

## **How will Cultural Resources be affected by the NorthMet Mine?**

American Indians have lived in what is now Northern Minnesota for more than 10,000 years

The proposed PolyMet NorthMet Mine is within the 1854 Ceded Territory where Band members have retained their rights to hunt, fish and gather

Cultural Resources and Natural Resources are inseparable

- Hundreds of plants and dozens of animals are used by Ojibwe Bands for food, utilitarian, medicinal and ceremonial purposes and preserve connections to cultural identity through sharing and maintaining traditional knowledge and spiritual connections to the world

Tribal cooperating agencies consider a 216,300 acre area bounded by the St Louis River, Lake Superior, Lake Vermilion and the Beaver Bay to Vermilion Trail to be a Tribal Historic District

- The proposed District encompasses complex trail systems, Indian villages, trading posts, encampments for fishing, hunting, wild rice harvest and processing, sugar bush, and other traditional subsistence practices. It includes what was essentially a 'water highway' used by the Ojibwe at the time of European contact, and into the 20<sup>th</sup> century

An historic property of traditional and religious and cultural importance to Indian Tribes is not tied to continual or physical use of that place

- If an area remains in the hearts and minds of tribal members then that place is significant

Many Band members followed traditional practices extensively (and still do where and when possible) until about a generation ago when effects of mining impacted rice beds in the Embarrass and St. Louis River watersheds, severed access to Sugar bushes and truncated animal migration routes through the Laurentian Divide.

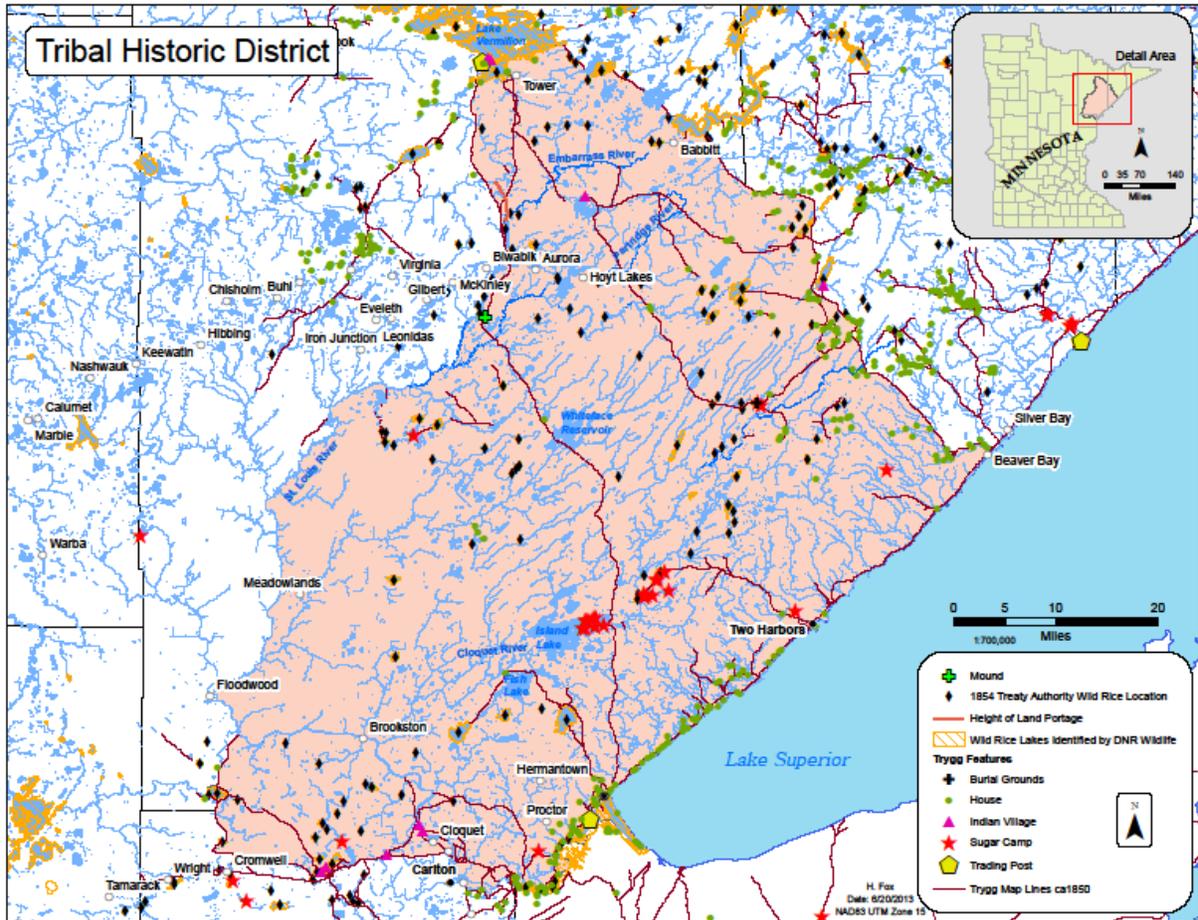
- Elders recall ricing on the upper Embarrass River where rice is scarce today
- Spring Mine Lake Sugarbush used by Band members into the 1950's may be affected by fugitive dust
- Portions of the Lake Vermilion to Beaver Bay Trail of historic importance to Native and non-Native population from pre-contact through first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century will be impacted by mining activities

Trails are not just travel corridors

- spiritual and social components through linking the past and present

Information prepared by staff from the tribal cooperating agencies and supporting intertribal agencies: Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Bois Forte Band of Chippewa, Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission and the 1854 Treaty Authority

Mesabe Widjiu or the Laurentian Divide is sacred to the Ojibwe and is part of the Bands' oral history and cosmology explaining the origin of the hills and the separation of waters along the divide



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