

# Public Art at Owámniyomni

## Emerging Community-Identified Priorities

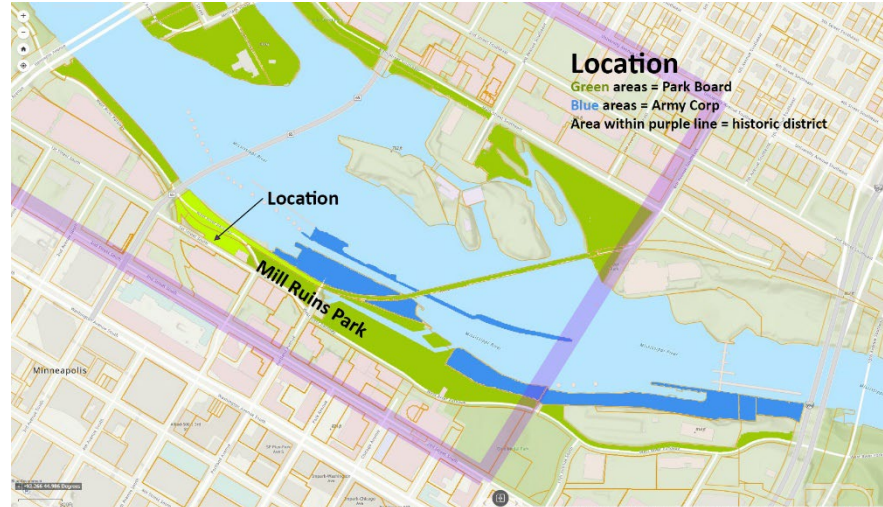
### from the Winter Conversations

January through March 2023



## Background

The City of Minneapolis initiated a public art project as part of the development of the new Water Work's Park, on the south side of the Mississippi and adjacent to Owámniyomni (St. Anthony Falls). The City began planning for this project in 2020 and an artist was selected in 2021. Following a complaint to the City, the artist resigned in 2022.



The priorities, goals, actions steps and questions in this document are the result of thirteen hours of discussion during three conversations held between January and March of 2023. These conversations were designed to plan how the project could move forward with the Dakota community, given the effects of the previous process on the community and the mistrust that unfolded between City staff and the community. The people who led and participated in them are listed on page 8. The short (one year)-, medium (two-three years)- and long (three-five years)-term priorities, which are detailed on the following pages include:

- A. Be a Good Relative and Reflect Dakota Values throughout the Project
- B. Base the Project on the Site's Story
- C. Develop an Artist Selection Process Based on Dakota Values
- D. Demonstrate that the City/Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) are Committed to and Value this Project and Share What They've Learned through the Conversations.
- E. Ground this Work in Native Leadership and Decision-Making
- F. Establish a New Way of Working and Planning with the Native Community on a Long-term Basis.

Note: The priorities are divided into two categories: Priorities for the public art project, and priorities for the public art project that should also be considered more broadly by the City and the Park Board.

## PRIORITIES FOR THE PUBLIC ART PROJECT

### Priority A: Be a good relative and Reflect Dakota Values throughout the Project.

**Timeline:** Medium term—will guide the project throughout and be implemented by project artists.

#### Goals:

- Center the project on histories, storytelling and listening to Dakota voices.
- Focus on collaboration, cooperation and building bridges and acknowledge we are stronger together.
- Remember that continuity honors the work of the past, informs our present and inspires our future.
- Connect the project to history, but not industrial history. Let the water's voice be heard. The land has its own history that needs to be acknowledged.
- Include Dakota language.
- Consider how this project benefits youth.
- At some point, invite diversity into the process and include non-Dakota voices. At the same time, be thoughtful when bringing in other indigenous groups into the discussion/process. (Don't lump all indigenous people together.)



Mona Smith, Sandy Spieler, Angela Two Stars

#### Actions/Steps:

- Define the Dakota values through conversations with the community.
- (See priorities C and D for additional action steps.)

#### Questions to Consider:

- *Which Dakota Values do we agree the project and art should exemplify? The National values of Oceti Sakowin, Dakota Oyate; generosity, perseverance, bravery/courage and wisdom?*
- *Are we talking about Dakota values or Indigenous thought?*
- *Would the Dakota values that are determined and agreed upon be best as a mission statement?*
- *What structures and processes need to be put in place to ensure the project is based on values?*
- *Which of the priorities below already outline those structures and processes?*

## Priority B: Base the Project on the Story of the Site

**Timeline:** Medium term—implementation by project artists. Long term—change the name of the park.

### Goals:

- Include authentic stories about the history, joy and tragedy of this land: Trade site, genocide, cosmology—so much energy. These stories are not written in history books. Artwork based on our story and Native values will inevitably be healing, inclusive and support anyone who visits. Be sure to include the genocide that happened here.
- Create an artwork that serves as an access point to understanding each other and connecting to this place.
- Consider the natural elements at the site, and how the project can be restorative to land and water. Nod to the resilience of bison herds, their power, beauty and history, as well as how they nourish us.
- Make the project a healing space of acknowledgement, a space for everyone to come together to understand and respect this place, this river, this body of water. The river represents connection and was a highway for Native people from all different nations. It connected us to non-Natives as well. The river is teaching us to come together to make real changes. Create a genuine collective understanding about our relationship to and restoring land and water.
- Define “community” for this project.
- Support healing through community seeds of storytelling and collaboration.

### Action Steps:

- Address the fact that the name Water Works is inappropriate. (Owámniyomni.)
- When addressing the name, work in conjunction with Friends of the Falls to come up with a name that is appropriate for this project’s land and theirs since they will be adjacent to one another.
- Submit a request from the City to the Park Board to change the name of the park.

### Questions to Consider:

- *What other action steps are missing above?*
- *Who should the artists be talking to about the stories of this place? Where should they look for the stories?*
- *Who is working with children on these stories already?*



Hermann Meyer

- *What is the name change process for the Park Board? Will having different project name, artwork name and park name be confusing?*
- *How can we keep this site as sacred as possible? How can this site become a shared, interactive space?*
- *What are the boundaries of this site, how do we define this place?*

## Priority C: Develop an Artist Selection Process Based on Dakota Values

**Timeline:** For this project—short term, for policies and guidebook—medium term, for changes to state and federal laws—long term.

### Goals:

- Change the selection process to encourage multiple voices, support collaboration amongst artists.
- Realize that one person's success is everyone's. Collaborate and acknowledge we're all moving forward in the same direction, locally and as Native people around the world.
- Be brave about disrupting the process to make changes.

### Actions/Steps:

- Determine eligibility and the artist selection process for this project and for future policies.
- Explore the possibility of having another organization do the artist selection process.
- Involve the Native community in artist selection, including elders.
- Provide support to artists to apply and reduce barriers to participation (i.e., a pre-submission workshop, guidebook or one-on-one help).
- Seek applications from artist teams.
- Request a letter of support from applicant's respective tribe or community.
- Support the creative rights of Native artists and the Indian Arts and Crafts Act.
- Clarify the City's legal position on this process, so we can be partners.
- Clarify whether the City can select all the finalists from 2021 and have them work together.
- Advocate for changes to laws to allow Native American preference for art in the same way that laws that imbue Native preference in education and employment already.

### Questions to Address:

- *What is the definition of eligibility?*
- *The project is seeking artists who have the capacity to tell the stories of this site, and who have strong knowledge of Dakota language, history and culture. How will we know artists or artist teams have this capacity? What do we need them to submit in order to know they have this capacity? What would we look for in their applications? For example, do they incorporate Dakota stories in their work? Do they describe Dakota stories in their application?*

- *Who is determining that the criteria are met by the applicants? Who is close to community and can vet? Can vetting be done by a group of artists?*
- *Is the artists' application followed by the review and selection or would a more discussion- based and consensus process work better?*
- *How can we best support the artists applying to the project and reach missing voices?*

**Priority D: Demonstrate that the City/MPRB are committed to and Value this Project and Share What they have Learned through this Project and the Conversations.**

**Timeline:** Short term.

**Goals:**

- Establish better accountability within the project and build trust with the Native community.
- Acknowledge mistakes made and learn to not cause harm.
- Clarify how decisions are made.

**Action Steps:**

- Acknowledge this is Dakota homeland and these are sacred sites.
- Explain what City/MPRB staff have learned from this experience and other Native projects and how those lessons are being considered as they develop a healthy way of working with the Native community on future projects.
- Be humble about it but don't belabor it.
- Communicate with the previous applicants and acknowledge ongoing negative effects the process had on them.
- Clarify who in the City/MPRB has authority for decisions.
- Provide an official response from the City/MPRB to all of this.
- Clarify what funding sources are being used, what sources could be used in the future and how funds can be used.
- Reduce barriers for participation.
- Provide a plan for how the City/MPRB can commit to this project and implement this project and the values, goals and action steps in this document. Commit leadership and staff to this work—put it in their workplan.



The Falls in 1863

### Questions to Address:

- *What becomes of all the information gathered in the conversations?*
- *How will this be demonstrated? Who does the Dakota community need to hear from to trust that the City/MPRB are committed, and what's the best way to deliver this communication?*
- *Are more funding sources needed to deliver this specific project?*
- *Will City/MPRB staff participate in education, training, cultural competency and emotional labor?*

## PRIORITIES FOR THE PUBLIC ART PROJECT AND TO ALSO BE CONSIDERED MORE BROADLY

### Priority E: Ground this Work in Native Leadership and Decision-Making

**Timeline:** Position for this project—short term. Permanent positions—long term.

#### Goals:

- Elevate Native leadership positions to create long-term systemic change in how the City works with Native community.
- Seek the advice of Dakota Leaders.
- Develop an ongoing relationship with and foster connections with the Native arts community.

#### Action Steps:

- Use the City's public art project manager pool to create and expand it to include a permanent Native community art mentor and liaison whose purpose would be to:
  - Be responsive to the Native communities' needs and ensure Native voices are being included and heard.
  - Maintain transparency and build trust.
  - Educate and empower artists on how to navigate the system and build large projects (permits, engineers, fabricators, etc.).
  - Build awareness of what's happening in public spaces.
  - Educate the public about Native art and it's educational, living connections between the generations, as well as how to support it.
- Achieve these goals, through community workshops and meetings, regular on-going communication, the advice of local Native leaders who are experts, and experienced artists assisting emerging artists and sharing their knowledge and experience.
- Determine how the project will continually work with Dakota Tribes and other Native organizations.
- Determine when to interchangeably use Indigenous Peoples, First Peoples, First Nations, Native American and American Indian. There is a time and place for each definition.
- Hire a permanent Native liaison at MPRB.

### Questions to Consider:

- *What are the eligibility criteria for selecting a Native public art project manager?*
- *Can the City ensure that Native preference will be given for these positions. Is it just for this project or a city-wide position?*
- *To what degree are the City/MPRB partnering with Friends of Falls?*
- *How can the City/MPRB lean on the amazing Native resources in this community-- people with great knowledge and understanding about our communities and our tribal governments?*
- *How can the City/MPRB make this a more Native-led process and relinquish power?*

## Priority F: Establish a New Way of Working and Planning with the Native Community on a Long-term Basis.

**Timeline:** Some things could be short term within the project and working with Friends of the Falls, but much of this is medium to long term.

### Goals:

- Redefine and strengthen a formal reciprocal relationship between the City/MPRB and the Native Community in a way that centers Dakota people and knowledge, builds trust, and embraces Native land control.
- Address the silos and competition that have undermined the efforts to understand and connect with these places. In collaboration and conversation, there can be shared learnings and broader shifts in paradigms that are necessary to be in the right relationship with these places.
- Let this site be the catalyst for how the City/MPRB work with the Native community that achieves this community's big picture desires and that reverberates into other Dakota sites and spaces in the Minneapolis area.

### Action Steps:

- Many organizations/institutions are doing related projects along the Mississippi. Owámniyomni is located within the larger Bdote Sacred Landscape. Organizations and institutions with (colonial) authority over places along the Mississippi River should be in conversation and collaboration. Have conversations among City and MPRB Departments about how this relates to their work city-wide.
- Proactively identify the sacred homelands in the metro area that should be honored.
- Create policy for acknowledging Dakota sacred sites in the City.
- Center this process on Native decision-making authority, continuity, and accountability. Consent not consultation.
- Develop real allies in the City/MPRB (and other spaces) for these projects to be successful in the ways that we dream they could be.
- Fund and coordinate this process, including paid engagement and staff positions by tax profits from stolen land.
- Review and revise Native project and site selection policies and procedures.
- Explore the process for designating the water a living being with rights.

## Questions to Consider:

- *Who is already doing this work along the river? Whose support do we most need to implement this? Who should we be collaborating with?*
- *How will City/MPRB support the Native community and develop a relationship that shows the City is responding to the Native community? How does the City/MPRB and Native community engage in genuine conversations?*
- *When we talk about sacred places, can we talk about how we seek a process to define these places as sacred place in reality and in policy/law?*
- *How is land back possible?*
- *How can the City/MPRB recognize Indigenous wisdom, traditions and realities without erasing Indigenous people?*
- *What actions are needed for truth and reconciliation? Is there a way to connect and consult with the City's Race, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (REIB) Department on existing truth and reconciliation work?*

## People Involved

### Participants in these Conversations

Jewell Arcoren, Kate Beane, Syd Beane, Alexandra Buffalohead, Frank Buffalo Hyde, Andrea Carlson, Juanita Espinosa, Anne Jackson, Niko Kubota, Courtney Leonard, Marlena Myles, Sam Olbekson, Cole Redhorse Jacobson, Mona Smith, Darlene St. Clair, Dana Thompson, Thomasina Topbear, Angela Two Stars, Moira Villiard, Rory Wakemup, Gwen Westerman, Dyani Whitehawk, Jill Yohe.

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