



DEWEIGAN



Dewegan—The Drum
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DEWE'IGAN (The Drum)

Dewe'igan, whose sound is the heartbeat of Mother Earth, has had a special place in the hearts of Anishinaabe people and indigenous people throughout the world. Dewe'igan, on the surface level refers to the drum, however when broken down in Anishinaabemowin "dewe" refers to "the sound" while "igan" relates to "the vessel which carries this sound." Oftentimes the drum is referred to as mishomis or grandfather. He is revered as an elder member of the family and respected as such.

Grandfather drum teaches us how to be and how to respect each other. He teaches us how to walk a good path and to lead by example. He teaches us that being a singer is not an easy life. As a singer, you must know songs for everything, because singers are called upon every day to render appropriate songs. Singing is a form of healing and medicine for the people. A singer must have respect: respect for fellow man, respect for mishomis, and respect for themselves.

There are many different types of drums—water drums, sweat lodge drums, big drums, hand drums, pow-wow drums—yet they all stand up for the people time and time again. When the people come together for celebrations, ceremonies, and rites of passage, it's dewe'igan that is heard first and last. When there's a death in the community, dewe'igan is there. Dewe'igan was present at the boat landings in the 80's when Anishinaabe people were harassed during the spearfishing season. Grandfather drum was present at American Indian Movement events as he led the people through trying times. He was also present at the Supreme Court as Anishinaabe treaty rights were reaffirmed.

Dewe'igan is usually constructed from wood, sometimes an old hollowed out log, sometimes a wooden barrel, sometimes steam bent wood, and then he is adorned with animal hides, such as moose, elk, buffalo or deer. This serves as a reminder that everything Anishinaabe was given ultimately comes from the woods. It is said that once a dewe'igan is constructed, it then has a voice. This voice can be heard from miles away. It is one of the many voices of our people and will continue to resonate our sound as sovereign nations.

18" x 24" posters are available through GLIFWC at PO Box 9, Odanah, WI 54861, by phone at 715.685.2150 or email lynn@glifwc.org. They can be ordered online at www.glifwc.org and click "resources." The first poster is free of charge. There is a charge of \$2.50 plus postage for each additional poster. 8 ½" x 11" posters are available for 30¢ each plus postage.