

A RESOLUTION HONORING THE LIFE OF DENNIS DOWNES

WHEREAS, The City of Chicago mourns the loss of our cherished community member, Dennis Downes, who passed away on February 25th, 2024 at his home in Antioch at the age of 72; and

WHEREAS, The City of Chicago has been notified of Dennis' passing by the Honorable Alderman Brian Hopkins of the 2nd Ward; and

WHEREAS, Born on May 16, 1951 in Chicago to parents Mary Berriochoa and Mathew Downes, Dennis' passion for art and history took root in his formative years in Northbrook and visiting his mother's people at a young age, the Basque Berriochoa Clan living in Idaho and Montana Rocky Mountains; and

WHEREAS, Dennis' research on Native American trail marker trees culminated in the publication of his incredible book *Native American Trail Marker Trees: Marking Paths Through the Wilderness* and numerous pieces of his masterful artwork inspired by natural and ancient sites, and his profound contributions to the preservation of Native American history have been nationally and tribally recognized; and

WHEREAS, As an award winning artist, author, sculptor and explorer with entries in over 150 public and private shows, several of Dennis' sculptures and paintings are on permanent display across the country, including the "Captain George Wellington Street" statute near Navy Pier and at the Art Institute of Chicago where three of his pieces were on display at the "Fiber in Art Museums" Exhibit in 1999; and

WHEREAS, Dennis was also a leader in organizations such as the Great Lakes Trail Marker Tree Society and was dedicated to sharing his knowledge and passion with others through lectures, presentations, and community outreach efforts; and

WHEREAS, Dennis' commitment to preserving Native American culture was exemplified by his involvement in the installation of a 6-foot-tall bronze sculpture of a trail marker tree in Antioch's downtown area, as well as his contributions to The Grove in Glenview, where his 16-foot-tall steel-and-resin sculpture of a trail marker tree remains on permanent display; and

WHEREAS, As a symbol of their gratitude for Dennis' contributions to preserving their cultural heritage, an Ojibwe elder bestowed upon him the name "Mayaagaabaw," meaning "he stands foremost among others" as he was foremost in preserving this history and passing it on to the next generations to keep alive; and

WHEREAS, As Dennis would say, "Don't be afraid of doing something, be afraid of never doing anything"; and

WHEREAS, Dennis leaves to cherish their memories of him: his wife, Gail Spreen-Downes; sister Maryann and brothers Louis, Harrold, and Patrick; cousins; nieces; nephews; and great-nieces and great-nephews; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, That the City of Chicago honors the memory of Dennis Downes and extends its deepest condolences to his family, friends, and all those whose lives he touched; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be presented to the family of Dennis Downes as a token of our community's gratitude for his extraordinary life.

Brian Hopkins

BRIAN HOPKINS
Alderman, 2ND Ward