

LOCAL NEWS

"Bad River" documentary follows tribe's fight to save Great Lakes from oil pipeline

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CBS (CHICAGO) - Hundreds of miles north of Chicago, through Lake Michigan and onto the shores of Lake Superior, resides the largest Chippewa reservation in Wisconsin. The Bad River Band of the Bad River Reservation has been fighting for decades to save the Great Lakes from a potential oil pipeline rupture.

The new documentary "Bad River" takes viewers into that ongoing fight against Enbridge's Line 5 pipeline, a 71-year-old oil pipeline that illegally runs through their land and into Mackinac in Michigan. The pipeline has spilled over 1 million gallons of toxic oil into the environment in 29 different spills over the past 50 years, according to the [Sierra Club](#).

"There's a bend in the Bad River, where she's changing her course, and the pipeline is in her way, which means there is an imminent risk of rupture," Mary Mazzio, director of "Bad River" told CBS Chicago.

That bend is the Meander, an 11-mile bank between the Bad River and the narrowest point of the pipeline. "As the lower court judge found [a rupture] would be catastrophic for Lake Superior and all of us," Maazio said. The Meander is vital for flood moderation, fish migration, and the wild rice cycle, according to [Robbert Blanchard](#), chairman of the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa.

The [court ordered](#) Enbridge to stop operating on the reservation by June 2026 and to pay over \$5 million for trespassing on the reservation for over nine years. Both sides are currently appealing.

The documentary is not just about the pipeline, but the pipeline is [symbolic of the oppressive](#) and racist systems they have been fighting since the reservation's establishment in 1854.

"The Bad River people are warriors. They have this history of fighting for their land, for their water, for their culture, and again, not just for themselves, but for all of us," Mazzio said.

Half of the proceeds of the documentary will go back to the Bad River Band, who have had to divert a large amount of funds to this legal fight, said Mazzio.

The [case](#) is before the Seventh District Court of Appeals in Chicago "with a very, very uncertain future," Mazzio said.

"If you're betting the odds, this goes all the way to the Supreme Court," she said.

The documentary highlights dozens of members of the Bad River Band and is narrated by Indigenous activist and model Quannah ChasingHorse and actor Edward Norton.

"Bad River" is playing at the AMC River East Theater in Streeterville through March 20. The film production company, 50 Eggs, also welcomes people to [host](#) their own private showing event of the film.

CBS Chicago contacted Enbridge for comment on the documentary and has not yet heard back.