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For Immediate Release

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Showcasing a Civic Center Community Treasure

Traverse City – A uniquely shaped, historical tree at Civic Center Park is the centerpiece of an upcoming public ceremony. Intentionally bent as a sapling over 100 years ago, the “marker tree” located at the north end of the park was used by Native Americans to mark the trail from Detroit to the Straits of Mackinac. Now, the tree will receive the acknowledgement it deserves.

“Native American marker trees are rich part of our country’s history, and our region is blessed to have more than one,” said Kristine Erickson, Director of Grand Traverse Parks and Recreation. Last year, Parks and Recreation received a grant from the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians to undertake a “placemaking” project, starring the marker tree.

“The area around the tree really needed to be cleaned up to show respect for it,” said Erickson. Grant funds were used to purchase new fencing, remove crumbling asphalt, move cement bins closer to the ball fields, plant grass, and purchase educational signage. Erickson hopes the improvements will elevate the community’s awareness of the tree’s historical significance.

To celebrate the project’s completion and the tree’s history, the public is invited to take part in a special ceremony near the large, white oak on Tuesday, October 25, at 11 a.m. Program participants include officials and members of the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians; author, artist, and marker tree expert Dennis Downes; County Commissioners; Parks and Recreation Commissioners; and county and city officials. The ceremony will feature drumming and singing by a member of the Grand Traverse Band, a blessing, and history and education imparted by Downes, president of the Great Lakes Trail Marker Tree Society.

Placemaking, Erickson explained, is “a reimagining or reinvention” of a community space through creative, collaborative efforts to strengthen the connection between people and that place. She now envisions the tree “as a place where people can meet, greet, learn, and reflect.” Parks and Recreation plans to further develop the area next year by adding benches and landscaping.

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