

Reservation Business Committee (RBC), responsible for matters of local reservation concern. The Chairman and Secretary of each RBC are members of the TEC, which elects the President and other officers from its membership.

Aside from mutual interest in tribal resources and successful prosecution of claims before the Indian Claims Commission, the six reservations or "bands" (as they were known until adoption of the new constitution in 1964) have little of enduring common concern. Each is suspicious of the possibility that one reservation may benefit more than others from tribal activities, though all reservations may share a suspicion that their own elected representatives and tribal officers are using their positions for individual gain.

Each of the six reservations is "open" in the sense that at least some land is occupied by whites. This leads to terminological difficulties: To the whites the reservation is a tract of land that belonged to the Ojibwa, but one that has been largely alienated and is now largely occupied by whites. Thus, the whites make up part of the population of the reservation. To the Ojibwa themselves, on the other hand, the term reservation refers primarily to the Ojibwa population, and to either the land originally allocated to them or to their present holdings. In another sense it refers to the Ojibwa Band or bands situated around the Indian Agent's facilities provided in exchange for the cession of their ancestral lands under treaty. The Indian Agency has been replaced by the PHS Indian Health Division, separate school systems, the Indian Road Service, a BIA Agency office at Bemidji, and now the CAP. In the usage that follows, "reservation" refers to Ojibwa residents within the old territorial limits, or to the land itself depending on context. The term is not used here to refer to the white population except as specifically noted.

The Ojibwa population of White Earth is made up of descendants of the Mississippi and Pillager Bands recognized in 19th Century treaties, together with those of the Pembina Band that are not at Turtle Mountain or elsewhere. A century of intermarriage has blurred distinctions, which now exist primarily in terms of formal enrollment on tribal records for purposes of distribution of claims settlements. It is recognized, however, that one village (Pine Point) is primarily made up of descendants of Pillagers, and the descendants of the Pembina Plains Ojibwa are still occasionally distinguished as "Bronchos."

A substantial number of enrolled members of the White Earth Ojibwa live elsewhere. It is estimated that the present White Earth Ojibwa population is about 2350, including some three hundred living in predominantly white communities immediately adjacent to the reservation. This compares to a population of more than 9300 indicated by the 1950 census. Most of the decline occurred in the early 1950's.

Large Ojibwa populations are also found in many cities. White Earth Ojibwa are found in particular in Minneapolis, St. Paul, Kenosha, Waukegan, Peoria, and Los Angeles. The largest members are in Minneapolis-St. Paul, and there is some evidence that they form a social "reservation" within the Twin Cities. The change in the tribal constitution was almost defeated by the "city vote," and the same group challenged, in a Federal court, the validity of the referendum and its results.

The Ojibwa population of White Earth Reservation is divided among the three villages of White Earth, Naytahwaush, and Pine Point (each with somewhat more than five hundred residents in slightly more than one hundred households), the community of Rice Lake (with about two hundred residents scattered in the vicinity of the lake), a few small hamlets (such as Elbow Lake), and a number of families and individuals living in relative isolation at the numerous lakes. Each village has a village council, but these sometimes become inactive.

The distribution of population in the villages is interesting, and White Earth village may be taken as representative. Here the village is spread out along one major and several subsidiary streets. From the northern edge (at the approximate location of the Episcopal mission) to the southwestern end of the main street the distance is approximately two miles—for a village of only some 550 residents. The houses are widely spaced, exceptions being cases in which a house has been built near another by a close relative or where a house was built in the center of the village when the population was much larger. It is also found that kinsmen tend to be located as closely as housing permits. Several villages in fact have sections known by the names of their predominant families.

The White Earth communities may also be described from another point of view, to which the systems of social relationships is central.