

March 2011

Poet-tree Workshops a success and the Kilmer Fireplace restoration begins

Update by: Deb Robinson, Como Woodland Advisory Committee volunteer

In the Fall of 2010, the weather was picture perfect for the Como Woodland tours leading up to the Poet-tree Workshops. Taking the students outdoors to learn about local history and natural history through poetry helped the kids contextualize and retain the information that was provided. And, of course, the kids enjoyed the fresh air and exercise as well.

During their walk to the Como Woodland Outdoor Classroom site, the students were in high spirits - excited to be outside. The walking tours were designed to acquaint the 139 fifth and sixth grade students with Como Woodland, Kilmer Memorial Fireplace, and the many benefits of trees.

Chelsea Heights Elementary fifth graders toured Como Woodland on September 13, 2010 and their Poet-tree Workshops took place the following day in their classrooms. Participating Chelsea Heights Elementary teachers were Lynn Bartol and Josh Malloy. Como Park Elementary sixth graders toured the Como Woodland on Oct. 15 and their Poet-tree Workshops took place three days later. Participating Como Park Elementary teachers were Kelly Dudeck, Michael Binns, and Ra Kour.

Tour guides were volunteer Como Woodland Advisors, Sharon Shinomiya (who also coordinated the workshops) and Deb Robinson, and Parks & Rec Educational Coordinator, Kelley Dinsmore. The Poet-tree Workshop guide was professional poet and educator, John Minczeski.

The walking tours of the Como Woodland prepared students for the Poet-tree Workshops. John led five workshops (one for each participating class of the two schools) in which each class wrote a group poem. Students also wrote individual poems.

The group poems will be included in the Kilmer Fireplace Rededication booklet, which will be printed in time for the Kilmer Fireplace Rededication. Como Woodland Advisors, Sharon and Deb will write and layout the booklet, while the Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Department Director's office will assist in printing the booklet.

Up until late November of 2010, restoration of the Kilmer Fireplace had still not begun. And the possibility of having the Kilmer Fireplace ready for the scheduled May 19, 2011 rededication date looked unlikely. However, as winter approached, scaffolding was erected around the fireplace and the historical restoration masons of A & M Construction began work.

The masons enclosed the entire fireplace and scaffolding in plastic. Using portable heaters inside this plastic cocoon the masons will be able to work on the fireplace over the winter months – as long as it isn't too cold. At long last, the Como Woodland Advisors felt more confident about going forward with their plans for a Kilmer Rededication Event in Spring 2011 – 75 years after the fireplace's original dedication.

On Rededication day, City Forestry Department staff hopes to take part in a tree planting with the students who participated in the Poet-tree Workshops and with the Como Park Sr. High School AP students who will be working on their field studies at Como Woodland on May 19.

The Como Woodland Advisors wish to thank the Poet-tree Fund's generous donors and volunteers, District 10 Community Council, and the participating schools for making the Poet-tree Workshops a success. And also many thanks to the Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Department, and the Minnesota State Legacy/Heritage Fund for making the Kilmer Fireplace restoration possible.