

# Changes in Native American Interpretation at Prophetstown State Park

Historic Prophetstown is a facility located inside Prophetstown State Park. Historic Prophetstown, an independent non-profit organization, leases approximately 300 acres from the State, and interprets early 20<sup>th</sup> Century farming and the history and culture of Native Americans. Prophetstown State Park is operated by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources through the Division of State Parks and Reservoirs. Historic Prophetstown receives \$1/car from gate fees collected by the State and the park benefits from the interpretive programming provided by Historic Prophetstown, which tells the story of the land through agricultural practices over time.



Both Historic Prophetstown and the Indiana Department of Natural Resources recognize the need to constantly improve the visitor's total experience at the park. Both agree that expanding and improving Native American interpretive programs is a key element of that visitor experience.

As a result, Historic Prophetstown and the Indiana Department of Natural Resources have mutually agreed that the State will assume responsibility during 2012 for planning and developing the interpretation of tribal history and culture, as well as the ongoing stories of contemporary Native American Tribes as those themes and stories relate to Prophetstown State Park. Historic Prophetstown is very happy to see the DNR assume the role of growing and improving this aspect of the visitor experience.

The State will also assume management of the prairie portion of the acreage behind the current farmstead, and will, with Historic Prophetstown, cooperatively define approximately six acres of land outside the prairie for use in producing crops for forage and programs. This will allow the staff and board of Historic Prophetstown to concentrate their resources on development and interpretation of the farm.



**Who will plan and develop the interpretive facilities and programming related to Native People?** An interpretive master plan (IMP) for the property was developed in 2004. It is available online at <http://www.in.gov/dnr/parklake/2971.htm>. The IMP does not address interpretation of Native People since, at the time it was written, that element was handled by Historic Prophetstown. Therefore, the plan will require an update.

The process for planning will be developed by DNR staff. That process will include input from local stakeholders, tribal representation, educators and others with expertise in the field, as appropriate. The process will also include discussions with Historic Prophetstown regarding past and present interpretive efforts. We envision interpretation using a mixture of media, with the possibilities ranging from live programming by qualified Native Americans who are sharing their own stories and culture to a trail with signage that provides ongoing messages when no paid or volunteer staff is available. No specific decisions have been made at this point. We anticipate that the event "The Battle of Tippecanoe 200th Anniversary Commemoration" and the symposium "Wiping Away the Tears –The Battle of Tippecanoe in History and Memory," both held in early November 2011, will serve as a launching pad for ideas and discussion. We are also evaluating the possibility of establishing a full-time interpretive naturalist position at the park, which would provide an on-site coordinator for research, community and stakeholder interaction,

programs and implementation of all agreed-upon interpretive elements. The availability of funding and a vacant position are guiding factors in this evaluation.

**Is there a timeline?** The changes in management will officially take place at the beginning of 2012. We anticipate that we will be offering programming during the 2012 recreation season. Development of a timeline for other interpretive elements will be a part of the planning process.

**How will this affect current Native American programming offered by Historic Prophetstown?** Programming will continue as scheduled through the remainder of 2011. We anticipate continuing the relationship with those currently providing programs as funding allows and inviting their comments and ideas as we plan for additional interpretation.



**How will this affect the Native American Village in the prairie behind the farm?** The structures will remain as we evaluate the best property-wide approach for interpreting the history, culture and current status of Native people. New locations may be considered in the planning process.

**Will this affect gate fees or funding that goes to Historic Prophetstown?** Gate fees will remain the same for now and Historic Prophetstown will continue to receive a portion of those gate fees. Fees will be evaluated whenever DNR gate fees are considered for change in the future.



**Will the management or look of the prairie change?** The staff at Prophetstown State Park is already involved in the management of the prairie within the 300 acres leased to Historic Prophetstown. We will continue to manage the prairie with fire and will maintain the existing trail as we look at the best options for interpreting the history, culture and current status of Native Americans. We will also continue to restore prairie communities throughout the park as appropriate. Signage naming the prairie in honor of the Kampen family will remain onsite at Historic Prophetstown.

**Will Historic Prophetstown still have access to the prairie for school programs and other events?** Yes, school programs conducted by Historic Prophetstown will continue as planned.

**How can I share my thoughts and ideas regarding this change?** We encourage you to share your ideas about interpretation of the history, culture and current status of Native Americans by sending an email to [PtownNativeAmericanInterp@dnr.IN.gov](mailto:PtownNativeAmericanInterp@dnr.IN.gov). You may also stop in at the Prophetstown State Park Office and complete a comment card.

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