



BUILDING A MORE INCLUSIVE PRESERVATION COMMUNITY

A WALK IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF OUR ELDERS INVOLVING YOUTH IN PRESERVATION

Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians
Tribal Historic Preservation Office, Wisconsin



The Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians has inhabited the Lac du Flambeau area of northern Wisconsin since 1745, when they were led to the area by Chief Keeshkemun (Chief Sharpened Stone). The name Lac du Flambeau or “Lake of the Torches” was given to the band, who called their home Waswagoning, by French traders and trappers who observed the band’s practice of harvesting fish at night by torchlight. Treaties in 1837 and 1842 officially established the Lac du Flambeau reservation, which encompasses 86,500 acres and is home to abundant rivers, wetlands, and a 10-lake chain. It is one of the densest concentrations of fresh water in the world.

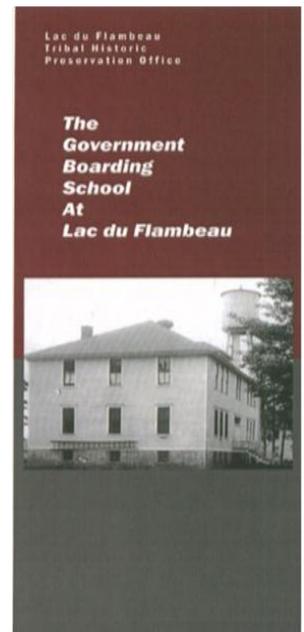
In 2008, the Lac du Flambeau Band created a long term management plan for the preservation and interpretation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Government Boarding School Complex located on its reservation. This plan is called *Legacy of Survival: A Walk in the Footsteps of our Elders*. Now listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Boarding School Complex tells the story of a part of American Indian history frequently omitted from modern history books. Opened in 1895, the boarding school was the manifestation of a government policy to rid American Indian children of Native influences by removing them from their families and forbidding them to speak their language or engage in the practice of their culture and beliefs. Many Ojibwe (Chippewa) children attended the Boarding School on the Lac du Flambeau reservation, which operated until 1932 as a BIA school.

The Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO) of the Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians received a 2009 Preserve America matching grant to carry out the *Legacy of Survival: A Walk in the Footsteps of Our Elders* plan. Despite the Boarding School Complex’s group of historic buildings and remnants of associated farming activities, nothing on the grounds fully communicated the story of the school. Implementing the plan, which included elements of promoting and enhancing heritage tourism, general education, youth and elder engagement in preservation, and the installation of exhibits and signage through the Boarding School Complex corridor located in the heart of the Lac du Flambeau reservation, was intended to coincide with the restoration of the Boys Dormitory Building (1906).



The Preserve America grant project, administered by the National Park Service, was conceived as a means to inform both members of the Lac du Flambeau Band and reservation visitors alike about the reservation’s history and create an opportunity to explore historic Lac du Flambeau.

According to Tribal Historic Preservation Officer Melinda Young, one goal was to bring people to the reservation for activities other than gaming at the Lake of the Torches Resort and Casino.



Objectives

In their grant application, The Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO) listed five primary objectives for the plan:

- Create the Dormitory Life exhibit and exhibition hall within the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Boys Dormitory Building
- Develop and install signage at seven heritage resource sites within the Boarding School Complex corridor
- Develop a driving tour brochure and complimenting CD which will depict each historic resource located within the corridor and explain their history through the eyes of tribal elders and youth
- Engage tribal youth directly in the development of interpretive, marketing, and preservation materials and instill a preservation ethic among the youth of the area
- Create a legacy of Survival Website to provide access to historic information, promote heritage tourism resources, report on project activities and success, list local community history preservation events, and showcase the youth “History Through My Eyes” poster series

The Student Experience

In September 2012, the Lac du Flambeau THPO carried out the youth component of the grant in partnership with NVision, a nonprofit “committed to providing Native youth and young adults with skills, knowledge, cultural understanding, and wellbeing that will support their development as the next generation of tribal and community leaders, educators, and artists.”

For *A Walk in the Footsteps of Our Elders*, NVision organized a six-session, two-day workshop titled “History Through My Eyes.” As part of the workshop, Native youth interviewed community members with audio and video equipment to garner multiple perspectives on Lac du Flambeau history. Sessions included writing, video production, graphic design, digital photography, webpage creation, painting, and other media. Elementary and high school students were recruited via information sent to schools and flyers posted around town. The THPO and NVision also used social media as a recruitment tool, connecting with youth via Facebook. The workshop, held in conjunction with the tribe’s annual Wild Rice Fest, expanded to include young adults. The Wild Rice Fest garners significant participation, and the large numbers of community members at the event gave program participants a chance to speak with the maximum number of people. Youth participation facilitated a new approach to interpretation, adding contemporary perceptions. It also served to further connect Native youth and young adults to the Lac du Flambeau community.



For more information visit:

Lac du Flambeau Chamber of Commerce:
<http://www.lacduflambeauchamber.com/>

Town of Lac du Flambeau Comprehensive Plan:
www.ncwrpc.org/counties/vilas/LDF_Adopted-Plan_OnWeb.pdf

A Legacy of Survival:
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/A-Legacy-of-Survival/10907238942694>

Nvision:
<http://www.nvisionit.org>

