

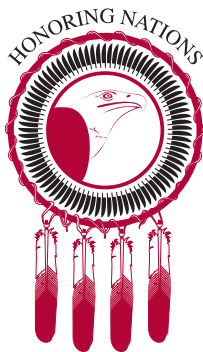
**EXCELLENCE IN  
TRIBAL GOVERNANCE**  
AN HONORING NATIONS CASE STUDY

**The Menominee Community  
Center of Chicago:**  
Creating an Innovative Partnership Between  
Urban and Reservation Communities

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Ben Heraghty

FEBRUARY 2005



HONORING CONTRIBUTIONS  
IN THE  
GOVERNANCE OF AMERICAN  
INDIAN NATIONS



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The Menominee Community Center of Chicago was awarded High Honors in Honoring Nations 2003.

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**Ben Heraghty**



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# THE MENOMINEE COMMUNITY CENTER OF CHICAGO:

## Creating an Innovative Partnership Between Urban and Reservation Communities

Ben Heraghty

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*Abstract: Over half of the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin lives off-reservation. Regrettably, the ties between the Menominee's reservation and urban populations, like those between the split populations of so many Indian nations, have been tenuous for decades. In 1994, a group of Menominee Indians living in Chicago reached out to the Tribe and the Tribe reciprocated. Now, the Menominee Community Center of Chicago is an official community of the Menominee Nation and its members are active participants in tribal culture and governance, strengthening and being strengthened by this renewed connection. This case study examines the steps taken by reservation and urban Menominee to build a bridge between their respective communities and reinforce the ties of the Menominee Tribe.*

## INTRODUCTION

Annie Silas is a tall, shy 12-year-old girl. She loves listening to music and playing basketball, and from time-to-time she also likes to write to her great Aunt Rosie. Annie was born and raised on the North side of Chicago, but she is also a proud descendant of the Menominee Tribe of Keshena, Wisconsin.

Her dark brown eyes sparkle with enthusiasm as she recalls her trip in September 2002 to the Menominee reservation, some 250 miles from her inner city Chicago home. “I didn’t cry at first, but then the woman told me who she was, and I cried,” she says shyly:

*“I was there to help my aunt from Chicago organize the trip back to the Reservation. There were young and old people there and some Menominee hadn’t gone back to the reservation for a long time. On the second day we were all standing next to the river and we were about to get into canoes for the ricing ceremony. Before we got into the canoes, there was a woman blessing the harvest. Afterwards, she came up to me and I noticed a tear in her eye she said that she had a niece in Chicago, and she started crying and hugging me. I didn’t know who she was, but then I started crying because someone said she was my great aunt and she was talking about me. That was the first time I met my great Aunt Rosie.”*

Decades of federal policies of assimilation and forced relocation as well as inadequate economic opportunities on reservations have resulted in an increasingly urban Indian population. Urban Indians account for approximately 60 to 65 percent of North American Indians, and roughly



the same percentage live away from their reservation.<sup>1</sup> Over half of the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin lives off-reservation. Regrettably, the ties between the Menominee's reservation and urban populations, like those between the split populations of so many Indian nations, have been tenuous for decades. Forced relocation and the search for viable economic opportunities have drawn many tribal citizens and their families away from reservations. Urban Indians have been raised in cities that provide few resources to connect with their extended families and tribal communities. Annie Silas is one of the vast numbers of urban Indians the silent and forgotten majority of Indian country who are only just beginning to reconnect to their tribal lands and nurture extended family ties through innovative urban Indian programs.

The fact that so many Indians now live off-reservation raises a crucial challenge for tribes and their governments how does a tribe incorporate and connect with citizens who live many miles from the reservation, especially in urban areas? What legal, economic, and social resources are available to establish relationships with urban Indian communities? Which services can be offered to meet the needs of urban tribal citizens, and which citizens are eligible? And how can an urban Indian population take the initiative and reach back to its reservation to generate and sustain formal and informal relationships?

These were the challenges faced by Chicago members of the Menominee Tribe of Wisconsin. In 1994, in direct response to these challenges, a group of Menominee Indians living in Chicago reached out to the Tribe and the Tribe reciprocated. Now, the Tribal government recognizes the Menominee Community Center of Chicago

as an official community of the Menominee Tribe, and its members are active participants in tribal culture and governance, strengthening and being strengthened by this renewed connection. How were these relationships built, and how are they sustained?

## **THE MENOMINEE TRIBE OF WISCONSIN**

The Menominee Indians are an Algonquian-speaking tribe living on the Menominee Reservation in northeastern Wisconsin (see Appendix A). The Menominee land base once stretched from Lake Michigan to the Mississippi, encompassing 9.5 million acres. Today, the Menominee Reservation covers 235,000 acres and operates as a sovereign tribal nation, as well as a recognized county of Wisconsin.

Throughout the first half of the 1800s the Menominee Tribe signed a series of statutes and treaties with the federal government. Initially, these government-to-government agreements promised the Tribe protection from land acquisition by white settlers and traders. The boundaries of the modern reservation were solidified during this time under the leadership of the famous Chief Oshkosh in treaties of 1854 and 1856.<sup>2</sup> However, later treaties consistently appropriated land for white settlers, government land, and the resettlement of other Indian tribes, especially from New York. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, Wisconsin forestry companies targeted the Tribe's extensive forestry holdings. In 1871 the Tribe was able to end these acquisitions by obtaining a license to harvest timber on its lands.

The Menominee Tribe benefited significantly from timber

production at the beginning of the twentieth century, and greatly expanded industrial production through a timber mill built by the US Forest Service in 1909. When combined with an increased number of logging licenses supervised by the federal government, forestry supported the creation of hospitals, clinics, schools and other social programs for the Menominee reservation in the first half of the twentieth century. In 1935 the Menominee sued the federal government for mismanagement of forestry resources and, in a landmark decision handed down in 1951, received \$8.5 million in compensation.<sup>3</sup>

By the beginning of the 1950s the Tribe was relatively prosperous and self-sufficient through its reliance on timber production. This prosperity became, however, a disadvantage for the Menominee when Congress passed House Concurrent Resolution 108 (the Termination Resolution) in August 1953. Resolution 108 stated that some tribes (including the Menominee) had attained such a level of integration and prosperity that they no longer required independent federal reservation status. Thus these tribes would have their federal reservation status ‘terminated’ and states would assume jurisdiction over these reservations. In June 1954 President Eisenhower signed the bill into law and termination took effect in May 1961. The tribal electoral and citizenship roll was closed, the sawmill was appropriated by the state, and state taxes were levied. Throughout the 1960s the absence of federal protection and the increased tax burden on the county corporation of Menominee Enterprises Inc. (MEI) led to significant loss of assets, identity, businesses and land. The reservation became the poorest county in Wisconsin.<sup>4</sup>

In response to the dramatic decline in the prosperity of the

reservation and the prospect of large-scale development on Menominee land, several Menominee leaders banded together in 1970 to organize a grassroots campaign for restoration of federal recognition under the banner of Determination of Rights and Unity for Menominee Shareholders (DRUMS). DRUMS engaged in extensive and highly visible political organizing and lobbying for two years under the leadership of Ada Deer,<sup>5</sup> a young Menominee social worker. This political action resulted in the Menominee Restoration Act (Public Law 93-197) signed by President Nixon in December 1973.<sup>6</sup>

The political activism of the early 1970s was translated into political and economic development following Restoration. Although there was significant disagreement on the best way to reorganize the Menominee governance structures, by 1975 the reservation had reinvigorated its governance functions and a new Constitution was approved in 1976. Tribal citizens born since 1954 had steadily been added to the tribal roll, and in 1979 a new tribal legislature began its first term of office. Since the mid-1980s the Menominee Tribe has sustained itself through successful forestry and gaming enterprises. Sustainable forestry methods supervised by Menominee Tribal Enterprises (MTE) have produced high quality timber products while maintaining environmental best practices. The tribe has also invested heavily in capital infrastructure using revenue from its casino, hotel, slot machines and bingo operations.

### *Snapshot Menominee Tribe Today*

Although the Menominee Tribe has come a long way in its struggle for self-determination and renewed prosperity, statistics show that there is still a long way to go. Despite

rapid advances in the forestry and gambling industries over the last 10 years, and an increase in per capita income at a rate faster than the national and state averages, the average income of a person in Menominee county in 2001 (\$16,930) was still well below the per capita income of the United States (\$30, 413) and Wisconsin (\$29,196). The workforce is heavily dependant upon the tribal government as the primary employer, employing 94% of the workforce. Although the labor force participation rate (percentage of those employed or actively seeking work, as a percentage of working age population) is significantly higher than the state and national average, the unemployment rate has held steady at more than double the state and national average over the past 5 years at around 10%.<sup>7</sup> According to the 2000 Census measure of poverty, in Menominee County a quarter of all families and almost 1 in 3 individuals live in poverty.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, a quarter of all Menominee Indians across the United States and a quarter of all American Indians live in poverty.<sup>9</sup>

The Menominee Tribe on the reservation and across the United States has solid rates of high school graduation at approximately 80 percent, which is equivalent to the national average.<sup>10</sup> However, the level of educational attainment drops significantly for college graduation. The national average for attainment of a Bachelor's degree (or a higher degree) is 24.4%. This figure drops to half among both Native American and Menominee populations across the United States with approximately 12% attaining a Bachelor's degree or higher. This is the second lowest percentage of educational attainment among racial categories after Hispanics. In 1993 the Tribe realized the importance of education to its future and opened the College of the Menominee Nation to provide increased

access to college education and workforce skills Tribal citizens.

### **URBAN INDIANS THE “FORGOTTEN” MAJORITY**

Many reservation Indians were relocated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) under the federal relocation policies of the 1950s and early 1960s. As part of the Termination policy, the BIA offered grants and job training to Indians who would leave the reservation and seek employment in urban areas. For some this provided jobs, but for most urban Indians the result was high rates of unemployment, combined with cultural dislocation and trauma.

Historically, tribal, state, and federal policymakers have maintained a reservation-centric view of Indian needs and priorities despite the existence and encouragement of significant urban Indian relocation. As a result, urban Indian populations struggle to address their needs alone. Most free or low-cost services available to Indians living off-reservation require that they travel back to their home reservation to obtain care or services. For many, poverty prevents such travel. Urban Indians also suffer frequently from a severe sense of cultural dislocation. Many would prefer to return to their traditional lands and many attempt to maintain close ties to their native culture, but distance and economic distress make these desires difficult to realize.

Urban Indians have therefore turned with increasing frequency to nonprofit urban Indian community centers that offer services such as employment training, health

care, housing programs, and welfare. As important as these centers have become, they still struggle to meet urban Indians' needs. As non-governmental and off-reservation entities, they face obstacles in securing funds that are directed toward tribal governments. Further, given that most centers serve Natives from distinct and different cultures, these pan-Indian centers' are constrained in their ability to meet the cultural needs of any single population.

Studies reveal that urban Indians are disproportionately prone to experience socioeconomic distress when compared to the general population. They are twice as likely to lack a college degree, twice as likely to be unemployed, and one in four urban Indians lives in poverty compared to the general population. Urban Indians are also forty percent more likely to die from accidents and almost three times more likely to die from alcohol-related illnesses than the general population.<sup>11</sup>

The story of the Menominee in urban areas follows a similar pattern to the struggle of urban Indians all over the United States. When the US government terminated its status as a federally recognized tribal nation in 1961, many Menominee families were encouraged to move to urban areas such as Green Bay and Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and Chicago, Illinois. Currently, 70 percent of the estimated ten thousand Menominee tribal citizens live beyond their reservation boundaries, while six percent of these tribal citizens live in the Chicago metropolitan area.<sup>12</sup> Amongst this off-reservation population, two out of every three citizens lives in an urban area.<sup>13</sup> This substantial urban Menominee population, numbering almost 5000 people, or 50 percent of the total Menominee population, is often

severely disconnected from tribal roots.

Menominee Indians living in the Chicago area demonstrate the myriad economic and social hardships commonly experienced by urban Native American communities. During the Relocation phase, Menominee Indians in Chicago were concentrated in an area on Chicago's North side called "Uptown". Consistent with the statistics for urban Indians across the United States, the Menominee Indians living in the Chicago area experience high unemployment, while those who are employed work mainly in low-paying jobs in the service sector. They have critical medical needs but oftentimes do not have access to major medical coverage. Additionally, single women head a high percentage of households in Chicago. Within the Chicago area, Menominee Indians have tended to get lost among the city's considerable Indian and minority populations. As a result, 84 percent of the Menominee Indians living in the Chicago area are at or below the poverty line. Only 6 percent are homeowners.<sup>14</sup>

### **BUILDING A BRIDGE FROM CHICAGO**

In 1994, the Menominee Indians of the Chicago area confronted this economic and cultural marginalization by forming a center of their own. This center diverged from typical urban Indian community centers in order to fulfill specific Menominee needs. It began, initially, as a forum for formalizing social and familial connections. Known as the Menominee Social Club of Chicago, its members hosted cultural gatherings and offered support services for Menominee individuals and families living in the greater Chicago area.



The Chicago-based Menominee were initially drawn together through the tragic death of Menominee tribal citizen and long-time Chicago resident Rose Shawanokasic. Menominee tribal members rallied together to pool resources and emotional support to assist local and reservation family members and close friends for funeral arrangements.

Barbara Jersey, coordinator of the MCCC since 2003, remembers the first gatherings of Chicago-based Menominee after the funeral in early 1994 as simply a social chat amongst friends. But many of the core group in those early days were also brought together by their deeper shared history of removal from the Menominee reservation and subsequent adoption by non-Native families living in the suburbs of Chicago. As former coordinator Pam Alfonso remembers:

*“At first we would just invite Menominee people to dinner to catch up and gossip it was just an informal dinner at someone’s house. The social club was really a support network for those of us who had grown up in ‘the system’. Many of us had been adopted by families and we didn’t know each other or our families back on the reservation. The network was a product of the system we were raised in.”*

The social club thus provided an informal social support network for Menominee living in Chicago. Raffles, donations and potlucks sustained a meager amount of funds to support projects such as a bereavement fund. In addition to its social purpose, the club also operated as an informal referral resource, for example, directing Menominee to various educational, medical, housing and

## Indian organizations in Chicago.

By 1996, the infrequent meetings of the social club at the American Indian Center of Chicago had emerged as a growing organized constituency. The pooled knowledge of friends was not enough to sustain the increasingly frequent and complex questions regarding Menominee housing, medical coverage, and education. The informal social gatherings had generated political consciousness. The Club's members began to strongly identify themselves as Menominee and assert their status as citizens of the Menominee Tribe of Wisconsin. In turn, their growing participation in tribal events and political activism gained the attention of the Menominee tribal government. Issues of formal membership and voting rights of the Menominee Tribe were regularly referred to the tribal legislature, and Chicago became an important campaign ground for candidates seeking tribal legislature votes. The social club therefore faced a dilemma to what extent should it move beyond the informal social support network it had already established? On one hand, the club did not want to lose the intimacy of its informal social network. On the other hand, there was clearly work to be done on the unique issues pertaining to urban Indians of tribal citizenship and cultural connection.

Fortunately in early 1996, long-serving Menominee government official Royal Warrington contacted the leaders of the social club and floated some ideas about increasing Chicago involvement. As Legislative Staff Services Director for the Menominee Tribal Legislature it was Warrington's job to prepare and orientate new legislators in Keshena, Wisconsin. For several years he had been noticing the trend of legislators and candidates

to engage with the social club, as well the numerous questions and referrals emanating from this community. As a tribal official, Royal also had an intimate knowledge of the Menominee Constitution and realized that there may be scope for a more substantial and formal inclusion of the social club in some way.

In March 1996, Royal Warrington attended a Menominee community meeting in Chicago of about eighty people to discuss the options for reaching out to the legislature. There were several issues to consider. First, the Tribe could provide neither recognition nor financial support to an unincorporated entity. The community therefore had to decide what type of organization it wanted to become. Second, some tribal citizens on the reservation might resist the inclusion of Chicago residents because they could not be certain of individual tribal affiliation. Third, under the Menominee Constitution, the tribal legislature could designate the social club as a 'community area'; a community area could be designated as the official responsibility of a tribal government committee. Such a designation would mean that the entity would become part of the Menominee nation and certain obligations would accrue. For example, the Menominee government was obligated to hold a community meeting twice yearly with a designated community. Was this level of formality necessary or desirable?

In considering these issues, the social club leaders also recognized that they were in a unique and timely position with regard to the legislature. Of the nine tribal legislators in Keshena in 1996, seven had lived in Chicago at one time or another and interacted with the social club, a direct result of the increasing importance of Chicago on

the virtual Menominee map.

## **OBSTACLES TO INCLUSION**

Initially, not every legislator of the Menominee tribal government was open to the idea of an active off-reservation political presence. Some tribal citizens viewed urban Menominee Indians as ‘outsiders’ a threat to the deep community bonds forged over centuries among clans and families on the reservation. During several meetings on the reservation, Chicago Menominee leaders were asked for their tribal citizenship credentials before they were even allowed to speak. Given this low but consistent level of resistance, the Chicago leaders wondered how they could continue to establish connections to the reservation without provoking a backlash.

However, the Chicago leaders quickly realized that they possessed some creative and effective resources at their disposal. They discovered that in order to overcome distrust towards them as perceived ‘outsiders’, they could utilize the relationships between Chicago Menominee and well-respected families on the reservation, such as Margaret Snow and Mavis Neconish. Both Snow and Neconish were born and raised on the reservation for most of their adult lives and then moved to Chicago. Both came from well-respected and traditional reservation families. As a result, they could call upon key citizens of the tribe in order to open doors and establish connections prior to visits from Chicago-based leaders such as Pam Alfonso and Barbara Jersey.

Some tribal citizens were also concerned that granting money, access and legitimacy to the Chicago-based

Menominee would lead to a ‘slippery slope’ of recognition for all off-reservation Menominee populations. “If we give money to Menominee in Chicago,” they worried, “then will we have to give money to Menominee in Green Bay, Milwaukee and everywhere else?” This then raised concerns about the drain on resources in assisting off-reservation communities, since recognition of an official ‘community area’ of the Tribe obligated the Menominee government to hold two community meetings each year in that community. Recognition might increase those eligible for health and education services paid for from tribal funds.

But as Pam Alfonso and the Chicago leaders argued in various meetings on the reservation throughout 1996, the strength of the constituency in Chicago was *already* attracting visits from tribal legislators and officials twice a year. The social club was sending several people from Chicago to the General Council meeting of the tribal legislature each year – evidence that Chicago residents were active and engaged. Menominee in Chicago were not after a ‘free ride’ on Menominee financial resources or services. Rather, they were interested in deepening connection with their heritage. And if other urban-based Menominee communities in Green Bay or Milwaukee wanted to organize and initiate a more formal relationship with the reservation, the Chicago leaders reasoned, then surely that would strengthen the potential resources of the tribe rather than weaken it?

One of the major advantages of the social club was the pooling of collective professional skills and political ‘know-how’ of its people. Many Chicago-based Menominee had been educated in Chicago public schools

and colleges, and now worked in a wide array of jobs and sectors. For example, Pam Alfonso at the time worked as an urban economic development organizer in Chicago organizing poor communities to advocate for themselves. Barbara Jersey worked in the corporate sector, and Michael Chapman brought his legal skills and knowledge of the Constitution to the project.

In response to the persistent efforts and initiative of the Chicago leaders for recognition by the Tribal Legislature, in late 1996 the Menominee Nation Tribal Council acted under the Tribal Government Plan Ordinance 95/04 to officially recognize the newly renamed Menominee Community Center of Chicago (MCCC). The center was designated as a non-profit tribal program under the sphere of influence of a tribal legislature oversight committee. This made it eligible for an initial grant of \$10,000 to cover basic operating costs.

### **MCCC TODAY**

Today, the Menominee Community Center of Chicago is the institutional home of the only officially recognized off-reservation community of the Menominee Indian Tribe. The MCCC is governed by a five-member Board of Directors that oversees activities and reports to the Menominee Tribal Legislature. To sustain its numerous offerings, the Center still relies on a ten thousand dollar annual budget and, more significantly, the generous volunteer efforts of its dedicated members. Meetings and activities are frequently based at the American Indian Center of Chicago.

The Center succeeds in strengthening the relationships of

its Chicago-area members by providing a full spectrum of cultural engagements as well as information about and referrals to social services. The MCCC organizes and sponsors powwows, traditional fish feasts, and breakfasts for homeless Menominee. It has hosted language classes with the support of a Menominee Newberry Library Fellow and has worked with the Tribal Historic Preservation Office regarding Menominee artifacts held in the Chicago Field Museum. Additionally, the MCCC studies urban Indian issues and collects useful data for the Menominee Tribe as well as the general public. The Center's research on the status of urban Menominee housing conditions allows it to advocate for improved housing services and the Center has begun to develop programs for enhancing Menominee employment opportunities in the Chicago area.

In addition, the MCCC enhances social and political connections between the Chicago-area Menominee Indians and the Menominee Tribe. As Joan Delabreau, Chairperson of the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin for 2003 declares:

*“...those who relocated are still part of our family, and the Menominee Community Center of Chicago has been a very important bridge in relationship-building between our Illinois membership, the Menominee Tribal legislature, and our community members here in the reservation.”*

Although Menominee populations in Green Bay and Milwaukee are larger than in Chicago, the MCCC remains the only recognized off-reservation community entity in the Menominee nation.

## LESSONS LEARNED

With such a small operation, how does the Center evaluate success? Five factors contribute to the existence and effectiveness of the MCCC.

First, the Center and the Menominee tribal government have willingly worked together to redefine tribal citizenship. At the beginning of the lobbying process the leaders in Chicago made a pact tribal affiliation should not be judged by a strict geographic standard, especially given the context of separation and relocation for urban Indian communities. Communicating this message to reservation citizens was at the core of the recognition process. Through this recognition, the Tribe has embraced a portion of its population that many Indian nations simply do not include in the ongoing business of governance. While several other tribes offer services to their off-reservation constituents as individuals, the Menominee Tribe's recognition of an off-reservation community in its entirety is virtually unheard of in Indian Country. By establishing an inclusive definition of citizenship, the Tribe offers political, cultural, and economic support to tribal citizens far from the reservation center. The result has been an increase in the *quality* of the relationships between Chicago and reservation Menominee. Instead of being viewed as 'outsiders', the inclusion of the Chicago community center as a 'virtual' community area of the Menominee Tribe has only served to strengthen the bonds between the two communities.

The second factor in the Center's success was the Menominees' realization that the Tribe itself would be strengthened by the incorporation of these citizens and



families into the civic and cultural affairs of the Tribe. Although not every legislator and member was open to the idea of an active off-reservation political presence, perhaps the Menominee Tribe began to accept the contributions of its off-reservation citizens after the federal government terminated its reservation status. Then, tribal citizens living in Chicago played a significant role in the restoration of federal recognition. Now, the Menominee Tribe is again welcoming the contributions of its Chicago-area citizens. In total, 45 percent of Chicago-based Menominee now vote in tribal elections and tribal leaders are already recognizing the benefits of drawing upon these citizens' unique perspectives. The legislature is beginning to recruit members of the Chicago community onto policy committees and tribal oversight boards, such as the Menominee Gaming Commission and the Restoration Committee, to help nurture and grow the Tribe.

The Tribe also recognizes the wealth of contacts that the MCCC offers. Some MCCC members hold leadership roles and advance Menominee tribal interests in the Chicago area in education, public policy, and economic development. Additionally, the MCCC offers opportunities for official interactions between the Menominee Tribe and various Illinois populations that might provide a natural springboard for interactions between tribal government and state leaders. As Michael Chapman, the first Chicago resident to be elected to the Menominee legislature, notes:

*“... since there are so many Menominee in Chicago - we have always had representation on either the board or the staff of many of the Chicago Indian organizations... Political involvement in the Chicago Indian community is critical, for*

*securing or retaining staff or board appointments often requires some community based organizing. This informal political base can be applied to a wide range of issues, including the city for service enhancement, all the way to candidates seeking city and tribal office on the reservation.”*

With the increasing importance of tribal-state relations, tribes such as the Menominee do well to utilize the connections that their urban populations provide.

Third, the Menominee Community Center of Chicago and the Menominee Tribe recognize the importance of cultivating a distinctly Menominee cultural identity among its urban diaspora. The MCCC and the Tribe collaborate in their efforts to meet needs specific to Menominee Indians that are frequently overlooked by pan-Indian initiatives. For example, the Center educates Native and non-Native Chicago communities about the Menominee Tribe and its unique history. The MCCC’s presentations in schools and other organizations portray an accurate image of Menominee culture and accomplishments. The Center’s range of activities is also an important part of enhancing the emotional health of its members. Many of these individuals were adopted out of the tribe or raised in foster care with little or no connection to their cultural heritage. Now, the MCCC offers them an avenue for establishing or reestablishing contact. Several MCCC members have been united with previously unknown family through the Center’s Enrollments Office contacts. The MCCC also encourages mentoring relationships, pairing older and younger MCCC members. These relationships, built on a common culture and a shared tribal citizenship, will sustain the Center’s vibrancy and

ability to serve Menominee citizens and families for generations to come.

A fourth factor that undergirds the Center's success is that urban and reservation Menominee have employed simple strategies to renew and strengthen their relationship. Together they have brought biannual meetings of the tribal legislature to Chicago. Through these meetings, constituents come to know their elected leaders and stay abreast of social, cultural, and economic developments being pursued by the tribal government. Tribal legislators also benefit as off-reservation citizens communicate their needs and contribute their distinct perspectives and knowledge. The Center organizes trips for Menominee individuals and families to go "back home" to the reservation for important cultural events such as the Sturgeon Feast and the Big Drum Ceremony. It also circulates information on tribal enrollment, the legislative election process, the tribal constitution, and tribal social services available to Chicago-area citizens. The Center coordinates attendance to the Menominee Nation Annual General Council Meeting. These simple and easily replicable acts have enabled the Menominee to strengthen the entire tribal population.

Finally, the MCCC does not wish to be 'all things to all Menominee', but instead aims for a successful completion of consecutive key projects. Limited resources mean that each project must be constructed using a creative combination of volunteers, time, money, space, ingenuity, creativity and any other resources available. Successful projects since 1996 have included establishing a Menominee language course at the Native American Education Services College (NAES) of Chicago, and

constructing four traditional Menominee village dwellings in a Chicago park for use as a resource in school programs on Native American history and culture. In 1998 the MCCC collaborated with the Newbury Library on a display named “Keepers of the Forest”, which exhibited the sustainable practices and products of native forestry production. The display and subsequent business reception produced important business leads in Chicago for the hardwood industry located on the reservation. Perhaps the most satisfying project for the leaders of the Chicago Center was in September 2002. The Center coordinated a trip back to the reservation for about 30 people specifically targeted at reconnecting adopted Menominee and senior citizens with their family. It was through this trip that young Annie Silas first met her Aunt Rose, and many other Menominee were also able to connect with their long lost relatives after years of forced separation.

## **CONCLUSION STRENGTHENING AND SUSTAINING COMMUNITY**

For too long, tribal governments have forgotten their off-reservation citizens. As recently as the 1990s, this was true for the Menominee community living in the Chicago metropolitan area. Regrettably, it remains true for urban Indians throughout Indian Country. To the credit of the Menominee Community Center of Chicago and the Menominee tribal government, the Chicago-based Menominee are no longer forgotten. Through an innovative partnership between an active off-reservation community and a forward-looking tribal government, the Menominee are redefining what it means to be tribal citizens. Their efforts are an expression of nation building that deserves the careful examination of other tribal

governments and off-reservation Indian citizens.

For all the progress in building community relationships between the MCCC in Chicago and the tribal legislature in Keshena, among the Menominee of Chicago there is still a touch of irony to the enthusiasm surrounding the Center. As Pam Alfonso muses:

*“The original tribal boundaries of the Menominee extended all the way down the Mid-West to include Chicago. We have been recognized for innovation and service to our community, but really we’re just returning to the old ways.”*

The wheel may have come full circle now that the presence of Menominee citizens is once again recognized in Chicago. However, the difference today is the renewed sense of purpose among the Menominee tribal citizens. The MCCC is helping to rejuvenate and reconnect relationships between family and tribal citizens, like the one between Annie and her great aunt Rosie. These relationships continue to nourish and strengthen the future generations of the Menominee Tribe.

### **Appendices**

- A. Map of Wisconsin Indian Reservations
- B. Selected Population Statistics for United States, Wisconsin, Menominee Reservation and Chicago
- C. Timeline Menominee Tribe
- D. Great Seal of the Menominee Tribe
- E. Menominee County Workforce Summary
- F. Teaching Note



**APPENDIX B: SELECTED POPULATION STATISTICS**

	<b>United States</b>	<b>Wisconsin</b>	<b>Menominee Reservation<sup>15</sup></b>	<b>Chicago<sup>16</sup></b>
<b>Total Population</b>	281,421,906	5,363,675	3,225	8,307,904
	Urban: 222,360,539 Rural: 59,061,367	Urban: 3,663,643 Rural: 1,700,032		
<b>American Indian or Alaskan Native <i>alone or in combination</i>*</b>	4,119,301	69,386	3,088	50,420
	Urban: 2,774,716 Rural: 591,977	Urban: 39,236 Rural: 30,150		
<b>American Indian or Alaskan Native <i>alone</i></b>	2,475,956	47,228	3,070	22,251
	Urban: 1,497,402 Rural: 978,554	Urban: 23,177 Rural: 24,051		
<b>Menominee Tribe <i>alone or in combination</i>*</b>	9,840	7,423	2,732	309
	Urban: 4,780 Rural: 5,060	Urban: 2,782 Rural: 4,641		
<b>Menominee Tribe <i>alone</i></b>	7,886	6,485	2,715	185
	Urban: 3,282 Rural: 4,601	Urban: 2,114 Rural: 4,371		

\* Census 2000 used self-identification of race. Participants could select whether they viewed themselves as *only* American Indian, or whether they viewed themselves as a *combination of* American Indian *and* one or more other races. The combination of the category of Native American *alone* with the category of *in combination with one or more races* provides a so-called ‘maximum’ number for the Native American population. The *alone* category acts as a so-called ‘minimum’.

For further details see Stella U. Onguwole, *Census 2000 Brief*, “The American Indian and Alaska Native population: 2000”, U.S. Census Bureau, February 2002. <http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/c2kbr01-15.pdf> (viewed 7/22/04)

## **APPENDIX C: TIMELINE MENOMINEE TRIBE**

- 1634 French settler Jean Nicolet visits area near Green Bay and makes contact with Menominee Tribe.
- 1812 Menominee side with the British against the Americans.
- 1832 Menominee, under Chief Koshkenaniew, side with the Americans in the Black Hawk War against other tribes.
- 1854 Treaty of Keshena Falls signed by the famous Chief Oshkosh establishing the boundaries of the modern reservation around the Wolf River in northeastern Wisconsin
- 1862 A Menominee regiment is formed and fights for the Union.
- 1882 Congress passes an act to allow the tribe to harvest “dead and down” timber on its lands.
- 1909 US Forestry Service builds a timber mill and approves logging of mature trees.
- 1924 Congress passes an act allowing Indians to become citizens of the United States. Previously they were considered wards of the state.
- 1935 Menominee sue the federal government for mismanagement of forestry resources
- 1951 In a landmark decision the Federal Court awards the Menominee \$8.5 million in compensation for mismanagement of Menominee forestry resources by the Federal Government.



- Aug 1953 Congress passes House Concurrent Resolution 108 terminating federal reservation status for some prosperous tribes, including the Menominee.
- June 1954 President Eisenhower signs the 'Termination' bill into law.
- May 1961 Termination takes effect for the Menominee Tribe. The tribal roll is closed, the sawmill is appropriated by the state, and state taxes levied on the tribal administration.
- Spring 1970 Determination of Rights and Unity for Menominee Shareholders (DRUMS) is formed to organize a grassroots campaign for restoration of federal recognition.
- Dec 1973 Menominee Restoration Act (Public Law 93-197) signed by President Nixon.
- 1975 Tribal administration and governance restored.
- 1976 A new Constitution is approved. First reservation medical clinic opens.
- 1979 New tribal legislature begins its first term of office.
- 1986 Menominee off-reservation tribal casino opens for business.
- 1993 College of the Menominee Nation opens.
- Fall 1994 Original members of the Menominee Social Club of Chicago meet for dinner.

- 1996 Menominee Community Center of Chicago designated as the first off-reservation community area by the tribal legislature (Ordinance 95/04). \$10,000 allocated for first MCCC budget.
- 1998 “Keepers of the Forest” exhibited in Newbury Library displaying the sustainable practices and products of native Menominee forestry production.
- Sept 2002 “Homeward Bound” weekend trip and campout for 30 Chicago-based Menominee citizens on the reservation in Wisconsin, organized by MCCC.

## APPENDIX D: THE SEAL OF THE MENOMINEE TRIBE



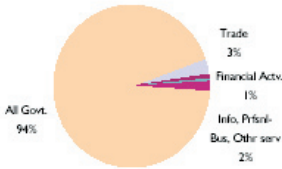
This seal appears on a white flag to represent the Menominee Nation. The circular seal of the Menominee Nation bears a red “Thunderbird”, one of the paramount creatures in Native American lore. The thunderbird is often depicted as an eagle, but the Menominee employ a more traditional depiction. Some people believe that the thunderbird actually represents a real bird, one seen only rarely today - the condor. The tail of the thunderbird shows a white upward pointing arrow, symbolic of the bright future now facing the Menominee people.

Two other devices appear in the seal, one over each of the thunderbird’s shoulders. To the viewer’s left appears a map of the reservation upon which a pine forest is depicted. Over the right shoulder is a cross section of a log. Both the pine forest and the log point out the importance of the timber industry to the Menominee way of life.

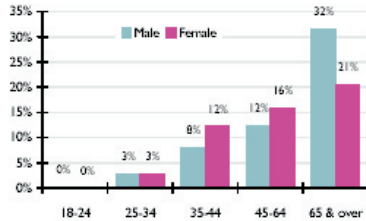
*The Seal of the Menominee Tribe:* <http://users.aol.com/donh523/>

## APPENDIX E: MENOMINEE COUNTY WORKFORCE SUMMARY

Menominee County Industry Distribution: 2002

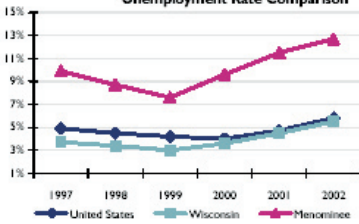


Percent of age group with at least a Bachelor's degree in Menominee County

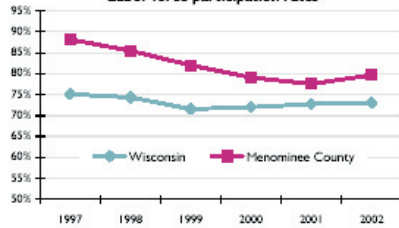


Source: US Dept. of Commerce, Census 2000, Summary file 4, QT-P20

Unemployment Rate Comparison



Labor force participation rates

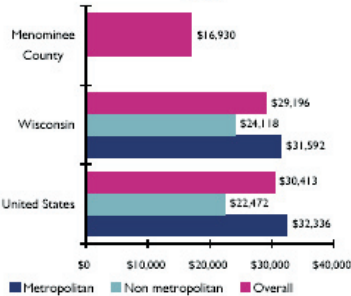


Source: WI DWD, Office of Economic Advisors, 2003

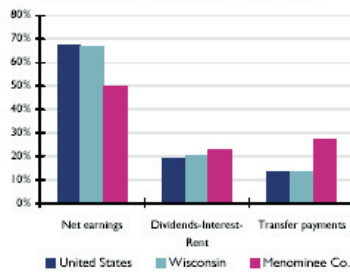
Per Capita Personal Income

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	Percent Change	
							1 year	5 year
United States	\$24,270	\$25,412	\$26,893	\$27,880	\$29,760	\$30,413	2.2%	25.3%
Wisconsin	\$23,301	\$24,481	\$26,004	\$26,926	\$28,389	\$29,196	2.8%	25.3%
Menominee County	\$12,977	\$13,785	\$14,333	\$14,796	\$15,254	\$16,930	11.0%	30.5%

2001



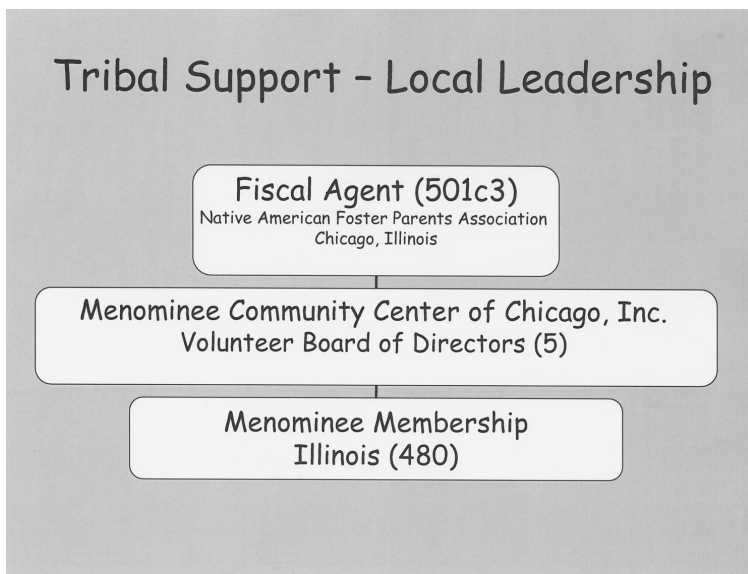
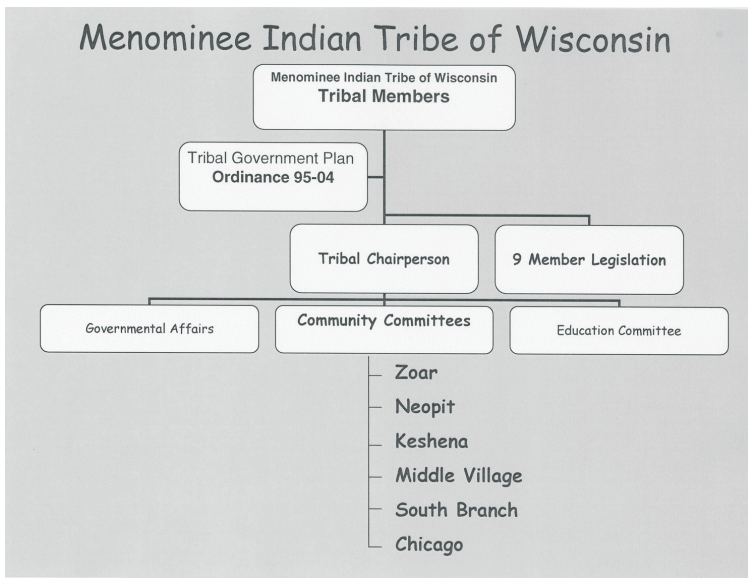
Components of Total Personal Income: 2001



Source: US Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, State & Local Personal Income, May 2003, CAI-3, CA05

Graph sources: State of Wisconsin, Department of Workforce Development, Office of Economic Advisors, January 2004. Available at: [http://www.dwd.state.wi.us/lmi/cp\\_pdf/m078cpw.pdf](http://www.dwd.state.wi.us/lmi/cp_pdf/m078cpw.pdf), (viewed 8/3/04)

## APPENDIX F: ORGANIZATIONAL CHARTS



## Connecting Families -Sustaining Our Future



Annie adopted since age 2 (Chicago)

10 years later she is reunited with her Great Aunt Rose  
(Menominee Reservation)

**APPENDIX G: TEACHING NOTE**

## QUESTIONS AND TALKING POINTS FOR INSTRUCTOR

- *The Ambiguity of Statistics*: The table of selected population statistics contains notes regarding the new categories of AIAN *alone* or *in combination*. The Census rationale for this change was one of self-identification many Native Americans may have only one parent or grandparent who is ‘objectively’ categorized as Native American, but still identify as Native American. How do various tribes define themselves? Is the concept of Native American one of self-identification, ancestral or clan lines, or objective criteria? How do statistics help or hinder tribal decisions? How are these conflicting categories reconciled?
- *Insider-Outsider Dynamic*: Who is considered part of a tribe and who is not? How do specific cultural, geographic and historical issues influence the concept of ‘citizenship’ of the tribe? Are there ‘blind spots’ for particular tribes in who they include and exclude as citizens? What boundaries are set by tribes to maintain and sustain ‘cultural integrity’? Which boundaries are valuable and which ones are detrimental to the interests of the tribe?
- *Reservation versus Urban Indians*: What are some issues specific to urban Indians? What is the attitude of reservation Indians to urban Indian communities, and vice versa? Does each tribe know the number of its tribe in urban centers? What level of contact is there with these urban communities? What structures are in place at present for this level of contact? Are they formal or informal structures? What are the potential advantages and disadvantages of establishing links with urban citizens of a tribe?

- *Why did Chicago work?* Milwaukee and Green Bay have much larger Menominee populations than Chicago. Why is it that Chicago was successful in sustaining momentum for a formal relationship with the reservation? What are the key factors for success in this particular tribe? Are there any general strategies transferable to other tribes and/or urban populations?

### LESSONS LEARNED

Ideally, students or participants in this case study will come away from the discussion with a deeper knowledge of the key issues, major obstacles, beneficial strategies employed, political understanding and necessary technical skills to build connections between reservations and urban communities. Below are some of the major lessons learned:

- *Political Organizing is Key:* Initiative and enthusiasm on the part of the urban Indian community is usually the first essential step in establishing a relationship. A relationship cannot be sustained solely by the reservation. There must be key political and social organizers and leaders in the urban community to organize a core constituency that has an interest in reconnecting to the reservation.
- *Multiple Skills are Useful:* The Menominee of Chicago utilized all the skill base of their members, e.g. political organizing, family connections and respected elders, legal knowledge of the constitution and professional expertise in dealing with bureaucracy. Collaboration was essential, especially when most of the core leadership group worked in full time jobs in Chicago. The core group of leaders operated as a team and delegated responsibility.



- *Patience and Pacing:* Reconnection to tribal reservations will not happen overnight. The process of engagement must be paced at a rate that all of the reservation can handle. Some tribal elders and government officials will see urban Indians attempting to structure formal connections with the reservation as an outside threat, and there will be significant distrust of the process.
- *Legal Recognition Provides a Firm Foundation:* Informal links between urban and reservation communities are essential, but can easily dissipate if key individuals lose interest or the ability to devote time to sustaining these links. Informal networks in the Green Bay and Milwaukee communities exist, but tend to rise and fall depending upon the individual personalities driving the process. Ultimately, a formal legal recognition of off-reservation communities will provide a firm foundation for a *sustainable* relationship. Legal recognition brings with it formal obligations from the tribal government to the off-reservation community. In this way, there is a sustained link, and the off-reservation community will not become a ‘forgotten’ community when times are tough.
- *Less is More, at First:* The MCCC has kept its programs and operations small-scale and has avoided doing too much too soon. It has a very small budget, no full time staff, and operates on the generosity of its volunteers. Over time its programs and operations may expand, but its primary purpose at present is to nurture relationships between the reservation and Chicago-based Menominee. Without additional resources, any activities beyond small-scale projects may begin to draw it away from its primary purpose of reconnection.

- *Eyes on the Prize a Stronger Tribe*: The ultimate goal of establishing relationships with urban Indian communities is to strengthen the tribe. The tribe becomes stronger through reconnecting family members to each other, utilizing urban Indian networks and professional expertise, and increasing the pool of citizens to whom tribal traditions can be passed down to. The increasing pace of globalization means that a tribe with strong connections to urban Indians will be more robust and adaptable to social changes that frequently develop first in urban areas.

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**END NOTES**

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

<sup>2</sup> Brian C. Hosmer, “Reflections on Indian Cultural “Brokers”: Reginald Oshkosh, Mitchell Oshkenaniew, and the Politics of Menominee Lumbering”, *Ethnohistory*, 44:3, pp493-509.

<sup>3</sup> Patricia K. Ourada, *The Menominee Indians: A History*, Norman, Oklahoma, 1979.

<sup>4</sup> *Encyclopedia of North American Indians*, “Menominee”, Houghton Mifflin, [http://college.hmco.com/history/readerscomp/naind/html/na000107\\_entries.htm](http://college.hmco.com/history/readerscomp/naind/html/na000107_entries.htm) (viewed 8/2/04)

<sup>5</sup> Ada Deer was appointed by the Clinton administration in 1993 as the first Native American woman to head the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

<sup>6</sup> Nicholas C. Peroff, *Menominee DRUMS: Tribal Termination and Restoration 1945-1974*, Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1982.

<sup>7</sup> See also Appendix E

<sup>8</sup> US Census Bureau, Census 2000, County Profile, Menominee County, WI, <http://censtats.census.gov/data/WI/05055078.pdf> (viewed 8/3/04)

<sup>9</sup> US Census Bureau, Sample File 3 and AIAN Summary File

<sup>10</sup> See AIAN Sample file and *Census 2000 Brief* “Educational Attainment: 2000”, U.S. Census Bureau

<sup>11</sup> Urban Indian Health Institute, *The Health Status of Urban American Indians and Alaska Natives*, March 2004, available at <http://www.uihi.org/publications.asp> (viewed 8/12/04)

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, refers to self-identifying American Indian and Alaskan Natives (AIAN) of the Menominee Tribe including those self-identifying in combination with one or more other races. For more information see *Census 2000 Brief*, “American Indian and Alaskan Native Population: 2000”, U.S. Census Bureau. See also Appendix B.

<sup>13</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, refers to self-identifying American Indian and Alaskan Natives (AIAN) of the Menominee Tribe including those self-identifying in combination with one or more other races.

<sup>14</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, refers to self-identifying American Indian and Alaskan Natives (AIAN) of the Menominee Tribe including those self-identifying in combination with one or more other races.

<sup>15</sup> Menominee County has similar physical boundaries as the federally recognized Menominee Indian Tribal Reservation, but is slightly larger. Both are classified as ‘Rural’ in Census 2000. Here we have used population figures for Menominee Reservation.

<sup>16</sup> Chicago Urban Area