

# History of Little Earth

Inspired by the struggle for civil rights of the 1960s, American Indian leaders in Minnesota began meeting in 1968 to discuss issues affecting the lives of native peoples. The group saw American Indians living in abject poverty, in poor health due to inadequate health care, unemployed, and disconnected from their heritage. These meetings resulted in the formation of the American Indian Movement (AIM), the first inter-tribal native-rights organization in the country.

In addition to organizing political and social actions to bring the plight of American Indians to the attention of government leaders, AIM and its leadership saw the need for a native-oriented housing development to help American Indians transition to the reservation to the city without losing touch with their traditional values. AIM worked with government agencies and social service organizations to make this native-run housing community a reality.

The Little Earth Housing development was completed in 1973 and soon became a focal point of American Indian life in the Twin Cities.

Shortly after it opened, the Little Earth development fell victim to a number of financial problems, most the result of substandard construction of the original units. Due to poor site preparation and shoddy materials, the managers of the development could not keep the units in livable condition and make the required mortgage payments without outside financial support.

By 1975, these difficulties led to a restructuring of the Little Earth's management. The original managing nonprofit corporation was dissolved and a new governing Board of Directors was formed, made up of American Indian leaders from established organizations in the region.

The Board incorporated itself as the Little Earth of United Tribes, Inc., and selected AIM to manage the property and run the various programs offered there.

Little Earth struggled to survive throughout the 1980s, and by 1990 the fate of the development was in the hands of the courts. Prospects of success appeared dim, but through a combination of good luck and hard work on the part of the community's leadership, Little Earth survived. In many ways, the sense of purpose that developed in the community over the years, the dedication of the Little Earth Residents Association, the support of local social service organizations and the cooperation of the City of Minneapolis showed the federal government and the courts that Little Earth was worth preserving.

With the help of a new administration in Washington, the community reorganized itself again in 1994. The new leadership at Little Earth worked tirelessly through the late 1990s to restructure the community's finances, improve the units and grounds, and developing new educational and social service programs catering to the needs of Little Earth residents.

Due to the hard work of Little Earth's many supporters and the assistance of many nonprofit and government organizations, Little Earth today provides a safe, secure and culturally-rich community for American Indians in the Twin Cities area.



## Little Earth Community Partnership

2495 18th Ave. South • Minneapolis, MN 55401 • Phone: 612-724-0023 • Fax: 612-724-1703

### LERA

2495 18th Ave. South  
Minneapolis, MN 55401  
Phone: 612-724-0023  
Fax: 612-724-1703

### LEUTHC

2501 Cedar Ave. South  
Minneapolis, MN 55401  
Phone: 612-729-9361  
Fax: 612-729-5947

### NELC

2438 18th Ave. So.  
Minneapolis, MN 55401  
Phone: 612-721-2174  
Fax: 612-729-1183

Web Site: [LEARTH.ORG](http://LEARTH.ORG)