

**INTERVIEWER:** Lots of place names in Minnesota come from Indigenous heritage. The name Minnesota itself, as you might know, comes from the Dakota word for the region meaning either "clear waters" or "cloudy waters," depending on how you pronounce it. Many Indigenous place names have been lost to history, though. But a new map is restoring Native place names to Northern Minnesota through a partnership between the Bois Forte Band of Chippewa and the nonprofit Ely Folk School and volunteer artists. The full map will be unveiled today at 3:30 this afternoon at the Bois Forte Heritage Center and Cultural Museum in Tower.

And two of the people involved in creating it are on the line right now. I'm so happy that Paul Schurke is with us. He's a board member at the Ely Folk School. And Rick Anderson is also a board member at the Ely Folk School and a Bois Forte Band member. Wow. Paul and Rick, thanks for taking the time to talk with us. How are you both?

**PAUL** Yeah, thanks, Cathy. Thanks for--

**SCHURKE:**

**INTERVIEWER:** And Rick, are you with me?

**RICK** I'm here, yeah. Paul cut out there, and I got worried. [LAUGHS]

**ANDERSON:**

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah. [LAUGHS] It's OK. You and I will then plow forward, if we need to, Rick. And I'm assuming, Paul-- Paul Schurke, are you with me? No, it looks like Paul might have dropped off. That's OK. We're going to get him back on the line. There he is. Yep, there we heard you. We heard you. my

**RICK** My voice is a little shaky here today. I've got a cold.

**ANDERSON:**

**INTERVIEWER:** OK. Oh, well, heck, I'm sorry about that. But I'm glad you both are with us. Say, I'm going to toss the first question to Paul. How did this idea come about?

**PAUL** Yes, when we founded the Ely Folk School eight years ago, one of our missions was to serve as a bridge between  
**SCHURKE:** the Native and non-Native communities up here among Minnesota's seven Ojibwe communities. Four of them are up here. That's around the [? canoe ?] country. So we've had a number of programs and classes and events at the folk school engaging the Ojibwe members of our area up here. And a flagship project has been our birch bark canoe building program, where we build a very traditional Anishinaabe birch bark canoe with community volunteers.

And that led to canoe flotilla trips across the Boundary Waters to join the powwow with our Ojibwe neighbors near Quetico, Ontario, like Lacroix village, where they shared with us a map they had created showing the beautiful lakes of Quetico Park with their original Anishinaabe names. We wondered if something similar could be found for the lakes on our side of the border and started doing some digging. And over the last several years, lo and behold, we found many of those names.

And so the first step in this mapping process for the [? canoe ?] country to return the names of the original people, the original lake names here, is underway with today's unveiling of a map. This first segment of the project is a map that covers the traditional realm of the Bois Forte Band, which extends 100 miles from Tower, Minnesota near Lake Vermilion all the way westward across the [? Nett ?] Lake. So this map is 106 names, all the original spellings, as far as we can tell, and their interesting, lyrical, poetic meanings that have descriptions of the places that they represent on there. And we're pleased to share this with the folks that will join us this afternoon.

**INTERVIEWER:** Say, Rick, obviously these lakes were renamed when the Europeans settled in. How were you able to find the original names? What was the detective work behind it?

**RICK ANDERSON:** I'm going to leave that to Paul because I only joined the folk school a year and a half ago. So that stage of the project Paul was there finding those initial names.

**PAUL SCHURKE:** Yeah, so fortunately it turns out that there were people back in the 1850s who realized that this would all be lost to history if it wasn't captured quick because the Ojibwe did not have written language. It was all oral history. So it was left to anthropologists and missionaries and explorers who traveled the north country here, the ones who had the wherewithal and the interest and who also spoke fluent Ojibwe, to sit down with the elders of the tribes back there 150 years ago and capture these names before they were gone.

And fortunately, those names exist now in different archives. At the Smithsonian, the Peabody Museum, and the Minnesota Historical Society has references to some of that. And interestingly, Cathy, since this map project has been announced, much as we hoped, other resources have come forward. People have been prompted by the announcement of this map to share with us other resources that are out there, which gives us hope that we can continue the map, to cover all of the [? canoe ?] country up here, the Arrowhead region in Minnesota, to find-- we've collected several additional names now, many of them in the Boundary Waters and Quetico Park but hope to find additional resources. And this map project is prompting other people to alert us to things that are out there that might bring all this to light.

**INTERVIEWER:** Glad to hear that. Say, Rick, this project is a bridge between Native and non-Native folks. What does that mean to you?

**RICK ANDERSON:** Yep. I'm just thrilled with it. That's one of the reasons that I joined-- decided to join the Ely Folk School. I'm a lifelong resident of Ely. And our family goes back, obviously, many, many, many generations. Yeah, so I used to work for a grant program called Culture-Based Arts Integration, which was incorporating Native arts and craft into core curriculum classes for the St. Louis County School districts. And I thought with that kind of background and the activities and programs that they ran at the folk school, that would be a perfect kind of match for me to get some more Native programs in the Ely community.

**INTERVIEWER:** Nice. And talk, because you are a native to the area, that area of the state of Minnesota, obviously, over the past few years, Native names have been restored to places across the state. Like, Lake Bde Maka Ska comes to mind. Talk about the importance of a name to a place.

**RICK ANDERSON:** It's really interesting to look at how the Anishinaabe people named places. If you look on the map-- well, you can't look on the map. But after today you can.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yep.

**RICK** There's a place "The Bay Where the Baby Porcupines Swim."

**ANDERSON:**

**INTERVIEWER:** Aw.

**RICK** So they would find a place and describe an event or a feature that somebody witnessed or whatever. And that

**ANDERSON:** became the name of that place. There was another, "Raven Duck Under [? Rock" ?] or something. Raven duck was actually how they described a black duck, which is a species of duck. But instead of black duck, it was a raven duck.

So just that personal-- you can imagine back hundreds of years ago, grandpa, why is the water open? And the response was, because the fish eat the ice there. And that's actually the name of one of the creek mouths.

**INTERVIEWER:** Fish Eat the Ice.

**RICK** Yep.

**ANDERSON:**

**INTERVIEWER:** Paul Schurke, I have about a minute left here. What do you hope comes of this map?

**PAUL** Well, we're pleased already with the response. As mentioned, the announcement has triggered several people to  
**SCHURKE:** step forward and ask to become involved, both with extending the map to cover more of Northern Minnesota because, of course, we have. Within 50 miles of Ely, there's 2,000 lakes. And many of them probably still have Native names out there somewhere.

So we look forward to extending the map and working with all kinds of groups, the four Native communities around our [? canoe ?] country, the IRRR has expressed interest in helping to facilitate that. And other groups like the US Forest Service and local schools have expressed interest in this as well. So I think we've-- I think we've triggered a keen interest in putting these names back on the map here and engaging people with not only the beautiful environmental heritage we have up here with the Boundary Waters, but also the extraordinary cultural heritage that [? canoe ?] country includes with some 600 years of Ojibwe history and everything that represents for the people who originally called this home.

**INTERVIEWER:** By the way, the map is beautiful. Nice job. And I really appreciate the time of you both. Thank you so much.

**PAUL** Thank you, Cathy.

**SCHURKE:**

**INTERVIEWER:** Thank you, Rick. Paul Schurke is a board member at the Ely Folk School. Rick Anderson's a board member at the Ely Folk School too and also a Bois Forte Band member. Now, as I mentioned, you can watch the map's unveiling today 3:30 this afternoon at the Bois Forte Heritage Center and Cultural Museum. That's near Fortune Bay Resort Casino in Tower, Minnesota.