

Wadena Gull Lake, and White Fish Lake, MN

Chief Wadena was once a headman at Gull Lake. He was the cousin and brother-in-law of the Gull Lake Chief Bad Boy. On July 22, 1860, he was present when the Episcopal bishop of Minnesota, Henry B. Whipple visited the White Fish Lake band advocating a Christian “civilized life.” Wadena afterwards told Whipple:

“My father’s word are true, but he does know that they are dark to me. He can easily say it is better to be civilized and to be a Christian. See my people. We have no oxen, no tools, no hirses—nothing to do as the white man does. We have no seeds no schools. We know the Grand Medicine, but we do not know your religion. We are in the dark and need the light, and our white friends must be patient.

“I came here from Gull lake, because I wanted to get away from the firewater. I desired to avoid it for we all fall into its temptation. My fathers used to live here. I shall plant a tree where you have preached today, and when my children grow up, that tree will tell where the first white missionary stood and preached on the banks of White Fish Lake.”

Wadena never fought against the Sioux people because he claimed they were all good people. He was a medicine man, leader and philosopher.