



OFFICE OF THE CHAIR
**MENOMINEE INDIAN
TRIBE OF WISCONSIN**

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Statement

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Friday, February, 24, 2017

Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin's

Menominee River NAGPRA Affiliation Claim Confirmed

(Keshena, WI) – The Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin has received notification from the University Of Michigan Office Of Research, confirming the Tribe's cultural affiliation claim with remains from the Backlund Mound and Village Site in Menominee County, Michigan. The cultural affiliation claim was made following the guidelines of the federal Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). Following this notification, the Tribe and the University will work together towards the goal of transferring possession of the remains pursuant to NAGPRA and the University's NAGPRA policies and procedures.

"For the general public, this determination officially confirms Menominee claims of ancestral connections to this land. But for the Menominee people, this determination only reaffirms what our people have already known for generations about our connection to the Menominee River area. The Menominee River area is the site of our very Creation Story. Most importantly, this determination is a key milestone in our efforts to properly bury with appropriate ceremony our ancestors who were inappropriately disturbed and held in University collections. Now thanks to the efforts and resiliency of many people, we are getting closer to properly returning them to a peaceful resting place as well as protecting our ancestors still resting in these precious mounds" said Gary Besaw, Menominee Tribal Chairman.

The Backlund Mounds and Village site, situated in the Sixty Islands Area of the Menominee River, are part of a large complex of raised agricultural fields and mound groups which are culturally significant to the Tribe. Excavations of the Backlund Mound group were carried out under the direction of Dr. Al Spaulding of the University of Michigan in 1956. The 1968 report published in The Wisconsin Archeologist identified 26 individuals who were taken from 3 of the 8 mounds at the site. The Backlund Mound and Village site is one of many culturally significant sites of the Menominee Tribe that lie within the footprint of the proposed Back Forty Mine.

"The area in and around the proposed Back Forty Mine site contains many other culturally significant Menominee sites which have not been properly evaluated during the permitting process for the mine. We are thankful for laws such as NAGPRA which allow us to regain possession of our ancestors, however like any society in the world, we would prefer our ancestors' remains not be bothered in the first place" said David Grignon, Menominee Historic Preservation Officer.

The Menominee continues to oppose the Back Forty Mine project, based partially on the responsibility of the Tribe to protect sacred sites and burial sites in the area of the Mine.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE February 24, 2016 Contact: Gary Besaw Tribal Chairman (715)799-5114

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