

## HISTORY

# Residents take good care of bent-tree trail marker

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TRAVERSE CITY — There are plenty of trees in northern Michigan, but the white oak in Don and Sally Dunlop's Washington Street front yard is plenty special.

The tree is fat and old, perhaps 150 years old, with thick bark and grooves swirling like snow flurries in a December wind.

What makes the Dunlops' tree so special is its deep, y-like branch and hanging knot that rises from its gnarled base. The



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Sally Dunlop, left, Bo Burke, center, and Don Dunlop, right, stand in front of a historic marking tree on Washington Avenue.

y-bend and knot mark it as a “bent” tree — a hardwood that was deliberately manipulated by Native Americans two centuries ago, when it was young, so it would stand out and mark a path through the woods.

“At first we thought it was a novelty, but we now know it’s an asset,” said Don Dunlop.

Caring for the tree is “a responsibility that weighs on us heavily” given the tree’s in-

credible history, Sally Dunlop said. She relies on Bo Burke, a consulting arborist, to regularly baby the ancient giant through prunings and biannual doses of nutrients.

“We feel like we should take care of it,” she said.

John Bailey is a member of the Grand River Band of Odawa people and hails from the Black

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