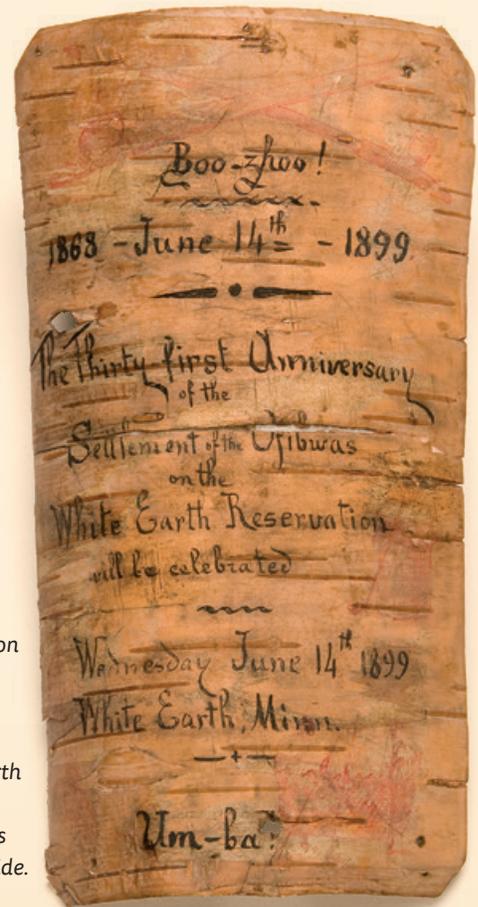


White Earth Celebration and Powwow

THE FIRST OJIBWE from the area of Gull Lake and Crow Wing arrived at what is now *Gaa-waabaabiganikaag* (White Earth Reservation) on June 14, 1868. A few years later, around 1872, an Ojibwe leader and Episcopal minister named Enmegabowh helped create a celebration that became an annual event held on June 14—or the weekend closest to the date—to commemorate the arrival at White Earth.¹

Not only did members from White Earth participate, but visitors ranged from far and wide, especially from the Dakotas. The planning and fundraising for the festive occasion, led by the White Earth Nation, took time. Invitations and other commemoratives, like this 1899 birch bark invitation, have been a consistent element of the event. Over time, lacrosse games, horse races, and mock battles have made way for activities such as golf tournaments and 5K races.

Traditional singing, dancing, and drumming have always been central to the celebration. One cannot visit the grounds during the celebration without hearing the drum. The drum represents the heartbeat of the people and is a commonality found not only at White Earth celebrations but also at powwows (Ojibwe) and *wacipis* (Dakota) all over North America.



A birch bark invitation announcing the 31st anniversary of the settlement of the Ojibwe on White Earth Reservation, Minnesota, 1899; 6.5 inches high by 3.5 inches wide. (MNHS COLLECTIONS)

Historically, these events allowed indigenous people to freely share and honor traditions without repercussions. The US government banned many ceremonies and traditions before and during the creation of the reservations. These restrictions remained in force until the American Indian Religious Freedom Act was passed in 1978.

The 2018 White Earth Annual Celebration and Powwow, which had more than 800 registered dancers, marked the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the Ojibwe to *Gaa-waabaabiganikaag*. Once again, the White Earth community, along with friends, family, and peers from all over, came together to celebrate with singing and dancing. While the materials found on regalia and the goods sold by vendors have changed, the excitement and unity among the participants and visitors remain the same.

—Rita Walaszek, collections associate and enrolled member of the White Earth Nation of Ojibwe



Jingle-dress dancers at the 2018 White Earth Celebration and Powwow. (JOHN H. WALASZEK)

1. Bruce White, *We Are at Home: Pictures of the Ojibwe People* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2007), 168.



Copyright of **Minnesota History** is the property of the Minnesota Historical Society, and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or users or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission: [contact us](#).

Individuals may print or download articles for personal use.

To request permission for educational or commercial use, [contact us](#). Include the author's name and article title in the body of your message. But first--

If you think you may need permission, here are some guidelines:

Students and researchers

- You **do not** need permission to quote or paraphrase portions of an article, as long as your work falls within the fair use provision of copyright law. Using information from an article to develop an argument is fair use. Quoting brief pieces of text in an unpublished paper or thesis is fair use. Even quoting in a work to be published can be fair use, depending on the amount quoted. Read about fair use here: <http://www.copyright.gov/fls/fl102.html>
- You **should**, however, always credit the article as a source for your work.

Teachers

- You **do not** need permission to incorporate parts of an article into a lesson.
- You **do** need permission to assign an article, either by downloading multiple copies or by sending students to the online pdf. There is a small per-copy use fee for assigned reading. [Contact us](#) for more information.

About Illustrations

- **Minnesota History** credits the sources for illustrations at the end of each article. **Minnesota History** itself does not hold copyright on images and therefore cannot grant permission to reproduce them.
- For information on using illustrations owned by the Minnesota Historical Society, see [MHS Library FAQ](#).