

Information Item

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission



Meeting Date: February 5, 2026

Topic

American Indian Regional Park and Trail Place Names Series and Draft Toolkit, System Wide

District(s), Member(s):	All
Policy/Legal Reference:	<i>2050 Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan</i>
Staff Prepared/Presented:	Tracey Kinney, Planning Analyst (651-602-1029) Allison Waukau, Met Council Tribal Liaison Alice Messer, Manager, Design and Construction, Saint Paul Emma Pachuta, Senior Planner, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board Carrie Day Aspinwall, Special Project Consultant, CDA Enterprises
Division/Department:	Community Development / Regional Parks and Trails

Proposed Action

Information item; no action is proposed at this time.

Background

The Met Council requires individual long-range plans for each regional park, park reserve, regional trail, and special feature. Regional park and trail place names are developed during the long-range planning process as part of the plan's extensive public engagement efforts. When a regional park or trail name is proposed to be changed, Implementing Agencies may submit a new long-range plan, long-range plan amendment or system-level request during a Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan update for Met Council consideration. Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) and Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Department have been engaged in on-going regional park and trail renaming projects with the American Indian Community. This Place Names Series expands MPRB and Saint Paul's conversations to the regional level through a collaborative engagement series with members of the American Indian Community and the ten regional park implementing agencies. This series is led by Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi and the agency's Tribal Liaisons; with support provided by MPRB, Saint Paul, and Met Council.

The American Indian Regional Park and Trail Place Names Series and Draft Toolkit project is an initial effort focused on centering American Indian voices in regional park and trail place name processes. This Place Names Series brings together the American Indian community and the Regional Parks and Trails Implementing Agencies to explore American Indian history, values, and processes related to park and trail place names. As part of the Place Name Series Project, a Met Council Toolkit is being developed as a resource to Implementing Agencies to support an understanding of cultural learnings, as well as regional park and trail place name history, meaning, and processes.

The American Indian Regional Park and Trail Place Names Series is comprised of four engagements between May 2024 and 2026. The engagements consist of a variety of discussions from four perspectives as listed below:

- Knowledge Keepers, who are Tribal State Historic Preservation Officers and Community Leaders experienced in Dakota history, values, and processes.
- Elders who are experienced Dakota and Ojibway voices knowledgeable about American Indian history, community, and processes.
- Youth perspectives on identity, tradition, and cultural continuity.
- Implementing Agencies engaged in regional park or trail place name or other related American Indian or cultural projects.

The Draft Park and Trail Place Names Toolkit was initiated by the Met Council as part of the American Indian Park and Trail Place Names Series as a resource for Implementing Agencies. This toolkit will support an understanding of cultural learnings, as well as regional park and trail place name history, meaning, and processes. The toolkit is currently a database housing the following items:

- Place Names Listening Session meeting learnings.
- Exploration of regional park and trail place names history and culture.
- Case studies of other place names projects around the metro.

As the engagements are completed an Agency Sub-Group will further develop the Toolkit into a more user-friendly resource.

At the February 5 meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission, Implementing Agency and Met Council Staff will introduce the Placename Series and Draft Toolkit. Council Staff will return to MPOSC in the coming year as this project evolves, to recap Place Names work to date and share the advancement of the Place Names Toolkit work.

Rationale

The *Imagine 2050 Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan*, Work Plan committed the Met Council to take action on a number of American Indian Advisory Council Commitment Projects in coordination with the American Indian community and the Regional Park and Trail Implementing Agencies (Section 9, Table 9-1, 2025-2028 Work Plan for the *2050 Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan*). The Place Name Series advances the Policy Plan's Work Plan Cultural Projects by building relationships and exploring American Indian values and processes.

Imagine Lens Analysis

The American Indian Regional Park and Trail Place Names Series and Draft Toolkit aligns with the *Imagine 2050 Regional Core Value of Accountability* and Regional Goal of Equitable and Inclusive Region. Related to accountability, the Met Council recognizes that the land that the Regional Parks and Trails System sits on is the ancestral land of the Dakota and the Ojibwe, which was stolen from them through a series of ill-intentioned treaties that were often enacted under pressure from the U.S. Government. This Place Names project acknowledges these past harms, as well as the sovereignty of our Tribal partners, and seeks to maximize our effectiveness by being in partnership together. With a focus on equity, this project treats regional park and trail naming as a catalyst for inclusive engagement processes aimed at creating a Regional Parks and Trails System that honors and represents the diversity of all communities.

