

First Nations Bent Tree Markers

The use of bent trees by First Nations, as trail and site markers, is an important and little-known element of our local history. The bent trees were used to designate trails and, in some cases, to indicate direction to important locations, such as freshwater springs, and medicinal, ceremonial and burial sites.

Two websites listed below provide an excellent description of the system, and an indication of how widely they were used across North America. The Great Lakes Trail Marker Tree Society website, based out of Illinois, also documents the location of many of these markers.

Closer to home, the 'Ottawa Rewind' website mentions, and provides a photo of, a candidate bent tree found near Davis Lock, apparently pointing to Opinicon Lake. Ron Shaw, historian and contributor to our website, notes that a bent tree is said to have been located on the fence line along the Carleton Place to Almonte road (not confirmed as a First Nations marker).

To this writer's knowledge, none are listed in the townships in the immediate Perth area. Suggestions would be welcome.

The Great Lakes Trail Marker Tree Society Website:
www.greatlakestrailtreesociety.org/trail_tree_faqs.html

Ottawa Rewind Website:
<https://ottawarewind.com/2016/08/07/strange-things-old-native-trails-once-marked-by-bent-trees/>

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