



Native Land Acknowledgment, Mural and Plaque Update

**June 15, 2026
School Board Meeting**

Presented By

Aubrey McMahan

Clara Rebhan



Background

2020-2026 Equity & History: Through the Equity Advisory Committee (EAC), discussions highlighted a need to expand land acknowledgement efforts and address the lack of collective awareness regarding the history behind the Two Rivers name change.

<2025: Foundation & Inspiration: This project was informed by the Mendota Elementary land acknowledgement, which served as the first building-specific model considered during the development process.

2025-2026: Alignment with the Strategic Framework: As a target of the 2025-2026 Goal Area 3 Strategic Framework Implementation, the Native Student Curriculum Advocates (NSCA) group was established in December 2025, co-chaired by Aubrey McMahan and Clara Rebhan.

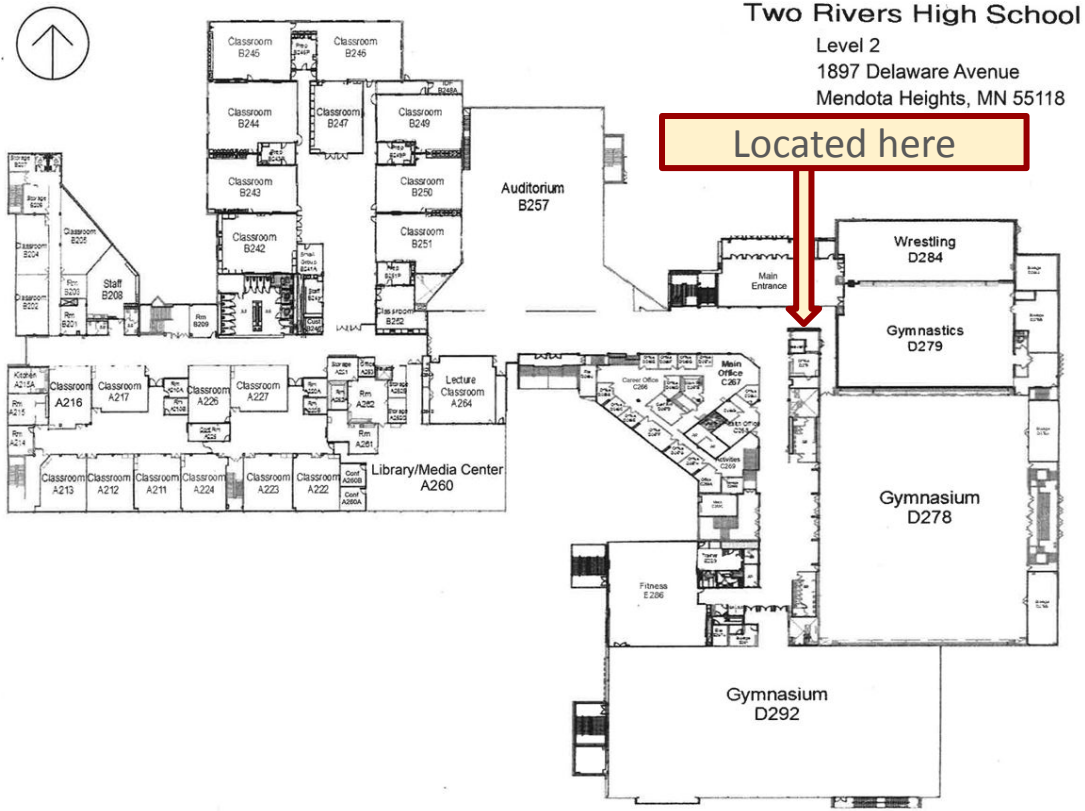
2025-2026: Educational Context: Participation in Ojibwe I and II courses underscored the importance of integrating native language, history, and culture, driving the effort to create an even further inclusive environment at TRHS.

Spring, 2026: Collaborative Development: Development of the land acknowledgement wording, mural, and plaque involved inclusive engagement from the TRHS Social Studies department, the Native Student Group (which meets Tuesdays to foster community), the American Indian Parent Advisory Committee (AIPAC), American Indian Cultural Liaison Nell Barri, Sara Blair, and Dr. Jess Cabak.

Spring, 2026: Funding: The American Indian (AI) funds, in support of our AIPAC, will be utilized to support the materials and creation of the mural, the land acknowledgement, and the accompanying plaque.



Mural





Mural

School District 197 is located on the traditional and contemporary lands of the Dakota people. On this land, we honor those who came before us and the people here today. Our district is committed to empowering Native American students and families as we learn, create, and grow together.



School District 197

WEST ST. PAUL-MENDOTA HEIGHTS-EAGAN



Land Acknowledgement

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Plaque

TWO RIVERS HIGH SCHOOL: OUR JOURNEY OF RENEWAL

From its founding in 1954, our school was known as Henry Sibley High School, after Minnesota's first governor. For nearly 70 years, it has been a cornerstone of the community. A thoughtful re-examination of our history led to a powerful conversation about how our school's identity aligns with our community values. Historical reflection revealed Henry Sibley's cruel actions during the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862; actions which resulted in the largest mass execution in U.S. history—the hanging of 38 Dakota men, plus two additional leaders. His legacy does not reflect the good character and significant contributions that our community demands of individuals we honor. In December 2020, the school board voted unanimously for a change.

This process was an opportunity for rebirth and unity. We embrace the name TWO RIVERS, inspired by our proximity to the historic confluence, or 'Bdote,' where the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers meet. The image of two rivers merging symbolizes our unity, the coming together of our past and future, and a commitment to moving forward with respect and understanding.

This plaque, dedicated in 2026, is a symbol of our commitment to education as well as our pride in learning, evolving, and gracefully moving with the current of time. We remain the 'Warriors' of Two Rivers High School, united by this place and its rich, complex, and empowered narrative.



Potential Future Projects

- Establish a native medicine garden on TRHS Campus
- Connect with Ms. LaPointe and Great River Greening (TRHS prairie restoration efforts)
- Explore how to open TRHS campus to native community for community gardening
- Explore how to potentially use the TVs in hallways for additional immersion
- Repeal federal legislation making it illegal for Dakota people to live in Minnesota

Minnesota Session Laws - 2009 Regular Session

Key: (1) ~~language to be deleted~~ (2) new language

CHAPTER 171--S.F.No. 1623

A resolution memorializing the President and Congress to repeal the federal legislation of 1863 ordering the removal of Dakota people from Minnesota.

WHEREAS, in the aftermath of the events of 1862 - the delay of United States treaty payments to the Dakota, the refusal of white traders to sell to them, the resulting starvation on the reservation, and the ensuing Dakota Conflict - white sentiment against Indian people was at its height, and many were pressing for the execution of 303 Dakota and mixed-blood men; and

WHEREAS, fearing that there would be further violence if he did not act, and to appease public feeling, Abraham Lincoln cooperated with the efforts of Congress to remove Indian people unilaterally, without even the semblance of agreement by treaty, by signing "An Act for the Removal of the Sisseton, Wahpaton, Medawakanton, and Wahpakoota Bands of Sioux or Dakota Indians, and for the Disposition of their Lands in Minnesota and Dakota," an action which ultimately ignited the Plains Indian Wars and brought 30 more years of conflict; and

WHEREAS, the act remains in federal law to this day, despite the fact that its terms are obsolete and its presence is a continuing offense; NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED by the Legislature of the State of Minnesota that it urges the Congress of the United States to repeal United States Statutes at Large, volume 12, page 819, chapter 119, and pages 803-804, chapter 103.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of State of the State of Minnesota is directed to prepare copies of this memorial and transmit them to the President of the United States, the President and the Secretary of the United States Senate, the Speaker and the Clerk of the United States House of Representatives, and Minnesota's Senators and Representatives in Congress.

Presented to the governor May 20, 2009

Signed by the governor May 21, 2009, 4:57 p.m.

