

Mazina'igan Supplement

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Spearfishing with Tommy Sky

A Sequel to Growing Up Ojibwe





Boozhoo! (Hello) My name is Tommy Sky. I live on the Bad River Reservation in northern Wisconsin. A reservation is an area of land owned by a tribe of Indians, in my case the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. This was land kept for the Indians in agreements that tribes made with the United States government in the 1800s. Those agreements are called treaties. Below are the reservations located in Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin, can you find the Bad River Reservation on the map?



I am an Ojibwe, or Chippewa, Indian. I am eleven years old, live with my mom and dad in a nice log house on the reservation. I have one little sister. Thank heavens only one!

I am pretty excited because it's springtime—April and that's when we can go spearfishing, and tonight we get to go out. Only people who belong to tribes that signed certain treaties can do this now. It's called using a treaty right, a right to continue to hunt, fish and gather on lands that were sold in those agreements called treaties.

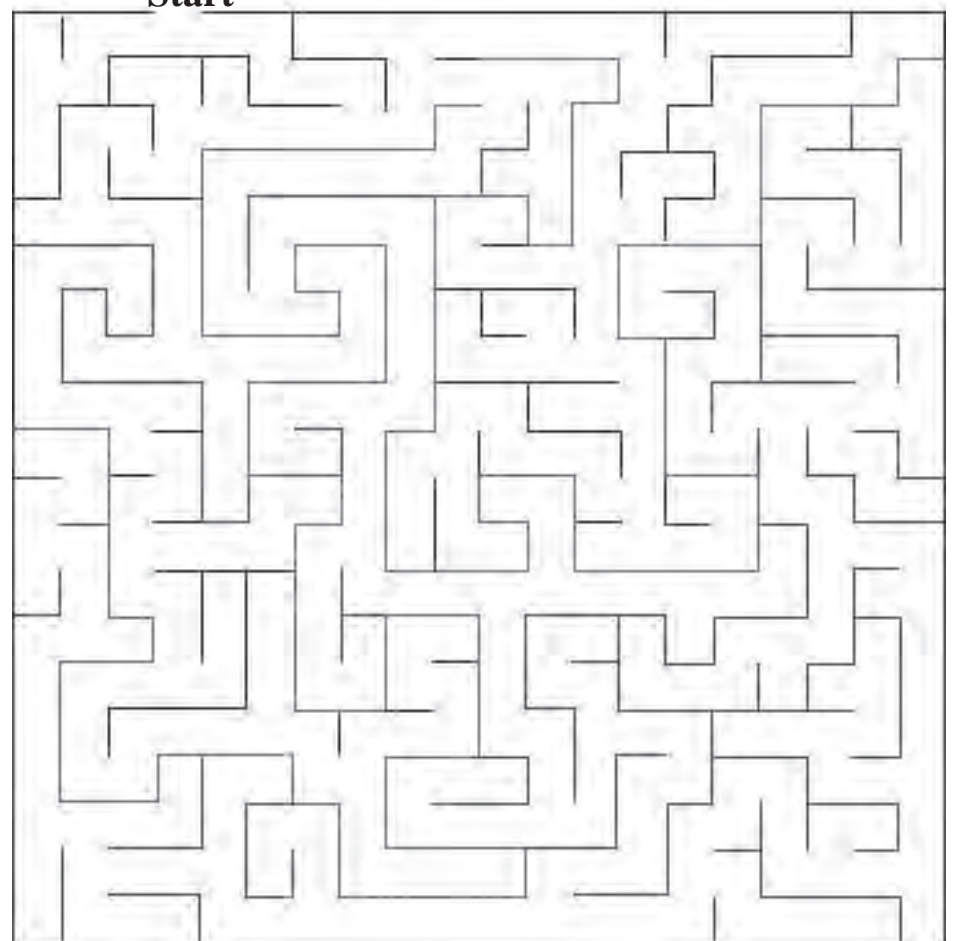
My people, the Ojibwe, have always speared fish in the early spring just after the ice goes out. They called it wa-swa-goning, fishing by torchlight. Many



Many years ago my people speared using birch bark canoes. Only people who belong to tribes that signed certain treaties can do this now.

Help Tommy find his life jacket

Start



I was excited about spearing this year so I found all my gear earlier this month and put everything where I could find it easily when the ice finally went off the lakes. Unfortunately my life jacket was not with my gear. Can you help me get through the maze to find my it?



years ago, my people speared fish each spring using their birch bark canoes. The torches were fastened to the bow of the canoe. The points of the spears were made from bone. The spring spearing season was very important because it was one of the first chances for my people to get a lot of fresh food after a long winter of fishing through the ice.

The time for spring spearing is just after the ice breaks up around the shores of the lakes. We spear mostly for walleye, called ogaa in Ojibwe, and usually get a few northern pike and sometimes a muskie too. We spear in the shallows close to shore where walleye have come in to lay eggs, or spawn.

Last spring my dad let my sister and I go with him spearing for the first time, but we could only watch. But I did go out with a group of kids from the Boys and Girls Club last year, too, and we got to try it for real. This year I get to try it on my own, and I can hardly wait. Dad made a special spear for me. Well, he just cut off the long handle a little bit on his old spear, so it really wasn't a big deal.



Today some Ojibwe people still use birch bark canoes and paddles like our ancestors did. Some use aluminum canoes, and others, like my family, use a flat-bottomed fishing boat and a trolling motor.



Upper left: Kids from the Bad River Boys and Girls Club spent one night learning how to spear. It was fun. Everybody got a chance to try it out and some of us even brought a few fish in the boat. Lower left: A creel clerk measures a walleye at a spearfishing landing. All the catches are counted and measured by a creel clerk before the fish can be taken home.

Upper: Helping out at the landing. Pretty proud of his dad's catch, this little guy is looking forward to a walleye dinner.



We use special spears to fish with. They are called trident spears. They have three to five prongs. The spear is attached to a long pole, about ten to twelve feet long, so you can reach fish a distance from the boat. Dad cut mine down a little so it would be easier for me to handle.

Dad's got our boat on the trailer and hitched to the truck now. We usually take off around 4:30 p.m., depending on how far we have to go. We can't go to just any lake. Each day the tribe names certain lakes that will be open for spearing that night. We can only go to these lakes and use certain landings because there are workers stationed at every open landing during spearfishing season.

The workers count and measure the fish we catch before we can leave and go home. These workers are called creel clerks. Wardens, like police officers, are



Getting ready to go out spearing, Nick Hockings from Lac du Flambeau sharpens the tines on his spear.



Tools used to creel the catches at a spearfishing landing: a measuring board, data sheets, and a kerosene light. They need the board to measure each fish and the data sheets are where they enter the information, like the kind of fish, the length, and sex. Since it's dark out, they need a kerosene light to work by.

28	29	30	31	Month _____	1	2	3	4	5
Off-Reservation Treaty Fishing Permit No. 1253									
27	<input type="checkbox"/> Spearing		<input type="checkbox"/> Fyke Netting						
26	<input type="checkbox"/> Seining		<input type="checkbox"/> Gill Netting						
25	Tribal ID Number _____ of _____ Reservation								
24	Signature of Permittee: _____								
23	Issued by: _____ of _____ Reservation								
22	Water: _____ County: _____								
	Bag Limit Walleye _____		Muskellunge _____						
	Other Restrictions: _____								
21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12

This is what our permits look like. We must get a new permit each night we spear. The permits must be filled out by the creel team with our tribal ID number along with the bag limit for walleye and muskie.

Spearing word search

Circle the following words in the puzzle. The words may be hidden in any direction: horizontally, vertically, diagonally, and forwards and backwards.

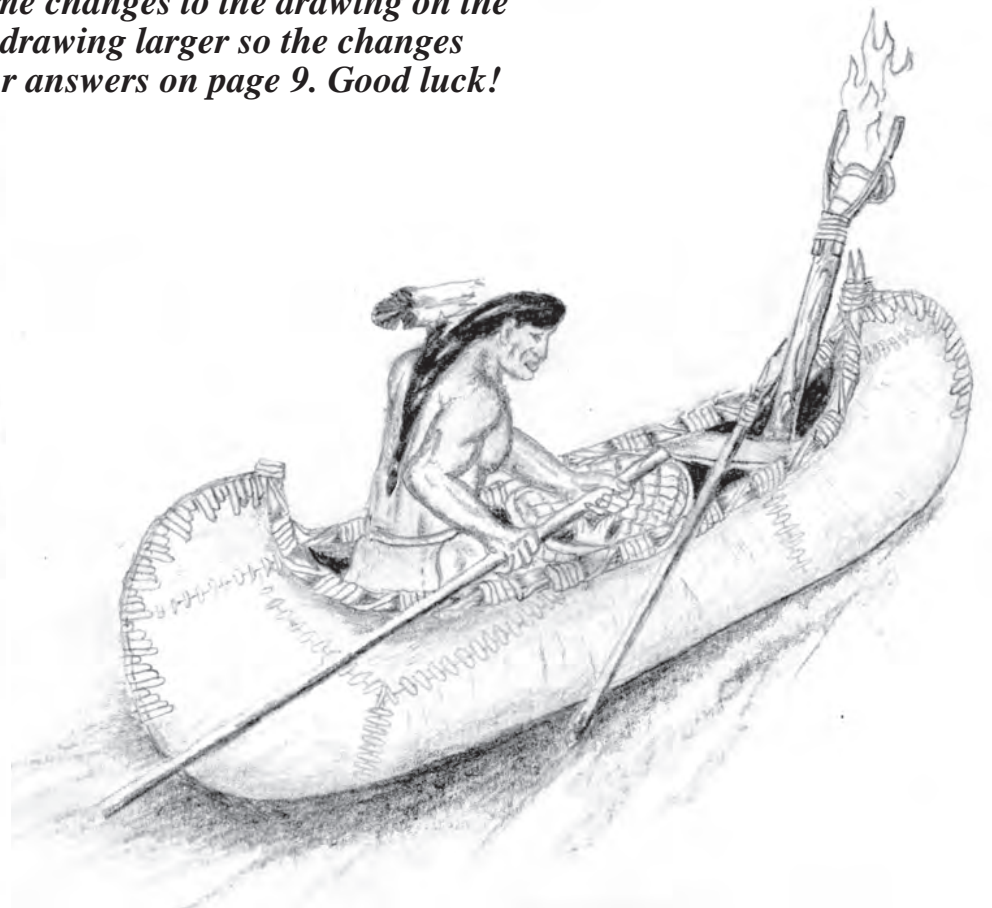
- BOAT
- CANOE
- COLD
- CREEL
- GLIFWC
- HEADLAMP
- LIFEJACKET
- MEASURE
- MOTOR
- MUSKIE
- NIGHT
- NORTHERN
- OJIBWE
- PERMIT
- SPEAR
- TREATYRIGHT
- WALLEYE
- WARDEN

V	X	E	E	W	B	I	J	O	Q	Z	C	Z	N	P
W	W	D	U	Z	Z	I	D	L	O	C	A	Q	O	M
T	G	C	C	Z	N	S	H	S	Z	R	N	M	E	A
N	E	W	A	L	L	E	Y	E	M	X	O	L	G	L
M	W	K	T	H	G	I	R	Y	T	A	E	R	T	D
H	E	W	C	M	Z	W	Z	N	G	A	U	B	D	A
R	X	A	N	A	A	D	R	T	L	I	I	I	G	E
A	G	W	S	R	J	E	F	E	I	K	S	U	M	H
E	T	T	D	U	H	E	E	L	F	M	J	V	D	H
P	X	E	I	T	R	R	F	O	W	Z	R	H	W	B
S	N	Z	R	H	C	E	O	I	C	G	Z	E	O	U
E	U	O	N	I	G	H	T	T	L	E	X	A	P	X
L	N	R	I	C	R	V	O	Q	O	W	T	H	F	V
Y	F	H	B	A	X	R	C	T	J	M	Q	G	J	O



Can you spy the differences in the two drawings?

The drawing below was done by a friend of mine. I made some changes to the drawing on the right. See if you can spy the ten differences. I also made the drawing larger so the changes would be easier to spot. Circle the differences and check your answers on page 9. Good luck!



also there, and they will give people a ticket, or citation, if they spear too many fish or bring in fish that are over the size limit. So, you really got to watch out what you are spearing and how many fish you spear.

You see, our spear fishing season has lots of rules. We can only go to lakes that are named each night. You have to show your tribal I.D. (identification) and get a permit. You will be told what the bag limit is, or how many fish are allowed for each permit that night. And you can only take two fish over 20 inches. If you goof up, you get a ticket.

My uncle Tim got a citation last year for one too many over 20 inches. He was mad. Dad says the size limit helps make sure not too many female fish are taken. They are usually the bigger fish which have come close to shore to lay their eggs. The size limit makes sure more of the smaller male fish are taken instead.



Everyone has to get a nightly permit in order to go spearing. You have to show your tribal I.D. to get it. The permit will tell you how many fish you can take that night.



A headlamp is an important part of spearing gear. You can shine the light into the water while using your hands to actually spear the fish.

Oops! Gotta get moving. Dad's calling me to come help load up. We gotta bring a bunch of stuff. For one thing, it's cold. You don't start spearing until it's dark, usually shoving the boat out into the water just as the light goes down. With the ice just gone from the lake, the water is still very cold. So is the night air. So we have to load up snow pants, heavy jackets, hats, waterproof boots, and life jackets.

We also have to remember the headlamps and batteries. The headlamps are bright lights attached to the front of a helmet, so you can shine down into the water without holding a light in your hand. The light reflects off the large, round eyes of walleye just beneath the water. The light is run from a battery, so you have to have one of those with. You also gotta remember a couple buckets to plop the fish in when you haul them into the boat. Mom usually packs some sandwiches and some hot coffee for dad and hot chocolate for my sister and me.



Once we have all the gear in the boat and tied down, we load up into the truck and head down the road to Lake Namakagon, about 40 miles from our house. That lake has an Ojibwe name. It means place of the sturgeon. We call sturgeon “name” in Ojibwe. The “e” sounds like an “a”—nah-may. When we get to the landing, the creel clerks are there, and we get our permits. We each can take 20 walleyes tonight. Dad says each lake has a total number of walleye our tribe can take by spearing. That’s called a quota. Once we reach that number, the lake is closed to us for the season, except for hook-and-line.

There are two other boats there already. They are launched and loaded with the long spears sticking out the back end of the boats.

Well, we got our permits and are ready to launch. I get into the boat and Dad backs the boat into the water while Mom watches and tells him when to stop. The boat is in deep enough water to float, so they unhook it from the trailer, and I jump from the bow onto the

landing with a rope in hand. Good thing I have high, rubber boots or I would be wet, because I didn’t quite make it to dry land. I lead the boat around to the side of the dock and wait for Dad.

We shove off from the dock when it’s almost dark. The other two boats have already headed to the far side of the lake. We’re lucky because it is very calm tonight, so we don’t have to try to find the side of the lake where the wind doesn’t hit. That’s called the lee side. We can start to look for fish right away. I’m standing up on the bow of the boat with my headlight on and spear in hand. I turn my head slowly pointing the light into the water and scanning for the sight of those shining walleye eyes. Dad keeps the boat running very slowly as we putt along the shoreline, the motor a gentle purr. “Watch out!” Dad yells suddenly. “Duck!” I ducked just in time to avoid a large tree limb hanging out over the water. I was too busy looking down into the lake and didn’t see the big branch that would have knocked me into the water. Close call!





Measure the fish

Here are some of the fish species that live in our surrounding lakes. Get out your rulers and measure each of the fish and write down how many inches they are on the line next to the Ojibwe name for the fish. Once you are done you can unscramble the letters to find out what kind of fish it was that you measured.



2. maashkinoozhe is _____”

ekimsu _____



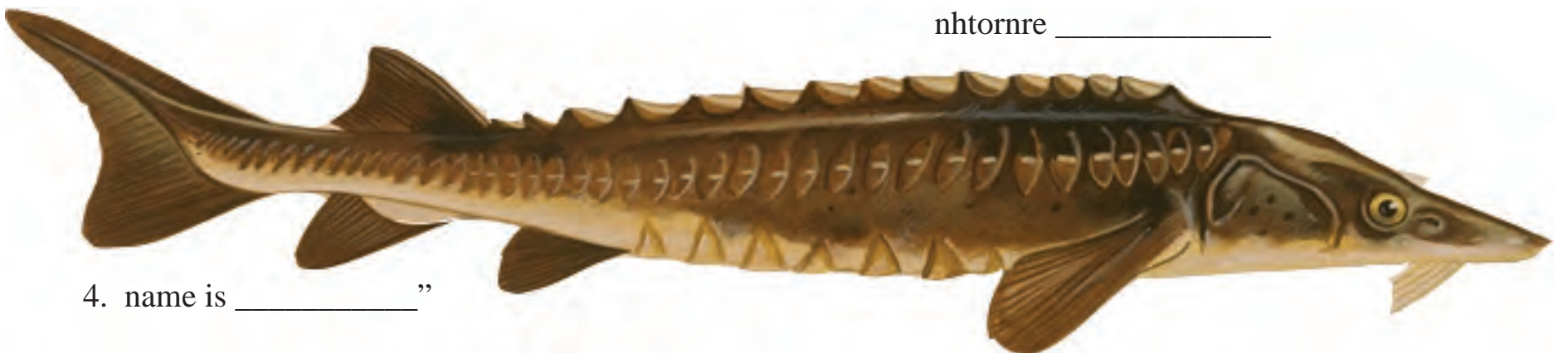
3. ginoozhe is _____”

nhtornre _____



1. ogaa is _____”

leyawle _____



4. name is _____”

ogrsnute _____



5. m izay is _____”

bbtrou _____



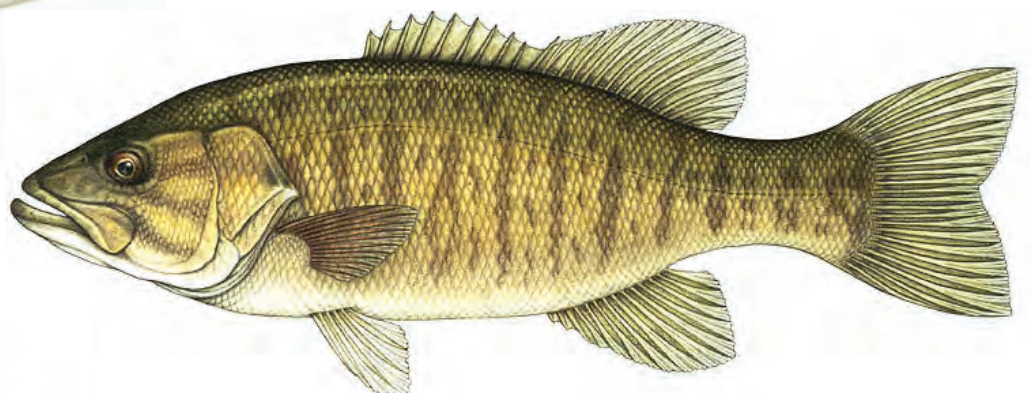
6. asaawe is _____”

hepcr _____



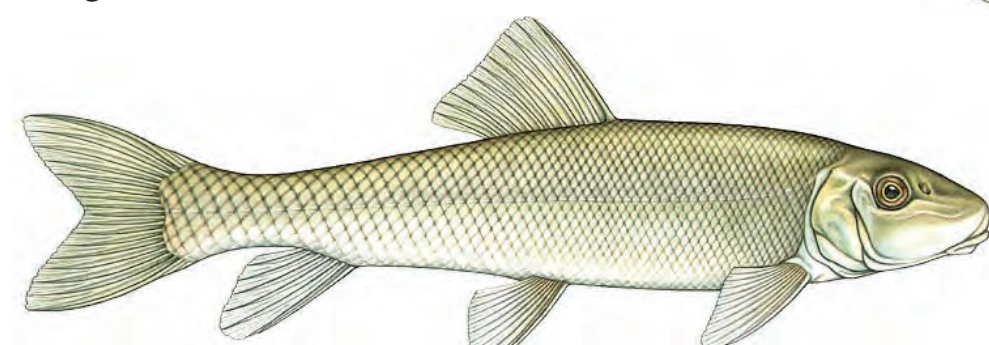
7. ashigan is _____”

egamltohur ssab _____



8. ozaawaa ashigan is _____”

lamstohulm sbsa _____



9. namebin is _____”

rुकcse _____

Answers: 1. walleye is 4 1/2” 2. muskie is 5” 3. northern largemouth bass is 5 1/2” 4. sturgeon is 9 3/4” 5. burbot is 5” 6. perch is 4 3/4” 7. largemouth bass is 5 1/2” 8. smallmouth bass is 5 1/4” 9. sucker is 5”



No sign of walleye yet. We keep trolling, patiently looking. We round a bend and head into a small bay, scaring a beaver that plunges into the water and swims away. An owl hoots softly from the trees. I can't see it though. Otherwise, it's very still and quiet except for the motor of our boat.

At last I spot the shining eyes, not far in front of the boat and to the left. I ready my spear as the boat moves closer. I can see the fish, a gray form, tail moving slightly as it hovers in the shallows. It looks like a nice size fish, not too big. I want to hit it right in the back of the head, not put my spear through the body. I aim and thrust my spear quickly before the fish swims away. Clank! The spear hit a rock instead of the fish. I can see it dart away, scared by the splash.

"That's o.k, Tommy. It takes practice. Remember you have to learn to adjust distance a bit because you are seeing the fish through water and that makes it look closer than it really is—the water distorts, or changes, what we actually see," Dad says.

O.k., so we keep on trolling, heading deeper into the bay, following the shoreline closely. Soon I see several pairs of shining eyes. We're in a good spot! I let Dad know there are fish ahead. He cuts the motor down even more. We quietly drift in towards the eyes. I thrust again...and miss! Wow, this is pretty hard. I was sure I would get that one. We keep going—more shining eyes. My spear hits the water, and more fish scatter. Nothing is on the end of my spear.

"Dad, I can't do this. I wonder if this spear is bent or something?" Something has be goofed up—couldn't be me.

"No, Tommy, the spear is just fine. Just keep trying."



I also like to go hook-and-line fishing during the summer with my grandpa. We call this wewebanaabii. Color the picture.



13-year-old Sokaogon member Jake McGeshick brings in a nice walleye.



A Red Cliff spearfisherman, Richard Chelberg, brings in a nice looking walleye from Lake Namakagon.



We putt over to the other side of the bay and find more fish in the shallows. Wham! I shove my spear at a big one and walla! I got one. Quickly I bring it into the boat and plop into our bucket. At last! Dad's grinning and so am I.

An hour ticks by and I manage to pull in five more pretty nice looking walleye and miss a lot more. Now we think it's time for Dad to have a try, so we switch places, and he puts on the headlamp and grabs a full-sized spear. I man the motor. This I have practiced quite a bit. You don't want to goof up because you will send the guy at the bow of the boat into the water. Dad would not be happy. You have to watch for floating logs, rocks and stuff when you are going through such shallow water.

We turn the boat and go back through the little bay where we had noticed quite a few fish. Dad waves at me to slow down. He sees fish. I cut the motor back and watch. Wham! Dad brings one up and quickly flips it into the bucket. A minute later, wham again! Another one comes in. This seems to go a lot better with me on the motor and him up front. We keep trolling the shore, heading back towards the landing. It didn't take us long and Dad had his twenty fish in the bucket, with one big one flopping around in there.

It's getting late, so even though I only got six out of the twenty I could get, we decided to call it for the night.

We pull up at the dock. I jump out and tie up the boat. We unload and together carry the bucket with our fish up to the creel clerk. He has a kerosene lamp set in the back of his pick-up truck and a measuring board ready. One guy measures the fish and another guy records the measurement. Each fish is measured, and they record the sex. A warden from the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission, called GLIFWC or Glif-wic, is also there and watches on. We had no violations, so we were all clear.



Creel clerks and wardens have to wait at the landings until all the boats are in, so many times they work very late into the night.



Spearing takes some patience. Sometimes you can slowly motor along the shoreline for quite a while before you even see a fish. Later, in the spring, most of the fish will have laid their eggs and gone back into the deeper part of the lake.

Ojibwe Words

wa-swa-goning—fishing by torchlight

namakagon—place of the sturgeon

name—sturgeon

ogaa—walleye

ashigan—largemouth bass

namebin—sucker

anit—fish spear

giigoonh—fish

bakazhaawe—clean fish

wewebanaabii—fish with a hook and line

noojigiigoonyiwe—go fishing

jiimaan—canoe or boat

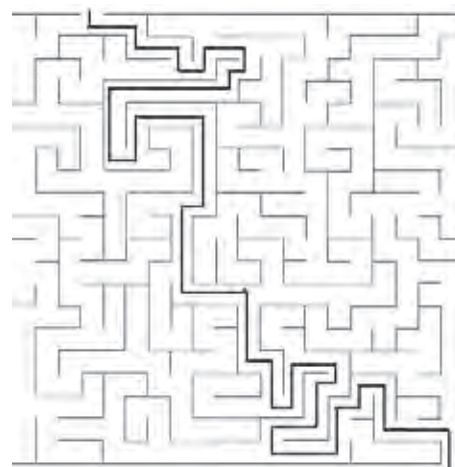
wiigwaasi-jiimaan—birch bark canoe

zhaangweshi—mink

gookooko'oo—owl

biiwaabiko-jiimaan—aluminum canoe

Maze page 2



Spy the differences page 5





Mom and my sister were there waiting for us. They made a little campfire and were keeping warm while they waited, drinking hot chocolate and munching on sandwiches. Mom brought a frying pan, so she was ready to fry up some flopping, fresh walleye for us over the campfire. That's when they are really good! And Dad and I are hungry. The sound of the sizzling fish and smell makes me even more hungry, but the hot chocolate warms my belly while I wait. It was chilly out on the lake.



Nothing is as tasty as fresh fish fried over the campfire!

"Did you get any of the fish, Tommy?" my sister asks.

"Yeah, I got six nice ones," I say proudly.

"Only six after all that time? I could do better than that!" she says grinning.

"Oh yeah! Go ahead and try," I say. She'd probably lose her spear in the water or fall in.

We clean up the campsite and head home to clean and fillet the rest of the fish. We all help. Dad fillets, or cuts up the fish, and Mom and I wrap.

My sister mostly stands around. My fish are going to Grandma and Grandpa. We always share with our family when we get fish and also stash some into our freezer.

My sister doesn't give me a break and keeps whining to Dad that she wants to try spearing. "

"She's only eight," I tell Dad. "She can't do that yet," I say.

But Dad, he gives in. "Okay, tomorrow night you can give it a try," he says.

"I'll drive the boat for her," I volunteer, thinking it would be fun to "accidentally" put her in the water. But Dad says no, he'll do the steering.

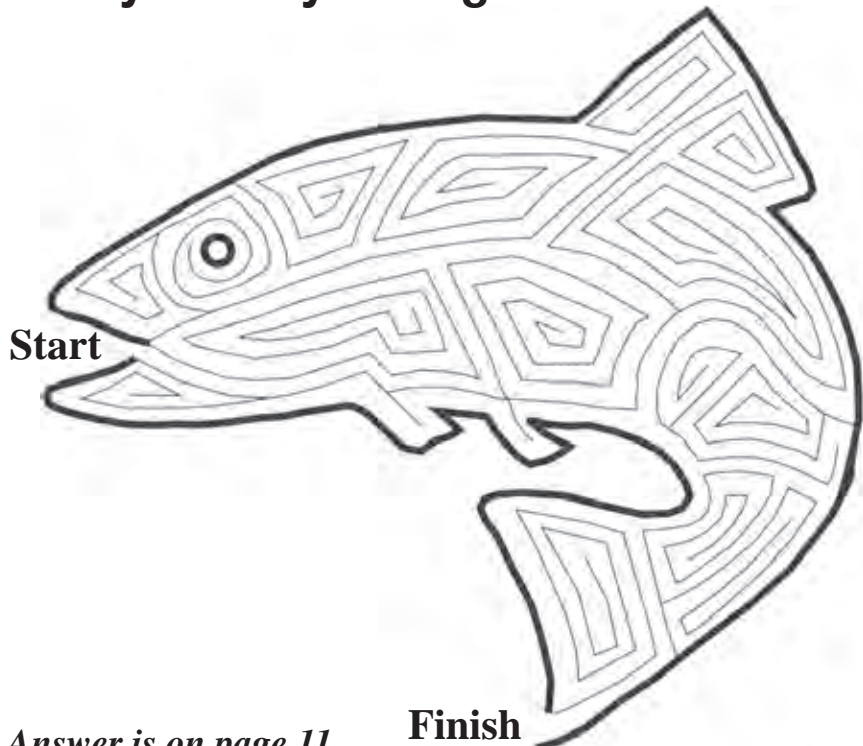
Well, that puts me at the campsite with Mom tomorrow night. Sisters can really mess up your life!



Cleaning and packaging the fish is all part of the work. Everyone is suppose to help, but my sister doesn't really get much done. She thinks the fish feel slimy. So what!

Afterword/Epilogue: My sister got a ten pound northern Sunday night. Dad had to help her get it in the boat. They weren't even out that long. Beginners luck, I say.

Find your way through the fish maze



Answer is on page 11.



OK, so my sister speared a nice northern. She thinks she's really cool. She was just lucky, that's all.



The Mink and the Fish

Mink found a live pike on the lake shore. He told the pike, "Pike, the Muskie is calling you all kinds of names." "What is he calling me?" asked Pike. Mink answered, "He says you're wall-eyed." Pike did not like to be called names and said, "Well, he's got teeth like a saw blade and a long plated face. He's not pretty either."

There was a muskie nearby, and Mink told him what Pike had said about him. Mink went back and forth, back and forth, getting Muskie and Pike mad at one another. Finally Pike and Muskie had a big fight and Mink acted as referee. Muskie and Pike ended up killing each other in the fight, so Mink had the last laugh on them.

Mink got a big kettle and boiled and dried the meat. Then he lay down to rest. He was taking life easy. He had the fish eggs, which were his favorite, all together next to him and all he had to do was open his eyes and stick out his tongue to eat them. Finally he dozed off.

Some Indians came by in their canoes and saw Mink lying there with all those fish. They came ashore and picked up all the fish and put them in their canoes. Where Mink

had all the fish eggs right next to him, they put rocks there. Then they went away.

When Mink woke up, he reached with his tongue for the fish eggs, but instead there was only rocks and stones which broke his teeth. He realized they'd played a trick on him and he just walked away.

(Adapted from Victor Barnouw, 1977, *Wisconsin Chippewa Myths and Tales and Their Relation to Chippewa Life*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.)



Now let's see what you learned!!!

Fill in the blanks or circle yes or no to answer the following questions. Cross off the words from the word bank as you use them.

- 1.) The Bad River Reservation is located in what state? _____
- 2.) Only people who belong to tribes that signed certain _____ can go spearing.
- 3.) What does the Ojibwe word wa-swagoning mean? _____
- 4.) We can spear in any lake we want?
Yes No
- 5.) What is the name of the spear that is used by the Ojibwe to spear fish? _____
- 6.) When we get to the landing we have to get a _____ before we go spearing.
- 7.) The total number of walleye a tribe can take from a lake is called a _____.

- 8.) Workers who count and measure the fish at the landings are called _____.
- 9.) We mostly spear _____ walleye.
- 10.) Each fish is measured and sexed at the landing? Yes No

Word Bank		
creel	clerks	permit
trident	fishing by torchlight	male
quota	treaties	
	Wisconsin	

Word search page 4

V X E E W B I J O Q Z C Z N P
W W D U Z Z I B L O E A Q O M
T G C C Z N S H S Z R N M E A
N E W A L L E Y E M X O L G L
M W K T H G I R Y T A E R T D
H E W C M Z W Z N G A U B D A
R X A N A A D R T E I I I G E
A G W S R J E F E K S U M H
E T T D U H E E L F M J V D H
P X E I T P R F O W Z R H W B
S N Z R H C E O I C G Z E O U
E U O N I G H T T L E X A R X
L N R I C R V O Q O W T H F V
Y F H B A X R C T J M Q G J O

Fish maze page 10



Taking care of the fishery

It's important to take care of the fishery so that we will all have plenty of fish in the future. That is why the tribes do fish surveys every spring. It happens at the same time as spring spearing—just after the ice goes out.

Fishery staff from tribes and from the Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission use electrofishing boats to survey the walleye in many lakes we use.

Electrofishing is pretty neat. The boat has special electrodes that reach out into the water and gently stun the fish in the shallows. Usually two people are at the bow of the boat, and they scoop up the walleye and place them in big container of water in the center of the boat.

The fish are counted, measured, marked and then returned to the lake. Later the boat comes through the lake again and recaptures fish. It's the number of marked fish that are recaptured that give biologists an idea of how many fish are actually in the lake.

My dad says that this way we can see if there are any big changes in the population and adjust how many we take, especially if the population is getting low.



This is an electrofishing boat used for fish population surveys. Those arms that reach off the bow of the boat with spider-like things on the end put a low-volt shock into the water and slightly stun the fish. The crew then scoop the fish out of the water to be counted, measured, sexed, and then returned to the lake.

Oh! I should tell you that Bad River operates a big hatchery. They hatch and grow lots and lots of walleye there. Many other tribes have hatcheries too. Did you know that in 2008 tribal hatcheries put over 47 million fish into both on and off reservation waters for us all to enjoy. That's a lot of fish!

It's important to take care of our fishery. That's why we do it.



These are Bell jars used in hatcheries to incubate fish eggs, in this case walleye eggs from Kentucky Lake. Once hatched, the little baby fish, called fry, are either stocked back into a lake or reared in the hatchery to a larger size called a fingerling.

Now let's see what you've learned (answers from page 10) 1. Wisconsin 2. treaties 3. fishing by torchlight 4. no 5. trident 6. permit 7. quota 8. creel clerks 9. male 10. yes

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Additional copies of this supplement can be ordered from GLIFWC, P.O. Box 9, Odanah, WI 54861; e-mail pio@glifwc.org; or phone (715) 685-2150. 1-5 copies are free, and orders of six or more will be invoiced at 20¢ each. Postage fees will be added to orders shipped outside the United States.

The original Tommy Sky supplement along with the ricing and sugarbush sequels are also still available.