

Duluth Indigenous Commission - March 15, 2021

Discussion on what the Commission would like in their relationship-building with the Duluth Police Department, included:

- Regular representation at Commission meetings.
- Having Indigenous representation on juries.
- More attention by the Duluth Police Department for social services.
- Training of police officers in mental health crisis.
- Working with/partnering with community mental health services to avoid further criminalizing.
- Communicating more with the opioid response team.

There was discussion on the Duluth Public Schools' plan to provide curriculum on Native Cultures, including Outdoor Native Education classes, representing eleven nations.

This winter yurts are being built on private properties to help the homeless. AIM (American Indian Movement) and City Councilor Van Nett are working to have some on public property, perhaps even a yurt village.

The Rights of Nature group will be invited to a Commission meeting to look further into Sacred Sites around Lake Superior and waterways that flow into Lake Superior.

Discussion on an Indigenous Commission calendar brought forward the need to include Chief Buffalo's activities.

Submitted by Liz Taylor

Duluth Indigenous Commission - February 22, 2021

Elena Foshay, Director of Workforce Development for the City of Duluth, brought forth the strategic plan being considered in facing the following employment-related challenges for Indigenous people in our community: felonies; transportation; training and courses on work ethics; job training; programs for youth. Emily Edison (SOAR Career Solutions) and Rochelle Goodrich (Fond Du Lac Human Services) explained how their areas are partnering and working on these issues.

Dan Hartman reported on how the Glensheen Mansion staff plan to place land acknowledgement statements and signs around the Glensheen property. They believe it is not enough to just state the history, but will honor ancestors with pictures, pow wows on the property, and eventually have videos with more in-depth stories of the history.

Sobriety Feasts, with open meetings, will be the 4th Tuesday of the month at 6:00 p.m.

Concerns were brought forward regarding a Medallion Hunt program by KQDS Radio (Midwest Communications) as the public were encouraged to dig on sacred land.

A letter from the Indigenous Commission will be sent to Representative Stauber in opposition to his position on Deb Haaland as Secretary of the Interior.

Submitted by Liz Taylor

Indigenous Commission- January 25, 2021

The Marten Trail (former Western Waterfront Trail), the goal for this meeting was to:

- Begin the process of improving the Marten Trail.
- Learn what stories need to be told.
- Begin to find ways to get community feedback--having a plan for public comments.

Cliff Knettel, Parks Department, talked about improving the trail by: extending it by seven miles to bring it through Fond du Lac, and including an interpretive section that tells of the history, animals, and rich heritage of the area.

Sam Geer and John Koepke, Urban Ecosystems, talked about including the different native cultures and ecosystem history along the trail. They emphasized including: the natural and unique landscape, the migration of people to the area, the fur trade, treaties and reservations that were developed, lifeways—how people moved to the area to work, and the industries that brought them there. Ways of displaying on the trail include: freestanding signs; Cairns (rocks) on the trail; art works along the trail.

Law Enforcement Accountability and Reform:

Blair Powless suggested that Police reform and accountability be looked at through having an audit conducted and look at alternatives to police calls, social workers working with police department, have more native individuals on the police force, communication groups re police accountability. What more can be done to address the fear kids have of police officers. Blair suggested reaching out to the police—having more of a voice with them, training for police officers in native cultures.

Homelessness in Duluth

URTS for the homeless are also being developed on private property. The American Indian Movement group, Peace Church, Temple Israel, and others are contributing to this. Babette will send a draft letter to Commission members thanking Mayor Larson for allowing this to happen. City Councilor, Roz Randorf, talked about the 24/7 winter shelter being set up in the Lincoln Park Community Center.

Art in Gichi-ode' Aking: Moria Villiard reported that the Duluth Public Arts Commission is working on this project and will be updating the Greater Downtown City Council on plans for the park.

Submitted by Liz Taylor

Indigenous Commission, December 21, 2020

Mayor Larson attended the virtual meeting to express her desire to hear and listen to the needs of the commission and to look at ways to give support to the commission and its work in the future. There was discussion on the Indigenous in our community being more visible. Commission members asked that when City Government issues regarding the Indigenous Community are being made--e.g., changing the use of the title "Chief" in the community—that the Indigenous Commission be included. Clarification was made that staff member Kathy Wilson is the official contact person between the Commission and Mayor Larson.

Renee Van Nett is the incoming President of the Duluth City Council and is the first Indigenous woman to hold this position. She will no longer be the liaison for the Commission and the City Council.

Blair Powless brought forward the issue of having more Indigenous members serving on Jury Duty. He encouraged working to improve and access racial bias with the police, engaging more with the communities of color, and more discussions on direct engagement with officers and citizens on this issue. He also encouraged the presence of an Office of Violence Prevention, where social workers address issues so not to make situations worse, working together for a stronger voice--funded by the City. He suggested having more Indigenous people on the police force and on the Citizens' Review Board.

It was decided that City department heads will be invited to future commission meetings.

There was discussion on partnering with the City to build URTS (with porta potties and dumpsters) on City property to help with the homelessness.

It was suggested that an annual antitrafficking awareness march in downtown Duluth be set.

Submitted by Liz Taylor

Indigenous Commission, November 16, 2020

Arc Northland wants to work with the Indigenous Community to enhance and increase services for people with disabilities, and people over 65.

The Human Rights Commission wants to work with the African Heritage Commission and the Indigenous Commission on a racism statement for Duluth. A subcommittee will work on this.

The Commission was asked to support a partnership with Loaves and Fishes, Hildegaard House, Peace Church and CHUM on the homelessness in Duluth. A letter of support from the Commission will be drafted and voted on at the next meeting to request sites for the homeless: Sites to build yurts on; Dumpsters; Porta Potties; Accessible to bus lines. Councilor Renee VanNett brought forward the concern for 24-hour hygiene facilities for the homeless, which the City Council is working on.

An Indigenous Calendar is being developed with teaching tools regarding the history and meaning of being American Indian today.

Mayor Larson and City department heads will be invited to a Commission meeting to discuss the relationship and clarify the role of the Commission and the City and to promote the visibility of the Commission.

Skip Sandman has been named the Spiritual Advisor for Spirit Mountain. The Heritage Preservation Commission will work with the Commission on enhancing the relationship with Spirit Mountain and preserving the Indigenous heritage of this location. Much appreciation of this relationship was expressed by the Commission members.

Opioid/AIM/Sweat Lodge/Sobriety Feasts are not happening during the pandemic time.

Submitted by Liz Taylor

Indigenous Commission, October 16, 2020

The local Rights of Nature group asked the Commission to help craft language for a petition stating the rights of the St. Louis River Estuary Water Trail to be part of the Duluth City Charter and go on the ballot for the next election. A National Water Trail designation would allow surrounding communities to engage with both local citizens and visitors to learn about its past, present, and future, as well as plan and implement restoration efforts--with a sense of urgency--for Mother Earth.

In Duluth, there is concern that People of Color are not using social services. A survey of 120 people was done by LISC Duluth (Local Initiative Support Corporation) under the categories of: age, gender, ancestry, employment, use of current services, to come up with what resources are needed and what to do with the information. WEES (Wealth, Entrepreneurship and Economic Sustainability) is looking at the results to make certain they use a good process, that racism isn't embedded in the services to meet the needs, and how to move forward to bring the homeless to the job world. The survey also showed that people do not know of the services available. The hope is that employers get to hear the stories. Pam Kramer, representing LISC Duluth, will come back to the Commission with the next steps they plan to impose.

Andrew Slade, of the Environmental Center, informed the Commission that a Lloyd K. Johnson Foundation grant is available to fund a Minnesota Environmental Partnership for natural resources in tribal communities.

It was suggested an Indigenous Culture Calendar be developed, representing treaty signing dates, etc., to educate the public on the Indigenous history and culture in the Duluth area.

Indigenous People's Day was celebrated on October 12th with an emphasis on ways that needed change, with ancestors being honored.

Homeless camps at the Point of Rocks Campground have been ordered to evacuate. Concern was expressed as to the need for places to place these individuals. Attention to this will include a rally at City Hall.

Submitted by Liz Taylor

Indigenous Commission Meeting, August 17, 2020

City Councilors Eric Forsman and Janet Kennedy were present (Zoom) to tell of their support to honor Spirit Mountain as a Sacred place as the City goes forward with future plans. Babette Sandman noted it is a Sacred Fasting Area. It was requested that plans for any updates and changes to the area be brought to the Commission, so they have a say in the process.

Christina Woods of the Duluth Public Art Institute brought forward that two pieces of public art are being questioned as not true Indigenous art:

- The Leif Ericson statue.

- The Hiawatha and Minnehaha Tiffany Stainless Windows at the Depot.

The St. Louis County Historical Society will be asked to review the labelling of these art pieces and report back to the Commission.

The Indigenous People's Day will not be held this year due to the COVID-19 virus. A virtual day at Cedar Creek will be considered.

Mayor Larson will be invited to an upcoming Commission meeting to discuss the process for the Commission to have more opportunity to be visible when discussing the use of "Chief" for official City titles.

Before the next meeting, Chair Sandman will send the Commission a draft letter to the Duluth City Council in the support of the AIM Homeless Village in Duluth's West End.

Submitted by Liz Taylor

Duluth Indigenous Commission: January 27, 2020

Public Comment: Janet Kennedy, City Councilor, Pam Kramer, LISC Director, and Elena Foshay, City of Duluth Work Force presented information on a grant to focus on disparities. They are seeking two people who have experienced disparities to serve on a task force for 5 hours a week at a rate of \$50/hour. The task force will develop an action plan to reduce disparities. Commissioners were encouraged to refer applicants for these positions.

The Indigenous Commission's 2019 report to the City Council Committee of the Whole is being prepared. The 2020 work plan draft was approved.

The commissioners voted to continue Babette Sandman as chair and Carol DeVerney as vice chair.

Sobriety Feasts every second Wednesday of the month continue and are well attended.

Two applications to serve on the commission have been received. The applicants will be invited to the next meeting.

A draft copy of the by-laws was distributed for discussion at the next meeting.
Next meeting: Feb. 24, 2020

Submitted by Gail Schoenfelder

Indigenous Commission, November 18, 2019

The Indigenous Commission is working on adding members to the commission, including naming a representative from the Fond du Lac tribe, because of recent lack of quorum at meetings.

At the November meeting, Mary Villiard reported on the progress of the Chief Buffalo project, in the Gitchi-ode' Aking Park—with murals, storytelling, access to the history of in the downtown parks. Mary is working with other Indigenous artists to obtain funding to educate the community through murals, etc.

A grant proposal to have storytelling along the Western Waterfront Estuary is being considered.

Submitted by Liz Taylor

Indigenous Commission Meeting: September 16

At the Indigenous Commission meeting on September 16th, there was discussion on Indigenous Peoples' Day Planning—October 14th at noon in City Hall. This will include a walk to Gitchi-ode' Aking Park and a talk by one of Chief Buffalo's family members.

A Climate Mobilization Campaign Launch was held on September 24 at Gichi-ode' Akiing Park. The Climate Motivation Group brought forth a draft "Resolution Declaring a Climate Emergency in Duluth and Requesting the Duluth Energy Planning Commission to Develop a Community Plan for a Just Transition to a Clean Energy Economy" to be presented to the Duluth City Council.

Opioids/NAH/Sweat Lodge Sobriety Feast planning is going well, with children being brought in.

Community education and acknowledgement of the land history will be a future agenda item.

Submitted by Liz Taylor

Duluth Indigenous Commission, June 17; July 15; August 19, 2019

Commission members were happy with the celebration of the Gichi-Ode' Akiing Park naming ceremony in downtown Duluth. There were over 200 people in attendance. The name of the park means Grand Heart Place. A grant from the city of Duluth provides for events and Indigenous art in the park to honor Anishinaabe presence and Anishinaabe leader, Chief Buffalo. This is organized and directed by Zeitgeist. The first mural painting session in the park was on August 22-with a well-attended community presence.

Jim Ammel, UMD's Social Work Department, is doing a Generations Project: Exploring Indigenous Voices Using Photovoice. Thirty Indigenous community residents (10 youth, 10 adults, 10 elders) have been recruited to represent community Generations and to document community needs and strengths through photography. Project results will be related to the community and will reflect and celebrate indigenous voices and culture looking at multiple ways of interpreting through different generations, locations, etc. Dr. Ammel has met with the Commission several times to keep them updated on the project.

The Commission set a goal to have more of a voice/relationship with the Duluth City Council. On September 15, there will be a Vigil for the murdered indigenous women--Garfield Avenue and Superior. On September 28th there will be a March and rally to protest the Line 3 Project.

Submitted by Liz Taylor

Indigenous Commission, March 15, 2019

The Commission is finalizing plans for a May date to have a Naming Ceremony for the downtown park--Gitcie-ode' Aking.

Members noted there have been 60-65 individuals at the past months' Opioids/NAH/Sweat Lodge/Sobriety Feasts-held the second Wednesday of each month at 6:00 p.m. at One Roof. The success of these feasts has been overwhelming.

Submitted by Liz Taylor

Indigenous Commission, Update

A resolution introduced by the Indigenous Commission to change the name of Lake Place Park to Gitchi Ode' Akiing was unanimously passed by the City Council on December 10. The name Gitchi Ode' Akiing translates to "A Grand Heart Place." The resolution was sponsored by Councilors Gary Anderson and Joel Sipress.

A dedication is planned for Spring 2019.

Submitted by Gail Schoenfelder and Liz Taylor