

The Midwest Treaty Network

A Native/non-Native alliance supporting tribal sovereignty, treaty rights, and environmental and cultural protection in the western Great Lakes region.



1983 Federal court decision reaffirms Ojibwe treaty rights to fish, hunt and gather, after 75 years of being outlawed by the State. Tribal members (such as Tom Maulson at Lac du Flambeau) begin to spear again.



1987 The anti-treaty backlash from white sportsmen, who form Protest Americans' Rights & Resources (PAAR). Red Cliff spearer Walt Bresette denounces the first PARR conference. Militant group Stop Treaty Abuse markets "Treaty Beer" to draw whites to protests.



1989 PARR and Stop Treaty Abuse (STA) draw thousands of white protesters to northern boat landings during Spring spearfishing to harass spearmen. The Midwest Treaty Network was founded on Tom Maulson's pontoon boat by reservation spearing groups and treaty support groups. The MTN trains 2000 Witnesses for Nonviolence to monitor harassment.



1994

Opposition builds to Exxon's Crandon zinc-copper mine (proposed previously in 1976-86), next to Mole Lake's wild rice beds.



1995

MTN forms Wolf Watershed Educational Project to organize a Native/ non-Native alliance along the threatened Wolf River.



1998

WWEP speaking tours brought together tribes, environmentalists, and sportfishing groups to oppose the mine and support a Moratorium bill. Exxon turns over project to its partner company Rio Algom.



2001

Bill to ban cyanide in mining passes Senate but not Assembly. Citizens Assembly unites grassroots opponents of corporate mine, energy, and water projects. Student Mine Summit brings youth to Mole Lake. Rio Algom sold to BHP Billiton (world's largest miner.) Mining industry journals rate Wisconsin as the worst place on Earth to do business, and calls the WWEP a "threat to the global mining industry."

Article VI of the U.S. Constitution defines treaties as the "Supreme Law of the Land," but treaties with American Indian nations have not been respected.

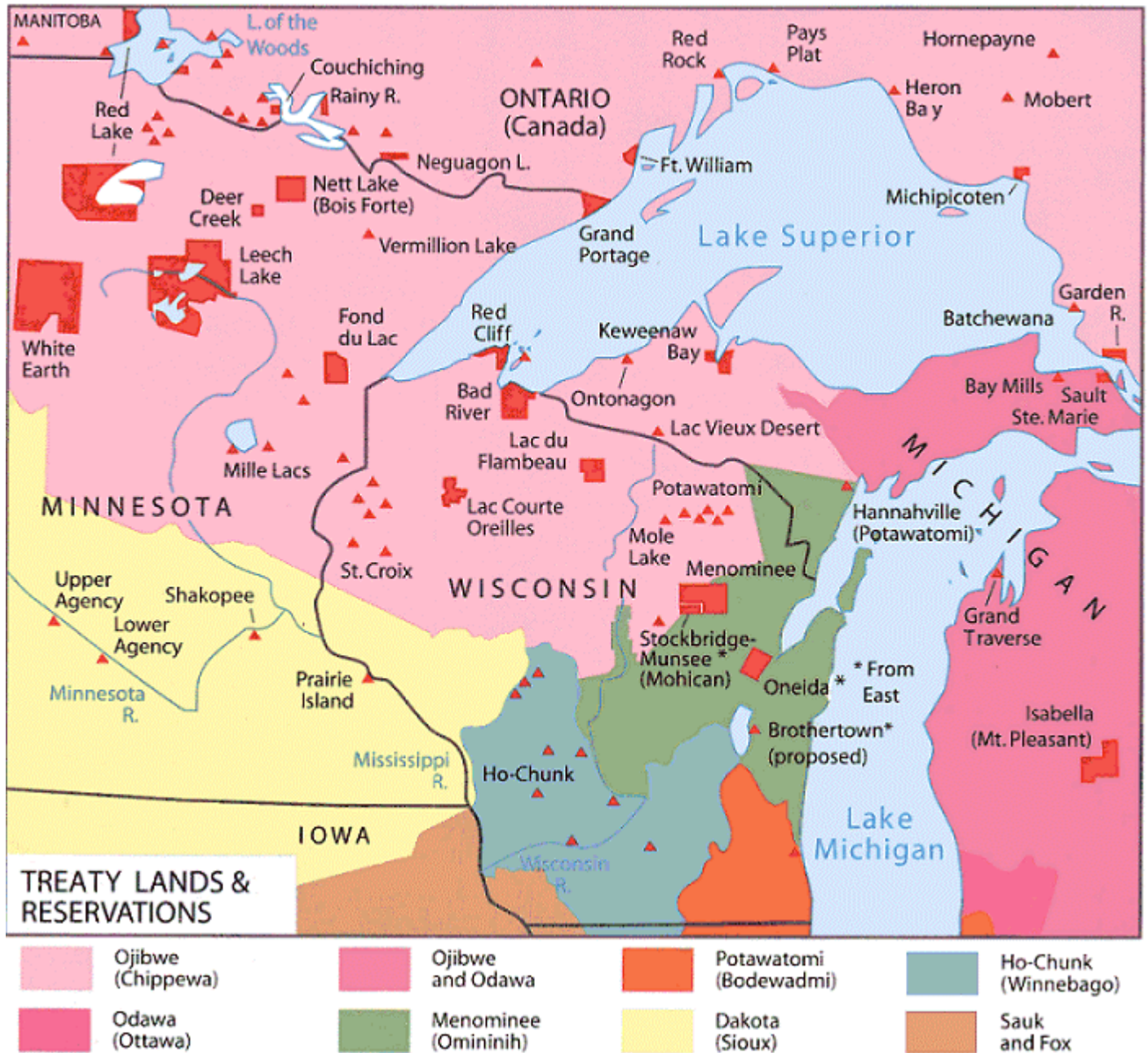
In the late 1980s the MTN began coordinating the Witness for Nonviolence, which stood with Ojibwe (Chippewa) families during the Wisconsin spearfishing crisis, to deter and monitor harassment and violence by white sportsmen. Using their peaceful presence, public education, and support for a federal court injunction against anti-Indian harassment, the more than 2,000 Witnesses by the early 1990s helped create a climate in which the Ojibwe could fish in peace.

After the anti-treaty groups declined Wisconsin, some sportfishers woke up to the reality that outside mining companies, not the tribes, are the real threat to the fishery. They also saw that the treaties and tribal sovereignty could be a legal obstacle to mining, because they guarantee tribal access to off-reservation natural resources that could be environmentally damaged by mining.

The MTN worked against metallic sulfide mining projects that threatened the fishery for Indians and non-Indians alike, particularly the proposed Crandon mine next to the wild rice beds of the Mole Lake Sokaogon Chippewa Community and upstream from the pristine Wolf River. Even during the treaty rights conflict, MTN organizers saw common ground with some sportfishers, who later began to work with the tribes to protect the fishery.

In 1995, the MTN started the Wolf Watershed Educational Project campaign to organize regional speaking tours on the Crandon mine, as a way to bring together Native nations with white sportfishing groups, environmentalists with unionists, and rural residents with urban students. This alliance has helped not only to evict the world's largest mining corporations (such as Exxon and BHP Billiton), but to change racial relations in northern Wisconsin for the better. In 2003, Mole Lake and the Forest County Potawatomi acquired the Crandon mine site and cancelled all permit applications.

The MTN has supported other Native environmental justice issues, such as opposition to nuclear waste storage, groundwater pumping and diversions, military projects, dams, transmission lines, and generic engineering. At the same time, the MTN has worked with numerous tribes and tribal organizations throughout the region on issues of cultural respect (such as sacred site protection), exposing the racism of anti-sovereignty movements, opposition to spiritual exploitation and cultural trivialization (such as Indian logos and mascots), support for tribal land claims and economic self-determination, and building cultural and economic ties between Native and non-Native communities.

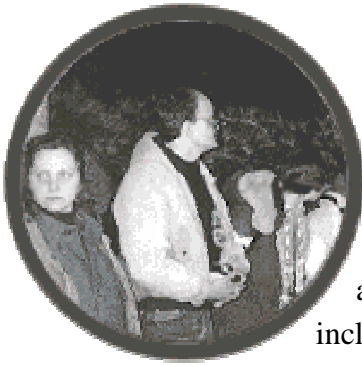


The MTN takes its direction from tribal nations and tribal grassroots organizations. The MTN is oriented toward carrying out regional projects which local groups feel they can accomplish only with the help of other local groups. It has carried out public educational campaigns with brochures, reports, web pages, an extensive e-mail alert list, press releases, petitions, and documentation.

The MTN has carried out numerous rallies, gatherings, concerts, speaking tours, conferences, skills trainings, youth summits, presentations to classrooms and groups, international action calls, support for runs and walks, and many other actions. The MTN's main tools have been community education and action, in response to requests from tribes and tribal organizations.

The MTN has no paid staff, and donations have gone almost exclusively toward printing, postage, and phone costs (tax-deductible donations can be made to "MTN/PC Foundation"). Its main strategy is educating, mobilizing and empowering communities on the frontlines, rather than relying on state or federal agencies to defend the interests of Native nations and their allies.

We do not believe only in unity at the top, between leaders, but in deeper interaction between communities. We believe that our major work in the near future will be youth education and empowerment, emphasizing the MTN's original vision of Native cultures and treaties as protection for the land and people.



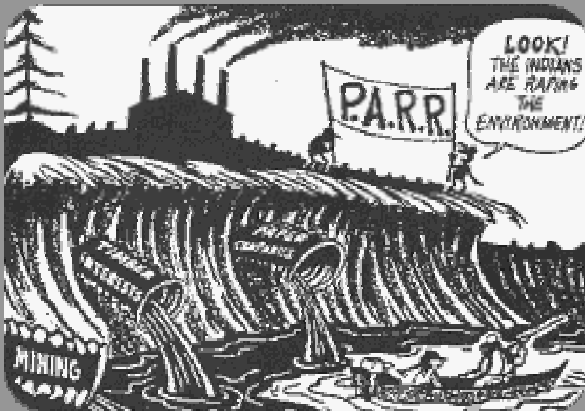
1990 MTN documents incidents of violence, racism and police inaction, including rock throwing, vehicle assaults, sniper fire, bombs, in 1989-92.



2003 The Potawatomi and Mole Lake Ojibwe purchase the Crandon mine site for \$16.5 millions, ending the 28-year mining battle and canceling all permit applications. The alliance drove away any partners in the world for the company, and drove down the sale price. Mole Lake sets up Wolf River Protection Fund to raise money to pay off its half of the purchase.



1992 A federal court injunction on STA harassment, & biological evidence that Ojibwe speared only 3% of fish, lessens anti-treaty actions. The anti-treaty groups' open racism had driven away many northern white supporters.



1993 Anti-treaty groups claimed concern about the fish, but did nothing to protect fish from mining companies coming into the ceded territory, particularly near the Wolf River.

The award-winning MTN website at www.treatyland.com serves as a touchstone for Native peoples and supporters of sovereignty throughout the world. The MTN's toll-free Hotline has an updated calendar of events and alerts. For more information, contact the Midwest Treaty Network Board of Directors at the address below. Tax-deductible contributions to continue the MTN's work for Native rights can be made out to "MTN/PC Foundation."

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