

# NATIVE RESURGENCE

## A Guide to Sites of Native American Resistance and Ingenuity in the Midwest from the 1970s to the Present

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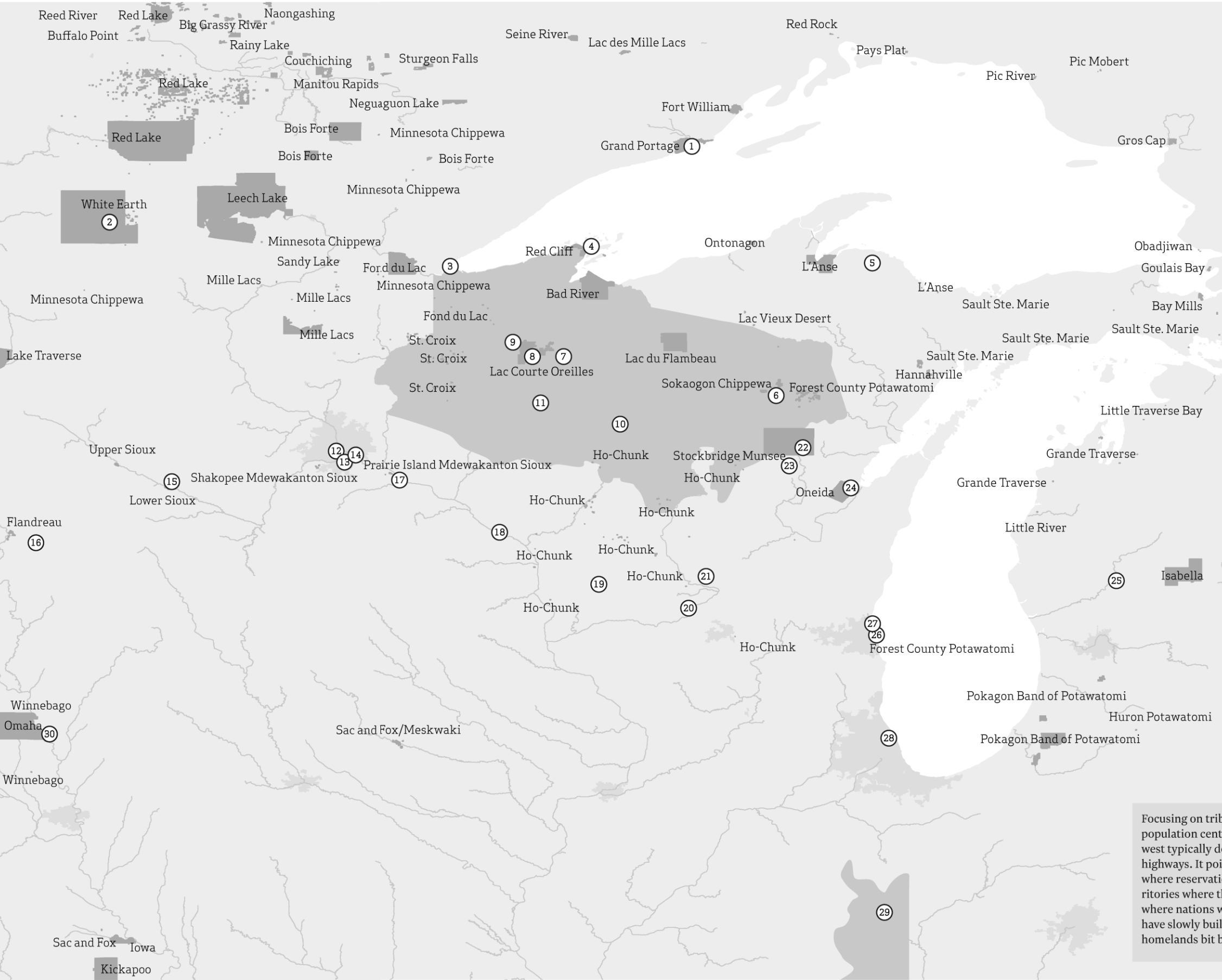
We seem to be driving in circles. Patches of sunlight on the gravel road betray no evidence of the direction of travel through this dense, lush forest. It looks a bit like a coastal Oregon landscape; the light tinged a watery green as it passes through the thick canopy of tall pines. These tribal access roads do not appear in our atlas, so there's nothing to be done but continue driving through the disorientation. We rumble past acres where two out of every three trees have been cut. A few stately, old trees spared along with the saplings that will re-populate the stand and enable it to blend back in to the seemingly untouched forest that dominates the landscape. This land is the **Menominee Nation**, and it has been actively managed using traditional forestry practices for the last 175 years. It feels as remote and ancient as the virgin forest of our imagination, yet, as tribal foresters are quick to point out, it's been logged twice over and more than 2 billion board feet of timber has been shipped south to build cities such as Chicago, **Milwaukee**, and **St. Louis**. Nevertheless, it remains one of the healthiest forests in the world, the color and density of its vegetation so distinct from the surrounding landscape that the reservation's borders are visible from space and used to georeference satellite imagery. Despite the prodigious harvest there is more standing timber today than when the Menominee Reservation was created in 1854. For this reason, forestry programs from around the world send their best students to study here. Eventually, the gravel road runs into blacktop. We turn left and find ourselves back on the map, headed toward the lumber mill in **Neopit**.

As distant and isolated as Menominee Nation feels from the urban centers whose economies and histories typically define the **Midwest**, its relationship to cities like Chicago is more complex than its role as a supplier of natural resources might suggest. The Menominee forest is part of a network, not just or even mostly in relation with the Midwest's major cities, but also with the always-unfolding story of Native life in this region. (In many ways, the story of Chicago, or any settler city, is but a blip in the 10,000-year history of the Menominee in **Wisconsin**.) **William Cronon's** epic text *Nature's Metropolis* is largely a spatial story about the entangled histories of Chicago and its surroundings that speaks to the futility of trying to separate country from city. Putting the Menominee Nation, instead of Chicago in the

center, produces a very different kind of story. Both are important and have much to offer one another. Yet the familiar tale in which Chicago is the main protagonist has effectively drowned out the other stories in which it plays more of a supporting role. Inverting the center/periphery frame that has imbued these stories with uneven value creates space to imagine and prefigure alternatives. Much as the Menominee Nation's majestic white pines built the existing Chicago, so too might the resurgence of the Native Midwest inform our struggle to create a more just and sustainable future.

**Native Resurgence** is a guide to sites of Native American resistance and ingenuity in the upper Midwest since the 1970s. Drawn from a growing archive, the sites selected for this issue of AREA coalesce around the theme of land reclamation, revitalization, and protection. A more comprehensive version of this ongoing research project will soon be available online at: [www.native resurgence.net](http://www.native resurgence.net). Our goals for this project are threefold. First, we want to place Native stories firmly in the center of our narrative; they too often occupy a position peripheral to the concerns of urban progressives and radicals. Second, we want to highlight successful examples of recent Native activism and tribal development, since stories of all-too-real victimization and discrimination tend to be the ones that most readily spring to the minds of politically conscious non-Natives. Finally, we hope that including this project in AREA we might productively unsettle familiar narratives of Chicago's urban processes, placing them in relation to a longer history of colonialism and dispossession, but also endurance and evolution.

From longstanding organizations such as the **American Indian Center of Chicago**—the nation's oldest urban Indian center—to fleeting events such as the **American Indian Chicago Conference** of 1961 and the occupations at **Chicago Indian Village**, **Belmont Harbor** and **Argonne National Laboratories** in the early 1970s, Chicago itself has a rich history of Native survivance—the joint processes of survival and resistance. The implications of this history—what it enables us to do in a historical present haunted by racism and colonialism—become more clear when Chicago is de-centered from its position as the de facto capital of the Midwest and re-situated in a larger regional context. Not only will this dissolve the false dichotomy between urban and rural but, for our purposes, it allows us to begin seeing this land—from the **Calumet River** to **Lac du Flambeau**—for what it is: **Indian Country**.



### FURTHER READING

The tremendous diversity of experience among the indigenous peoples and nations of this continent is reflected by the wide range of news sources, books and organizations that focus on various issues of concern to Native Americans.

“**News From Indian Country**” (<http://www.indiancountrynews.net/>) published out of Hayward, Wisconsin, is an excellent source of information on happenings throughout Indian Country, with an emphasis on the upper Midwest.

Tune in online to “**Indigenous Politics: From Native New England and Beyond**” (<http://www.indigenouspolitics.com/>), a weekly radio program featuring interviews with political leaders, community activists, artists and scholars engaged in the struggle for justice, sovereignty, and decolonization.

Founded by Winona LaDuke, **Native Harvest and the White Earth Land Recovery Project** ([www.nativeharvest.com](http://www.nativeharvest.com)) focus on land stewardship, traditional food systems, and renewable energy.

Also based in northern Minnesota, the **Indigenous Environmental Network** ([www.ienearth.org](http://www.ienearth.org)) works tirelessly for the protection of sacred lands and the revitalization of traditional ways of knowing.

The **Midwest Treaty Network** (<http://treaty.indigenousnative.org>) and the **Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission** ([www.glifwc.org](http://www.glifwc.org)) both emerged out of the treaty rights struggle in northern Wisconsin in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Whereas the GLIFWC continues to cultivate off-reservation treaty rights through progressive management of natural resources, the Midwest Treaty Network—an alliance of Native and non-Native groups supporting indigenous sovereignty—maintains an impressive archive documenting the treaty rights and anti-mining movements.

For an overview of Native American history and politics in Wisconsin check out Patty Loew's book *Indian Nations of Wisconsin: Histories of Endurance and Renewal* (2001). In contrast, *Waziyatawin's What Does Justice Look Like?: The Struggle for Liberation in Dakota Homeland* (2008) focuses on a contemporary movement for justice and decolonization in Minnesota.

Focusing on tribal nations, major rivers and lakes, and large population centers, this map challenges an image of the Midwest typically dominated by state boundaries and interstate highways. It points to a Midwest of great complexity, a place where reservations occupy tiny pieces of land in vast territories where the Ojibwe continue to exercise rights, a place where nations without reservations, such as the Ho-Chunk, have slowly built a fragmented land base by buying back their homelands bit by bit.

### Profiles (keyed to numbers on map)

#### 1. GRAND PORTAGE NATIONAL MONUMENT, GRAND PORTAGE, WI, 1999-PRESENT

Park and heritage center are jointly managed by the National Park Service and the Grand Portage Ojibwe.

#### 2. WHITE EARTH LAND RECOVERY PROJECT, CALLAWAY, MN, 1989-PRESENT

Non-profit organization working to restore Ojibwe lifeways, initiate sustainable development practices, and recover land to the White Earth community lost through treaty abrogation, allotment, and illegal sales.

#### 3. TRIBAL OPPOSITION TO ENBRIDGE PIPELINE, DULUTH, MN, 2007-PRESENT

Members of the Leech Lake tribe lead coalition to prevent the construction of a pipeline to carry oil from Alberta's Tar Sands to the US market.

#### 4. APOSTLE NATIONAL LAKESHORE, LA POINTE, WI, 1960-1970

Red Cliff Ojibwe fight conservationists over the creation of the national preserve on tribal land.

#### 5. KENNECOTT EAGLE MINE & YELLOW DOG PLAINS, BIG BAY, MI, 2002-PRESENT

A coalition led by the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community is fighting an attempt by the multinational mining giant Kennecott/Rio Tinto to operate a metallic sulfide mine in Michigan's Yellow Dog Plains, just a few miles from Lake Superior. This controversial mining process extracts precious metals from sulfide ore using cyanide and other toxic chemicals and pollutes nearby waters with acid mine drainage. The current struggle to

protect the sacred Eagle Rock and Yellow Dog Plains is the most recent battle in a 30-year war against multinational corporations seeking to profit from metallic sulfide mining in Ontario, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan. Strong grassroots resistance by a remarkably broad coalition—including many former adversaries from the treaty rights conflict over Ojibwe spearfishing—thwarted Exxon/Rio Algom/BHP Billiton's plans to operate a zinc copper mine at Crandon/Mole Lake. After a 28-year struggle the Sokaogon Chippewa Community Mole Lake Band and the Forest County Potawatomi Community joined forces in 2003 to purchase the mine site in 2003 and permanently retired all extant permits.

#### 6. CRANDON MINE, MOLE LAKE, WI, 1976-2003

Sokaogon Ojibwe prevent mine from opening next to their reservation.

#### 7. OCCUPATION OF WINTER DAM, WINTER, WI, 1971-PRESENT

Constructed in 1923 on the Chippewa River, Winter Dam flooded land occupied for generations by the Lac Courte Oreilles (LCO) Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. The dam was a disaster for the LCO Ojibwe, submerging villages and burial sites and destroying once abundant cranberry bogs and wild rice beds that were vital sources of food and income. When the initial 50-year operating license for Winter Dam expired in 1971, LCO activists and members of the American Indian Movement (AIM) occupied the dam for five days and demanded their long-standing

grievances be heard. After lengthy negotiations with federal and state officials an agreement was reached in 1984 in which the LCO received a cash payment, 4,500 acres of land, and rights to develop a hydroelectric power plant at the dam. The LCO Honor the Earth Pow-wow—held annually on the third weekend in July and today one of the largest pow-wows in North America—began in 1971 as a small gathering of LCO members opposed to the renewal of the dam's license. The pow-wow commemorates this important moment in LCO history and empowers tribal members to continue the struggle for justice and self-determination.

#### 9. OPPOSITION TO ARROWHEAD-WESTON TRANSMISSION LINE, NAMEKAGON RIVER, WI, 1999-2007

Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe and conservationists work unsuccessfully to prevent the construction of a major transmission line over the Namekagon River and on reservation borders.

#### 10. OFF-RESERVATION TREATY RIGHTS, CEDED TERRITORY, WI, 1983-1991

Ojibwe legally defend and successfully exercise treaty provisions permitting off-reservation hunting, fishing, and gathering despite organized, often violent, opposition.

#### 11. FLAMBEAU MINE, LADYSMITH, WI, 2007

Lac Court Oreilles Ojibwe successfully force Kennecott/Rio Tinto to improve cleanup efforts and water monitoring on a closed mine near the Flambeau River.

#### 12. MINNEHAHA FREE STATE, MINNEAPOLIS, MN, 1998-1999

Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota and Earth First! lead a 16-month encampment to block the re-route of a highway through sacred lands.

#### 13. PROTECTION OF COLDWATER SPRING, MINNEAPOLIS, MN, 1998-2008

Continued Dakota activism to protect and reclaim the sacred Coldwater Spring.

#### 14. “TAKE DOWN THE FORT” CAMPAIGN, ST. PAUL, MN, 2006-PRESENT

Continued Dakota activism to protect and reclaim the sacred Coldwater Spring.

#### 15. DAKOTA COMMEMORATIVE MARCH, ST. PAUL, MN, 2002-2012

Every other year participants in the Dakota Commemorative March walk 150 miles from Lower Sioux Agency in southwest Minnesota to historic Fort Snelling near the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport. The journey commemorates the 1,700 Dakota women, children and elders who were forcibly marched from Lower Sioux to a concentration camp at Fort Snelling at the conclusion of the U.S.-Dakota War in November of 1862. Of those who survived the original march, many more died while imprisoned during the long winter and on the final removal to Crow Creek Reservation in South Dakota the following spring. While other events—such as the Mahkato Wacipi and the Memorial Relay Run—commemorate the 38 Dakota warriors who were hanged on December 26, 1862 in what remains the largest mass execution in U.S. history, the Dakota Commemorative March focuses on the lesser-known story of the women and children. The march also

functions as a collective act of truth telling and a means for Dakota people still living in exile to reconnect with their ancient homeland and thereby facilitate a rebirth of the Dakota Oyate.

The Dakota Commemorative March is one strategic element in the larger movement for justice, decolonization, and liberation in Dakota homeland. Another element, the “Take Down the Fort” campaign aims to both literally and metaphorically dismantle Fort Snelling—a potent symbol of imperialism and oppression. The fort—now a popular living history center and state park located at the confluence (Bdote) of the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers—is the site of both Dakota genesis and genocide.

#### 16. PIPESTONE NATIONAL MONUMENT, PIPESTONE, MN, 1937-PRESENT

Ongoing struggle to protect ceremonial sites from desecration by tourists.

#### 17. XCEL ENERGY NUCLEAR WASTE STORAGE, PRAIRIE ISLAND, MN, 1994-2008

Prairie Island Indian Community (Mdewakanton Dakota) receives oversight authority and compensation for nuclear waste stored 600 yards from their reservation.

#### 18. OTAKUYE HDIHUNIPI DAKOTA HOMECOMING, WINONA, MN, 2004-PRESENT

Annual gathering of the Dakota Nation pays tribute to a rich, pre-European history and enables a process of reconciliation and healing.

#### 19. KICKAPOO VALLEY RESERVE, LA FARGE, WI, 1997-PRESENT

Jointly owned and managed by Wisconsin DNR and the Ho-Chunk Nation of Wisconsin.

#### 20. BADGER ARMY AMMUNITION PLANT, BARABOO, WI, 1998-PRESENT

The Ho-Chunk Nation is currently in negotiation to acquire 3000+ acres of contaminated former military land for bison farming, prairie restoration, and the protection of cultural sites.

#### 21. PROTECTION OF BIG SPRING, NEW HAVEN, WI, 2000-2002

The Ho-Chunk Nation and non-Native residents force Nestle to abandon plans to bottle groundwater feeding the sacred Big Spring.

#### 22. MENOMINEE DRUMS, KESHENA, WI, 1970-1975

Grassroots organization to stop the erosion of Menominee's land base and to restore federal recognition to the tribe.

#### 23. OCCUPATION OF THE ALEXIAN BROTHERS NOVITIATE, GRESHAM, WI, 1975

Two-month occupation by the Menominee Warrior Society demands that the former monastery be returned to Native hands.

#### 24. ONEIDA COMMUNITY INTEGRATED FOOD SYSTEMS, ONEIDA, WI, 1994-PRESENT

The Oneida Nation's food initiative includes organic production, processing, distribution, and education to promote health and restore tribal traditions.

#### 25. OPPOSITION TO NESTLE BOTTLING OPERATION, STANWOOD, MI, 2002-2009

Coalition of conservationists, students, sportsmen, and Ottawa and Ojibwe activists limit the amount of water Nestle can pump, bottle, and sell from public supplies.

#### 26. AIM TAKEOVER OF COAST GUARD STATION, MILWAUKEE, WI, 1971

Occupation of an abandoned US Coast Guard Station gives Milwaukee's Indian Community School its first permanent home.

#### 27. SACRED SITES RUN, MILWAUKEE, WI, 2006-2010

Annual run to honor and gain legal protection for sacred sites and Native spiritual practices.

#### 28. CHICAGO INDIAN VILLAGE, CHICAGO, IL, 1970-72

Chicago Indian Village (CIV) was a direct action group that emerged in 1970 to fight for better housing for the city's Indian population. From an office in Uptown, community organizer Mike Chosa (Ojibwe) planned seven encampments and multiple sit-ins in just over two years, most visibly on decommissioned Nike missile sites in Belmont Harbor and at Argonne National Lab. Following the lead of American Indian Movement (AIM) activists who had occupied Alcatraz Island the previous year, Chosa justified the encampments by citing 19th century treaties that promised to return abandoned federal land to the Indians. CIV's final encampment, at a recently closed National Guard base in Lake County, lasted almost six months and won the support of surrounding residents. Ultimately, however, the encampment was raided and CIV's leadership dispersed without directly meeting their goal of achieving better housing. Nevertheless, the organization exposed the city's Indians to militant tactics while raising broader public awareness of Native issues.

#### 29. MIAMI LAND CLAIM, EASTERN ILLINOIS, 2000-2001

The Miami Nation of Oklahoma sue for 2.6 million acres of tribal land illegally sold in the 19th century.

#### 30. BLACKBIRD BEND, ONAWA, IA, 1973-1990

In 1973, twenty Omaha Indians crossed the Missouri River into Iowa to re-settle and farm land that had been part of their Nebraska reservation before the river abruptly changed course fifty years earlier. Although the Bureau of Indian Affairs supported their land claim, the activists were arrested on larceny charges. By 1975 the tribe formally embraced a second occupation and filed a companion lawsuit to regain title to the land. A judge granted an injunction permitting the Indians to occupy and farm the land during the ensuing legal battle over the property between the Omaha tribe and the non-native property owners. Although the Omaha had both geology and public records on their side—all the current property owners traced their titles to a single white squatter whose claim was so dubious that the county had left the land off tax rolls for years—the case bounced back and forth between District Court, the Court of Appeals, and the Supreme Court over the next 15 years. Finally, in 1990, the District Court reluctantly agreed that 2,200 acres of disputed territory belonged to the Omaha. While it was but a small fraction of the land originally granted under the 1854 treaty, the restored territory quickly became the most economically valuable for the tribe. Blackbird Bend's location within the state of Iowa permitted Omaha to open a casino and alleviate unemployment on the reservation.