

New Mural, Peace Tree Unveiled at Pulaski Playfield

Effort designed to encourage social unity, environmental consciousness and youth empowerment.
By Jeramey Jannene - Oct 11th, 2021 05:45 pm

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Students from Tamarack Waldorf School distribute mulch around a peace tree at Pulaski Playfield. Photo by Jeramey Jannene.

A unique partnership of Menominee Tribal Enterprises, Milwaukee School of Engineering and Milwaukee Public Schools has brought new life to Pulaski Playfield on Milwaukee's Lower East Side.

All involved in the effort, including students from the nearby Cass Street School and Tamarack Waldorf School, gathered to celebrate Friday afternoon. Elders from the Menominee Tribe and Oneida Nation blessed and prayed on a 10-foot-tall white pine "peace tree" relocated from the tribe's northern Wisconsin reservation. A new mural covering the playfield's fieldhouse was also unveiled.

The effort is designed to promote social unity, environmental consciousness and youth empowerment.

"The white pine is linked to one of the most universal spiritual symbols in the world, the symbol of unity, together. Changing and growing as a nation is what we want out of this,"

said MTE representative **Nels Huse**. “We have to start someplace and we thought this was a good place to start.”

The project is a culmination of a year-long effort by MSOE Scholars program students and tribe members. Other MSOE student teams partnered with the tribe on a forest-management-themed, educational video game and another coordinated a coloring contest. The partnership was started during the prior school year, but the park unveiling was delayed because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Artist **Rozalia Singh** painted the mural, “Growing Power,” which showcases symbols of peace and unity, mixed with bright colors. The playfield, **1840 N. Pulaski St.**, is owned and maintained by MPS’ **Milwaukee Recreation** department.

“It takes a village to raise and educate a child. This is a pouring out of the village,” said MPS Superintendent **Keith P. Posley**. He said he was proud that Singh was an MPS graduate. The students and tribal representatives were joined at the ceremony by Lieutenant Governor **Mandela Barnes**, MSOE president **John Y. Walz** and **Milwaukee Bucks** vice president of corporate social responsibility **Arvind Gopalratnam**. The Bucks’ G League affiliate, the **Wisconsin Herd**, plays on a court in Oshkosh blessed and prayed on by the Menominee.

“When many of us continue to feel dismayed about how divided we sometimes may feel, I think we can look to symbols like the peace tree to be a guiding light for all of us to a better tomorrow,” Barnes said.

As part of the broader effort, a tree that first grew in 1831, damaged by lightning, is being donated to the Field Museum in Chicago. Huse said it was symbolically important, given that both the Peshtigo Fire and Chicago Fire occurred 150 years ago to the day, Oct. 8, 1871. Other peace trees are being planted in Keshena, Kenosha and Appleton.





At Pulaski Playfield peace tree unveiling. Photo taken Oct. 8, 2021 by Jeramey Jannene. All Rights Reserved.