

Ojibwe History from Colonization to Now



Long ago, the Ojibwe people were sick. A terrible epidemic was killing them. There was a man called Ode'immin. *Ode'* means heart in Ojibwe, and his name explains his connection to his emotions. Ode'immin got sick and died. In death, he traveled west to where it's more beautiful than the sunset. When he got to that river that he would have to cross to the other side, the spirits asked him, "Why are you grieving, Ode'immin?"

Ode'immin answered, "Because my people are dying." The spirits told Ode'immin that he was to return to the Ojibwe. He was to tell them that their teacher was coming to teach them about *minobimaadiziwin*, the good life. Their teacher would bring to the Ojibwe their rituals and ceremonies to help them get over the hills in their lives, the historic trauma that we have experienced since contact.



Nanaboozhoo is the name of our teacher, and Wiindigo—otherwise known as colonization—is the name of the monster that was killing us. Colonization and historical trauma travel together.



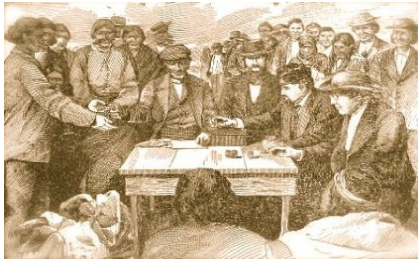
Historical trauma is committed against an entire “people,” in our case, the Ojibwe of the Leech Lake Nation. That trauma is passed down from generation to generation and exhibits itself in the behaviors, both psychological and physiological, of our people today.

He killed our people, sometimes tearing apart the children, elders, and women, and tossing their body parts here and there as he moved on, knowing full well that we couldn't enter the place more beautiful than the sunset—often thought of as heaven—without all our body parts.



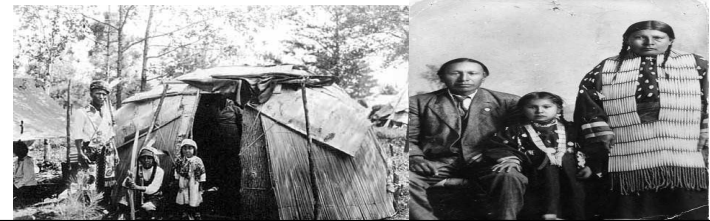
In building the dams on the Mississippi River, which runs through our reservation, 42,000 acres of land were flooded. We are water people. Our villages and burial sites were next to the lakes and rivers. When the settler society built its dams to provide energy for the mills in St. Paul and Minneapolis, and also to help float the logs downriver to support the logging industry, the Ojibwe people were not asked how we would be affected. The effects were devastating, destroying our wild rice beds, cranberry bogs, villages, and flooding our gravesites.





Many history books continue to overlook the death and suffering of the Sandy Lake Tragedy of 1850. President Taylor's administration and territorial officials wanted to move the Lake Superior Chippewa to lands to the west. Part of the scheme involved switching the annual treaty payments from Madeline Island in Wisconsin — spiritual gathering center of the Chippewa — to Sandy Lake in Minnesota. The trip required traveling by canoe and on foot for hundreds of miles. There were no supplies on hand when the Chippewa arrived in October. Agents finally made partial payments in December, but by then snow covered the ground and canoe routes were frozen. The officials responsible for the scheme hoped that worn-out tribal members wouldn't make the trip home and would stay permanently. At Sandy Lake and on the trek home, more than 400 people died because of delayed and meager payments, tainted food, disease, inadequate housing and the cold weather.

Child writes about a family who walked home to Leech Lake. There was a father, the mother, the mother's brother, a 10-year-old son, and a 2-year-old daughter. Halfway home, the mother's brother got sick and died. They stopped to bury him. Two days from Leech Lake, the children got sick. The son died and the father carried his dead son on his back. Next, the 2-year-old daughter died. The mother carried her dead daughter on her back, and both parents returned home to Leech Lake carrying their dead children. Sandy Lake became known as the place where their people died.



The water destroyed our rice beds that grow best in two to three feet of water. According to Anton Treuer, a noted Ojibwe scholar and language professor, the flooding resulted in clear cutting, poverty, dependence on annuities, destruction of gravesites, malnutrition and starvation, illness, and death. With the completion of Winnibigoshish Dam, not only were 62 square miles of land flooded, but we also experienced a smallpox epidemic. Wiindigo continued to eat our people up.



In the migration story, it's said that we dropped many things along our journey. These things included our language and culture. My father, Simon Howard, was five years old when he was sent to boarding school in 1918. At that time, the people were poor and his grandma was taking care of him. She simply could not feed him, so she sent him away to school so he would be fed. Unfortunately though, the older boys bullied the younger boys and took away their food and any gifts received from home. My dad talked about being hungry and how the little boys were losing weight. The school eventually had the older girls sit with the little guys so that they could eat.

Internalized oppression is another example of historical loss symptoms.



The Ojibwe began remembering and picking up the knowledge that we had dropped along the way during our migration. In 1975, Ojibwe high school students walked out of the racist Cass Lake High School, and the people established the reservation's Bugonaygeshig School, a K-12 school located in the woods. In 1990, Leech Lake Tribal College was established. In 1993, Sean Fahrlander became the college's first graduate, earning an Associate of Arts degree in Anishinaabe language and culture. He is now fluent in Ojibwe, an educator, and a storyteller.



Resources #1

<https://tribalcollegejournal.org/nanaboozhoo-wiindigo-ojibwe-history-colonization-present/>

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<https://cdn.theatlantic.com/static/mt/assets/science/morganza.jpg>

<https://tribalcollegejournal.org/nanaboozhoo-wiindigo-ojibwe-history-colonization-present/>

Resources #2

<https://i.pinimg.com/736x/f1/14/f6/f114f60a510b327e5d74f352614b8952--native-indian-native-american-indians.jpg>

<http://www.nativewildricecoalition.com/uploads/4/3/2/2/4322793/6209498.jpg>

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<https://www.crazycrow.com/site/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Mille-Lacs-Band-of-Ojibwe-Grand-Celebration-05-850x567-1.jpg>

<https://crazycrow-xli6b9xzashumpmly.stackpathdns.com/site/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Mille-Lacs-Band-of-Ojibwe-Traditional-Powwow-37-1000x667.jpg>