

An aerial photograph showing a winding river cutting through lush green terraced rice fields. The fields are arranged in curved, concentric patterns, creating a complex, organic landscape. The river flows from the top right towards the bottom left, curving through the fields. There are some small structures and palm trees scattered throughout the landscape.

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FEATURE (PEER REVIEW)

RESTORATIVE CARTOGRAPHY OF THE THEAKIKI REGION: MAPPING POTAWATOMI PRESENCES IN INDIANA

By Elan Pochedley

Editor's note: This feature article has been peer reviewed.

Introduction:

Virtually Mapping Potawatomi Presences and Connections



Wild rice and the 1833 Survey of Menominee's Reservation. Image by Elan Pochedley.

This article explores what decolonization can consist of—and be envisioned as—when we recognize how settler colonial governance, policies, industries, and structures have affected both Indigenous peoples and nonhuman relatives within their respective homelands. I assert that analyses of settler colonialism must address the environmental dislocations and degradations experienced by both humans and nonhumans. Further, I argue that decolonization must also account for the revitalization and health of those nonhuman relatives who have been displaced and harmed as a result of settlement. Philosopher Kyle Whyte (Citizen Potawatomi Nation) provides a definition of settler colonialism that is inclusive of the environments and ecological dynamics that have been disrupted or transformed by settlement:

Settler colonialism refers to complex social processes in which at least one society seeks to move permanently onto the terrestrial, aquatic, and aerial places lived in by one or more other societies who derive economic vitality, cultural flourishing, and political self-determination from the relationships they have established with the plants, animals, physical entities, and ecosystems of those places.[1]

The digital mapping project I am working on in collaboration with the Cultural Heritage Center of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation (CPN) attempts to make visible—through the use of archival accounts, records, and ArcGIS mapping software—historic Potawatomi presences, ecological roles, environmental ethics, and narratives of geographic belonging. I wish to demonstrate how environmental disruptions experienced by Potawatomi people and native nonhuman relatives (commonly referred to as “natural resources”) were and are entangled. I argue that these maps, and the narratives that shape how we understand the places represented within them, provide entry points for imagining returns to the territories from which our ancestors were forcibly

removed. In this article, and through the interactive maps I’ve developed in collaboration with the CPN Cultural Heritage Center, I ask: What could such returns consist of? What lessons about ethics, about relationality to the earth, and about obligations to waters can we glean from bringing together disparate archival sources?

This article documents the methods used for conducting decolonial restorative cartography, utilizing archival sources in unconventional ways to illuminate Indigenous presences and networks of relationality. In envisioning decolonial methods for mapping, I draw on the concept of “Biskaabiiyang,” meaning “a new emergence,” as discussed by Leanne Simpson (Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg):

Within Nishnaabeg theoretical foundations, Biskaabiiyang does not literally mean returning to the past, but rather re-creating the cultural and political flourishing of the past to support the well-being of our contemporary citizens.... It also encompasses a visioning process where we create new and just realities in which our ways of being can flourish. Nonetheless, it is not just a visioning process. We must act to create those spaces—be they cognitive or spatial, temporal or spiritual.[2]

Settler state archives from the nineteenth through early twentieth centuries, including land patents, reservation maps, and natural resources surveys, document the presences of Neshnabék[3] ancestors and their nonhuman relatives in northern Indiana. The duality of these sources—recording the structural dispossession of Potawatomi as well as their presences and relational networks—makes them appropriate materials for applying Biskaabiiyang methods. Throughout this article, I draw on testimonies provided by Potawatomi leaders in the 1820s and 1830s, Neshnabék knowledge keepers’ and scholars’ understandings of environmental ethics and obligations to nonhuman relatives, and early pioneer histories and

journals detailing humans' historic relationships with nonhuman relatives in northern Indiana. These sources deepen our understanding of the maps by elucidating the political, social, and ecological networks that existed within these traditional Potawatomi territories.

As I've learned from visiting with relatives in Oklahoma and Michigan, as well as from Neshnabék writers and scholars, the sharing of stories is critical for teaching communal ethics and lessons, while also creating space for individual interpretation and meaning making. In *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back*, Simpson writes, "Our culture placed a profound importance on individuals figuring out their own path, or their own theoretical understanding of their life and their life's work based on individual interpretation of our philosophies, teachings, stories and values."^[4] The stories included in this article are not traditional stories or creation stories; however, these place-based narratives present critical entry points for imagining the spatial lives, the seasonal migrations, and the relational networks of our Potawatomi ancestors.

By highlighting Neshnabék ancestral roots within our homelands, I am hopeful that the included maps, as well as the article itself, serve as means and mediums for modern Potawatomi people to connect once more to the waters, the lands, and the nonhuman relatives of present-day Indiana. By posing questions throughout this article, I seek to simultaneously guide readers to engage with the political and theoretical significance of these geographic and textual representations, while also providing them space to develop personal interpretations of the significance of these works for their own visioning processes and efforts toward decolonization.

By documenting the respective presences of Potawatomi people and wild rice beds, these virtual maps offer a starting point for spatially envisioning historic inter-species relational networks in northern Indiana. I hope this article encourages future, more expansive visions of representing and restoring ecological networks, and, in doing so, imagining decolonial returns—not only for ourselves, but also for the waters and our nonhuman relatives.

Ruptures in Relationality: The 1838 Forced Removal of the Potawatomi

The reservation of Chief Menominee, surrounding and inclusive of the chain of lakes then known as She-ba-ta-ba-uk (“Duck Lake”), was the central point of resistance for the Potawatomi threatened with removal from their homelands in present-day Indiana.[5] Local historian Daniel McDonald described the ecological features of the biodiverse region:

Black bass, sun-fish, goggle eyes, perch and blue gills are plenty. There are still a few ducks to be found in the bayous and out of the way places during duck season, but since the white man came, they, like the

Indians over on the north side of the Middle Twin lake, have had to move on and give place to “the survival of the fittest.” Before the country was settled, ducks congregated there by the thousand, so much so that the Indians called it “Duck lake,” in their language, She-ba-ta-ba-uk.[6]

William Sluyter, an early settler of the region, detailed the composition of Menominee’s village of Potawatomi in the days leading up to their removal by force:

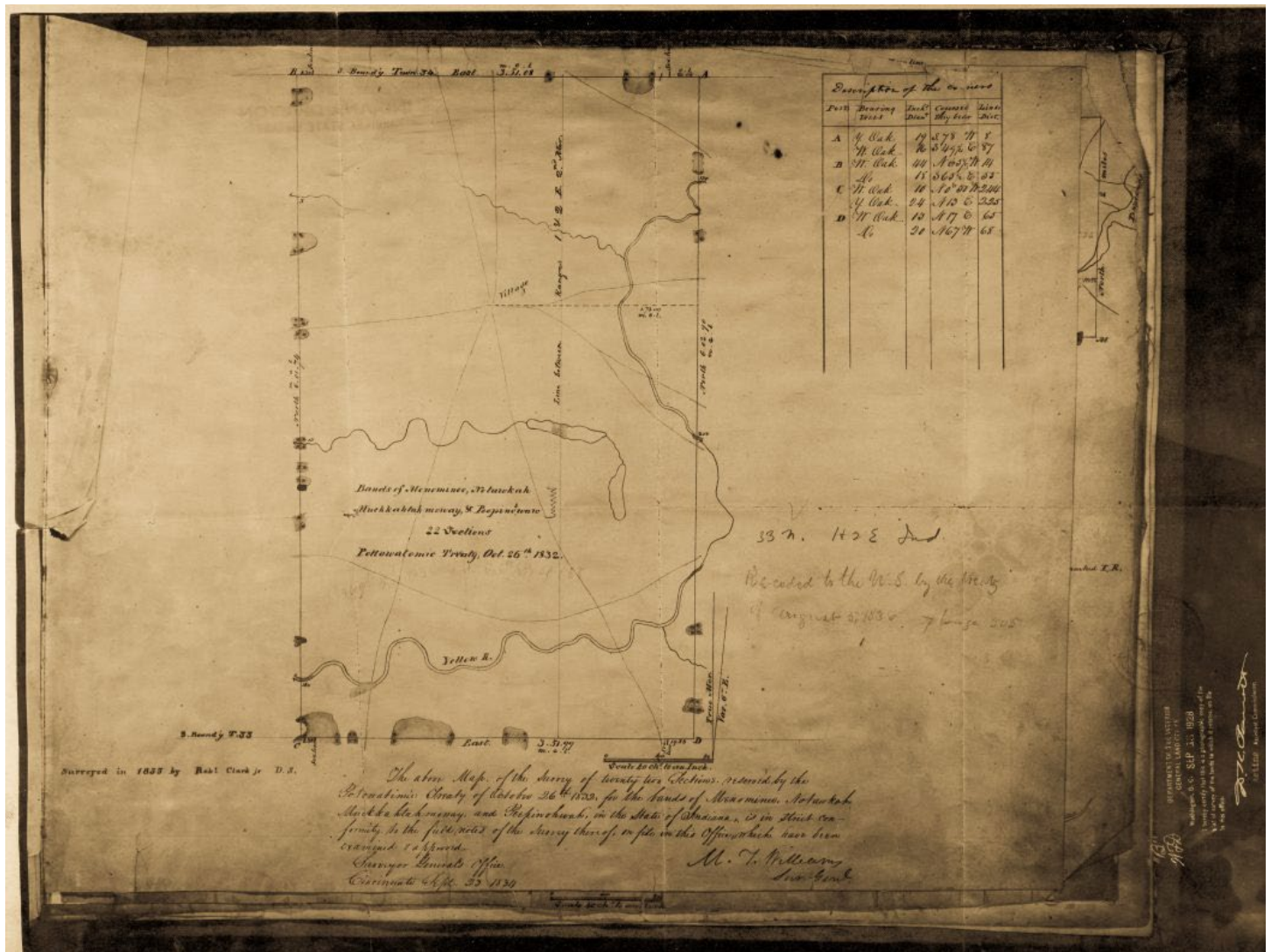


Lawrence Lake at She-ba-ta-ba-uk (Twin Lakes), Indiana. Image courtesy of Elan Pochedley.

WILLIAM SLUYTER—“I lived near the Menominee village, which was just north of Twin lakes, in Marshall county, and was present at the time the Indians were congregated there, September 3 and 4, 1838, to be removed to the western reservation. The village was composed of log huts and wigwams of poles, covered with bark and matting, erected without any system. There were seventy-five or a hundred of these primitive dwellings. A graveyard in which their dead were buried was near by.”[7]

following the involuntary confinement of their principal chiefs, the Potawatomi began walking the path of their forced removal to Kansas on September 4, 1838, in what is now called the Trail of Death.[8] The waters and lands of Chief Menominee’s Reservation, protected under the 1832 Treaty of Tippecanoe, had been encroached upon the preceding August by white settlers “who had squatted on the reservation expecting to enter the land as soon as the Indians went away.”[9] Tensions between the Potawatomi and white settlers were at a peak after the latter moved onto the unceded territory of Menominee’s Reservation, and were further compounded by the pressure applied

From the 14,080-acre reservation of Chief Menominee, by the threat of bayonets and



1833 Survey of Menominee’s Reservation. Image courtesy of the Indiana State Library, Indiana Map Collection.

by the settler government on the Potawatomi to remove west of the Mississippi River under Indian Removal policy.[10] At the nexus of these forces, the removal of the Potawatomi was falsely construed as lawful and necessary by officials of the settler state, including Indian Agent Abel C. Pepper, U.S. Senator John Tipton, and Indiana Governor David Wallace.[11] At the request for settler militia intervention by Pepper and the white squatters, Governor Wallace determined that “the services of one hundred volunteers... armed and equipped” should be summoned for the removal of the Potawatomi to prevent the “shedding of blood.”[12] The legal justification for removal was the 1836 Treaty of Yellow River, which purportedly transferred the reservation to the United States; however, it notably lacked Chief Menominee’s x-mark. X-marks frequently stood in for the signatures of Indigenous leaders

and parties at the conclusion of written treaty agreements. Scott Lyons (Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe) argues that we must view these x-marks critically while understanding them within the context they were inscribed: “The x-mark is a contaminated and coerced sign of consent made under conditions that are not of one’s making.”[13] Despite the pressure being exerted against the Potawatomi by settler government officials, Menominee refused to participate in the treaty-making process of an agreement that specifically aimed to dispossess him and his community of their homes. Menominee and other Potawatomi leaders petitioned U.S. Senator John Tipton in 1836, Secretary of War Lewis Cass in 1836, and President Martin Van Buren in 1837 to assert that they had never ceded the Yellow River Reservation.[14] Menominee gave the following speech at a council in 1838 explicitly stating



Chief Menominee Monument. Image courtesy of Elan Pochedley.

his opposition to the treaty and declaring his enduring commitment to ensure that the She-ba-ta-ba-uk Potawatomi freely remained in their homelands:

The President does not know the truth. He, like me, has been imposed upon. He does not know that your treaty is a lie, and that I never signed it. He does not know that you made my young chiefs drunk and got their consent and pretended to get mine. He does not know that I have refused to sell my lands and still refuse. He would not by force drive me from my home, the graves of my tribe, and my children who have gone to the Great Spirit, nor allow you to tell me your braves will take me, tied like a dog, if he knew the truth. My brother the President is just, but he listens to the word of the young chiefs who have lied; and when he knows the truth he will leave me to my own. I have not sold my lands. I will not sell them. I have not signed any treaty, and will not sign any. I am not going to leave my lands, and I don't want to hear anything more about it.[15]

Despite Chief Menominee's persistent and steadfast efforts to avoid the removal of his people, he and the Potawatomi of his reservation were ultimately forced to leave their territory at gunpoint. The removal of the Potawatomi had extensive impacts on both the human and nonhuman kin that knew this area of the Great Lakes region as home, ushering in a shift of human-environmental relations and roles in northern Indiana. The Potawatomi, who practiced a seasonal round rooted in an ethic of sustainable harvesting, gathering, fishing, and hunting that deferred to the natural life cycles of native plant and animal relatives, were forced out of their homes by white settlers who sought to terraform the region into agricultural lands.

Evidence of Potawatomi presences, as well as bodily remains of Potawatomi ancestors, were

covered and literally plowed over following their removal. The lakes of She-ba-ta-ba-uk were promptly renamed after settler farmers. [16] Further, Sluyter described the process of settlers exterminating the very traces of Potawatomi presences: "After they left, the wigwams were torn down and burned; eventually the old chapel, which was used as a guardhouse, was torn down, and the little graveyard was finally plowed over and obliterated, and no trace of the village, the chapel or the graveyard can now be found." [17]

Environmental tragedy followed the forced removal of the Potawatomi from northern Indiana. The Yellow River, a tributary of the Kankakee River, ran through Menominee's Reservation. Rivers, lakes, and wetlands were crucial to Potawatomi food systems and medicines, while also providing their primary mode of transportation via canoes. Within two decades of the 1838 Trail of Death, settlers began planning and executing the large-scale dredging, channelizing, and draining of the Kankakee River—historically documented as bountiful with wild rice [19]—in an effort to eliminate the swamplands known as the Grand Kankakee Marsh. [20] These projects of "reclaiming" agricultural lands from wetlands had profound effects on the plant and animal life that depended on the marsh. Author Andrea Neal has documented how the draining of the Grand Kankakee Marsh, pursued in order to create arable soil for farming, resulted in massive species loss: "Biologists estimate the draining of the Kankakee eliminated one-fifth of the migratory bird population in the United States." [21]

Even She-ba-ta-ba-uk, the home waters of Chief Menominee and his village, did not escape agriculture's ascent onto the once biodiverse territory of the Potawatomi. In 2005, researchers mapped hydric soils based on Natural Resources Conservation Service data in order to determine wetland loss within the Twin Lakes watershed. They concluded that only around 20 percent of the original wetlands of She-ba-ta-ba-uk remain in the present: "The greatest loss has occurred

in the northern counties of the state such as Marshall County.... Development of the land in these counties for agricultural purposes altered much of the natural hydrology, eliminating many of the wetlands.”[22] These original wetlands—now depleted by approximately 80 percent—once provided an environment rich in biodiversity that the Potawatomi were dependent on, with the wetlands of this region supporting swamp loosestrife, cattails, soft stem bulrush, marsh fern, marsh cinquefoil, pickerel weed, arrow arum, sedges, red maple, silver maple, green ash, black ash, American elm, and swamp white oak, among other species.[23]

Mnomen, commonly known as wild rice, was documented in 1920 by the State of Indiana’s Department of Conservation as still being abundant at She-ba-ta-ba-uk over eight decades after the 1838 removal: “the wild rice when well developed, is one of the most handsome of our native grasses.... It is fairly common

at Twin Lakes, several miles to the north [of Lake Maxinkuckee].”[24] However, based on exhaustive online searches examining numerous primary sources, I have failed to locate any type of mnomen (i.e., *Zizania aquatica*, *Zizania palustris*, or *Zizania palustris interior*) within natural resource surveys of the Twin Lakes watershed since 1920.

According to our Great Migration story, in times long before Euro-American settlement, the Neshnabé knew that they had arrived home in the Great Lakes region once they reached the place where food grows on water. Yet, the removal of the Potawatomi and the subsequent eradication of wetlands by white Indiana settlers contributed to the decline of the mnomen that grows on water.[25] Mnomen—a critical spiritual relative and food source of the Neshnabé—once thrived in the shallow waters of wetlands, lakes, and rivers which have since been altered as a result of settler drainage projects. Just as agrarian settlers’

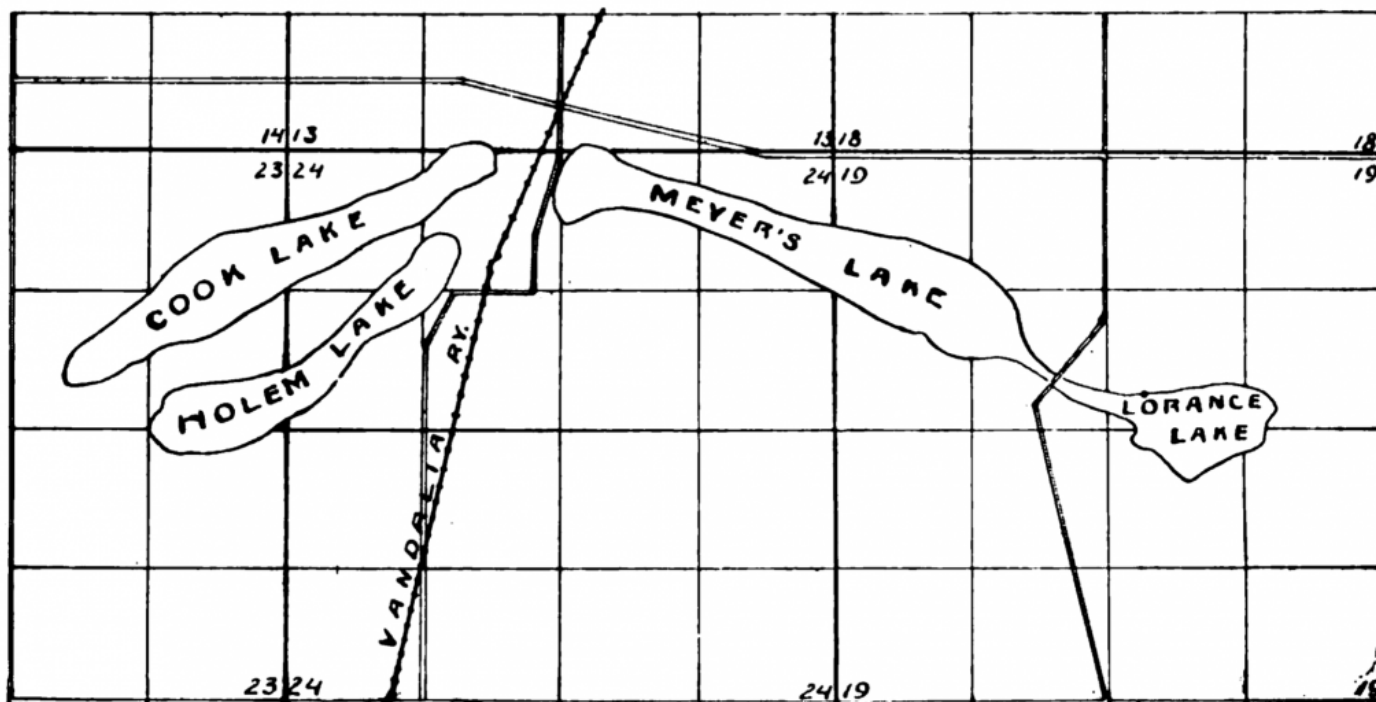


Fig. 59. Map of Twin Lakes, Marshall County, Ind.

Map of Twin Lakes, 1900.[18]

insatiable search for land forcibly uprooted Sheba-ta-ba-uk Potawatomi from their homelands, the displacement of water and the eradication of wetlands has negatively impacted and even decimated nonhuman relatives who relied on the natural environments of northern Indiana prior to being dislocated.

The displacement of natural waters, just like the displacement of the Potawatomi, was pursued by settler state agencies and white farmers to enact their collective vision of a white agrarian society

premised on specific Euro-American methods of cultivating the land. In addition to examining how settler colonial logics affected both the Potawatomi and their nonhuman relatives within this article, I also ask: What types of futures could be made possible for local environments, watersheds, and Potawatomi people when we recognize our inter-species relationships as central roots of our identities, rather than relegating these bonds to the category of human-environmental interactions?

Lessons from Historic Mnomen (Wild Rice) Beds



Mnomen restored by the Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi (NHBP). Image courtesy of Elan Pochedley.

Mnomen is commonly known as wild rice but is translated into English by the Potawatomi as the “good seed.”[26] In the story of the Neshnabék Great Migration—also shared by the Potawatomi’s Ojibwe and Ottawa relatives—arriving to the place of mnomen tells us that we have reached our home. The late White Earth Ojibwe Historian Andy Favorite theorized: “Wild rice is part of our prophecy, our process of being human, our process of being Anishinaabe... we are here because of the wild rice. We are living a prophecy fulfilled.”[27] The ontological significance of this relative is demonstrative of why Potawatomi protect their aquatic surroundings; bodies of water make mnomen possible by offering the good seeds homes, while mnomen itself signifies to the Neshnabé that they are where they are meant to be on this Earth.

The nation to which I belong, the Citizen Potawatomi Nation (CPN), no longer resides alongside mnomen as a result of the removal of Potawatomi people from the Great Lakes region; CPN is now based in central Oklahoma. The 1838 removal of Menominee’s village and the Potawatomi of Indiana uprooted our ancestors from the rivers, lakes, and wetlands upon which they derived life in the place where food grows

on water. Not only was removal a geographic displacement of our Potawatomi ancestors, it was a rupture in our interdependent relationships with our nonhuman relatives, including mnomen.

In a March 2020 interview, Dr. Kelli Mosteller (CPN), Director of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation Cultural Heritage Center, emphasized how our ancestors’ knowledge of and dependence on inter-species kinship networks was violently severed as a result of removal:

You are taking a woodland people—our homes are made out of wood, our storage vessels are made out of wood, our main mode of transportation is made out of wood—and you are moving us to the Central Plains of Kansas. You are taking a people whose main food staples are wild rice, and fish, and large hooped animals, and berries, and you are putting us in the Central Plains, the Flint Hills of Kansas. You are taking a people whose clan animals and the medicines that they know how to cure their sick with grow in this place, and you’re putting us in the Central Plains. Our oral traditions tell us that Creator made this place for us: that where the food grows on water is where



*Citizen Potawatomi Nation (CPN) Cultural Heritage Center.
Image courtesy of Elan Pochedley.*

we are meant to be as a people.... So how do you convey the trauma of the deaths that happened and the destruction, but also being completely uprooted from every natural element of your world that anchors you to who you are as a people is in this place, and you're being ripped away from that?[28]

While our nation has been removed from the homelands of our ancestors, first by force to Kansas, then by treaty agreement to Oklahoma, the memory of mnomen and its significance to our people has not been forgotten. Dr. Mosteller described how mnomen made life possible for the Potawatomi in the Great Lakes region through its ontological and nutritional significance to the Neshnabé:

The wild rice is the symbol of a safe place... 'Cause you have to think about it: for our ancestors—yes the Great Lakes region gets a lot of snow today, but 200 years ago, 300 years ago, the snows were so much heavier that the wild rice was not only a place in the 7 Fires Prophecy that the Creator said, “This will be the place that you're meant to be,” but it was the literal difference between food

that had some nutrients to it and starving over those long winters when you're having to follow the herds and you've dried berries, you've dried fish, you've done everything. But that wild rice is something that if you had a good harvest, if you took care of it, and you did the hard work to prepare, wild rice could carry you a long way through the winter. You can take it with you. It's not prone to rot like berries and other things are.... Because it has a high nutrient value—whether or not our ancestors thought about it in that way—they knew that you could eat it and stay healthy throughout a long winter, even if the ability to procure your proteins failed...the wild rice was still there for us.[29]

I am incredibly grateful to have participated in a wild rice camp hosted by the Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi (NHBP) in early September 2019. In visiting directly with our mnomen and Potawatomi relatives, I gained experiential knowledge and a deep appreciation for what it means to care for and be in deference to the wild rice that sustained our ancestors for so many generations. Just as those who came before us depended on mnomen for sustenance,



CPN Cultural Heritage Center. Image courtesy of Elan Pochedley.

contemporary Potawatomi nations in Michigan are caring for this nonhuman relative in an effort to preserve it—and our bond with it—for future generations. This dynamic is reflective of the reciprocity timelessly characteristic of the Potawatomi's relationships to mnomen; as I learned at the camp, the wild rice that misses landing in your canoe and falls into the waters below seeds the plant, which will emerge in the years to follow.

When attending this wild rice camp and later visiting with NHBP members and personnel of the nation's Environmental Department, I was taught that the ecological restoration of wild rice is oriented toward also revitalizing Potawatomi ecological roles and environmental ethics by

rebuilding relationships with this nonhuman relative. This is exemplified in the NHBP's documentary *Mnomen: The Good Seed Reawakens*, wherein Lee Sprague (Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawatomi) tells the story of the Neshnabék Great Migration:

Nanaboozhoo made that journey from the East Coast here to the Great Lakes and saw that flower. Then he started seeing everything else around here. That was the first thing that he noticed. So our peoples, Anishinabe peoples, have been living with wild rice since Nanaboozhoo found this homeland for us. As you go into the wild rice beds, that story becomes alive, our Migration Story. You see it happening right



Mnomen restored by the NHBP. Image courtesy of Elan Pochedley.

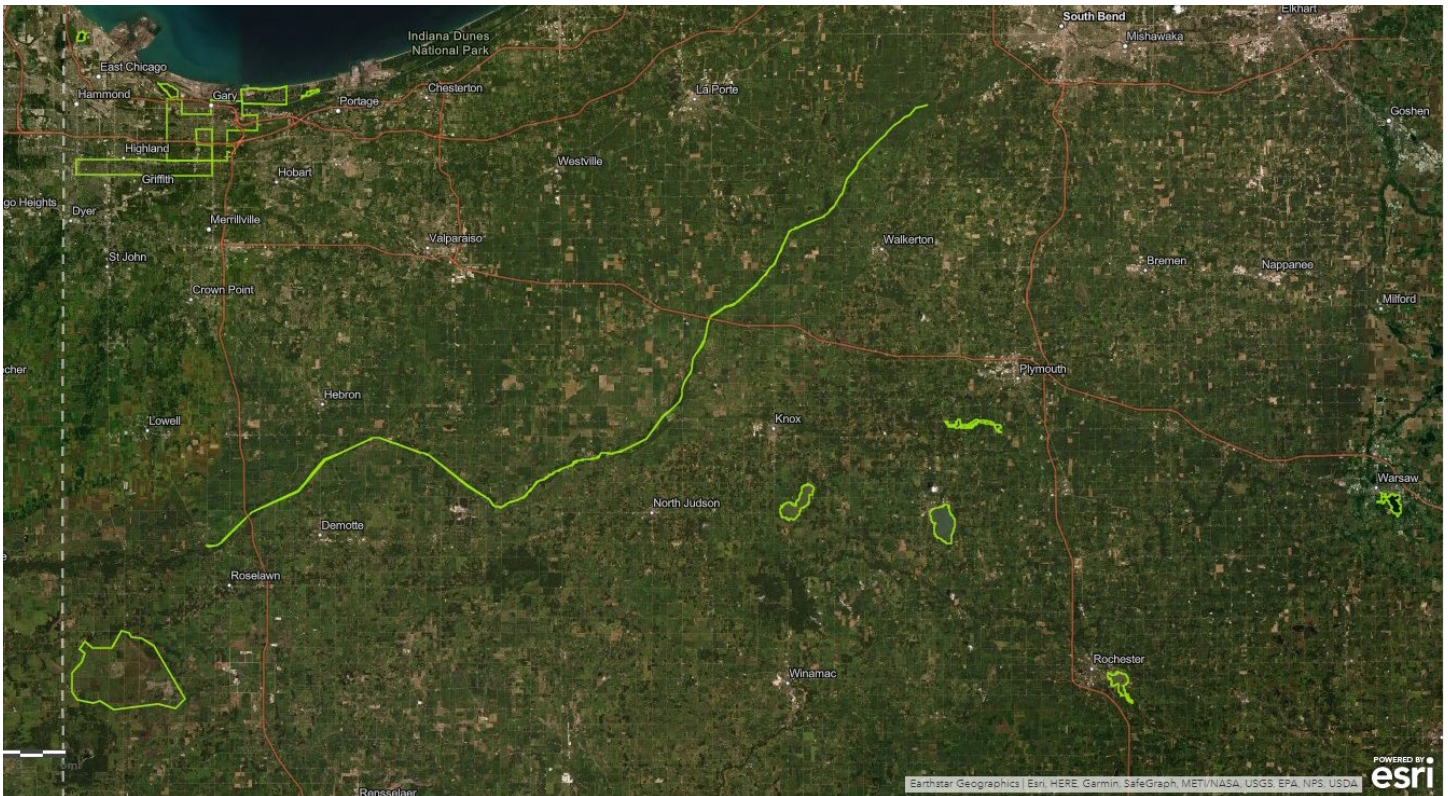
in front of you. You see what Nanaboozhoo saw, and it all makes sense.... I see mnomen as almost our seminal or our most sacred food. It's why we're here. So following that trail of Nanaboozhoo is like re-introducing ourselves and our people back to the wild rice and seeing what Nanaboozhoo first saw and then seeing all the other things that come with that. It's important, I believe, for our children to see the flower to understand that story, to understand the beauty of it, and that we need to take that responsibility and understand those stories and everything that comes with them.[30]

I understand the “everything that comes with them” to be a reference to the ethics and obligations to both human and nonhuman relatives that emanate from our stories, as well as teachings about what it means to be Neshnabé and in relation to all of our relatives, human and nonhuman.

Historic Mnomen Beds in Indiana



Mnomen beds in northern Indiana. View larger map [here](#).

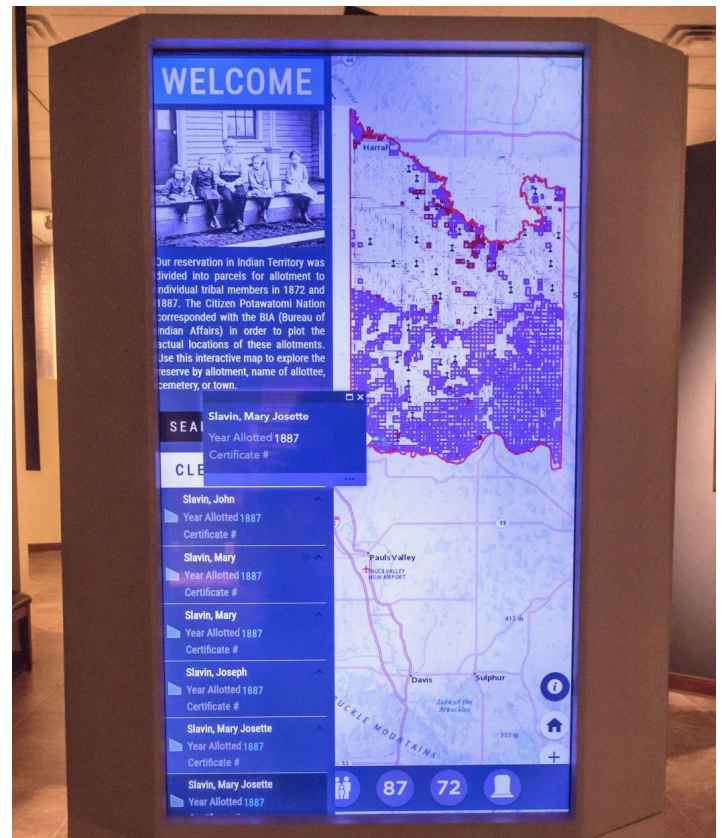


Mnomen beds in northern Indiana (detail). View larger map [here](#).

Restoring Relationality through Restorative Cartography

I became committed to mapping historic Potawatomi territorial claims and mnomen beds as a process for—in the words of Leanne Simpson—attending to the “spatial” elements of a “visioning process” that centers the relational networks of our Potawatomi ancestors, as well as providing a potential blueprint for what future returns to relationality could consist of within Potawatomi homelands for their descendants. My entry into virtual mapping and the possibility of map-making as a powerful research tool came about through a unique set of circumstances. In the fall and winter of 2019, personnel of the NHBP’s Environmental Department demonstrated to me the ways that digital mapping and aerially monitoring wild rice were deployed for the nation’s Mnomen Restoration Program. This was my first introduction to digital mapping software, technologies, and techniques. While I was working at the CPN Cultural Heritage Center later in the spring, I passed an interactive map of family allotments within our reservation in Oklahoma daily. As I’ve learned from family members, the mapping of space is nothing new for the Citizen Potawatomi, with contemporary scholars such as Margaret Wickens Pearce representing our nation through her spatial endeavors. In conversations with intellectual leaders of different Potawatomi nations during the past few years, I found that the innumerable ways that our Potawatomi ancestors were attentive to the storying of space, to the centrality of movement, and to the knowledge of navigation were becoming clear. I soon began experimenting with ArcGIS mapping technologies in the summer of 2020, attempting to document both the historic presences of Potawatomi people and wild rice within their homelands of northern Indiana, in a moment when it was necessary to stay static due to the pandemic. As a result, it dawned on me that virtual maps of the Potawatomi’s traditional territory in Indiana, prior to our ancestors’ forced removal in 1838, could work toward revitalizing the removed

Potawatomi’s descendants’ connections to the Great Lakes region and the ecosystems that our ancestors were dependent on. In focusing on the presence of historic wild rice beds and illustrating mnomen’s proximity to the land patents and reservation sites of Potawatomi ancestors, I’ve visually reconstructed a critical component of the Potawatomi seasonal round through a speculative representation of historic mnomen beds and Potawatomi presences. In creating these maps, I’ve aspired to visually reconstruct portions of the inter-species relationality that was maintained and renewed by our Potawatomi ancestors, as well as to suggest what a decolonial return to relationality could consist of for modern Neshnabé, by looking to the movements of those who came before us.

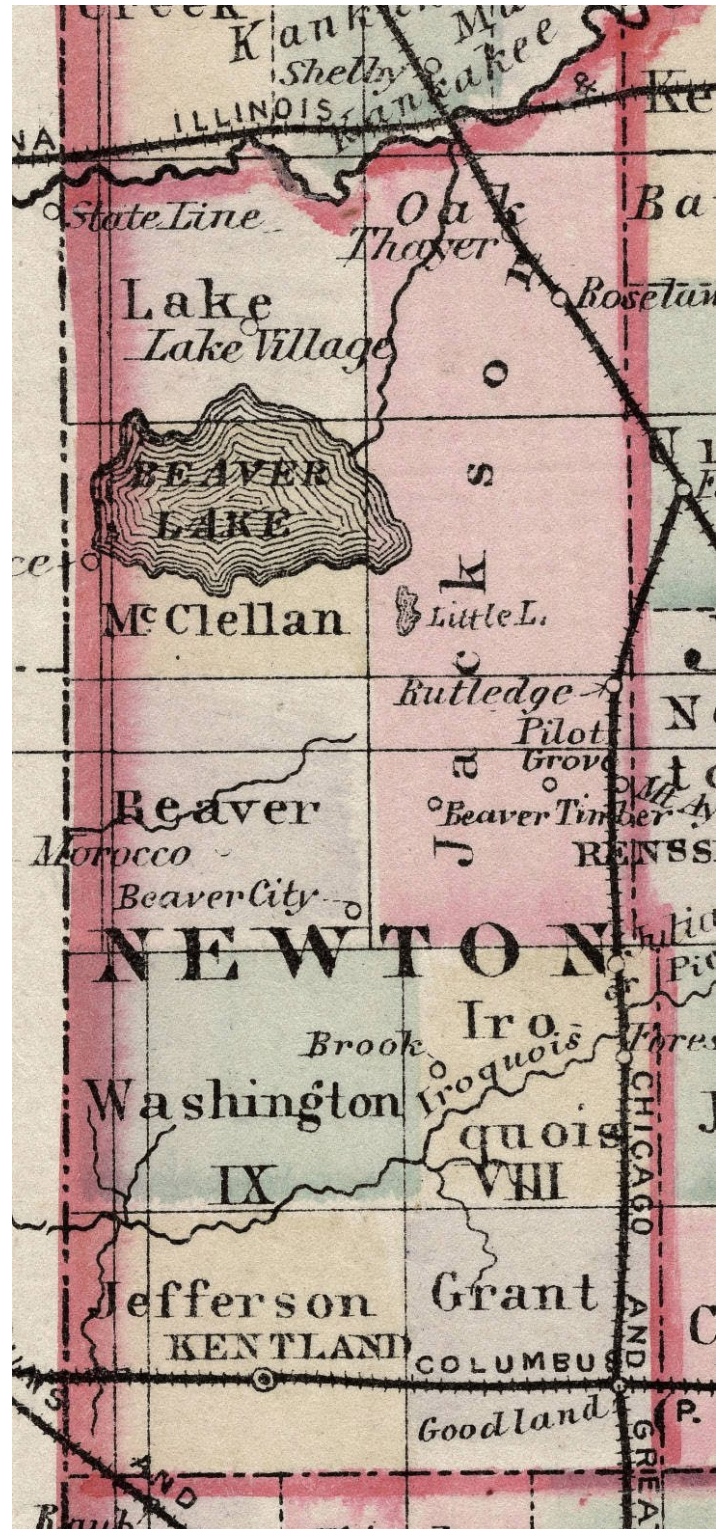


Allotment map at the CPN Cultural Heritage Center. Image courtesy of Elan Pochedley.

The Story of Beaver Lake

The story of historic Beaver Lake presents a powerful example of how waters, mnomen, and the Potawatomi were displaced by settler state actors who advanced white agrarian visions of Indiana. Once the largest natural lake interior to the boundaries of Indiana, Beaver Lake was known to have wild rice on its waters and wetlands. A survey conducted between 1834 and 1835 measured the spatial extent of the vast lake, detailing that “it covered an area of about 25 square miles, or about 16,000 acres of land.... In many places it was difficult to determine where the marsh ended and the lake began.”[32] The massive lake was documented by pioneer historian Burt Burroughs as providing everything one would need to survive and thrive. He noted that the Beaver Lake region consisted of “thousands of acres of swampy stretches studded with musk-rat houses, and flanked by wild-rice and towering cat-tails and bulrushes,” as well as including “heavily timbered” islands. Burroughs added, “As a breeding ground and natural retreat for wild game this ancient habitat has seldom been equaled and never surpassed anywhere in the Mississippi basin.”[33] The watershed was also abundant with fish, until the search for agricultural lands arrived upon its shores.[34]

Despite the rich biodiversity that the lake and wetlands provided for humans and nonhumans alike, it was made the target of drainage projects. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, projects of ditching, draining, and channelizing bodies of water were pursued within Indiana as well as across the United States, in efforts to create arable agricultural lands. In 1912, U.S. Chief Hydrographer M.O. Leighton detailed his perspectives on the importance of draining—and thereby eliminating—wetlands for the national interest:

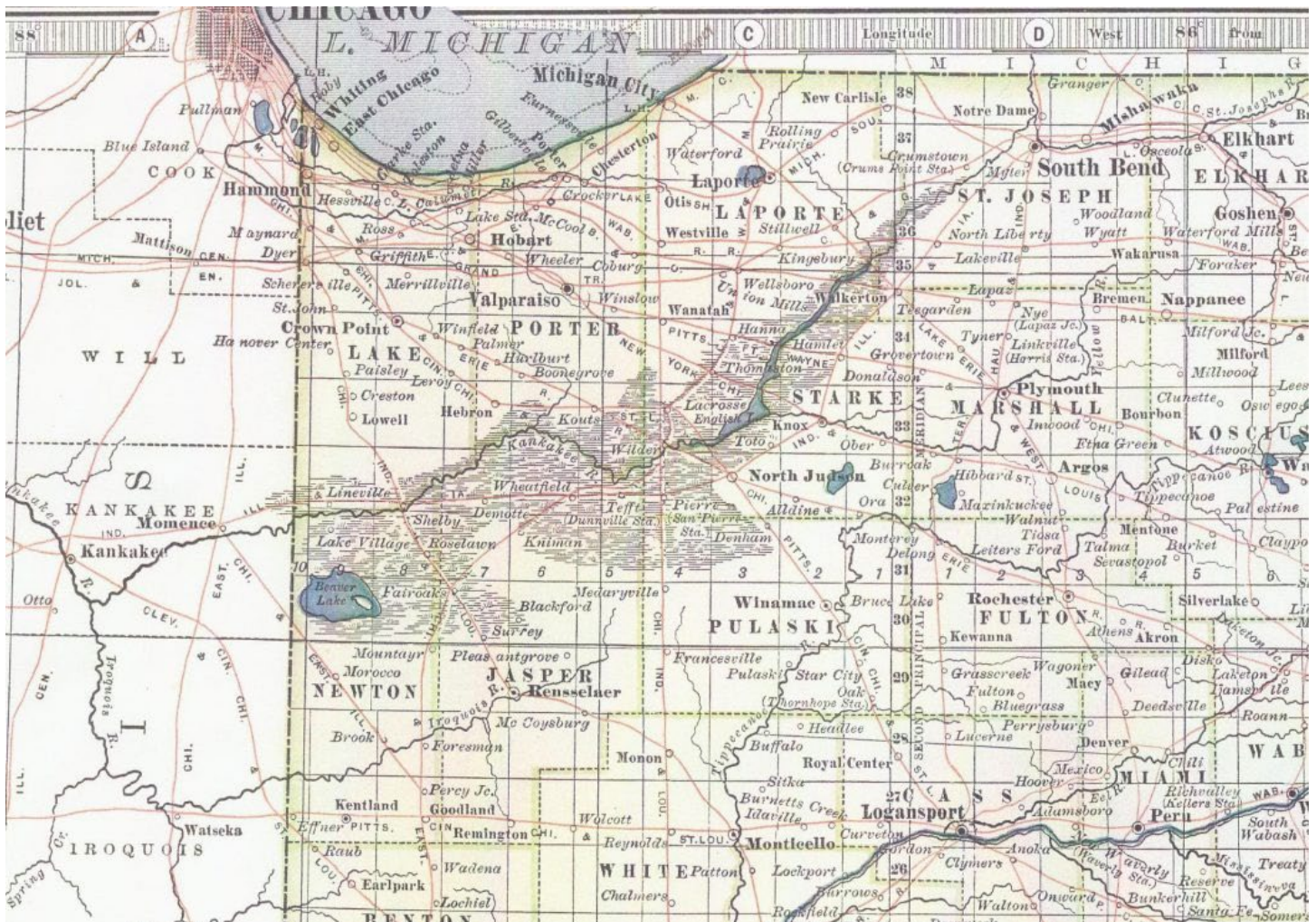


1886 Map by Frank A. Gray.[31]

The whole function of man in reclaiming swamp lands is to supply that which nature has neglected.... Another national aspect of swamp drainage is that of home making. In their present condition the swamps of the country are a source of weakness in our national economy. They are now unproductive; they can be made sources of great national wealth. They are now practically vacant; they can be made to produce citizens. In other words, they can become the sustenance of the very element of which this country is made up. Seventy-four million acres of drained swamps can be made to support at least 7,000,000 people in agricultural pursuits. Is not this a national matter? Does it not enter into every element of production, trade, and finance? Does it

not become an essential feature of national stability, national progress, and national defense?[36]

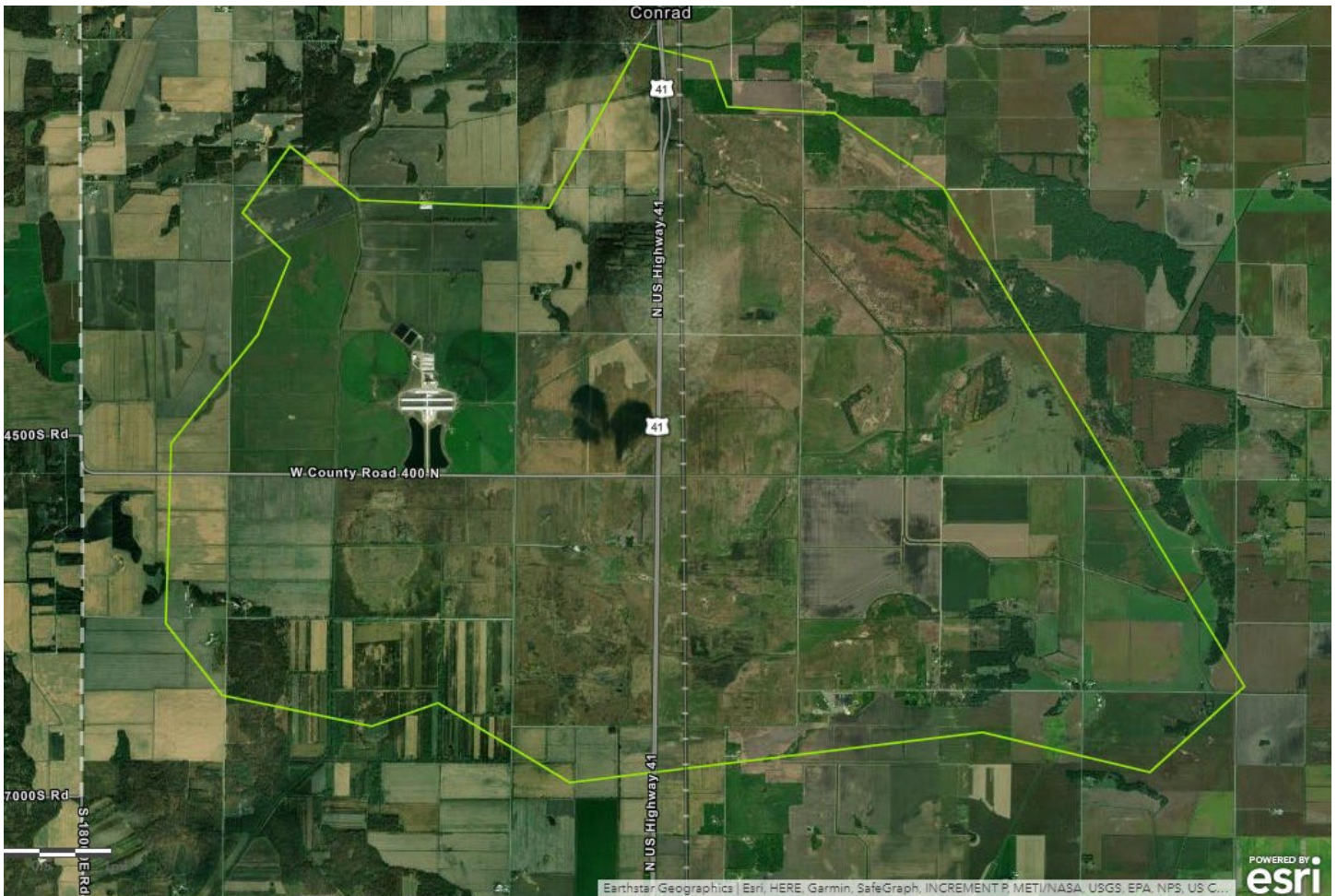
The state of Indiana's views on its own agricultural foundations were entirely commensurate with Leighton's speech, even in the early years of such "land reclamation" projects. In 1850, Indiana Governor Joseph Wright spoke to the State's General Assembly, asserting the economic, cultural, and—one could argue—ontological significance of agriculture to the increasing number of white citizens of the state. In encouraging the development of state and county agricultural societies, he asserted, "We are an agricultural people. Our climate, soil, and situation, make us so."[37]



1897 Map by Century Atlas Co.[35]

The government of Indiana was encouraged by the federal Swamp Land Act (1850) to ditch, drain, and channelize bodies of water including rivers, lakes, and wetlands, which, along with subsequent legislation, culminated in the U.S. government transferring title of “reclaimed” regions to the state under the agreement that they would be transformed into agricultural lands and sold to private citizens by the Indiana State Government.[38] Michael Dobberstein details how the Indiana State Legislature in 1851 and 1852 created the legal mechanisms for draining wetlands and selling the resulting agricultural lands: “Land was to be purchased through public auction, and the state pledged to drain the land with the proceeds. In 1851, the state’s new constitution mandated that earnings from wetland sales would be allocated to funding public education, minus the cost of draining.”[39]

The history of ditching, draining, and selling Beaver Lake resulted in a series of legal battles between land speculators and the Indiana Supreme Court, causing debate within the Indiana legislature and the state’s courts, and ultimately requiring U.S. congressional intervention to settle ownership disputes.[40] While Dobberstein asserts that the “federal government never considered Beaver Lake ‘swamp and overflowed lands,’ as defined by the language of the 1850 Swamp Land Act,” the lake was in fact drained with state money and its bed subsequently sold in an era of expanding settlement wherein such environmental interventions had become common.[41] John Ade described the progression of “land reclamation” projects affecting the Beaver Lake region:



Historic Beaver Lake. View larger map [here](#).

About 1853 the first effort was made to drain the lake by cutting a ditch from the northwest part of the lake to the Kankakee river. The contract to make this ditch was taken by Austin M. Puett, grandfather of William Darroch. This first ditch carried off enough water to cause the shore line to recede about a hundred yards—in other words, it reclaimed a very narrow strip all around the lake. As this ditch was enlarged and tributaries opened, the old bed of standing water gradually disappeared and Beaver Lake is now dry land at most seasons of the year. The name remains but the “lake” itself is now only a memory of the past.[42]

In mapping the perimeter of Beaver Lake upon modern aerial imaging of the region, I have illustrated the scale and enduring impacts of these drainage efforts. In 1925, Burroughs wrote about the devastating ecological consequences experienced by nonhuman relatives during the draining of Beaver Lake:

For days the sandy spaces roundabout the sloughs were alive with the roly-poly forms of these goslings, some dead, others dying, while the remainder toiled persistently though painfully landward, under a burning sun, in search of water... With the passing

of the waters of the lake the hosts of buffalo, cat-fish and pickerel contained therein were left marooned in shallow pools or stranded helplessly in the black muck of the lake’s bottom. There were buffalo and pickerel of enormous size, patriarchs of these primeval waters, whose carcasses littered the bottom of the lake so thickly that one could step from one to another in any direction, like upon so many stepping stones.[43]

Beaver Lake was well known to the Potawatomi, who relied on the abundance of life the lake and wetlands provided for their sustenance. “Berry Whicker, Henry Campbell and other Ohio land hunters” who joined Potawatomi on a trip to Beaver Lake in 1824 recorded that it was “a beautiful body of water, very clear and rather shallow, a delightful place for the Indians to hunt, fish and bathe. It was one of the principal camping grounds of the Potawatomi Indians.”[44] With wild rice and Potawatomi presences being documented in pioneer histories of the region, the Neshnabé may very well have harvested mnomén from the waters and wetlands that once were Beaver Lake. With approximately half of the historic lakebed currently undergoing prairie restoration by The Nature Conservancy, could historic inter-species relational networks inclusive of the Potawatomi be revitalized in this region?[45]

The Story of Lake Manitou

Lake Manitou provides a key site that demonstrates Potawatomi environmental ethics during a period when both Potawatomi and their nonhuman relatives were threatened with displacement by settlers. Mnomen was documented at the lake in 1875 by Indiana State Geologist E.T. Cox.[46] The water body was originally five distinct lakes that were flooded as a result of a government dam being built near the lake’s outlet.[47] Under the 1826 Treaty of Mississinewa, a mill for processing corn would be constructed by the United States for the benefit of the Potawatomi.[48] Samuel Milroy was assigned by then Indian Agent John Tipton to build the mill, with the task completed in 1827.[49] The dam was built to generate hydropower that would power the mill. With the federal government’s

mission of assimilating the Potawatomi and other Native peoples into primarily geographically contained farmers during this period, it should come as no surprise that the government supported the construction of a mill and dam to facilitate the processing of corn, therefore encouraging its very cultivation.

While Euro-American conceptualizations of agriculture and property were premised on the individualized “improvement” and ownership of lands held in severalty, the Potawatomi’s harvesting, fishing, and hunting activities emphasized mobility and adaptation. The annual fluctuations of the Earth and the Potawatomi’s nonhuman relatives dictated the seasonal timing of our ancestors’ subsistence networks. During

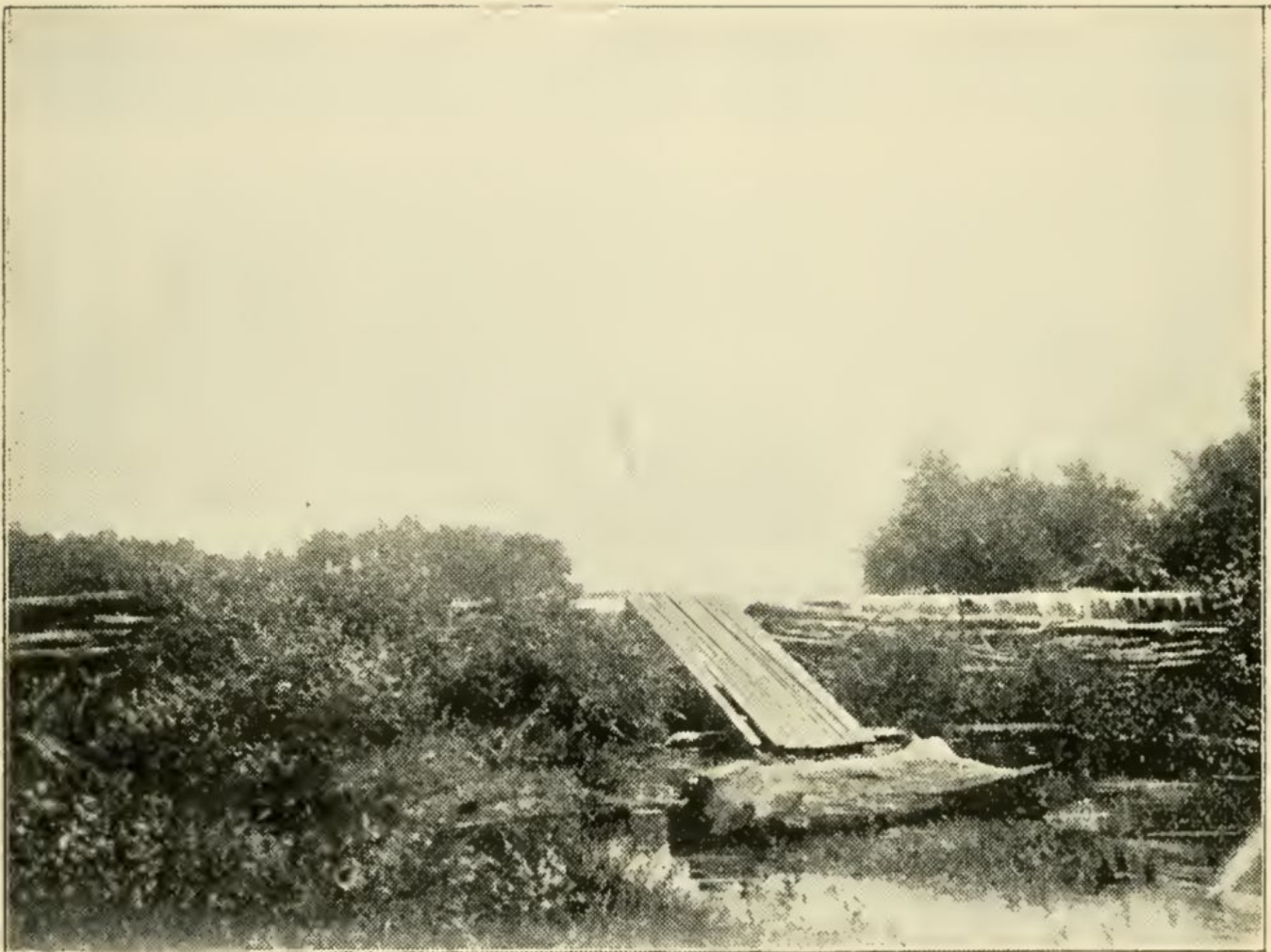


Lake Manitou. View larger map [here](#).

negotiations of the 1821 Treaty of Chicago, renowned leader and orator Metea^[50] attested to the Potawatomi's dependence on the Earth upon which they lived: "I am an Indian...and live by hunting and fishing, but my country is already too small; and I do not know how to bring up my children, if I give it all away."^[51] The sustainable harvesting of fish was undeniably central to

the replenishing of Potawatomi food sources in northern Indiana.

While the construction of a mill to process corn and a dam to create hydropower may initially appear as a boon to the Potawatomi, their construction was at odds with Neshnabék environmental ethics that deferred to the balanced relationships of the natural world, only intervening in ways



POTTAWATTOMIE MILL DAM.

Present Appearance of the Old Pottawattomie Mill Dam on the Outlet of Lake Manatou, near Rochester; Built in 1826.

Pottawattomie Mill Dam by Daniel McDonald, 1899.^[56]

that would not harm the long-term sustainability of the nonhuman relatives that our ancestors depended on for survival. Milroy reflected on the dam's construction in 1827: "So far as came to my knowledge, the Indians had no fear of being on the Lake; their fishing and night-hunting for deer, was common on it. The objection made by them to the erection of the mills, was that the dam at the outlet would injure their fishing."^[52] The Potawatomi saw the construction of the dam as impacting their ability to successfully live off the natural resources of the Earth. For the Potawatomi, maintaining the health of the fish by being respectful of their lifecycles, seasonal migrations, and ecological interactions was directly intertwined with the Potawatomi's ability to continually rely on these nonhuman relatives for their dietary needs.

Local histories refer to the ubiquity of fish at Lake Manitou. John Troutman recounted how in the days of early settlement, "All the streams and lakes were alive with the best varieties of edible fish... this natural and bountiful supply of game and fish was a Godsend to the pioneer settlers of this country."^[53] In 1883, A.L. Kingman documented the extent of the fish population at the lake:

In early days the supply of cheap and delicious food procured from Manitou Lake was surprising, and it still yields all the fish required by the citizens of Rochester and the surrounding country. The varieties found are bass, pike, sun-fish and buffalo fish, the same as in the other lakes of the county... Fish have at times been so plentiful that the millwheel on the race leading from Manitou has frequently been clogged up by them.^[54]

While these pioneer histories of Lake Manitou emphasize the abundance of fish, the dam caused the population decline of the pike. This decline, however, was narrated as being reflective of the fish's lack of intelligence, rather than the lack of

intelligence of those (i.e., Tipton and Milroy) who had decided to intervene in the natural ecological dynamics of the watershed. Pioneer settler Alfred Sibert directly blamed the pike of Lake Manitou for their own elimination: "Large pike were plentiful in the lake forty years ago, but the pike is a fool fish and its foolishness has lead [*sic*] to its extermination... In addition to swarming up stream in the spring time, the pike is strongly disposed to go down stream in the fall, and as there is no means of getting back into the lake over the dam, Manitou pike are now but a memory."^[55] Settlers and government officials failed to recognize the pike's seasonal migration patterns and subsequently failed to make alterations to the dam that respected and deferred to their cycles of movement. In having warned Milroy that the dam would negatively impact their fishing, the Potawatomi demonstrated ecological knowledge of the pike that was critical for maintaining the integrity of ecosystems in which these nonhuman relatives could thrive and continue to provide for the Potawatomi. The displacement of the pike and the displacement of the Potawatomi demonstrate how settler colonial governance and technology severed inter-species relational networks premised on ecological knowledge, sustainable dependencies, and mutual respect in northern Indiana.

For descendants of the removed Potawatomi, knowledge of inter-species dependencies and symbiotic relationships within our homelands is being actively sought out and revitalized. In central Oklahoma, galleries at my nation's Cultural Heritage Center describe our Neshnabék ancestors' origins, migrations, and connections to Turtle Island (i.e., North America). When entering the galleries of the Heritage Center, visitors are surrounded by a principal teaching that guided and continues to guide the Potawatomi of the past, present, and future: the Seven Fires Prophecy. In association with the Third Fire, which describes the Neshnabé arriving to the place where the food grows on water, is a beautiful, backlit drawing of three pike:



3rd Fire

Seeking the Western Path - A Land Where Food Grows On Water

Energized from their cultural and spiritual revival, the Neshnabek were again led by the sacred Megis to their next stop at Senajwen (Sault St. Marie). Mamogosnan (Creator) provided an abundance of food and the people flourished.

The Neshnabek finally continued their journey west. At the shore of Lake Superior they separated, one group went north around the water and the other south. Years later, the two groups met at the western end of the lake. The sacred shell rose from the waters at the sixth stop, Spirit Island. They had found the food that grows on water, menomen (wild rice).

Realizing that their migration was concluding, the Neshnabek sought out the promised turtle-shaped island that would signify their journey's end. Remembering a place nearby, the people returned to an island (Madeline Island) off the coast. Our spiritualists placed tobacco on its shores and the Megis again rose from the water - proclaiming the peoples coveted destination.

"The Neshnabek will find the path in their chosen ground, a land to the west in which they may move their families. This will be the land where food grows on water."

Goozhe (Pike)

Harvested in our ancient Fish and Great Sea clans, the pike rears its young in wild rice stands, dependent on the plants as our people have been.

CPN Cultural Heritage Center. Image courtesy of Elan Pochedley.

During an interview with the Heritage Center's director, Dr. Mosteller, I asked her about the association between the pike and wild rice. She responded by detailing pike's dependence on mnomen, relationally linking it to the Potawatomi's own reliance on wild rice:

It actually acts as the nursery for the pike. So in the early spring season, they go in, lay their eggs in the reeds—like sort of down on the root ball—and they come and go. It keeps their eggs from being eaten by other fish or beavers or things like that. And so that's the part from our nature/science writing research that we were really drawn by. But then we're also reading, in various places like [Alanson] Skinner and places like that, why our ancestors had an understanding of as to why the pike were there. And it was very much: This is a safe place.

The wild rice is the symbol of a safe place. So it is the literal protective barrier for the pike and their eggs, but it is this symbolic protective place for us: that food will always be there.[57]

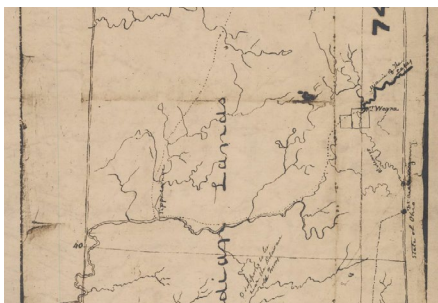
Wild rice and pike were both documented as historically residing at Lake Manitou, making it highly plausible that such ecological niches and relationships existed there, supporting the lives of our Potawatomi ancestors. What decolonial possibilities could emerge by virtually re-assembling the ecological networks and inter-dependencies shared by mnomen, gnozhe (pike), and the Neshnabé? With wild rice signifying and providing homes for the pike as well as our Potawatomi ancestors, how can virtual returns inspire map viewers to imagine the restoration of expansive ecological systems that are inclusive of the descendants of the removed Potawatomi?

Potawatomi Reservations, Land Patents, and Mnomen Beds

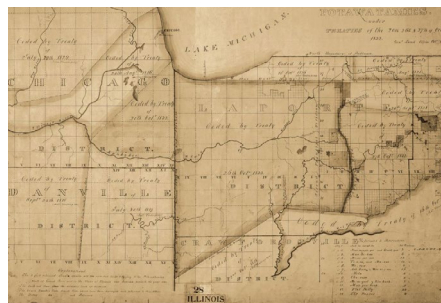
The historic presences of the Potawatomi and mnomen, once mapped, provide an image of what has been and what could be once more. Nineteenth-century maps of Potawatomi reservations and property patents approved by respective U.S. presidents allowed me to locate Potawatomi claims to space that were—at least for a brief period—recognized by the federal government. In providing specific locations of reservations and individual land patents, these records are incredibly valuable. They facilitate our ability to tie Potawatomi presences to the historic mnomen beds described and represented above. Critically, they empower contemporary Neshnabék people to geographically trace the political lives of our ancestors as they navigated constructions of property imported to Turtle Island by Euro-Americans, while also enabling

us to speculate on the seasonal migrations and inter-species relational networks of our ancestors through the mapping of mnomen beds.

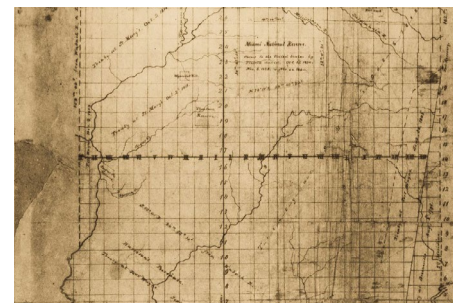
Reservations and individual patents were detailed in a number of treaties made with the Potawatomi of northern Indiana. So far, I have been able to locate maps and records associated with the following treaties: Treaty of Chicago (1821); Treaty of Mississinewa (1826); Treaty of St. Joseph (1828); and Treaty of Tippecanoe (1832). With the assistance of the Indiana State Library, I have located maps of Potawatomi homelands in northern Indiana. The following gallery allows the reader to visit these cartographic representations of Potawatomi reservations recognized and guaranteed under the 1832 Treaty of Tippecanoe.



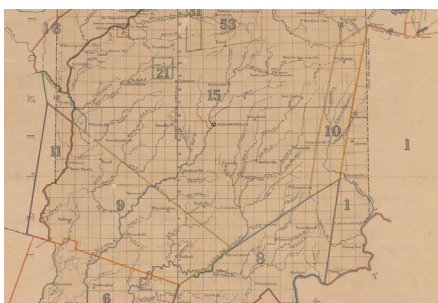
1818



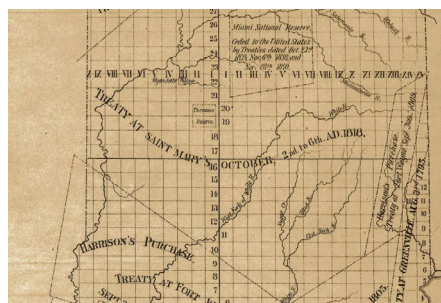
1835



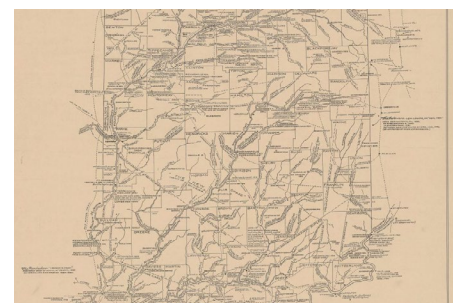
1840



1872



1882

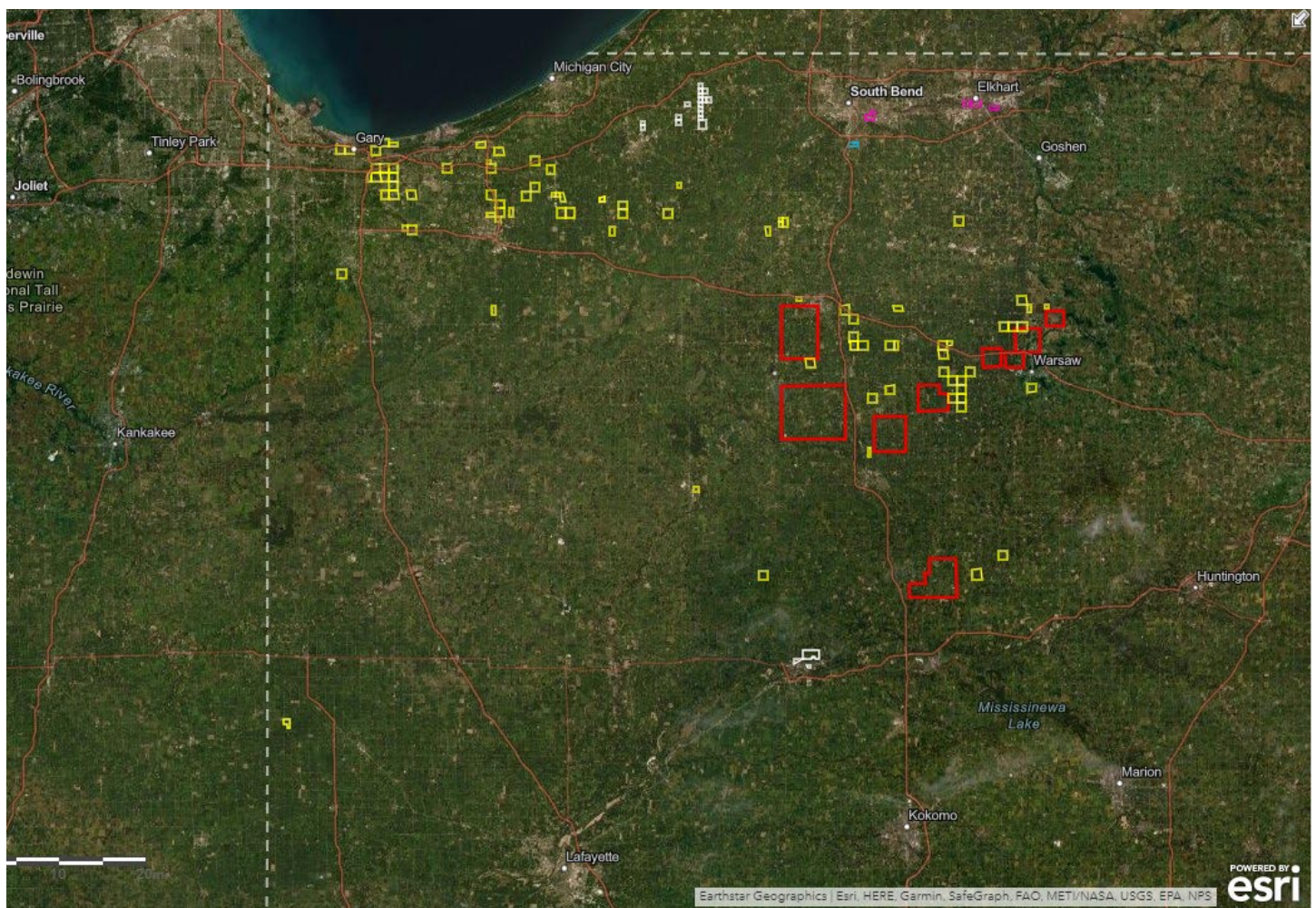


1933

Years of Maps: (1) 1818; (2) 1835; (3) 1840; (4) 1872; (5) 1882; (6) 1933, Gallery of Reservation Maps. Images courtesy of Indiana State Library, Indiana Map Collection.

Individual land patents provide names of Potawatomi who had property titles secured under treaty agreements while, critically, providing the geographic locations of their parcels of land. By cross-referencing individual land patents' descriptions of townships, ranges, sections, and aliquots with the Public Land Survey System (available as a "map image layer" through ArcGIS software), I have been able to—surprisingly

precisely—document Potawatomi people's recorded claims in northern Indiana. The irony of the utility of these archives and settler state systems which abstracted Turtle Island is not lost on me: the survey system that facilitated the sale of lands stolen from our Potawatomi ancestors by white settlers is also the very mechanism through which we can track the political, legal, and geographic claims of our relatives.



*Map of Potawatomi Reservations & Land Patents in Indiana by Treaty.
View larger map [here](#).*

By interacting within the map, by selecting individual boxes that represent the spatial extent of respective land patents, one can access the associated treaty, language in the treaty referencing the land patent, the digitized patent record hosted by the Bureau of Land Management, and the spatial reference used for mapping each individual patent.

The historic mnomen map, when brought together with the mapped reservations and land patents, provides a visual medium for conveying the Potawatomi seasonal round in enhanced detail from the generalities usually found in earlier histories of the Potawatomi. Historian David Edmunds described the seasonal round: “Potawatomi life followed the rhythm of the seasons. During the summer the Indians formed large villages, usually along streams or rivers, where Potawatomi women planted small fields of beans, peas, squashes, pumpkins, melons, and tobacco.... Wild rice was harvested [during the Mnomneké-gizes] when it was available, as were many types of nuts, roots, and berries.”^[58] Kyle Whyte emphasizes the centrality of renewal to the seasonal round, as well as the place of Neshnabék ecological roles within this system:

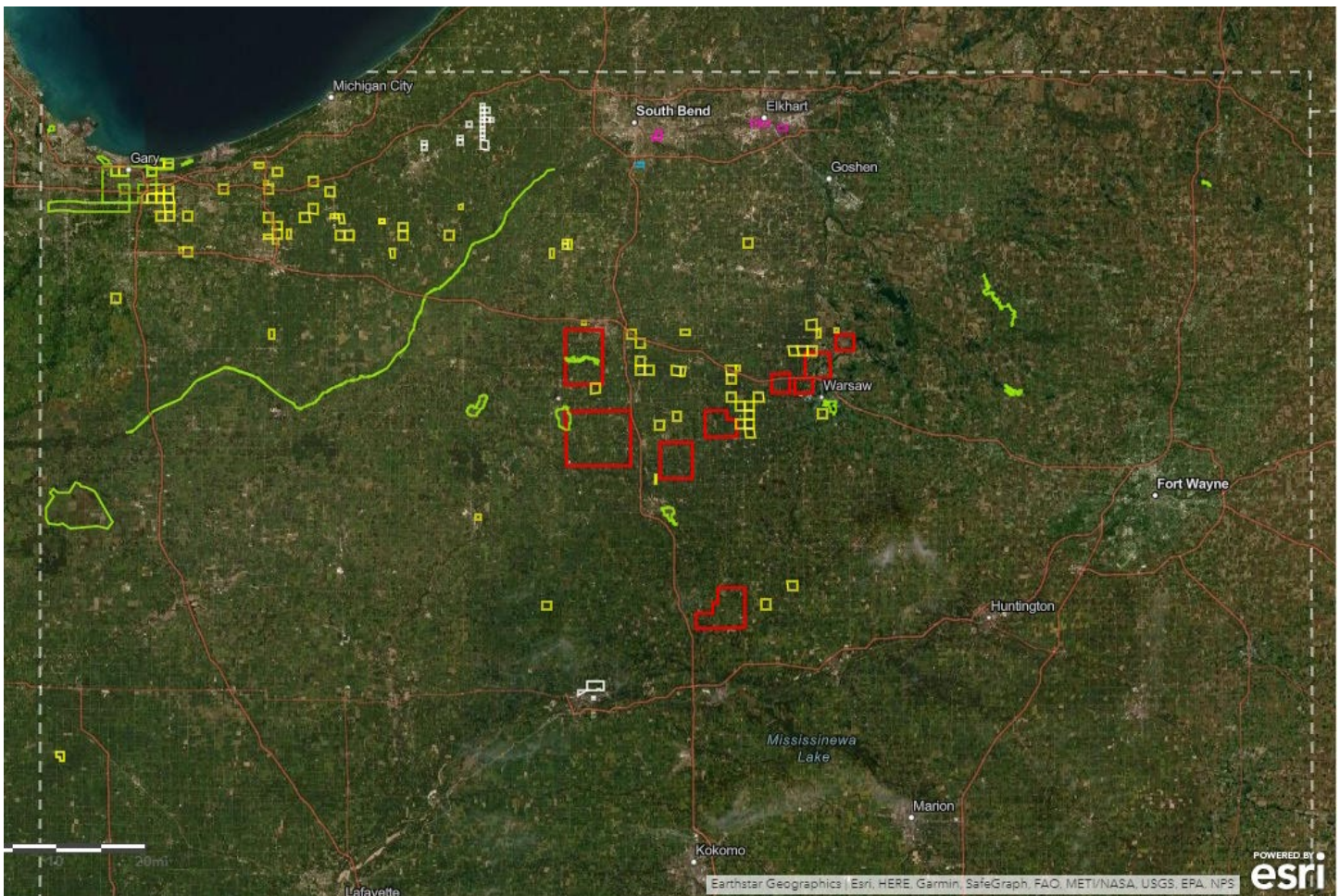
“Renewal” is a complex ecological process. As Anishinaabe/Neshnabe people, we have long traditions of relating to particular

relatives, whether water, whitefish, wild rice, sandhill crane, blueberries or sturgeon. We call them relatives, in part, to refer to our seasonal round system of governance in which humans have multiple responsibilities throughout the year to monitor, steward, harvest, process and recycle refuse involving all of these relatives and how they relate to one another.... In our seasonal round system, a part of what makes it work is what humans do; but another part involves the ecological conditions that interact reciprocally with what humans do.^[59]

The layering of the reservation and land patent map with the historic mnomen beds map creates an entry point to begin envisioning other ways of mapping space from a Neshnabék perspective; locating potential sources of relationality between humans and nonhumans, and the networks that emerge and can be deduced from considerations of geographic proximity, as well as the interplay of mobility of the Neshnabé and the seasonal emergence of wild rice. By bringing the reservation and land patent map together with the historic mnomen beds, I’ve constructed a cartographic representation of speculative relationality and inter-species dependencies between mnomen and our Potawatomi ancestors, reflective of the seasonal round.

This layered map demonstrates the ubiquity of wild rice beds within, adjacent to, and in locations generally accessible to the Potawatomi who were both nutritionally and ontologically dependent on harvesting the good seed to sustain and renew their place in the world. The majority of locations of wild rice were identified during an exhaustive summer-long search through digitized surveys that had been conducted by the State of Indiana’s Department of Geology and Natural Resources, Department of Conservation, and additional primary sources which I undertook in

2020. The locations had all been identified during the 1800s and early 1900s, stretching as far back into the historical record as I could reach virtually. Through keyword searches of “wild rice,” “water oats,” “Indian rice,” and “Zizania (followed by aquatica, palustris, or palustris interior)” within surveys and reports uploaded primarily on Google Books, I was able to create a spatial rendering of the historic, potentially present, and optimistically future homes of mnomen.

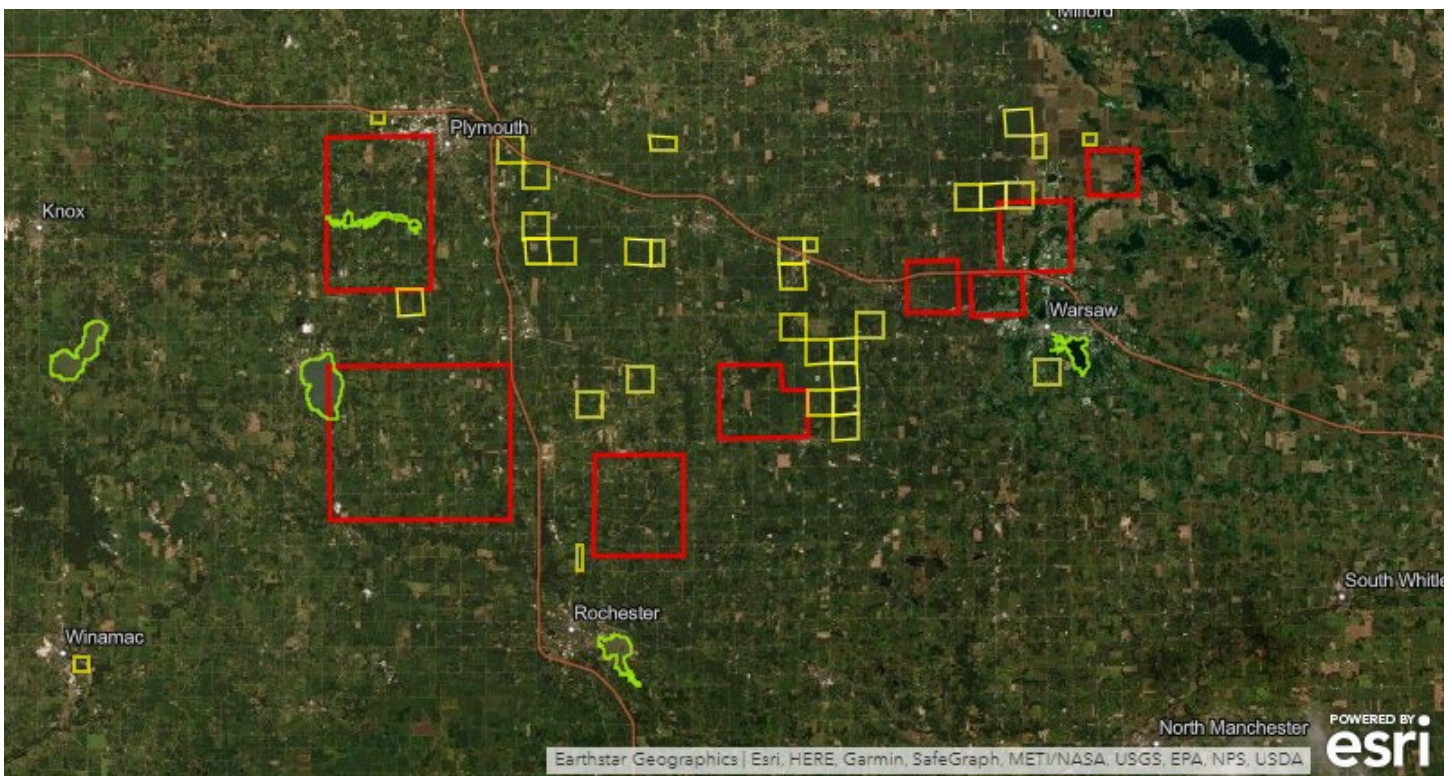


*Map of Historic Mnomen Beds, Potawatomi Reservations, & Land Patents in Indiana.
View larger map [here](#).*

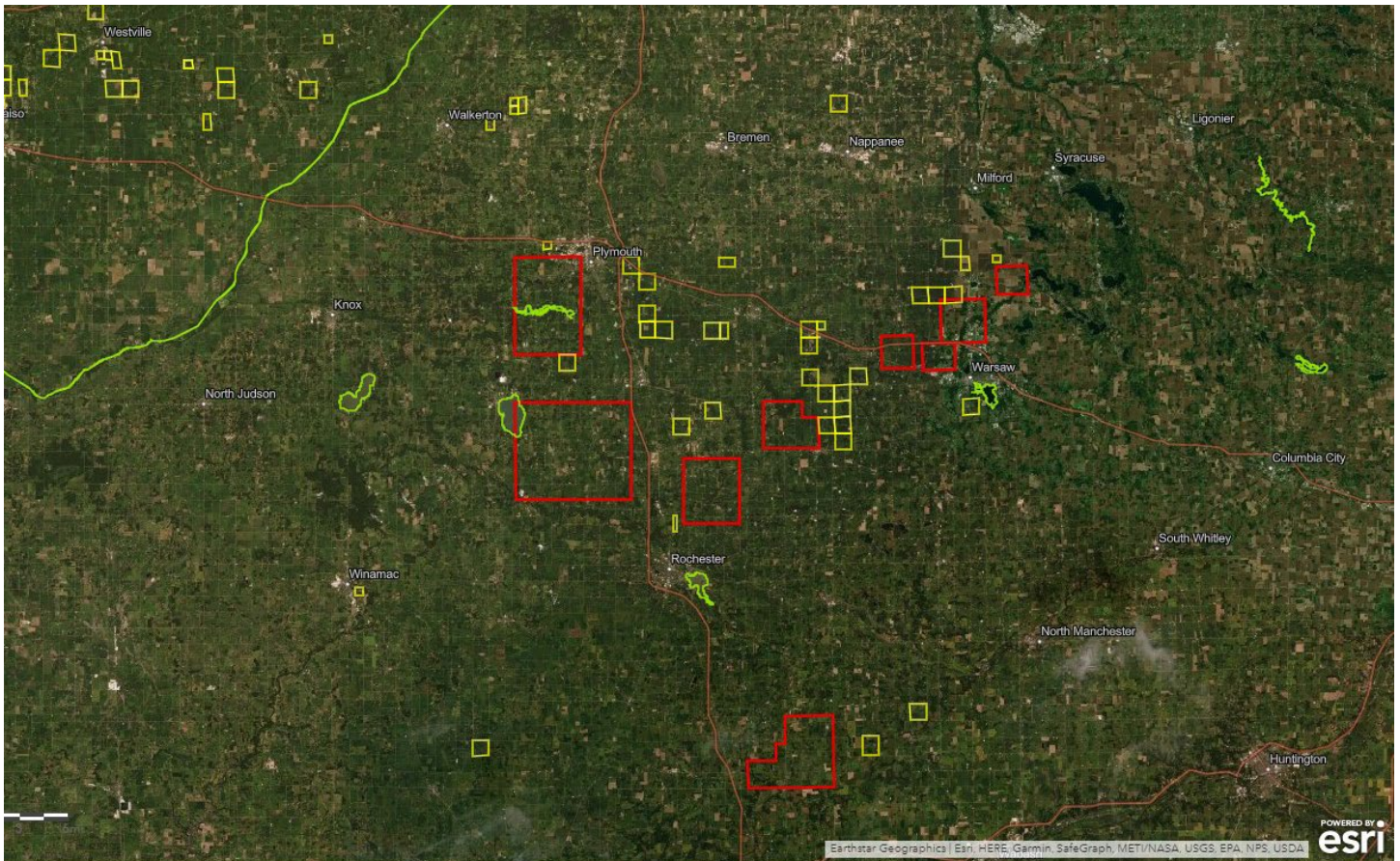
These geographic representations are far from perfect. They represent the total possible spatial extent of mnomen beds across the entirety or large stretches of lakes, rivers, and wetlands, many of which have been significantly altered or completely drained since mnomen was documented. The map flattens the years in which mnomen beds were observed and recorded. I am surely missing lakes, rivers, and wetlands where wild rice was documented, due to not yet locating those sources. The spatial representations illustrated—and relational connections suggested—in this map are undoubtedly limited by a Euro-American property ideology that was utilized to confine the Potawatomi within reservations and individual land parcels, as well as the surveying techniques employed to capture both Potawatomi and mnomen in abstracted space. Our homelands

are exponentially greater in size than these reservations and land patents convey. Yet, the bringing together of reservations, land patents, and mnomen beds within Potawatomi homelands encourages the viewer to imagine a decolonial future of this territory informed by the presences and relational networks of the past.

While I do not expect these cartographic depictions to do justice to the complexities of relational networks and subsequent dislocations, I see them as access points: points of speculation that allow us to decenter what geographer Sarah Hunt (Kwakwaka'wakw Nation) refers to as the “Colonialscapes” that cover Indigenous peoples’ relationships to each other and with nonhuman relatives: “Just as landscapes appear to create a complete view of a particular space,



*Map of Historic Mnomen Beds, Potawatomi Reservations,
and Land Patents along the Tippecanoe River.
View larger map [here](#).*



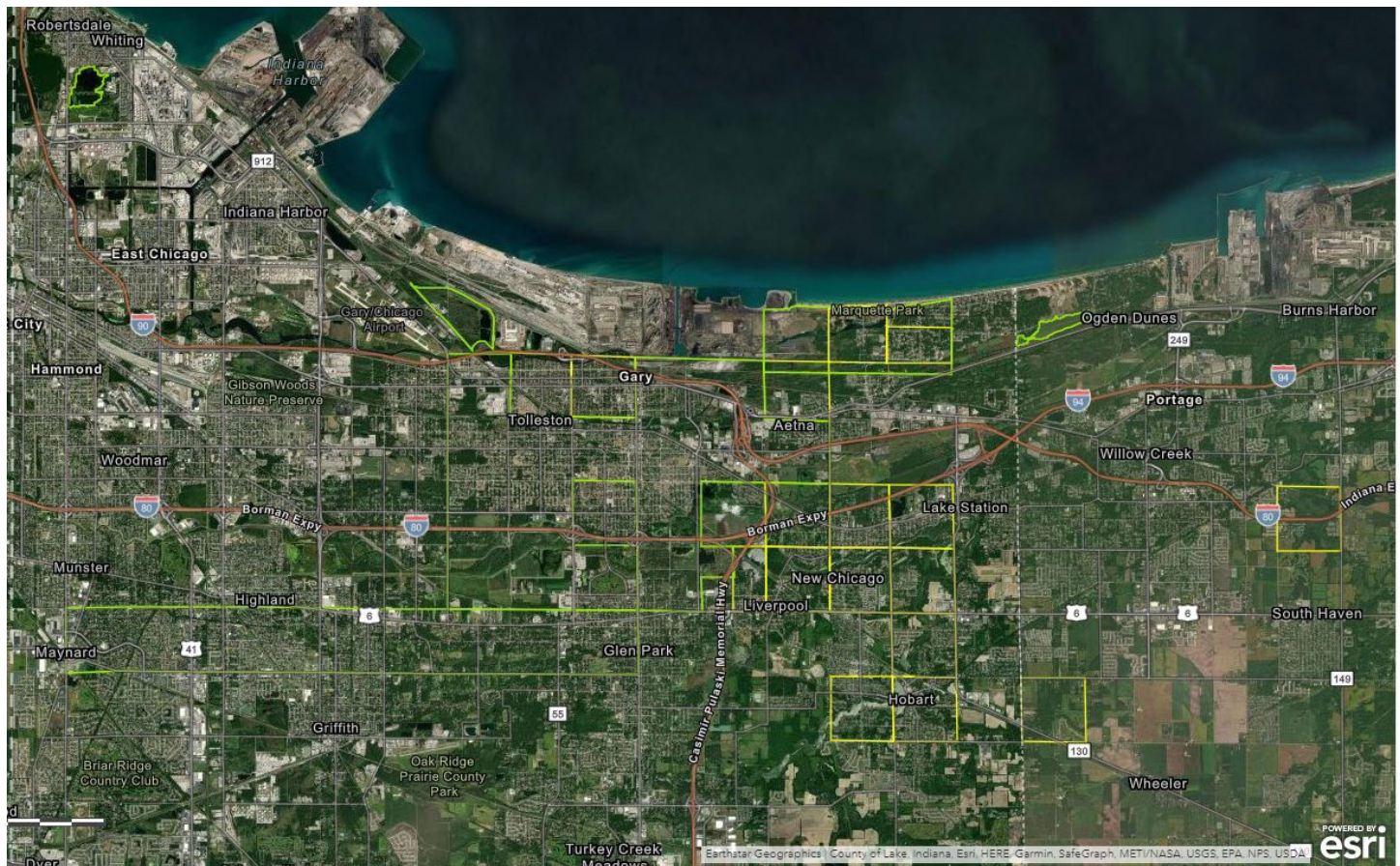
Map of Historic Mnomen Beds, Potawatomi Reservations, and Land Patents (including the Kankakee River and Elkhart River).

View larger map [here](#).



Map of Historic Mnomen Beds and Potawatomi Land Patents in the Calumet Region.

View larger map [here](#).



*Map of Historic Mnomen Beds and Potawatomi Land Patents in the Calumet Region (Detail).
View larger map [here](#).*

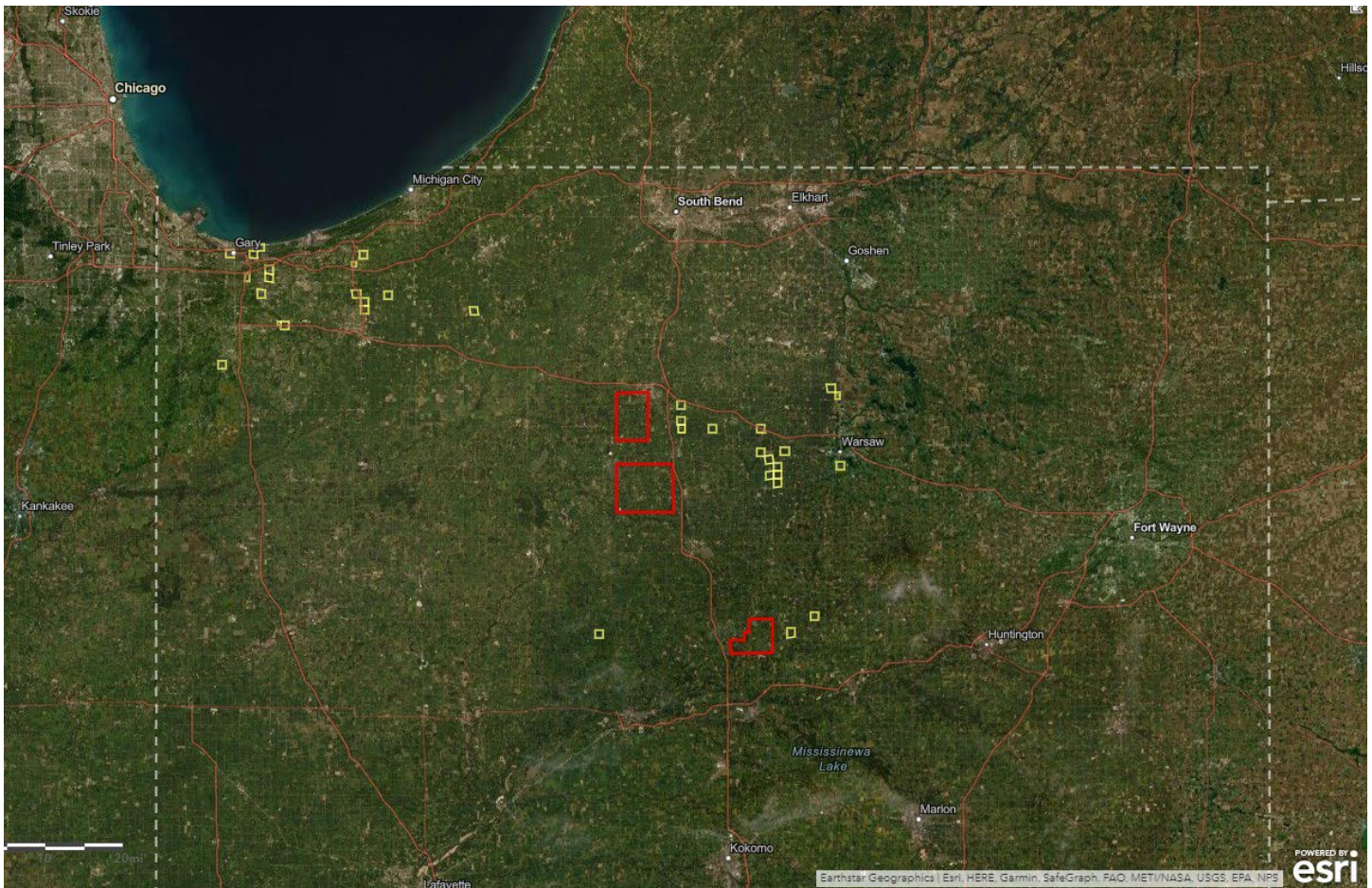
colonialsapes create the appearance that a colonial spatio-legal perspective...is somehow 'true'. Colonialsapes thus cover over other spatial relations and representations, as the colonial view blankets over these prior and deeper spatial orders.”[60] I constructed these maps to offer a beginning point for envisioning and enacting a decolonial return to the waters, lands, and nonhuman relatives of our homelands across generations. Leanne Simpson describes the temporal structure of the Seven Generations Teaching practiced by Neshnabék peoples: “Nishnaabeg custom required decision makers to consider the impact of their decisions on all the plant and animal nations, in addition to the next seven generations of Nishnaabeg.”[61] Our accountability to future generations in the present, just as our ancestors’ accountability to us in the past, must be understood as being far more expansive than any anthropocentric interpretation

would suggest. If our Potawatomi ancestors knew that they had arrived home when they reached the place where food grows on water, shouldn’t the restoration of mnomen—virtually or physically—be central to a visioning process for a future wherein our descendants are connected to the sacred plant that signifies our ontological connection and existential belonging to Turtle Island? These maps open avenues for imagining what routes our Potawatomi ancestors navigated to harvest mnomen, celebrate the ricing season, and visit with their relatives. These maps, derived from data included in the records of a settler colonial government, open possibilities for envisioning the restoration of relational bonds between Potawatomi and mnomen in the present and future, glancing back at our ancestors’ roots to the sacred plant that sustained their very existence.

Conclusion: Towards A Decolonial Method of Ecological Restoration

The growth of Chief Menominee’s village coincided with the ever-increasing threat of removal in the late 1830s. When Baptist missionary Isaac McCoy visited Menominee’s village north of the chain of lakes on June 11, 1821, he noted the entire community “lived in four little bark huts.”^[62] However, by early September of 1838, the village had grown to roughly a hundred homes of Potawatomi who had moved to the village in order to resist removal to Kansas or had been brought to the village by the armed volunteer settler militia.^[63] The very place of resistance, Menominee’s Yellow River

Reservation—while unceded territory—was also the place where Potawatomi were brought and confined in the days prior to their removal. It is not a coincidence that the removal of the Potawatomi began from the location where Chief Menominee and the Potawatomi at She-ba-ta-ba-uk (Twin Lakes) refused to leave; where our ancestors were collectively congregated, yet confined, within the spatial limits of the reservation. Through bringing together five distinct archives of nineteenth-century maps, land patents, government records, journal entries, and muster rolls, I have painted a picture of the territorial



*Reservations and Land Patents of the Potawatomi Removed on the 1838 Trail of Death.
View larger map [here](#).*

extent of the Potawatomi who were brought by force to She-ba-ta-ba-uk or who gathered there to resist removal. By ascertaining the names of the Potawatomi explicitly recorded as being on the forced removal of 1838—as documented in a corn roll conducted on September 1, 1838, William Polke’s journal kept during the removal, and muster rolls made for the journey from Indiana to Kansas—I created a map that demonstrates the specific territorial connections and property claims of the Potawatomi uprooted by gunpoint from their Indiana homelands.

Over the past two years, I have come across stories detailing how Potawatomi nations in southwestern Michigan—the Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawatomi,[64] the Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi,[65] and the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi[66]—are involved in ecological restoration initiatives throughout traditional Potawatomi homelands and what is commonly referred to as “ceded territories.” These Potawatomi nations either strategically avoided removal or subsequently returned to their homelands. Their initiatives range from restoring wetlands, rehabilitating sturgeon populations, re-establishing the natural floodplains of channelized rivers and tributaries, and restoring mnomen beds. These nations are in the process of restoring aspects of watersheds to their natural states that existed prior to being altered as a result of Euro-American settlement, industrial development, resource exploitation, and pollution.[67] The Pokagon Band of Potawatomi has even been working on an ecological restoration project beyond the state boundaries of Michigan, restoring native habitat on 1,147 acres originally part of the Grand Kankakee Marsh in North Liberty, Indiana.[68] Their respective projects are emblematic of ecological restoration initiatives that are led by and inclusive of Indigenous nations who retain obligations to the waters, lands, and nonhuman relatives of their traditional territories and homelands.

Watch video here: [Indiana NRCS Restoring Indiana’s Wetlands: Pokagon Band.](#)

Numerous rivers, lakes, and creeks within the jurisdictional boundaries of the state of Indiana have been the focus of recent ecological restoration initiatives by local, regional, state, and federal environmental agencies, as well as alliances, coalitions, commissions, conservancies, councils, and departments pursuing various ends. These include watershed restoration, dam removal, natural habitat restoration, shoreline revegetation, invasive species management, reforestation, environmental cleanup, controlled/prescribed burns, and even freshwater mussel translocation. These efforts, when planned and executed in sustainable and ecologically sound ways, are vital for the health and protection of watershed biodiversity. However, these projects—excluding the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi’s restoration efforts within the Kankakee River watershed—have largely failed to respect the descendants of the removed and displaced Potawatomi as the enduring environmental stewards of their homelands.

Our Potawatomi ancestors were environmental stewards of Indiana, along with the Wea and Piankashaw (Miami), Lenape (Delaware), and Shawnee.[69] Not only were our relationships with the aquatic worlds of northern Indiana transformed as a result of settlement and subsequent dislocations, the lands and soils too have been affected by the removal of the Indigenous stewards of this region. Artist George Winter noted, on an 1844 trip to Kee-waw-nay Lake where a Potawatomi village once existed, “The scene her[e], now presented a wilder and more rugged appearance – the unrestrained growth of thrifty woodland, than when occupied by the Indians – whose annual firing it – had kept it in an apparently well trained condition, keeping down the undergrowth.”[70] It should come as no surprise that the Potawatomi in Indiana historically conducted prescribed burns, wild rice seeding, and other forms of ecological regeneration as an

Indigenous people who derived their livelihoods from their local environments.

The following restoration projects are for watersheds that run through or adjacent to land patents and reservations of the Potawatomi who were forcibly removed from Indiana in 1838:

Water Bodies & Potawatomi Connections:	Projects:
<p><i>Coffee Creek</i> Runs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Through Mie-saw-bee’s Land Patent 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Invasive Species Management 2. Prescribed Burns 3. Reforestation 4. Vegetative Buffer Restoration 5. Water Restoration
<p><i>Deep River</i> Runs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Through Paq-q-shuk’s Father’s, Aub-e-naub-bee’s, Land Patent 2. Through Pee-pees-kah’s Land Patent 3. Through Quash-mau’s Land Patent 4. Through Wee-saw’s Land Patent 5. East of Old Wee-saw’s Land Patent 6. West of Paq-q-shuk’s Father’s, Aub-e-naub-bee’s, Other Land Patent 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dam Modification (Proposed)
<p><i>Eel River</i> Runs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Through Mis-sink-qu-quah’s Land Patent 2. Directly East, Southeast, and South of Paq-q-shuk’s Father’s, Aub-e-naub-bee’s, Land Patent 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dam Removal 2. Decreased Nutrient & Chemical Runoff from Agriculture 3. Freshwater Clubshell Mussel Translocation
<p><i>Fancher Lake</i> Located:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Completely within Mis-sink-qu-quah’s Land Patent 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Native Aquatic Habitat Restoration 2. Native Prairie Habitat Restoration 3. Removed Exotic Species 4. Stabilized Shoreline 5. Vegetative Buffer Restoration
<p><i>Grand Calumet River</i> Runs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Through Ash-kum’s Land Patent 2. Northwest and North of Miss-no-qui’s Land Patent 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Capping and Removal of Contaminated Sediment 2. Invasive Species Management (Proposed) 3. Native Plant and Habitat Restoration 4. Prescribed Burns (Proposed)
<p><i>Indian Creek</i> Runs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Through Mon-i-taw-quah & Swa-gaw’s Land Patent 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reforestation
<p><i>Lake Maxinkuckee</i> Located:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Partially within Aub-e-naub-bee and Mau-ke-kose’s Reservation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sediment Studies 2. Shoreline Revegetation 3. Wetland Restoration

<p>Water Bodies & Potawatomi Connections:</p>	<p>Projects:</p>
<p>Long Lake Located: 1. West and Southwest of Wee-saw’s Land Patent</p>	<p>1. Invasive Species Management</p>
<p>Tippecanoe River Runs: 1. Through Miss-no-qui’s Land Patent 2. Through Paq-q-shuk’s Father’s, Aub-e-naub- bee’s, Land Patent</p>	<p>1. General Watershed Restoration 2. Protection and Enhancement of Aquatic Habitat for Fish and Wildlife 3. Riverbank Stabilization 4. Water Flow Management to Protect Endangered and Threatened Freshwater Mussels</p>

For references to specific ecological restoration projects: [71]

As these restoration initiatives continue and new ones emerge within the Potawatomi homelands of present-day Indiana, affecting the watersheds from which our ancestors directly derived life, what could a decolonial return consist of through the inclusion of Potawatomi people and nations in stewardship decisions? Outside of a paradigm of Western legal rights and property laws, how could justice for the descendants of the removed Potawatomi—as well as the waters, lands, and nonhuman relatives who were displaced due to Euro-American settlement—be realized? Can we imagine justice beyond solely anthropocentric concern, a justice oriented toward restoring inter-species relationality and accountability? How could ecological restoration projects provide an opening for contemporary Potawatomi to return to the homelands of their ancestors who were forced by threat of violence to abandon the waters and lands where their foods and medicines grew, where their ancestors were buried, and where they knew they were home through the presence of mnomen?

These maps are virtual entry points for members of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation to reconnect with the aquatic worlds and terrestrial landscapes of their ancestors. These cartographic representations are intended to be invitations for imagining geographic, ontological, cultural, and ecological returns for those Potawatomi who no longer live within the Great Lakes region, as well as for those Potawatomi whose lives are dictated by settler state-constructed borders that too frequently limit access to our homelands. I hope, in the maps being accessible through this article and my nation’s Cultural Heritage Center, that they also digitally connect members of other Potawatomi nations to the territories of their ancestors who share roots in northern Indiana. I dream that they will inspire virtual and physical returns to where the mnomen grew, grows, and can grow once more on water—to those geographic places that signify to modern Potawatomi that we’ve arrived home, just as our ancestors had generations before.

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