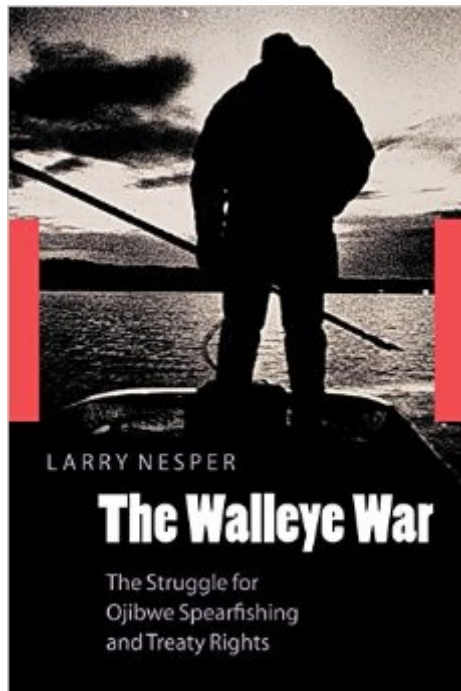


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# The Walleye War: The Struggle For Ojibwe Spearfishing And Treaty Rights



## Synopsis

For generations, the Ojibwe bands of northern Wisconsin have spearfished spawning walleyed pike in the springtime. The bands reserved hunting, fishing, and gathering rights on the lands that would become the northern third of Wisconsin in treaties signed with the federal government in 1837, 1842, and 1854. Those rights, however, would be ignored by the state of Wisconsin for more than a century. When a federal appeals court in 1983 upheld the bands' off-reservation rights, a deep and far-reaching conflict erupted between the Ojibwe bands and some of their non-Native neighbors. Starting in the mid-1980s, protesters and supporters flocked to the boat landings of lakes being spearfished; Ojibwe spearfisher-men were threatened, stoned, and shot at. Peace and protest rallies, marches, and ceremonies galvanized and rocked the local communities and reservations, and individuals and organizations from across the country poured into northern Wisconsin to take sides in the spearfishing dispute. From the front lines on lakes to tense, behind-the-scenes maneuvering on and off reservations, *The Walleye War* tells the riveting story of the spearfishing conflict, drawing on the experiences and perspectives of the members of the Lac du Flambeau reservation and an anthropologist who accompanied them on spearfishing expeditions. We learn of the historical roots and cultural significance of spearfishing and off-reservation treaty rights and we see why many modern Ojibwes and non-Natives view them in profoundly different ways. We also come to understand why the Flambeau tribal council and some tribal members disagreed with the spearfishermen and pursued a policy of negotiation with the state to lease the off-reservation treaty rights for fifty million dollars. Fought with rocks and metaphors, *The Walleye War* is the story of a Native people's struggle for dignity, identity, and self-preservation in the modern world.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Dr. Larry Nesper's 13-year journey with the Lac du Flambeau Indians becomes a thoroughly enjoyable and scholarly example of modern ethnographic work. The book meticulously details all of the issues relevant to Ojibwe spear-fishing and treaty rights as 1) native tradition, 2) cultural conflict (conflict both within the native culture, and between the native population and the State of Wisconsin), 3) inter-cultural legal conflict and controversy, and 4) an example for current dialogues regarding ethnicity and ethnic conflict, ethnic prejudice, and racism. Nesper clearly outlines all pertinent issues of the 25-year "Walleye War" from every angle, and conscientiously works his way through them, all the while carefully explaining different cultural perspectives. Even though Nesper states that he has become friends with many of the native people about whom he writes, he does not let his own feelings of friendship taint the truth. I recommend the book for enthusiasts of native culture, academics (especially those teaching cultural anthropology), and anyone interested in the history of, and current issues regarding, treaty rights and the relationship between native cultures and state or federal government entities.

This is a wonderful account of what an important legal battle over tribal sovereignty meant for both the Ojibwe and for the surrounding community that opposed them. Nesper doesn't essentialize the parties, but rather shows the conflict within the Lac du Flambeau band, and the ways that ideas of tradition themselves changed during the battle, and how the battle transformed and revived the tribe. Not much academic jargon, lots of great stories and insights. I'd recommend this for casual readers, academics, and for college or graduate classes interested in contemporary Indian issues, uses of culture, or racial conflicts.

I loved this book and have lent it out to some co workers who also enjoyed it. If you have an interest in Native Americans, especially from Wisconsin, than get it. Nesper does a great job giving both sides to the troubling story. The story will shock and amaze you.

I feel that the book identified the struggle--very real--of the Anishinaabeg people (Ojibwe//Chippewa) to practice their traditional rights and to not be ashamed to do so. We in the southern part of Wisconsin see Amish folk--another quote "ethnic minority"--practicing their rights on a daily basis. The recognition of the struggle that First Nation people have had to contend with for so long is way

over due. It may lose the reader here and there, however, overall, for those who had some prior knowledge and understanding, and indeed respect for native cultures, it brings it home. In German let me say, Hut ab! "Hats off" to the author for trying to present a side of our Wisconsin that many contemporary folk are not too savvy about. Miigwech! Danke!

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