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Wisconsin Point brings back Ishkode (Good Fire)

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Ishkode or "Good Fire" returned to Wisconsin Point 150 years later, on Nov. 5. The Wisconsin Point fire restoration project has been in development for about three years, with the goal of restoring traditional practices back to the Point and controlling vegetation. "Today we're here to commemorate an event at least 150 years in the making," opened Mayor of Superior Jim Paine at the burn.

In partnership with the Superior Fire Department, Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, The Nature Conservatory, and Lake Superior National Estuarine Research Reserve. The burn was on the Allouez Bay side using Wisconsin Point Road, the Bay, Bird Sanctuary access road, and a man-made fire break with two drop tanks at either end of the burn location. 25 certified firefighters were on scene from Superior, Fond du Lac, Bad River, and the Nature Conservancy brought the burn boss.

"We [Superior and Fond du Lac Fire Department] should be able to burn on a fairly regular basis. Small areas as we move through, just as habitat management as well as the cultural significance," said Chief Camron Vollbrecht, the Superior Fire Chief. "They [Fond du Lac People] burned out there, they lived out there, and they used fire to manage their backyard if you will."

Chief Vollbrecht continued by



Fond du Lac elder and fire operations specialist Vern Northrup and Superior Mayor Jim Paine holding torch made by Northrup at Wisconsin Point on Nov. 5

Photo by Alicia Zoltowski | Promethean

saying that the goal is to normalize and continue to bring Ishkode back to Wisconsin Point in segments in partnership with the parks department and foresters. Along with continuing the practice to other areas, specifically the Superior Municipal Forest.

"We were always told that if this Point did light on fire without like someone managing it like a prescribed fire. The fire would continue to go all the way around and probably burn down the city," said Valerie Ross Zhaawendaagozikwe. Zhaawendaagozikwe was a student researcher for Minnesota and Wisconsin Points and is a University of Wisconsin-Superior student.

Zhaawendaagozikwe was motivated to do this project by her passion for environmental science and her Indigenous heritage. "[About the first sample found] Oh my God, we are holding a piece of like a tree

that one of our ancestors peeled for our canoes. This is insane," Zhaawendaagozikwe hopes that it empowers students and community members to learn more about fire ecology and the benefit of Ishkode for local forests.

Mayor Paine hosted a viewing of the Ishkode at the Bunge Dock across the Allouez Bay for people to view the fire and hear from the researchers, Chief Vollbrecht, and the mayor. "To light this Point on fire and resort it to the way it has been for hundreds and hundreds of

years," said Mayor Paine, "action is what matters... that is a land acknowledgment."

Ishkode will continue to return to Wisconsin Point, and the City of Superior will continue to send updates on when those burns will occur. For more information, The Nature Conservancy and The National Park Service have information on the process, practice, and benefits of Ishkode for local forests.

For references and more information please go to the Promethean website.



Burn boss lights leaves on fire at Wisconsin Point on Nov. 5.

Photo by Alicia Zoltowski | Promethean



Superior firefighters standing in circle at Wisconsin Point on Nov. 5

Photo by Alicia Zoltowski | Promethean



Mayor Jim Payne lighting leaves on fire at Wisconsin Point on Nov. 5

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If you're interested in joining the Promethean, members meet every Tuesday & Thursday at noon in YU 159.

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Chancellor Renee Wachter giving a welcome, Nov. 10, in Swenson Hall.

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