

## **SHELLEY BUCK**

I'm Shelley Buck. I'm president of Owámniyomni Okhódayapi. We also have Barry Hand who is the program director at Owámniyomni Okhódayapi. And then we also have Kjersti Duval who's the contract manager with Studio Civic | Duval.

I want to thank each and every one of you for joining us today. We want to make sure that you enter your name and your affiliation in the chat so we can record your attendance. We want to make sure we get everyone accounted for, so please do that. And we have someone who will keep track of that for us.

We're excited to be working on this project, and we're excited to be at this stage in the process. Wíta Wanáǰi is a sacred area for our people. Owámniyomni Okhódayapi has gone through a large process, a large change, and our mission is to truly do a land restoration; an indigenous land restoration. We want to bring education and tell a history that hasn't been told before. We have a big job to do, because the side has been desecrated and destroyed. But we know we can do it with everyone here.

This is Dakota homeland. And I think that's important to know. That's part of that history that a lot of people don't know about. Wíta Wanáǰi was a meeting place for the Dakota people. It was a place of birth and also death. If you've ever been down there, you can feel the power that the River has. She has a great power that's still there even though she's been desecrated and altered. But we really want to heal this place because it has such meaning to Dakota people. We want it to be a future home base for the Dakota Tribes, here in Minnesota, so they can feel connected to the River again, and to their homelands again. And now I will turn it over to Barry.

## **BARRY HAND**

Good morning relatives. I want to welcome you all here today as we really take a first step, an actionable step, towards reestablishing a Dakota presence here at Owámniyomni. The Falls were obviously, as Shelley was saying, an important place; and as we've had Manifest Destiny, as we've had colonization, a lot of our places have been erased throughout North America. This place here is in the heart of downtown Minneapolis. It's in the concrete corridor of a major urban area, where there's a lot of desecration and the watercourses were changed.

Industry built themselves up here. Dakota people are now going to try to reinvigorate and restore this area, Dakota homeland, that is so important. Including the island, Wíta

Wanáǰi, which was mined out for foundations for a lot of the buildings in the area. It won't be exactly what it was. But that place – even though you're not able to see very much of it, if at all – that place of power is still there.

And so here, as we move forward, understand that this is a great undertaking, where we're trying to honor that Dakota legacy of value, and the last couple thousand years, and of being here time immemorial. But also to share that heritage with the greater community so that we can pick it up and walk forward with that together. We're doing that by doing the restoration, and through a Dakota mindset and Dakota view.

As you see here, you have the outlines of Wíta Wanáǰi there. That was well known as a place to make sugar. When I say sugar, we're talking about some maple trees. So there is a well known maple forest there on that island. As you look a little bit further south. You're going to see a light blue line there that was the original cataract of the Falls. Now you can see where the Falls, just to the left of that light blue line – is where the Falls were when they collapsed, and where they remade the Falls. If you look to the right of that light blue line on what would be considered the South or the bottom of your paper, you're gonna see Spirit Island. I'm going to touch on that in a second. When you look at where the Falls was, we have documentation not only through our oral histories, but through the first Europeans that came here. This was a place of pilgrimage for our Tribal Nations in the area. This is a place of power.

Nothing went up above these Falls pre-contact, and of course before the Falls collapsed this was also a place of birth and a place of creation. What I mean by that is it was a spawning ground for fish. Our sturgeon, our buffalo fish, the paddlefish. And our sacred beings in the water, and at Spirit Island. It was considered a spot where the sacred beings would spawn and procreate. This place of power was known pretty far and pretty wide.

It became a place of power to spearhead captains of industry too, in the sense of powering the flour mills, the wheat, the wheat mills that we had here, of course, in "Mill City." The difference from a Dakota mindset was that the power of those Falls and the power of that water traveling through this area was seen as a resource to extract, to power the wheels in the mills to grind this wheat. It wasn't for the betterment of humankind. It wasn't for the betterment of humanity. It wasn't in reciprocity with the land, it was for profit.

Geologists will tell us that because of the limestone bed, eventually the Falls collapsed, and so on and so forth. And that's one way to look at it. Another way to look at it is through the Dakota mindset of stating that maybe that power was being abused in a wrong way. And it wasn't meant for that and so went to sleep for a little while. These captains of

industry rebuilt these Falls and they became hydroelectric. They kind of still were able to do these things, but it also kind of put them to sleep. The original Falls, if you follow that blue line, you can see that these cataracts have these Falls that straddle these islands that are present.

What we're proposing to do here is to take off this concrete sarcophagus, and expose this Mother Earth, this limestone bed, and we're looking at a healing and a restoration. Now, when I say healing and restoration, what that means is we're never going to get back to what things were. That's not what that means, but we can get back to what we can through hard work and prayer and good mindsets. And so the site is going to be restored with our plant medicines, which are our plant relatives and trying to live in reciprocity. When we pull back that concrete cover and the concrete sarcophagus that encases this site, we're going to have to pause a little bit so that our Dakota people can pray and heal and welcome back that land to the surface again and ask for their blessings to move forward. In doing that, we're tied to that River. And our relatives that call the river home, your sturgeon, your plant life, your fish, your mussels, these are all interconnected. And we have a word in our language that talks about this interconnectedness. of reciprocity. We say **Wodakota and Wodakota** is talking about a concept of *we all depend upon one another*. We never are supposed to take more than we need. And that's what happened here with the Falls and the mills: more was taken than what was needed for certain ones to benefit and so from the Dakota mindset, we're looking at restoration.

There's also been talk where you see Wíta Wanáǵi there, it's under the water and a little bit of that concrete jetty is said to be part of Wíta Wanáǵi - and so we talk about restoring that island. It won't be the same island, but as human beings and as two-leggeds, that's the Dakota worldview of healing and reciprocity.

We humans identify ourselves as two-leggeds versus those that have four legs, those that fly, those that swim, those that crawl, but as two-leggeds, when we do something that maybe took us out of that reciprocity, that law of living in concert with one another, we have to show a way how we can try to heal that wound if our skin is cut. It leaves a scar. The skin is never the same, but we heal. And so that's one of the things we're going to attempt to do.

This is a huge undertaking that's more than just engineering and bringing people together to heal. It's about looking forward. These parcels are going to be a green corridor. In the middle of the city. That's important. There's a thing called the Mississippi Flyway for our bird relatives, Wahupakoza we call them that the ones that fly. It's the largest flyway in North America. We don't tend to think of downtown Minneapolis as an ecological oasis.

But we can put an oasis in this concrete realm by putting this green space, and what does that look like? Well, there's an interconnectedness: the birds eat the fish, the fish eat the plants and the mussels and the smaller fish. We have a life way that's connected to those fish in those birds as well.

When we're looking at restoring this land, those plant relatives that we asked to come back and we can plant and we can plant but we're not farmers in a field. What we're doing is we're planning those relatives and they're gonna let us know whether or not they want to come home or not. It's kind of a philosophy and you're going to see certain plants that are going to maybe crowd out other plants.

What we know from our biologist is that there's probably something in the soil there that they're cleaning up. Our plant relatives do a really good job of cleaning that up, whether they're on land, whether they're in water. Also, there's another little relative that lives in this water, the mussel shells of mussels, which have been under a lot of duress, but they are a key species to this river system. They were also a key food source for Lakota people. And in fact, our word for spoon is mussel shell in our language Tukiha.

So we're as we're moving forward as we're cleaning this space up. What we're trying to do is build this network of what we would consider in our philosophy infinity, the universe – but on a small scale. When we talk about the four directions, when we talk about Owámniyomni, at that point, it's the center of the universe. But there's also the Dakota understanding that wherever we're at, we're at the center of the universe. So when we're looking at design, when we're looking at how we're going to manage this as far as designing the site, the engineering challenges – we need a guide, we need to look at the River and have a guide. We need to look at some of the things that were left for us. Whether they were old paintings, old photographs, the River is going to let us know what it's going to do.

Human beings have done what we've done. It doesn't matter which human beings did it. Human beings did it. And so now we're trying to restore it. But the River is going to let us know that we can't fight the River. We can't control the River. This is the Dakota view of the Rivers: the River is going to do the restoration. It's going to do it and we're going to have to move with the River.

As we're moving along, you can see how this work can keep growing in partnership with the city, the Tribes and the National Park Service. So when we restore this place in a Dakota-led way, what that means is that when the Dakota people are taking stewardship of this land, everybody's going to have a seat at the table. Everybody's going to have a

place to be there, everyone will be included. And I think that's something that is going to be changing from the past history of this site. Whereas if you weren't part of that industry, or you weren't part of the lock and dam or you weren't moving through that lock and dam – when Dakota people and Owámniyomni Okhódayapi are managing and and protecting the site, everybody's going to have a place all the time.

## **KJERSTI DUVAL**

Thanks Barry. So yes, this is an outline of the land that will be conveyed by the US Army Corps. This is the project site, and I'm going to take you on a quick tour of the site in Google Maps to give everyone a sense of what we're talking about.

Here's the lock. Here is the Falls. And the site is this entire stretch of Riverfront, in addition to that land passing under the Stone Arch Bridge. The location is on the Central Riverfront, and this is the Central Business District. Here's US Bank Stadium and Commons Park over there. And this entire River corridor is part of the Mississippi National River Recreation Area, which is a 70-mile long National Park corridor. It's also in the midst of the Minneapolis park system. Mill Ruins Park is here. And the Minneapolis Park Board is working on Water Works Park here. Phase One is complete, here, and it includes Owamni restaurant by the Sioux Chef, which I'm sure you've seen heralded nationwide as an incredible restaurant. We concur. Water Works Park Phase Two is going to be built right here, next to and abutting the site that we're working on. And so the Minneapolis Park Board will be a coordinating partner on the overall restoration and improvement of the Central Riverfront.

Just a little bit about the site characteristics, zooming in. You can see that the site is now highly industrialized. This parking lot sits below the grade of this damming surface. So behind this wall is water. The federal government has an easement along the shoreline land above the lock. This shoreline land is actually owned by the Park Board but this fence marks the boundary of the federal easement - an easement we seek to eliminate. And then the lock itself has a couple of structures: the old control station, and a restroom facility. But in order to have that control station perched up here at the lock edge, you see there's a very large gravel slope needed to access this parking area up here. All of those are features that we don't see remaining, which is why we have a Section 106 and a Section 408 process scoped. Those features will be removed and the site transformed in favor of an indigenous landscape restoration.

The site then comes down to the water here and progresses along the shoreline. And so this is across the River from where those islands once were. You can see some of the fill

across the River where they built the hydro plant, and some of the other features of the land that changed, if you go back to the maps in the slide deck.

[back to the deck]

So now, just to walk through some of the process considerations. I want to invite Barry once again to briefly discuss the approach that we're taking for decision making. Barry can you spend maybe a minute or so describing this?

## **BARRY HAND**

So moving forward with our Minnesota Dakota Knowledge Keepers... If we're going to lead and change this place we've got to adopt a Dakota mindset as the core philosophy. When Dakota people make decisions, it's usually consensus decision making. It's a slower process. But what that allows is for everybody to have a voice. That doesn't mean everybody's happy all the time. But what that does mean is that when Dakota people moved or when they decided to do something or move on an issue, it meant that everybody was heard. In that consensus-driven decision making, people will put the group ahead of their own needs, so if you had a disagreement, or maybe you didn't agree with a certain direction that the group was going, you weighed your wants and the needs of the group. So moving forward, looking at this diagram, Dakota Knowledge Keepers are going to be a big part of the decision making. And the third section of this is very important, I think, and it hasn't been discussed, or excuse me, it hasn't been implemented in very many other places – and that is having your Tribal Working Group. So Owámniyomni Okhódayapi not only is going to be working with these Dakota Wisdom Keepers, Knowledge Keepers... they're also going to be led by the four Dakota communities that called Minnesota home.

This is an extra step, an extra caveat. And when you're looking at timelines and deadlines, this can put a crunch on those. However, this is how you move forward in an ethical way where you are restoring that trust in one another and then making sure everybody has a seat at the table. And so the four Dakota communities, this Knowledge Keepers group, and of course we have a Program committee. And all of those things working together, it might slow down your process a little bit. So allow time for that to happen because people will be wanting to think on it. Pray on it, converse with their families and extended families on it and then they'll come back to the table and share what they have.

## **KJERSTI DUVAL**

Thanks, Barry. So, the Tribal Working Group has been convened. Shelley is convening and facilitating that group. Barry is facilitating the Program committee, and of course the Knowledge Keepers will be part of consultant teams. And so between those three, we have a network of communication and decision making that fulfills the mission of a Dakota-led restoration, and presenting Dakota culture on the Riverfront.

Now a couple other things to note on the process side. Just want everyone to know that we have already completed a lengthy and large public engagement process. That's not what we're asking for this second season of work. Rather, it needs to be a more targeted outreach that will deepen relationships that inform design, and keep the public apprised – communicating progress to the broader public. So just keep that in mind as you write your scopes.

I'm not going to go deeply into these high level goals. I'm including them in this presentation for you to revisit later if you wish. It's somewhat self explanatory. If you read the RFP, you can probably Intuit what these high level goals are for each phase. But we just include those for your reference.

On to teaming considerations. As you know, we created a teaming directory because it's not an intuitive thing for large multinational firms or big design engineering firms to find individuals or small organizations that have deep ties to Dakota culture and identity. We know that this isn't necessarily always going to be a typical quals and fees discussion that's happening, or that you would expect with a typical subconsultant. So we have provided some thoughts on equivalencies as you reach out and have discussions with those local experts.

Also on the teams and quals theme, we have provided information to Dakota Knowledge Keepers via an informational video in response to questions received, and also want to provide this information to you, about alternative approaches to both the consultant role and costs beyond billable hours for Dakota Knowledge Keepers specifically.

Some Knowledge Keepers are part of an organization or our experienced consultants who are used to this kind of a process, but some may be an elder or an individual coming to this for the mission, and it is not a thing that they would typically do - but their knowledge is important and essential.

So we've advised that the Knowledge Keepers consultant role could be an individual role, or it could be that people are working as a collective of individuals and preparing a shared scope and fee. So you can look for that in this process.

Additionally, with reimbursable expenses, that's something that's very commonly dealt with among small organizations or businesses, but for an individual advisor, we propose considering a budget allowance model for supporting costs that are anticipated to be incurred during the process. Those would be identified and managed by a Knowledge Keeper, but not incurred by the Knowledge Keeper. They would be costs paid directly by the Prime to those supplemental vendors.

Finally, the selection process. The Selection Committee is formed. Here are its representative members, which include OO leadership and board members, notably board members with special expertise in projects like this. We're also including the Planning Director for the Minneapolis Park Board because of that coordinating relationship with the land abutting. The committee will be forming prior to the submission deadline to finalize selection criteria. Those criteria will be consistent with what you've seen in the RFP and heard about today. If you do have questions, you can direct those to me through February 19. The final Q&A will be posted on February 21. And I'll pass it to Shelley to close out.

## **SHELLEY BUCK**

I just want to say thank you again, *Pidámayaye*, to everyone for participating today and taking an interest in helping us really make this a place that everyone can enjoy while also learning something and doing some healing.

This is a very healing place and hopefully it will be beautiful, just as beautiful as it is healing. So I appreciate all the interest and if anyone has any questions, we're here to answer them for you.

-END OF PRESENTATION-

*Questions asked in the Pre-Proposal Conference are recorded and answered in the Q&A.*