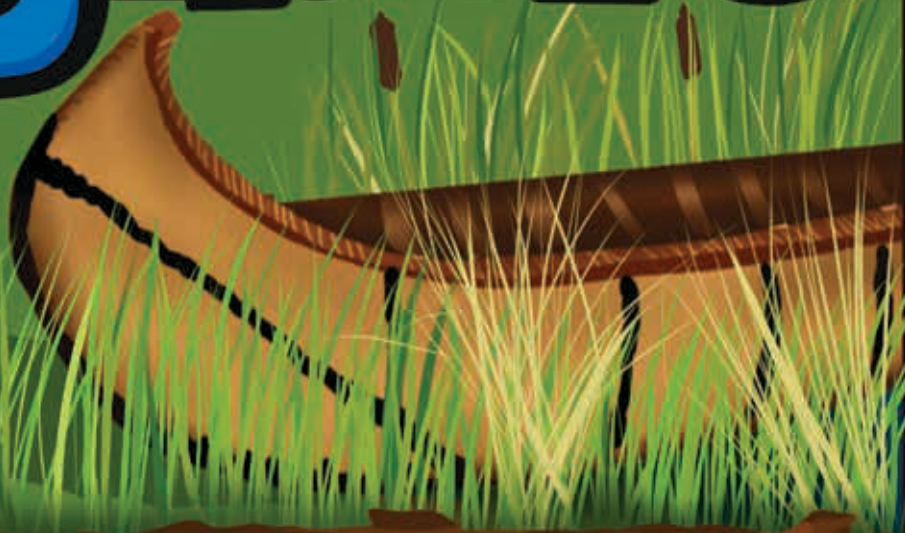


# GROWING UP



# Ojibwe





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**Boozhoo! (Hello!) I am Anishinaabe. Some people also call us Chippewa or Ojibwe. My Ojibwe name is makoons, which means bear cub. My English name is Tommy Sky. My clan is ma'iingan, wolf clan, and I live on the Bad River Reservation in northern Wisconsin.**

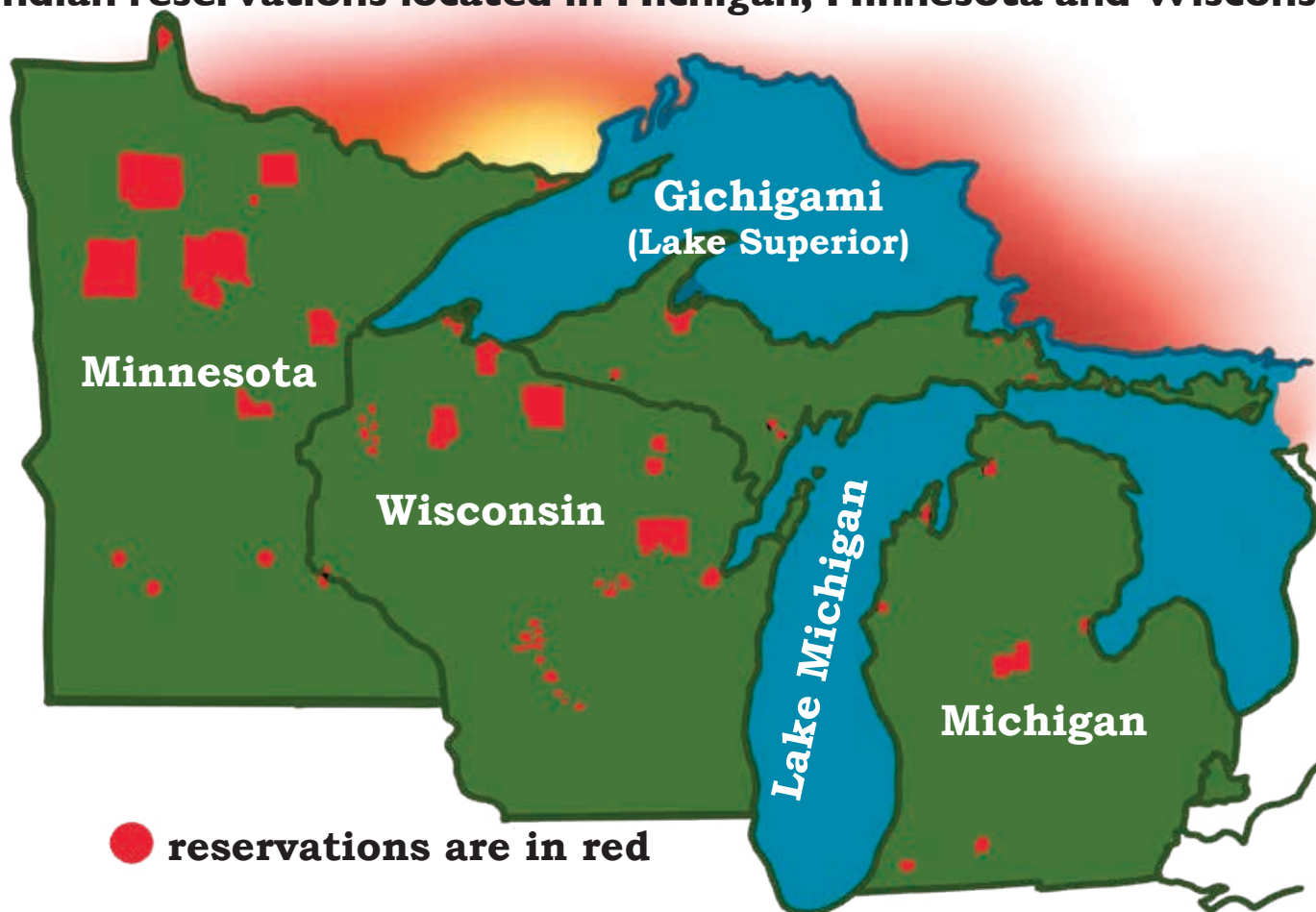


**makoons  
(bear cub)**



**ma'iingan indoodem  
(wolf clan)**

**I am fifteen years old, and I want to show you some special things about my people, the Ojibwe. So, come along with me. Below are Indian reservations located in Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin.**



**A long time ago, the Ojibwe people lived all across the Great Lakes region, but as more and more settlers arrived, the Ojibwe sold their lands to the United States through treaties. Some lands, called reservations, were set aside for the Ojibwe people. Have you ever been on a reservation?**



**On the reservation, we live in houses just like people in towns and cities. My house has three bedrooms. One bedroom is all mine.**



**In the old days, my people, the Ojibwe, lived in houses made from wiigwaas (birch bark) called wiigiwaams. Sometimes we still make wiigiwaams for special ceremonies. We carefully take the bark off birch trees in late spring and roll it into large rolls for use in making wiigiwaams.**



**Ojibwe people use birch bark to make many things, like baskets and canoes. Birch bark is strong, but not heavy.**



**Some people still make birch bark baskets, which are useful and beautiful. Before we harvest anything we always make an offering of asemaa (tobacco).**



In early *ziigwan* (spring), when the snow first starts to melt, my dad and I go to our *sugarbush* (a stand of maple trees) to collect *ziinzibaakwadwaaboo* (maple sap). We put small taps beneath the bark of the *aninaatigoog* (maple trees), and the sap runs into a bucket below.



When the bucket is full, we carry it to our *sugar camp* and put it in a big cooking pot, where we cook it over a fire for a long time.



The sap gets very thick and turns into zhiwaagamizigan (maple syrup) that we use on our pancakes or with our oatmeal. Sometimes, we cook it even longer and make ziinzibaakwadoons (maple sugar candy).



Yum! The Ojibwe people have always made maple sugar in this way. Many years ago the sap was collected in a birch bark container called a biskitenaagan, because we did not have metal buckets then.





In iskgamizige-giizis (April) when the ice goes out, it is time to go fishing. Since the old times, Ojibwe people have used anitiin (spears) and asabiig (nets) to fish for ogaa (walleye) and other kinds of fish. My dad likes to spear in the spring. Sometimes I go with him, but it gets very late at night because he does not start until just before dark.



In the dark, he goes very slowly along the shallows, using a small spotlight to look for walleye. My dad stands on the bow of the boat with his anit (spear), while Uncle Joe steers the boat. There is a sudden splash as my dad's anit hits the water without warning, and up comes a walleye.



**He can only take a certain number of fish each night and must be careful not to take fish that are too long. Sometimes it is midnight before we get our number of fish and head back to shore. My dad's fish are counted and measured at the boat landing before we can take them home to clean them.**



My family also bagida'waa (goes netting) in the spring. Sometimes, we net fish on the reservation, but this year we packed up the truck and went to Mille Lacs Lake in Minnesota to net walleye. The Bad River Band, along with other Wisconsin and Minnesota Ojibwe bands, kept the right to hunt, fish and gather when they sold lands to the U.S. government in agreements called treaties. That is why we can go netting in Mille Lacs Lake today.



My dad says we are exercising our treaty rights. Mille Lacs Lake is a very big lake. We went out in a boat and put down a net in the evening. The net was marked with buoys that float on the water so we could find it again in the morning.



**We got up early the next morning and lifted our net, which was full of ogaa and ginoozhe (northern pike). (Can you remember? Is anit a spear or a net?)**



**I don't like cleaning fish, but I help anyway. I wash off the fish fillets and hand them to nimaamaa (my mom). Sometimes we wrap it and freeze it. We make packages for nookomis (my grandma) and nimishoomis (my grandpa) and inzigosag (my aunties), too. My mom makes fry bread to go with our fresh ogaa—one of my favorite dinners.**



Right after school is out for summer vacation, I go to my Uncle Marvin's house on the Red Cliff Reservation for a few days. He likes to harvest wiigwaas (birch bark) in ode'imini-giizis (June). This is the time when the bark comes off the trees very easily. We go out into the woods, and he looks for big birch trees. He makes baskets from the bark he gathers to sell and to use for gifts. If the bark has too many long black lines, the bark cracks easily when bending it into a basket, he says.



Uncle Marvin takes the bark from the tree very carefully, cutting so he only cuts the loose, top layer of bark and not the tree beneath. He does not want to hurt the tree. I help him bundle the bark and carry it back to his truck. It's fun being in the woods. We see deer, and Uncle Marvin points out animal tracks to me. We saw makwa (bear) tracks once. Can you identify the tracks below?



**In the summer, I like to swim and play ball. I am on the little league team in town, so I have to go to many practices. I like to bat best.**



**I am also learning an Ojibwe ball game called baaga'adowe (playing lacrosse). We play it with special sticks called lacrosse sticks that have a little net made to catch a ball. Other reservations, like Red Cliff, have started lacrosse teams also. So sometimes we play each other, just like teams in baseball or soccer.**



**Niibin (summer) is pow-wow season. Many dancers come to dance at pow-wows, each in their specially made dance outfit. The outfits are decorated beautifully with beadwork, feathers, and furs. There are also many dewe'iganag (drums) at pow-wows.**



**The sound of the drum is like a giant heartbeat. You can hear it from far off. I would like to learn to drum and sing Ojibwe songs. For now, I just dance. My mom made me a traditional dance outfit. She beaded and fringed a buckskin vest and leggings for me and put beadwork on my moccasins. I also wear a roach as headgear and a bustle of feathers and fur. I treat my dance outfit with respect. The pow-wow starts with a Grand Entry, when all the dancers enter the dance circle in single file.**



**First come the flags—U.S. flag, the Veterans flag, an Eagle Feather flag, and often the Canadian flag. Then come the dancers—a long line of colorful dancers—traditional male and female dancers, grass dancers, jingle dress dancers, and fancy dancers. The drums used at pow-wows are made of wood and animal hides. Other dewe’iganag are kept for use only during special ceremonies.**





**In the summer, we do other special things, like pick wiingashk (sweet grass) in northern Michigan. My mother weaves it into long braids, and we use it during special ceremonies.**



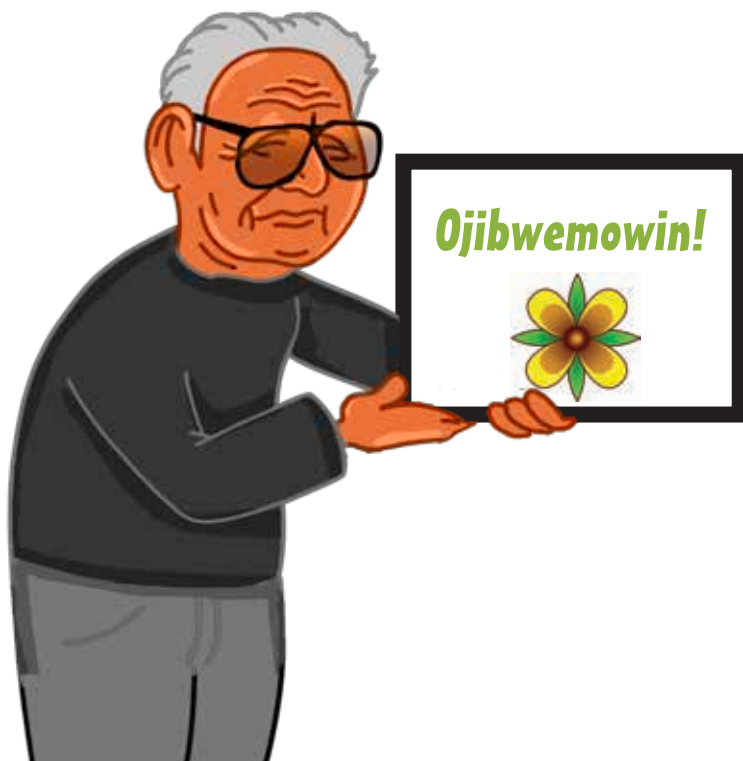
**We also pick bagwaji-zhigaagawanzh (wild onion, or leek), miinan (blueberries), ode'iminan (strawberries), and odatagaagominag (blackberries), and lots of other plants. I really love berry picking, but sometimes I eat too many and get a stomachache.**



Each year I go to two camps. I go to Camp Onji-Akiing (From the Earth) and Ishpaagoonikaa (Deep Snow Camp). Both camps focus on leadership, natural resources, and taking care of the environment through Anishinaabe traditions.

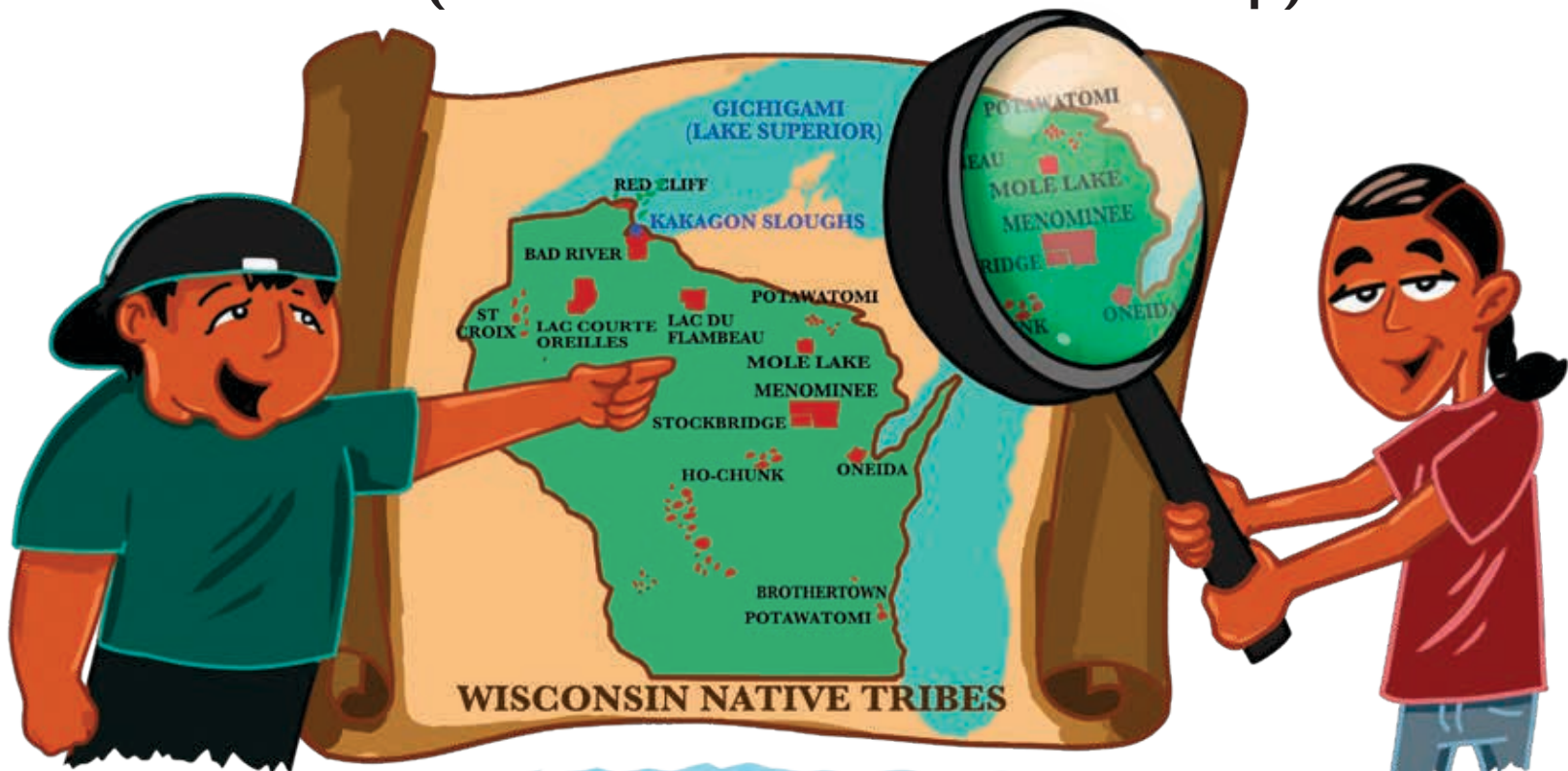


I also go to Ojibwe language camp on my reservation. We camp out there in tents for a week. Elders who use Ojibwemowin (Ojibwe language) come to teach us. We work on using our language. Very few people in the United States use Ojibwemowin very well. It is important we do not lose our language. Maybe you have noticed that I try to use some of the words I learned at language camp.



*wiigwaas*—birch bark  
*wiigwaasi-jiimaan*—birch bark canoe  
*aninaatigoog*—maple trees  
*ziinzibaakwadwaaboo*—maple sap  
*waagaagin*—fiddlehead fern  
*ma'iingan*—wolf

**Just before school starts, it is time to gather manoomin (wild rice). On the Bad River Reservation, we have beautiful manoomin growing in the Kakagon Sloughs. We think it is the best tasting wild rice in the world. But my friend, Wayne, from Mole Lake says Mole Lake rice is best. (Find Mole Lake Reservation on the map.)**



**Many tribes have rice chiefs and they say when wild rice is ready to harvest. When the season is open, my mom and dad go out in our jiimaan (canoe). My mom knocks the rice into our boat using cedar ricing sticks, and my dad slowly poles the canoe through the field of rice. We do not take all the rice, but leave some to reseed, or plant, the rice bed for the following year.**



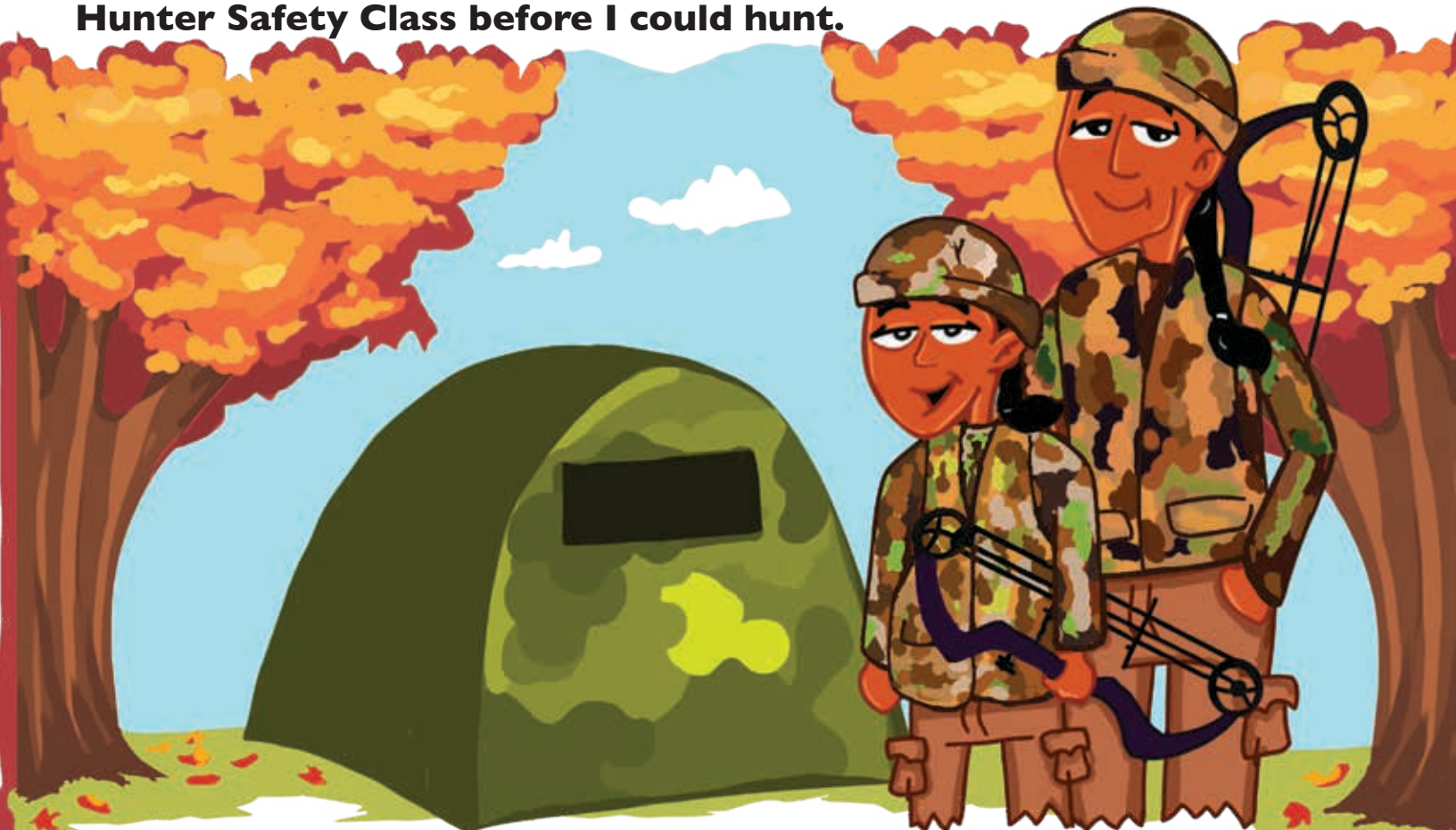
**After the manomin is brought to shore, there is a lot of work to do. I help spread the wild rice out on a big tarp in the sun to dry, so it can be safely stored. Then we parch the rice in a big black pot over a slow fire. It has to be stirred all the time so it doesn't burn. Parching cracks the hard outside hull, and preserves the seed.**



**Next the rice is “danced.” The rice is placed in a pit or a barrel lined with soft material, and someone with soft shoes or moccasins dances on it gently to further crack and remove the hulls. Once this is done, we put the manomin in a birchbark winnowing basket and gently toss it in the air. The wind takes away the dry hulls, and only the rice grains are left. We have wild rice at many community feasts and special events. I like wild rice and venison soup.**



**In the fall my dad likes to hunt. Some Ojibwe elders say the waawaashkeshiwag (deer) are ready to take when you first see the fireflies at night. I had to wait until I was old enough to take the Hunter Safety Class before I could hunt.**



**Last year my dad got two does off-reservation and one buck on reservation. He says he is more interested in the meat than antlers, so he tries to get good-eating deer, not just ones with big antlers. We eat venison a lot at home. I really like it, especially my dad's venison jerky. We also bring venison to community feasts.**



**Dagwaagin (fall) means back to school time. Mom and I go shopping for school clothes and supplies. This year I got Nike shoes, two Nike shirts, and some cool jeans. I also got a new backpack, pencils and lots of notebooks. I like school because I get to see all my friends there. Mom picks me up when I stay late for basketball practice. She's a nurse at the Ashland hospital. My favorite subjects in school are science and art. I especially like drawing migizi (eagle) and feathers. Sometimes if I get bored in school, I draw eagles on the back of my notebooks, if the teacher is not looking.**



In gashkadino-giizis (November) my tribe has elections. That is when we elect members to our tribal council. The tribal council makes laws and governs our community within the reservation. I am too young to vote, but my mom and dad vote. They help elect a tribal chairman, a vice-chairman, a treasurer and a secretary, plus council representatives. The tribal council makes important decisions for our community. My dad is a tribal council member. He is up for election this fall. I helped him put up election signs around the community.



Bad River also has tribal judges, tribal police, and tribal conservation wardens who enforce tribal laws. I want to be a conservation warden because they spend a lot of time outdoors enforcing hunting, fishing and gathering regulations. It is time for me to go now, but first I would like to share with you my favorite story from *The Mishomis Book* by an Ojibwe elder and spiritual leader, Eddie Benton-Banai. The story tells how the Earth was made after a great flood. Many Ojibwe people call Earth "Turtle Island." You will see why.





# Waynaboozhoo and the new Earth

**The following story and graphic are borrowed from *The Mishomis Book* by Edward Benton-Banai.**

“The teaching about how a new Earth was created after the Great Flood is one of the classic Waynaboozhoo stories. It tells of how Waynaboozhoo managed to save himself by resting on a chi-mi-tig’ (huge log) that was floating on the vast expanse of water that covered Mother Earth. As he floated along on this log, some of the animals that were able to keep swimming came to rest on the log. They would rest for a while and then let another swimming animal take their place. It was the same way with the winged creatures. They would take turns resting on the log and flying. It was through this kind of sacrifice and concern for one another that Waynaboozhoo and a large group of birds and four-leggeds were able to save themselves on the giant log.

They floated for a long time but could gain no sight of land. Finally, Waynaboozhoo spoke to the animals.

“I am going to do something,” he said. “I am going to swim to the bottom of this water and grab a handful of Earth. With this small bit of Earth, I believe we can create a new land for us to live on with the help of the Four Winds and Gitchie Manito (creator).”

So Waynaboozhoo dived into the water. He was gone a long time. Some of the animals began to cry for they thought that Waynaboozhoo must have drowned trying to reach the bottom.

At last, the animals caught sight of some bubbles of air, and finally, Waynaboozhoo came to the top of the water. Some of the animals helped him onto the log. Waynaboozhoo was so out of breath that he could not speak at first. When he regained his strength, he spoke to the animals.

“The water is too deep... I never reached the bottom... I cannot swim fast enough or hold my breath long enough to make it to the bottom.”

All the animals on the log were silent for a long time. Mahng (the loon) who was swimming alongside the log was the first to speak.

“I can dive under the water for a long ways, for that is how I catch my food. I will try to dive to the bottom and get some of the Earth in my beak.”

The loon dived out of sight and was gone a long time. The animals felt sure he had drowned, but the loon floated to the top of the water. He was very weak and out of breath.

“I couldn’t make it,” he gasped. “There appears to be no bottom to this water.”

Next, Zhing-gi-biss’ (the helldiver) came forth.

“I will try to swim to the bottom,” he said. “I am known for diving to great depths.”

The helldiver was gone for a very long time. When the animals and Waynaboozhoo were about to give up hope, they saw the helldiver’s body come floating to the top. He was unconscious and Waynaboozhoo had to pull him onto the log and help him regain his breath. When the helldiver came to, he spoke to all the animals on the log.

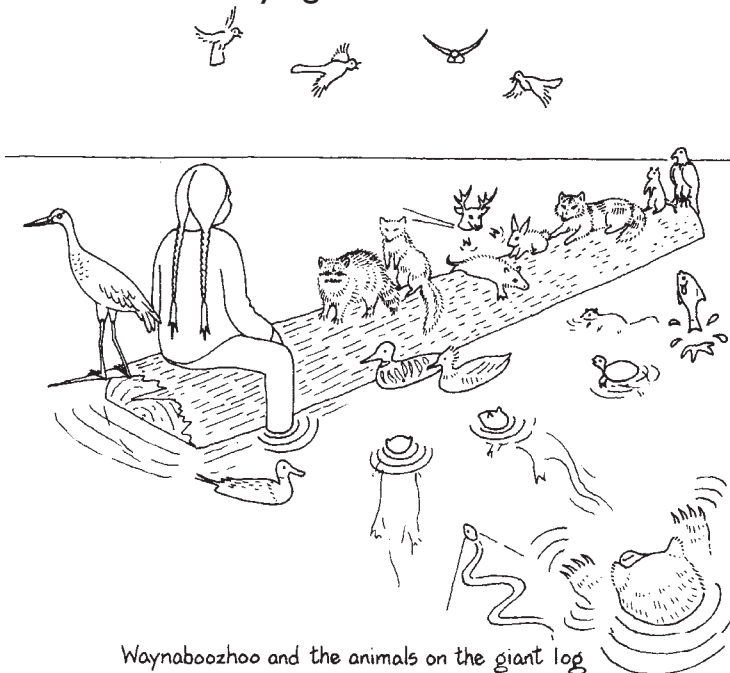
“I am sorry my brothers and sisters. I, too, could not reach the bottom although I swam for a long ways straight down.”

Many of the animals offered themselves to do the task that was so important to the future of all life on Earth. Zhon-gwayzh’ (the mink) tried but could not make it to the bottom. Ni-gig’ (the otter) tried and failed. Even Mi-zhee-kay’ (the turtle) tried but was unsuccessful.

All seemed hopeless. It appeared that the water was so deep that no living thing could reach its bottom. Then a soft, muffled voice was heard.

“I’ll try,” it said softly.

At first no one could see who it was that spoke. The little Wa-zhushk’ (muskrat) stepped forth.



Waynaboozhoo and the animals on the giant log

I'll try," he said again.

Some of the animals laughed and poked each other. The helldiver jeered, "If I couldn't make it how can he expect to do any better?"

Waynaboozhoo spoke, "Hold it everyone! It is not our place to judge the merits of another; that task belongs to the Creator. If little muskrat wants to try, I feel we should let him."

The muskrat dived down and disappeared from view. He was gone for such a long time that Waynaboozhoo and all the animals on the log were certain that muskrat had given up his life in trying to reach the bottom.

The muskrat was able to make it to the bottom of the water. He was already very weak from lack of air. He grabbed some Earth in his paw and with every last bit of strength he could muster, muskrat pushed away from the bottom.

One of the animals on the log caught sight of muskrat as he floated to the water's surface. They pulled his body onto the log. Waynaboozhoo examined the muskrat "Brothers and sisters," Waynaboozhoo said. "Our little brother tried to go without air for too long. He is dead." A song of mourning and praise was heard over all the water as Wa-zhushk's spirit passed to the next world.

Waynaboozhoo spoke again, "Look! Muskrat has something in his paw. It is closed tight around something." Waynaboozhoo carefully pried open muskrat's tiny paw. All the animals gathered around trying to see. Muskrat's paw opened and there, in a little ball, was a piece of Earth. All the animals cheered!

Muskrat had sacrificed his life so that life could begin anew on the Earth.

Waynaboozhoo took the piece of Earth from the muskrat's paw. At that moment, Mi-zheekay' (the turtle) swam forward and said, "Use



my back to bear the weight of this piece of Earth. With the help of the Creator, we can make a new Earth."

Waynaboozhoo put the piece of Earth on the turtle's back. All of a sudden the noo-di-noon' (winds) began to blow. The wind blew from each of the Four Directions. The tiny piece of Earth on the turtle's back began to grow. Larger and larger it became, until it formed a mi-ni-si' (island) in the water. Still the Earth grew, but still the turtle

bore its weight on his back.

Waynaboozhoo began to sing a song. All the animals began to dance in a circle on the growing island. As he sang, they danced in an ever-widening circle. Finally, the winds ceased to blow and the waters became still. A huge island sat in the middle of the great water.

Today, traditional Indian people sing special songs and dance in a circle in memory of this event. Indian people also give special honor to our brother, the turtle. He bore the weight of the new Earth on his back and made life possible for the Earth's second people.

To this day, the ancestors of our brother, the muskrat, have been given a good life. No matter that marshes have been drained and their homes destroyed in the name of progress, the muskrats continue to multiply and grow.

The Creator has made it so that muskrats will always be with us because of the sacrifice that our little brother made for all of us many years ago when the Earth was covered with water. The muskrats do their part today in remembering the Great Flood; they build their homes in the shape of the little ball of Earth and the island that was formed from it.

We hope you have found this teaching about the Great Flood to be meaningful.

Migwetch!"

(Note: This story may use different spellings of Ojibwe words than are used in the main text. Because there are regional variations in spelling and usage of the Ojibwe language, GLIFWC has elected to follow spelling as found in *A Concise Dictionary of Minnesota Ojibwe* by John D. Nichols and Earl Nyholm.)



**Giga-waabamin miinawaa!**  
**(See you again!)**



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# GROWING UP Ojibwe

.....is a story of a young boy who takes the reader into the fascinating culture of the Ojibwe people.

