

## *Section 4 - Ojibwe Socio-Cultural Perspectives*



The upper Great Lakes region, and all of Turtle Island or North America, enjoyed millennia of indigenous governance. The Anishinaabe, and other Native nations, describe the creation of the lands and waters that make up Turtle Island in their origin stories. These stories also orient human roles and responsibilities in relation to the other parts of creation. Although the Anishinaabe do have a migration story, which describes the movement of the nation from the Atlantic coastal area of North America, beginning sometime prior to the European colonization of that area, older stories describe the Anishinaabeg in relation to the interior of North America.

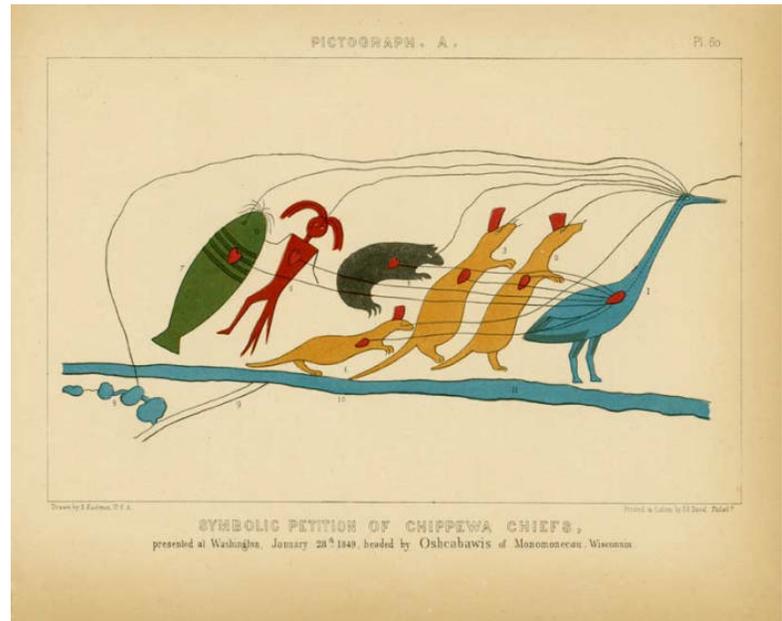
Following the great flood, when Nanaboozhoo, or original man, and the animals cooperated to reconstitute the land on turtle's back, Nanaboozhoo and Ma'iingan (wolf) were instructed to travel together in all directions. Nanaboozhoo was instructed to observe, and name, the various land formations and hydrological features. The stories of his travels, which have been recounted in all Anishinaabe communities, include descriptions of features known as the Great Lakes, the Gulf of Mexico, the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific Ocean, and other places far removed from the Atlantic coast. Throughout his travels, Nanaboozhoo altered parts of creation. Oftentimes, these alterations came about from Nanaboozhoo's human foibles: hunger, greed, and boredom, and provide important lessons related to self-control, respect for others, care taking, and the importance of humility. The Anishinaabeg have thousands of stories that describe creation and their relationships to nature that are considered sacred. These stories include protocols on how they are told and who tells them.

For the Anishinaabeg, these creation stories provide the basis of law, science and philosophy and continue to be relevant and useful frameworks for centering Anishinaabe values. In these stories, the world is described in term of relationships between various beings, all endowed with agency. Non-human beings communicate and express complex emotional states. Storms and weather systems devise strategies to help or hurt others (an example of this is the story about biboon [winter] kidnapping niibin [spring]). Human beings are often featured in these stories, but their role is not contemplated as being in charge or in control of other beings. In

many cases, the vulnerability of human beings is illustrated along with the generosity of other parts of creation.

Within the Anishinaabe worldview, human beings are dependent on *manidoog* or spirits, plants, animals, and forces of nature, and that the Anishinaabeg sometimes survive using their keen wit or humor. The creation stories direct Anishinaabeg to seek healing and purpose by cultivating personal relationships with non-human beings through activities like hunting, plant gathering, conducting ceremonies at “landmarks” and in isolation, and playing traditional games such as *baaga’adowewin* (lacrosse). The sacred creation stories also serve as an archive of historical information. This is not the right venue to recount all of the relevant sacred stories or *aadizookaanag* that may explain how this place came to be. It is, however, important to understand that the social and cultural resources are not simply physical objects to be mined and cataloged from a particular site, but that the stories and traditions of the indigenous peoples of the area are critical to determining the social and cultural resources that may be present. It is also important to understand that Anishinaabe identity is directly connected to the environmental surroundings which hold the knowledge and stories critical to the peoples’ continued survival.

From this framework, environmental destruction has deeply significant consequences. When hunting, fishing, and gathering in their traditional territories, the Anishinaabeg see their role as part of the natural and spiritual order. Anishinaabe spiritual beliefs mandate the use of certain plants and animals in ceremonial activities. Those activities ensure the perpetuation of creation and the physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing of the person and their community. There are three key aspects of the Anishinaabe worldview necessary for understanding their perspectives on land management activities.



- First, the differences between human and non-human beings, in terms of intelligence and awareness, capacity for emotion and intrinsic value and other characteristics, are less prominent. The Anishinaabeg consider water, animals, plants, rocks and other manifestations of creation as “spiritual beings.” As such, an interaction with the environment that is interpreted by a mainstream American lens (western culture) as management or harvest of inanimate and unintelligent “resources,” might be interpreted by an Anishinaabe person as fulfilling obligations to spirits to recognize and honor them. ***All spiritual beings, whether human or non-human, exercise agency, have rights and warrant respect.*** It is customary to ask permission before harvesting a plant or animal (or

even entering a sacred space) and offering *asemaa* (tobacco) to the *manidoog* as a sign of respect.

- Second, humans are not the masters of the world but rather weak and pitiable creatures, dependent upon all other non-human beings for survival. ***The proper attitude toward the natural world is one of care-taking, humility and gratitude.***
- Third, the relationship between humans and the rest of nature is one of reciprocity. Animals, for example, will offer themselves to a hunter as an act of pity for her or his weakness. ***If gifts are not accepted with respect and gratitude, the natural world will withdraw cooperation.***

The Mocquah Barrens area (also spelled, Mocqua, or Makwa by different Anishinaabeg) north of the contemporary township “Ino,” is a very special place to the Lake Superior Ojibwe. This area is known to support abundant wild fruit and plant medicines, which have been harvested by the Bands for hundreds of years.<sup>1</sup> Indications of past use of the area are noted in historical accounts of Ojibwe people who lived in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. One example of these historical accounts is the Life History of John Condecon which has been compiled by GLIFWC into a story map

(<https://www.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=da66ea22904e4159bd5808fc547b64bd>). The story map illustrates the travels of Mr. Condecon and his family across the Lake Superior area of the ceded territory. One passage describes journeys to the Mocqua Barrens to pick berries:

*“In 1873 we went to Bad River where we joined a large number of Indians from Ashland and Odanah who were going to the prairie country to pick blueberries. These we dried for our own use, and sold the surplus to the whites.”*



1. Mocquah barrens in July 2020.

What these accounts don’t tell us is how the Ojibwe engaged in caretaking of the area or cultivating the abundant fruit crops that exist today. Further, these accounts have not been systematically collected and reviewed. Additionally, Anishinaabeg alive today maintain stories about the area, from their own personal experience and that of their ancestors. A more complete Social and Cultural Resource section would require an investment of time and resources. According to the Red

<sup>1</sup> Settler communities also enjoy a history of harvesting wild fruit from the area, adopting Ojibwe harvesting methodologies similar to those who have taken up wild rice harvesting in the ceded territories.

Cliff Tribal Historical Preservation Officer, one would start with a culturally-respectful call out to living Anishinaabeg who have information and stories to share about the area, providing space for those Anishinaabeg to tell their stories before a hearing officer who would be charged with recording those stories and developing a report. Additional relevant information could be gained from the work of a trained historian, ethnographer and/or linguist to engage in research about the use of the area and its social and cultural significance. An archaeological analysis of the landscape would not be practical or well-informed without accompanying linguistic and ethnographic support.

Several challenges to the success of this endeavor exist. First, following the treaty-making period, which ended in the 1860s, the federal government and Christian religious institutions engaged in a systematic genocide of Indian people, lasting at least 60 years. The purpose of this campaign of social control was to absolve the United States of its ongoing obligations to indigenous peoples. This campaign of social control took many forms, including forced relocations, the allotment, or individualization, of tribal lands, the seizure of Indian lands for non-Indian purchase, sabotage of traditional Indian government institutions, and many others. The adoption of Christianity by Anishinaabe families became a focus of federal efforts, while, at the same time, the practice or teaching of Anishinaabe language or cultural and spiritual traditions became subject to severe sanctions. At the same time, economic policies forced Indian people into the labor market, and newly-adopted criminal codes penalized those who engaged in the traditional harvesting activities. Another aspect of the genocidal campaign involved compulsory education of Native youth in the Euro-American tradition.



2 Blueberries picked in the Mocqua barrens.

By 1926, approximately 83% of Native American children were being educated in boarding schools, which were designed as totalitarian institutions, immersing its subjects in Euro-American language and beliefs (United States Commission on Civil Rights, 2018). These schools were often located far from the pupils' homes and communities, and required children to leave their families for months or years at a time. Not all Indian children attended boarding schools; some were able to remain home with their own families. However, even those children were forced to attend government or religious schools. The curriculum taught in all American schools during this period was deeply racist, derogating indigenous traditions by characterizing them as savage and evil, or quaint, and entirely discounting their modern relevance. In addition to the trauma endured by Indian children from being subject to a curriculum steeped in white supremacy, many experienced physical and sexual abuse in boarding schools and on-reservation educational and religious institutions.

During this period, Anishinaabe parents adopted a variety of strategies to protect their children. Many chose to keep their children from learning Anishinaabemowin (Anishinaabe language) and the continuity of Anishinaabe oral traditions, including the telling and learning of creation stories, suffered greatly. The adoption of Euro-American traditions and values by Anishinaabe families was another strategy employed to protect children and keep them at home. Rarely, however, did Anishinaabe families completely assimilate, but more often adapted the English language and settler customs to comport with Anishinaabe ideas and humor. In spite of the risk, many families continued to speak the Anishinaabe language and pass down their cultural traditions, sometimes in secret. By the 1970s, and continuing to the present, Native Americans throughout the United States, and beyond, built internationally recognized political movements to gain recognition of their human rights, including their treaty rights and rights of cultural expression and freedom of thought. Examples of individuals and communities leading these movements include Billy Frank, Jr. of the Nisqually Tribe, and others, exercising their treaty fishing rights in violation of state law; the efforts of Lac Courte Oreilles to reclaim the Winter dam; the Haudenosaunee who demanded the recognition of their sovereignty and entry into by international political organizations (i.e. the United Nations); the Yanomami who brought their human rights claims to international court to prevent further disruption of their lands and way of

life. These movements have inspired each other and brought attention to the human rights issues faced by Indian nations, leading to law and policy shifts that acknowledge tribal sovereignty and the capacity of Native Nations to rebuild and reclaim their cultural heritage, including their indigenous languages, arts, harvesting, farming and food traditions, and rights to traditional homelands and waters.

Although, today, the forced removal of Native American children for cultural re-education is no longer an official policy of the United States, Native American children are still subject to some of the highest rates of removal from their homes; Native American parents remain vulnerable to racial discrimination in all levels of law enforcement during criminal proceedings and are incarcerated at disproportionate rates. Most Anishinaabe children attend non-tribal schools for at least some portion of their formal education. Despite mandates to include curriculum about Indian history and beliefs, such as Wisconsin 1989 Act 31, curriculum employed by these institutions tends to emphasize a narrative of Euro-American dominance and superiority. These trends in the criminal legal and education systems continue to challenge the continuity of Anishinaabe cultural traditions.



3. Logging the old growth forest. Old Odanah is in the background (Photo courtesy of Patrick Mayotte)

Another historical development that presents a challenge to developing a comprehensive report on the social and cultural significance of the Makwa Barrens area is the environmental destruction that occurred during the timber era. One of the most tragic and enduring violations of the Lake Superior Anishinaabe, was the wholesale destruction of the ancient forests in their territories. An unfathomable amount of old-growth timber was stripped from the land following the signing of the treaties. With the clear cuts

came increased flooding, forest fires and disease. A century later, the lands still bear the scars related to the early 20th century boom and bust timber industry, including reduced surface water quality and increased vulnerability to flooding. The complete and total removal of the ancient forests also effectively erased much of the physical record of thousands of years of indigenous forestry practices.

The focus on timber exploitation led to the development of fire-suppression policies by the Federal government. Section 1.3 describes the importance of fire in maintaining the barrens

landscape and the ecological changes of fire suppression policies. Fire-suppression policies also negatively impacted the connection between the Anishinaabeg and the area of the barrens by curtailing their long-established land management practices. GLIFWC has collected traditional ecological knowledge stories telling of Ojibwe camps, which were set up prior to the logging era, where “the Indians” used fire, picked berries, and held ceremonies. Stories also indicate that the Ojibwe were not the only native people that used the area. Ho-Chunk tribal members would travel from their homes in and around DeJope (what is now known as Madison, WI) to pick blueberries because they were so plentiful in the Mokwa barrens. The prevalence of berries is linked directly to the Anishinaabeg use of fire. The prioritization of logging came at the expense of indigenous land uses. Implementation of fire-suppression policies divorced the Anishinaabeg from their lands and away from the cultural and social practice of fire camps, which brought a multitude of health-related and economic benefits to the communities.<sup>2</sup> The failure to take a more holistic approach to forest management has caused widespread harm to native people.

The lack of extensive documentation for the ongoing occupation and use of the barrens by indigenous peoples is not surprising given the obstacles described above. Other sections in this report provide both general and specific information for why this area was, and continues to be important to the Anishinaabeg. The ongoing relationship with the barrens is typical of what archaeologist Larry Nesper describes as “*a deep, tenacious, and persistent attachment to a very particular geographic region.*” While the patterns of Anishinaabeg harvests of berries, venison, and other beings in the barrens changed since the arrival of Europeans in the 1820’s, the cultural identity of the Anishinaabeg still depends on the person-to-person relationship with natural resources or spiritual beings in and around the Mocqua Barrens. Today, the Anishinaabeg fear that ongoing maintenance activities or a catastrophic spill from the Line 5 pipeline will damage those relationships.

It is important to consider the risk posed by Line 5 and the fear it causes in the Anishinaabeg. Traditionally, risk is quantified in statistical terms without considering how that risk may be perceived by different groups of people. The Anishinaabeg have notably been absent from the conversation regarding the significance of the risk of industrial activities to their traditional lifeways and treaty harvest rights. While the descriptions of place-based concerns throughout this document are generally understandable to a non-Tribal reader, additional work is needed to properly describe subjective values that tribal members have about the likelihood of negative consequences of ongoing pipeline operations into technical documents. Those values must then be incorporated into decisions regarding the ongoing presence of pipelines in the Anishinaabe ancestral territory.

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<sup>2</sup> See 2019 Ishkode Fire Report, submitted to the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians Wildlife Program by the Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan, December 31, 2019.

For the Anishinaabeg, the pipeline has already changed the barrens by changing its aesthetics. While some changes may not be perceived as generally negative, many are undoubtedly so. Anishinaabeg are particularly sensitive to visual and acoustic impacts because the relationship described above is focused more on place than on time. Geographic locations are not interchangeable, so a loss of a cultural or natural



*4 Line 5 integrity dig within the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest.*

resource in one location cannot be replaced with a similar resource in another location. Pipeline maintenance activities occurring in the barrens are obvious and noticeable. When they occur without proper warning to the community or notification of Tribes they lead to concern and stress. Ultimately these activities may affect the important cultural stories related to the landscape.

Anishinaabe history and sense of place are best protected through holistic analysis of projects that would affect these socio-cultural relationships. Community leaders have voiced their concerns on pipelines in the past but these perspectives have not been given the attention they deserve. Pipelines like Line 5 are particularly difficult in this regard because they are traditionally permitted in piecemeal and fragmentary fashion by different regulatory agencies according to land ownership. This creates a situation where the same pipeline or pipeline company is operating under different permits, maintenance requirements, and regulatory oversight. This creates not only confusion, but risks diminishing the holistic view that Anishinaabe embody: protection and respect for all beings.

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