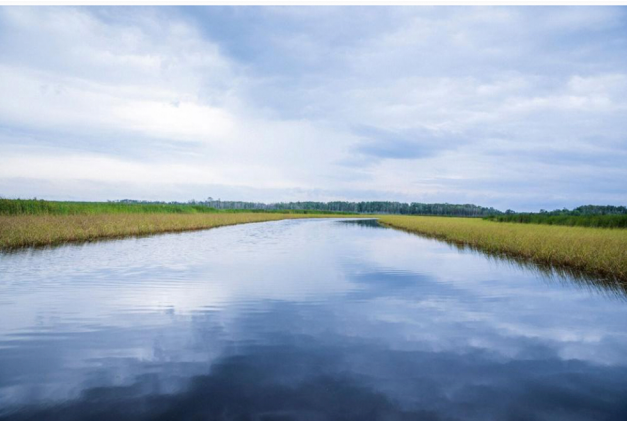


## 'Bad River' movie documents tribe's fight to survive; Enbridge Line 5 is just its latest struggle

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Mary Mazzio's latest movie, "Bad River," examines the tribe's battles for sovereignty, culminating in its ongoing conflict with Enbridge Energy Co. Half of the profits made by the film will be donated to the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa.

Contributed photo

Mary Mazzio likes to explore the concept of struggle and overcoming obstacles in all her films, whether it's a fight for social change or dealing with issues like poverty and lack of opportunity.

Her films "A Hero for Daisy," "A Most Beautiful Thing" and "Underwater Dreams" all follow ordinary people doing extraordinary things — women fighting for equal sporting facilities on college campuses, the first African American rowing team breaking ground in their sport or how a group of kids with undocumented Mexican parents built a robot from parts off the shelf of a store and defeated MIT engineers in a contest.

Searching for similar inspirational stories, Mazzio was invited by Bad River's then-tribal chairman, Mike Wiggins, to explore the reservation. They met in the early-morning hours when it was too dark to see — but then the sun began to rise over Chequamegon Bay and Odanah. Instantly, Mazzio knew she had the inspiration for her new film, "Bad River," a documentary that debuts this month.

"Without sounding cliché, it was spell binding. I lost track of time," Mazzio said. "It was my introduction to the Bad River Band."

The two hopped into a boat and navigated the channels of the Bad River itself while Wiggins spoke about the importance of Lake Superior and the ongoing conflict with Canadian-based Enbridge Energy Co., in which the tribe was suing to have a 70-year-old oil pipeline removed from its land.

"There's a long history of historical trauma and challenges our tribe has faced," Wiggins said in a Daily Press interview, recalling his tour with Mazzio. "Through it all, we maintained a value system that recognizes the importance of our home and the importance of taking care of our ecosystem for future generations. The Enbridge issue has refocused a lot of our efforts on preservation of clean water."

Mazdio found it an "extraordinary David vs. Goliath" story that she was determined to capture on film.

"It's a small Native community with a monumental effort expending money, time and energy to protect Lake Superior," she said.

The tour with Wiggins inspired Mazdio to interview more tribal members about the fight with Enbridge — but they wanted to discuss more than just that battle. The film she ended up making chronicles the tribe's fight for sovereignty, which unfolds through a series of revelations, devastating losses and a powerful legacy.

### If You Go

"Bad River" will debut March 15 at Ashland's Bay Theater. It also is being released across the country in March. To learn more and view a trailer, visit [badriverfilm.com](http://badriverfilm.com).

Patty Loew, professor emerita at Northwestern University, was among those members Mazdio interviewed. She spoke passionately about the tribe's resilient past, going back to the negotiations between Kechewaishe, or Chief Buffalo, and President Millard Fillmore to preserve Ojibwe land. Loew said the tribe has since fought for recognition of its right to hunt and fish in ceded territory, to preserve their land and to ensure a good life for future generations.

"Chief Buffalo's trip is one of the most important acts of resiliency and the Ojibwe have been resisting ever since," she said in the movie.

The film covers the history of Ojibwe conflicts, including the U.S. government removing kids from their families and sending them to Indian boarding schools, the Walleye Wars when European-Americans violently protested Ojibwe fishing rights, and the tribe's stand against the open-pit Gogebic Taconite mining operation that threatened local waters. The battle with Enbridge is the latest chapter of that story, Loew said in an interview about the film.

"Here's this little band standing up to the Goliaths of the industry," Loew said.

The battles aren't just on behalf of tribal members in Odanah today, Loew said. They are part of the Ojibwe tradition of protecting those who will live on Chequamegon Bay in the future.

"When you make a decision, think about how it's affecting seven generations into the future," she told the Daily Press. "When you think about the problems that we face as human beings — hopelessness, poverty, hunger — you have to have long-term vision in thinking about what's best for our children, our grandchildren and generations after them."

The movie ended up covering a lot more ground than Mazdio bargained for when she set out to tell the story of the pipeline conflict.

"(The movie) is all the richer," she said.

Loew said she hopes the movie draws an audience well beyond Bad River's boundaries.

"I hope they look at us and realize we're trying to act ethically and thinking about not just for our little community, but everyone," she said.



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