



The word “deliberate” comes to mind if you spend any time at all around Munising, Michigan. These are a deliberate people, and they have a deliberate way about them. I suppose it may have a lot to do with the pace of the seasons. There are many months of the year where it just doesn’t pay to act in haste. No matter what your plan may be, you just are not going to get your boat out of the harbor between November and March, so why fret about it? Funny thing is, this enforced deliberation, this mandated consideration, does not fade with the coming of leaves and greenery. No, once the seasonal clock completes its 180, the same slow measured pace pervades the atmosphere around Munising.

It manifests in various ways. You are walking down the streets, let’s say, and you happen across your typical Munisingian, and you engage in polite conversation; “Nasty storm brewing off shore today, hope it passes us by.” “Yah, yah well it might...” and there it is, that deliberation, that pregnant pause. The native may well keep engaged, keep his eye locked on yours. His mind is working, the wheels turning. He considers and discards first one and then another conversational parry. With each consideration you can sense a change in the set of his jaw, the tilt of his head. In his silent mind he is trying each on for size, trying to find the best match for the particular layout of the chess pieces on the great board of life. Finally, he shrugs and says nothing. He has deliberated himself into a stalemate, and simply doesn’t wish to share that with you. In his own mind, he has played the game to the end. He just assumes that you were there with him. It doesn’t matter that you weren’t. That’s your problem.

Of course an extra complication arises when two Munisingians meet. One must be direct before the other may hide behind deliberation. This invariably leads to either an awkward silence or a sort of agreed upon Detente. In the former the two just stand, facing each other, in a ritualized challenge pose. One may shift his feet, or rut slowly with one foot against the exposed cobble stone of the uneven pavement. The other will typically match this, pose for pose. This may go on for some time, until some external factor interrupts the match and allows a graceful exit for one or both actors. The latter is itself a ritualization of

ancient Chippewa arts. In this mode, signaled by a subtle head bob, first to the right and then to the left, the two take turns scraping a foot in a long arc in front of them. First one, then the other. There is no overt aggression. After a minimum of two passes, one will announce that his wife, mother, daughter or aunt is waiting for him and, turning on his left heel, stroll away towards the north. Any perturbation signals a surrender, and is reported in the local shopping circular.