

Mayoral Address for Riverwalk Expansion Unveiling October 1, 2016.

The great people of the Ho Chunk nation know the story of the great creator, Ma'una. He whose tears of loneliness dropped down from space and time to create the river and the seas of earth. He who created the lands, the grasses, the stones to quiet the earth. He who created the four directions and the four winds to steady the earth. And finally, using a piece of clay created a being in his likeness and breathed his breath into it to create life.

It is on this path that we hope many generations get to experience the divine work of Ma'una. To see his tears flowing beneath them in the waters known as the Upper Dells, to feel his trees and grasses and rocks working in orchestration to support them, to be guided by his winds to direct them to peace, and have new life breathed into them by the spiritual presence that surrounds them.

This is not a construction project. This is not just a walkway. This is an awakening. Today is an awakening of our past. An awakening in which we embrace our future by calling upon the nature, the people, our history, and the spiritual wonder for which our great City was once known for and has been lost for some time now.

This River Walk must symbolize something greater to this community. This River Walk must bridge the gap of tourism, culture, and history so that we too can work in orchestration to complete the feat set out before us, which is to make our downtown something special for not only our visitors, but for those of us who call this home.

We have but one chance to get this right, but we have over 159 years of settlement full of characters, stories, and visionaries to help us, and natural beauty created over 18,000 years ago to inspire us. If we truly want a better future for our city, then we must rely upon our past to guide us. May we too be guided by the winds, be supported by the steadiness of our rock formations, be calmed by the stained tears of our waters, and have new life breathed into our endeavor.