



Ojiig'anung



Ojiig'anung (Fisher Star)
Sam Zimmerman (Zhaawanoogizhik)
Grand Portage Band of Ojibwe direct descendant
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S. Zimmerman '22



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With the emergence of summertime in Ojibwe Country, the Fisher, or Ojiig, constellation—appears upright in the northern sky. Artist and Grand Portage Ojibwe direct descendant Zhaawanoogiizhik Sam Zimmerman celebrates niibin (summer), recalling Ojiig's efforts to end the long winter with friends Nigig (Otter), Bizhiw (Lynx), and Gwiingwa'aage (Wolverine).

Led by Ojiig, the four held a feast and discussed how to bring warm weather back to their community. They decided to travel westward to a mountain, climbing to the top where they took turns leaping into the sky, using their sharp claws to tear open a hole that they hoped would release the warmth of summer. But when the Sky People saw what was happening, they fired arrows at the four friends to stop them from completely opening up the sky. An arrow—represented by two stars—struck Ojiig, pinning down his tail. And so it is, the Hole in the Sky is large enough to bring in enough warm air for part of the year, while for another part of the year, cold air remains during the winter season. While there are any number of variations to the Ojiig'anung story across Ojibwe communities, it is most often associated with the rise of niibin.

Zimmerman applied thousands of hand-painted acrylic dots to adorn the dark summer sky and the figures resting in the green summer landscape. Ojiig occupies a space in the sky popularly known as Ursa Major, or the Big Dipper, a seven-star Mediterranean constellation. In Zimmerman's night sky, Ojiig'anung includes 13 stars, displayed as soft blue dots in the sky of the painting.



Full size Ojiig'anung posters measuring 18" x 26" are available from Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission, PO Box 9, Odanah, WI 54861; by phone at 715.685.2108; or by email pio@glifwc.org.