



HUDDLE

Indigenous Place Naming

South Addition Community Council: Meeting Summary

Meeting Date: May 28, 2020 @ 7:00 pm

Location: Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Summary Date: May 29, 2020

Agenda Items: Indigenous Placemaking sign at Westchester Lagoon

Taylor Smith, Aaron Leggett, and Melissa Shaginoff joined the virtual South Addition Community Council meeting via Zoom on May 28, 2020 at 7:00 pm

Taylor began the presentation with an overview of the project. The goal of the presentation was to inform the community about efforts to date, status of the Indigenous Place Naming project, and receive feedback on the potential site at Westchester Lagoon.

After sharing the project overview, Aaron and Melissa spoke to the larger effort that the wayfinding signs are a component of and the significance and symbolism of a project of this nature. Aaron shared that this is the culmination of roughly a decade of work to bring awareness to indigenous place names throughout Anchorage. Melissa added that the choice to call this a 'movement' was intentional as the signs are a visual component that bring awareness to something much larger. The wayfinding signs will begin to orient people and share interpretive content around the ways in which the Dena'ina spoke of and related to the land we all live on today in Anchorage.

A community member asked a clarifying question regarding their understanding of many different dialects among Native Alaskans. The community member was curious how the project team would ensure the accuracy of place names and if there may be certain places that have multiple names among dialects. Aaron shared that while there are many dialects within Dena'ina, 'Chanshtnu' is within the Upper Cook Inlet dialect and there is no contention surrounding this place name. Aaron is very sensitive to differences among dialects and ensuring the accuracy of place names used within this movement. Melissa added that this movement is collaborative for that reason. Knowledge does not always land with one person, so there are many cultural consultants and native leaders working together and pulling from a network of sources to develop these signs and their content.

Another community member asked how many signs there would be as part of this project. Taylor shared that this current effort has funding for 2 signs. This proposed sign at Westchester Lagoon is being considered alongside a sign at Chanshtnu Muldoon Park.

A community member asked how there might be differentiation between East and West Chanshtnu/Chester Creek as these two signs will be on different ends of the creek. Aaron clarified that Chanshtnu refers to anywhere on the creek and there were not directional differentiations within the language. He added that there was also no lagoon at that time. Melissa shared that directional language gets complicated and East and West were not ways that the indigenous related to the land. While indigenous directional language would be an interesting sign to consider in the future, it is not something that will be incorporated into these signs at this time.