

This map shows Finland and its surrounding regions. To the north is Norway, to the east is Russia, and to the south is Sweden. The Baltic Sea is to the south, and the White Sea is to the east. Major cities in Finland are marked, including Helsinki, Tampere, and Rovaniemi. The map also shows the Gulf of Bothnia between Sweden and Finland, and the Barents Sea to the north.

Language and Community Shift

[illegible]

After the 1950s, more commuted to the cities for work and smaller farms closed as Oulu's population shrank. The community held local celebrations such as their midsummer Juhannus Juhlat through the early 1980s. Local bands like the Oulu Hotshots (lower right) sang songs in both Finnish and English and Finnish was the mother tongue for many of the community's oldest members. A welcome sign to the community was painted on a large rock and included a Finnish flag (left). Most businesses in the community closed by the 1990s as well as the local elementary school—which had doubled as a gathering place for community festivals and wedding receptions.



villia - yogurt
 sil sala - best Herring Salad
 kulta velli - fruit soup
 juustoa - cheese
 kovaa keitettyä
 HARD BOILED EGGS - MUNNIA
 SAUNA makkaraa
 voi leipää ^{cheese} ^{and} ^{sauna}
 pulla sweet rolls
 mehua fruit juice
 25\$ per item



THE OUTLAWS

BRINGIN' IT BACK
OLD TIME FOLK MUSIC



It was as businesses were closing that Duane Lahti decided to purchase his family's old homestead—the Palo homestead. His family worked for several years to restore the buildings, earning a spot on the National Register of Historic Places. As people heard about the project, Duane was contacted about various buildings that might be of interest and together with other community members created the Oulu Cultural and Heritage Center (OCHC), which has grown to include the Pudas house, the Northern Co-op building, the Pedersen Chicken coop, the Fairview schoolhouse, the Bjorni-Korhonen savusauna, the Saaski millhouse, and the John Aho house, all in addition to the Palo Homestead.



A large, two-story wooden building with a porch, surrounded by people, likely a museum or historical site. The building has a dark roof and light-colored siding. A group of people is gathered on the porch and in the yard in front of the building. There are trees in the background.



A white baseball jersey with 'OULU' in blue and '26' in red, paired with a dark blue cap that says 'OULU VALMENTAJA'.



For the last several years (except during the Covid-19 pandemic), the OCHC has partnered with the local South Shore school district to offer three weeks of day-camp style summer school classes on site. One of these weeks is focused on local history and during this week, students have taken short Finnish lessons, conducted oral history interviews with local residents, learned Finnish folk dances, songs, and recipes, and had visiting authors and storytellers teach them about local conservation efforts and indigenous history.



For many in Oulu, a shift from speaking Finnish to speaking English coincided with the closing of many local businesses and a loss of a sense of community. While Finnish is no longer used for regular communication in the community, using Finnish language and flags signals not only the placement of a symbolic value on its usage, but a connection to the community's past and a time when the community was still close-knit. The OCHC has worked to successfully re-establish a sense of community through preservation and celebration of local heritage. Postvernacular language in Oulu, Wisconsin, is thus not so much symbolic of a connection to an ethnic heritage as it is a celebration of local history, community, and identity.



CENTER FOR
THE STUDY OF Upper
Midwestern
CULTURES

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