

Rat Portage

Recreational  
Urban Trail

Tour Guide

## RAT PORTAGE URBAN RECREATIONAL TRAIL HISTORICAL WALKING TOUR

### Rat Portage Urban Trail



This trail meanders along flat and gently rolling, paved city streets with sidewalks of wood, interlocking brick or concrete, with a portion of it a natural recreational walk along a creek.

The Trail Gateway Sign and entrance is at McLeod Park (Lakeview Drive), then along the Greenbelt to the Harbourfront, past Float Planes and Museum, along 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue, past the Blue Heron and Lakeside Inn, along Seventh St. S. to Fourth Avenue South, along Old Chalet Lane to Anicinabe Park. Then along Miihana Way to Highway 17 West (west) to River Street and then west to the natural trail along Laurenson's Creek, heading back to 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue and the downtown area.

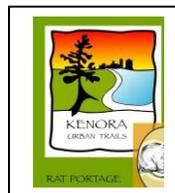
DISTANCE: 6 – 8 km

TERRAIN – Easy to Moderate

SEASONS – All seasons

USES – Hiking/Walking

WEB – [www.kenora.ca](http://www.kenora.ca)



### McLeod Park



McLeod Park was first owned by two Americans – Powers & Linn.

In 1889 the Canadian Milling and Reduction Company of Rat Portage purchased the land. The plant was completed in the fall of 1891 and renamed Dominion Gold Mining & Reduction Works. This plant had the capacity to treat 190 tonnes of gold and silver ores per day in 24 hours. Average value was \$80.00 per tonne. For an example, Sultana Mine brought in 75 tonnes per day. The plant closed in 1892 and was foreclosed in 1893 and then was destroyed by fire in 1906 and was valued of \$40-50,000.

John Short purchased the property and built Shorts Tie Mill (they made ties for the railway). This burnt down in 1914. In 1921 John Short sold to the Keewatin Lumber Company.

In 1925, the property sold to the Kenora Paper Mills and then in 1944 to Ontario-Minnesota Pulp & Paper Mill. In 1959 some parts of the property were expropriated by the Ministry of Highways. In 1989 Boise Cascade transferred the park to the Town of Kenora.

The Park itself was named in honour of Dan McLeod – one time owner of the Rat Portage Lumber Company and later General Manager of Backus-Brooks Pulp & Paper Co. in Kenora.

### Husky the Muskie



In 1967, the Chamber of Commerce took on a Centennial Project – to build a big fish in McLeod Park. Jules Horvath and Bob Selway from Deluxe Signs designed and built the fish. The Muskie is 40 feet tall, weighs in at 2.5 tonnes, has a 12” Steel I-beam, 3500 bolts, 700 lbs. of resin, 36 sheets of plywood and 50 feet of fiberglass. It took 1,000 man hours to build. Bill Brabrooke had the winning slogan – “Husky the Muskie says prevent water pollution”. In 1995, \$20,000 worth of repairs to the fish were completed by Ross Kehl of Puma-flex Systems. This fish symbolizes our attachment to Lake of the Woods, promotes that we are stewards of the lake and that we nurture our pristine environment and that we love our lake.

## Greenbelt/Harbourfront



The Harbourfront greenbelt was a shoreline restoration project which cleaned up our shoreline and extended it to include this trail system. The Harbourfront area has seen two extensive projects to enhance the beauty of the shoreline area and to make it more inviting to our guests and residents alike. Former Mayor Kelvin Winkler who was Mayor of the Town of Kenora for 19 years, was instrumental in acquiring the 3.2 million dollars for the first rejuvenation project on the Harbourfront. It opened on July 1, 1987. The second major renovation project of the harbourfront took place in 2011, under former Mayor Len Compton. This area has transformed into a vibrant and active destination for all to enjoy.

## Lake of the Woods



Lake of the Woods has 65,000 miles of shoreline and 14,522 islands. Kenora is the main access point to this wonderful lake of ours. And just to the north of Kenora is the Winnipeg River. The Anishinaabe peoples believe the lake represents a drum and the communities surround the drum. They believe the entrance to the Winnipeg River is a Spiritual doorway and consider the river a very sacred place. The lake and river have always been a source of life and livelihood for the First Nations people. Their reverence for the lake and river is also felt by all nationalities that live on or near the lake and river and we all have become its stewards.

## Whitecap Tent & Thistle Pavilion



The Thistle Pavilion was part of the first restoration of the waterfront. It is used as a Tourist Information Centre in the summer months. The Whitecap Tent was part of a revitalization project in 2011. It stands 50 feet tall, length of 250 feet, width of 128 feet and has a capacity of 3,426 (non-alcoholic standing room event). The cost of the tent was 1.6 Million dollars. Events like July 1<sup>st</sup>, Sports Shows, Harbourfest and concerts are held in this tent. It is available for rent for weddings, socials or other special events. The Whitecap suits the overall brand of the City of Kenora. It symbolizes the big waves which can be found on the Lake of the Woods and is a source of activity and continuing progression into the future.

## Float Planes



The first float planes showed up on the lake in the 1920's and were called Air Boats. For the first 30 or 40 years the planes were used on supply runs, and for trapping, hunting and some fishing. In the 1970's Barney Lamb started the lucrative business of fly-in fishing resorts from this site. Walsten Air took over and the out-post camps were up-dated with all the modern amenities. River Air now flies from this site and has added flight tours of the Lake of the Woods. It is a site to behold to see all 14, 522 islands from the seat of a float plane.

## Lake of the Woods Museum



This award-winning Museum is one of the smallest and finest in Canada. The Museum was established in 1964 in the old Land Titles Building next to the current Museum. In 1986, the Museum moved to its current location. The Museum seeks to promote understanding of and respect for the cultures and heritage of the Lake of the Woods area. In 2014, the Museum celebrated 50 Years of Collecting. The Museum holds in excess of 25,000 articles, including First Nations, fur trade, natural history specimens, minerals, textiles, industrial and business items, with rotating exhibits in the main hall. The newest addition is an audio-visual tour on an I-Pad. It describes each exhibit and what you are looking at. It includes video clips, archival photos and stories by community members. This Museum is a one-of-a-kind, architecturally outstanding and a fascinating place to visit.

## Blue Heron (Old Fish Market)



Carl Lindstrom immigrated to Canada in 1912 and worked at the Kenora Fish Market on this location. At that time it was owned by a Gustafson, but Carl bought it outright in 1931. He shipped fish (pickerel, jackfish, whitefish, trout and sturgeon (caviar) to Toronto, Montreal, Fort Erie, Buffalo, Chicago, Boston & New York. Carl bought the fish from the commercial fishermen and from the bush pilots who brought in fish from the northern lakes. Each day 8 to 10 fishing boats stopped to unload hundreds and hundreds of boxes of fish. Pickerel was considered a delicacy and people always asked only for Lake of the Woods pickerel. Carl was forced out of the wholesale business in 1971 due to new Government regulations. The Johansen's purchased the building in 1975 and turned the Fish Market into the Blue Heron with a gift shop and ice cream parlour. The closeness to downtown and being on the lake made it a perfect location. Jim Johansen broke all the rules of retail and jam packed the Blue Heron with all kinds of antiques, trinkets, Xmas decorations and unique items. He ran the store for over 26 years, and it continues to be a "unique to Kenora" retail outlet.

## Lakeside Inn & Conference Centre



This hotel was constructed in 1968 by the Druxerman Family (Alvin, Bruce & Peter) and at that time was called the Holiday Inn. It has 95 rooms and a swimming pool. The architects were Krauss and Associates. They had the grand opening on Nov. 20, 1969. It was and is the tallest building in Kenora. In the 70's the current ball room was a disco with a dance floor which lit up and was called "Northern Lights". In 1995, Al Tucker took over as General Manager and it became the Inn of the Woods. A marina was attached with 145 docking slips. It is now called Best Western Lakeside Inn & Conference Centre, boasts 94 hotel rooms, 26 business suites and heated pool and sauna. Their slogan - "The only thing we overlook, is the lake".

## Kenora Recreation Centre



The Kenora Recreation Centre was built in 1967, Canada's Centennial Year. Many improvements over the years have resulted in a world class complex. The Recreation Centre boasts an arena, a 200 metre walking track, 3 pools (Leisure, Lane & Youth), a fitness centre, a sports injury clinic and a Senior's Centre. Outside you will find two ball fields, tennis courts, a beach volleyball court, a basketball court and a skate park. You will find a boat ramp and docking with two outdoor washroom facilities. During the summer months daily overnight parking is offered for a fee. The Rat Portage Urban Recreational Trail follows along the creek behind the Recreation Centre. The Recreation Centre is found directly across the street from the Lakeside Inn and across from a grocery store (which can be also accessed by boat) and both are within walking distance of downtown.

## Anicinabe Park



The Department of Indian Affairs purchased 14 acres of land in 1929 from Hattie Cameron, so that the First Nations people could camp and have an area where they could stay to visit their children who were attending C. J. (Cecelia Jeffrey) Residential School. This is that site. It was then purchased by the Town of Kenora in 1959 from the Dept. of Indian Affairs and in 1994 a portion of this was leased to the Kenora Golf & Country Club.

In 1974, there was an armed occupation of Anicinabe Park. The first armed occupation of any land in Canada. A First Nation's conference at the park turned into the armed take over with 64 armed men and over 150 men, women and children. It was done to bring focus to the plight of the First Nation's people who were suffering due to loss of culture from the residential schooling. The issues included racism, lack of employment opportunities, slum living conditions, alcoholism, drug addiction, broken homes and the right to govern themselves. A resolution was signed at Town Island with all 9 demands being met. The First Nation's people formed an agreement with the Mayor at that time, Jim Davidson. There was a peaceful resolution during a very volatile time with an undeclared war between the First Nation's people and the Canadian Government. Anicinabe Park was used as a symbolic gesture and symbol of First Nation Discontent. It ended peacefully with hope for a better future for the First Nation's Peoples. The occupation led to the NeeChee Friendship Centre being built, street patrol to help look after First Nation's people and less punishment and more treatment for alcohol and drug abuse.

Speed forward to 1991, another major re-development of the park at a cost of \$400,000. The project included the up-grading of the camping area, one entrance, the construction of the reception/office building, gazebo built at beach area and a new boat ramp and parking area was created. In 2012, a beautiful new campsite washroom was added.

Anicinabe Park is located in Green's Bay and loosely translated in Ojibway means "the people", therefore Anicinabe Park is the People's Park. This park has always been a gathering place beginning with the First Nations people. To get to this park you travel down Miikana Way, which translated means "road to water". Anicinabe Park has consistently been a stopping place, a gathering place and the tradition continues today with the Park being a public area and camp ground. The park now boasts 34 tent sites and 49 R.V. sites, with awesome views of Lake of the Woods. The City maintains ownership of the park and hires a Contractor to operate and maintain the park. Scott Green of Green Adventures is the current Contractor until 2018.

## Laurenson's Creek



In 1890, the Western Lumber Company was located on Laurenson's Creek and was operated on steam power. Log booms were brought in by company steam boats from all over the lake. The Western Lumber Company consisted of a sawmill, box factory and sash & door company. In 1906, five sawmills combined to form the Rat Portage Lumber Company.

Laurenson's Creek is named after Robert Laurenson from Shetland, Scotland who opened his own trade/goods store in Rat Portage in 1877. He had a good working relationship with the First Nation's people of Rat Portage and worked for the Hudson's Bay Company. He started out as a labourer in 1864 for the Hudson's Bay Company, was also Post Master for Rat Portage from 1874 - 1877 and became Manager of HBC in 1874 for the North West Angle.