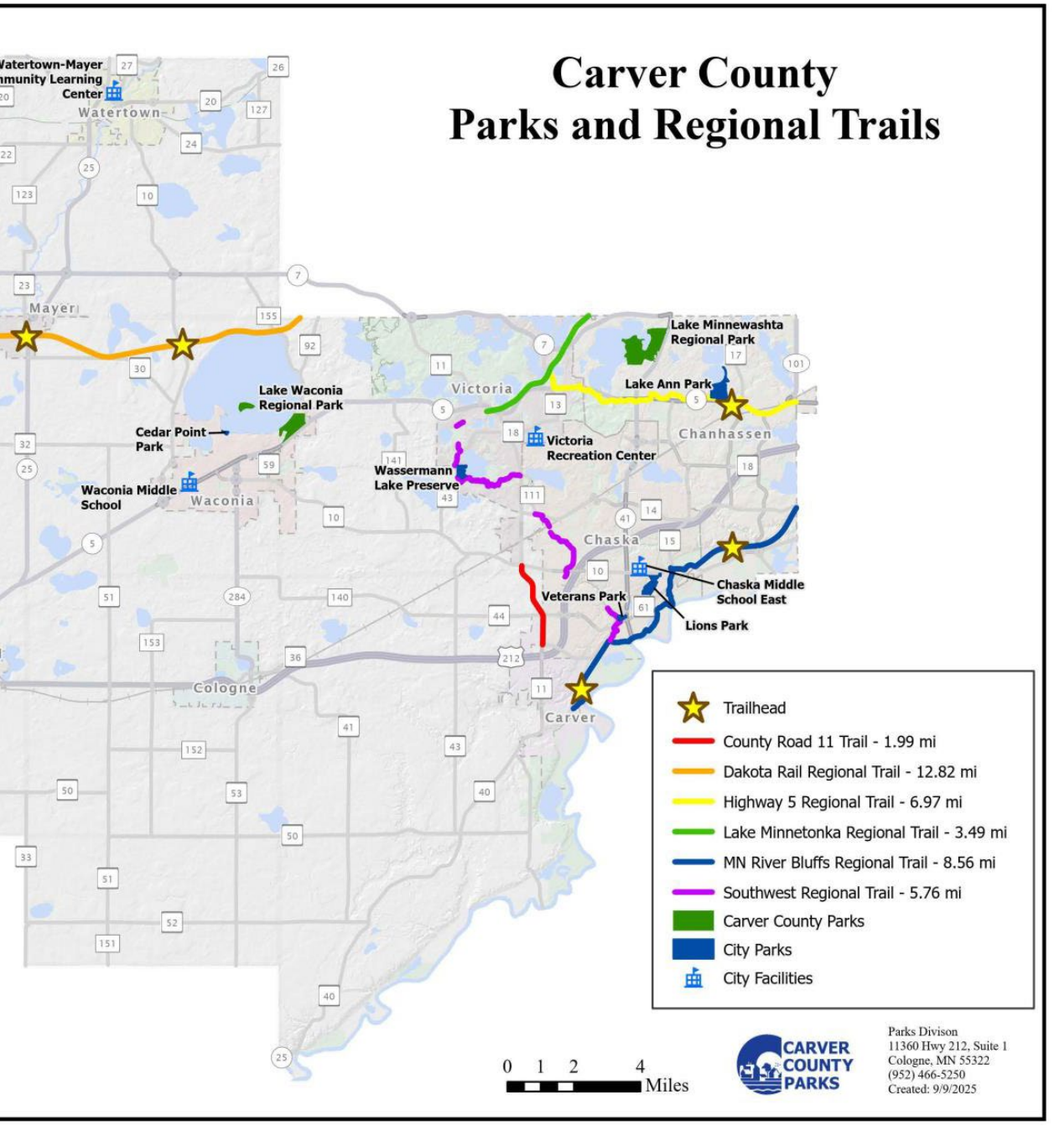
- Lake George was the site of several battles between Dakota and Ojibwe tribes before 1800 (some recorded burial mounds).
- The area was first charted by American surveyors and settlers in the 1840s.
- The lake was named after the chief land surveyor George Arbuckle – little is known about him.

Regional Trail Example – Historic Figure (Colonial)

Point Douglas Regional Trail

- Point Douglas is named after the small Village of Douglas founded on the point in 1849. The village was abandoned in1903.
- The town's name stems from Illinois statesman Stephen A. Douglas
- Douglas was a prominent Democrat known as the "Little Giant." He is famous for his debates with Abraham Lincoln in 1858 and the race for the presidency in 1860.

Regional Trail Example – Railway or Highway



Highway 5 Regional Trail

- Named after Minnesota State Highway 5
- The highway was completed in 1953 and runs for a total of about 80 miles
- Much of the regional trail follows along the route of the highway
- In 2023 part of the highway (which the trail follows) was renamed after Prince Rogers Nelson – however the trail name did not change.

Draft Toolkit - Agency Advice

Themes

- Support for the Toolkit
- The database format is informational, but not user-friendly
- Place names aren't always in the power of agencies
- Interpretations are subjective
- Requires more historical analysis and community engagement
- Inquiry into names as part of long-range plan processes
- Add the original American Indian Names of each regional unit, if possible/practicable.
- How to use the toolkit with an agency’s tribal liaison or board?

Draft Toolkit Status and Next Steps

Status

- First draft that includes intial 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.

How Can We Move This Forward?

- What are your thoughts on the Place Names Series and Draft Toolkit?
- What are your ideas for making the Toolkit better?

Thank you!

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