

The following narrative was written by Lyz Jaakola in answer to a number of questions surrounding the Anishinaabe culture and its music:

Background on Ojibwe-Anishinaabe

In our language, Anishinaabemowin, the word for "The People" is Anishinaabe. Another more commonly heard word for these same people is Ojibwe (Ojibway, Ojibwa, or other spellings). It's not certain when that term originated but I have heard that other Algonquin-speaking tribes were asked "Who are those people there?" and they responded with "Ojibwe" which can be interpreted as "those who make pictographs". Lastly, the term Chippewa is considered an Anglo mispronunciation of Ojibwe. If you replace the voiced consonants with unvoiced consonants, the J becomes a CH, the B becomes a P and if you spell the sound of the English letter A as a person who writes in a romantic language (such as French), it becomes an E. Similar to how American Aluminum becomes British AL-yu-min-yum in sound, the names of the indigenous peoples of this continent have been subjected to a multitude of mispronunciations.

To be absolutely clear, I will say Ojibwe-Anishinaabe when I refer to this indigenous culture most prevalent in and around the Great Lakes region. According to the 2010 US Census, 170,742 people identified themselves as Chippewa with most of these residing in MN, WI, and MI. The Minnesota population of Natives is about 101,900 with a majority of tribal affiliations reported as Chippewa and Dakota. The three counties reporting the highest populations of Native peoples are Hennepin (10, 591), St Louis (4477), and Ramsey (4043).

Comparing Musical Elements in European and Ojibwe-Anishinaabe Music

European Classical music and Ojibwe-Anishinaabe music styles are distinctly different yet share some overall similarities. Although it's impossible to write about a single Ojibwe music style just as it is impossible to write about a homogenous classical music style, fundamental differences can be identified:

	<u>European</u>	<u>Traditional Ojibwe-Anishinaabe</u>
Melody	Mostly major & minor scales	major/minor pentatonic & hexatonic scales Use of microtones and ornaments Descending phrases, preference for m3 rd
Harmony	Triadic harmony, chords	rare harmony in overlapping entrances, often unison or approximate unison in group singing
Timbre	Voices, bel canto style wide array of instruments	Voices, Northern woodlands style Drums, shakers & solo flutes
Rhythm	homorhythm preferred	sometimes independent "meters" between drum & voice, "mixed meter" common, syncopation is an aesthetic so voices don't compete with Drum

Form	wide variety of forms	shorter repeated melodic phrases, Often long, lyrical melodies descending terraced repetitions “incomplete repetition”
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NOTE The terms used in this description are from Western European music tradition. Native musicians do not use these terms in the same context or meaning. Phrases such as “On the beat” or “Singing in harmony” have a different meaning to an Ojibwe Pow-wow singer than to an American choral singer.

Comparison of Vocal Style between Cultures

Technically, singing each style is different and I am not a “master” at either... I have sung both on the opera stage and for Ojibwe ceremonies. It is different production with the same equipment. In all types of singing, there are selective tensions in the physical instrument which are controlled by the singer. There is also selective absence of tension (or relaxation). To sing bel canto style, I believe the tension happens in staying out of the way of the breathing mechanism and activating specific muscles for phonation within a generally relaxed instrument. To sing Northern woodlands style, it’s just a different set of muscles. Maybe it’s more directing the air like on an airplane wing for lift off and landing... In any case, both techniques require an attention to detail and much practice. They are an acquired skill. Both communities value singers for that skill and for their personal commitment to learning and continuing their highly stylized mode of expression.

Instruments of the Ojibwe-Anishinaabe

Instruments are often understood to have spirit. Every community has their own protocol for who, where, how and why instruments are sounded.

Drums

A Drum is respected as the heartbeat of the Earth, the heartbeat of the people. Drums are “awakened” through ceremony and their spirits are feasted on a regular basis as they are considered to be an animate being. There are 3 different types of drums, generally: The sacred waterdrum, large dance drum, and frame hand drums. Some Drums are only for ceremonial functions and won’t be seen outside of those ceremonies. Other Drums will be found in both sacred and secular settings while still others are only “for fun”. Each Drum has a story or set of teachings that accompanies it and the keepers of the Drums are responsible for following and maintaining those teachings. Generally, the large dance Drums are sounded by men – the instrument and group of singers/drummers carry the same title, “Drum”. If women sing with those Drums, they will sing “back-up” or “zhaabowe” which is at a particular place in the song form and an octave above the main melody sung by the men. Other types of drums, waterdrum or hand drums can be sounded by men or women, but individually may be considered gender-specific as in “This drum is a women’s drum.”

Shakers

Shakers are considered to have specific function, as well. In the Midewewin (Grand Medicine Society, the indigenous Ojibwe-Anishinaabe belief system) shakers are thought to be the first sound in Creation. Shakers are considered an important instrument for that reason, and often shakers are reserved only for ceremonial activities.

Flutes

Many woodlands tribes have flutes. There are at least three different origin stories for flutes... A flute player knows these stories better than I. In short, one story says the flute was given to a woman who was mourning her man, another was a man that missed his girlfriend, another story tells of a man who copied the design of a tree branch to make the flute. In any case, the flute is most often considered to be played by men who would be wooing a girl. Each flute was made uniquely to fit the player so it had a unique timbre and tuning. The girl would come to recognize the man's flute sound and song. I think they are often called courting flutes.

The use of rhythmic tension

Rhythmic tension between the voices & Drum... I guess it signifies an older song. To many who are aware, that's one of the "markers" of the old songs. When one hears the old songs or newer songs like the old songs, there is an independence between the drumbeat and the main pulse of the vocals. That's the mark of skilled singers/drumgroup.

The development of Ojibwe-Anishinaabe traditions in Lyz's lifetime

How have traditions evolved, I can only talk about what I know and what elders have told me. And that won't be all Native American traditions as there are literally hundreds of different tribal communities whose traditions are unique to them in some way if not in every way.

My experience is since the 1960s and mostly Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Ojibwe. When I was a child, there was one main public pow-wow at FDL and when there were ceremonies, they were secretive due to the fact that our spiritual practices were illegal until 1978 when the Indian Religious Freedom Act was passed. I heard elder women sing but it was usually a cappella songs in Ojibwe or church songs, sometimes in Ojibwe. Men would sing with the Pow-wow Drums. Both men and women sang in ceremony, depending on the purpose and context. We didn't have many women singing back-up at pow-wows when I was young. As I got older, pow-wow started picking up speed and people were traveling farther to pow-wows, picking up traditions from all over as well as bringing our traditions all over. One example is the jingle dress dance which originated with the Ojibwe-Anishinaabe and now most pow-wows will have jingle dress dancers from any tribe. The pow-wow repertoire is constantly growing while Drums keep old songs and make new ones regularly. Women's music kind of took a hiatus while pow-wow grew. Some say it was to protect the women from certain persecution, others say it was because the women have been silenced due to tribes adopting the male-dominated forms of community from the colonizers. In any case, women's songs are being revitalized just as our language use is being revitalized. I started singing with a hand drum in 1990s because I had a dream that that was what I should be doing. We are taught that the spirits guide us in our dreams. I started asking elders about singing and drumming and 20 some years later I have met hundreds of Ojibwe-Anishinaabe women who sing with hand drum and even a few who sing seated at the Big Drums. Some have been singing longer than I have and some started about the same time I did and some are just starting to learn about singing with drums. It's so hard to know what the natural evolution of our music would have been since our culture has survived such an assault over the last 200 years. But I do know that elders from various

communities where women haven't been singing come to me and others saying how we remind them of their grandmothers who used to sing to them with a hand drum.

Pow-wow is an ever-changing organic music tradition. It's generally thought that pow-wow as we know it began in the mid-1800s...1860 is an often used date. Ever since then, each community has developed its own set of protocol in regard to their celebration. Not all tribes have pow-wow but MN has had pow-wows for at least 130 years... and today there are generally 4 types of pow-wows: traditional, contest, ceremonial, and school pow-wows. Pow-wow is a way of life for some people today and many families are on "the pow-wow trail" for the majority of weekends during the summer. Songs and traditions are always maintaining tradition while adding novel twists to the cultural arena.

English to Anishinaabe translations:

Thank you = Miigwech

Hello = Boozhoo or Aaniin

See you later = Giga waabamin

Wow = Howa

Drum = Dewe'igan

Shaker = Shiishiigwan

Let's all sing = Nagamodaa

Songs = Nagamon

Flute = Biibiigwan