

LIVING IN BALANCE: ANISHINAABE STAR KNOWLEDGE

A guide for educators on
themes presented in the
planetarium show

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INTRODUCTION

Shaaganaashii kidwinan digoobiigaadenoon anishinaabe kidwiining dibaachigaadeg nangoosag enaabiishinowaad minwaa ezhi enaachiigaaziwaad. (English words are translated to Eastern Anishinaabemwin explaining the stars and their alignments.)

All around Gchi-Gamiin (the Great Lakes), Anishinaabe star knowledge teaches us about nangoog (the stars), baamskobidegin giisoong (the planets), aantkiiwinan (the seasons), and how to live mina-maadziwin (a good life).

The stories of the constellations show us many things, including how to respect the lands, the waters, animals, and all forms of life.

If you look above and to the North Star, you will see Maang (Loon)—a messenger and leader who stays close to the water at the doorway between giizhigoong (the sky) and Aki (the Earth).

Maang helped Nanaboozhoo, the Trickster, place the stars and planets in the sky, including Aki (Earth), Giizis (the Sun), and Dibik-Giizis (the Moon), also known as Nokomis Giizis (Grandmother Moon).

Within Maang is Giiwedinangoonh (the North Star), which shines brightly to show the way. For many generations, Giiwedinangoonh has helped Anishinaabeg navigate the waters and land.

Maang is seen throughout all seasons, rotating around Giiwedinangoonh.



GIIZIS (MOON)



Just as we look to the stars for an understanding of the seasons, we also look to Nokomis Giizis (Grandmother Moon). Biboon (Winter), Ziigwan (Spring), Niibin (Summer), and Dagwaagi (Fall) each have their own moon that relates to the place they are seen. Their names reflect what is happening on the land and waters.

Mshiikenh (Turtle) carries the original lunar calendar of moons on his back. There are thirteen inner scutes, each representing one moon or month.

The twenty-eight outer scutes represent the days that pass from one full moon to the next full moon. Some of these phases include Shkigoojing (New Moon), Gegaa mooshkine'aapkizi. (Three- Quarters Moon, meaning First Quarter Moon), Mooshkine'aapkizi (Full Moon), and Aapta'aapkizi (Half Moon, meaning Last Quarter Moon).

The Moons are recognized as seasonal and regional. They are named for what is happening in the environment based on many generations of observations.

BIBOON (WINTER)



Mkwa Giizis (Bear Moon) or Mkwa Gwekshing Giizis (Bears Turning Over in Their Dens Moon) is in the sky during Winter.

Mkwa (Bear) is considered a relative who teaches about medicinal plant knowledge. Anishinaabeg used observation to learn from what was safe to eat and gather and use medicines, like root medicines and Red Willow.

Winter is when bears hibernate, and cubs grow in the protection of their dens, which Anishinaabeg respect by not intruding.

Winter is brought by Biboonke-nini (Wintermaker), the constellation known as the spirit that makes winter. He welcomes the snow, which we acknowledge as relatives and as grandfathers. His arms stretch far across the sky and he can be seen for a few hours after sunset.

While some teachings about the stars can be shared throughout the seasons, most star stories are shared when Biboonke-nini is in the sky.

ZIIGWAN (SPRING)



Even though Biboonke-nini (Wintermaker) tries to maintain his grip on the sky, Ojiig (Fisher) emerges in the Spring. We know Spring is close when Ojiig is directly overhead.

One story tells of when Biboonke-nini (Wintermaker) took over and fought for eternal winter, but Ojiig (Fisher) restored the changes of the seasons.

In another story, during a battle between animals and the ogres, spring and all the many birds became captive to the ogres. Of all the animals, only Ojiig was able to trick the ogres and free the birds. He saved everyone with his courage and wit, but the ogres pinned him to the sky, rotating around the polestar for revenge. When Spring returned, all the animals honored his sacrifice. He is remembered in the sky, always on the move.

Ojiig is not the only one on the move. So are the names of the moons. For Anishinaabemwin to be an active language, the names of the moons can't be fixed to the names of months in English. They must come from observations of the environment. Today, moons are changing when they happen because of the impact of climate change.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is a change in the weather a given place normally experiences. It can change how much rain, snow or storms a place experiences. A change in the average temperature over time, and a shift in when particular weather happens in the year. There is overwhelming evidence that human activity has caused a rapid change to the climate on Aki (Earth). We can see these changes all around us. Nanaatigo Ziizibaakwad Giizis (Maple Sugar Moon) has been fluctuating and out of alignment with the moon phases in some places because of climate change. The only way to know when to use the name of this moon is to observe the maple trees. When the freeze thaws and the sap runs, it is time to tap the trees to gather the sap to boil down into maple syrup or sugar. If the weather changes rapidly and warms up suddenly, the trees can begin budding early, and the sugaring season ends even though the cold returns.

We must look at these signs of climate change and do our best to live mina-maadziwin (a good life) to restore balance.

We restore balance by offering semaa (tobacco), feast, and share teachings about caring for the lands and waters.

Mshibizhii, who Carl Gawboy describes as a Water Puma, is honored through feasting when rising in the sky in Spring. Seeing Mshibizhii is both a warning of fast-rushing rivers as the ice melts and waters break, as well as a celebrated sign to prepare for traveling and visiting all along Gchi-Gamiin (the Great Lakes).

NIIBIN (SUMMER)



Much like Mshibizhii, Jijaak (Crane) is also a signal to travel, but in the summer. Among many roles and gifts to Anishinaabeg, Jijaak is honored for guiding Anishinaabeg to Baakoting, the place of the rapids and showing them how to establish their village. Jijaak is known for leading well with a loud clear voice and the ability to listen.

DAGWAAGI (FALL)

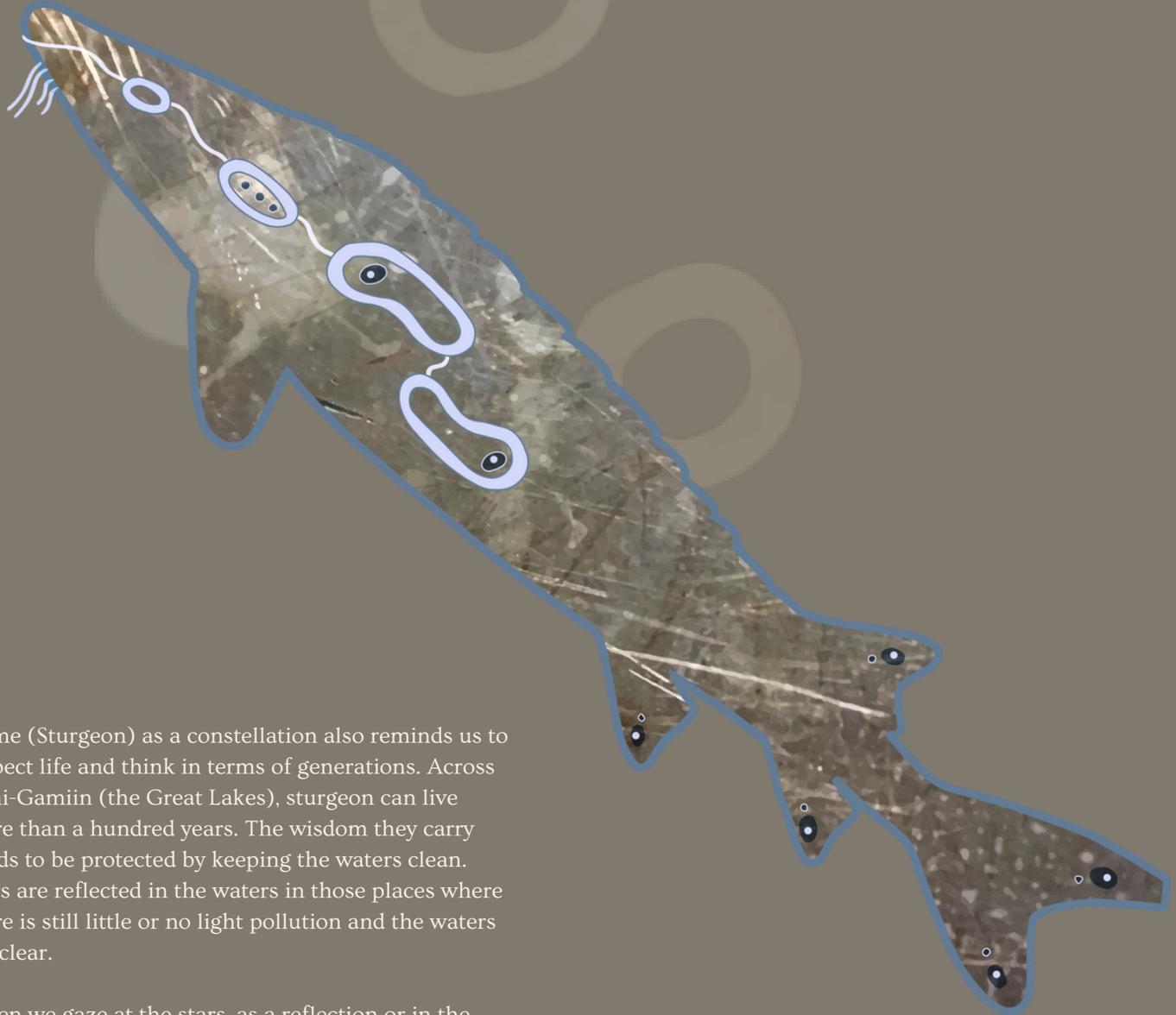


Listening is teaching for living well through all seasons. Fall can be a season of abundant gathering when we remember to listen to teachings. Mnoomnike Giizis (Ricing Moon), much like Nanaatigo Ziizibaakwad Giizis (Maple Sugar Moon), is also changing because of climate change. The wild rice is also impacted by pollution from boats, crowding from invasive plants, and improper harvesting.

When harvesting wild rice, it is vital to slow down and be gentle while knocking the stalks to gather the rice or the plants will be damaged, not just for that season but for many seasons after. Hope is for the future when we listen to those who came before us and care for the next generations.

Fall is also a season of preparation. William Wilson tells stories about Mooz, (the Moose) constellation, which reminds us to waste nothing. Mooz (moose) provides food, clothing, and shelter. When a moose is killed for food, the beard from males is hung high on a tree. It would be disrespectful for the mooz beard to be on the ground since Anishinaabeg recognize, that the beard is among the stars. Instead, the beard is placed high on a tree branch to reflect Mooz in the sky as a way to honor and thank the moose for giving its life.

RESPECT FOR LIFE



Name (Sturgeon) as a constellation also reminds us to respect life and think in terms of generations. Across Gchi-Gamiin (the Great Lakes), sturgeon can live more than a hundred years. The wisdom they carry needs to be protected by keeping the waters clean. Stars are reflected in the waters in those places where there is still little or no light pollution and the waters are clear.

When we gaze at the stars, as a reflection or in the sky, we can look for the way to Jiibay Miikan (Spirit Trail) and the paths within.

ANISHINAABEMWIN KIDWINAN / GLOSSARY

aki / ki

earth (also ground, dirt)

**Anishinaabemowin /
Anishinaabemwin**

the Anishinaabe language

aantkiiwinan

seasons (changing of the seasons)

aapkizi

part of the moon (the part that shines,
in reference to the moon)

aapta'aapkizi

half moon (half appearance)

baakoting

Place of the Rapids (Sault Ste. Marie)

baamskobidegin giisoong

planets (objects circling around the
sun)

biboon

winter

biboonke-nini

Winter Maker (winter making man)

dibik-giizis

moon (night time sun)

dagwaagi / dgwaagi

all / autumn

gchi-gamiin

Great Lakes (great bodies of water)

gegaa mooshkine'aapkizi

$\frac{3}{4}$ moon (almost full moon / piece
you see)

giiwedinangoonh

North Star

giizhigoong

sky / day

giizis

sun

jijaak

crane (bird)

jiibay miikan

Milky Way (spirit trail / road)

mnoomnike giizis

Ricing Moon (harvesting rice)

mkwa

bear [slight emphasis on the m]

mkwa giizis

bear moon

mkwa gwekshing giizis

bear turning over moon (implying in their dens)

mina-maadziwin

good life

mooshkine'aapkizi

full moon

mooz

moose

mshibzhii

water panther / lynx (commonly known as a lion or a wild cat / puma)

mshiikenh

turtle

nanaatigo ziizibaakwad giizis

Maple Sugar Moon

nangoonhs(ag)

star(s) (small flickering things in the sky, with emphasis on small, diminutive)

niibin

summer

nokomis giizis

Grandmother Moon

ojiig

fisher

semaa

tobacco (used as a traditional medicine when performing ceremony and giving thanks)

shkigoojing

new moon (new position, new thing hanging)

ziigwan

spring (also mnookmi)

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