



Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame Foundation, Inc.

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NEWS RELEASE

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2024 WISCONSIN CONSERVATION HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES ANNOUNCED

Walt Bresette and Lewis Posekany

The Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame (WCHF) Foundation, Inc., is pleased to announce the April 2024 Induction of Walt Bresette and Lewis Posekany. "From overseas service to the protection of Wisconsin's water resources, Walt and Lew have earned our reflection and celebration. We honor them as the newest inductees to the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame and look forward to sharing their stories at the ceremony on April 17th" said 2023-2024 WCHF Foundation President Marco Mascitti. Each of these individuals will be inducted into the WCHF on April 17, 2024, in live ceremonies held virtually and free for the public to attend. For more information visit: <https://wchf.org/2024-induction-events/>

INDUCTEE BIOS

Walt Bresette:

Walter Bresette was born on July 4, 1947 on the Red Cliff Reservation of Lake Superior Ojibwe. Catholic school in Red Cliff was followed by high school in Bayfield. In 1965, he attended a summer camp for Indigenous youth at UW-Eau Claire. Walt served four years in the U.S. Army (stationed in Japan) as a communications specialist. After service, Walt expanded into other avenues in communications—art school (Chicago); Indian issues advocacy (Madison, Wisconsin); WOJB Radio (Lac Courte Oreilles); Great Lakes Indian Fish Commission (Odanah, Wisconsin) and first editor of their conservation newsletter, *Masina'igan*, and then he shapeshifted into public speaking and activism.

Those who fish in northern Wisconsin lakes or in the Wolf River owe Walt Bresette an untold debt for his role in the defeat of the Crandon Mine and the landmark Mining Moratorium Bill. Signed into law by Gov. Tommy Thompson on Earth Day, 1998, it required any metallic-sulfide mining company, before mining in Wisconsin, to prove they had not polluted surface water or groundwater in any of their previous mines in the U.S. or Canada. When conservationists and environmentalists think of Walt Bresette's legacy, they remember him and the non-violent *Ogichidaag* (*protectors of the people*) protecting Bad River's sacred wild rice beds by blockading a train carrying sulfuric acid over rickety tracks to a mine in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, five miles from Lake Superior. When Nature educators think of the storyteller and visionary Bresette, they hear children in Wisconsin public schools debating the merits of protecting land and soil, water and air, forests and fisheries—the public commons—with a proposed Seventh Generation Constitutional Amendment.

Always reaching out to neighbors in Wisconsin and the Upper Great Lakes region, Walter invited non-Indian communities to join Native people in protecting Wisconsin's and Great Lakes' precious resources.



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Lewis Posekany:

Lew partnered with the Izaak Walton League to protect the Namekagon River from a hydroelectric project, preserving it and the St. Croix as federally designated wild and scenic rivers. The Supreme Court Namekagon Hydro Dam decision resulted in far-reaching and durable changes to state water law. Lew was an environmental advocate long before advocacy was popular. He often functioned as his own legal counsel, prepared arguments, and cross-examined witnesses.

Consequently, Lew was respected for his polymathic knowledge of the law, legal procedure, the public trust doctrine, aquatic biology, engineering, and hydrology. He effectively translated his erudition into some of the most far-reaching, progressive, and long-lasting decisions the courts have rendered on environmental matters in Wisconsin and the Nation. Legal precedence set in these court decisions led to environmentally sounder jurisprudence. Because of Lew, the Namekagon River is one of the nation's premier destinations for fly fishing for smallmouth bass, canoeing, and tubing. Our trout streams are some of the best in the country. Our water resources, lakes, rivers, and cold-water streams, become more valuable as climate change threatens the water supplies of wastrel states that did not have a Lew Posekany to protect them. That legacy is timeless and enduring, as recognized by Governor Tony Earl. It always will be if we care for and protect our water resource heritage as passionately as Lew did. The culture of caring he inculcated into DNR is justification for admitting Lew to the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame in addition to his many other accomplishments.

Lew's life's work is epitomized by this quote from Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, "A river is more than an amenity; it is a treasure." Lew was a resolute trustee making sure Wisconsin's wild river treasure was not diminished.

WCHF INDUCTION EVENT DETAILS

The 2024 WCHF Induction Events will be held on April 17, 2024. The events will be held live on a virtual platform and are free and open to the public. For more details about the events visit: <https://wchf.org/2024-induction-events/>

WISCONSIN CONSERVATION HALL OF FAME FOUNDATION, INC. (WCHF)

The WCHF was established in 1982 to encourage the growth and practice of a conservation ethic as a legacy for the people of the State. Individuals may be nominated for induction into the WCHF by the public. Based on a set of criteria, 2024 nominees were selected for induction by the WCHF Board of Directors, Representatives of 33 Voting Member Organizations, and an independent Board of Governors.

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