

Proposal for Renaming of Lake Place Park to Gichi-ode' Akiing Indigenous Commission, City of Duluth

The Indigenous Commission works to ensure that the views of the Indigenous Community are incorporated in the decision-making, future planning and stewardship of the City of Duluth. It endeavors to act as a guide in the development of public policy, planning and services so that the Indigenous Community is adequately represented in these processes and works to increase understanding and acceptance of the Indigenous Community and culture.

Several years ago the Indigenous Commission requested the change in name of what is currently known as Lake Place Park. Since then they have put their knowledge of culture, history and local needs to work in consulting with local stakeholders to create a vision of the new park. They have helped the community see what is possible and discovered what it cares about.

Purpose

The Indigenous Commission sees the purpose of the newly named park as the following:

- Educate the community and visitors about Indigenous language, history and culture
- Dispel myths about Indigenous peoples
- Draw tourists to the area
- Create a place of healing for Indigenous people and others
- Reverse the trend toward cultural genocide

New Park Name

Gichi-ode' Akiing - A Grand Heart Place - will be a reminder to enter the park with a good heart. This newly named park will be a place of healing for Indigenous people, in an atmosphere of spiritual healing in the tradition of Chief Buffalo and Ojibwe ancestors. It will also offer peace, joy and invitation to people of all cultures. The park's name will help express a law found in traditional Anishinaabe expressions, *nindinawemaganidog*, which means "All of my relations".

Honoring Culture

The park will be an opportunity to showcase the Indigenous history of this area, to bring forward what has been remembered, what has been suppressed and what has been forgotten.

The history of the area has been full of oppression and discounting of Indigenous people. Yet we have shown as a community that we do not have to be bound by the past. People have come to appreciate and value history that comes from other than

that of European traditions. We can expand representations of history beyond just white people. The Clayton, Jackson, and McGhie Memorial was an important step for our city to acknowledge a tragic event that took place in Duluth and to move toward reconciliation. Having a statue of Joe Gomer at the Duluth International Airport is also a good statement about the contributions to our community from all racial and cultural groups that are here in Duluth.

It is very exciting to now be at the point to create a park that acknowledges the historical challenges as well as celebrates the contributions of Native people in the area.

Attracting Visitors

Tourists today are attracted to opportunities and places where they can learn about other cultures. The Museum of the American Indian in Washington, DC has shown that nationally and internationally, there is strong interest in the experiences and cultures of Native people. For Duluth to have a city park that is designed by Indigenous people will be a unique asset.

A Place of Healing

The park will be a place of healing for Indigenous people and all who enter it. Having a positive representation of Native culture will be of great benefit for people in the downtown area and for young people who have been inundated with negative stereotypes and representation. In short, it is a step to reverse the trend toward cultural genocide.

This park is about acknowledging the past, but not getting stuck in the trauma or the guilt and fear. We will not forget the past, but this park offers our city an opportunity to create reconciliation through reclaiming the Indigenous part of our history and to move forward with a grand heart.

*Submitted by Mary Jo Wimmer, Trillium Leadership Development
Consultant to the Indigenous Commission*