

Resolution # 25-07

RECOMMENDING APPROVAL TO THE SAINT PAUL CITY COUNCIL TO RENAME BRUCE VENTO NATURE SANCTUARY AND INDIAN MOUNDS REGIONAL PARK TO REFLECT DAKOTA CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Renaming of Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary to Waḡaŋ Ṭípi (pronounced wah-KAHN TEE-pee) and Indian Mounds Regional Park to Wiḡahapi (pronounced we-CHA-ha-pee) using University of Minnesota Dakota Orthography for spelling and diacritics.

STAFF COMMENTS:

The Design and Construction Division within Saint Paul Parks and Recreation has been working intentionally and diligently over the last nine years to build knowledge and understanding of the sacred sites in Saint Paul. Central to this work, there has been significant effort to both build relationships and shape processes with the Dakota and other Native American communities centering Indigenous voices in our work.

The following sacred sites are within the limits of Saint Paul:

- Bdote (Confluence, Dakota) is the area around the confluence of the Mississippi River and Minnesota River which holds the creation story of the Dakota. Water is considered the first medicine. From Bdote, Dakota people spread out and other sites of creation and communities formed, with Bdote always being regarded as a sacred place of creation.
- Indian Mounds has the only remaining burial mounds in the Twin Cities urban area. The maḡa paha (burial mounds, Dakota) at Indian Mounds are part of the larger Bdote landscape. The Imnizaska (White Cliffs, Dakota) which the burial mounds are upon is a place of connection of earth, sky and water. This highest point along the river corridor served as a landmark for the Dakota and the reason for the burial mound placement. It is a sacred place of burial, place of gathering and ceremony for Indigenous people for over a thousand years. Imnizaska (pronounced e-me-NE-zha-ska) is also the Dakota name for the area that is now Saint Paul, Minnesota.
- Waḡaŋ Ṭípi (within Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary) is a sacred place of ceremony where sacred waters flow from the caves. Waḡaŋ Ṭípi (Dwelling Place of the Sacred, Dakota), refers to the cave on the east end of the site. Various bands of the Dakota Oyate and other Native Nations have held council over generations to build and strengthen alliances with one another. Waḡaŋ Ṭípi is intimately connected to the maḡa paha, the burial mounds atop the bluff, where the ancestors dwell.

2010

Master Plan for Indian Mounds Regional Park adopted by City (Comprehensive Plan) and Metropolitan Council

2016

Splashpad receives Parks and Trails Legacy funds, and project initiated. Upon community conversations, there is a recognition that the Dakota voice had not been engaged in the development of the 2010 master plan document

2017

Reallocation of Park and Trail Legacy funds to Cultural Landscape Study and Messaging Plan (CLS). Purpose of project is to establish cultural, historic and present day understanding of the sacred site. Project includes analysis and recommendations for Indian Mounds Regional Park and Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary due to the connection between these sacred Dakota sites



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2018

\$3 million appropriation from State of Minnesota for a Dakota cultural and interpretive center at Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary -Wąkan Tȋpi Center

May 2020

Tribal Caucus held. Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs) of the Upper Sioux Community, Lower Sioux Indian Community, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, Prairie Island Indian Community, and The Ho-Chunk Nation of Wisconsin provide guidance for renaming Indian Mounds Cemetery and Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary.

The Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs) request that City of Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Department initiate the change with their support and that the process include tribal consultation and tribal engagement. Names should capture the sacredness of the place for future generations and enforce tribal protections.

June 2020

Cultural Landscape Study and Messaging Plan complete. Renaming was part of the Messaging Plan which also included this description of the intention of the plan:

“How can we change a community’s perception of this place — an Indigenous cemetery drastically altered over the last two centuries to function as a public park — toward a perspective that is informed, empathetic, and respectful of its sacredness? The messaging plan uses communication to transform the perception of the site from that of a park to a sacred place of burial.”

January 2021

Lower Phalen Creek Project (Wąkan Tȋpi Awanyankapi) indicates to City that community is asking about name change for Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary

May 2021

Saint Paul Parks and Recreation and THPOs continue the conversation about renaming the two sacred sites - Indian Mounds Regional Park and Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary

February 2022

Meeting with Sue Vento (Metropolitan Council member and former Lower Phalen Creek Project (LPCP) board member) City of Saint Paul staff, Wąkan Tȋpi Awanyankapi staff to review renaming of the site which was named for her late husband. Preference to keep the trail name honoring the late U.S. Representative Bruce Vento and support for renaming of Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary.

March 2022

City staff talked with the THPOs about moving forward on renaming. The THPOs stated that the priority was to work toward a consultation policy or memorandum of understanding that would help to develop an appropriate process for renaming these places to reflect their sacredness

July 2022

Initial implementation work for messaging begins with consultation of THPOs

December 2023

Process for naming the two sites is resurrected with a goal to finalize for the opening of the Wąkan Tȋpi Center in 2025. Engagement plan includes Tribal consultation and subject matter experts

February 2024

Metropolitan Council proposes new cultural landscape classification and related policies rooted in tribal sovereignty and recognition within their regional development guide “Imagine 2050”

May 2024

Tribal Council Meeting of Four Dakota Nations at Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community. Tribal Councils assigned THPOs to represent the Tribal Council in the naming process for Indian Mounds Regional Park and Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary



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Spring/Summer 2024

Parks and Recreation works with Waḡaṇ Ṭípi Awanyankapi to determine steps for THPO approval

October 2024

Outreach events for awareness and input including Indigenous People's Day, American Indian Center, Metro Urban Indian Directors & Saint Paul Indians in Action meeting. Presenting naming options and feedback provided

Summer 2024-Spring 2025

Series of meetings facilitated by Waḡaṇ Ṭípi Awanyankapi starting Summer 2024. Meetings included:

Leonard Wabasha, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community; Samantha Odegard, Upper Sioux; Cheyanne St. John, Lower Sioux Indian Community; Franky Jackson, Prairie Island Indian Community; Noah White, Prairie Island Indian Community; Maggie Lorenz, Waḡaṇ Ṭípi Awanyankapi; Alice Messer, Saint Paul Parks and Recreation; Ellen Stewart, Saint Paul Parks and Recreation; Mary Norton, Saint Paul Parks and Recreation

April 2025 Final Recommendations agreed upon by Tribal Historic Preservation Officers:

- One name for Cultural Landscape.
Imniḡaska (white cliffs, Dakota) for Cultural Landscape.
Pronounced e-me-NE-zha-ska

- Individual sites will have their own names
Waḡaṇ Ṭípi (Dwelling Place of the Sacred, Dakota) as the new name for Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary.
Pronounced wah-KAHN TEE-pee

- Wicaḡapi** (cemetery, Dakota) as the new name for Indian Mounds Regional Park. Wicaḡapi was provided as a recommendation from Dakota elder Glenn Wasicuna.
Pronounced we-CHA-ha-pee
 - Other considerations from THPOs since 2020 have included PaWakáṇ (sacred, Dakota); Miziiwakonton, (burials upon the bend of the river, Dakota); Maka Paha (burial mounds, Dakota); Paha Yamni; Wiḡáahnakapi (cemetery, Dakota per Williamson Dictionary); Eháṇa Wicaḡapi (cemetery, Sisseton online dictionary and Marlena Myles Land Map)

REQUEST OF THE COMMISSION:

Adopt Resolution # 25-07 recommending renaming of Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary to Waḡaṇ Ṭípi and renaming of Indian Mounds Regional Park to Wicaḡapi. The two of them together will be referred to as a cultural landscape named Imniḡaska.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS:

Input was received during engagement events at Indigenous People's Day, American Indian Center, Metro Urban Indian Directors & Saint Paul Indians in Action meeting. No community concerns were heard.



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