

From: Karen Noyce

To: Ed Zabinski

For the Grand Rapids Arts and Culture Commission meeting on June 3, 2024,  
with regards to the project:

## **Pokegama and Gaabinwajiwinaag: retrieving a neglected history of place**

### **Project Goals**

- To retrieve and make public the specific history of the Pokegama Band of Mississippi Ojibwe from their arrival in this part of Minnesota through to their displacement from Pokegama to the White Oak Point and White Earth Indian Reservations.
- To produce a map of the pre-settlement, pre-dam, natural and cultural landscape of this area, through which to tell the story of the Pokegama Band. To create this map in such a way as to inspire imagination and better understanding of life before roads, motors, and rapid communication.
- To engage a wide spectrum of local and regional Ojibwe people, including artists and historians, in the creation of this map so as to reflect and communicate the Anishinaabe relationship with land and universe.
- To bring the Pokegama story into prominent public view, so as to illuminate a buried past, bring more truth to the popular narratives of Grand Rapids and Itasca County history and heritage, and encourage incorporating this truth into the teaching of local history in the schools.

### **Project Components**

- A permanent public installation of a large outdoor 3-dimensional map of the places once known as Pokegama and Gaabinwajiwinaag. The map will portray the landscape as it was in the 1800s, using Ojibwemowin place names (with translation), and will include known sites of cultural significance to the Pokegama Anishinaabeg, traditional travel routes, etc. Locations on the map will be keyed to annotations on culture and historical events, including those leading to the dispossession and displacement of the band. Some written annotations will physically accompany the display; more detail will be available through a website accessed via QR codes.

- A paper version of the map that is available to the public and is likewise annotated
- A website that holds the compendium of information associated with the map and the Pokegama Band story, as well as contextual information about regional and national actions and policies of the time that drove the course of local history.
- Teaching materials related to the maps to help bring the learning of this history into area classrooms.

### **First steps towards achieving goals and eventual completion of the project**

1. Gather information for the creation of map and create digital base map: *Information gathering is mostly completed, though additional finds and refinements will continue through until production. Initial digital creation of the base map has been done.*
2. Broaden the network of Ojibwe band members and descendents who are in conversation and consultation about this project, providing more information, fact checking, and indigenous perspectives on presenting this history. This network will provide crucial guidance in how to proceed with implementing this project in a good way. Ultimately, the project must have support and buy-in from a spectrum of local and regional Native people. *This phase is currently in process, with good progress. Creating more circles of consultation and engaging in the conversations will be a primary focus of my personal efforts through the next six months and beyond.*
3. Research and Identify an advantageous site on city land for the public map exhibit installation. *It is is our current ask of the city and of the Arts and Culture Commission that they start the official process of vetting potential sites for this project.*
4. Engage an appropriate design/architectural company to work with us on producing several concepts for the gross physical design of the outdoor map exhibit. Feasibility and cost estimates. *Our second ask of the Arts and Culture Commission at this time is for logistic and financial assistance in finding an appropriate consultant who can provide initial advice on design constraints and costs of permanent outdoor exhibits of this sort.*
5. Seek grant funds for engaging a designer/builders of the structures, a 3-D map creator, and an artist to produce the exhibit. *Envision being ready to start this in 2025*
6. Identify the right people for these roles and engage them, presumably through a competitive bidding process and evidence of design work compatible with the

collective vision. They must be able to work as a close compatible team, and in close consultation with us. *Hopefully ready to start this process by summer of 2025*

7. Engage a website designer to create a website that holds the information accompanying the map. *2026?*

*(Note: Our intention is that wherever possible, choice of Native, specifically Ojibwe artists/designers/contractors is desirable in creating this exhibit.)*

### **Key components of the history to be communicated in the project**

- Arrival of the Anishinaabe people in the Pokegama area
- Displacement of the Dakota people by the Anishinaabe
- The story of the last large campaign of the Dakotas circa 1768 (as told o William Warren), to rout the Ojibwe and reclaim this area. An encounter between the large Dakota war party and two hunters at Pokegama initiated a frantic chase downriver to Sandy Lake, leading to a Dakota victory there, but followed by a crushing ambush and defeat of the unwary Dakota by the Ojibwe just a few days later, further downstream at Crow Wing.
- First person accounts of life around Pokegama in the early 1800s. Descriptions of abundance of resources and beauty of the landscape.
- Kechiwaymitigosh – “Big Frenchman” – acknowledged leader of the Pokegama Band in the early 1800s; Represented the Mississippi Band as signatory to the first US treaties (1826, 1837) involving Ojibwe people in Minnesota. In the Treaty of 1849, he specifically was recognized as Pokegama Band.
- Sandy Lake Tragedy of 1850 - Evolving policies of Federal and Minnesota Territory to remove all Ojibwe, including those in Wisconsin and Michigan, into Minnesota west of the Mississippi River directly to decisions by federal and state leaders caused the deaths of 400 Ojibwe people from starvation and illness. Sandy Lake was the cultural/political center for the Pokegama and similar bands and sub-bands of the Mississippi Ojibwe.
- Mayajewaywedung – Another leader who represented the Pokegama band as “second chief” at the signing of the Treaty of 1849. Subsequently he represented the band as head-man or chief, in the treaties of 1854, 1855, and 1867...
- The Treaty of 1855 ceded title to most Mississippi Ojibwe lands, but not hunting/fishing/subsistence rights in return for assurance of 7 small permanent

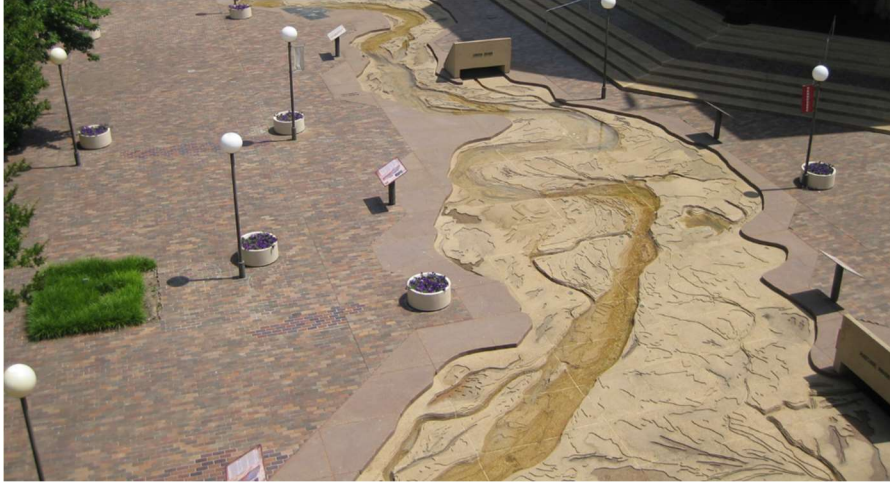
reservations, including a Pokegama reservation that encompassed all of Lake Pokegama

- The Treaty of 1864, less than 10 years later, then took away the Pokegama reservation.
- In 1867 the state land and timber surveyors arrived and surveyed the timber on the former Pokegama Reservation.
- In 1868 logging began on Lake Pokegama and expanded rapidly
- In 1884 the Pokegama Dam raised the water of the river upstream and of Pokegama Lake by 7-9 feet, causing devastating disruption to wild rice and other aquatic resources. Anishinaabeg up and down the river protested similar dams
- 1885: First homesteaders arrived on Lake Pokegama shores
- Story of conflicting values: a) story of encounter between Duncan Harris homesteader and Waymetigoshe over clearing of a traditional sugar bush; b) story of the potato raid – White Oak Point Ojibwe pulled a fast one on those at Trout Lake, in protest of the latter adopting capitalistic values and making money from their potato crop instead of honoring traditional values of sharing resources with fellow Ojibwe.
- Migration of some Pokegama band members, but not others, during the logging and homesteading periods.. Metigwakiconce (Chief “Drumbeater”, a son of Kechiwaymitigosh) –stays at Pokegama. At least 2 of his daughters marry “founders” of the town of Grand Rapids. In fact most of the early businessmen in Grand Rapids had Native wives.
- Information revealed in census data and Indian Annuity rolls helps document the fates of those mixed-blood families and other Pokegama band families.
- What we know of Biabedaush, Nokaince, “John Smith” and other Pokegama Band members
- Mississippi/Pokegama people today – survived a long period of efforts to annihilate their culture, but have been leading successful efforts to assert treaty rights, reclaim culture and language, and rewrite a truer history. Ojibwe people have preserved traditional values and are vibrant participants in northern Minnesota arts, culture, music, and business scenes. Work to restore sovereignty, regain stolen lands, and obtain equity in economic opportunity and treatment under the law continue.

**A few examples regarding aspects of project design:**

Possible concepts for 3-D map (previously sent to Commission)



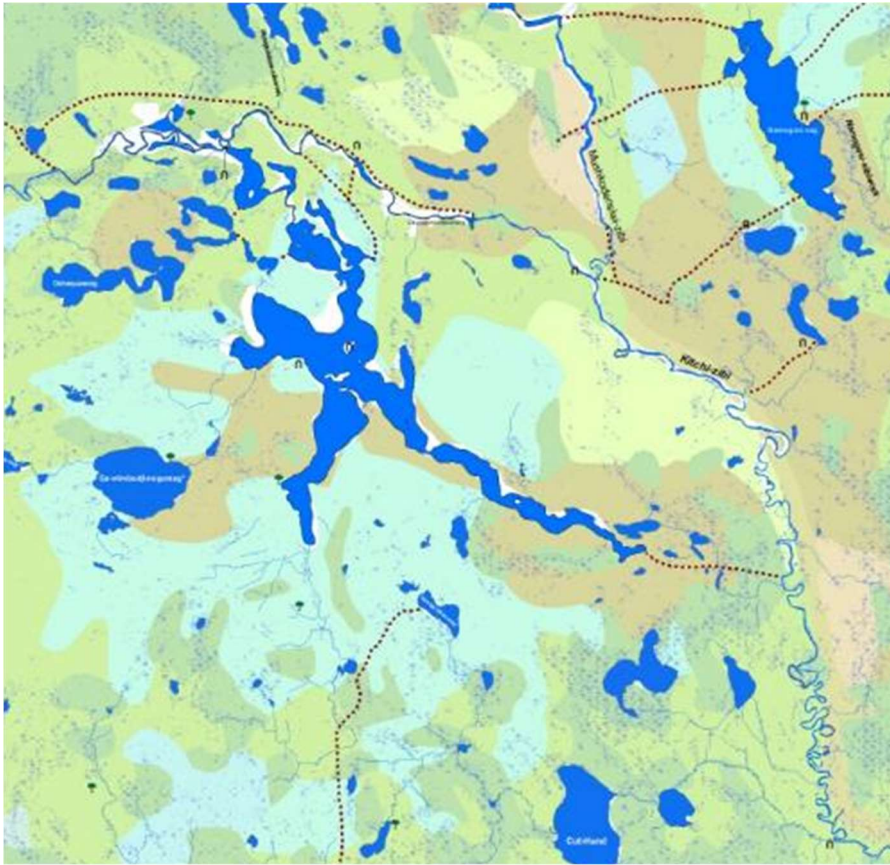


One very preliminary concept for the Pokegama installation.

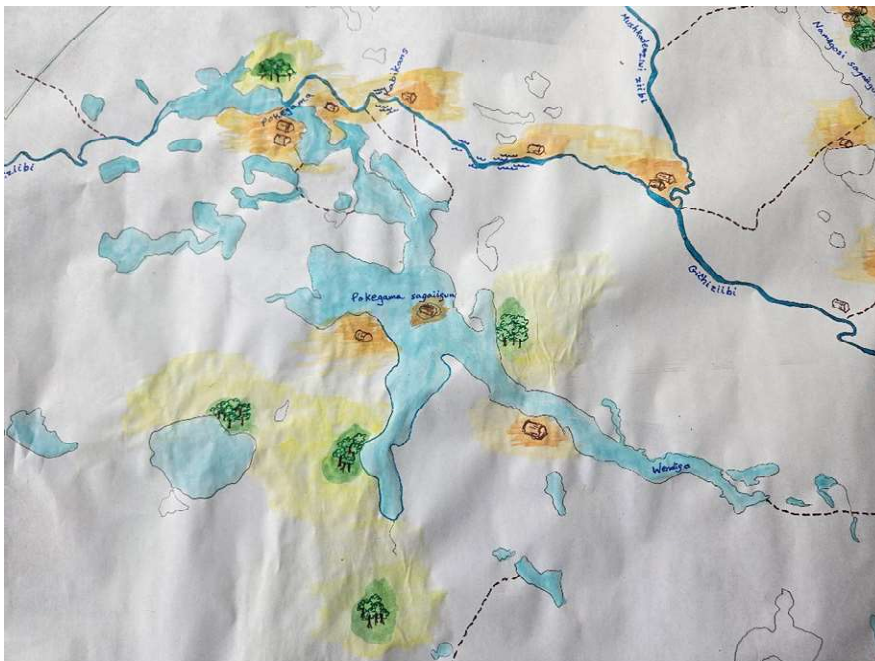


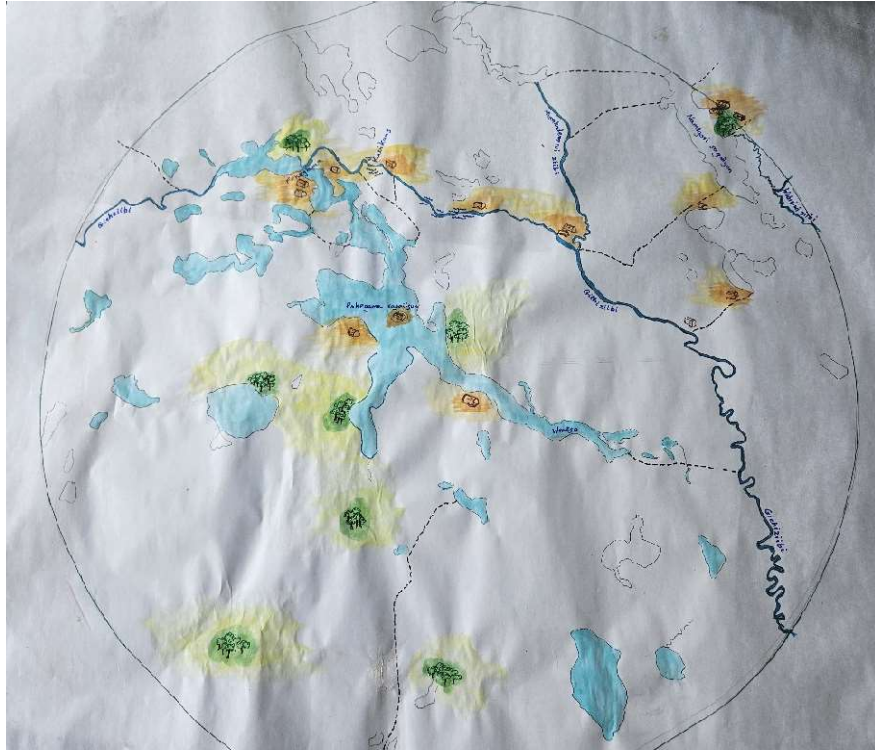
Peper map project:

Digital map already exists, but may not have the desired organic look or shape



Hand-drawn look ? Circular shape?





Example of professionally produced, hand-drawn look and hand colored map: 2023 map of Vermilion area with original Ojibwe names, produced by Bois Fort Reservation and Ely Folk School

