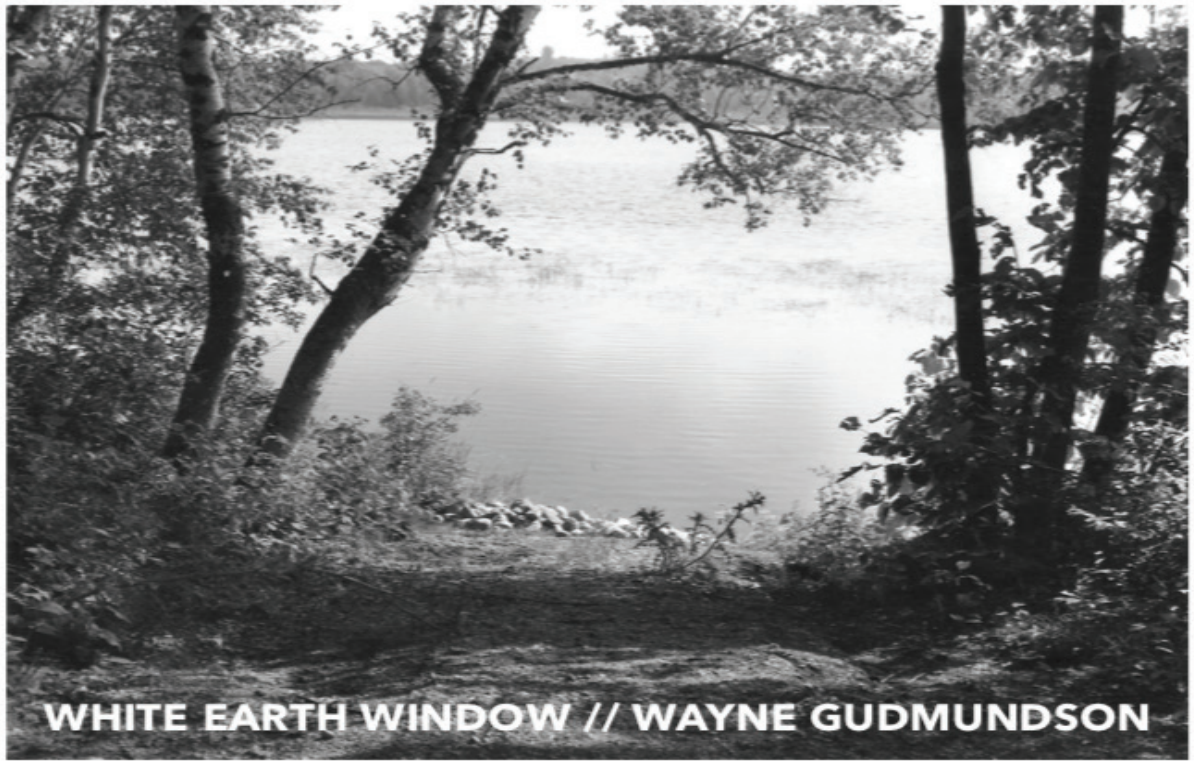

WHITE EARTH WINDOW // WAYNE GUDMUNDSON

## THIS IS NOT A DEFINITIVE HISTORY OF THE WHITE EARTH RESERVATION.

For that, one must look to such books as William Warren's *History of the Ojibway People*, Melissa Meyer's *The White Earth Tragedy*, Michael McNally's *Ojibwe Singers*, or Anton Treuer's *The Assassination of Hole in the Day*, among others.

Rather these photos are vignettes that offer glimpses of some of the places as seen through the history of the Ojibwe at White Earth – at one time a communal reservation that encompassed nearly 1,300 square miles.

## EZHI-BIMAADIZING

The nature of life

The seasons of the year are integral to the Ojibwe culture and closely tied to the seasons, as are the activity cycles practiced for survival; hunting, sugaring, fishing, gardening, gathering and ricing.

## BIBOON
### Winter

When the lakes froze over, familial hunting groups left their village in search of game areas. They carried with them very few items; newly woven mats made from bulrushes and reeds by the women, a kettle, some rice and dried berries. To set up winter camp the men shoveled snow away and the women erected the wigwams in a circle. In the center food was cooked communally over an open fire. Each wigwam also had a central fire where meat was laid on large racks to dry. Customarily, each family hosted a feast to celebrate the first game killed. While the men hunted the women tanned hides and prepared furs that served for bedding or clothing and sometimes for trade. During the coldest months, when the men were often away hunting for weeks at a time, the women made fishnets from nettle-stalk fiber. The winter role of the elders was to tell stories about Nanabozho, the trickster, and give instruction on Ojibwe values.

*The White Earth Tragedy*, Melissa Meyer, 1994

## ZIIGWAN
### Spring

With the coming of spring, the groups returned to the main villages and prepared to journey to the sugar bush. Sugaring leaders, usually women, had the right of usage to a certain stand of maple trees to which they returned annually. Supplies and tools needed for the process were stored in a small lodge nearby. Women vigilantly kept the sap kettles boiling day and night until the thick syrup became granulated. They stored the sugar in birch bark cones and the super mandible of duck bills. Ziinzibaakwad, maple sugar, served as an all-purpose seasoning and as a confection. While the women took primary responsibility for making maple sugar some men spent time fishing with seines, hooks, traps and spears. Fish was an especially important food resource during the spring.

*The White Earth Tragedy*, Melissa Meyer, 1994

## NIIBIN
### Summer

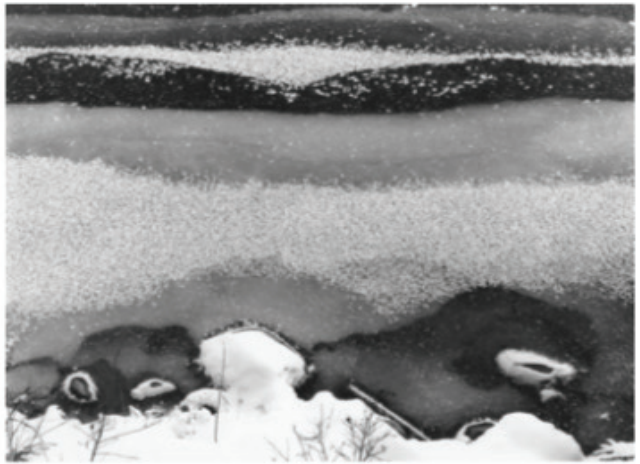
On the completion of the sugaring process, families returned to their villages to plant gardens. The summer bark wigwams were located along the lakeshore surrounded by a garden. Men broke new ground each spring to enlarge the garden. The women primarily cultivated corn, squash and pumpkins. When the gardeners completed their tasks, Mide priests and priestesses gathered and requested a blessing for the garden from the manidoo, or spirit. Both spring and summer signaled a series of gathering activities. In the spring roots were gathered. In the summer women and children gathered blueberries, chokecherries, gooseberries, cranberries and raspberries. They dried and ground most berries for storage, "boiling down" raspberries and spreading them to dry on pieces of birch bark. They also gathered basswood and birch bark and herbal specialists selected medicinal plants.

*The White Earth Tragedy*, Melissa Meyer, 1994

## DAGWAAGIN
### Autumn

At the close of summer, thoughts turned to harvesting manoomin, wild rice. Ricing leaders allocated a section of the rice field to each household to harvest. Women visited the rice fields at the end of summer to demarcate their area by tying some rice in sheaves and staking boundaries to show that they intended to harvest their area that year. Once ripened the rice was gathered by women in canoes poled by men. They untied the sheaves, shook loose the grains and used poles to gently knock the rice into the canoe. The rice was then spread out evenly on birch bark to dry, parched in kettles and pounded to remove the husks. Winnowing of the rice was done by men wearing clean moccasins "jigging" or treading on the rice. Finally the rice was tossed on birch bark trays so that the wind could carry away the chaff. Respectfully only a portion of the yield was kept. Some kernels were encased in mud and tossed back into the water to ensure next year's crop.

*The White Earth Tragedy*, Melissa Meyer, 1994



## GAA-ZHAAGAWIGAMI-ZAAGA'IGAN

### Bad Medicine Lake

"A short ways north of Ponsford lies a lake, today commonly known as Bad Medicine Lake. The Indians have always called the lake Gaa-zhaagawigami-zaaga'igan, Lake-of-the-Valley, or Lake-lying-in-a-mountain-depression. The lake contains especially four well known species of fish, i.e. pickerel (more properly styled pike), suckers, herring and a small species of sunfish. This is the only lake in the vicinity that contains herring. Formerly school after school of them were seen. The lake has neither inlet nor outlet, its water supply being replenished from the surrounding slopes. The lake is very deep. Its water is clear and of a greenish hue. Its fish are fat and of good taste. The Indians, however, formerly refused to eat fish taken from this lake, calling them pagwadjigigulag or wild fish. The Indians were possessed with the idea that all fish here originated from snakes and did not spring from the ordinary species of fish. It was a principle amongst the Indians here never to eat fish taken from a lake without an inlet or outlet. Such fish were descendants of reptiles. There was a belief among them that during the spawning season snakes were seen to mingle with fish of a lake containing on outlet or inlet.

It is said that the suckers of this lake have indeed a large head but a rather long and slender body. The pickerel and herring are naturally long and slender. Some even daim fish of this lake in spawning season have a snake smell and to eat thereof is nauseating.

This lake due to the lay of the land has a great tendency to rise and fall depending on the amount of precipitation in a season. The Indians were also once very leary about embarking of this lake with canoes for fear of meeting some horrible monster. Especially it been reported amongst them that huge pickerel, fifteen to thirty feet long and as large as a big log were seen from time to time within its waters.

Many Indians even today will not eat the fish of this lake whilst the white populations daims they are the best fish ever tasted. To convince oneself I suppose one had better go afishing and try it out."

*The Ponsfordian*, 1930, by Reverand Benno Watrin O.S.B.

## GIIYOSEWININI

### The Hunter

"Some six or seven miles northeast of Ponsford is a small lake known as Basswood Lake. From time immemorial, the Indians have called it Basswood Island Lake because it contains an island on which grew many basswood trees. In early days this island was a favorite resort of the Indian on their hunting expeditions. And since quite a legend has become attached to this spot.

Minakwadons (Little Fair Cloud) the grandfather of our present John and Mike Basswood, about 1850 settled on this island and was probably the oldest permanent Indian settler in these parts, arriving from Leech Lake many years previous to the coming of the Otter Tail Pillagers. In constant fear of the Sioux and not noted for bravery, lonely and secluded he abode on this island. Here he kept a small garden, and around about him was plenty of game and fur. His expert trapping and hunting procured him an ample supplied larder and a well-filled bag of money. Often he went to Crow Wing and elsewhere to sell a huge pack of valuable furs and in return took home money and necessary provisions. He tramped through the woods to the trading post with the immense pack of furs on his back but rode home in somewhat royal state by hiring an ox team and cart to convey himself and his purchases.

There is a tale that he kept his gold in a copper kettle hid upon the island and that probably a kettle full of gold still lies buried somewhere on this island. Since his death about sixty years ago some have even hunted for this supposed treasure but naturally in vain.

Minakwadons lived to be about sixty-seven years old and died about 1870. He was buried on this island. His only surviving son, Jawanakamig (South Land) likewise abode on this island. His children became known as the Basswood Island boys and later simply as Basswood of whom John and Mike Basswood still survive."

*The Ponsfordian*, 1930, by Reverand Benno Watrin O.S.B.

## GAA-DAZHIIKODAADING

### The Battle Site

The contested hunting area between the Dakota and the Ojibwe followed a line from northwest Minnesota south and east. This was the line between the forest and the short-grass prairie. Its free-flowing streams and forest edge areas were ideal habitats for beaver, muskrat, and deer.

Since it supported both subsistence game and furred game for trade, hunters of each Nation were attracted to this area and entered only at great risk . . . Sporadic warfare between the two groups regulated exploitation of the transition zone by discouraging permanent habitation and creating a sort of game preserve.

Before Minnesota became a state, it was said that the Pine Point area was the camp headquarters for the Ojibwe in their warfare against the Dakota people for land and resources.

At the north end of Flat Lake on the Tamarac Game Refuge the last battle between these two peoples took place over the rich beds of wild rice. The fallen Dakota warriors were buried in a mound some 200 yards north of the battle site and the Ojibwe carried their wounded and dead back to the Pine Point area. From there the dead were taken back to their respective homes.

*The White Earth Tragedy*, Melissa Meyer, 1994

## GAA-WAABABIGANIKAAG
White Earth

The White Earth Reservation is named for the layer of white clay underneath the surface on the western half of the reservation. The land is typical of the west-central Minnesota of prairie in the west, rolling hills and many lakes and rivers in the middle, and conifer forest in the east. Indian communities include White Earth, Pine Point/ Ponsford, Naytahwaush, Elbow Lake, and Rice Lake. Other villages were built along the railroad track running south to north in the western part of the reservation, Callaway, Ogema, Waubun, and Mahnomen.

With the 1867 Treaty, great pressure was put on all bands in Minnesota to relocate onto one reservation. Never the historic homeland of any Ojibwe group, it became a reservation in a treaty with the Mississippi Band of Ojibwe. It was to become the home of all the Ojibwe and Lakota in the state, however not all bands wanted to move onto one reservation and give up their reservation. Mississippi Band members from Gull Lake were the first group to come and settle around White Earth Village in 1868. The 1920 census reflected those who had settled in White Earth: 4856 were from the Mississippi Band including 1308 from Mille Lacs, the Pillager had 1218, Pembina Band 472, and 113 had come from Fond du Lac of the Superior Band.

The different bands tended to settle in different areas of the reservation. Mille Lacs Lake members moved to the northeastern part of the reservation, around Naytahwaush and Beaulieau. Pillager Band members settled around Pine Point in the southeast. After 1873, Pembina Band members from the Red River Valley moved into a township on the western side of the reservation in the village of White Earth where the government agency was located.

Indian Affairs Council, State of Minnesota

March 19, 1867- Treaty of Washington D.C. establishing White Earth Reservation and called for the removal of all Ojibwe from central Minnesota. Chief Hole-in-the-Day (Bugone-giizhig) opposed commencing the migration until the U.S. government built houses for the immigrants and constructed a sawmill and gristmill; he hoped to renegotiate the treaty before it was too late. He worried that the emigrant Ojibwe might suffer a difficult first year if these essential obligations went unmet. As it happened, his concerns were well founded. *The White Earth Tragedy*, Meyer, 1994

June 27, 1868 - Bugone-giizhig was assassinated. The migration to White Earth slowly began after that in the fall. *The Assassination of Hole in the Day*, Treuer, 2011

## GAA-DAZHISHINIKAAG
### The Cemetery

In 1872, the United States built a government agency at White Earth village. The village soon became a kind of boomtown, where annuities were distributed and exchanged for supplies with the Metis merchant families. A thriving timber industry, nourished by the reservation's eastern pine lands, brought further cash to the town's saloons and stores. White Earth village was also the seat of mission influence. Episcopalians rebuilt Gull Lake's St. Columba mission on a hillside near the agency. And at the far south edge of town, Benedictines built a mission and school.

In 1921 tribal ceremonies were outlawed. Emma King, White Earth Tribal & Community College, explained, "The story I heard was that an elder from Pine Point gave the drum to an elder from St. Columba. The drum was being secretly kept in the church for a short time. Elders from White Earth would hear the drum drumming when they were cleaning the graveyard. When they would check out the situation, no one would be around. The drum was not properly cared for and not feasted. The drum was given to an elder in Naytahwaush for ceremonial purposes. The people who knew the correct history are now all gone."

With Henry Benjamin Whipple's (the first Episcopal Bishop of Minnesota) approval, the Episcopalians expanded the mission in Minnesota by training and supervising a group of Ojibwe clergy. Notable among them was John Johnson Enmegabowh and Edward Kay-O-Sed who compiled the 1910 edition of the Ojibwe Hymnal, which remains in use to this day. Both are buried at St. Columba.

*Ojibwe Singers*, Michael D. McNally, 2000

1882 - Episcopalians exerted efforts restricting travel by Indians off the reservation unless given passes by the Indian agent

1921 - Circular 1665 outlawed many tribal ceremonies, feasts, and give-aways, actively suppressing freedom of religion for native people. This was in effect until 1933, but unofficially much longer.

1978 - American Indian Religious Freedom Act formally put a stop to the suppression of Indian religions.


## WAABAN
### Sun Rise (also means East)

The Catholic Diocese based out of Crookston, Minnesota has six churches on the White Earth Reservation – St. Ann, Waubun; St. Anne, Naytahwaush; St. Frances Cabrini, Big Elbow Lake; Most Holy Redeemer, Ogema; and St. Theodore, Ponsford.

According to Dr. Denise K. Lajimordiere, "Minnesota had sixteen boarding schools that drew students from all eleven of the state's reservations. The earliest was White Earth Indian School, begun in 1871. It had room for 110 students. Also called industrial schools, these institutions prepared boys for manual labor and farming and girls for domestic work. The boarding school, whether on or off a reservation carried out the government's mission to restructure Indians' minds and personalities by severing children's physical, cultural, and spiritual connection to their tribes."

Sister Carol Berg, OSB noted, "The federal government, aided by church-sponsored missionaries, marched steadily toward its goal of assimilation for Indians. The drive was particularly strong between the 1880s and 1930s. Their aim was detribalization, individualization and Americanization of the American Indian."

March 3, 1891 - Congress authorized the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to create legal rules that required Indian children to attend boarding schools. It also authorized the Indian Office to withhold rations, clothing, and other annuities from Indian parents or guardians who would not send and keep their children in school.

1978 - Indian Child Welfare Act was the first step in recognizing the disastrous results of boarding schools. The goal of this act was to keep Indian children in Indian families.

# DIBENDAGOZIWIN
## Belonging

In 1905 most of the 750,000 acres of White Earth Reservation in northwestern Minnesota belonged to members of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, either as individual allotments or as property held in trust for the tribe by the federal government. Over the next five years, in what historian William W. Folwell calls the "Tragedy of White Earth," most of that land was lost to non-Indians.

A variety of Euro-American interests were responsible for this wholesale transfer of property: timber companies wanting to log the reservation's pinelands, farmers desiring a share of the rich Red River Valley soil, speculators understanding the property's real value, and banks wishing to expand their business.

For those mixed-bloods who managed to retain their allotments despite all odds, tax forfeiture proceedings loomed as a threat. Policy-makers had interpreted the 1906 Clapp Rider to mean that White Earth mixed-bloods had been declared U.S. citizens and were liable to support public service. Mahnomen and Becker county officials levied high taxes and increasingly seized remaining allotted lands in tax forfeiture proceedings, which came to be the primary method of obtaining allotted lands.

Reports of rampant fraud brought the formation of the Graham Commission to investigate this situation. Clear-cut evidence collected by the Graham Commission prompted five individuals to confess. The Commission forwarded 1,529 cases of illegally sold trust allotments to the Department of Justice, and civil charges were filed against the Nichols-Chisolm logging company. Judicial maneuvering delayed final resolution of the claims cases until the statute of limitations had expired, barring criminal prosecution from being made.

*The White Earth Tragedy*, Melissa Meyer, 1994

*Ransom Powell and the Tragedy of White Earth*, Ken Peterson, 2012

1887 -THE DAWES ACT enabled allotment of Indian lands. It had two underlying goals - the acquisition of Indian land and the cultural assimilation of Indian people. It ended the previous communal proprietorship of the land base.

1889 - THE NELSON ACT implemented the allotment of 160 acres.

1904 - THE CLAPP RIDER AMENDMENT cut the size of personal allotment in half. More than five hundred people at White Earth never received the allotments they were entitled to under the Nelson Act. The 25-year waiting period on sale of land was shortened.

1906 - THE BURKE ACT formally eliminated the 25-year trust status of allotment and the non-sale of mixed-blood Indians at White Earth.

## A Personal Story

"At that time, I was working on construction repairing a guy's home. One day I happened to be at my parent's house and the sheriff stopped in and wanted to collect taxes on my grandmother's property. My grandmother had long been passed away but since their property had never been through probate court in Bagley it had never got settled. What had happened was at the time my father was supposed to divide up the property amongst the family members. Well, that never really happened.

So I went to the courthouse to find out what was going on. We went through the records to see why this tribal land was being taxed. When it was first registered, there was a bill of sale to Bogadeen logging company, with an X from my grandmother's first husband. It showed that they sold 160 acres to Bogadeen logging company. The next time it was registered, it was for 80 acres in my grandmother's name, Louise Fox.

I asked my father about this and he said that he remembers when the Bogadeen logging company approached his mother and asked about permission to log behind the house and they said they'd push in a road if they'd sign a paper giving them permission. So they signed . . . that paper was actually a bill of sale.

When my father and mother were getting married (Richard and Lorraine) they wanted to get a loan and all they had to do was come up with 2 ½ acres of land to qualify for the loan. So their plan was to go to the courthouse and get 2 ½ acres from my grandparent's land. When they went there they found out that they no longer owned the property. So they went to court. My father hired a lawyer to help my grandmother. They went to court and because my grandmother's first husband and Bogadeen logging company didn't show up they both lost by default. Since she was the only one that showed up she won her 80 acres, but the state kept 80 acres because of back taxes - tax forfeiture. The logging company just walked away.

The next day I went back to work and was speaking with this older gentleman that I was working for. I told him the story that I just told you and he said, 'I used to work for Bogadeen Logging Company and I was one of the guys that spoke Ojibwe and went up to people and asked for permission to put in a road in exchange for logging rights. There was no money, just a road. After the papers were signed I was run off the property. I never understood that.'

After I told him the story, he sat down, he just about collapsed and never said anything after that."

Richard Fox in Interview with Wayne Gudmundson, 2012

## MEGWAYAAK
### The Woods

"Old Headquarters" is the name given to the base of operations of the Nichols-Chisholm Lumber Company. It was located near what is now called Long Lost Lake and functioned as the headquarters for the company's logging operations in the area. It amounted to quite a little settlement out in the woods, employing about 250 men through the winter when the timber was being cut, although many men were employed there throughout the year, tending the fields, cutting the hay, laying out railroad grades and a host of other jobs.

All of the cutting was done by hand: axemen notched the trees, sawyers cut them down, swampers trimmed the branches off, and another team of sawyers cut them into the proper lengths. Once cut, they were hauled to a ramp usually located on a side hill where they were loaded onto bobsleds to be hauled to a landing or the railroad which ran through the logging area independent of the existing commercial lines.

The destination was the Commonwealth Landing on the north side of Elbow Lake, where in the spring the logs were boomed in preparation for the summer's drive down the Ottertail to the mill at Frazee. A series of dams were built to accommodate the movement of thousands of logs.

By 1920 significant logging on White Earth and in most of Minnesota was done. The last lumber mill in Minneapolis closed in 1919. Smaller mills remained in northern cities and town, but the great timber companies were focusing their energies on the Pacific Northwest.

*The Nichols-Chisholm Lumber Company*, Tim E. Holzkamm, 1973

*Ransom Powel and the Tragedy of White Earth*, Ken Peterson, 2012

## GAA-WAAWIYEGAMAAG
### Round Lake

"Round Lake in the spring of 1901 it can be said, witnessed the last uprising of the Chippewas in the state. The United States Indian Department had given out orders to Captain Mercer, then Indian agent at White Earth to cut all "Dead and down" timber on the reservation. Captain Mercer gave out the contract to the Commonwealth Lumber Company and appointed a certain Mr. Sullivan overseer. Ray W. Jones was acting president of the lumber company whilst Jim McKaig was in charge of the drive down the Otter Tail River.

The logs were floated to the Shevlin mills at Frazee. Mostly Indians were employed on the drive as they had not only legal preference but were expert drivers. The Indians thus soon became aware that green timber was also being floated along for which they were not receiving sufficient pay. In council they decided to stop the drive until recompense was made. So one day some sixty or seventy Indians motley armed with rifles, shotguns, etc. appeared at the Round Lake dam and ordered the drive to halt under the threat of blowing up every dam within the reservation.

The foreman McKaig at first ordered the drive to proceed but the Indians threatened to shoot on the spot the first man attempting to put a log through the dam and so no one cared to risk his life. Moreover the workmen both white and Indian sided in with the Indians proclaiming them in the right. Also the traders at Ponsford upheld the Indian and supplied food and ammunition gratis.

Becoming alarmed, the Indian agent and the foreman did everything then in their power to appease the wrath of the Indians even bringing them plenty of 'grub' from their own storehouses. Dan Morrison and Charley Moulton were used as the intermediaries to pacify the Indians. After holding up the drive for three or four days, it was finally decided to let the drive move on and the stumps would be rescaled according to a promise of a United States inspector who happened to be in White Earth at the time. Namely in the spring the stumps of green trees were apparent from the oozing sap.

Accordingly it was done, and a suit was filed against Captain Mercer, the Indian agent and the Nichols-Chisholm Lumber Company which had in the meantime succeeded the Commonwealth Company. The trial was held at Fergus Falls in the United States District Court, Charley Moulton being the interpreter for the Indians. The Indians were duly upheld in their contention and allowed $40,000 which was a very conservative estimate to be sure."

*The Ponsfordian*, 1930, by Reverand Benno Watrin O.S.B.

## MASHKIIGWAATIG
### Tamarac

One half of the Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) lies on the south edge of the White Earth Reservation and the other half in Becker county and covers a total of 42,724 acres.

Historically, the refuge was a prized hunting, fishing, ricing, and maple sugaring area for Indian tribes. The Dakota once controlled the area, followed by the Ojibwe.

Between 1890 and 1930, the refuge's original stands of red and white pine were logged. Settlers followed the loggers, but farming never achieved much prominence due to the thick forest, marginal soils and numerous wetlands.

Following establishment in 1938, the north half of the Refuge was acquired almost instantly through purchases by the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission from sellers and from county tax forfeited lands. In the mid-1930s the Indian owners of 13 allotments were told by the sheriff to leave. The next day their shacks were leveled by bulldozers. These 13 parcels totaling 877 acres are still listed as White Earth Tribal land.

Much land in the south half just off the reservation was owned by influential hunting clubs. Their opposition to the Refuge delayed complete acquisition until the early 1960s. Land exchanges with the State completed acquisition of the present boundaries in 1968.

1936 - The Collier Agreement between the Biological Service (now US Fish and Wildlife Service) and Bureau of Indian Affairs allows White Earth members to hunt, fish and gather within the Tamarac NWR.

1938 - Executive Order No. 7902, signed by Franklin D. Roosevelt established the Tamarac Nation Wildlife Refuge (NWR) to serve as a breeding ground and sanctuary for migratory birds and other wildlife.

1998 - Tamarac NWR Annual Narrative Report

2013 - Mike Swan and Al Fox in interview with Wayne Gudmundson

## GITIGAN
Farm

Harvey R. Schermerhorn was born in 1835, the same year that a distant cousin of his, John F. Schermerhorn, signed the Treaty of New Ochota and oversaw the movement of the Cherokee to Oklahoma in what has become known as the "Trail of Tears."

H.R. Schermerhorn was trained as a clergyman and after holding many prominent positions in New York he went as a missionary to serve the Choctaw in Indian Territory in now Oklahoma. He became the Principal of the Spencer Academy for the tribe. Because of his significant contribution to the Choctaw people he was, by an act of congress, given 80 acres of land in 1902 - in what would in 1913 become the Healdon Field - one of the richest pockets of oil in Oklahoma.

In 1913, H.R.'s son John B. Schermerhorn left his position for Swift and Company in Chicago, moved to Minneapolis and became president of the Schermerhorn Oil Corporation.

J.B. Schermerhorn started buying farm land from land offices in Waubun and White Earth in 1917, eventually totaling 23,000 acres. Schermerhorn Farms, Inc. had five separate farms – the RANCH totaled 11,160 acres; OAK CREST, 2,685; ST. PIERRE, 2,050 acres; WAUBUN HILLS, 880; and the TERMINAL (BROWN FARM) 1.120 acres. The company produced grain crops, potatoes, and raised sheep, Hereford and pure bread Angus. In addition to the farm the corporation owned homes that were built in Mahnomen for management along with an office building, machine shop, garage, potato warehouses and grain bins.

The Schermerhorn summer home was built across the road from the RANCH in 1920. The semi-colonial home contained twelve rooms, three baths and two fireplaces. A three-car garage adjoined the house along with a small office and a four room apartment on the second floor.

J.B. Schermerhorn died in 1929 after which the farms were incrementally sold off.

Mahnomen County Historical Society

Oklahoma Historical Society

Minnesota Historical Society

## MAKOONS
### Little Bear

"Bungo, Big Bear and the Ponsford landings were rebuilt in the early 1980s. But in the 1930s there were nine rice camps on Lower Rice Lake, and anywhere from 800 – 1200 people showed up for the harvest.

Ricing was a big deal, a huge deal, back in those days. The Indians came from the different villages on White Earth and from the Leech Lake, Mille Lacs and Red Lake. They all had their own camps then.

A few Indians would show up early August and gather bundles of brush and with horses drag them into the river to make a temporary dam. The lake level would go up and allow canoes to move around the lake. They just left them in because the high water in the spring would push them out allowing the water to go out so that the new rice would get more sun and oxygen.

In the past when I owned the Mah Konce Rice Mill, some of these guys who knew the lake really well and were good harvesters could, on an opening day, get three full canoes which would be about 1000 pounds of rice. But most folks would bring in around 300 or 400 pounds.

In the 90s I did some oral interviews with the old timers who I met when I ran the mill. The one thing that stood out with all of them was that we are not taking care of the lake like we're supposed to.

The rice camps were about a lot more that just harvesting rice. They were one of the most important community events of the year. It was a time to re-group, a time to share stories, share language and pass along what was important about our culture."

Bob Shimek in interview with Wayne Gudmundson, 2012

## MANOOMINI-OGIMAA
### Rice Chief

Because the rivers were too shallow, lumbermen constructed a series of dams to catch the spring rains and snowmelt to float logs downstream. They chose Rice Lake, a major center for harvesting wild rice, as their main reservoir. This worked well for the logging concerns, but the irregular water levels devastated the wild rice crop. Floodwaters also engulfed low-lying Indian gardens on river-bottom land. Clear-cutting timber caused erosion and muddied streams, choking aquatic life.

Having lost land around Rice Lake to the logging companies the Ojibwe also lost control of what was once one of the focal points of their survival and culture.

The WELSA Act transferred title to the land around Rice Lake back to the Indians and coupled with the establishment of the *Lower Rice Lake Wildlife Management Area* the Tribe regained control of wild rice production.

The definition of Manoomini-ogimaa or Rice Chief is "One who speaks for the rice." That voice is now heard again.

1986 - the White Earth Land Settlement Act (WELSA) authorized three major components: Monetary compensation to the present day living heirs of the allottees who have a valid claim on his or her allotment; $6,600,000 for economic development; and 10,000 acres of land trasferred in trust for the White Earth Band.

1991 - White Earth Reservation Tribal Council Resolution No. 057-91-006 put in place the Lower Rice Lake Wildlife Management Area of 6,080 acres reserved exclusively for the benefit of White Earth tribal enrolled members only.

*The White Earth Tragedy*, Melissa Meyers, 1994

## WAYNE GUDMUNDSON

Photographer Wayne Gudmundson, professor emeritus from Minnesota State University Moorhead, has his work in 10 books, several public television documentaries, numerous exhibits, and is part of many permanent collections including the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal, the Reykjavik Museum of Photography in Iceland, and the Center for Creative Photography in Tucson. Gudmundson is represented by the Joseph Bellows Gallery in La Jolla, California.

These photographs were made with a 4 x 5 view camera that, like the photographer, is sneaking up on 70 years of age. The technical processes employed here came into popular use around 1880, not long after the establishment of the White Earth Reservation in 1867.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Several years ago a neighbor and friend, Tim Holzkamm, recommended I look into the work of Joseph Gilfillan, an early Episcopal missionary who recorded more than 940 Ojibwe place names in Minnesota. My initial idea was to make photographs at these sites and use Gilfillan's work to accompany my photographs. The project stalled for many reasons.

Later quite by chance I heard an amazing interview on the radio with Dr. Anton Treuer talking about Ojibwe place names. He agreed to talk with me about the Ojibwe experience on White Earth. Treuer pointed me towards people I should talk with and books I should read. His help was invaluable in shaping this project.

Further, he provided Ojibwe translations for the photo titles and offered the exhibition's title.

In addition, the following folks have helped me along the way: Joe Allen, Karen Branden, Becca Dallinger, Bruce Engebretson, Andy Favorite, Al Fox, Richard Fox, Tim Holzkamm, Joe LeGarde, Bud Parker, Bill Paulson, Bob Shimek, and Mike Swan.

The Arts Partnership in Fargo awarded me a grant to help with the cost of printing this exhibit. Cody Jacobson designed this catalogue.

And of course, without the ongoing help of my wife, Jane, I couldn't have completed this and so many other things.

To all these fine folks, I offer my sincere thanks.

// Wayne Gudmundson, 2018

# WHITE EARTH WINDOW // WAYNE GUDMUNDSON

## 06.01 – 07.28 // 2018

NEMETH ART CENTER

301 Court Avenue, Park Rapids, MN • nemethartcenter.org

This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota, through a grant from the Region 2 Arts Council, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund.