From:Tessa Lehto Phone: (952) 496-6160 FAX: (952) 233-4225

To: Mark McNeil
City of Shakopee
Pages:2

Action Item #3

Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community

2330 SIOUX TRAIL NW • PRIOR LAKE, MINNESOTA
TRIBAL OFFICE: 952-445-8900 • FAX: 952-445-8906

OFFICERS

Stanley R. Crooks
Chairman

Glynn A. Crooks
Vice Chairman

Lori K. Beaulieu
Secretary/Treasurer

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 25, 2003

CONTACT: Tessa Lehto
(952) 496-6160 or info@shakopeedakota.org

SMSC Protects Sacred Site

Prior Lake/Shakopee— The Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community continues its management responsibility for areas of Shakopee Memorial Park which contain sacred Indian burial mounds. For the past three years the SMSC has conducted a variety of activities to support protection of the site. The SMSC is also restoring the site to its natural state as an oak savannah and a traditional prairie. This month SMSC staff will mow these areas (as they do two to three times a year) using handheld weed whips; no machines are used on the mounds out of respect for those who are buried there. The SMSC also has staff pick up trash at the park, and the Community pays for tree trimming and all other expenses associated with the site.

The mound group originally consisted of 29 mounds, many of which were disturbed, damaged, or destroyed by the construction of Highway 101 and other developments in the area, including parking lots, paved paths, and the placement of barbecue grills. Even so, subsurface burial pits are likely intact. The seven remaining historical burial mounds are estimated to be between 500 and 2,000 years old and were built by the Dakota people.

"The land that this area occupies is of extreme importance to native people, and more specifically to the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community. This area contains many documented sacred burial mounds and is also part of Tinta Otonwe, the village of the Dakota leader Sakpe [pronounced *Shock-pay*], for whom the town of Shakopee is named. Members of this Dakota Community have very strong ties to this land and wish to protect and preserve the sacredness and cultural traditions connected to this area. Our Community is committed to ensuring that the sacredness and cultural significance of the area is honored," said SMSC Chairman Stanley Crooks.

The mounds were first documented and mapped by T.H. Lewis in the 1880's. During the summer of 1954 the City of Shakopee erected a U.S. veteran's memorial atop the largest burial mound in the park. The memorial consisted of an 8-ton block of granite and a flagpole in memory of veterans who died in service to the U.S. since the Civil War. After nearly half a century of working to have the memorial removed, it was not until October 1998 the memorial was finally removed at the request of the SMSC and the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council.

Members of the SMSC have worked with the Minnesota Valley Restoration Project and others at different periods to protect this important site. In 2000 the SMSC assumed management responsibility for the sacred site.

The City of Shakopee and the SMSC put up snow fences each winter to prevent snowmobilers from disrespecting the mounds by driving over them. The SMSC Land, Cultural Resources, and Public Works Departments work together with the City to preserve the integrity of the site for future generations.