

The Falls Initiative

Community Conversation 2 - March 16, 2022

Response to Public Questions

Question: Has there been any discussion of giving the Falls land in trust to our local Native people?

Answer: Tribal ownership has been and will continue to be considered. Returning the land is welcomed by the City of Minneapolis, Friends of the Falls, and Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board, if Tribal Nations and Native communities are interested in that path.

Friends of the Falls recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the City of Minneapolis, designating Friends of the Falls as the City's agent to negotiate conveyance of land surrounding the Upper Lock with the Army Corps of Engineers. The MOU also stipulates that the parties will develop a long-term plan for ownership and operations.

Question: Can Wakinyan further describe his vision for Indigenous water programs? What would they look like?

Question: What role might 'river personhood' play in your plans for the river moving forward?

Answer: Panelist Wakinyan LaPointe described a collective vision, rather than a personal vision, for Indigenous water rights and programming. Programs should honor the right of Indigenous peoples to maintain their spiritual relationship with traditional waters and coastal seas. Programs may include restoring the Indigenous names of waters and supporting existing water programs, including those where youth are measuring water quality. Developing a framework that recognizes the Rights of Nature, Rights of Water, or Personhood of Water requires western decision-makers, like the City of Minneapolis, to create equal and decades-long - or even centuries-long - partnerships with Indigenous peoples. Successful models of this work include the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#).

Question: How can we address the millions outside of this group? Meaning, do we dare to challenge elementary/middle school/high school education?

Answer: It is crucial to teach young people about the true and complete history of this place, as well as the ongoing discrimination and oppression experienced by Indigenous peoples. Teaching Indigenous languages continues to be a powerful tool to teach students about Indigenous culture and history. We also recommend the following resources:

- Indian Land Tenure Foundation: <https://iltf.org/>; <https://www.lessonsofourland.org/>

- Bdote Memory Map: <https://bdotememorymap.org/>
- University of Minnesota Open Rivers: <https://editions.lib.umn.edu/openrivers/>
- Minnesota Humanities Center:
<http://humanitieslearning.org/resource/index.cfm?act=1&TagID=&CatID=107&SearchText=&SortBy=1&mediatype=&lurl=1>

Question: Are the two non-Indigenous panel members willing to acknowledge the extent of historical trauma caused by colonizers/Euro-Americans, to share it with others, and to enter a conversation about changing our current institutions and systems?

Answer: Panelist John Shepard reflected on his personal experience, in particular learning that he had a relative that was instrumental in bringing the railroad to Minnesota. John was moved to learn this part of his heritage and is beginning to investigate the extent of that legacy. He acknowledged his personal history, as well as his responsibility to reflect on it and share it with others. He made a commitment to engage in broader conversations about these issues.

Panelist Whitney Clark stated that there is a need to recognize 500 years of colonialism and genocide, to reckon with their effects, and to consider how to rebuild. He said it is important not just to talk about the past, but to deliberately co-create a different path that results in different outcomes.

Question: Beyond individual recognition and investigation, acknowledging our non-Native advantages from colonialism, isn't it incumbent on us to take on the colonial systems that have power over these decisions?

Question: What can be done to stop neocolonial actions that continue to take place without proper informed consent of the Dakota people and Indigenous communities?

Answer: Panelist Robert Lilligren reflected on the many current initiatives along the River - including The Falls Initiative, Wakan Tipi, Bdote, the Riverview Streetcar Corridor - that seek to approach planning processes differently and in a better way.

Panelist Wakinyan LaPointe added that Indigenous communities must continue to demand, and not simply ask, for power and justice from western sector entities, like the City of Minneapolis and State of Minnesota, who currently have the power and resources to prevent neocolonial acts from happening. Western thinkers and decision-makers need to support legislation, make stronger financial investments, and create broader systems that uplift inherent Indigenous rights, including water rights.

Panelist Sharon Day quoted Audre Lorde: "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house." She suggested requesting a meeting with the United States Secretary of the Interior, Deb Haaland, to advance discussion of these issues.

Question: What is the GGN logo on the Eventbrite image for?

Answer: GGN is the landscape architect engaged in The Falls Initiative. David Malda from GGN was one of the speakers in the opening video of the March 16 Community Conversation. Participants may also interact with GGN staff in breakout rooms.

Question: Will there be a follow-up email with the links posted in the Zoom chat?

Answer: Yes. Friends of the Falls publishes a transcript of the event's Zoom chat on its website a few days after the event, which includes links. We will also email all event registrants with the chat transcript and event recording.