

**IMAGINE**<sup>20</sup><sub>50</sub>

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

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# 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 initial effort focused on centering American Indian voices in park and trail place name processes.
- Four progressive engagements from May 2024 through spring 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 20<sup>th</sup> Meeting (Lamoine LaPoint's Notes)

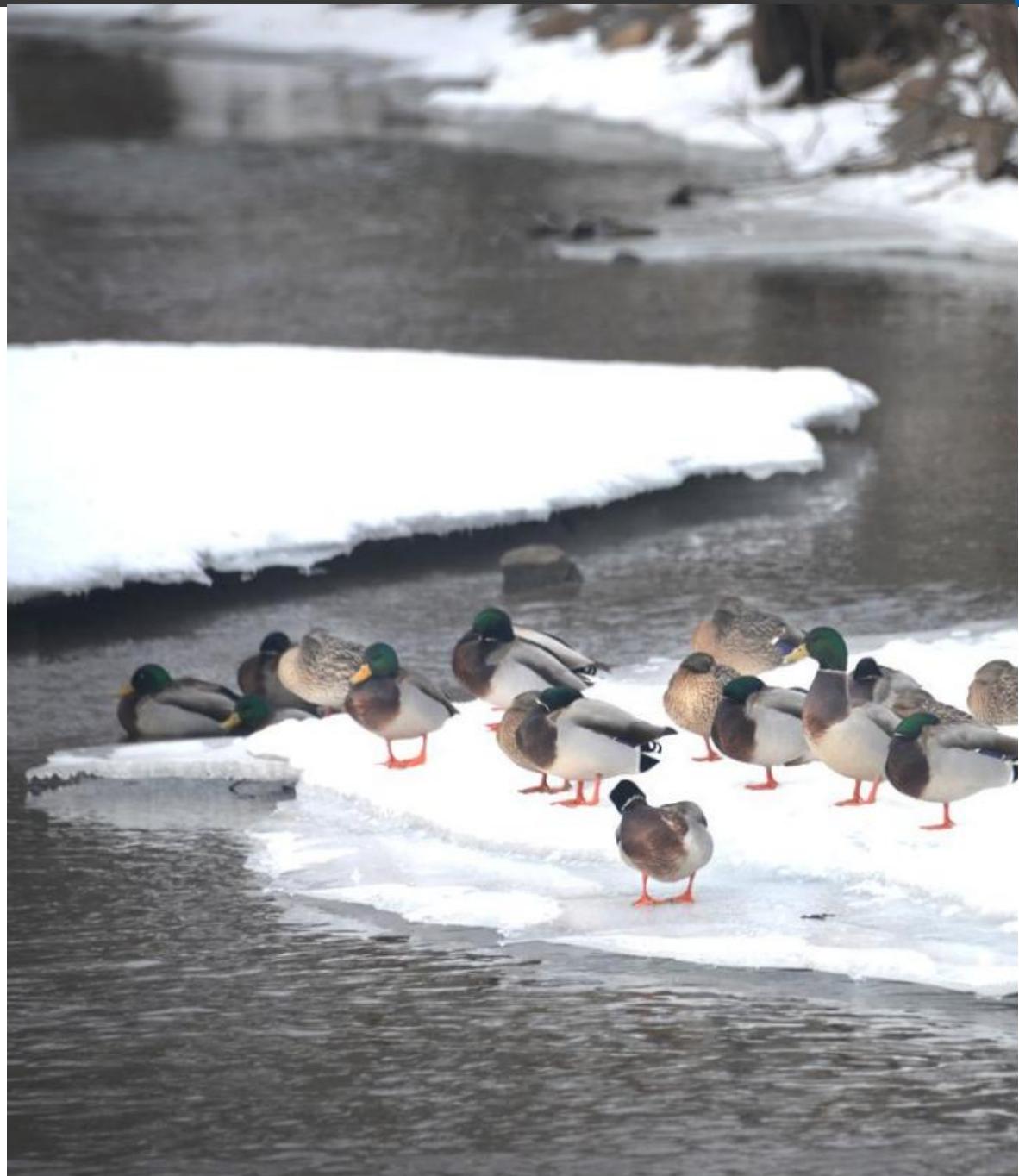
## Main Themes

**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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 17<sup>th</sup> and Next Steps

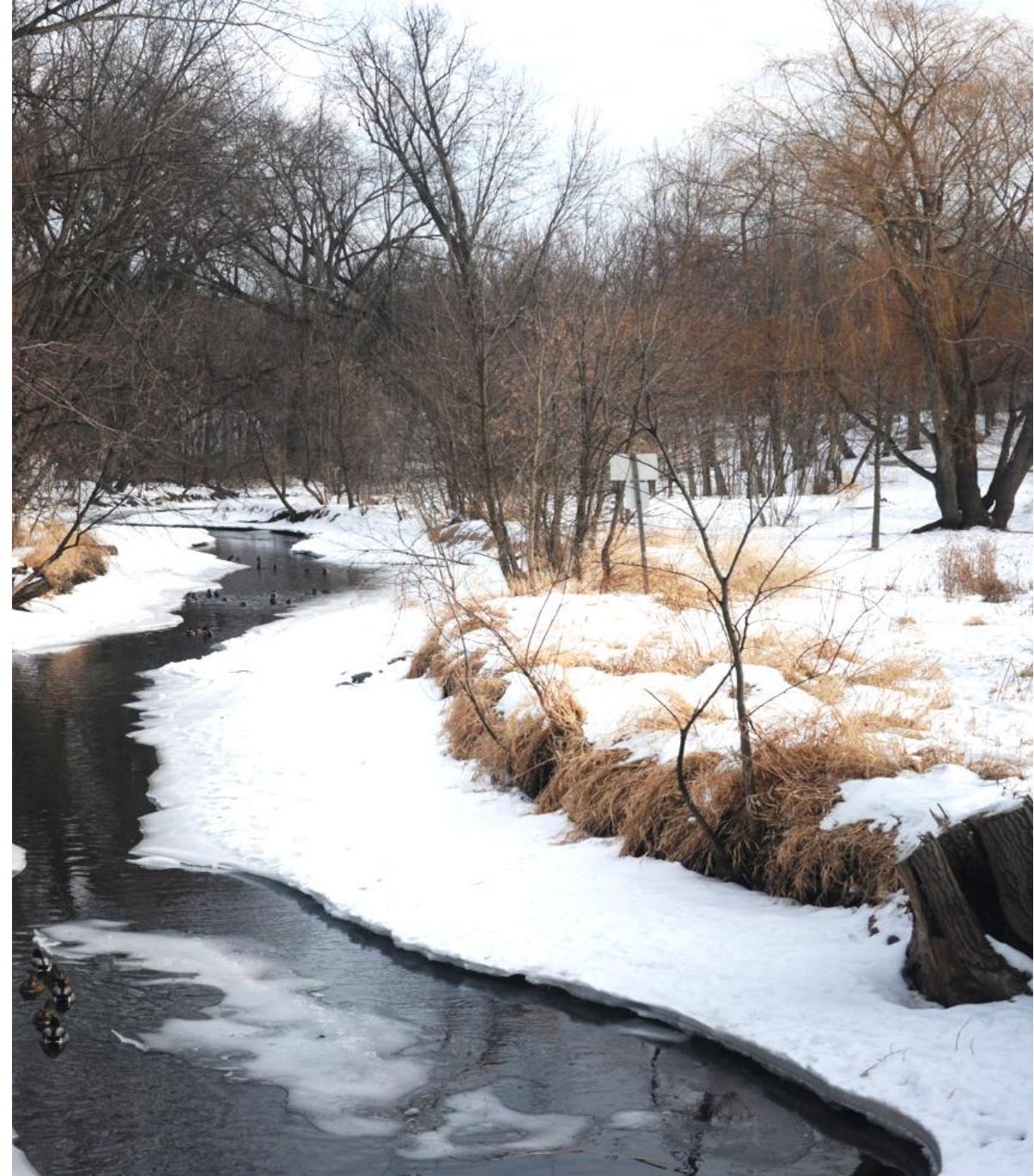
## November 17<sup>th</sup> Meeting

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

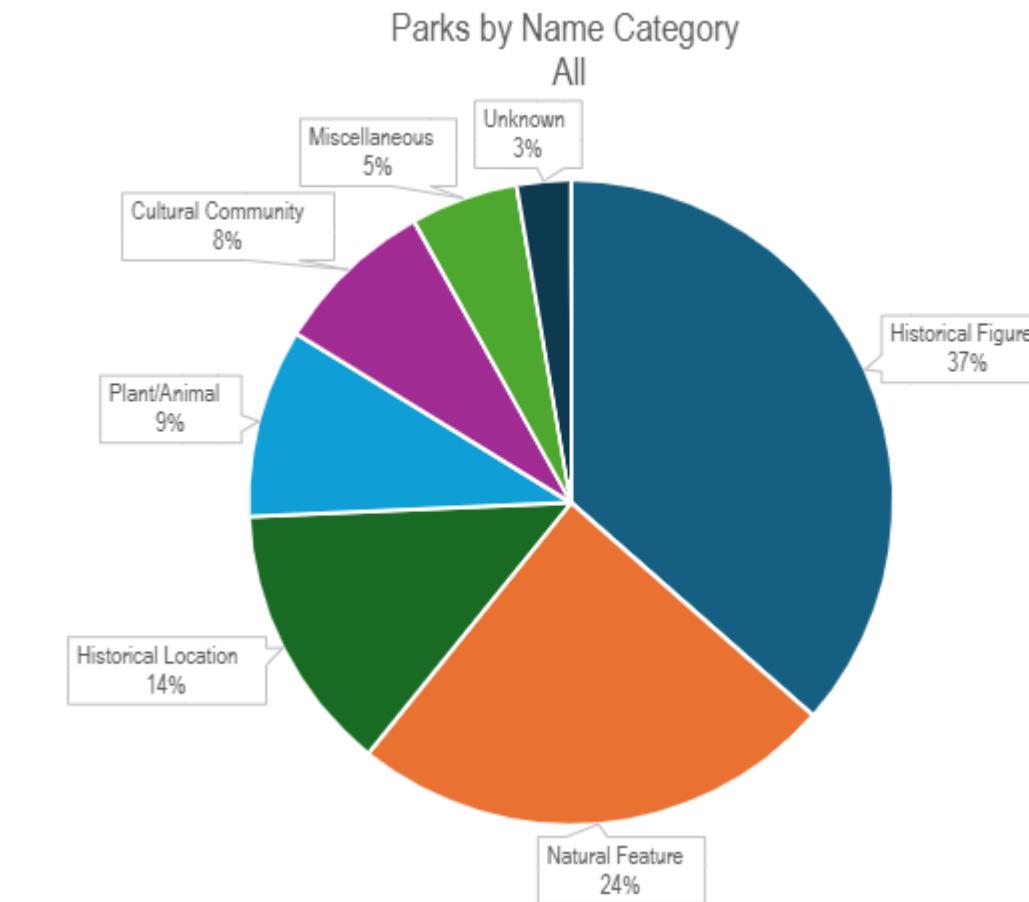


## This toolkit should:

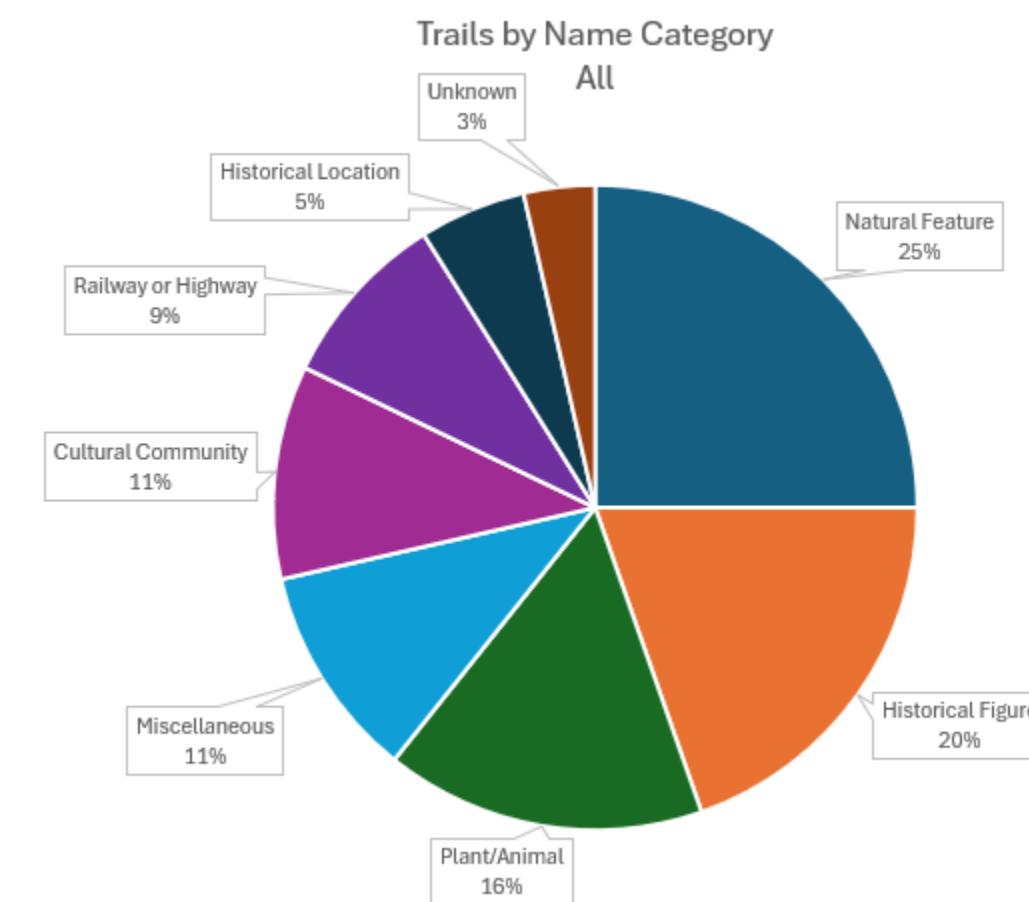
- Support an understanding of place name history, meaning, and processes.
- House the Place Names Listening Session meeting notes.
- Explore regional park and trail place names history and culture.
- Include case studies of other place names projects around the metro.

# Draft Place Names Toolkit – Intial Findings

## Regional Park and Trail Name by Category Types

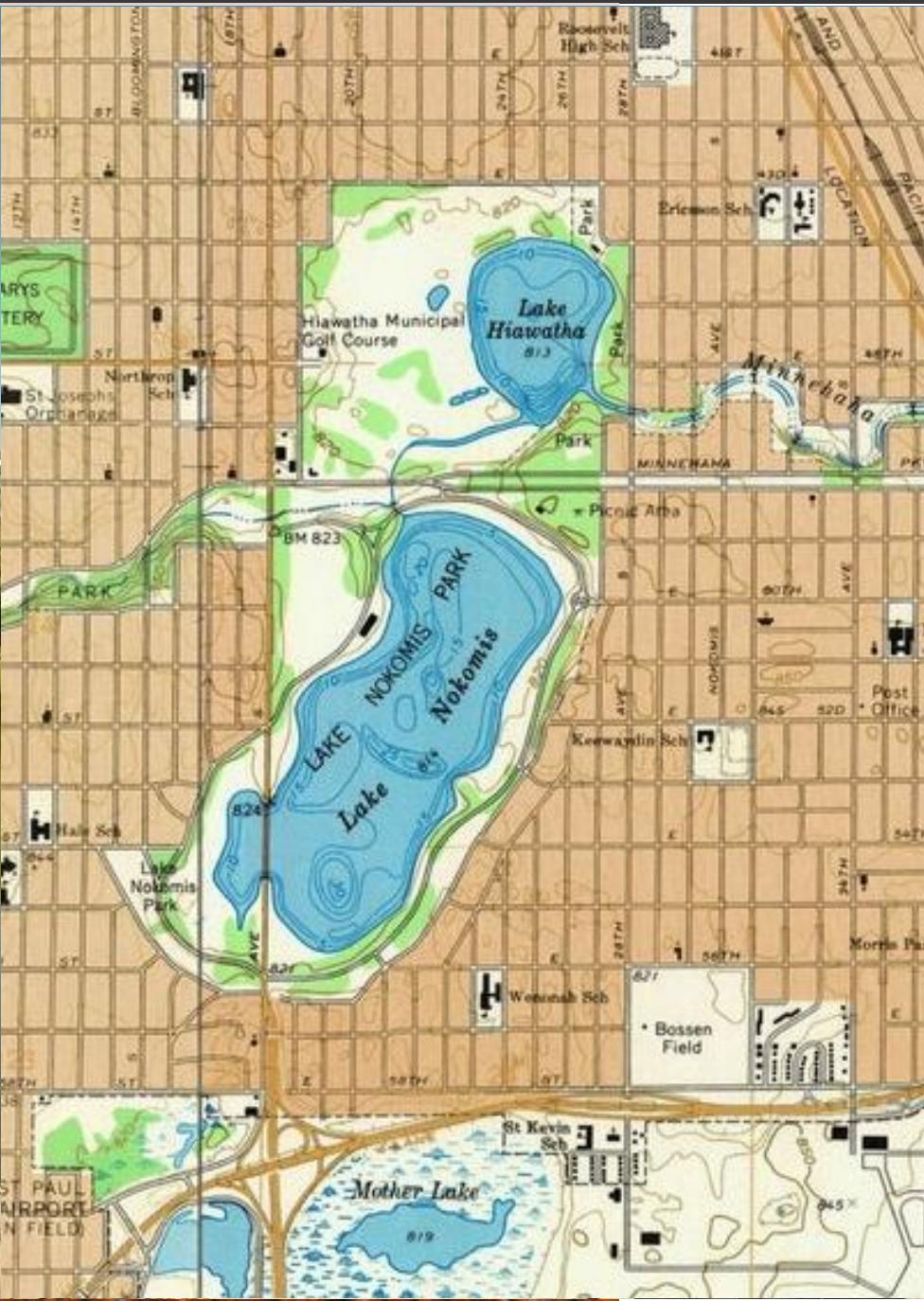


Regional Park, Park Reserves,  
and Special Features



Regional Trails

# Regional Park Example – Cultural Community (Ojibwe)



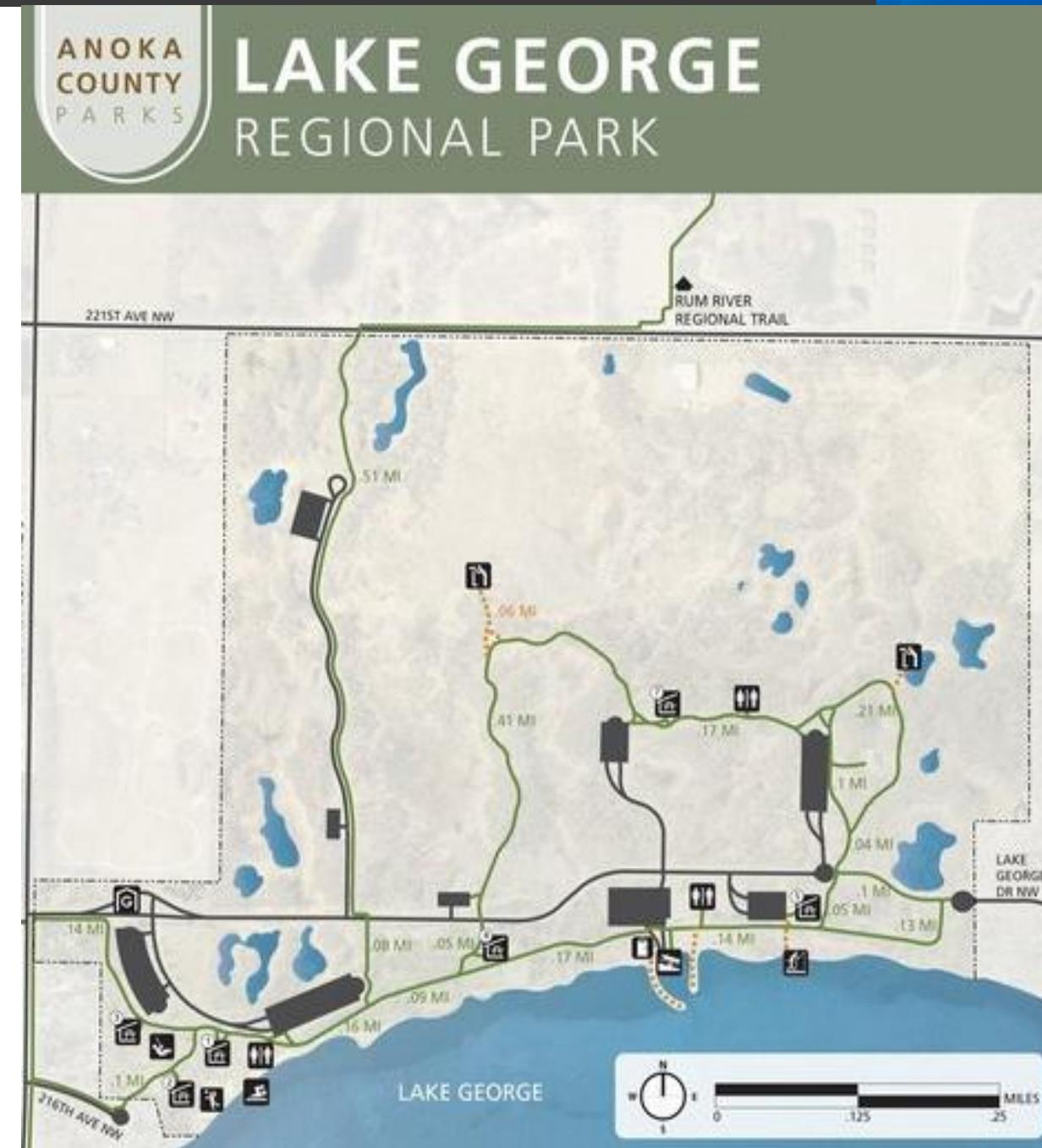
## Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park

- 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)

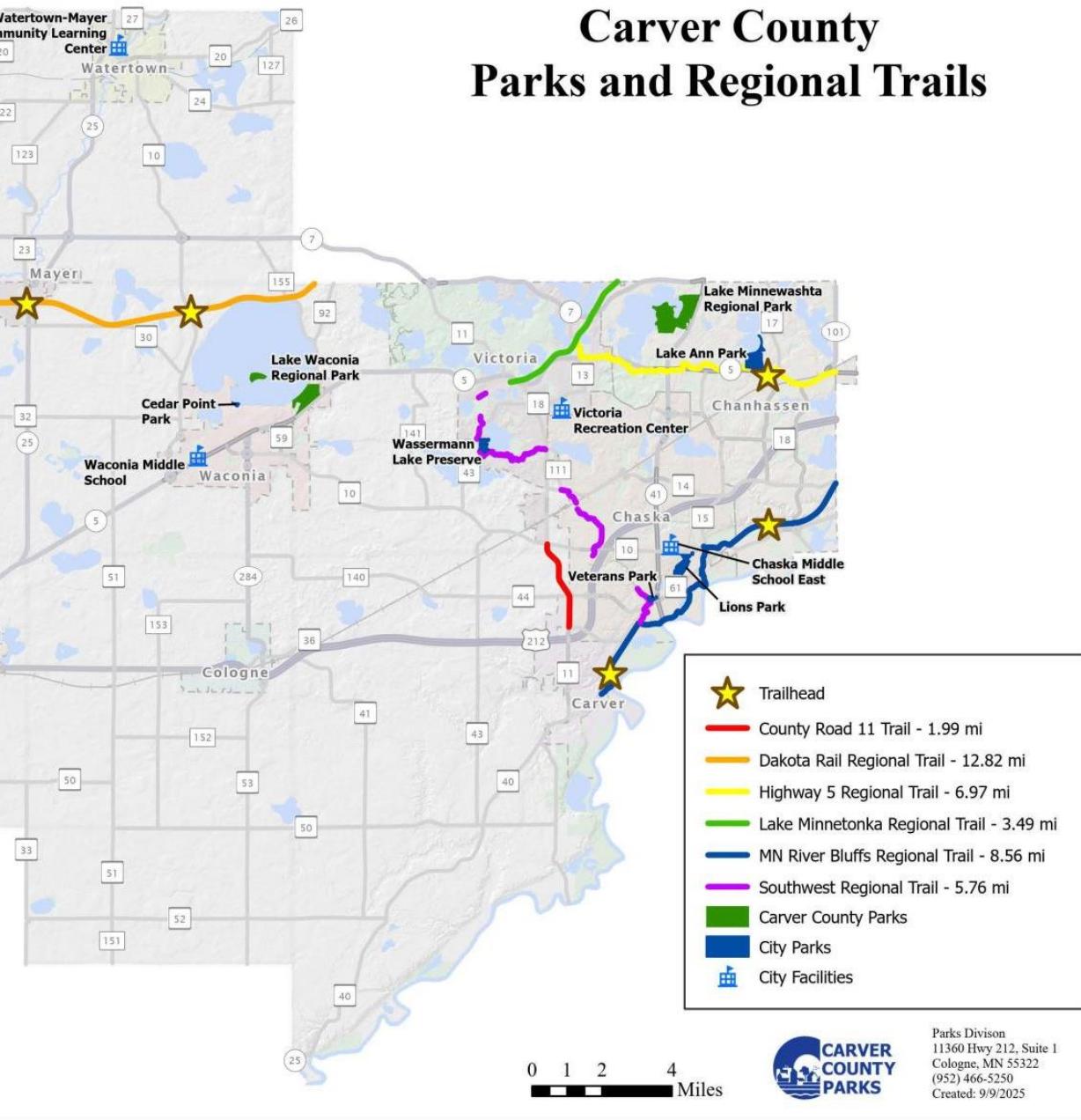
## Point Douglas Regional Trail

- Point Douglas is named after the small Village of Douglas founded on the point in 1849. The village was abandoned in 1903.
- 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

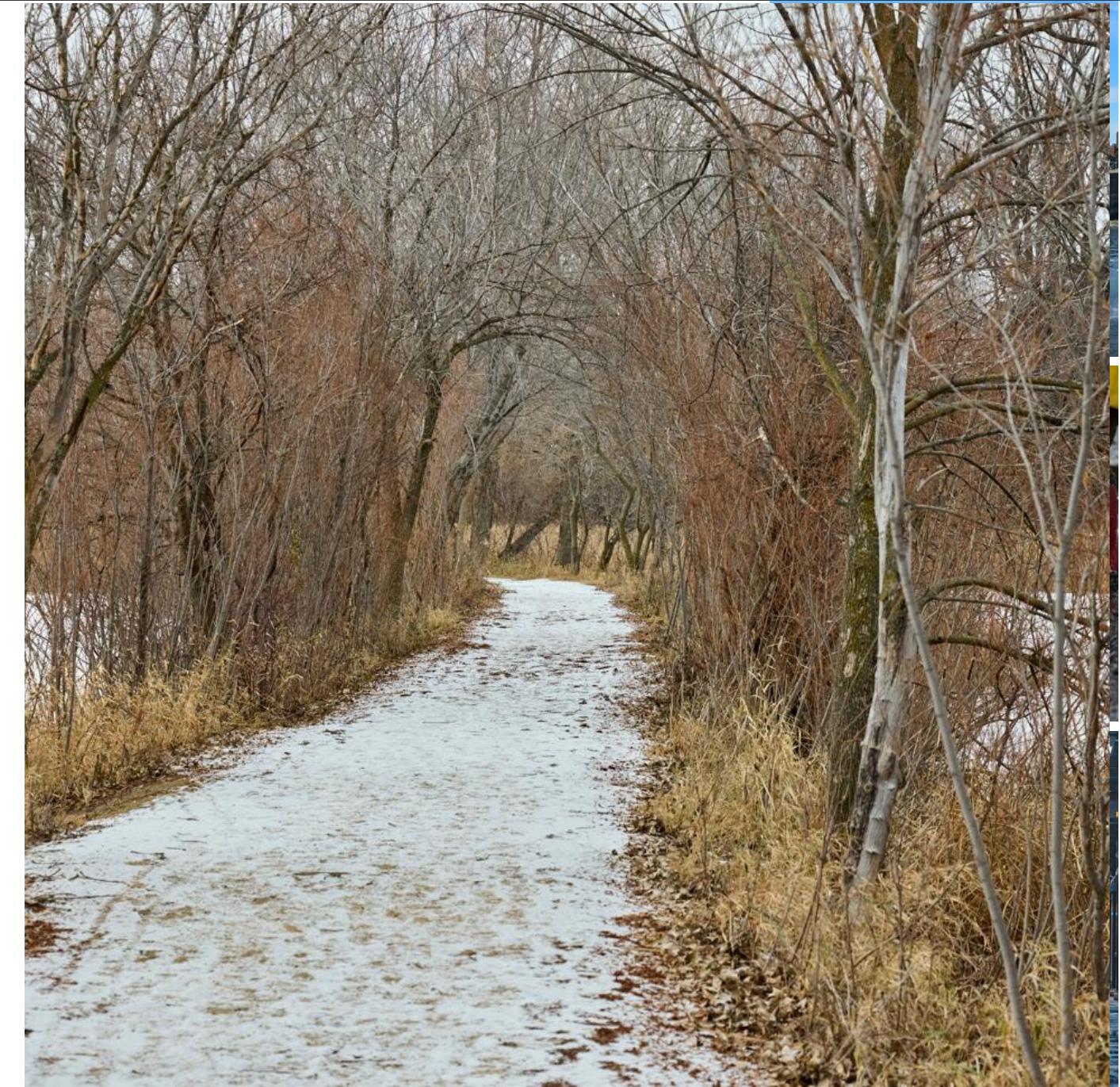
- First draft that includes intial findings
- Database format

## 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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