



The Pathfinder

The newsletter of the Midwest Institute for Native American Studies

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Month of
Mswé' kesis –
Month of the
Young Rabbits

Development Plan for Starved Rock's Plum Island Threatens Both the Living and the Dead

By Frank Coakley

Have you ever stood on the deck of the Starved Rock lodge in the state park in La Salle County, Illinois and looked out over Starved Rock dam on the Illinois River? Do you remember seeing the beautiful island just downstream from the dam? It is uninhabited, and its wildness adds to the glory of Starved Rock State Park and the whole experience of visiting there. It is called "Plum Island," and it's as if it were part of the park.

Nature lovers by the thousands drink in the natural beauty of the park and its environs. Truly, this is one of the last accessible places in Illinois whose natural loveliness has not been encroached upon and destroyed by the depredations of man.

Now try to imagine Plum Island inhabited.

Think Luxury Hotel.

Think Marina. Think

Power Boats, 60 of them. Think of the stench of diesel fumes filling the air you breathe as you try to enjoy the perfume of cedar, spruce and other trees in the park.

Think of the smiles and laughter of water-skiers who whip by, oblivious to what is really happening there for the sake of their self-centered pleasure.

Seem far-fetched?

Don't bet on it. Most of Plum Island is privately owned. It has not one iota of protection as a nature preserve. An Orland Park developer named Don Barclay is planning, as you read these words, to build a \$30-\$40 million upscale, 250-room, luxury hotel on Plum Island.

But that hotel is only the beginning. Barclay also envisions a 60-slip marina surrounding Plum Island, a conference center, and luxury cabins for the high rollers. To gain access to the island, they might build a bridge so guests can drive over to the island. Failing that, hovercraft can be used to ferry people to and from the island.

There are many reasons why development of Plum Island is unconscionable, besides the obvious fact that the end of the island's wildness would be a veritable canker sore on the beauty visitors go to Starved Rock to enjoy. But that is only part of the reason this development is undesirable.

Plum Island is an Illinois Natural Inventory site, and the wintering Bald Eagle population of the Illinois River Valley uses it as one of its most important strongholds. Last winter, an all-time high of 83 Bald Eagles was reported there. Being just south of the dam means the waters around Plum Island do not freeze over during the winter. These waters are a prime spawning area for wall-

eye and sauger, the fish on which the eagles depend for sustenance. Develop the island, and the spawning area will be no more. Neither will the winter refuge for the Bald Eagles. And neither will the fishing area so many Illinois sportsmen prize.

But Plum Island is much more than simply a wintering place for Bald Eagles and a spawning site for fish. Perhaps most important, it is also a prime historic location, at one time the location of a prehistoric Native American village and its sacred burial grounds. The remains of many Native Americans (members of the Illiniwek Confederacy that made this area their ancestral homeland) lie beneath the surface soil of the island. Many people believe that under no circumstances should this



Unspoiled Plum Island (on the left) as seen from the top of Starved Rock.

sacred ground be disturbed. Isn't this what the federal NAGPRA (Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act) of 1990 is all about?

Unfortunately, Plum Island's situation is not what NAGPRA is all about. The law covers publicly owned land, but not private preserves such as Plum Island.

The treatment of Native remains there

depends almost entirely on the good will of the owner and developer.

What can be done about this terrible situation? To date, Starved Rock Audubon, the Friends of Plum Island and concerned local citizens have collected the signatures of more than 4,500 individuals who oppose the development. High volumes of constituent mail opposing the development have led State Senator Patrick Welch and State Representative Frank Mautino to publicly announce their opposition to the development plans.

Unfortunately, these things are not enough. The only way Plum Island can be protected from the planned development is for the State of Illinois to acquire it from its present owners and make it a part of Starved Rock State Park. For this to happen will take the efforts of those organizations, like Midwest SOARRING Foundation, who are already in the fray and are working to educate the public about the issues involved.

Joseph Standing Bear Schranz, the Ojibwe executive director of Midwest SOARRING Foundation, sees the threat to Plum Island as part of a larger problem affecting both Native Americans and the fast-eroding environment throughout the state and the nation.

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Most students growing up in Chicago-area schools learn about “friend to the white man” Chief Alexander Robinson and, as adults, enjoy the Forest Preserve lands named for him and his wife. But who was this early Chicagoan and what, exactly, did he do to achieve such renown?

The Pathfinder is proud to share many fascinating insights from a Native Chicagoan’s years of research in:

Okama Alexander Robinson: Part II

*By Eli Suzukovich III, Archive and Special Collections Manager
Native American Educational Services College, Chicago Campus*

The Black Hawk War

In 1832, Black Hawk (Sauk) began his campaign against the United States. In February, Black Hawk called a council at Indian-town to muster the support of other tribes and to stress the importance of protecting their hunting grounds from settlers. Black Hawk said “Let all our tribes unite and we shall have an army of warriors equal in number to the trees of the forest.” Alexander Robinson, Caldwell, and Shabonna attended this council. Though moved by his speech, the three also knew the power and resources of the United States, not to mention the fact that in 1830, President Jackson’s Indian Removal bill was passed. This meant that the United States already planned on moving Native Americans west of the Mississippi, whether peacefully or by force.

These three also had experience with the U.S. Government. Caldwell and Shabonna had fought against the military while serving under Tecumseh, and Alexander Robinson worked as a translator for the U.S. Indian Agency in Chicago. Knowing aggressive actions against the U.S. would create a great deal of trouble, Shabonna replied to Black Hawk’s statement, “Your army would equal in number the trees of the forest, and you would encounter an army of palefaces as numerous as the leaves on those trees.” The council did not unite the various tribes as Black Hawk had hoped. The Potawatomi, for the most part, stayed out of the war. They avoided as best they could the Sauks and the various militia units searching for rebellious Natives. Numerous Potawatomi villages and families moved closer to Chicago for safety from the fighting.

Chicago, however, was not as secure as it was when Fort Dearborn was active. In order to for-

tify Chicago, Indian agent Col. Thomas Owen created a company and scout unit of 95 Potawatomi. The unit included sixteen Potawatomi okamek including Alexander Robinson, Shawnese, Wabansi, White Pigeon, Mzhiktano, Pile of Lead, and Makesit. This unit was successful in finding Black Hawk’s camp in Koshkonong swamp in Wisconsin. But despite their service to the United States, the Potawatomi still lost land.

The defeat of Black Hawk led to a treaty council. At the 1832 Treaty with the Potawatomi at Tippecanoe, 162 Potawatomi, including those who served at Chicago, lost a large portion of territory stretching from south of the Chicago River and Lake Michigan to the Illinois River. Many of the okamek who served in Chicago received small reservations and others received compensation for horses lost during the war. Alexander Robinson was promised an annual payment of \$200.

The land cessions from the Treaty of 1832 caused a great deal of stress on the Potawatomi, along with the loss of natural resources and the steady flow of settlers encroaching on their lands. Some Potawatomi began to remove themselves from Illinois, joining the Kickapoo in their migrations to Kansas and Texas. However, many Potawatomi stayed. But, in September of 1833, they would sign away their remaining lands and reserves in Illinois.

The Final Treaty

On September 14, 1833, okama Aptegizhek (Half Day) addressed treaty commissioners George Porter and Thomas Owen, stating that Potawatomi would not move West unless they could inspect the land first and most importantly, that there could be no discussion of selling any addi-

tional lands. Four days later, the United Bands brought in their best negotiators: Alexander Robinson, Billy Caldwell, and Joseph LaFromboise. The three began to work out the negotiations.

Going into the negotiations, Robinson and the others must have carried a heavy load with them. They were sent in with the thought that no land was to be sold and no one was to be removed. Then they encountered commissioners who had a set agenda from Washington. Commissioner Porter sternly reminded the Potawatomi and their representatives that “whatever ‘Old Hickory’ (President Andrew Jackson) wanted badly enough he was prone to take by force.”

After Porter had made his comment, a five-day gap appears in the official record. What was said during this lapse of time is unknown. It is at this time that Robinson, along with LaFromboise and Caldwell, come under scrutiny.

It is not certain what tactics the treaty commissioners used to achieve the final cession of the Potawatomi lands and their removal during this time, but it can be certain that the fear of military reprisal sat heavy on the minds of Robinson and the other okamek.

Consider that the previous year, Black Hawk’s campaign against American encroachment

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Alexander Robinson

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Robinson

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was defeated, forcing the Mesquaki and Sauk out of Illinois. Other tribes were also being forced out of the eastern United States. It can be assumed that Alexander Robinson, Caldwell, LaFromboise and the other okamek knew that removal was imminent, so they looked for the best deal possible. These men were traders and knew how to negotiate.

One of the tactics they used to their advantage was stalling for time when the Treaty Commissioners made their proposals for land cessions. By stalling, the land in question went up in value, due to need by settlers. As it became more valuable, the Potawatomi demanded more goods and money in exchange for the land. Alexander Robinson knew how to drive a hard bargain; he knew the advantage of working as an alliance and maintaining a position of power in the negotiations. His knowledge (and that of Caldwell's) was a valuable resource for the United Bands. With it, they could maintain a powerful position during the negotiations.

When the official record begins again five days later on September 26th, the treaty was written and ready to sign. In exchange for the land and removal, Robinson and the other okamek made some major conditions. The United States was to pay off all Potawatomi debts owed to traders and trading companies; send out and pay for an exploratory party to investigate the proposed relocation site; and pay for the subsistence costs for the first year in the new reserve. It was also stipulated that a pro rata share of treaty proceeds would be paid west of the Mississippi River to those who moved, and that after 1836, all the benefits would be paid out in their new location.

But because Alexander Robinson received an annuity of \$300 and Caldwell, LaFromboise, and even Shabonna also received annuities, these men became

suspect to some Potawatomi and even some historians. Some believed that they made a deal for themselves in exchange for giving up the land. Many were upset, especially the Potawatomi of Michigan, who felt they were misrepresented.

The treaty was finally ratified by Congress in 1836. Originally, the Potawatomi were to be removed to the Platte country of Missouri, but that was changed due to opposition from Missouri's governor. The site for the reserve was the Council Bluffs area of Iowa. The approval came after more negotiations from a business committee made up of Alexander Robinson, Billy Caldwell, Joseph LaFromboise, Wabansi, Kaykotemo, and White Sky.

The Reserve

In 1835, Alexander Robinson sold his tavern at Lake and Canal streets. A year later he

heirs or assigns, and could not be leased or conveyed to anyone without permission of the president of the United States." Despite this executive order, parcels of the land were bought and leased.

Even though Robinson sold parcels of his reserve, none of these sales was approved by any president, which makes the sales null and void. The descendants of Alexander Robinson remained on the reserve up until 1973 when his great grandson, Herbert Boetcher, died. The reserve then came under the ownership of the Cook County Forest Preserve District (FPD). This ownership is questionable, however.

Apparently, the FPD bought parts of the land from the people who purchased it from the Robinsons. Remembering that none of these sales was official, the FPD bought land from people who did not really own it. Also,

there has been no record found that the Robinson family ever intended to sell to the FPD. Since they took control of the land in 1973, there has been no record found that says the FPD's ownership of the land was approved by President Nixon. So who actually (and legally) owns the reserve is not certain.

Conclusion

Alexander Robinson lived on his reservation until his death in 1872, although not much is known about what he did from 1840-1872. While many records were lost in the Great Chicago Fire of 1871, it is known that Robinson was interviewed many times on the early history of Chicago, and it was said that he was always hospitable to guests and visitors. In his time, Robinson had two wives in a polygamous marriage and fourteen children. When he died, he was the one of the last of the original Chicagoans and the last chief to be buried in Chicago.



Alexander Robinson's grave, inscribed: *Alexander Robinson (Chee-Chee-Pin-Quay)/Chief of the Potawatomi, Chippewa and Ottawa Indians/who died April, 22, 1872/Catherine (Chevalier) his wife/who died August 7, 1860/and other members of their family/are buried on this spot/part of the reservation granted him/by the treaty of Prairie Du Chien/July 29, 1829/in gratitude for his aid to the family of John Kinzie and to Capt. and Mrs. Heall(sic)/at the time of the Fort Dearborn Massacre*

moved west with his band. How long he stayed with them in the Platte Country of Missouri is presently not certain. Some authors state that he stayed with his band when they moved to the Council Bluffs of Iowa. Nevertheless, Robinson returned to his reserve on the Des Plaines River in present day Schiller Park, IL sometime between 1837 and 1842. In the 1840's during the Tyler administration, the reserve was surveyed and a deed was given to Robinson, where, over the signature of President Tyler, it was written that "possession of this tract was granted forever to Alexander Robinson and his

"...the fear of military reprisals sat heavy on the minds of Robinson and the other okamek."

Profile: Al Ragland: Rubbing Shoulders With Greatness

MINAS Board Secretary Al Ragland likes to joke that his first claim to fame is that he was born just a block down the street from where Muhammad Ali came into the world — “albeit a few years earlier,” he laughs. Al’s home was at 305 Grand Avenue in Louisville, Kentucky; Ali, then known as “Cassius Clay,” was born in the 400 block.

Al’s father also achieved distinction in 1916, when, as an Urban League executive, he took the first black workers to jobs at the Ford plant in Detroit. This was a major breakthrough in minority employment in those early days of the civil rights movement. “My father was a major influence in my life,” Al says. “He showed by his actions the importance of public service, and it’s a lesson I’ve never forgotten.”

All throughout Al’s busy life, he has rubbed shoulders with greatness. At Roosevelt College in Chicago, his classmates included Harold Washington, the future mayor of Chicago, and numerous others who would become well-known public figures.

It was during his 18-month tour of duty as a Staff Sergeant with the U.S. Army in Alaska that Al first became aware of the plight of Native Americans. As a medical technician, he gave physical examinations to applicants to the Alaska National Guard. Even at that early age, he could see what the U.S. government had done to Native Americans in the name of “Manifest Destiny.”

Seeing the delirium tremens among the young Guard applicants and giving them shots of Vitamin B-12 as literally a life-saving measure left an indelible impression on him. “To my mind,” Al says, “this had been chemical warfare, plain and simple.” Throughout his time in Alaska, he saw firsthand the poverty and hopelessness among Alaska’s Natives that were the hallmark of the alcoholism that had been induced among them by our government.

Al returned to Chicago after the Army and went to work for the Public Aid Department. He rose quickly through the ranks to

become administrative assistant to Raymond Hilliard, Director of Community Relations. In this capacity, he rubbed elbows with Saul Alinsky, Nicholas von Hoffman, and many other notables, including scores of Catholic priests.

In 1968, Al moved to the Church Federation of Greater Chicago, consisting of 27 Protestant denominations. He was given a credit card and told to travel America and report back to them on the progress of the Civil Rights movement.

In 1972, Al was appointed



Executive Director of the Conference on Religion and Race, which was composed of the Archdiocese of Chicago, the Jewish Board of Rabbis, the Church Federation and the Greek Orthodox Church. During this time he became heavily involved with the American Indian Brotherhood, which sprang from the Tri-Faith Employment Project of the War on Poverty. He hired Mike Swayne, a Cherokee Indian and a stalwart of the 12-Step program of Alcoholics Anonymous. Working with Swayne, Al got a grant from the Illinois Department of Transportation to set up a detoxification center for Native Americans. It was natural that Al and Mike would become deeply involved in the Uptown area of Chicago.

“The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), after wrenching children from their tribes and forcing them to go to government boarding schools, would then just throw them into America’s urban

centers, thinking they would naturally integrate into American society. What they had really accomplished, however, was to destroy many of these people culturally and spiritually, the result of the powerless having to deal with the powerful,” Al says today. He stayed involved with the American Indian Brotherhood from 1972 to 1977, serving as Chairman for the final three years.

Between 1977 and 1985, Al spent several years caring for aged relatives and then served in various capacities for the Conference on Religion and Race and Black Methodists for Church Renewal, which was a United Methodist Conference.

Meantime, he helped Operation PUSH’s Frances Davis with community relations and ultimately went to work for the State of Illinois in 1986 as a child sex-abuse investigator in the Department of Children and Family Services. Today, Al serves as the Senior Child Protection Investigator for DCFS.

“I see a strong parallel between the suffering of Native Americans in this country and that of African Americans,” Al says. “Why else would Leonard Peltier, for example, be serving two life sentences for the murder of two FBI agents when even the Bureau has acknowledged in court documents that they have no idea who the real murderer is? It’s just more of the same old scapegoat game black folks have known intimately for centuries.

“Truly, we in this nation had better learn that righteousness and truth stand above all other considerations in our affairs. If we don’t, we shall perish,” he adds.

“I think of the struggle for reparations for the descendants of slaves, and I can’t help realizing that if there were a dollar-for-dollar reparations program for Native Americans, the result would be another all-out Civil War. This should lead us all to a clearer understanding of the role drugs and alcohol play in the

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“...we in this nation had better learn that righteousness and truth stand above all other considerations in our affairs.”

Minas' First Event a Moving Success

By Mark Dolnick

I'd like to tell you about the *Owashtinong Chung a ming* drum's visit to Chicagoland last January. It was the first event sponsored by MINAS, and a very important step in accomplishing MINAS' goal, "to educate children during the early elementary years regarding the cultural and social traditions of the indigenous peoples of the Great Lakes area." I think it accomplished a lot more besides.

First, though, I have to tell you a bit about myself. I serve on the MINAS board as Tech Advisor, producing our various publications, laying in wait to create a MINAS website and doing just about anything else that involves electricity.

The rest of our board serves because of their connection to, or involvement with, the Native American community. In that regard, my connection is tenuous—my high school was Niles West, home of the Indians, and I matriculated to Bradley University, known as the Braves.

That's about it. I mention all this because I was at Chiaravalle Montessori School on Friday, January 18, and the American Indian Center the next day just to videotape the proceedings. Like any photojournalist, my interest was in light and angles, rather than culture and tradition.

It was not so by the day's end. First, regarding the culture of students aged five to fourteen seated in a small gym for ninety minutes—civility and rapt attention are not the first things that come to mind. Yet that's what I saw through my camera lens. The

students avidly listened, watched and responded as the drum and dancers spoke of their history and their ways.

Apparently, the students had much to learn. Linda Bechtle has told me some of the questions her elementary students asked, prior to the drum's visit. "You

dance. Two large banners hung in the gym, proclaiming "*Bozho, Nikons!*" (hello, friends) and "*Wawana* from CMS" (thank you,) the latter signed by all the kids.

Anyway, peering through my lens, I saw the troupe make a quick and easy connection with their young audience. They spoke in both English and their Native tongues. They described their regalia, and the meaning behind the beautiful clothing. They asked questions of the audience, and it was clear from the prompt and correct responses that the Montessori students had paid attention to the facts shared with them in the classroom.

Owashtinong spoke of their beliefs and traditions, and I was struck with the power of a living lesson. A textbook or even the most committed teacher cannot convey a people's pride in their life and ways. They did.

The young members of *Owashtinong* really brought home the importance of the group's mission. In sharing their songs and dance with us, their obvious pride and love of their heritage enriched both the audience and themselves.

Witness this change—Linda shared with me the questions and comments her students had after *Owashtinong* had left. They asked, "When are we going to see them again?" "When's the next time we can go to a powwow around here?" "Can we go on a field trip to their reservation?" and "I wish they could come to our school every day."

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And the Winners Are:

Congratulations to the MINAS supporters whose winning raffle tickets were drawn at the end of the AIC powwow.

- ✦ Evanston Township High School teacher **Larry Geni**, who won a beautiful chipped stone multi-strand necklace from the **American Indian Center Gift Store**;
- ✦ AIC Board member **Mavis Neconish**, who won an outstanding Medicine Bag courtesy of **Dancing Bear Gallery** in Evanston;
- ✦ **Tricia Traske**, from Grand Rapids, MI, who took home a hand-crafted black ash basket from well-known Three Fires basket-maker **John Pigeon**;
- ✦ **Dr. Robert Fitzgerald** of Miami, FL, who won both a Gift Certificate to **Dave's Rock Shop and Prehistoric Museum**, of Evanston, and a Family Membership to the **Mitchell Museum of the American Indian** in Evanston;
- ✦ and to Midwest SOARRING Foundation Secretary **Janet Sevilla**, who won the grand prize Pendelton blanket.
- ✦ Special kudos to author and University of Chicago Lab School teacher emeritus **Gloria Needlman**, who was the big winner of the **50/50 Drawing!**

Again, many thanks to the individuals, organizations and area stores who donated the wonderful items for our benefit raffles, and to all of our friends all over the country who participated in them!

Our humble gratitude goes to all of the members of *Owashtinong* who opened their hearts to us, especially to MINAS Board member Frank Sprague for all of his organizational skills. We also appreciate the talents of Emcee Leonard Malatare, Head Female Dancer Nora Lloyd, Head Male Dancer Mike Pamonicotte and the Veteran Flag Carriers, and Chicago area drums *Shki Bmaadzi* and *Cricket Hill*.

Finally, none of this would have been possible without the support of the Illinois Arts Council and corporate sponsors John Cahill, First Bank and Trust, Nabil's, Inc., The Copy Room, the staff and students of Chiaravalle Montessori School and Joe Podlasek and the staff of the American Indian Center.

Chi Migwetch (Many thanks!)

mean they're driving here in cars?" "Do they speak English?" "They don't still wear animal skins, do they?" "What kinds of foods are they going to eat?" and, maybe most importantly, "You mean they still live around here?"

It seemed that the student body was energized and eager to experience *Owashtinong's* blend of history, tradition, music and

On January 18, the *Owashtinong* *Chung a ming* drum of Grand Rapids Michigan visited Chiaravalle Montessori School in Evanston. There, students were entranced by dance, music and the opportunity to learn about Native American culture in a living classroom. *Owashtinong's* passion transformed the gym into a very special place for everyone involved.





The following day, *Owashtinong* joined with Chicago Drum *Shki Bmaadzi* in a benefit performance at Chicago's American Indian Center. Native and non-Native MINAS supporters of all ages enjoyed the Native food and craft vendors in a celebration of tradition and culture.

Your MINAS Guide to Upcoming Area Events!

At the Mitchell Museum, 2600 Central Park Ave., Evanston 847.475.1030

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| April 14, 12 to 5 p.m. | 3rd Annual Chicagoland Indian Artists Marketplace |
| April 18 | Poetry reading and book signing:
<i>Mark Turcotte (Turtle Mountain Chippewa)</i> |
| April 20th, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. | A World of Difference Workshop
<i>Free anti-bias workshop for preschool teachers—call to register!</i> |
| May 4, 5:30 to 9 p.m. | 25th Anniversary Gala Dinner at The Dining Room, Kendall College |
| May 25th, 10:30 to noon | Kids Craft Morning: Fingerweaving |
| June 8th, 10:30 to noon | Kids Craft Morning: Weaving |
| June 22, 8 a.m.- 10 p.m. | Trip to Eiteljorg Indian Market, Indianapolis |
| June 28, 1 p.m. | Great Lakes Pottery
<i>Frank Ettawageshik (Potawatomi)</i> |

Upcoming Great Lakes–Area Powwows

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| April 20 | 8 th Annual Traditional Native American Powwow
<i>College of Lake County P.E. Center, Grayslake, IL</i> |
| April 27 | Honoring Education Powwow
<i>Zorn Arena—UW Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI</i>
<i>715.836.3367</i> |
| May 4-5 | United Indians Powwow
<i>South Exhibit Hall, State Fair Park, Milwaukee, WI</i>
<i>414.384.8070</i> |
| May 11-12 | Annual Traditional Sobriety Powwow
<i>Cermak Pool Woods</i>
<i>7700 West Ogden, Lyons, IL</i>
<i>630.695.1292</i> |
| May 17-19 | 8th Annual Potawatomi Trails Powwow
<i>Manners Park, Taylorville, IL</i>
<i>217.245.0409</i> |
| June 1-2 | Annual Kickapoo Powwow
<i>Grand Village of the Kickapoo Park, Le Roy, IL</i>
<i>ccranch@davesworld.net</i> |
| June 1-2 | 3 rd Annual Honor Our Elders and Warriors Traditional Powwow
<i>Matthiessen State Park</i>
<i>2 miles south of Starved Rock State Park, Utica, IL</i>
<i>708.493.0321</i> |
| June 8-9 | Return to Pimiteoui Intertribal Powwow
<i>W.H. Sommer Park, Peoria, IL</i>
<i>309.694.4876</i> |
| June 8-9 | Three Fires Homecoming
<i>Riverside Park, Grand Rapids, MI</i>
<i>616.458.8759</i> |
| June 15-16 | 4 Directions Intertribal Powwow
<i>Mineral Springs Park North, Pekin IL</i>
<i>309.925.2007</i> |

Event

(Continued from page 5)

Clearly, this visit filled a void, and sparked a passion. Clearly, our children benefited from learning about their neighbors in this exciting, immediate fashion.

I learned more than I bargained for, as well. I would serve MINAS well in any case—my tasks are an extension of my professional life, and I don't know any other way. But, after witnessing the event I've described, I find it hard to be dispassionate about the copy I transcribe and the images I process.

The next day, at the American Indian Center, I slipped even further towards a bonding with the mission of MINAS. *Owashit-nong* performed again, joined by Chicago drum *Shki Bmaadzi*. Food was served. Vendors sold wares. Children snaked around the floor as the performance progressed. The mood was both ceremonial and celebratory. I was proud to be a part of the organization that made this day possible.

I moved about the auditorium, ubiquitous but invisible, like a stagehand in a Japanese Noh play. I tried my best to capture these images and sounds,

hoping someday to edit them in a way that honors the artists and their purpose.

I took my leave before the powwow began, at 3p.m. Packing my gear, I said goodbye to the friends I had made. I stopped at the entrance to the hall, and watched quietly for a bit. The sense of history, of community, overwhelmed me. For a timeless moment, the hall vanished, leaving only the drum, the singers and dancers, and the people who watched and joined with them.

I finally walked away from the hall, but the images and feelings will remain with me always.



Profile

(Continued from page 4)

destruction of the human psyche," he says. "When you come to an understanding of what it means to murder the soul, then you know that the pain and suffering of the victims is without end."

Al Ragland has firm beliefs. One is that evil exists and expresses itself most frequently in a collective group of people who do harm to another group. Another is that greed makes difficult the

freedom to believe and to grow spiritually while looking for balance in spirituality.

Al also is convinced that the majority of the American public knows next to nothing about Native Americans, and that small bit is tainted with stereotypical thinking. "We in this country need to come to a new perspective, one that will enable us to have an accurate vision of our past. Without that perspective, how can we understand from whence we came and how to go about rectifying our future?"

Unless this happens, there won't be a future," he says.

"As I see it today," Al says, "from the perspective of one who has witnessed a great cultural struggle from the inside, the strongest contribution that can be made toward that understanding is the work MINAS is doing—educating our young people to view America's indigenous cultures accurately and with respect. Only by raising a new generation without prejudice against Native Americans, can Natives take their proper place in our society."



Plum Island

(Continued from page 1)

"It's time that mankind began to think globally about all the environmental issues facing us," Standing Bear said recently. "The threat to Plum Island is part of a greater threat, many instances of which we've seen here in Illinois, and many more of which we've seen throughout the United States."

Standing Bear decries the tendency among many to solve one problem and be satisfied that the environmental war has been won. "We've got to stop thinking piecemeal about all these things that are happening before it is too late," he says with evident feeling. His organization is responsible for preserving the last real

and unspoiled part of the original Illinois prairie. And that has been a long and hard struggle.

If you want to see Plum Island preserved in its natural state, and if you agree that it should be part of Starved Rock State Park, then you need to add your voice—and soon—to the chorus of voices already raised in opposition to the development described above.

You need to write to Governor George Ryan, 207 State House, Springfield, IL 62706. And you need to write to your Illinois State Senator and Representative. This is an election year. Add your voice to those who argue that there are five major reasons to make Plum Island part of Starved Rock State Park:

1. To protect the prehistoric Native American village and burial sites on the island;
 2. To ensure the survival of wintering Bald Eagles;
 3. To minimize disturbance of walleye and sauger spawning areas—fish that feed the eagles;
 4. To avoid the many risks associated with development—the lack of ready access, the natural instability of the island, its location in a floodplain, and more; and
 5. To safeguard the beauty of the scenic view at Starved Rock State Park.
- If you care about our environment and the rights of Native Americans, don't fail to share your concerns with our elected officials and representatives.

MINAS and noted Potawatomi artist Candi Wesaw have produced a magnificent series of note cards. The first set is available now, for only \$12, (which includes postage and handling.) Each set includes 10 cards on heavy stock with matching envelopes.



Please send me sets at \$12 each. (Make checks payable to MINAS.)

Name _____ Address _____

City, state, zip _____ Phone Number _____

We would love to hear your comments and suggestions about MINAS' efforts and this newsletter. So give us a call at 847.328.5968, e-mail us at PotawProj@aol.com, or snail-mail us at the address below.

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Address Correction Requested

Here's your next issue of
The Pathfinder

