

# LIBERATION SOCIOLOGY AND ADVOCACY FOR THE SOKAOGON OJIBWE

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*As Native peoples have challenged the assault on their lands and cultures by mining and oil corporations, social scientists have become increasingly involved in research, consultation, and advocacy on behalf of Native peoples. Although there is considerable controversy about the appropriate role of social scientists in these conflicts, little academic commentary about the effects of nongovernmental environmental advocacy organizations on the outcomes of these conflicts exists. Nor is sufficient attention paid to the specific historical dynamics of Native struggles over resources in social movement theory. This Wisconsin case study addresses these issues with an examination of the author's participation in an Indian, environmental, and sportfishing alliance that defeated the world's largest resource corporation (Exxon) and the world's largest mining company (BHP Billiton). The author's involvement with the Sokaogon Ojibwe is used to reflect on the role of the sociologist as advocate and the political consequences of engaging in participatory action research.*

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In the past several decades, as multinational mining and oil corporations have penetrated the most remote parts of the planet, the principal victims have been resource-rich Native communities where mining and/or oil extraction has resulted in large-scale ecological devastation, cultural disruption, forced removal of entire communities, and massive human rights violations by both corporations and host governments (Anthropology Resource Center, 1981; Bodley, 1977, 1990; Clay, 1990; Gedicks, 1982, 1993). Defying the stereotype of primitive tribal peoples being swept aside by the onslaught of industrial civilization, Native peoples have organized and forged international alliances to defend themselves (Gedicks, 2001; Wilmer, 1993). As Native rights movements have challenged the assault on their lands and cultures, social scientists have become increasingly involved in research, consultation, and advocacy on behalf of Native peoples. Much of this involvement has taken the form of academically employed anthropologists conducting anthropological research in some kind of “partnership” with mining companies (Coomans, 2004, p. 3). Critics and defenders of social scientists as consultants and advocates for Native peoples have argued about the appropriate role of the social scientist in these conflicts (Ballard & Banks, 2003; Coomans, 2004; Hyndman, 2001; Kirsch, 1996a, 1996b, 2002). Helge Kleivan (as cited in Brøsted et al., 1985), an anthropological advocate of the rights of Native peoples, dismissed the idea that social scientists can remain neutral in these situations:

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Confronted by a world where genocide, exploitation and deprivation of control over one's own life are constant facts of life for fellow human beings, social science must become the indefatigable eye watching over human inviolability. Only then will the social scientist become anything more than a predator consuming data. (p. 11)

Is neutrality even possible in such situations? Stuart Kirsch (2002) has argued that in disputes between transnational corporations and indigenous communities, neutrality may not be possible "because of structural inequalities that make it easier for corporations to take advantage of anthropological expertise and silence opposing voices" (p. 175).

My own position in this controversy has been shaped by my long-standing association with the Sokaogon Ojibwe (Chippewa) of Mole Lake, Wisconsin.<sup>1</sup> Beginning in 1976 and continuing to the present, I served as a consultant, adviser, documentary filmmaker, and advocate for the Sokaogon Ojibwe as they opposed the construction of a large underground metallic sulfide mine next to their reservation. In my dual role as a sociologist and activist, I was following in the tradition Gouldner (1970) characterized as "Reflexive Sociology" in contrast to positivist sociology with its emphasis on preserving the separation between subject and object: "The aim of the Reflexive Sociologist . . . is not to remove his [sic] influence on others but to know it, which requires that he must become aware of himself as both knower and as agent of change" (p. 497).

In 1977, I founded the Center for Alternative Mining Development Policy to assist Indian tribes and rural communities in the upper Midwest in evaluating and/or resisting proposed mining projects. In 1982, as the resistance to mining intensified, I became a founding member and served as executive secretary of the Wisconsin Resources Protection Council (WRPC), a statewide environmental organization that included both Indian and non-Indian opponents of mining.

Despite the growth of environmental advocacy organizations such as Project Underground,<sup>2</sup> there has been little academic commentary about the effects of the emergence of nongovernmental organizations, specifically those monitoring mining operations, on the behavior of multinational corporations (Ballard & Banks, 2003, p. 291). Likewise, the specific history of Native American struggles, including the resistance to dispossession, forced removal, internal colonialism, and treaty rights conflicts "occupy a domain that social movement theory, as presently constituted, is not designed to address" (Clark, 2002, p. 412). This article addresses both these issues with a Wisconsin case study of the development of an Indian, environmental, and sportfishing alliance that drove out the world's largest resource corporation (Exxon) and then the world's largest mining company (BHP Billiton).

My transition from being a consultant to becoming an environmental and Native rights advocate was shaped by several factors, including the emergence of a liberation sociology in the 1960s, the development of tribal resource nationalism in the 1970s, and the intense conflict over the assertion of Ojibwe treaty rights in the 1980s. Each of these events can be considered episodes of an ongoing "framing process" attempting to orient both my own and other groups' actions to changing political, social, and cultural circumstances (Snow & Benford, 1992, p. 136).

## LIBERATION SOCIOLOGY

I came to the University of Wisconsin–Madison in the fall of 1967 as a sophomore fresh from a college seminary where I was training to be a Catholic foreign

missionary. My first political experience that fall was when I witnessed fellow students protesting Dow Chemical's use of napalm in Vietnam by sitting down in the Commerce Building and blocking Dow job recruiters. I was not involved in the protest but was sympathetic to the concerns raised by the protesters. The students were prepared to be arrested in the tradition of nonviolent civil disobedience. However, when Madison police arrived, they started beating students instead of arresting them. Instead of paddy wagons, the students were taken away in ambulances. As classes changed and an angry crowd gathered, the police used tear gas to disperse the crowd. It was the first time that the Madison city police had been called onto the campus, and it was a disaster. It was also the beginning for me of what Goffman (1974) identified as a "primary framework" that allows individuals "to locate, perceive, identify, and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences defined in its terms" (p. 21).

After this experience, I began to see for the first time other dimensions of the university's complicity in the war effort through the Reserve Officer Training Corps and the Army Mathematics Research Center. Although the university's Land Tenure Center was not directly involved in the war effort, it came under much criticism for conducting studies of peasant land reform organizations that could be very useful to authoritarian regimes that wanted to suppress such movements in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Campus teach-ins about the role of the Land Tenure Center in the Third World opened my eyes to the importance of social science as a research tool to preserve the status quo and to suppress movements for social change.

When I started my graduate studies in sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1972, many of my fellow students and I had been radicalized by the antiwar movement. As an undergraduate, I was suspended from the University of Wisconsin for my participation in protests against the invasion of Cambodia by the United States and the murder of four students at Kent State by national guard troops in May 1970. Nevertheless, when my 2-year suspension expired, I began my studies with the idea of combining teaching and activism. I had the opportunity to learn from sociology professors such as Maurice Zeitlin how sociology could also be used to expose the role of powerful institutions in maintaining oppressive social relationships. Professor Zeitlin was a highly visible antiwar activist on the campus and in the community as well as a scholar of both U.S. Latin American policy and the corporate ruling class in the United States. His scholarship and teaching encompassed the central concern of liberation sociology, namely, human emancipation through the development of "knowledge that helps persons locate their experience, discontents, and troubles as aspects of processes that are subject to human intervention and transformation" (Flacks & Turkel, 1978, pp. 193-194).

As an alternative to the "top down" social science research on the victims of oppressive power relationships, I proposed "guerrilla research" on the structure and activities of multinational corporations with the explicit aim of providing useful information for oppressed communities (see Gedicks, 1973). In advocating research on the institutions of the powerful, I was connecting to a long-standing tradition of sociologists going back to Marx and continuing with W. E. B. Du Bois, Jane Addams, and C. Wright Mills. This tradition emphasizes the production of knowledge that enables people to understand and change the conditions that oppress them (Feagin & Vera, 2001, p. 35).

During this period, I was research coordinator for Community Action on Latin America, a Madison-based anti-imperialist collective. Part of my job was to make

connections between U.S. foreign policy toward Latin America and the concerns of Wisconsin citizens. I found this connection when the Kennecott mining company showed up in northwestern Wisconsin, near Ladysmith, exploring for new sources of copper to replace those that had been nationalized in Chile under the democratic socialist government of Salvador Allende. Other mining companies, responding to the wave of economic nationalism all over the Third World, were also interested in Wisconsin's untapped mineral reserves. Phelps Dodge, a major U.S. copper producer, was exploring next to the Lac du Flambeau Ojibwe Reservation, near Woodruff-Minocqua, and Exxon Minerals was exploring next to the Sokaogon Ojibwe Reservation, near Crandon.

Because of my research on the social, economic, and political impacts of mining companies in Chile, I was invited to the 1976 conference "Indian Tribes as Developing Nations" at the Johnson Foundation headquarters in Racine, Wisconsin. The meeting was organized by Americans for Indian Opportunity (1976), an advocacy organization whose major focus was the use and misuse of Indian lands and resources. Exxon Minerals had just announced its discovery of one of the 10 largest zinc-copper deposits in North America immediately adjacent to the Sokaogon Ojibwe Reservation at Mole Lake, Wisconsin. Two members of the Mole Lake Tribal Council asked me to provide assistance to the tribe in its dealings with Exxon. The tribe needed technical assistance, legal help, and fundraising support to develop an effective counter strategy to Exxon's mining plans. This was an ideal opportunity to apply the principles of liberation sociology to respond to the needs of an impoverished and threatened community.

### RESOURCE COLONIZATION AND TRIBAL NATIONALISM

When copper, iron, and lead were first discovered on Indian lands in the Lake Superior region in the early 1800s, Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri, an articulate visionary of American expansion, ordered a list of the area's tribes to determine "the practicality of extinguishing their title" (Keller, 1978, p. 16). A series of treaties ensued that secured mineral rights for the U.S. government to all of Ojibwe tribal lands. The Lake Superior tribes were crowded onto land considered worthless for agriculture.

After a decade of geophysical exploration beginning in the mid-1960s, it became clear that the reservations of the Ojibwe, Potawatomi, Menominee, Stockbridge-Munsee, Oneida, and Ho Chunk Indians lie in the southernmost extension of a mineral-rich geological formation known as the Canadian Shield. Some of the largest multinational mining corporations in the United States and Canada were exploring, drilling, and planning to mine the region's valuable reserves of copper, nickel, lead, zinc, vanadium, titanium, and uranium. The long-range planning of these corporations envisioned the Lake Superior region as a new resource colony that would provide raw materials for growth and diversification and a dumping ground for the toxic and radioactive wastes left behind from the mining process (Gedicks, 1985, p. 182).

The resource colonization process was not limited to mining. It included energy and military components as well. The same Indian tribes and rural communities targeted for mining also faced the threat of radioactive contamination from the siting of a high-level nuclear waste dump in the granite bedrock of the Lake Superior region. A 1979 report for the Department of Energy ranked the Lake Superior

region as the “most favorable for further study” as a potential radioactive waste disposal site (Dames & Moore Consultants, 1979). Finally, the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe were concerned about potential environmental and health hazards from the nearby Navy communications facility known as ELF (extremely low frequency; Rasmussen, 1999, p. 4). ELF is the communications component of a first-strike nuclear capability that transmits messages to nuclear submarines patrolling deep waters around the world using electric and magnetic fields.

As corporate pressures to exploit Indian resources intensified, Indians became more aware of the value of these resources. In 1975, for example, the Phelps Dodge mining company approached the Lac du Flambeau band of Ojibwe in northern Wisconsin to acquire the mineral rights to potential copper deposits on the reservation. The tribe hired Charles Lipton, an international minerals lawyer, to examine Phelps Dodge’s offer. “No company that I have seen in recent times,” said Lipton, “would dare to suggest such terms now to a developing nation overseas” (Gedicks, 1985, p. 183). The tribe responded with a counterproposal. Phelps Dodge abruptly ended its negotiations with the tribe.

However, tribal nationalism is not simply an economic issue. In 1975, when Exxon discovered the large Crandon zinc-copper sulfide deposit in Forest County, Wisconsin, the cultural, environmental, and human health effects of large-scale mining were of major concern to the area’s tribes. The proposed Crandon mine was 1 mile upstream of the wild rice beds of the Sokaogon Ojibwe, 5 miles downwind of the Forest County Potawatomi Reservation, and 40 miles (via the Wolf River) upstream of the Menominee Nation.

### EXXON VS. THE SOKAOGON OJIBWE

The proposed mine lies on territory sold by the Ojibwe Nation to the United States in 1842 and directly on a 12-square-mile tract of land promised to the Mole Lake Sokaogon Ojibwe in 1855 (Danziger, 1978, p. 153). In September 1975, Exxon gave a U.S.\$20,000 check to the tribal chairman for the right to explore on the 1900-acre reservation. If Exxon liked what it found, they could go ahead and mine it. At the same time, Exxon began making other offers, including one of U.S.\$200,000 for just 40 acres of corporate-owned timberland a mile away. Two weeks later, the tribal council found out about Exxon’s check, tore it to pieces, and reasserted their treaty claim to the land encompassing the Exxon discovery site (Dorgan, 1977, p. 2).

Treaties guaranteed Ojibwe access to wild rice, fish, and some wild game on ceded lands. But the economic, cultural, and spiritual center of the Mole Lake Ojibwe is their wild rice lake. The rice, called *manomin* (gift from the creator), is an essential part of the Ojibwe diet, an important cash crop, and a sacred part of the band’s religious rituals.

The Crandon/Mole Lake mine would have extracted approximately 55 million tons of sulfide ore during the 30-year life of the project. During its lifetime, the mine would generate 44 million tons of wastes—the equivalent of eight Great Pyramids of Egypt (Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources [DNR], 1986, p. ii).<sup>3</sup> When metallic sulfide wastes have contact with water and air, the potential result is sulfuric acids plus high levels of poisonous heavy metals such as mercury, lead, zinc, arsenic, copper, and cadmium. The mine would also use toxic chemicals in ore processing (including up to 20 tons of cyanide per month) and reduce ground-

water tables in the area because of the constant dewatering of the underground mine.

Exxon's total disregard toward the fate of the tribe was summarized in their technical project plan: "The Mole Lake [Sokaogon] Indians may have to accommodate new pressures coming from both the mine development and the newcomers" (Exxon Minerals, 1978, p. 56). Similar sentiments could be heard from state government officials and legislators who assumed that the mine would be developed regardless of any objections from the Ojibwe. Not only were the threats to the survival of the Ojibwe dismissed but the entire process of decision making at the state level marginalized the Ojibwe as well. In other words, the Ojibwe were experiencing "environmental racism" long before the term began to be used in the mid-1980s.<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, individual members of the Sokaogon Ojibwe expressed their alarm at the threat of Exxon's proposed mine and their plea for assistance in what would later come to be identified as an "environmental justice frame" (Capek, 1993, p. 5). One aspect of the Ojibwe experience that was missing from the traditional environmental justice frame was the reality of internal colonialism. The penetration of Indian lands by resource-extractive industry became the mechanism by which tribes were transformed "from captive nations into internal colonies" (Snipp, 1986, p. 459). The effect of this renewed assault has been characterized as "revolutionizing the status of American Indian tribes on a scale equal to the restriction of their political powers in the 19th century" (Snipp, 1986, p. 458).

The environmental justice frame not only identifies a condition of injustice but also implies a strategy for action (Capek, 1993, p. 7). To defend tribal control of reservation resources, the Sokaogon Ojibwe planned a multidimensional defense strategy. They hired an attorney to represent tribal mining concerns during any mine permit proceedings, an anthropologist to research the treaty claim, and independent consultants to do a social, economic, and environmental impact assessment of the Exxon mine. The tribe also contracted with various government agencies for baseline environmental studies of the reservation. Finally, the tribe organized a mining committee to represent tribal concerns before the public as well as the state of Wisconsin's regulatory agencies.

The prospects for an alliance between rural communities and threatened Indian tribes appeared especially good after a grassroots citizens group in northwestern Wisconsin successfully blocked the Kennecott mining company from constructing an open pit copper mine on the banks of the Flambeau River near Ladysmith, Wisconsin, in 1976 (Gedicks, 1993, p. 91). However, developing this alliance would take a major organizational commitment of time, resources, and energy. Through my work with Community Action on Latin America, I had become aware of the work of Shelton Davis and the Anthropology Resource Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts, as well as the work of Roger Moody and Colonialism and Indigenous Minorities Research/Action in London (Moody began editing the newspaper *Native Peoples News* in 1978; see Davis, 1977; Davis & Mathews, 1976; Moody, 1992). Both the Anthropology Resource Center and Colonialism and Indigenous Minorities Research/Action brought together social scientists and human rights activists to develop and coordinate international campaigns to protect tribal land rights in places such as Brazil and Australia. With these organizational models in mind, I conceived the idea for a Center for Alternative Mining Development Policy that would provide technical assistance and organizational support for Native American and non-Native rural communities targeted for mining projects.

Gaining entry into the Sokaogon Ojibwe community was not without its problems, despite an invitation from the tribal council and an Indian advisory board that set the agenda for the Center for Alternative Mining Development Policy. Many tribal members were suspicious of academics and believed that once information had been gathered from the community, the research would be used to advance my professional career with no benefit to the tribe. Distrust of social scientists is common in Native communities and is well founded in the history of tribal-academic relations (Bodley, 1990).

Although part of my research involved traditional social impact analysis, a major part of the research involved tribal participation in setting the goals and methods for the research and action strategies. This included fundraising for Ojibwe tribal members to make on-site visits to other reservations that had experience with mining. Without information about the colonial style of extractive resource development on other reservations, the Sokaogon Ojibwe would be unprepared to resist similar plans by Exxon. In contrast to positivist sociology, participatory action research "fundamentally is about who has the right to speak up, to analyze and to act" (Hall, 1992, p. 22). At this time (1976) however, there were very few examples of environmental organizations coming to the assistance of tribes threatened by mining projects. It was not until the emergence of the environmental justice movement in the mid-1980s that mainstream environmental organizations began to acknowledge the serious environmental threats affecting Indian lands and cultures.<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, within a year of my first meeting with the Sokaogon Ojibwe, the initial resistance to Exxon had been developed on the basis of preexisting relations and social networks, a factor that has been crucial in the development of the environmental justice movement elsewhere (Schlosberg, 1999, p. 126). Churches played a crucial role in the initial funding of the Center for Alternative Mining Development Policy, particularly the U.S. Catholic Conference's Campaign for Human Development and the United Presbyterian Church's National Committee on the Self Development of Peoples. The environmental justice frame provided a readily understood statement of the problem and a call for action for church funding agencies.

### WHO PAYS THE COST OF MINING?

One of the basic assumptions in almost all state agency and university planning documents was that there would be serious long-term environmental contamination from mining, and that mining companies should not be liable for the costs of cleanup and monitoring of mine wastes (McNamara, 1976, p. 51). This assumption could make sense only if the affected communities were kept unaware of these risks and kept out of the decision-making process as these plans were implemented. To prevent this from happening, the tribe needed as much information about the project and about the company's track record as soon as possible.

The key to developing an effective counter strategy to corporate resource colonialism is to identify the weakest, most vulnerable aspects of the project (e.g., financing, dangerous or unproven technologies, violation of Native land rights, human health risks, failure to comply with applicable environmental laws and regulations, etc.) and organize a campaign with regard to these issues. The Sokaogon Ojibwe hired COACT Research, Inc. of Madison to provide them with a social, economic, and environmental assessment of Exxon's proposed mine. The COACT

study identified several fatal flaws in the mine plan, including the threat to the tribe's wild rice lake (Gough, 1980). A separate study by Wisconsin Indian Legal Services also identified mining impacts to the tribe's wild rice lake as one of the critical legal issues in the mine permitting process. Any withdrawal of groundwater, or dewatering, of the proposed underground mine would harm the rice lake and provide the tribe with legal grounds to request a state denial of a mine permit (Wilson & Pritchard, 1979, p. 27).

Project anthropologist Robert Gough (1980) directly challenged Exxon's presumption that the tribe would simply "adapt" to the inevitability of mining: "For the Sokaogon, whose community would be most immediately affected by the proposed mineral development, issues of sovereignty, self-determination, treaty rights and the federal government's trust responsibility transcend the state's mineral development interests and Exxon's corporate timetable" (p. 391).<sup>6</sup>

Unsurprisingly, one of the most controversial aspects of the COACT study (Gough, 1980) was the discussion of Exxon's negative track record with other mining projects. This information provided the tribe with a way of assessing the reliability of Exxon's assurances that modern mining technology would not harm the environment, based on the company's own record. The U.S. Economic Development Administration ordered COACT to delete the Exxon track record section of the report. When they refused, the U.S. Economic Development Administration cut off all further payments for the study.<sup>7</sup>

Exxon's public image as a socially and environmentally responsible corporation, prior to the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill, was a major selling point for the Crandon project. Exxon's Crandon project staff spent a great deal of time and effort cultivating this image and reacted swiftly when faced with potentially competing public images. In December 1978, Paul Jason, Exxon's public affairs director for the Crandon project, contacted the Wisconsin Humanities Committee funding committee, by letter and phone, persuading them to deny U.S.\$28,000 in finishing funds for my documentary film about the potential impact of Exxon's proposed mine on the Sokaogon Ojibwe (Eggleson, 1979; Wagner, 1979). The less said about this controversy the better, as far as Exxon was concerned.

This was not the end of the matter however. One of the key strengths of networking is the use of multiple, interlinked strategies and tactics (Schlosberg, 1999, p. 134). When Exxon closed off one avenue of public discussion and debate, we simply expanded our network of allies and developed alternative venues. As soon as Exxon filed its mine permit application in 1982, the Sinsinawa Dominican Sisters of Wisconsin entered a shareholder resolution asking that the company postpone any further investment in the mine permit process until Ojibwe treaty claims to the Exxon site were settled (Investor Responsibility Research Center, 1983). At Exxon's annual shareholder meeting, a Sokaogon and Sinsinawa delegation cited Wisconsin's attorney general in emphasizing that the company's title to the Crandon deposit was legally uncertain. Although the resolution failed, it nonetheless forced the company to respond publicly to the treaty claim and to raise doubts among shareholders about the feasibility of the project.

A large part of Exxon's early success in mobilizing local public opinion in favor of the mine was due to a public relations campaign that sought to convince people that the mine was inevitable and that environmental opposition was unthinkable against such a "clean" mine. Exxon's project timetable reinforced this sense of inevitability by calling for the construction of a "test mine" in 1981 before any public hearings on an environmental impact statement. The prospecting permit

would have allowed Exxon to begin construction of a mineshaft and extract a 70,000-ton bulk sample for analysis. Once the mineshaft was in place, of course, the bureaucratic momentum in favor of issuing all the required permits would be overwhelming.

Exxon's plan went awry in August 1980 when they secretly obtained a draft copy of COACT Research's report to the tribe. The report challenged Exxon's public statements about the "minimal impact" of a test mine. Exxon did not know whether the tribe had the resources to challenge any prospecting permit issued by the DNR. Rumors circulating in Crandon suggested that the tribe was planning to challenge the permit. Because of the federal government's special trust responsibility toward the tribe, any lawsuit would automatically involve the federal government and the federal courts. This could delay the project for several years. In September, Exxon made a surprise announcement that it was abandoning its plans to apply for a prospecting permit. This delay bought invaluable time for the opposition to educate their neighbors about the project and build alliances.

By the time that Exxon filed its mine application with the Wisconsin DNR in 1982, grassroots environmental organizations such as the Rusk County Citizens Action Group in Ladysmith were meeting with the Sokaogon (Mole Lake) Ojibwe to share information and build personal and organizational connections. That same year saw the founding of the WRPC, a statewide environmental organization concerned with mining and water quality. Included in the group's membership were grassroots citizen groups, Indian tribes, elected officials, and residents of potential mining areas, antinuclear organizations, and resort owners. I was elected executive secretary. The organization planned a number of public meetings in the Town of Nashville (which covers half the mine site and includes the reservation) to begin a dialogue between the Mole Lake Ojibwe and their non-Indian neighbors. Township residents, who depended on private wells for their drinking water, were especially concerned about groundwater contamination from the mine and the mine waste dump.

In March 1983, the WRPC chapter in Nashville petitioned the town board for an immediate moratorium on mining. Under Wisconsin law, the state cannot issue a mining permit until local zoning approval has been granted by individual townships. After the board turned down the moratorium request, dissatisfied citizens threw their support behind an outspoken Ojibwe critic of the Exxon mine as candidate for town chairman in the April 1983 election. Although the Ojibwe candidate did not win, he received substantial non-Indian support that demonstrated growing local opposition to the project. At the annual town meeting that same year, a mining moratorium resolution received 41% of the vote. By the time Exxon announced its withdrawal from the project in 1986, it had already lost the decisive battle of public perceptions about the mine. However, another battle was developing that could easily unravel the emerging Native/non-Native alliance against mining. That was the battle over Ojibwe treaty rights.

### OJIBWE TREATY RIGHTS UNDER SIEGE

After a federal court decision recognized Ojibwe treaty rights in 1983, White sportsmen held sometimes violent protests against Ojibwe off-reservation spearfishing. Riot police from around the state were deployed at northern lakes during the spring spearfishing seasons while antitreaty mobs attacked Ojibwe spearers and their families with rocks, bottles, boat and vehicle assaults, sniper fire,

and pipe bombs. Posters advertising the First Annual Indian Shoot were found in northern Wisconsin bars (Metz, 1990, p. 17). Antitreaty groups had accused the Ojibwe of destroying the fish and local tourism economy, even though the tribes never took more than 3% of the fish (Strickland, Herzberg, & Owens, 1990, p. 24). Nonetheless, then-Governor Tommy Thompson criticized the Ojibwe for exercising their treaty rights. Indeed, as the Strickland et al. (1990) report on the conflict notes, "The state of Wisconsin acted as if its 'problem' in northern Wisconsin is the result of Chippewa behavior" (p. 10).

State Administration Secretary (and former Exxon lobbyist) James Klausner had, in 1990, unsuccessfully pressured the Mole Lake and Lac du Flambeau Ojibwe to "lease" their treaty rights in exchange for money. After Exxon's withdrawal from the controversial Crandon mine project, Noranda, Rio Tinto, and other mining companies interested in northern Wisconsin became acutely aware of treaties as potential legal obstacles to developing mines on and adjacent to Indian reservations. The treaties do not cover mineral rights, but Native nations interpret their guarantees to mean that any degradation of off-reservation resources would be an "environmental violation" of the treaties, giving them legal standing in federal court to challenge harmful projects. Mining proponents took a position against treaty rights as a potential obstacle to development of a mining district in the lands ceded by the Ojibwe treaties. The Wisconsin Counties Association, viewing the treaties as a potential legal obstacle both to county timber income and mining, took the lead in organizing county governments around the United States to oppose treaty rights (Kerr, 1990).

On the question of mining, the perspective of most environmentally minded sportfishers was closer to the tribe's. When they asked antitreaty groups to take a stand against mining's potential environmental threat to the fishery, the groups either refused to take a stand or sided with the mining companies. Because antitreaty groups refused to oppose the mining companies, they began to lose their "environmentalist" image in the eyes of many of their followers, and the tribes saw new opportunities to build bridges to certain sportfishing groups. Even at the height of the spearing clashes, the late Red Cliff Ojibwe activist Walter Bresette had predicted that non-Indian northerners would realize that environmental and economic problems are "more of a threat to their lifestyle than Indians who go out and spear fish . . . we have more in common with the anti-Indian people than we do with the state of Wisconsin" (Midwest Treaty Network, 1991, p. 1).

The most pejorative term used throughout both the spearing and mining conflicts was the label of *outsider*.<sup>8</sup> Antitreaty protesters used the label against both the Ojibwe and non-Native treaty supporters. Mining companies deployed the label, often successfully, against urban-based environmental groups such as the Sierra Club. Local environmentalists and tribal members, however, quickly labeled the multinational companies as "outsiders" and in so doing, increasingly won support of their former local White adversaries. In so doing, they began to use "geographies of inclusion" to redefine parts of northern Wisconsin as a common home for both Native and non-Native residents. Instead of continuing the conflict over the allocation of the fishery, both groups began to cooperate to protect the fishery against a common outside threat.

In 1993, Rio Tinto's Kennecott company opened the Ladysmith mine located 100 miles to the west of the Crandon deposit in northwestern Wisconsin and 30 miles south of the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe Reservation. The mine opened despite a successful court challenge by the tribe and the Sierra Club, charging that

the Wisconsin DNR had failed to conduct endangered resource surveys in the Flambeau River as required by law. The court issued an injunction against mine construction until a supplemental environmental assessment of endangered species was completed. The tribe and the Sierra Club accused the Wisconsin DNR of conducting a whitewash study but were unable to pursue the case because of a lack of funds (Gedicks, 1993, p. 159). The mine closed after 4 years.

Native and non-Native opponents, however, stopped Noranda's plans to open the Lynne mine in Oneida County located 30 miles south of the Lac du Flambeau Ojibwe Reservation. The area was one of the hotbeds of militancy against spearfishing, but local environmentalists nevertheless built a working relationship with Lac du Flambeau after Noranda announced its plans in 1990. Sportsmen also joined the opposition to protect the rich fishing and hunting grounds around the Willow Flowage. The unexpectedly strong opposition, combined with questions about the mine's potential damage to wetlands, convinced Noranda to withdraw by 1993.

This multiracial alliance of tribes, environmentalists, and sportfishers was strengthened by renewed opposition to the Crandon mine along the Wolf River as Exxon announced its intention to revive the project with its new partner, Canada-based Rio Algom, in 1993. In a series of meetings and gatherings from 1992 to 1995, different grassroots groups met to coordinate opposition to the mine. One of these meetings, "Stop the Plunder of Native Lands: Coming Together to Protect the Flambeau, the Willow, and the Wolf" in Tomahawk, was organized by the Madison Treaty Rights Support Group in the fall of 1992.

Tribal and environmental activists discussed strategy and tactics while a paid informant took notes. The informant's eight-page memo was subsequently "leaked" to the *Wisconsin State Journal*, which ran a story about the conference and quoted some inflammatory statements from the report questioning the credibility of the leaders of the antimining movement (Seely, 1993). In the unpublished report, Tom Maulson, the tribal chair of the Lac du Flambeau Ojibwe, and one of the most outspoken advocates of treaty rights during the spearfishing controversy, was quoted as advocating breaking into state office buildings to obtain files; Walter Bresette, a Red Cliff Ojibwe treaty activist, who had been arrested for nonviolent civil disobedience at the Kennecott mine site in Ladysmith, was quoted as calling "for more aggressive tactics against the Flambeau Mining Company in Ladysmith"; and I was described as an advocate of "blowing up bulldozers." All of these quotations were fabrications. To the reporter's credit, he interviewed all the people misquoted in the report and included their comments on the accuracy of the statements. None of the mining companies or their lobbyists or public relations firms would admit to any knowledge of this memo. Despite the presence of an informant, these conferences and meetings provided an opportunity for networking among diverse groups that eventually led to coordinated actions.

In the fall of 1995, I took a sabbatical from teaching and received an applied social research and social policy grant from the American Sociological Association to assist the Sokaogon Ojibwe in reviewing the reams of technical reports submitted by Exxon/Rio Algom in support of their mining application. During an early on-site visit to the reservation, one of my informants took me aside and advised me to minimize my presence on the reservation to avoid being caught up in an intratribal conflict between promining and antimining factions. He suggested that any assistance I could provide to a developing resistance in the surrounding non-Native community would help the tribal opposition to mining. Following this advice, I refocused my efforts and helped organize a Crandon chapter of the Wis-

consin Resources Protection Council to better coordinate growing citizen opposition in the town of Nashville with Mole Lake tribal opposition.

Looking back on this change of plans, it appears as a moment of great insight into the way I understood the symbiotic relationship between mining resistance in the Native and non-Native communities. It also forced me to reevaluate the importance of technical objections to the mine plan compared to building multiple and overlapping networks of resistance. Although technical objections to mining projects are important, decision makers rarely deny mining permits on technical grounds alone. Treaty rights activists on the Mole Lake Reservation understood this and made great efforts to develop alliances in the non-Native surrounding communities. As tribes won their treaty rights and opened new casinos in the early 1990s, their legal and financial ability to protect the off-reservation environment was improved to the advantage of Native and non-Native alike.

### BUILDING STATEWIDE COALITIONS

By 1996, the Wolf Watershed Educational Project (a campaign of the Midwest Treaty Network) began to coordinate a series of antimine speaking tours around the state, bringing tribal representatives to communities that had never heard a Native American speak publicly. A spring 1996 speaking tour along the Wolf and Wisconsin rivers educated 22 communities about the Crandon mine and the company's proposed 38-mile liquid waste pipeline from the mine to the Wisconsin River. My documentary film on the Indian and environmental alliance against Exxon, *Keepers of the Water* (Gedicks, 1990), was shown at many of these public events.<sup>9</sup> After each community event, organizers left behind a core of grassroots supporters who carried on the work of coalition building and community action. The tour culminated with a rally of 1,000 in Rhinelander at the company headquarters and the pipeline's proposed outlet. This was just the beginning of a systematic and widespread educational campaign conducted in many of the communities contacted through the speaking tour.<sup>10</sup>

Residents living downstream from the proposed mine could become well informed about the mine by logging on to more than 24 Web sites maintained by groups opposed to the project. A mining company representative complained about the domination of the Internet by opposition groups:

If you were to get on the Internet and type "Crandon Mine," you do not get our web site. You get all the other ones. If you go into any one of the groups, they are all linked. They are very good at using the Internet as a tool. And if I'm a person who just wants information, I get all of theirs first. Whatever the key phrases they use they are very good at it. (Riemer, 2003, p. 858)

The journal of the National Mining Association complained that Wisconsin "barbarians in cyberspace" were spreading anticorporate tactics around the world through the Internet (Webster, 1998).

Fishing organizations and sportsmen's clubs began to strongly and publicly oppose the Crandon mine and the metallic mining district proposed by prominent interests. The tourism industry—the Wolf River watershed's economic lifeblood—also began to realize that urban tourists may not be drawn to the area's clean lakes and rivers if mines were allowed to open. Mining companies had perhaps felt that sportfishing groups would never join hands with the tribes, yet some slowly realized that if metallic sulfide mines were allowed to contaminate rivers with sulfuric

acid, there might not be edible fish left to argue about. The American Rivers group had already identified the Wolf River as the fifth-most-endangered river in the United States, and the Federation of Fly Fishers would later warn that the river is the single most threatened in the country (Seely, 1998).

### BUILDING LOCAL ALLIANCES

In the same year of 1996, the Mole Lake Ojibwe joined hands with their non-Indian neighbors in the town of Nashville not only to fight the mine proposal but also to chart economic alternatives to mining development.<sup>11</sup> In December 1996, the Nashville Town Board signed a local mining agreement with Exxon/Rio Algom after a number of illegally closed meetings and despite the objections of a majority of township residents. The local WRPC chapter filed a lawsuit against the old town board for 55 violations of the state's open meetings law.<sup>12</sup> The former town board was replaced in the April 1997 election by an antimining board that included a Mole Lake tribal member. The cooperation between the WRPC chapter and the Mole Lake Ojibwe was largely responsible for the fact that 98.4% of Nashville's eligible voters cast ballots—the highest turnout of any election in the history of Wisconsin (Grossman, 2002).

In September 1998, the new town board rescinded the local agreement. Without this agreement from the town, the state cannot grant a mining permit. The mining company sued the town for violation of contract. The township countersued the company, charging that the local agreement "resulted from a conspiracy by the mining company and the town's former attorneys to defraud the town of its zoning authority over the proposed mining operations" (Seely, 1999, p. B3). To raise funds to defend itself, the town set up its own Web site (<http://www.nashvillewiundersiege.com>) to explain how people could donate money for a legal defense fund in what the town called a "David and Goliath" showdown. In January 2002, a state appeals court upheld the 1996 local agreement.

Cooperative relations between the town and the Mole Lake Tribe were further strengthened when they received a U.S.\$2.5 million grant from the federal government to promote long-term sustainable jobs in this impoverished community. Together with surrounding townships, the Menominee Nation, the Lac du Flambeau Tribe, and Mole Lake formed the Northwoods *niijii* (the Ojibwe word for *friends*) Enterprise Community. Now Indians and non-Indians are working together to provide a clear alternative to the unstable "boom-and-bust" cycle that mining would bring to their communities. If successful, the unique project could bring in an additional U.S.\$7 million to \$10 million to these communities during the next decade. This effort, combined with casinos that have made the tribes the largest employers in Forest County, has dampened the appeal of mining jobs for many residents. Indian gaming, although not providing an economic panacea for many tribes, has enabled some tribes to finance legal and public relations fights against the mining companies. One of these fights used federally recognized tribal sovereignty to enhance environmental protection of reservation lands.

### TRIBAL WATER AND AIR REGULATORY AUTHORITY

Tribal lands were ignored in the original versions of many federal environmental laws of the 1970s, including the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act (Knox,

1993, p. 54). To remedy this exclusion, amendments to these laws were enacted to give tribes the same standing to enforce environmental standards as states. In pursuing this authority, Mole Lake expanded the traditional environmental justice frame to include support for tribal environmental self-governance (Krakoff, 2002, p. 162).

In 1995, the Mole Lake Ojibwe became the first Wisconsin tribe granted independent authority by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to regulate water quality on the reservation. The tribe's wild rice beds are just a mile downstream from the proposed Crandon mine. Tribal regulatory authority would affect all upstream industrial facilities, including the proposed mine. Because Swamp Creek flows into the tribe's Rice Lake, the tribe has to give approval for any upstream discharges that might degrade their wild rice beds.

Within a week of EPA approval of Mole Lake's water quality authority, Wisconsin Attorney General James Doyle sued the EPA and the tribe in federal court, demanding that the federal government reverse its decision to let Indian tribes make their own water pollution laws. A petition urging Doyle to drop the lawsuit was signed by 26 environmental groups, 2 neighboring townships, and 454 people in 121 communities around the state. In April 1999, the U.S. District Court in Milwaukee dismissed the Wisconsin lawsuit and upheld the tribe's right to establish water quality standards to protect its wild rice beds. The state appealed this decision. Four townships downstream from the proposed mine signed on as "friends of the Court" on the side of the EPA and the tribe. In June 2002, the U.S. Supreme Court let stand the lower-court decision (Bergquist, 2002).

Meanwhile, after 5 years of opposition from the state of Wisconsin and the state's largest business lobby, the Forest County Potawatomi won approval of their Class I air quality designation from the EPA. This allows the tribe to designate their 11,000 acres as Class I, the highest air designation possible. No new facilities that release more than 250 tons of particulates per year would be permitted. The mine was expected to emit about 247 tons of particulates into the air each year. If either tribal air or water quality standards would be violated by the proposed mine, the tribes could deny air or water quality permits necessary for mine approval.

### THE MINING MORATORIUM CAMPAIGN

Besides building local alliances between the tribes, environmental groups, and sportfishing groups, the Wolf Watershed Educational Project's speaking tours during 1996 and 1997 built public support for legislative passage of a sulfide mining moratorium bill that would prohibit the opening of a new mine in a sulfide ore body until a similar mine had been operated for 10 years and closed for 10 years without pollution from acid mine drainage. The movement for a sulfide mine ban originally developed out of the Rusk County Citizens Action Group (site of Rio Tinto's Flambeau mine) and was developed into a piece of legislation at the initiative of the Menominee Nation's Mining Impacts and Treaty Rights Office and with the assistance of State Representative Spencer Black (Democrat-Madison). The legislation became a rallying point for the Native American/environmental group/sportfishing group coalition as well as for the powerful mining lobby in the state.

The mining companies and their powerful lobby, the Wisconsin Association of Manufacturers & Commerce, responded to the speaking tours and the moratorium campaign with newspaper ads, radio ads, a U.S.\$1 million blitz of TV ads, and a U.S.\$1 million lobbying effort (Fantle, 1997). Peter Theo (1996), Exxon's director

of governmental affairs, complained that “the anti-mining faction’s ability to frame the debate and to encourage the introduction and near passage of a bad law by using inflammatory political rhetoric is particularly troubling” (p. 1). Rodney Harrill, president of Crandon Mining, was surprised at the organization and effectiveness of the antimining movement:

This is not just a ragtag group of individuals. It’s an organized, coherent opposition. At different meetings I see them reading off the same script that’s printed off the Internet. . . . Our opposition was way out ahead of us on this thing. (as quoted in Seely, 1997, p. B2)

Harrill explained to a reporter why his company was spending so much to defeat the moratorium bill. “In my view,” said Harrill, “it would probably be the end of Crandon Mining and probably the end of sulfide mining in the state” (as quoted in Seely, 1997, p. B1).

Nevertheless, in March 1998, the legislature passed the moratorium bill after initially successful attempts to weaken it, and prominent Republican Governor Tommy Thompson was forced to sign the bill to ensure his reelection. The Crandon project appeared doomed to many when the “mining moratorium” law was signed, but the new law did not stop the mine permit process; rather, it provided another hurdle at the projected end of the permit process in 2004.

The upsurge in environmental activism around the state, however, convinced Exxon to turn the project over to its partner Rio Algom. The Canadian company submitted three “example mines” to meet the criteria of the moratorium law. In May 2002, the Wisconsin DNR rejected the only example mine that had been both open and closed for 10 years because it failed to demonstrate that it had operated without harm to the environment.

### FROM CORPORATE TO TRIBAL OWNERSHIP

In 2000, Rio Algom was purchased by the London-based South African company Billiton, which merged the following year with Australian mining giant BHP to form the world’s largest mining company, BHP Billiton. Company spokesman Marc Gonsalves soon reported that the company had received an “endless stream of e-mails” from Crandon mine opponents around the world (Kallio, 2000).

Beginning in December 2000, the Wolf Watershed Educational Project had demanded that BHP Billiton withdraw applications for mining permits and open a dialogue with state, tribal, and local governments to negotiate a turnover of the site to the public. In June 2002, the company communicated to mine opponents a willingness to consider a public purchase of the site. An alliance of environmental, conservation, and local and tribal governments released a detailed proposal calling for a public acquisition of the Crandon mine site (nearly 5,000 acres of land and mineral rights) as a conservation area devoted to sustainable land management practices, tribal cultural values, and tourism suitable to this environmentally sensitive area. The main goal of the purchase would be to permanently end the controversy over permitting the Crandon mine by taking the land out of the hands of mining companies and guaranteeing that no mineral extraction would ever take place at the site.

When the state failed to make any financial commitments to purchase the site, the Sokaogon Ojibwe and the Forest County Potawatomi pursued their own negotiations and worked out a deal to pay U.S.\$16.5 million for the land, assets, and min-

eral rights of the proposed Crandon mine. In October 2003, the two tribes held a press conference at the state capitol and announced that they were the new owners of the mine site. The tribes split the cost, with the Potawatomi spending U.S.\$8.5 million from their gaming revenues, whereas Mole Lake would pay U.S.\$8 million in borrowed money and assume ownership of the mining applicant, the Nicolet Minerals Company.<sup>13</sup>

As the new owners of Nicolet Minerals Company, their first priority was to notify the Wisconsin DNR that they were withdrawing the permit application to mine the Crandon deposit. After 28 years, a grassroots movement of Native American nations, sportfishing groups, environmentalists, unionists, rural residents, and urban students had not only defeated some of the most powerful multinational mining corporations but also acquired control over the mine site.

### **CONCLUSION: ADVOCACY AND WORK WITH NATIVE PEOPLES**

The international industry journal *North American Mining* discusses Wisconsin as one of the industry's four main global battlegrounds, where "the increasingly sophisticated political maneuvering by environmental special interest groups have made permitting a mine . . . an impossibility" ("Troubled Times," 1998, p. 3). The *Mining Environmental Management Journal* portrays the Wolf Watershed Educational Project as "an example of what is becoming a very real threat to the global mining industry" (Khanna, 2000, p. 19). The Vancouver-based Fraser Institute has rated Wisconsin at or near the bottom of its annual "mining investment attractiveness score" for the period of 1998 to 2003 because of the state's "well-publicized aversion to mining" (Worthington, 2003).

The successful conclusion of the Crandon mine conflict was not simply the result of casino revenues coming to the rescue of the tribes and the local community as some newspaper headlines have suggested (Peckham, 2003, p. 6).<sup>14</sup> By the time that BHP Billiton had sold the project to a Crandon lumber firm, they had given up the idea of ever receiving a mine permit (Deardorff, 2002). In explaining why he sold Nicolet Minerals Company to the tribes, project manager Gordon Connor Jr. said he searched throughout the world for venture capitalists or mining partners, but none wanted anything to do with Wisconsin (Rinard & Jones, 2003).

Although casino revenues were important to the buyout, they were not the reason for the significant markdown in the final price. The driving force behind the buyout and the devaluation of the property as a potential mine site was the persistence of a powerful grassroots coalition of Native nations, environmentalists, and sportfishing groups. This unlikely alliance was able to educate large numbers of people to become involved in a movement to protect a significant shared resource in the Wolf River watershed and the Native and non-Native communities that called this place home. The arrogance and environmental racist mentality of the multinational mining corporations led them to dismiss the objections of the Sokaogon Ojibwe to their proposed mine as irrelevant to corporate planning. At each stage of the escalating conflict, the mining companies engaged in a variety of strategies that consistently failed to understand the nature of the movement opposing their plans. A member of the Wolf Watershed Educational Project described the group as follows:

We are not the mainstream environmental group. If we were, we would have a board of directors, a centralized coalition. Because we are a looser network,

mainly rural led, the people that are on the front lines call the shots. [We are] multiracial, middle class, working class, with a wide range of ages [usually in the environmental groups, the age ranges from 20 to 40]. Here you have 16 year olds, side by side, with 80 year olds. You have a strong base in the Indian and non-Indian communities. . . . We have a mixture of people who know the Internet and people who are technically savvy and good at research. But we also have people who are good at organizing their own communities. They are plain spoken, they speak the language of the people, have more of a tie to the community. We have people who can do the research and put the science into plain English and tell the people in their local community, or send it to others in the movement. Its real grassroots . . . and the mining company doesn't know how to deal with us. If we were just an environmental coalition, I don't think we would do very well. But we are environmental, sport fishing, and Native. That's what makes us strong. (Riemer, 2003, p. 862)

This description of the Wolf Watershed Educational Project also embodies some of the core ideas of liberation sociology, including the democratization of knowledge and the empowerment of oppressed communities. The Ojibwe treaty conflict at first threatened to divide Native and non-Native communities but later brought them together in new and unanticipated ways.

To avoid becoming anything more than “a predator consuming data,” I felt that my role in this conflict was to provide whatever knowledge and skills I had to help the Sokaogon Ojibwe to successfully defend their lands and culture from what seemed like an overwhelming assault from the world’s most powerful resource corporations with the full cooperation of the state of Wisconsin and the anti-Indian movement. At times, this called for traditional research, writing both for an academic and a popular audience, public speaking, documentary filmmaking, and community organizing. These multiple and varied roles reflected the constantly changing dynamic of the opposition movement as it developed shifting collective action frames and a multidimensional defense of its home.

The kind of knowledge that is produced as a result of interaction with oppressed communities is simply unavailable to social scientists who claim neutrality in disputes between corporations and Native communities (Kirsch, 2002, p. 193). When sociologists or anthropologists have taken advocacy positions on behalf of Native peoples, they have both contributed and learned from the experiences of oppressed communities. What are some of these contributions and experiential lessons?

First, that the traditional tools of social impact analysis, when combined with the principles of participatory action research, can provide a voice for those who are excluded from the decision-making processes that are so common in large-scale corporate development projects affecting Indian lands and rural communities. Even before the Gough (1980) COACT study for the Sokaogon Ojibwe was completed, it put Exxon on notice that the tribe had information and analysis that could be used to challenge Exxon’s plans at the earliest opportunity. Exxon’s withdrawal of its prospecting permit upset the corporate timetable and gave the tribe valuable time to publicize the findings of the COACT report and challenge the misplaced trust of their non-Indian neighbors in Exxon’s ability to construct a “clean mine.”

Second, the research agendas and participatory action strategies that challenged the most powerful mining corporations in the world have to be understood in the sociohistorical context of tribal resource nationalism and the decade-long struggle of the Lake Superior Ojibwe to defend their treaty rights. The scientific question about the effects of heavy metal contamination on wild rice was part of the same

research agenda of how to prevent a new era of corporate resource colonization of Indian lands and cultures. The scientific data on wild rice became an important part of the Sokaogon Ojibwe's case for asserting regulatory authority over water quality on the reservation.

Likewise, the struggle to assert tribal sovereignty over reservation resources in the face of the combined opposition of Exxon/Rio Algoma and the state of Wisconsin required the Sokaogon Ojibwe to develop allies in the non-Native communities locally and statewide. The Wolf Watershed Educational Project provided the organizational framework within which this alliance could develop and spread the word about the threats posed by mining to directly affected communities. The success of this low-budget, grassroots organizing effort took the mining industry by surprise and shifted the arena of struggle from the formal, legal process of mine permitting to the battle for public opinion. This experience, along with many others worldwide, convinced the mining industry that they need a "social license to operate" ("Smart Mining Companies," 1997, p. 3).

Finally, the intercultural communication and solidarity that developed between diverse communities involved in this struggle thwarted the mining industry's attempts to divide the opposition with regard to differences of race, class, and geographical regions. This solidarity expressed itself in increased dialogue and co-operation between the Sokaogon Ojibwe and their immediate neighbors in the town of Nashville, reversing decades of isolation and racial antagonism between the Native and non-Native groups.

The undemocratic fashion in which Exxon/Rio Algoma manipulated the Nashville Town Board into approving mining came as a cultural shock to the majority of town residents. WRPC organizer George Rock (as quoted in Grossman, 2002) told Nashville residents that they were "being treated like a Third World country," in a way that Native Americans were used to being treated, and that "now white people are being treated the same way because they're in the way" (p. 399). Mr. Rock, in effect, provided a collective action frame by tying these perceptions "together in such a way that what was previously inconceivable, or at least not clearly articulated, is now meaningfully interconnected" (Snow & Benford, 1992, p. 138). Acting on this shared sense of injustice, Nashville residents and Mole Lake tribal members forged an alliance that resulted in the election of Robert VanZile, a tribal member, to the Nashville Town Board in 1997. It was the first time an Indian had ever been elected in the township.

These experiential lessons are not limited to resistance to exploitative mining and environmental racism; they also involve breaking down barriers between communities and recognizing common bonds in developing more just and sustainable forms of economic development. In short, these struggles are "part of an envisioning process that provides alternative strategies and solutions" (Wright, 2001, p. 230). The alternative vision of once-antagonistic groups coming together to defend a common resource and redefine the boundaries between Native and non-Native communities is one of the most enduring outcomes of this historic conflict.

## NOTES

1. The people called Ojibwe or Chippewas call themselves Anishinabe (first or original man). The term *Ojibwa* is probably corrupted from *o-jib-i-weg* (those who make pictographs; Danziger, 1978, p. 7). I refer to the particular band of Lake Superior Indians I have worked with as Sokaogon Ojibwe or Mole Lake Ojibwe.

2. Project Underground (n.d.), based in Berkeley, California, defined itself as a “vehicle for the environmental, human rights and Indigenous rights movements to carry out focused campaigns against abusive extractive resource activity” (para. 1). The organization discontinued operations in 2004 but continues to support an indigenous mining campaign organizer in cooperation with the Indigenous Environmental Network based in Bemidji, Minnesota.
3. Calculations of the Great Pyramids based on figures in the World Book (Jacobs, 2000, p. 917).
4. Native peoples’ experience with environmental racism began in 1492. African Americans protesting the siting of a toxic landfill in mostly African American Warren County, North Carolina, first coined the term in 1982. The United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice drew national attention to the problem with their 1987 groundbreaking study *Toxic Wastes and Race* (see Chavis, 1993, p. 4).
5. My initial attempts to enlist the support of mainstream environmental organizations in the state met with little success. One of the state’s most prominent environmental organizations told me that they could not risk their credibility with state agencies by opposing a project that was seen as inevitable by most politicians.
6. The issue of tribal sovereignty was not just rhetoric. With the assistance of Daniel Bomerry of the Seventh Generation Fund, the Sokaogon Ojibwe were able to see firsthand how other tribes were asserting sovereignty in the face of mining threats. The fund arranged for Daniel Poler Jr., a Sokaogon mining committee member, and myself to visit the Northern Cheyenne Reservation in Lame Deer, Montana. The tribe was successfully resisting coal mining on their lands but was being surrounded by coal-fired power plants that were spewing airborne pollution into the reservation. In 1978, when we visited the reservation, the Cheyenne had just filed a request under the Clean Air Act to redesignate their entire reservation to Class I air quality. They became the first tribe to have their regulatory authority recognized by the federal government. In taking this action, the Northern Cheyenne were able to develop their own air quality standards to protect reservation air quality from additional coal plants that were planned next to the reservation (see Smith & Guenther, 1981).
7. Funding was restored after Wisconsin Senator William Proxmire made inquiries into the U.S. Economic Development Administration’s decision.
8. This account of “geographies of inclusion” draws heavily on Gedicks and Grossman (2004); see also Grossman (2002).
9. For a review of the film, see Gaard (1997).
10. The tactic of campaign caravans was very successful in mobilizing public opposition to promising legislation in the Philippines (see Tujan, 2001, p. 156).
11. Among the principles of environmental justice, endorsed by the delegates to the People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, is the promotion of economic alternatives that would contribute to the development of environmentally safe livelihoods (see Edwards, 1995, p. 42).
12. The case was settled when the old town board admitted to the violations in a signed deposition.
13. Mole Lake has set up a Wolf River Protection Fund to help pay for its half of the purchase (see <http://www.wolfriverprotectionfund.org>).
14. A recent appraisal of the value of the land and mineral rights of the Crandon mine site put the value at U.S.\$580.3 million (see Nicholson Group, 2002).

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