



# PERFORMANCE PLAYGROUND

Celebrating the  
Ojibwe Heritage  
through Storytelling

# What to expect:

- **What Is Storytelling?**
- **The Ojibwe**
- **The Indigenous People of Michigan**
- **About Storytelling**
- ***The Chickadee***
- **Additional Ojibwe Stories**
- **Performing Art and Visual Art**
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# WHAT IS STORYTELLING?

**Storytelling** is the act of sharing stories. For this lesson we are exploring storytelling of indigenous people which is an oral tradition often told with song.

# THE OJIBWE LANGUAGE

**Anishinaabemowin** is the language indigenous of the Ojibwe. It is currently spoken in nearly **150 Anishinaabe communities** in Michigan and around the Great Lakes.

Some Anishinaabemowin words are used in English like **chipmunk**, **moose**, or **moccasin**.



# THE OJIBWE

## The Ojibwe

Refers to a cultural, linguistic, and political grouping. There are differences among the various Ojibwe peoples across the United States.



# THE OJIBWE

The **Ojibwe** (sometimes called **Chippewa**) was one of the largest tribes in what is now Michigan, living in all of the upper peninsula and the eastern side of the lower peninsula.

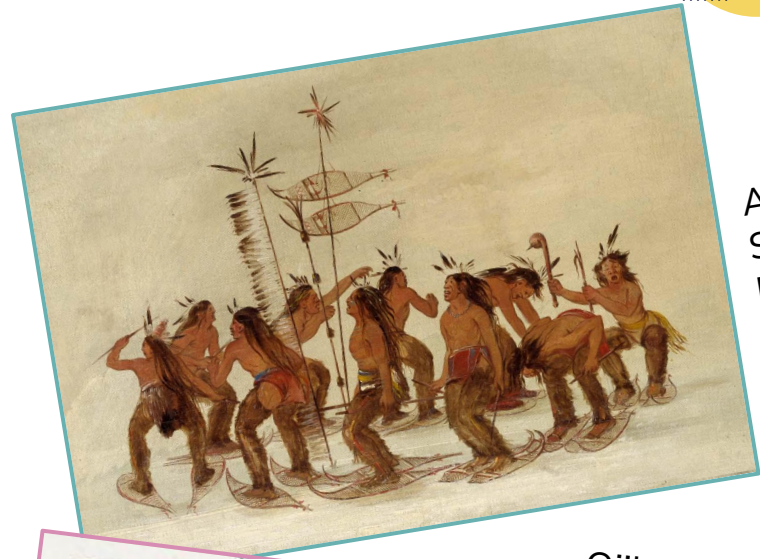
Among the tribes of the area, the Ojibwe were **Keepers of the Ceremonies and Song**.



# THE OJIBWE

As keepers of ceremonies and song, the Ojibwe have shared their beliefs through **storytelling**, **song**, and **dance**.

The Ojibwe language is still spoken today, and they have written language of images, or **pictograms**, to tell stories.



An Ojibwe Snowshoe Dance



Ojibwe pictograms

# THE OJIBWE

The Ojibwe lived in settlements with semi-permanent homes, called **wigwams**.

They farmed their land to grow **maize** (a type of corn), **squash** and **wild rice**. Living near forests and rivers surrounding the Great Lakes provided great fishing and hunting.



A painting of a wigwam wrapped in Birch tree bark



Ojibwe harvesting wild rice in the 1920s



# THE OJIBWE

While times and ways of life have changed, the Ojibwe have survived and retained its many traditions, including telling stories.

Today there are around **320,000** Ojibwe people in North America with over **170,000** in the United States.



An Ojibwe  
powwow in 2019

# THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE OF MICHIGAN

Two other large tribes in the Michigan area were the **Odawa** (Ottowa) and **Potawatomi** (or Bode'wadmi).

Together with the Ojibwe, the tribes formed the **Council of the Three Fires** in **796 AD**.

That's **over 800 years** before Europeans settled in North America!



Locations of the Three Fires tribes in relation to Michigan today.

# THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE OF MICHIGAN

Though much of the tribal land has been taken over the last 300 years, there are **12 federally recognized tribes** in Michigan today!

**\*Tribe-** a sovereign entity with federal relationships.



# ABOUT STORYTELLING

Storytelling is about sharing traditions and new ideas, but it's also about **listening**. Listening is how we learn from these stories.

These tales are often meant to provide an explanation for things in nature, such as *How The Bear Got a Short Tail*.



# ABOUT STORYTELLING

Importantly for storytelling amongst indigenous peoples is the preservation of **history**. Centuries of tradition and recollections of the past have been passed down by spoken word and song instead of written down.



# ABOUT STORYTELLING

Stories serve as a reminder of one's place in the **world** and within their **family**. When family and friends gather and share funny, sad, or historical stories, they are strengthening the connection between everyone. The people who heard that story can **share it in the future!**



# THE CHICKADEE

In the video, Stacie taught you to sing part of the song about the **chickadees**.

In the new slides, you will see the song written out and along with an English translation.



# THE CHICKADEE

Aanikoobijiganag aanikoobidoowaad

*The ancestors tied and extended it*

wiingashk wiindamawiyangidwa

*the sweetgrass, telling us*

gashkibijigeg gegashk-akiing

*make bundles, the world is not yet ripe.*



# THE CHICKADEE

Gijigijigaaneshiinh ayaa gawaandag

*The marsh chickadee is there in the white pine*

noondaagozid noondenimiyangidwa

*calling out and flirting with us*

manidookeyaang manidoowiyaang

*it's a ceremony, a way to be alive.*

# THE CHICKADEE

Here are some of the words from this song to further explain the meaning of the story.

**Aanikobidoon** is a word for tying two pieces of thread together to extend its length. When this happens, the two pieces of thread become one.

**Aanikoobidoowaad** means to extend.

**Aanikoobijiganag** means our ancestors. The ones we are connected to, like threads.

**Gijigijigaaneshiinh** is the name of the chickadee and also the sound of their call.

# OJIBWE STORIES:

## *Nanabush & Creation*

The following three stories are told by Edna Manitowabi from the Wabano Centre in Canada.

**Nanabush** is a trickster spirit that appears in many Anishinaabe stories.



# OJIBWE STORIES:

## *Nanabush & the Thunderers*



# OJIBWE STORIES:

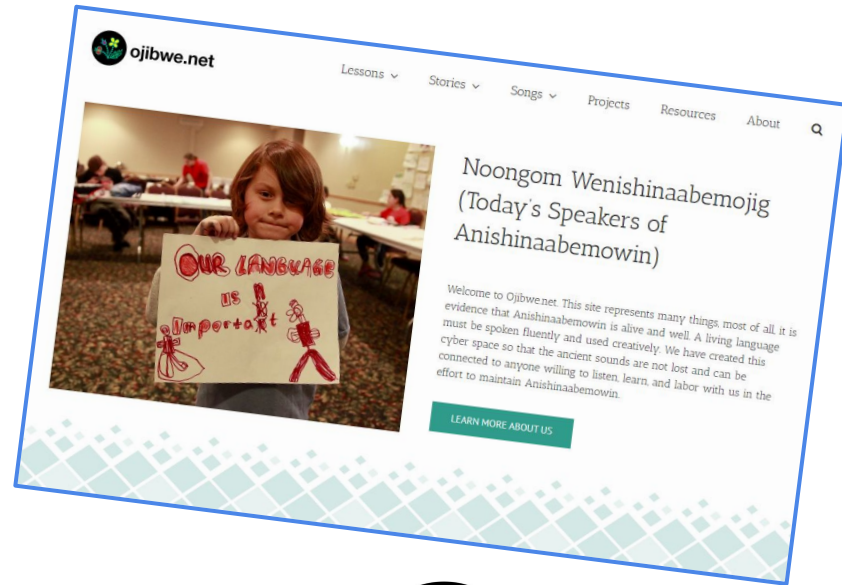
## *Nanabush & the Spirit of Winter*



# OJIBWE STORIES: *Learn more*

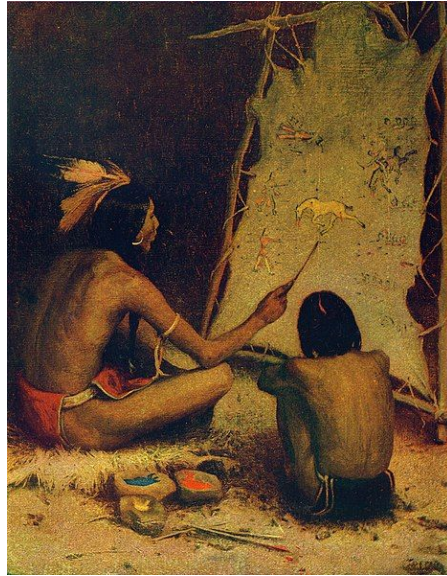
There are many stories that you can read and listen to on Stacie's website, [Ojibwe.net](https://www.ojibwe.net).

There are also lessons on how to speak and understand **Anishinaabemowin!** You might become inspired to tell a story of your own.



# PERFORMING ARTS AND VISUAL ART

While storytelling is an oral tradition, the act of telling stories has captured the imagination of many **visual artists.**



*The Historian* (1902) by E. Irving Couse depicts a man sharing a story.

This 1985 painting by Detroit-born artist Sharon Loree depicts a grandmother sharing her stories.



# PERFORMING ARTS AND VISUAL ART

Native American artist **David Bradley** depicts modern indigenous people with a distinctive style. The paintings here show two versions of storytelling: one with friends and one with family.



*True Grit #2, 2018*



*The Storyteller*



# LEARN MORE IN THE PERFORMANCE PLAYGROUND!


To learn about another aspect of indigenous storytelling, visit the Performance Playground lesson all about [Jingle Dress Dance](#).



# LEARN MORE IN THE PERFORMANCE PLAYGROUND!


To learn about how to craft and tell your story, explore the Performance Playground lesson on [Spoken Word](#).





**Storytelling** is an integral part of every culture. Be sure to listen to when your family shares their stories. Those are your stories, too!

**Storytelling** is particularly important in the preservation of indigenous cultures. Online you can find a wide variety of resources to listen to stories and explore the language!



Slides written and organized by **Will Biby** in collaboration with **Stacie Sheldon**, author and storyteller.

You can learn more about Stacie's book, *The Adventures of Nimkii* by [visiting here](#). Check with your local library to see if they have a copy you can check out!

