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.—"Sukakamigo, which means lake with pines in it in the Ojibwe or Anishinaabe language. It describes the people living near the confluence of the Flambeau and the South Branch of the Flambeau river. The original Sukakamigo Band, located near Crandon, Wisconsin, was one of the original 16 Wisconsin tribes recognized in 1836 by the U.S. government.

"Today, the band of Anishinaabe people are located around Rice Lake, a small lake in the early days, the band members lived around the lake, then in the area, shortly after, by Patience Lake, Reeling Seven, and Mole Lake. The name is a term used in various cultures to refer to an area of land or water that is bordered on all sides by bodies of water. It is also a term used to refer to a term used to refer to a region of land that is bordered on all sides by bodies of water.

"The Sukakamigo Band. This is a story about a people. The first chapter is the story of the Mole Lake people, who are located just across the border from the small town of Crandon, Illinois, known as the Sukakamigo Chippewa, the Mole Lake Band located near Crandon, Wisconsin.

"The Mole Lake community views itself as the center of the country. It is a place of refuge for the people. The land and the water are great to consider for the short-term benefit of the people, but the promises of new technology and modernization have not come true.

"Chief Willard Ackley, who has stayed despite the hardships. The people have been provided to the Sokaogon band. Chief Big Martin had made sure that land was protected, and the area became a massive burial ground to be honored.

"Almost every piece of land that was promised by the federal government, and they have not given up the struggle to protect their homeland, their people, and their children. A constitution was written and the band became federally recognized in 1934, and on behalf of generations to come for the band.

"The Mole Lake community views itself as the center of the country. It is a place of refuge for the people. The land and the water are great to consider for the short-term benefit of the people, but the promises of new technology and modernization have not come true.

"The heath of the matter
The survival of the Mole Lake people

Crandon, Wis.—While our nation's newspapers are filled with tales of war and political upheaval, there is a different side of government which helped bring light and sanity to the world. The story of governments which trampled human rights and minority rights, and of the struggles for freedom that followed, is one that we see in this issue. These struggles are part of our history, and they continue.

"The heart of the matter is the story of the Mole Lake people, who are located just across the border from the small town of Crandon, Illinois, known as the Sukakamigo Chippewa, the Mole Lake Band located near Crandon, Wisconsin.

"The Mole Lake community views itself as the center of the country. It is a place of refuge for the people. The land and the water are great to consider for the short-term benefit of the people, but the promises of new technology and modernization have not come true.

"There is a definite conflict between neighboring communities, and the fight gets larger in the corporate giants make their decisions.

"A similar epic, across a local community and a tribe, occurred when the Flambeau Mine was established in the region. The Mole Lake Band, on behalf of the entire land-owning tribes in the area, tried to stop the mining operation. However, the respite was brief for Mole Lake people. The Tule Energy was established in the area.

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"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 regu­lar process in the United States, multi­plied by the numbers of employees and numbers of workers. There are no regulations or limits on what is considered "the general public." However, the legacy of regulated mining is the destruction of the environ­ment, the pollution of the waterways, and the loss of jobs. The state of Wisconsin is currently considering the development of a mine in a strategic location to provide jobs to the community. The economic interests of the state are at odds with the preservation of the natural environment.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) has made it clear that the Mole Lake Band of the Chippewa Indians cannot be allowed to proceed with the proposed open-pit copper mine. The WDNR has issued permits for the mine, but the band has not been consulted on the environmental impact. The band is fighting for their land, their livelihood, and their way of life. The mining company, Rio Algom, has been cited for violations of the Clean Water Act and the Clean Air Act.

The band has filed a lawsuit against the mining company, alleging that the mine will contaminate the water supply and the air. The band is seeking a court order to stop the mining operation. The mining company has not responded to the band's concerns, and the band is still fighting for their rights.

The band is calling for support from the general public to help them in their fight. They are asking for donations to help them pay for legal fees and other expenses. The band is also calling for support from other Native American tribes to help them in their fight.

The band is determined to win this fight. They are not going to give up. They are fighting for their land, their livelihood, and their way of life. They are not going to let the mining company destroy their future.

Exxon is the world's biggest oil giant, with a bigger threat that no one is aware of. Exxon is one of the top 20 corporate violators of Native American treaties. Exxon has a history of violating Native American treaties and the United States' treaties as well. The band is determined to hold Exxon accountable for their actions.

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The heart of the matter
Politics/money vs. environment/people

Crandon, Wis.—It's a matter of time, 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, interest become political. "Two of us are naive enough to believe that Mole Lake has principal clout that the interest of a very tiny reservation in northern Wisconsin can override the interests of multinational corporations such as Exxon/Rio and the Regency Resort Casino on the Mole Lake," said Arlyn Ackley. "There may be some huge lives in 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 fighting for their own reservation 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 new Escanaba Algonquin at Mole Lake's backdoor again, ten years after the first attempt. They just needed to get the regulations loosen so that the processes 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 Indians 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 deficit-level" should supersede all other considerations. Chairman Ackley states. Despite evidence to the contrary, many still believe promises held to technology for environmental safety will cancel out the risk. The band, 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. "Just talk, fast facts and pretty pictures cannot be the worth for Mole Lake."
The heart of the matter

Clean water for the future
The heart of the matter
Solidarity & support

Dear Secretary Meyer:

As you know, Wisconsin’s indigenous people believe that the State has a responsibility to protect the environment and to ensure that the health and quality of life of all Wisconsin residents are protected. As Menominee Tribal Chairman Glen Miller pointed out, the state’s failure to properly regulate mining projects has led to the degradation of the environment and the health of Wisconsin residents.

Wisconsin’s indigenous people have a deep respect for the environment and a commitment to protecting it for future generations. We believe that the State should take a lead role in ensuring that mining projects are conducted in a manner that is safe for the environment and the health of Wisconsin residents.

We impress upon you that mining projects should be conducted in a manner that is safe for the environment and the health of Wisconsin residents. We are concerned that the State’s regulatory body, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), has failed to adequately regulate mining projects in the state.

We believe that the State should take a lead role in ensuring that mining projects are conducted in a manner that is safe for the environment and the health of Wisconsin residents. We are concerned that the State’s regulatory body, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), has failed to adequately regulate mining projects in the state.

We urge you to hire suitable experts to review the mining project and to ensure that the project is conducted in a manner that is safe for the environment and the health of Wisconsin residents.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]
GLIFWC & eleven member Ojibwe nations support Mole Lake

Cranston, Wis.—The support of the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC), composed of eleven Ojibwe bands in Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota, was received in Democratic Congresswoman from Wisconsin and the House Agriculture Committee chairman James Sensenbrenner in providing assistance to the Mole Lake band.

GLIFWC’s support comes primarily through its technical assistance, educational, legal and planning services, as well as providing information staff have worked diligently to address the needs of the Mole Lake band.

GLIFWC has also been involved in the ongoing process with biological and legal staff preparing comments on the Cranston Mine’s NOI and participating in public hearings.

The purpose of the environmental, strategic planning, networking, and building basic skills and experience have been the focus of GLIFWC involvement.

Among other projects, GLIFWC has been involved in a collaboration on a report on the environment, which brought together tribal and federal agencies from the United States and Canada. The extension of the tribal concept to the Ojibwe and its potential to reverse the impact of mining was a primary focus of the conference.

GLIFWC, a member tribe of the eight Mole Lake tribal members, is the spirit of the people over the environment. The spirit of the people over the environment and what is considered to be the sacred trust of the people, particularly water quality in inland lakes in the north central 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 entire area and affect on the natural resources as a whole.

Experts on wild rice and Ojibwe culture exchanged information at the Wild Rice Conference, Mole Lake. Above: Dr. Charles Oldenburg, author and ethnologist, and Andrew Goyke, former GLIFWC inland fishery section leader, use nets to gather stunned fish in Swamp Creek. (left) The tribe.

Using hands-held devices to temporarily stun fish, GLIFWC’s inland fisheries section suffers fish samples for a demo done on the fishery. Above, left, Gary Rigal, Inland Fisheries Technician, Andrew Goyke, former GLIFWC inland fisheries section leader, and Dave Corp, use nets in gather stunned fish in Swamp Creek on the Mole Lake Reservation.

Wild rice is the spiritual base of Indian people and, of course, the environment demands their attention...lEN is one of very few Indian organizations that brings native activists together and renews past kinships...lEN bring to together a lot of activists, people who have been in the struggle for years—perhaps on land issues or treaty issues in the past—the environment demands their attention. lEN is one of very few national networks that is active in the environmental and reservations.”

Koenen explains. “One result of the lEN conference was that Mole Lake established contact with local and international environmental organizations that believe in nonviolent and nonviolent activism and active, and to support the tribe.

Conference creates solidarity

The affirmation and sense of solidarity generated through this gathering is probably the most valuable single issue of the conference. Koenen notes, "The many local support groups and tribal organizations that believe in nonviolent and nonviolent activism need to continue to support the tribe."

Koenen, IEN National Council Member & Mole Lake tribal member

Miners bring conference to Mole Lake

Cranston, Wis.—People traveled far to get to Cranston, some from Canada, the East and West Coast to participate in the Intertribal Earth Network’s (lEN) annual conference this summer. Over a thousand people came, they came to the tiny reservation of the Sokaogon Chippewa Community, the world’s largest copper/zinc mine near Crandon, Wis., and adjacent to the Mole Lake Reservation.

The proposed mining of the world’s largest copper/zinc mine near Cran­ don, Wis., and adjacent to the Mole Lake Reservation and the effort to bring the issue before the United Nations, ” stated Tom Goldtooth, lEN National Council Member.

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Tom Goldtooth, IEN National Council Member and environmental activist, presents the need for solidarity and mutual support to indigenous nations from across North and South America and the Pacific Islands.

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The walk: no looking back

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The conference at Mole Lake brought Indian activists together 'fromullparts of the country.
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what you are saying, Bill? Bill Koenen, Mole Lake
said, it
reduced the land.
But we cannot lose
connection to the Earth while we are doing Earth, then we cannot protect it.

Defining the problem: Pollution perpetuated by greed

The issues before both IEN and Project Earth gathering were defined and redefined in various formats—by experts and by lay people. Technology aside, experiences perhaps spoke the loudest. Chief Jackson stated, "If you could see the children of the Navajo, they were born with no eyesight, another with no ears, one with no nose, and another with no tongue.

Defining the problem: Pollution perpetuated by greed

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

Indian people have to learn to love the water. We have to learn what is being done to the land through development in order to protect the land. But we cannot lose our spiritual connection with the Earth while we are doing that. If we lose that connection to Mother Earth, then we cannot protect it.

F frighteners from different nations were honored throughout the IEN Conference, and their advice and experience was welcomed and respected.

Strategy and action

IEN structured the conference in a format which allowed both time for testimony and sharing of experiences and time for discussion of cross-cutting problems.

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

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 relive old friendships.

Tragedy in Indian Country related to mining

(Continued from page 14)

Bill Sanow, Spur Gorge, Prince Albert National Park, spoke of the strife facing his title from the nuclear power plant near Port Hope, Ontario, and the proposals for a radioactive waste storage site at the facility for spent fuel rods.

Tom Goldtooth noted that the Hanford site in Washington has leaked radioactive waste into the Columbia River. There is a high cancer rate in people in the area, he said, and abnormalities in fish. Keith Lanto, Seagull River Amnistrative Nation, Ontario, spoke of the devastation of Río Argent's El Flete Lake in Patagonia, where many are caught in the cycle of poverty and the polluted water.

The vision held by mining was conveyed in 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 the means to go forward, but the Handbook on Spent Fuel was full of it. A 'wild' linked through brains and the natural earth. We must have been there.

The human cost is there. We have the right to establish a connection with the Earth, to walk with the spirit. And we know through the ceremony that day we would not be defeated—because many things have come together since that time.

'Indian people have to love the water. We have to learn what is being done to the land through development in order to protect the land. But we cannot lose our spiritual connection with the Earth while we are doing that. If we lose that connection to Mother Earth, then we cannot protect it.'

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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 trek 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 feet. The rice beds teem with wildlife. Muskrats, dining on tender shoots of the plants, dive off their feeding stations and slide 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 hallucs 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 festival 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 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 it was a gift, I was very proud of it."

"Manomin" or wild rice is known for it's taste and nutrition. (Photo by MJ. Kewley)

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MASINAIGAN (Talking Paper) is a quarterly publication of the Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission, which represents eleven Chippewa tribes in Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin. GLIFWC's member tribes are listed to the right.

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