



## SHAKOPEE MDEWAKANTON SIOUX COMMUNITY

The Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux consist of representatives from the Eastern or Santee division of the Dakota Nation. This community is Minnesota's smallest and youngest reservation. It is located 17 miles southwest of Bloomington, Minnesota and 45 minutes from downtown Minneapolis. It lies within the city limits of Prior Lake in Scott County. Approximately 250 people live on this tiny reservation.

In the 17th century, ancestors of the Dakota people lived in a number of villages in the lands that later became known as Minnesota. These villages formed a political alliance known as Oceti Sakowin. It comprised seven groups. Four of these, the Mdewakanton (Dwellers of the Spirit Lake), Wahpekute (Shooters Among the Leaves), Wahpeton (Dwellers Among the Leaves), and Sisseton (People of the Ridged Fish Scales) are known as the Sanyanti or Eastern Dakota.

The Mdewakanton division of the Eastern Dakota signed the first of several treaties with the federal government in 1805. The Treaty of 1851 had the most profound effect on the lives of the Mdewakanton and other Eastern Dakota bands. According to the provisions of this treaty, the Dakota agreed to give up homelands in southern Minnesota in exchange for a 10 mile wide strip of land along the Minnesota River. Many Dakota leaders opposed this treaty, and others were coerced into signing it.

The failure of the federal government to live up to what it promised in this treaty, led to a war between the Dakota and white settlers in 1862. This war lasted approximately three months. In its aftermath, the largest mass execution in United States history took place when 38 Dakota men who had taken part in the war were hanged in Mankato, Minnesota on December 26, 1862. Other Minnesota Dakota escaped to the Western Plains or were put in prison camps. The prisoners were eventually sent to the newly established Crow Creek Reservation in South Dakota.

During the final decades of the 19th century, four Dakota communities were re-established in Minnesota. The Shakopee Mdewakanton community was officially organized and incorporated as a tribal entity in 1969. At that time the community consisted of 75 people. Shakopee Mdewakanton tribal government includes a General Council comprised of all enrolled tribal members, and three members council elected to office by the General Council to serve four year terms.

One of the first tribal enterprises of the community, the Little Six Bingo Hall, began operation in 1982. By 1992, the new Mystic Lake Casino had been built which offered 1100 slot machines, 76 blackjack tables, and a 1250 seat hall. The adjoining casino, Dakota Country Casino, opened its doors in 1993. Additional tribal enterprises include among others, a new hotel and a small shopping mall adjoining the casinos. The tribe's casino enterprise and related businesses employ several hundred people including tribal members, tribal members from other communities and non-Indians. Profits from the casinos have been used to build a new community center and recreation center for community use and to provide a variety of health, dental care and social services for tribal members.

The Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux community hosts an annual powwow in late August. This event is attended by Indian people from several different reservations and communities in the United States and Canada. This and other inter-tribal powwows are open to the public



## LOWER SIOUX COMMUNITY

The Lower Sioux Community is located within Redwood County in south central Minnesota. The community is about two miles south of the village of Morton and approximately six miles east of the city of Redwood Falls. The community, located along the bluffs of the Minnesota River Valley, offers a rare combination of scenic beauty and Minnesota heritage. Reservation enrollment includes approximately 612 members.

### **Historical Background**

The homeland of the Mdewakanton Dakota is the forest and lake country of Minnesota and western Wisconsin. The Mdewakanton represent one of four bands of the Sanyanti or eastern Dakota. The other three bands include the Sisseton, Wahpeton, and Wahpekute. During the late 1600's all four bands made their homes in several village sites throughout Minnesota. Mdewakanton means "Dwellers of the Spirit Lake." The people of this band once lived in the Lake Mille Lacs area and they took their name from the lake which they called Mde-wakan or Spirit Lake. Sometime during the early years of the 18th century, they were expelled from the area by the Ojibwe Indians.

In the late 1700's and early 1800's, the Mdewakanton and other Eastern Dakota bands began to live in the prairie country south and west of Minnesota's forests. For a part of the year they lived in the woodlands. Here they built summer villages. They constructed elm bark houses with platforms for drying their summer harvests of corn. They also exploited woodland resources such as deer, wild rice, and maple sap. At other seasons, they moved out onto the prairies and even further west to the Plains to hunt buffalo. Although they did not have as many horses as their relatives who lived to the west, they continued to use the resources of both environments.

In the Treaty of October 15, 1851, the Mdewakanton and Wahpekute bands cedes much of their Minnesota homelands to the federal government. They kept for themselves a ten mile wide tract of land on either side of the Minnesota River from Little Rock to the Yellow Medicine River. The Treaty of 1858, allotted this land in 80 acre plots to each family head. The surplus land was sold for 10 cents an acre. As a result of these treaties, the Mdewakanton soon found themselves deprived of their hunting grounds and they became reduced to starvation. Under difficult conditions, they were forced into a war with American settlers which became known as the Dakota Conflict of 1862. In the aftermath of the war, all treaties made with the Eastern Dakota were revoked, and the Dakota people either fled to the Dakotas or Canada or were removed to the Crow Creek Reservation in South Dakota.





## **THE RESERVATION TODAY**

Acts of Congress in 1888, 1889, and 1890 and the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, established the Lower Sioux Community. The governing body of the community is comprised of five members who are elected for two year terms of office. Tribal enterprises include the Lower Sioux Trading Post and Gift Shop which serves as a manufacturing and sales outlet for hand thrown, hand painted pottery made by tribal members; Jackpot Junction Casino which includes a restaurant, live entertainment, a shuttle service, and RV Park for overnight parking and camping; and Dakota Inn which is a new motel with over 100 rooms. Other tribal enterprises include the Lower Sioux Smoke Shop, a convenience store and gas station. Lower Sioux students attend public schools in Morton and Redwood Falls. Health care for tribal members is provided through the Indian Health Service.

Annual events on the reservation include a traditional pow-wow (wacipi) held during the second week of June. Throughout the year tribal members also sponsor feasts and gatherings for special family events. Two historic sites are located on or near the reservation. These include St. Cornelias Church and the Minnesota Agency which once stood at the heart of Dakota lands. Today the agency serves as an interpretive center, book, and gift shop.





# Upper Sioux Community

by Priscilla Buffalohead

## Location

The Upper Sioux Community is located within a five-mile radius of the city of Granite Falls, Minnesota. The tribal land base borders the Minnesota River. U.S. Highway 212 and State Highway 23 intersect the reservation. The reservation consists of rolling prairie country and woodlands enclosed in the valley of the Minnesota River. A five-member trustee board governs the community. The trustees include a Chairperson, Vice Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer. Each member serves a four-year term of office.

Children of the Upper Sioux Community attend public school in the city of Granite Falls. Some members send their children to Flandreau Indian School, a Bureau of Indian Affairs boarding school in South Dakota. The newest tribal enterprise of the Upper Sioux Community is the Firefly Creek Casino. This casino offers a full range of gaming such as bingo, blackjack, and slot machines. Tribal members are employed at the casino, in tribal government operations, and in a variety of occupations in the surrounding communities.

## Historical Background

Members of the Upper Sioux Community are descendents of the Sanyanti or Santee Dakota. During the 1600's, the Santee made their homes in several village locations throughout Minnesota. In the late 1700's and early 1800's, the Santee Dakota began to live in the prairie country south and west of Minnesota's forests. For a part of the year, they lived in the woodlands. Here they built summer villages. They constructed elm bark houses with platforms for drying their summer harvests of corn. They also exploited woodland resources such as deer, wild rice and maple sap. At other seasons, they moved out onto the prairies and even further west to the plains to hunt buffalo. Although they did not have as many horses as their relatives who lived to the west, they continued to use the resources of both environments.

The Treaty of Washington on September 29, 1837,

ceded all the Dakota lands east of the Mississippi River. Proceeds from this treaty were used to pay off debts traders claimed were owned to them. In the Treaty of October 15, 1851, two bands of the Santee ceded most of their Minnesota lands to the federal government. They kept for themselves a ten mile wide tract of land on either side of the Minnesota River from Little Rock to the Yellow Medicine River. The Treaty of June 19, 1858, allotted this land in 80-acre plots to each family head. The surplus land was sold for 10 cents an acre.

The Santee Dakota, deprived of their hunting grounds and reduced to starvation as a result of the treaties signed in the 1850's, were forced into a war with American settlers. Chief Little Crow led what became known as the Dakota Conflict of 1862. In the aftermath of the war, all treaties made with the Santee Dakota were revoked, and the Dakota people either fled to the Dakotas or Canada or were removed to the Crow Creek Reservation in South Dakota. The Upper Sioux Community of today was established by a Proclamation of the Secretary of Interior on October 6, 1938.

## Famous People

There are several prominent Minnesotans who are members of the Upper Sioux Community. One such individual is Carolyn Cavendar Schommer. Carolyn is one of only a handful of individuals in Minnesota who speaks her Native language fluently. She served as a Dakota Language teacher for several years at the University of Minnesota. The Shakopee-Mdewakanton Community currently employs her as a Dakota language teacher. Carolyn is very generous with her time, and very concerned about the educational needs of American Indian children. Last school year, she taught the Dakota language to American Indian families in the Robbinsdale and Osseo School Districts. She is a much-loved elder advisor to the Osseo Indian Education program.

*By Priscilla Buffalohead*

The Treaty of Washington on September 29, 1837,



## LEECH LAKE RESERVATION

The Leech Lake Reservation is one of seven Ojibwe reservation in Minnesota. It is located in the pine forest-lands of north central Minnesota. Some of the largest and most beautiful lakes in the state – Leech, Cass, and Winnibigoshish, are found within the reservation. The communities of Cass Lake, Bena, Ball Club, Inger, Deer River, Federal Dam, Onigum and several smaller settlements are within the reservation boundaries.

According to oral tradition, the Ojibwe migrated into the Great Lakes region from the east. The first families to locate at Leech Lake, in the mid 1700's were members of the Bear and Catfish clans of the tribe. These families established villages on small islands in the lake. From here, they exploited the rich hunting grounds surrounding the lakes, the abundant wild rice beds, the stands of maple groves, and lake waters, which provided a bountiful source of whitefish. Gradually other groups joined the Leech Lake Ojibwe. They came from Rainy Lake, Sandy Lake, and Lake Superior.

Historically, the Leech Lake Ojibwe became known as the Pillager Band because of a great misunderstanding. Members of this band were camping out for a religious ceremony when a white trader came among them. During his travel up the Mississippi, his trade goods became wet and he hung them out to dry. Band members approached the trader and offered pelts they had at home for his trade goods. The trader, not understanding the Ojibwe language, did not comprehend what they wanted. In the confusion that followed, some band members helped themselves to the trader's store of goods.

Many well known leaders of the Ojibwe Nation have come from the Leech Lake Band. Oze-win-dub, the Yellow Head, from Cass Lake, is the man who guided Henry Roe Schoolcraft to Lake Itasca. Another leader, Bug-o-nay-gechig or Hole in the Day, and nephew of the famous Hole in the Day II from Gull Lake, led a rebellion against federal agents who came to arrest some of his people in the late 1890's. Bug-o-nay-gechig School, on the reservation, is named after this famous leader. Perhaps the most well known leader from Leech Lake was Esh-ke-bug-e-coshe or Flatmouth. Born near Crow Wing around 1780, Flatmouth lived in Canada as a young man. He returned to make his home at Leech Lake sometime before 1806. He was known as a civil chief and he was highly respected by his people because he was a very knowledgeable man and an eloquent speaker. He participated in treaty making between the U.S. government and his band between 1837 and 1855. At one of these treaty conferences, Flatmouth said to the Commissioners: "It is hard to give up the land. The Great Spirit made the Earth and placed us upon it and caused it to produce that which enables us to live. You know we cannot live deprived of lakes and rivers. There is some game on this land yet, and for that we wish to remain. And we want some benefit for the sale, otherwise we would not give it up."

After the White Earth Reservation was established in 1867, some Leech Lake members moved to the new reservation. Many others chose to stay in their homelands and their descendants comprise the population of the reservation today.





The Leech Lake Reservation is governed by a five member Reservation Business Committee. Elections are held every two years. The committee sets general policy and a management team is responsible for carrying out tribal programs. Leech Lake is one of six reservations in Minnesota that organized as the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe under Section 16 of the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act. The Chairperson and Secretary-Treasurer of the Business Committee also serve on the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe's Executive Committee. The headquarters for the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe is located on the Leech Lake Reservation in the village of Cass Lake.

The Leech Lake tribe is the major employers of tribal members. Nearly 500 people are employed full time in nine tribal programs including planning, resource management, business, education, and youth program, social and health services, manpower, housing and accounting.

Children living on the reservation are served by seven public schools as Cass Lake, Bemidji, Blackduck, Deer River, Remer, Walker, and Grand Rapids. Students can also attend Bug-o-nay-geishig School, a tribal school funded through the Bureau of Indian affairs.

Traditional and contest pow-wows are held on the Leech Lake Reservation from May through September. These include a spring pow-wow, Fourth of July pow-wow, Ball Club pow-wow, the Inger Community pow-wow and the Labor Day pow-wow. In addition, a wild rice festival is held in the community of Deer River in August.





## Mille Lacs Reservation American Indian Reservations and Communities in the Upper Midwest

**T**he Mille Lacs Reservation is located in east central Minnesota along the southwestern shores of Lake Mille Lacs. The reservation includes the communities of Vineland, Isle, Sandy Lake, East Lake and Lake Lena. These tribal lands are located within the counties of Mille Lacs Lake which is one of the largest lakes in Minnesota. The lake is surrounded by smaller lakes and streams, low lying marshes, pine and hardwood forests. For tourists, this region is known as a great fishing and resort area,

Marie) they split into two groups. One migrated west along the north shore of Lake Superior. The other, the main body, migrated in the same direction along the southern shore of this great lake. Eventually, the main body of the southern division congregated together a LaPointe (Madeline) Island.

The Southern Ojibwe created a large settlement at La Pointe, and it was here they lived for four or five generations. Possibly in the mid 1600's, they

to a greater extent by reason of unfulfilled promises and agreements on the part of the United States government than the Mille Lacs Band of Chippewa of Minnesota." The United States purchased 12 million acres in what would become Minnesota and Wisconsin in 1837. The government agreed that the Ojibwe people who lived on this land could continue to hunt, fish and gather on their old homelands indefinitely. Because the Mille Lacs Band had assisted white settlers during the Dakota Conflict of 1862, the government promised they could remain on their lands.

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***According to sacred legend, the ancestors of the Ojibwe migrated to the Great Lakes region from the East. This migration may have begun several centuries ago.***

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but for the Ojibwe, it is a place where the past touches the present and connects with the lives of the people who came before.

The Ojibwe people of the Mille Lacs Reservation are part of a much larger group which is referred to as the Ojibwe Nation. According to sacred legend, the ancestors of the Ojibwe migrated to the Great Lakes region from the East. This migration may have begun several centuries ago. When the ancestors of the Ojibwe reached Bow-e-ting (Saulte Ste.

moved back to their former villages. The Ojibwe who came to live in the Mille lacs area came largely from the villages along the southern shore of Lake Superior. For the Mille Lacs Ojibwe, the Lake and surrounding forests have been a cherished homeland for well over two centuries.

The story of how and why the Mille Lacs Reservation came to have tis present form is a story of repeated injustice. In 1901, S.M. Brosills of the Indian Rights Association wrote: "No tribe in the United States has suffered

Later treaties, however, reduced the land base even further as lumber barons who wanted the pine land pressured government agents to make new land cessions. By the early years of the 20th century, Mille Lacs families who chose to stay at the lake were being harassed and sometimes even burned out of their homes. A great loss of land resulted from these injustices and consequently, Mille Lacs is a very small reservation today.

Today, the Mille Lacs Ojibwe maintain a government to government relationship with the United States. They are one of five reservations organized as The Minnesota Chippewa Tribe under provisions of the Indian Reorganization Act of



1934. The Mille Lacs governing body is modeled after a separation of powers form of government. The government consists of three branches: executive, legislative and judicial. The Chief Executive is responsible for the administrative branch of government. The Speaker of the Assembly and Secretary/Treasurer are responsible for the legislative branch. The judicial branch is headed by the Chief Justice who runs the band's Court of Central Jurisdiction.

The Mille Lacs Band owns two casinos: Grand Casino, Mille Lacs, and Grand Casino, Hinkley. The Grand Casino at Hinkley also houses a day care center and video gaming area for children. Both casinos are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Since the two casinos opened, there has been nearly full employment of band members for the first time in 100 years. With profits from the casino operation, the band has bought back several hundred acres of land they once held. In addition, they have built roads water and sewage treatment systems, schools, a

day care facility, a hospital sized clinic, two community centers, two massive log buildings for ceremonial

which features many unique items for sale such as birchbark baskets with porcupine quill embroidery, beadwork, and

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**Nay-ah-shing School is located in the community of Vineland. The school offers a fully accredited educational program and emphasizes tribal history, culture, and the Ojibwe language.**

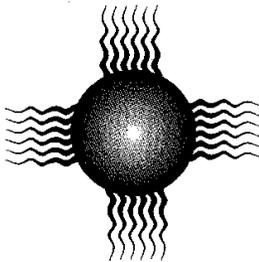
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events, and new homes for reservation residents. Nay-ah-shing School is located in the community of Vineland. The school offers a fully accredited educational program and emphasizes tribal history, culture, and the Ojibwe language.

basswood dolls.

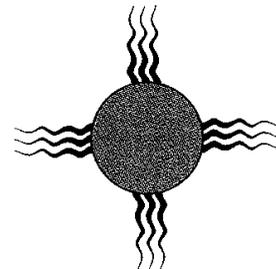
The Mille Lacs Band hosts an annual pow-wow held during the summer months at Grand Casino Hinkley. The Mille Lacs Indian Museum, operated by the Minnesota Historical Society, is also located at Vineland. The museum offers visitors a view of the way of life of the Ojibwe people as it was practiced long ago. The museum includes a gift shop

Perhaps the most hopeful sign for a brighter future lies within the Mille Lacs people. Throughout their history, they have demonstrated a remarkable strength of character. Nearly 500 years have passed since Europeans arrived in North America. Despite dire predictions that Indian people are a vanishing race, the Mille Lacs Ojibwe have endured. Many still live near the shores of lake Mille Lacs. The culture and language are still being taught through the generations. The people have endured.



*the clear sky  
resounds  
when i come  
making a sound*

*the clear sky  
loves to hear me sing*



*Anishinaabeg Lyric Poem*





## FOND DU LAC RESERVATION

The Fond du Lac Reservation is located in northeastern Minnesota west of the city of Duluth. It includes the communities of Cloquet, Sawyer, and Brookston. The land that forms the reservation lies at the top of rugged hills that rise from the Lake Superior basin. The Fond du Lac Reservation enrollment includes over 1000 members who are Ojibwe (Anishinabe, Chippewa). The Ojibwe who came to live on the Fond du Lac Reservation are primarily from the Lake Superior division of the tribe. They are called Ke-che-gum-me-win-in-e-wug or Men of the Great Water. Arriving from former villages along the southern shore of Lake Superior, by 1783, the people who came to be known as the Fond du Lac Ojibwe had already established a permanent village near the mouth of the St. Louis River on lands that became the reservation.

During the summer of 1826, an historic treaty council was held at Fond du Lac. Representatives from several Ojibwe bands met with government agents to sign an agreement establishing a boundary between Dakota and Ojibwe lands. By 1843, the population at Fond du Lac consisted of three bands with a total enrollment of 433 members. During this period in Fond du Lac history, three prominent community leaders are often mentioned. Mongazid (the Loon's Foot) was a hereditary chief of the Marten doo-daim (clan). He is said to have possessed a bark scroll which recorded eight to nine generations of chiefs in his family. Shin-goob (the Balsam) was also a hereditary chief, and Na-ganab (the Foremost Sitter) was the speaker for the chiefs. The Treaty of 1854 created the reservation. At that time band members lived at Fond du Lac, Minnesota Point, Superior Point, Cloquet, Big Lake (Sawyer), Brookston, Indian Point at the west end of Duluth and in the Spirit Lake area. Today, because of irresponsible government policies, the reservation has been reduced to approximately 35% of the original land base.

Fond du Lac is one of six reservations to be organized as the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe. The Reservation Business Committee, consisting of five members is elected to serve four year terms. The Fond du Lac Band employs over 1000 people for government service and tribal enterprise work. Tribal enterprises include a construction company, two casinos and a new hotel.

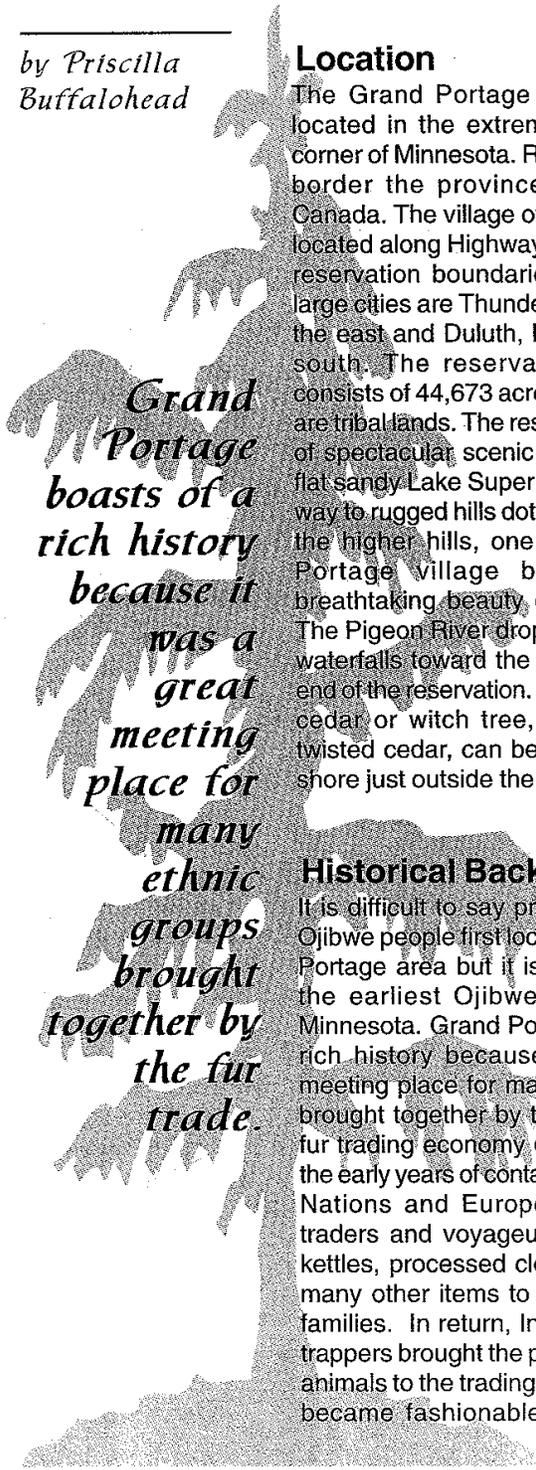
Black Bear Casino and hotel are located in Carlton, and Fond du Luth Casino is located in the city of Duluth. The revenues from these tribal enterprises are redistributed to reservation members through direct services and other activities.

Health care to reservation residents is provided through Min-no-aya-win Clinic, located in Cloquet, and through the Center for American Indian Resources in Duluth. The nation's first Indian owned and operated chemical dependency treatment center is also located on the reservation. It is called Mash-ka-Wisen which means, "Be Strong, Accept Help." Four school districts serve the Fond du Lac Reservation. The Fond du lac Headstart Program serves over 100 children. The Fond du Lac Ojibwe School, which serves approximately 250 students, emphasizes Ojibwe culture and heritage. Annual events held on the Fond du lac Reservation include the Ojibwe School Pow-wow in May, the Mash-ka-wisen Pow-wow which honors sobriety in August, and the Honor the Elders Pow-wow in December. Other events include the Peter DuFault Memorial Day picnic, the Fond du Lac Health Fair, and the summer and fall Bear Fests.



# Grand Portage Reservation

by Priscilla  
Buffalohead



*Grand Portage boasts of a rich history because it was a great meeting place for many ethnic groups brought together by the fur trade.*

## Location

The Grand Portage Reservation is located in the extreme northeastern corner of Minnesota. Reservation lands border the province of Ontario in Canada. The village of Grand Portage, located along Highway 61, is within the reservation boundaries. The nearest large cities are Thunder Bay, Ontario to the east and Duluth, Minnesota to the south. The reservation land base consists of 44,673 acres, most of which are tribal lands. The reservation is a land of spectacular scenic beauty. Miles of flat sandy Lake Superior shoreline give way to rugged hills dotted with pine. On the higher hills, one can see Grand Portage village below and the breathtaking beauty of the shoreline. The Pigeon River drops in cascades of waterfalls toward the lake at the north end of the reservation. The famous spirit cedar or witch tree, a 300 year old twisted cedar, can be found along the shore just outside the village.

## Historical Background

It is difficult to say precisely when the Ojibwe people first located in the Grand Portage area but it is certainly one of the earliest Ojibwe settlements in Minnesota. Grand Portage boasts of a rich history because it was a great meeting place for many ethnic groups brought together by the fur trade. The fur trading economy developed during the early years of contact between Indian Nations and Europeans. European traders and voyageurs brought guns, kettles, processed cloth, blankets and many other items to trade with Indian families. In return, Indian hunters and trappers brought the pelts of fur bearing animals to the trading posts. These furs became fashionable hats and other

articles in the European market.

Grand Portage was an ideal location for the establishment of a trading center. The bay and level shoreline made for easy canoe landings. In addition, a short distance of nine miles separated the bay from a spot above Pigeon River Falls where canoes could be loaded with goods to be traded in the western interior. Early French traders used the portage and by 1731, they had built a cabin, blacksmith shop, and warehouse here. After 1760, the British took over the western trade and Grand Portage became an even more important trade center. By 1783, the British Northwest company had built a large complex of buildings at Grand Portage. The site became known as Fort Charlotte.

Around this time, 150 Ojibwe families lived at Grand Portage and along the north shore of Lake Superior. These families were instrumental in the success of the fur trade. They were skilled trappers and provided the traders with fine finished pelts. They also taught the traders how to make and repair canoes. In addition, Ojibwe families provided the traders with essential food supplies such as deer and moose, wild rice and maple sugar. Hereditary chiefs, who had to deal with an increasing number of outsiders, offered village leadership during this era. Aysh-pay-ahng, born in Grand Portage in 1783, became principal chief in 1838. Hereditary chiefs who came after included Shaganahshing (Little Englishman), Ahdikonce (Little Caribou), Joseph Luois, and May-maush-ko-waush. May-maush-ko-waush was the last principal chief at

Grand Portage. He died in 1920.

After the war of 1812, the Americans took over territories formerly held by the British. The Americans were less interested in trade and more interested in taking Indian lands. The first land cession made by the Grand Portage Ojibwe took place in the 1840's when Minong (Isle Royale), the large island 18 miles from the village, was turned over to the state of Michigan. In the Treaty of 1854, the Grand Portage Band ceded to the federal government the iron rich land at the western tip of Lake Superior and the lands north to the Canadian border. This treaty set aside two small reservations for the Ojibwe, one of which was Grand Portage.

Permanent houses were built at Grand Portage around 1856. Day schools were established for the children, and except for harvesting seasons, the schools were well attended. Some Grand Portage families added farming to the more traditional round of hunting, fishing, and plant gathering. As the century closed, village men found additional work in nearby Canadian mines, at the Grand Marais boat dock, and in lumber camps.

The Dawes Act of 1887 and the Nelson Act of 1889 brought disastrous consequences for the Grand Portage Ojibwe. These acts allowed land speculators to grab up large portions of reservation land. The situation did not begin to be rectified until passage of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. By 1939 a new tribal government was in place at Grand Portage. Under the leadership of tribal chairman, Alton Bramer, the tribe bought back some of the land that had been taken by land speculators. During the years of the Great Depression, Grand Portage men worked in the Indian Division of the Civilian Conservation Corps. They worked on archaeology excavation projects around the old Northwest

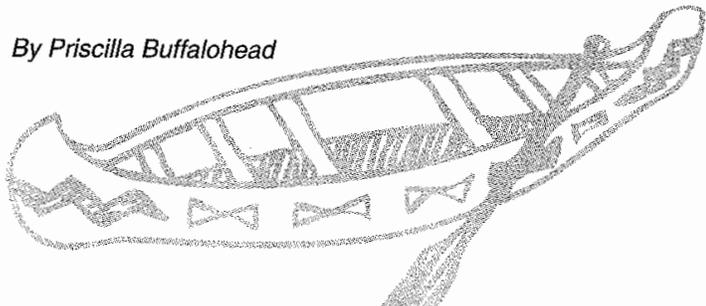
Company stockade at the lake and in the logging camps at Nett Lake. The log school house and log community center became a permanent feature of the village during the 1930's.

By 1960, Grand Portage continued to be a rather isolated community. As decades passed, the installation of a new telephone system and the construction of Highway 61 made direct communication with other communities more possible. The Reservation Business Committee negotiated with the Radisson Hotel Corporation in the 1970's to build a Radisson at Grand Portage. The hotel is now a tribal enterprise called Grand Portage Lodge and Conference Center.

### **The Grand Portage People**

Several well-known Indian leaders came from the Grand Portage Band. Billy Blackwell has written a number of children's books about the Ojibwe. Ruth Ann Myers is well known for her work in the field of Indian education and Indian rights issues. She served on the State Board of Education and became the Board's Chairperson during the 1980's. Her tireless efforts on behalf of Indian children have led to profound state policy changes with regard to the way Indian children and their parents are treated in the public school system. The internationally known artist, George Morrison, was also a Grand Portage enrollee. His fine art pieces, which include horizon paintings and driftwood collages, are drawn from his roots growing up near the Grand Portage Reservation.

*By Priscilla Buffalohead*



*The reservation is a land of spectacular scenic beauty. Miles of flat sandy Lake Superior shoreline give way to rugged hills dotted with pine.*

*American Indian Reservations and communities in the Upper Midwest  
highlighting the*

## **Bois Forte Reservation**

The Bois Forte Reservation is also referred to as the Nett Lake Reservation. It is located in northern Minnesota within St. Louis and Koochiching Counties. The reservation includes 112,000 acres of tribal owned lands. These lands include pine forests, numerous lakes and streams, and marshy lowlands. Nett Lake, at the center of the reservation, has the largest natural bed of wild rice in North America. The cities nearest the reservation include Orr, approximately 21 miles away, Cook, approximately 45 miles away, and International Falls, approximately 70 miles away. The Vermillion section of the reservation is located 60 miles away from Nett Lake near Tower, Minnesota.



The Bois Forte Reservation enrollment includes 2300 members who are Ojibwe (Anishinabe, Chippewa). Approximately 350 tribal members live at Nett Lake, and 125 members live at Vermillion. The Ojibwe who came to live on the Bois Forte Reservation are primarily from the northern division of the Ojibwe nation, having migrated here from locations along the north shore of Lake Superior. Maps drawn in the early 1800's note the existence of the community of Nett Lake. Long ago, they were known by other Ojibwe as "men of the thick fur woods". The Bois Forte Reservation was established by Treaty on April 7, 1866 and by Executive Order dated December 30, 1881.

Bois Forte is one of six reservations to be organized as the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe. The Reservation

Business Committee, consisting of five members, is the governing body of the reservation. The tribal government, health service clinic, and the Nett Lake school are the largest employers on the reservation. Bois Forte tribal enterprises include Fortune Bay Casino, a gaming enterprise located on Lake Vermillion near Tower, Minnesota; a multi-service center which consists of a convenience store and gas station in the community of Nett Lake; and a sawmill which is also located at Nett Lake. Health services for tribal members are provided by the Bois Forte Medical and Dental Clinic which opened in 1986.



The children of tribal members attend school in the Nett Lake School District. Nett Lake School, located on the reservation, serves students in grades kindergarten through six. Students in grades seven through twelve attend school 21 miles away in Orr, Minnesota. A new Education Center for tribal members is now under construction. Annual events held on the reservation include Sah-gi-bah-gah Days, a pow-wow and feast held during the last week of May or first week of June to celebrate the onset of Spring; Me-gwetch Ma-no-min, a feast and pow-wow held in October to give thanks for the bountiful wild rice harvest; and the Mid-Winter pow-wow and feast to celebrate the mid-winter season. Visitors are encouraged to visit Nett Lake which not only has the largest single bed of wild rice in North America, but is also known as the best duck hunting lake in Minnesota.



*The mountains, I become part of it -  
The herbs, the fir tree, I become part of it.  
The morning mists, the clouds,  
the gathering waters, I become part of it.  
The wilderness, the dew drops,  
the pollen-  
I become part of it.*

*-Navajo chant*

# White Earth Reservation

by Priscilla Buffalohead

## *American Indian Reservations and Communities in the Upper Midwest*

The White Earth Reservation is located in northwestern Minnesota.

The reservation lands encompass 1,296 square miles in 36 townships. These townships are in the northern part of Becker County, the southwestern part of Clearwater County, and all of Mahnomen County. The original White Earth Reservation, created by the Treaty of 1867, included 837,000 acres of land. Today there are 67,000 acres of tribal trust lands left or 12% of the original land base. Within the original reservation are the Indian communities of White Earth, Naytahwaush, Pine Point, Ponsford, Elbow Lake, Rice Lake, Ebro and Beaulieu. The surrounding non-Indian communities are Mahnomen, Waubun, Callaway, and Ogema. The reservation lies at the eastern edge of the Red River Valley. The western portion consists of rolling prairie. The eastern portion includes rich timberlands. Within the wooded lands are numerous small streams, large and beautiful lakes, and wild rice marshes. White clay can be found beneath the black topsoil around White Earth and it is this white clay that gave the White Earth Reservation its name.

The Treaty of 1867 created the

White Earth Reservation. The idea behind the treaty was to "consolidate" Ojibwe residents of Minnesota in one place. If the Ojibwe were consolidated, the government authorities believed, there would be more land and resources for white settlements.

The White Earth Reservation was supposed to be the place where all Minnesota's Ojibwe bands would eventually go. It was to be the place where Indian people would learn white style farming and where they would live like white men.



*Waweacumig and his family on the White Earth Reservation*

The first 200 Ojibwe to arrive on the newly formed White Earth Reservation came from Gull

Lake, Minnesota. They formed a part of what the federal government referred to as the Mississippi bands. Reluctant to leave their old home, the party of 200 arrived at White Earth by ox cart on June 14, 1868. Soon after their arrival, they began to build homes, a sawmill, and a small Episcopal Church. The Rev. John Johnson (En-meg-ah-bowh) served as the priest of this church. Other Mississippi band members arrived later from Gull Lake, Crow Wing, and Leech Lake. In 1871, White Earth village became the site of an official Indian Agency. A school, an industrial hall, and other buildings sprang up to become the White Earth village.

A township at the extreme southwestern edge of the reservation was added in 1873 to accommodate the Pembina Ojibwe who arrived from the Red River Valley. About the same time, the Ottetail Pillager Band arrived from Leech Lake. This group made their homes at Pine Point and the extreme southwestern portion of the reservation. By 1875, the population of the White Earth Reservation had swelled to 1,400 members. The last migration of Ojibwe arrived at White Earth around 1889 when their homelands were ceded to the federal

government. Families from Leech Lake settled at Pine Point.

Families from the Mille Lacs Reservation settled at Twin Lakes along the Wild Rice River. The villages of Beaulieu and Naytah-waush are associated with Mille Lacs arrivals.

In the 1880's white settlers began to pour into the Red River Valley just west of the reservation. After much of the prime farmland was taken, farmers began to look to the White Earth Reservation for additional lands. Their call for opening the reservation to white settlement was strongly supported by lumber companies. The lumber interests had their eyes on White Earth's prime virgin timber. When Congress passed the Dawes Act in 1887, these interests found a way to grab onto the reservation lands. The Dawes Act abolished tribal ownership of the land. Instead, individual tribal members were allotted 40 to 160 acre plots. The thousands of left over acres could then be sold to non-Indians. This policy was put into effect with the passage of the Nelson Act of 1889. This act included a provision whereby four eastern townships of the reservation were ceded to the government. In turn, the government allowed the timber interests to take millions of board feet of pine from these lands. The White Earth Ojibwe received very little in payment considering the land's true

value.

After the turn of the century, a



*Wawecumig - Mille Lacs Chief  
... who moved to White Earth*

series of government blunders and outright fraud took more White Earth land out of Indian hands. Congress passed bills making it easy for loan sharks and lumber interests to take more land. The Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Sault Ste. Marie Railway gobbled up lands and created the railroad towns of Bejou, Mahnomen, Waubun, Ogema, and Callaway. The White Earth Ojibwe were cheated in every way possible during this bleak period in their history.

Today, there are over 22,000 enrolled White Earth tribal members. Four thousand members live on the reservation. The reservation is governed by the White Earth Tribal Council whose offices are located in the village of White Earth. Doyle Turner is the current Tribal Chair. The band is the major employer on the

reservation. Residents are employed in government offices and programs and in tribal enterprises. The Ojibwe Forest Products Company, one tribal enterprise, is located in Waubun. This company markets forest products throughout the Midwest. The White Earth Garment Manufacturing Company located at Naytahwaush, manufactures hockey jerseys, softball uniforms, sweatshirts and t-shirts. The largest tribal enterprise, Shooting Star Casino and Hotel employ over 900 people, 80% of whom are reservation residents. Seven school districts serve the White Earth Reservation. Children of tribal members attend public school in Bagley, Detroit Lakes, Fosston, Mahnomen, Park Rapids, Waubun and Naytah-waush. The children also attend Circle of Life School in White Earth. This school emphasizes Ojibwe language and culture. The tribal controlled elementary school in Ponsford is called Pine Point Elementary. The tribe also offers a Headstart Program for pre-schoolers.

On June 14<sup>th</sup> each year, the White Earth Reservation celebrates the birthday of the founding of the reservation by hosting a pow-wow and sponsoring many other events. There are also pow-wows throughout the year in various settlements on the reservation.

*by Priscilla Buffalohead*

## RED LAKE NATION

### Description

The Red Lake Reservation is located in Northern Minnesota approximately 35 miles north of Bemidji, Minnesota. Within the reservation boundaries are the communities of Red Lake, Redby, Ponemah, and Little Rock. The reservation land base includes 790,000 acres located primarily within Beltrami County with scattered tracts in Beltrami Island and Pine Island state forests and in the Northwest Angle. The Red Lake Reservation is approximately one and one half times larger than the state of Rhode Island. Lower and Upper Red Lake are located at the center of the reservation. All of lower Red Lake and one half of Upper Red Lake belong exclusively to the Red Lake Nation.

The major village on the reservation, Red Lake, houses the tribal administration headquarters, schools, a nursing home and hospital. This community is one of the oldest in northern Minnesota. Around the turn of the century, Red Lake was already a thriving town with hotels and stores serving loggers and logging camps as well as local residents.

The village of Redby, located east of Red Lake, is known as "old Chiefs" village or Ondatamaning. The village was incorporated in 1905 and became open to settlement during the logging boom days when a railroad for carrying logs to market was built from Nebish to Redby. The Red Lake Indian Mills and Red Lake Fisheries Association are located in this village. The village of Ponemah is located approximately 25 miles northeast of Redby. The name "Ponemah" has been translated as meaning "hereafter" or "later on". Ponemah is the most traditional of the Red Lake villages. Ponemah Point, a point of land jutting into Lower and Upper Red Lake, is the site of a traditional village and burial ground. This old village was called "O-bashing" which means, "place where the wind blows through".

The Red Lake Nation includes a total population of over 7500 members. The majority currently live on the reservation. It is the only closed reservation in Minnesota, which means that no one other than Red Lake enrolled tribal members, can live on the reservation.

### Historical Background

According to Ojibwe oral tradition, the ancestors of the Anishinabe migrated to the Great Lakes region from the East. The first village established by the Ojibwe in the interior of Minnesota was located at Sandy Lake. From this point, according to tribal historian, William Warren, brave war parties of Sandy Lake proceeded to fight the Dakota and eventually remove them from the lands surrounding Leech, Winnebigoishish, Cass and Red Lakes. Around 1755, there was a battle with the Dakota at Sandy River initiated by the Cross Lake (Ponemah) Ojibwe. When the British surveyor, David Thompson, passed through Red Lake in 1798, he recorded the presence of an Ojibwe village at this site. He mentions in his journal the huge fish Ojibwe men caught with their spears in the waters of Lower Red Lake.

By 1806, the British Northwest Company established a fur trading post at the East End of Lower Red Lake near the mouth of the Blackduck River. Later, the American Fur Company took over Northwest Company tradition operations. By 1830, Red Lake village was firmly established as one of the oldest villages in northern Minnesota. Gradually, the population of the reservation increased. Ojibwe families from the Red River Valley, called the Pembina bands, joined the Red Lake people. The residents of Ponemah, which was called Cross Lake long ago, maintained close relationships with the Rainy River Ojibwe and other Canadian bands. Intermarriages took place

between these communities for many generations.

After the fur trade era, missionaries came to live at Red Lake. In 1842, a protestant mission located in the village but was abandoned in the late 1850's. The first Catholic mission was founded in Red Lake in 1858. By this time, the Red Lake Ojibwe had added farming to the more traditional seasonal round of life and Red Lake farmers were so successful in their endeavors that families from other areas joined them. The Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1860 reported Red Lake's population as 2,144. By 1875, Red Lake had its own post office and one of the postal carriers was Na-she-kay-we-gah-bow. The first government boarding school opened its doors in 1877. Later, government schools were built in Redby and Ponemah.

In 1864, Chief Moose Dung of Red Lake and members of the Pembina Ojibwe traveled to Washington D.C. to conclude and amend the 1863 Treaty of Old River Crossings negotiated the previous year. This treaty ceded approximately 8 million acres of land to the federal government. The Nelson Act of 1889, ceded another 2,905,000 acres. The Agreement of 1902 ceded eleven western townships of Red Lake land near Thief River Falls. During this era of treaty negotiations, federal officials tried to persuade Red Lake leaders to accept the allotment of their tribal lands to individuals and families. The allotment policy pursued by the federal government led to disaster on other reservations as tribal lands were rapidly transferred into non-Indian hands. The Red Lake leaders had the foresight to refuse allotment and that is why the tribal land of the Red Lake Reservation today is held in common by all tribal members.

### The Red Lake People

The Red Lake Nation consists of a tribal governing body of eleven members. These officials include a Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, and two representatives from each of four districts. The Tribal Council headquarters and administrative offices are located in the community of Red Lake. The Red Lake Nation has its own fire department, police

and court system. The tribe employs over 1400 people in tribal programs, tribal gaming enterprises, various federally funded programs, and in the fishing industry. Another enterprise of the band is Red Lake Builders, a company, which does road and building construction throughout the state. Casinos owned and operated by the tribe include Red Lake Casino, Lake of the Woods Casino, and River Road Casino.

Red Lake hosts one of the largest pow-wows held in Minnesota. The annual 4<sup>th</sup> of July pow-wow takes place at the pow-wow grounds in the village of Red Lake. Dancers come to this pow-wow from many different tribes and many different areas of the United States and Canada.

"Treat The  
Earth Well,  
It Was Not  
Given To  
You By  
Your Parents,  
It Was  
Loaned  
To You  
By Your  
Children."

*ancient proverb*