

# Diamond Point Park Archaeological Survey and Interpretive Plan

*Bemidji, Minnesota*



When the City of Bemidji, Minnesota, redeveloped Diamond Point Park, home to an important 3,000-year-old archaeological site, the 106 Group analyzed and interpreted the park's significant cultural resources. Initially, staff archaeologists conducted a Phase II archaeological survey of the park in preparation for the park's redevelopment. This survey ensured the park was designed to minimize impact to its archaeological resources.

Based on recommendations from the 106 Group, a cultural resources advisory group, comprised of American Indian community leaders, was formed and contributed to the design process. The 106 Group facilitated all tribal consultation activities on behalf of the city.



*Thumb nail lithic scrapper*

In addition, the 106 Group developed all interpretive content and strategies for the park. The interpretive plan balanced programming needs and resource management while ensuring the park's future use and enjoyment.



*1,000-year-old pottery sherd*



*Diamond Point Park was awarded the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota's Archaeology Award Project of the Year for excellence in project approach, public presentation, and incorporation of Native interpretive perspectives.*

## Discover the Lure of the Water's Edge

### Waniyeta Wowapi - Winter Court

For some people, time is a straight progression—a timeline, so to speak. For other people, it moves in circles—winter to sunset, summer to winter, flood to drought, life to death. The Dakota people have historically tracked time with seasonal markers written on buffalo hides, not dissimilar from the calendars we use today. They called this method for tracking time waniyeta wowapi, or winter counting. During the winter months, elders would gather to identify the most significant event from the previous winter and record it as a distinct figure on a buffalo hide—one simple, striking image each year. A single buffalo hide might have as many as 100 images strung in an ever-expanding circle that holds the heritage of generations.

Part of the lure of this place is that rich expanse of history. Evidence of more than 3,000 years of history has been found along the shores of Lake Bemidji. Generation upon generation have come to what is now Diamond Point Park to hunt among the giant pine, fill ceramic pots with water, and launch birch-bark canoes into the water.

If you could add a figure to the winter count of Diamond Point Park, what would it be? Perhaps a solitary figure fishing from a boat, a group of small children swimming, or a family gathering to share food. This place is steeped in the cyclical force we call time and history and you too have a role in that tradition.

## Discover the Lure of the Water's Edge

### Bemidjigamaug

The lure of the Mississippi River and Lake Bemidji are universal. People have called the shores of these waters home for thousands of years. The Ojibwe word for Lake Bemidji is Bemidjigamaug, which means "river flowing crosswise," so named because the Mississippi River enters on one side of the lake and flows out the other.

Among the early inhabitants of the area was an American Indian elder named Shaynowishbang, also known as Chief Bemidji. He was the leader of a large group of American Indian people who settled in this area before white settlers arrived. A soft-spoken, well-respected man, he welcomed fur trappers and explorers who traveled up the Mississippi River following the lure of unknown lands.

"I look back at what the Missisquoi is to me, and it's the giver of life. Everything is a circle—a circle of life. That river's been around here for thousands of years, and people have been using it for thousands of years. And people will continue to use it for the next thousands of years. As long as we keep that circle, don't try to sever all the things that go to it, because the Missisquoi is just one part of that web."

—Jim Jones, Jr., Anishinabe (Ojibwe) Indian, Leach Lake Pillager Band

## Discover the Lure of the Water's Edge

### Cultural Crossroads

"I have seen it in a vision, Seen the great canoe with pistons, Seen the people with white faces, Seen the coming of this hundred People of the wooden vessel From the regions of the morning... Let us welcome them, the strangers, Hail them as our friends and brothers, And the heart's right hand of friendship Give them when they come to see us. Gitchi-Manito, the Mighty, Said this to me in my vision. I behold, too, in that vision All the secrets of the future, Of the distant days that shall be. I behold the western marches Of the unknown, crowded nations, All the land was full of people, Buffalo, straggling, rolling, striving, Speaking many languages, yet feeling But one heart beat in their bosoms. In the woodlands rang their axes, Smoked their stoves in all the valleys, Over all the lakes and rivers Bushed their great canoes of bisonhide. Then a darker, drearier vision Passed before me, woe and dread like I behold our nation scattered, All forgotten of my countrymen, Wretched, warring with each other: Saw the remnants of our people, Sweeping westward, wild and woful, Like the dead rack of a tempest, Like the withered leaves of Autumn!"

—Wahkiakochi, a Dakota, recited from The Song of Hiawatha

Chief Bemidji made friends with the first white settlers to the area. He knew the Carvon brothers, who in 1888, established Bemidji's first trading post. Bemidji's first European homesteaders, Freeman and Betty Dook, developed a long-lasting friendship with Chief Bemidji as they built their home here on Diamond Point. Called by Chief Bemidji "Wahkiakochi," or "At the lake named," the village of Bemidji was incorporated in 1896. Shortly after that, the Great Northern Railroad and the Brainerd and Minnesota Railway extended into Bemidji to support the region's growing lumber industry. The rail connections between Bemidji, St. Paul, and Grand Forks brought lumberjacks, speculators, and modern building supplies.