

MASINAIGAN SUPPLEMENT

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The Heart of the Matter Mole Lake & Mining



A tribe at risk: The Sokaogon Chippewa, the Mole Lake band has endured many battles for survival over the centuries. However, today the threat posed by the potential large scale copper/zinc mine adjacent to Mole Lake reservation in northern Wisconsin has created a new fear among the band's people for the life the band's children will inherit and for the well-being of the Earth and the water. This supplement of the MASINAIGAN portrays something of the Mole Lake band—their history, beliefs, their community, their struggle and their fear. For them the land and water are inextricably tied to their culture and the survival of the people.

Cover photo: Dance drum and roach constructed by Mole Lake tribal members Joe Ackley and Emanuel Poler.

The heart of the matter

A history of struggle

Crandon, Wis.—“Sokaogon-ing seebe” means lake with posts in it in the Ojibwe or Anishnaabe language. It describes the people living near the contemporary Post Lake in Langlade County, Wisconsin, according to Mole Lake elder Earl Smith. Petrified tree stumps rise out of the water in that lake and one of the band’s early war chiefs is buried there.

Today, this band of Anishnaabe people are located around Rice Lake, but in the early days the band members lived all around the area, Smith states, by Pelican Lake, Rolling Stone, and Mole Lake.

This is the area they used to gather rice each fall, to hunt, to fish and gather. However, the land and its resources have been hard won. In 1806 the Ojibwe and the Sioux fought a bloody battle for the area with many lives lost at the time from both sides.

This is partly why the entire area is considered sacred, according to Fred Ackley, Mole Lake tribal judge. The bodies of warriors, Ojibwe and Sioux, were left where they lay and the area became a massive burial ground to be treated with respect due to those who fought and died there.

The Sokaogon people did not win their land easily, nor through one battle. Life was lived on the alert for the Sioux warring parties that could descend on the villages.

Spirit Hill, adjacent to the reservation and recently sold by a non-Indian owner to Exxon Inc., also contains bodies of the Anishnaabe ancestors. Battles were fought there and caves buried within the hillside were used to hide women and children in times of battle. Some were found and slaughtered where they hid, says Tim Randall, Mole Lake member who is working on a history for the band.

Many of these things are not written, but have been passed on from generation to generation by the tribe’s oral historians. These are the stories which comprise the history of the band as was the tradition of the Anishnaabe people, Randall explains.

During treaty times the Sokaogon band, now known as the Mole Lake Band, became “homeless.” The 1854 Treaty that provided reservations for other Anishnaabe bands did not provide a homeland for the Mole Lake people.

This has been a source of great controversy over the years. The Mole Lake people know that land, totaling about 12 square miles, was supposed to have been provided to the Sokaogon band. Chief Big Martin had made sure that the people’s homeland was secure, but the documents could not be found.

Smith speculates that the documents were lost in crossing Lake Michigan, and he has been told that other documents relating to their reservation were kept in a deerskin container and stolen at the Peshtigo Trading Post in those early years.

“When we made treaties,” he said, “we expected trust. A handshake would be binding and the Indian respected the integrity of the individual because that was his way,” Earl stated. However, that way was not the way of white man.

The lack of reservation status did not deter the Mole Lake people from staying in their homeland. They lived all around the area regardless of a reservation or not, Smith states.

The band, under the leadership of late Chief Willard Ackley pursued the acquisition of a reservation. In 1934, Smith relates, the band was declared a homeless people, so were allotted 1,800 square acres around Rice Lake, a lake known for its abundance of quality wild rice.

In 1937 the reservation status was finally ratified, he says, after a long struggle. A constitution was written and the band became federally recognized.

The people still know that a larger reservation was promised them by the U.S. government, and they have not given up the struggle to secure what rightfully belongs to them and their children.

Life was poor on the reservation, and the band’s people suffered. In the 1930’s and 1940’s people depended on the sale of crafts and things they had made for survival.

Credits

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“My grandfather went there (Spirit Hill) every day to sing his song to open up the day... They (my grandfather and grandmother) are still there and I go there to,” states Fran Van Zile, Mole Lake tribal member. Now owned by the mining company, Spirit Hill is still considered sacred by the Mole Lake people. It is the burial grounds for many of the band’s ancestors and people, like Tim Randall above, who still visit the Hill for ceremonies and spiritual purposes.

Tarpaper shacks without electricity or running water comprised the housing. In fact, the first flush toilet was a sensation on the reservation just about 30 years ago.

Children were sent off to Indian schools and were separated from families, and many moved away, like Smith, during the relocation era. They were encouraged to move to cities looking for an existence within the non-Indian world in hopes that they would be assimilated. But they kept the ties to the reservation, Smith related, journeying back for ricing seasons and to visit family still there.

Many, like Smith and Judge Ackley, have returned permanently. Despite years away, this is still home, and they are needed because the struggle for the band’s survival still continues. Life on the reservation has taken an upswing with the employment from the casinos.

Housing projects have replaced the tarpaper shacks, but the lifestyle is still modest and the needs on the reservation great and growing. Land is needed. With casino revenue (See A history of struggle, page 3)

The heart of the matter

The survival of the Mole Lake people

Crandon, Wis.—While our nation’s news rattles our ears daily with tales of war and exploitation abroad, and while we stand appalled at the acts of governments which violate human rights and destroy nations and while we cringe at the plight of Sarajevo, we fail to see similar encroachments and acts of “terrorism” occurring within our own boundaries, acts which threaten and destroy nations, cultures, and people.

This is the story of the Mole Lake people. In 1994 survival is the “heart of the matter” for the small band of Ojibwe Indians known as the Sokaogon Chippewa, the Mole Lake Band located near Crandon, Wisconsin.

The Mole Lake community views itself as under siege as it faces the plans of two multi-national corporations, Exxon and Rio Algom, who are partners in a proposal to establish one of the world’s largest copper/zinc mines near Crandon, Wisconsin. This proposed mine is adjacent to Mole Lake’s 1800 acre reservation—the valued homeland of a unique and beautiful people.

This is the second time in twenty years that a proposal has been submitted for a massive mining operation in the area. Exxon discovered the mineral deposit in 1975 and proceeded to apply for a permit to mine. Mole Lake fought Exxon for ten years, before this corporate Goliath withdrew from the permitting process in 1986, citing falling copper prices as the reason.

However the respite was brief for Mole Lake with Exxon returned in 1994 in partnership with Rio Algom, forming the Crandon Mining Company (CMC). Replete with a store front in downtown Crandon, CMC quickly managed to coopt the local com-



“It’s been twenty years since Exxon announced a potential mine site and we have been struggling to maintain our way of live ever since,” Arlyn Ackley, Mole Lake tribal chairman.

munity with promises of an economic boom for the area.

But Mole Lake along with other neighboring tribes, including the Stockbridge-Munsee, the Forest County Potawatomi, and the Menominee, refuse to be bought by promises of jobs and economic development.

There is a definite conflict between neighboring communities, and the rift gets larger as the corporate giants make more promises.

A similar split, between a local community and a tribe, occurred when the Flambeau Mine was established in Ladysmith, Wisconsin, and the Lac Courte Oreilles Band fought a losing battle against the corporate powers several years ago.

So the question arises—what makes the difference? How can one community view a venture as positive and another feel that their very survival is at stake?

The answer is simple, and yet com-

plex, and rooted in a long history of struggle. Simply said, the Ojibwe people, and in this instance, the Mole Lake Band, maintain a spiritual connection with the land. This connection is the heart and soul of their beliefs and way of life. It stems from the teachings passed down by ancestors who are buried there and whose spiritual presence is still felt and cherished.

The land, the lakes, the rivers are traditional areas for fishing, gathering rice, and hunting. Sacred areas on and near the reservation have been and still are used for ceremonies, burials, and gatherings. There is no other place on Earth that can or could be home for the Mole Lake people.

Central to the values and teachings of the Ojibwe is a deep respect for the Mother Earth, the lifegiver. The people have been taught to care for and honor the Earth.

Promises of new technology and modern mining methods, promises of reclamation and guarantees of environmental safety ring hollow in the ears of the Mole Lake people, because there are no guarantees. In the eyes of the Mole Lake Ojibwe that is one thing that technology has demonstrated. One flaw in an otherwise glorious plan can destroy a river, ruin the rice, poison the fish and game. It can happen soon, or it could happen one hundred years from now.

The bitter legacy of mining and its devastation of the Earth and the contamination of her waters cannot but pose a life-threatening situation to the Mole Lake Band, who must act both on behalf of the Earth and on behalf of generations to come for the survival of the band.

To the Mole Lake Band, the risk is too great to consider for the short-term benefit of some quick dollars and a few years employment... for any pay-off. The right to jeopardize the Earth, the water, and generations to come simply cannot be considered in terms of economics or dollars. It cannot be considered at all. You do not sell your Mother, and you do not sell-out your children.

A history of struggle

(Continued from page 2)

the band purchased another 2,000 acres recently of the land that was originally promised the tribe. As Fran Van Zile, enrollment secretary relates, over 46% of the band’s population is currently under the age of sixteen. Room for growth and additional services to meet the needs of an expanding population is necessary. Providing for the well-being of upcoming generations is her main concern and that of all the band’s leaders.

Exxon and Rio Algom have replaced the threats of Sioux warriors and the white settlers who left the Mole Lake Band with a tiny plot of homeland. Now the small reservation owned by the band must be

defended from ruin and degradation. The bones of ancestors and burial sites must be protected. This is the Indian way, Smith states.

Behind the Mole Lake people lies the courage and spirit of many warriors and war chiefs, such as Chief Big Martin and Chief Willard Ackley, individuals who have protected their homeland, their people, and their spiritual ways. These were leaders who refused to be defeated and a people who have stayed despite the hardships. The Mole Lake people have been left a precious legacy of spirit and survival, and while the land base is small, the spirit is big and there is much to defend—a nation and a way of life.



What’s ahead for the Mole Lake people? Will the land and the water still provide fish and rice for the future generations?

The heart of the matter

A license to commit genocide

Crandon, Wis.—Mining is a regulated process in the United States, multitudes of states, local and federal permits are required. These permits are suppose to provide the protection necessary for the interest of the United States treaties as well as the general public.

However, the legacy of regulated mining does little to demonstrate that the interest of tribal nations and public health and safety override the corporate interests of money and power, comments Mole Lake Tribal Chairman Arlyn Ackley. Rather, he says, history suggests that the permits have been a "license to kill" both people and the environment.

The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) has identified acid drainage from mine sites as the most difficult and costly reclamation problem it faces with western metallic mine sites. "The fact that acid drainage has been a persistent problem for more than 100

years is indicative of one of the major difficulties in dealing with it—that there are currently no widely applicable technologies to mitigate or stop a fully developed acid drainage situation," according to the USFS and US Bureau of Mines in a 1993 publication entitled *Acid Drainage From Mines on the National Forests: A Management Challenge*. "Only stopgap prescriptions are available and at considerable cost," they state.

In comparison, metallic sulfide mining in the wet, temperate environment of northern Wisconsin poses an even greater threat of environmental destruction, regardless of the era of technology. Mole Lake environmental staff believe the existence of an entire race and distinct culture is at risk of extinction by the legalized permitting of pollution.

The fact that cultural, environmental and economic damages have been allowed

to persist throughout the entire history of the metallic mining industry is indicative of the federal and state governments' reluctance to protect the environment from one of its most long lasting and far reaching threats. Indeed, the corporate interests are placed above the health, safety, welfare and treaties of sovereign nations, Mole Lake representatives state.

The Wisconsin statutes place the interests of the smallest divisions of local government above the interests of the Indian nations. Mole Lake sees the State and Crandon Mining Company (CMC) as engaged in a high stakes game of paper trails and finger pointing with the tribe.

Tribal efforts to elevate key decision-making processes to the federal level (through the Army Corps 404 permit process which regards wetlands dredging and filling) have been met with a clearly established record of federal and state cooperation to minimize the role of direct tribal consultation and input, state Mole Lake environmental staff.

The Army Corps of Engineers, St. Paul District, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources have discussed the format of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to cooperate in the development of a federal Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Crandon Mine project. The Mole Lake Tribe is opposed to these inappropriate and premature efforts by the Corps and state. The State's Scoping

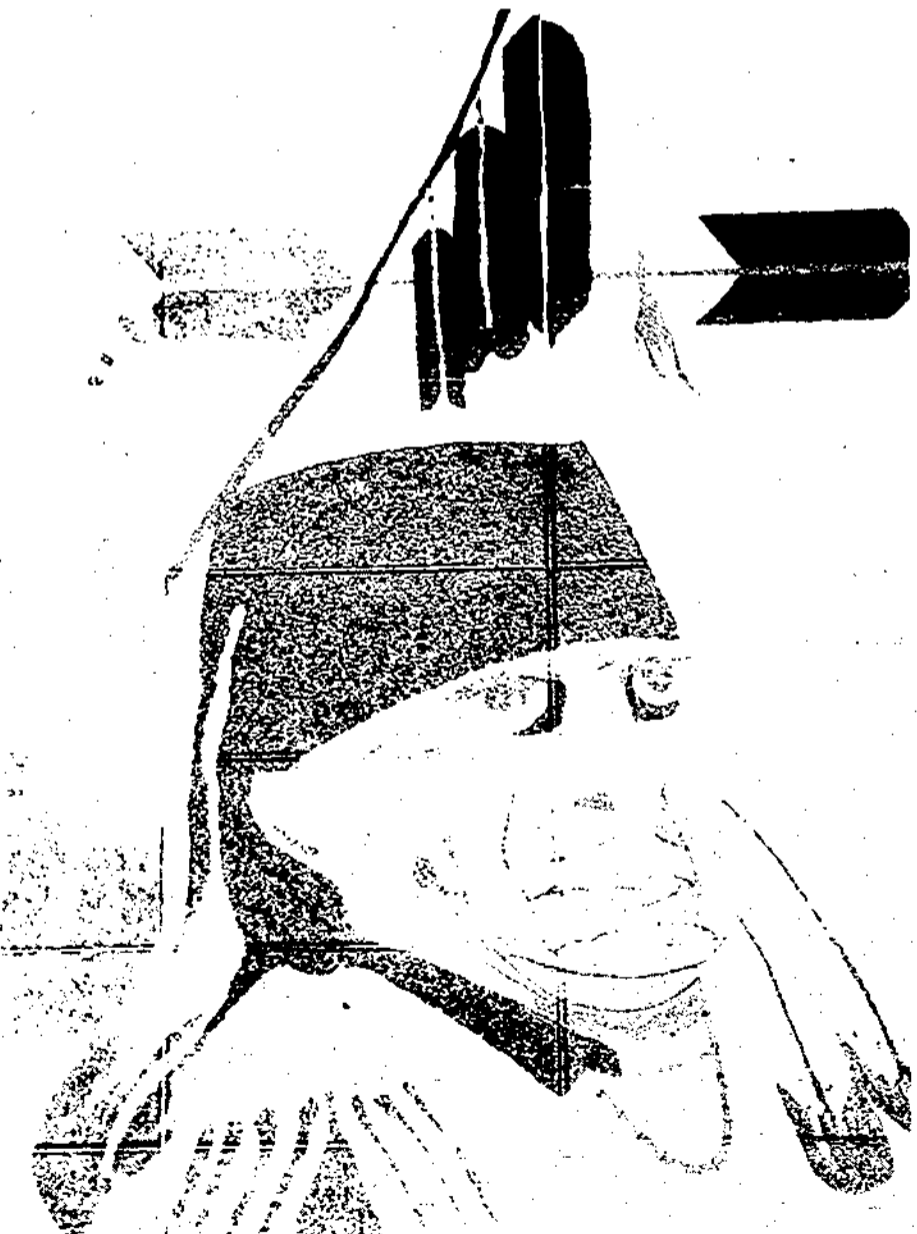
Process was completed August 9, 1994 without clearly acknowledging or incorporating tribal comments into the scoping guidelines presented to CMC.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) has made it clear to the Mole Lake Tribe that Mole Lake's failure to respond to analysis, comment and contribution to the State EIS development on the State's timeline will cause WDNR to assume worst case scenarios, at their discretion, in the analysis of the impacts on the tribe.

Mole Lake environmental staff believe the WDNR has already proven their ignorance on tribal issues, as shown in WDNR's 28 page letter to CMC President Jerry Goodrich, detailing EIS study requirements. The WDNR has made it clear to the tribe that the state will determine the acceptable level of risk the Mole Lake Tribe will endure.

Acid drainage persists at many active and abandoned mine sites, with some significant environmental problems dating as far back as the late 1800's.

"There are also concerns that current and future mining operations may generate acid drainage for years or decades after the mines cease operation. Unfortunately, major technical uncertainties are associated with the prediction of acid drainage potential at the time of mine plan approval as well as with mitigation or treatment techniques for post-mining use.



A mural on the wall of the Mole Lake tribal center portrays something of the people's proud spirit which is reiterated by tribal members today such as Mining Impact Committee member Jerry Burnett: "When you are fighting for your life you don't have to get paid for it." That's what he considers his responsibility to do.



Mole Lake is one of two lakes on the reservation which could be directly affected by the mine.

The risk to the Mole Lake Band

Who are Exxon & Rio Algom?

Crandon, Wis.—Battlefields and bombs aren't needed to destroy a nation. Pollution can maim and kill and create a wasteland without the fireworks, states Chairman Ackley.

Keeping in mind the type of jeopardy recognized as a result of mining procedures, imagine having possibly the world's largest copper/sulfide mine set directly upstream of your homeland. If your homeland is all you have on this Earth, and is "priceless," there is just cause for alarm.

In Mole Lake's instance, Swamp Creek flows directly from the mine site into the band's Rice Lake, their traditional and primary source of wild rice as well as fish, Chairman Ackley points out. Swamp Creek also is a tributary to the Wolf river, designated as an Outstanding Resource Water by the state, a designation opposed by Exxon Inc.

In Crandon Mining Company's (CMC) Notice of Intent (NOI) document, CMC states that "treated water from the mine wastewater treatment plant may either be discharged to Swamp Creek via a discharge pipeline installed along the same corridor as envisioned in the 1980s, or discharged to a series of absorption ponds located near the site or in a strategic location to provided mitigation, if needed, due to lowering of the groundwater table in the site vicinity as mining progresses."

CMC describes the wastes as "tailings, excess mine waste rock, and mine refuse."

CMC plans to manage the waste not used as mine backfill or for construction by placement in tailings ponds. "The tailings produced by the ore processing facility will be pumped via pipeline to a series of settling basins. The basins will be lined. Engineering studies to be completed during 1994 will determine the make-up of the liner system. As one basin is filled with tailings, a second basin will be constructed," the report states.

According to Tribal Judge Fred Ackley, chairman of the Mole Lake Mining Impact Committee, the Mole Lake Band has no reason to trust the ability of tailings ponds to effectively contain the contamination in the long-term. Waste seepage or any accident could destroy the band's drinking water, the fishery, and the wild rice, making the reservation uninhabitable.

This particular mine, as proposed, would disrupt at a minimum 866 acres of land, approximately one-tenth of which is wetlands. According to Al Gedicks, Wisconsin Resources Protection Council, an estimated 60 million tons of acidic wastes would be produced in the mine's lifetime, which would be 20-25 years.

The mine will also be sinking 1/2 mile deep shafts which would drain groundwater supplies. The process is known as "dewatering." This will affect local creeks including Swamp creek, Pickerel creek, Hemlock creek, and 12-9 creek. Also affected would be nine lakes in the region, including the band's Rice Lake.

As Judge Ackley notes, wild rice is a fragile plant, very susceptible to changes in water levels. The impact of water level fluctuations on the wild rice in the lake is a major concern of the band, much less the potential for metallic sulfide waste contamination.



Concern for the future of the band's youth weighs heavily on the minds of Mole Lake tribal members today. "We are an endangered species and they can't see it. They never put that in their EIS's. They want us to just step aside... but if we start drinking water with metal in it..." Fred Ackley, Mole Lake tribal judge



Al Gedicks, Wisconsin Resources Protection Council, shares information on mining during the IEN conference at the Mole Lake reservation.



Just completed apartment building for singles at Mole Lake.

Exxon is the world's biggest oil giant, with a budget that dwarfs that of most countries. But it is also one of the world's biggest producers of coal, uranium, copper, and other minerals

Exxon Minerals has invested heavily in copper mining in Chile and uranium mining in many countries. Its El Cerrejon coal mine in a Colombian Indian region put it on the Survival International list of the Top Ten corporate violators of Native rights. (It also was accused of weakening the national mining tax and exaggerating local job prospects. In 1986-90, 32 workers died on the job.)

Wyoming officials found Exxon "unusually uncooperative" in dealing with environmental health problems, worker safety, and economic impacts around its Highland uranium mine. Exxon had the worst mine safety record among the top 20 U.S. underground mining firms in 1989.

The 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill severely damaged the fishing industry around Alaska's Prince William Sound, and killed ducks, otters, mussels, and more. Commercial fishermen today say the salmon haven't returned in adequate numbers. Exxon refuses to meet with the fishermen or impacted Native villages, claiming that the spill has been cleaned up.

A federal NOAA official has challenged Exxon data and has said the clean-up may take another decade. The EPA fined Exxon in 1992 for not reporting chemical releases at a New Jersey oil refinery, which has since been sold. (Exxon also refuses to disclose toxic chemical releases at its foreign operations.) Exxon often underestimates the technological risks of large projects. In 1981, it abandoned a Nova Scotia mine after two years because of water infiltration. Two years later, it suddenly dropped a huge Colorado oil shale project, laying off over 2000 workers.

Rio Algom is best known worldwide for its disastrous Elliot Lake uranium mines in Ontario, which poisoned fish and other aquatic life in Serpent River. The Canadian government fined it for spreading high-level radioactivity in waterways. A nearby Ojibwa (Chippewa) reservation curtailed its fishing in the river, due to chronic disease, fetal deaths, and abnormal births.

Rio Algom used to be owned by Rio Tinto Zinc (RTZ), the British mining giant which has opened the Kennecott mine near Ladysmith. RTZ sold its shares in Rio Algom (according to the Canadian industry voice *The Northern Miner*) due to "potential liabilities" from the Elliot Lake clean-up, and it could find no single buyer. In Nova Scotia, Rio Algom has been called to account for a large increase in child leukemias around its East Kempville tin mine/smelter. Like Exxon, it is mining copper in Chile and uranium in Wyoming and New Mexico.

(Excerpted from Questions & Answers about Exxon's Proposed Crandon/Mole Lake Mine, a publication of the Midwest Treaty Network, Madison, Wisconsin.)

The heart of the matter

Politics/money vs. environment/people

Crandon, Wis.—It's a matter of trust, or rather distrust, to many members of the Mole Lake Band. If the safety of the mine rests in the hands of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) and other governmental regulatory bodies to grant permits, interests become political.

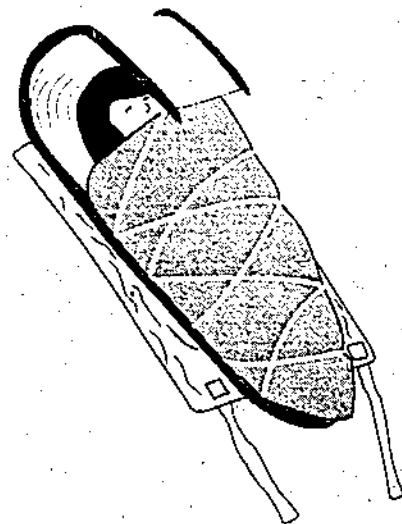
"Few of us are naive enough to believe that Mole Lake has political clout or that the interest of a very tiny reservation in northern Wisconsin can override the interests of multi-national corporations such as Exxon and Rio Algom," states Chairman Ackley. "There may be some hope within the legal system, however," he adds.

While addressing participants at the Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN) conference this summer, Chairman Ackley noted that while the Ojibwe tribes in Wisconsin were busy battling for their off-reservation treaty rights, Wisconsin legislators were also busy putting slack in the state's mining laws, setting the stage for the development of northern Wisconsin as a mining district.

It didn't take long for the Flambeau Mine to begin operating near Ladysmith, Wisconsin, he noted. And now Exxon/Rio Algom are at Mole Lake's backdoor again, ten years after the first attempt. They just needed to get the regulations loosened to make the process less difficult—a matter of time and lobbying, Chairman Ackley feels.

The tribes are operating in a society where "money rules," Chairman Ackley states, and Indian people simply don't have the population for voting power. "The WDNR will permit this mine while making a public show of environmental safety measures," he says.

Unfortunately, the majority of the public still believes "economic development or dollars" should supersede all other considerations, Chairman Ackley states. Despite evidence to the contrary, many still believe promises held in technology for environmental safety will concede to risk the Earth, the land, the water, and the people. Mole Lake has no faith in the permitting system or technology and will not concede to the risk. Chairman Ackley says, "Fast talk, fast bucks and pretty pictures cannot blur the truth for Mole Lake."



A message from the children at the IEN conference at Mole Lake.



The continued health of the Wolf river is a primary concern of Wisconsin tribes and environmental organizations. The construction of a large mine at its headwaters poses serious risks for the well-being of the river.

The heart of the matter

Self-determination & growth

Crandon, Wis.—The Sokaogon Chippewa Community, the Mole Lake Band, is a nation, like other bands and tribes. It practices self-governance and regulation. As such the tribal council is responsible for protecting its own rights and resources, both those on reservation as well as those held through off-reservation treaty rights.

Mole Lake is a small band. Tribal enrollment is 1,548 with 512 currently living on reservation, according to tribal enrollment clerk Fran VanZile. From 1986 to the present on reservation population has doubled, she states, which puts increasing pressure on the band for housing and human services.

Mole Lake is governed by an elected tribal council. The tribal council has six members. Currently, they are Chairman Arlyn Ackley; Vice Chairman Charles Fox; Secretary Paulette Smith; Treasurer Wayne LaBine; and two council members Ken VanZile and Eugene Poler.

The band has maintained its own tribal court since 1984. Fred Ackley has served as tribal judge since its inception. The court handles cases relating to conservation laws, Indian Child Welfare and marriages.

Developing an economic base for the band has been a long-term goal over the past several decades. It has been a long struggle which has finally taken an upswing with the advent of tribal casinos in 1990.

Tribal Treasurer Wayne LaBine oversees and coordinates between 25 and 35 programs for the band, including state, federal and tribal programs. Priorities for the tribe involve improving the tribally-operated day care and diversification, he states. The band is currently looking into opportunities available for economic development both locally and elsewhere.

Two casinos are operated on reservation by the tribe. While they are under separate management, the records also go through LaBine's office. The casinos, he states, have provided revenues for diversification as well as for expanding facilities on the reservation.

(See Self-determination & growth, page 10)



"Mining jobs are a temporary fix... The Spirits are looking down at the rape of the Earth." Charles Fox, Mole Lake vice-chairman



The Grand Royale Casino (above) and the Regency Resort Casino on the Mole Lake reservation have greatly reduced unemployment on the reservation. Robert VanZile, Jr. (right) deals a hand of blackjack at the Grand Royale.





The heart of the matter



Clean water for the future



Self-determination & growth

The casino's have changed the band's unemployment record from 80-90% unemployment to 32% unemployment, so besides revenues for tribal investment the casinos have served to boost the standard of living on the reservation.

Expanding the health care facility was one of the band's first priorities for casino revenues as well as repairing homes and providing suitable housing. However, acquisition of land in order to increase the small land base is another priority for the band, according to Charles Fox, Mole Lake vice chairman.

Fox also cites education among the council's major concerns. With 46% of the population under 18, education has to be a priority, he says. He is considering running for the local school board in order to have input into the education system. He would also like to see Mole Lake provide an alternative school on reservation so the youth can be more exposed to their own culture.

As vice chairman, his duties include acting as a gaming liaison to the council, providing reports on the gaming industries and handling personnel.

Fox is a member of the Big Drum Society at Mole Lake, so adheres to the traditional beliefs of his people and brings that into play as an elected tribal official.

Environmental leadership

Perhaps above all else, the tribal council's chief concern today is mining, not because the other issues relating to education, health, and housing are not important, but because mining jeopardizes all of that. Therefore, the band has had to

direct both human and economic resources to confront the mining issue.

The band established a Mining Impact Committee with appointed representatives. Fred Ackley, tribal judge serves as a chairperson for the nine member committee. The committee keeps the council and band informed on mining developments.

Ackley says the committee is composed of elder, spiritual, technical, and legal advisors in order to provide a broad base for considering mining issues in relation to the band.

The Mining Impact Committee has actively sought to forge alliances with other tribes, environmental organizations and individuals who also see the potential destruction of riverways and habitat if the proposed mine be permitted.

The council sees its role as taking a stand for the environment and leading the way. As tribal elder Earl Smith states, "Mole Lake is leading in advocacy for the environment and in resisting the mining operations through unity with other tribes. Indian people are the caretakers of this planet, so we have to do what we have to do."

One thing the band has done is establish an environmental center, the Sokaogon Chippewa Environmental Research Education, Planning and Management Facility. Ground was broken last June and the band hopes to see the completion of the facility this fall.

The center will house offices and an environmental research laboratory. It is envisioned as a facility which all tribes in the Great Lakes Basin can use for research and environmental management activities.



Mole Lake Treasurer Wayne LaBine.



Mole Lake tribal elder Earl Smith and his sister Betty White have observed years of change. According to Smith, the band's priorities today are "the welfare of future generations and the retention of Indian culture." Smith says the Indian people are "naturally compassionate and look to the welfare of all." They are also the "caretakers of the planet," and as such have a responsibility towards Mother Earth.

Fran VanZile, tribal enrollment clerk and clerk of court. Most importantly, Fran is the grandmother of five and worries daily about the future her grandchildren will have to face. "I've got to come up with a solution. Everyday, I live that everyday of my life... trying to make life easier for the next generation. It seems like we are always on the defensive," Fran states, worried about the impact of the proposed mine.

The heart of the matter Solidarity & support

Crandon, Wis.—The problems posed by the potential mine burden the capacity of the Mole Lake band, its limited staff and assets to the maximum. The daily concerns of the band and tribal operations must also be looked after in a routine manner. Consequently, Mole Lake has reached out for support and help, reminding neighbors and friends that the issues posed to Mole Lake are universal and that contamination of the resources will eventually effect all of us.

Mole Lake has found friends ready to elevate the issues and provide support in capacities available to them. That support has been found through the Nii Win Intertribal Mining Council, the Indigenous Environmental Network, the Midwest Treaty Network, Anishinabe Nijji, and the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission, to mention a few.

Nii Win means four

Nii Win was originally composed of four Wisconsin tribes concerned about the impact of the proposed Exxon mine. The original four include: Mole Lake, Stockbridge-Munsee, Forest County Potawatomi, and the Menominee. Recently, the Oneida tribe joined their ranks.

Nii Win recently purchased land and a building adjacent to the Mole Lake reservation to be used as headquarters and a spiritual center. Nii Win unified the tribal

endeavor to confront the mining issues and provides a forum for the potentially impacted tribes to share resources and expertise.

As Menominee Tribal Chairman Glen Miller noted, the Menominee nation lies just 45 miles downstream on the Wolf river. He views the potential of contaminating the Wolf river as great. He compares the possible destruction from the mine to the days of termination for the Menominee.

Talking on behalf of his tribe and Nii Win, Miller emphasized the need for immediate, unified action. "There is not enough money that could ever replace the damage to be done as a result of mining. . . There is not enough money in the Superfund to take care of the underground damage that has already been done. . . We cannot tolerate anymore," Miller stated during the IEN conference this summer.

Miller called for support in achieving a statewide referendum against all mining in Wisconsin and the building of further alliances on behalf of the environment. "We are in a crisis now with a potential mine. . . We need to network. . . pass the word."

As an Indian person, Miller feels strongly his "responsibility to our most valued resource—Mother Earth." It is from this base, that Nii Win tribes are challenging the siting of the Crandon Mine.



Lewis Hawpetoss, Nii Win representative from the Menominee reservation which is located on the Wolf river.

Legislators question adequacy of mine review

Support for many of the concerns expressed by the Mole Lake Band were also expressed by Wisconsin legislators in a letter to WDNR Secretary George Meyer. The letter is reprinted below:

Dear Secretary Meyer:

We are writing to express our deep concern about the adequacy of the Department's review of Exxon/Rio Algom's recommendations for tailings management at the proposed Exxon-Crandon mine. We urge you to hire an outside expert on sulfide ore tailings as soon as possible to ensure the quality and completeness of this review.

We feel the Department's current approach to this analysis inappropriately relies on staff without the adequate knowledge and expertise of sulfide-ore tailings. This situation is not acceptable, and we believe the design of the Tailings Management Area, should a mine be built, is among the most important environmental issues confronting the Department and state with regard to this project.

The consequences of an inadequate review of tailings management are enormous. Experience elsewhere has shown that damage from acid mine drainage defies remediation. Prevention is the only absolute cure. We need the best possible advice to avoid the mistakes made elsewhere. We remind you, that if built this would likely be the largest shaft mine of its kind in the world.

As you know, the Legislature has granted DNR the authority to consult technical experts, and to charge the costs of such consultations to the parties seeking permits to mine. As you know, an expert has already been hired to assess the groundwater monitoring analyses proposed by Exxon.

To facilitate an adequate review of the Exxon proposal, we suggest that the DNR should hire a hydrogeologist, a geochemist, or another expert specializing in tailings characteristics and containment. Most certainly, the Department should not rely on permit applicants in place of its own, or independent analysis, in matters of this gravity.

Again, we respectfully urge you to hire suitable experts to review and comment on all aspects of proposals for tailings storage by Exxon/Rio Algom.

Thank you for considering this request.

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HEADQUARTERS
AND
SPIRITUAL CENTER
MOLE LAKE
WISC.

GLIFWC & eleven member Ojibwe nations support Mole Lake

Crandon, Wis.—The support of the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC), composed of eleven Ojibwe hands in Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota, was received from its Board of Commissioners after a presentation by Mole Lake Tribal Chairman Arlyn Ackley.

Mole Lake is a member of GLIFWC, which was formed in 1984 following the Voigt Decision. GLIFWC assists its members in off-reservation treaty harvests and resource management.

GLIFWC's support comes primarily through the technical expertise. Biological staff, legal and planning personnel, as well as public information staff have worked directly with Executive Director James Schlender in providing assistance to the Mole Lake band.

GLIFWC has also been intensely involved in the permitting process with biological and legal staff preparing comments on the Crandon Mine's NOI and participating in public hearings.

Necessary environmental research, strategy planning, networking, and building sound basic arguments based on data and expertise have been the focus of GLIFWC involvement.

Among other projects GLIFWC assisted with the coordination of a conference on wild rice recently, which brought together tribal elders as well as experts from the East Coast and Canada. The traditional significance of the rice plant to the Ojibwe and its potential to survive the impact of mining were the primary focus of the conference.

GLIFWC's member tribes have long been concerned about environmental issues which impact the tribes, particularly water quality in inland lakes in the ceded territory and Lake Superior. Concern over the potential impact of the proposed mine relates not only to Mole Lake but the health of the environment in the ceded area and affect on the natural resources as a whole.



Tribal Judge Ed Barber, Lac Courte Oreilles, shares information with GLIFWC Executive Administrator James Schlender, during the Wild Rice Conference at Mole Lake. One of several elders to address the conference, Barber recalled how elders, or rice chiefs, used to determine when the rice was ready for harvest.



Experts on wild rice and Ojibwe culture exchanged information at the Wild Rice Conference, Mole Lake. Above Dr. Charles Cleland, anthropologist and ethno historian with Aurora Associates; Dr. Larry Nesper, anthropologist, University of Chicago; and Dr. Thomas Vennum, Smithsonian Institute and author of *Wild Rice and the Ojibway People*.



Using hand-held shockers to temporarily stun fish, GLIFWC's inland fisheries section collects fish samples for a data base on the fishery. Above, left, Gary Regal, Inland Fisheries Biologist stationed at Mille Lacs, Minnesota, with Butch Mieloszyk, GLIFWC fishery technician and Andrew Goyke, former GLIFWC inland fishery section leader, use nets to gather stunned fish in Swamp Creek on the Mole Lake Reservation.



Mining issues bring international conference to Mole Lake

Crandon, Wis.—People traveled from as far as Columbia, South America, Canada, the East and West Coast to participate in the Indigenous Environmental Network's (IEN) annual conference this summer. Over a thousand people came. They came to the tiny reservation of the Sokaogon Chippewa Community, the smallest reservation in Wisconsin, to provide support for a tribe in crisis.

The proposed siting is one of the world's largest copper/zinc mine near Crandon, Wis. and adjacent to the Mole Lake Band's only homeland triggered the siting of the IEN annual conference on the Mole Lake reservation this year, according to Tom Goldtooth, IEN National Council member.

Campsites dotted the meadow by Mole Lake throughout IEN's "Protecting Mother Earth Conference" which was held in conjunction with the 9th annual "Protect the Earth Gathering," sponsored by the Midwest Treaty Network and Anishinabe Nijji. The entire week-long event was also supported by the Mole Lake Band and the Ni Win Intertribal Council.

Worldwide networking

Issues related to mining worldwide and its impact on native communities was the focus of the 1994 gathering. However, as Bill Koenen, IEN National Council member and Mole Lake tribal member, stated the real focus of any IEN conference is the spiritual base of Indian people and, from that center, the responsibility to Mother Earth and the people. "The essence of IEN is coming together, sharing knowledge, resources, food, and spirituality—the sharing part is necessary," he says.

The power of the organization stems from the spiritual strength received throughout the gathering and the mutual support provided to each other. Tribal elders were present throughout to share their wisdom and strength as were spiritual leaders from many indigenous nations.

"IEN brings together a lot of activists, people who have been in this struggle for years—perhaps on land issues or treaty issues in the past—now the environment demands their attention. IEN is one of very few Indian organizations that brings native activists together and renews past kinships," Koenen explains.

The network grows as individuals return to their homes and the Mole Lake people know they are not alone in the struggle.

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—Bill Koenen, IEN National Council Member & Mole Lake tribal member



Tom Goldtooth, IEN National Council member and environmental activist, stresses the need for solidarity and mutual support as indigenous nations face crises such as mining and radioactive waste siting.

Conference creates solidarity

The affirmation and sense of solidarity provided through the gathering is probably the most valuable single result of the conference, Koenen notes. "There are not a

lot of people to wage this battle locally, so we need to bring in assistance in order to elevate the issues," states Koenen, who is also Mole Lake's environmental specialist.

One result of the IEN conference was that Mole Lake established contact with people and organizations that will be able to bring the issue before the United Nations (UN) non-governmental organizational body.

A representative from Mole Lake will meet with Dr. Miguel Alfonso Martinez, UN special rapporteur for the UN Study on Treaties and Agreements with Indigenous People, in order to bring Mole Lakes issues forward to the UN. "There is enough

IEN Mission Statement & History

Mission Statement

The IEN is an alliance of grassroots indigenous people whose mission is to protect the sacredness of Mother Earth from contamination and exploitation by strengthening, maintaining and respecting the traditional teachings and the traditional Natural Laws.

History

The organization was informally started in 1990 during the first annual "Protect Mother Earth" gathering held in Dilkon, Arizona within the Dine' Nation territory.

Many community-based indigenous activists from throughout North America, including Dine' Citizens Against Ruining The Environment (CARE) founded the concept for national alliance building. It wasn't until the following year near Bear Butte, South Dakota at the second annual gathering that IEN was made formal.

Each year, the annual IEN sponsored and locally hosted gatherings have attracted, on average, 500 individual indigenous people from throughout North America, Mexico, South and Central America and the Pacific Islands.

of a history with Exxon and Rio Algom on Serpent River in Canada to bring it to the public's view through the United Nations, not only in regard to the environment but also in relation to human rights," Koenen comments.

Other benefits stemming from the IEN gathering include continued contacts with technical experts and other resources which will be needed over the next days and months, Koenen said, to insure the network is established and maintained.

Assistance in archeological issues may also have been garnered through IEN connections. Contacts in Illinois and with others in the U.S. involved in repatriation work may be able to provide expertise in these areas of concern. These issues are generally overlooked in the mining permit process, Koenen notes, but need to be seriously addressed.

Also publicity which was generated from the conference served for public education and awareness purposes. "Hopefully, we will generate more congressional support and build national support from that," Koenen says.

Some individuals from the conference never left and are working at Mole Lake, Koenen notes, to provide support to the tribe.

The walk: no looking back

Mole Lake, Wis.—Dawn's break was greeted with ceremonies which initiated a walk to the proposed mine site one early morning of the conference. Several hundred people walked the one and a half to two miles from the Mole Lake campsites for spiritual unity, says Bill Koenen, IEN National Council member and Mole Lake tribal member.

The walk for him contained the essence of the week-long gathering. Purpose was there; solidarity was there; and a strong sense of spiritual strength traveled with the group that morning.

"Basically the purpose of the walk was accomplished. It was meant to unify the people, and it achieved that. Ceremonies were conducted, and we were instructed by our elders not to look back. We were told that these concerns would take care of themselves. There existed a magnificent sense of unity that morning," states Koenen.

"The hardwoods on Spirit Hill were full of dew. A wind rushed through leaves and spread the dew. We could have been in any rain forest in the southern hemisphere. And we knew through the ceremony that day that we would not be defeated. . . and many things have come together since that time," Koenen noted.

"Indian people have to learn two ways. We have to learn what is being done to the land through technology in order to protect



"Not here Exxon!"—Is that what you are saying, Bill? Bill Koenen, Mole Lake environmental planner and tribal member.

the land. But we cannot lose our spiritual connection to the Earth while we are doing that. If we lose that connection to Mother Earth, then we cannot protect it."

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—Bill Koenen, IEN National Council Member & Mole Lake tribal member

Defining the problem: Pollution perpetuated by greed

The issues before both IEN and Protect the Earth gathering were defined and redefined in various formats—by experts and by lay people. Technology aside, experiences perhaps spoke the loudest. Chief Johnny Jackson, Columbia River, spoke of the birth defects in Arizona's Navajo as a result of coal mining by Peabody Inc. The dumping of waste into the rivers contaminated the water used by the sheep, the cattle and the people. And the pain, he said, is being experienced now by those born and suffering the effects of that pollution.

"What happens to Mother Earth, happens to our children," Jackson stated. Jackson, who has been with IEN since its inception in 1990, noted that IEN is trying to solve some of the most difficult problems there are.

"If you could see the children of the Navajo, it would make you cry and make you hate. . . to see how some are brought into the world today because the water was put back this way."

Now, many of the Navajo near Dilkon, Ariz. have to drive for miles to get their water, he said, and others will also eventually be impacted. "Once done, it takes years to undo and sometimes never."

Peabody Inc., he said, dumped into the rivers with no regard to the people or animals dependent on the water. "Money talks louder than the environment," he stated.

Jackson worries also about the Columbia River, his homeland. He gives it about fifteen years before it is "dead," beautiful to look at, but lifeless.

Bill Rossi, Western Council of the Shoshone, Nevada, told of his granddaughters—one born without eyesight, another with a tumor and perforated intestines—the results of cyanide leaching into the water from mining in Nevada.

Jesse Deer-in-Water, Citizens Resistance at Fermi 2, Mich., talked about the practices of Kerr-McGee dumping waste in Oklahoma and storing radioactive waste in cement caskets on the banks of the lakes. (See Tragedy, page 15)



Several hundred people participated in a spiritual walk from Mole Lake to the Exxon mine site during the IEN conference this summer as a demonstration of solidarity.

Tragedy in Indian Country related to mining

(Continued from page 14)

Joe Campbell, Prairie Island Dakota, spoke of the risks facing his tribe from the nuclear power plant run by NSP in Minnesota and the proposal for a radioactive waste storage site at the facility for spent fuel rods.

Tom Goldtooth noted that the Hanford Site in Washington has leached radioactive waste into the Columbia River. There is a high cancer rate in people in the area, he said, and deformities in the fish.

Keith Lewis, Serpent River Anishinaabeg Nation, Ontario, spoke of the devastation of Rio Algom's Elliot Lake uranium mines to the Serpent River and his people. Contamination spoiled the fishery, a traditional resource of the tribe, and polluted the water.

These are but a few of the voices relating the legacy of contamination and resulting sickness from mining ventures and industry. The people and the stories came from near and far and from all four directions.

The threats posed by mining were clear on the faces of the people who spoke, who had witnessed or experienced the pain and the aftermath of such development.

It was obvious that technology provides no secure answers, such as at the Hanford site for radioactive waste. Guarantees of safety expire as technology fails.



Tribal elders from different nations were honored throughout the IEN Conference, and their advise and experience was welcomed and respected.

Strategy and action

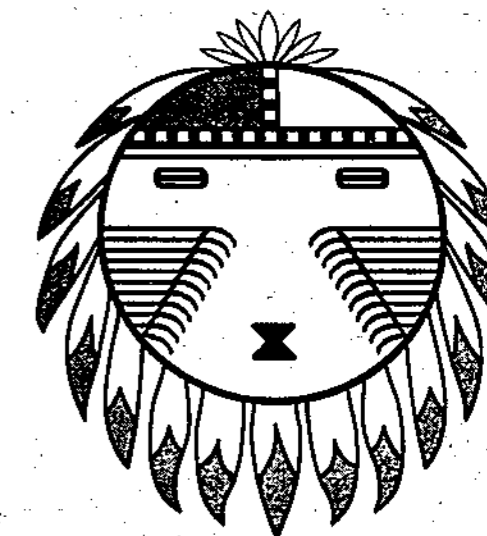
IEN structured the conference in a manner which allowed both time for testimony and sharing of experience and support as well as time for more focused small group planning on specific issues.

Basically, work groups focused on both education and training for grassroots action. A few of the topics for work groups were: nuclear waste storage, mining, alliance building, environmental and cultural issues on indigenous reserves, treaty rights, clearcutting, uranium mining, the Human Genome Diversity Project, and radiation exposure.

The work groups were led by individuals with expertise on the subject. Leaders provided information on the topic as well as led the groups in formulating action plans both nationally and within their own locales and communities. □



The IEN Conference at Mole Lake brought Indian activists together from all parts of the country. It was time to meet new challenges as well as rekindle old friendships.



Wild rice: part of a culture

Olive Glasgow
Freelance Writer

Crandon, Wis.—In the autumn of the year, when squirrels are busy clipping cones from the conifers and farmers are shocking corn, the Indians make their annual treks to the brackish waters of the northwoods to harvest the oldest agricultural crop in the nation.

Disturbing raucous flocks of feasting blackbirds, the Chippewas of Forest County glide like ghosts through the early morning mists plying their shallow boats through the waving sea of grain that flourishes on Rice Lake. Following in the age old custom of their ancestors, they glean the wild grain, formerly so vital to the survival of their forefathers.

As they progress great northern pike leap to snap flies hovering over the water and slapping the surface as they submerge, they appear to be piloting the advancing fleet. The rice beds teem with wildlife. Muskrats, dining on tender shoots of the plants, dive off their feeding stations and black billed coots, gabbling in alarm, skitter across the open channels of water while mallards break migrant flight patterns in the sky above, arrowing into a bay of the lake, all in competition for a share of the prized seeds of this wild water grass known as *Zizania Aquatica*.

"It is the magic time of the harvest moon and as the mists evaporate, gay halloos echo across the sun drenched lake as members of the Sokaogon band recognize friends and relatives who have converged on the village of the Chippewas to participate in the harvest.

This homecoming makes autumn a festive as well as a productive period of the year and creates nostalgic memories for elders of the band.

Many recall seeing Chief Ackley conduct the customary rituals, standing on the



"Manomin" or wild rice is known for its taste and nutrition. (Photo by M.J. Kewley)

bank of Swamp Creek. Before the canoes were launched in the channel he would scatter bits of sacred tobacco to the four winds petitioning the Great Spirit for a bountiful harvest.

"A bumper crop was always ample cause for rejoicing," his son Chuck recalls. "And the thanksgiving feast and harvest dance was generally the greatest highlight of the year. We roasted ducks, fattened in the grain fields with steaming heaps of rice

and our hunters always made sure we had plenty of meat on hand including rabbits, beaver, bear as well as venison and fish."

Chuck Ackley's wife, Naomi, recalls her late mother's accounts of the early festivities. Mary VanZile told Naomi how much the people always looked forward to the gathering of the clans each fall.

"We always wore our best clothes for these socials and in those days, when I was young, the most favored garments were still fashioned from buckskin. Every article was lavishly decorated with special designs worked into the material with colorful beads, ribbons and porcupine quills. Some of the women and girls however, settled for clothing made from bolts of material purchased from the fur traders.

I can still remember my favorite dress. I don't remember just how I got it but since I helped my grandfather trap he probably traded pelts for it at the trading post. Anyway it had ribbon sewed down the front of the blouse and all around the bottom of the ankle length skirt. The beating of the drums, the dancing and chanting remain fresher in my mind than the events of yesterday."

Since the Indians had to rely on the bounty of nature the elementary problem of subsistence was a ever present concern. Consequently territory including prolific wild rice bearing lakes sparked many inter-tribal wars.

One of the greatest and most conclusive conflicts, according to Indian legend, occurred in the summer encampment of the

Sokaogon band of Chippewas at Mole lake in 1806. Remnants of the Lost Tribe of Chippewas still dwell on the historic battlefield where their forefathers vanquished the Sioux. It was a costly victory.

According to the historic marker in Mole Lake, based on stories handed down from one generation to the next, around 500 warriors were slain.

White their ancestors had been successful in defending their territory from the Sioux the band didn't fare as well when in came to dealing with the U.S. government, since they failed to receive the 12 square mile reservation promised by representatives of the 1854 Treaty on Madeline Island.

It wasn't until 1934 that the government purchased approximately 1,700 acres for the tribe and this failed to include all the land around Rice Lake which had long provided their people with the veritable "Staff of Life."

This large body of water contains the most prolific rice fields in Forest County and each fall the people continue to harvest the grain formerly so vital to their ancestors. The techniques have altered little since. Shallow boats have replaced the bark canoes but tapered homemade batons are still used to flail the grain.

The pilot, standing in the stern of the craft, propels the boat through the water with the aid of a long forked pole while his partner sits on a low seat to harvest the grain. An experienced beater works with a steady rhythm using one rod to sweep the sheaves over the gunwale utilizing deft taps with the other to send the ripe kernels cascading into the bottom of the boat.

Most of the green rice is sold to buyers waiting at the landing.

Some members of the band continue to process their precious cargo despite the fact that it is a time consuming project. The grain has to be dried in the sun and then roasted, constantly stirred over an outdoor fire to prevent scorching. Then it is ready for the dancing.

This was formerly done in skin lined pits and archeologists were excited to discover prehistoric pits situated not far away on the shores of Bass Lake. This kind of site has never before been discovered according to David Overstreet, Chief Investigator for the Great Lakes Archeological Research Center. The pristine site was discovered in 1983 and was radiocarbon dated from burnt remains nearby to around 800-1200 A. D.

Nowadays the dancing, which separates the kernels from the husks is done generally in buckets or tubs and accomplished by circular motions of fresh mocasin clad feet. Then the grain is ready for the final step. The rice is placed as of old, in shallow birch bark baskets for fanning. The grain is flipped in the air so the breeze will carry off the chaff and the grain is then ready for use or storage.

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