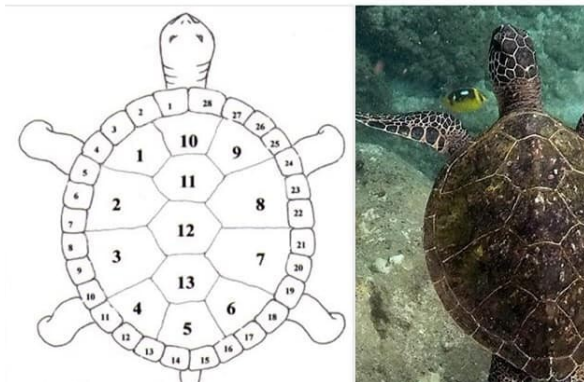


## 13 Moons on Turtle's Back

<https://earthhaven.ca/blog/13-moons-on-turtles-back/208>

**13 moons & 28 days on all turtle shell:  
equals 364 days, plus one day of res  
indigenous people around the world  
the wisdom of the turtle and followe  
month calendar; after all, there are 13  
cycles in a year & 27-29 days per cy**

**It's almost as if white man subtracted  
month in order sever the connecti  
between the people and the sun, mo  
stars, which are themselves a giant c**



Many Native American people look at Turtle's back as a sort of calendar, with its pattern of

13 large scales standing for 13 moons in each year. As Grandfather says to a young boy, it reminds us that all things are connected and we must live in balance.

Available in hardcover only. *Thirteen Moons on Turtle's Back*, by Joseph Bruchac and Jonathan London, with illustrations by Thomas Locker. 1992, 29 pages.

Many Native American people look at Turtle's back as a sort of calendar, with its pattern of 13 large scales standing for 13 moons in each year. As Grandfather says to Sozap, a young boy in this book's first story, it reminds us that all things are connected and we must try to live in balance.

In many Native American cultures, each of the 13 moons of the year is said to hold its own story. Turtle holds the mystery of each moon on the shell of its back and gives each moon its power.

From the Potawatomis' Baby Bear Moon to the Anishinabes' Maple Sugar Moon to the Lakota Sioux's Moon When Wolves Run Together, in Native American legend, the natural world is a place of great power where stories help humans understand the mysteries of the earth.

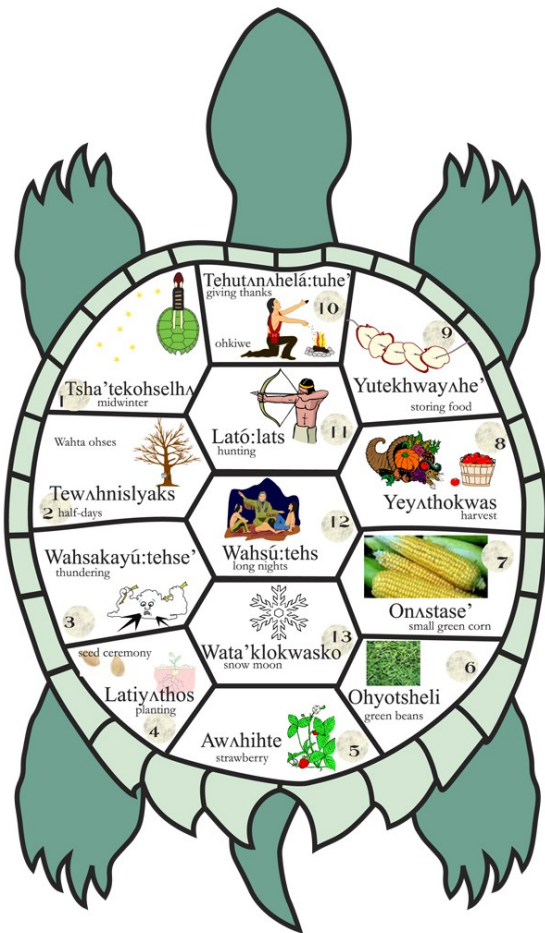
The Native people of North America have always depended upon the natural world for their survival. Watching the changes going on in the natural world with each season, they also look up into the sky and see it changing. In many parts of North America, the Native people relate the cycles of the moon to those seasons. In every year, there are 13 of those moon cycles, each with 28 days from one new moon to the next.

In this collection of poems based on traditional Native stories, Abenaki storyteller and American Book Award recipient Joseph Bruchac collaborates with poet Jonathan London to give voice to the 13 moons of the year and reveal the wonder of the seasons. Spectacular oil paintings by Thomas Locker honor the myths of Native American peoples and the sublime beauty of the land.

Joseph Bruchac is a storyteller, poet, and publisher, and much of his writing draws on his Native American and European heritage. He believes that poetry and storytelling are natural to human beings. His poems and stories have appeared in more than four hundred magazines and anthologies.

Publisher: Philomel Books  
Culture Groups: Abenaki, Northern Cheyenne,

Potawatomi, Anishinabe, Cree, Huron, Seneca, Pomo, Menominee, Micmac, Cherokee, Winnebago, Lakota Sioux, Abenaki <http://oyate.org/.../682-thirteen-moons-on-turtle-s-back...>



The

turtle's back is a significant symbol used in Iroquoian traditions. It represents the creation of Turtle Island also known as the continent of North America, on the turtle's back or more accurately the "*Earth Grasper*", from their Creation Story. A closer look will reveal a pattern of thirteen individual segments on his back which represent each moon of the Iroquoian cycle of seasons. These segments are named according to seasonal practices and natural environmental occurrences e.g. Green Corn, Harvest etc.

Further to this there are twenty-eight platelets which form an edging around the shell. This is the number of days in the moon cycle.

Source: [Oneida Language and Culture](#)

This "calendar" is a natural anomaly given to the native people of Turtle Island to remind them of their connection to Mother Earth and that we are not only connected as one people, but we are connected to the natural forces of above and below (Heaven or celestial bodies and Earth).

# **Dance of the 13 Moons: An Introduction to the Lunar Calendar of the Anishinaabe Peoples**

Updated: Jan 3

*Namebine-giizis* (Suckerfish Moon) /  
*Zaagibagaa-giizis* (Budding Moon) - May  
15, 2023

<https://www.zhaawanart.com/post/dance-of-the-13-moons>



"Mother Earth and the Dance of the 13 Moons," illustration by Zhaawano Giizhik.

Our grandmother the moon, named Nookomis, brought us the first medicine, called *b'he*, the water.

Wenabozho was raised by his grandmother, the Moon. The Moon was loving and caring and nurturing and it was she who brought the first medicine, the water.

*B'he*, or *nibi* ("my water") as she is called nowadays, is not merely an element but a *manidookwe* (female spirit) who gives the

earth and all of her beings beauty, growth, and generosity.

Nookomis aged gracefully. When she sensed the end of her presence on earth nearing, she told her grandson that after her departure she would always be near to him and reminded him to look up in the night sky to find her.

Nookomis sang a song on her water drum as the rains fell that night. That morning Wenabozho saw his grandmother shining in the dawn. The water was moving back and forth, and he heard a beautiful song, which we can still hear today. When you're by a lake or river you can still hear Wenabozho's grandmother sing.

Nookomis Dibik-giizis now lives in the sky world as a nurturing energy, watching over her children by providing them with light and balance, stabilizing the planet's rotation and regulating the ocean's tides...

- [An Anishinaabe teaching\\*](#)

*Boozhoo, aaniin, biindigen miinawaa  
nindaadizooke wigamigong; enji-  
zaagi'iding miinawaa gikendaasong.*  
Hello! Welcome once again to my  
Storytelling Lodge, a place filled with love  
and learning.

Today's story is the 13th part of the series  
"Stories and Teachings from the Earth."

We will explore the Anishinaabeg People's calendar—since our ancestors lacked books, it wasn't made of printed paper. Instead, the turtle's scutes served as a calendar.

Rather than using books, our ancestors inscribed and painted on rocks and other natural materials to understand the cycles of the stars and the seasons. Through careful observation and inquiry, the *gete-ayaa'ag* (ancestors) acquired essential seasonal knowledge for survival. Their understanding was derived from observing the positions of the sun, moon, and stars, as well as the behavior of animals, birds, and fish. This array of natural phenomena served as their *gekinoo'amaaged* (teacher). By observing and listening to these *gekinoo'amaagedjig* around them, they could navigate waters, predict the weather, and accurately track time.

In our cosmology, there exists a *Manidoo-miikana* (Spirit trail) that perpetually cycles from the earthly realms, through the sky world, star world, and into the spiritual domains. In the night sky, we refer to this Spirit Trail as *Giizhik-miikana* (“Cedar Trail”), the planetary ellipse that seems to move from east to west. The cleansing herb known as *Giizhik* (cedar) and the sky (referred to as *Giizhig*) are viewed as

spiritually interconnected beings, which is why it's called the "Cedar Trail." The eight planets of our Solar System, including our Mother Earth, orbited by her child the moon, are all part of the Great Spirit Nation, led by the Sun. All these relatives journey, each bearing their own names and spirits, across the sky along the Spirit Trail.

Among all the planets and their celestial relatives, *Nookomis Dibik-Giizis*, Grandmother Moon (**ᑎᑕᑭ ᑭᑭᑭ** in Ojibwe syllabics), is considered our main *gekinoo'amaaged*, or teacher. She is frequently referred to as *Gookomisinaan*: Our Grandmother. Even today, the Anishinaabeg continue to use *Gookomisinaan dibik-giiziso-mazina'igan* (a lunar calendar), unlike modern mainstream society, which uses *Gimishoomisinin giiziso-mazina'igan* (a solar calendar) — known as the Gregorian calendar. The solar year is approximately 365 days long; in reality, the Earth takes 365 days, 5 hours, and 49 minutes to orbit the Sun. In the current Gregorian calendar system, an additional day is added every four years (known as the [leap year](#)), and a leap year is omitted every 100 years for three centuries out of every four.

While the Gregorian *mazina'igan* is determined by the movement of *Gimishoomisinaan Giizis*, the Sun, the *Gookomisinaan dibik-giiziso-mazina'igan* is determined by the movement of *Gookomisinaan Dibik-giizis*, the moon.

The Anishinaabe lunar months span from one Full Moon to the next, resulting in 13 Moons (months) and 13+ full moons each year. Consequently, our Moon calendar does not align with the Gregorian 12-Month calendar. For instance, what we refer to as *Ziinzibaakwadooke-giizis* in March does not actually commence until later in the month—specifically, when the full moon appears. In other words, at the start of the Gregorian month of March, we are still in *Namebini-giizis* (Sucker Fish Moon). This year, for example, with the full moon occurring on March 7, *Ziinzibaakwadooke-giizis*, the sugar-making Moon, begins 7 days after the start of the Gregorian month of March.

The Anishinaabe method of counting from Full Moon to Full Moon is distinct because other Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island use soli-lunar calendar systems that typically go from New Moon to New Moon (which makes sense since a new moon marks the first phase of a lunar cycle), or from the sliver crescent following the New

Moon to the next sliver crescent. In the Anishinaabe calendar, the leap month occurs between December and January, with the New Year starting on the Full Moon that falls on or after the Winter Solstice.

## **THE TURTLE'S BACK IS OUR CALENDAR**

A well-known Anishinaabe creation story tells that the world was formed when a muskrat retrieved mud from the sea's depths and placed it on the back of a massive snapping turtle. The turtle's shell features thirteen central plates known as scutes.

The pattern on a turtle's back or upper shell mirrors our lunar calendar. This is how the Anishinaabeg track seasonal changes and all natural events occurring in each season. The lunar calendar observed by most traditional Anishinaabe Peoples states that a moon (month) spans 28 days. This is the duration it takes for the moon to orbit Earth and the period of a woman's menstrual cycle.



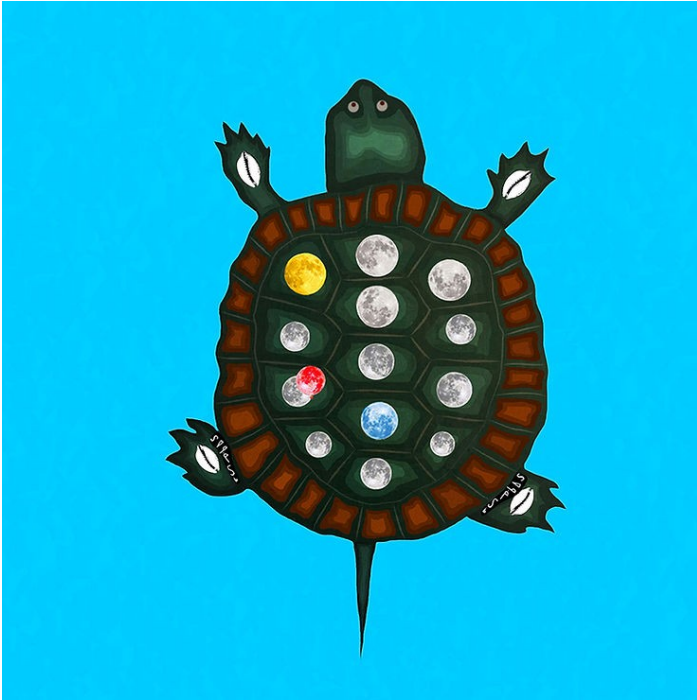
"Grandmother Turtle and the Dance of the Thirteen Moons," illustration by Zhaawano Giizhik.

The turtle's shell symbolizes the events, teachings, and origins of the Anishinaabeg. The thirteen large segments on the turtle's back signify *ashi niswi giizisoog* (thirteen moons) in Earth's orbit around the sun. The number thirteen also reflects the four seasons in Earth's journey around the sun, along with the nine moons required for a

human child to develop in the mother's womb. The scutes (scales) encircling the large segments on the turtle's back represent the number of days in a complete lunar cycle.

For the Anishinaabeg Peoples, the turtle is akin to a grandmother. She symbolizes the spirit of the people, the women, and the land.

Due to the vast area inhabited by the Anishinaabeg, the names for the moons and full moons that appear in a month can vary across different regions. Various nations, tribes, and bands may use multiple names for each moon because numerous natural events occur simultaneously. For instance, the Anishinaabeg in Southeastern Ontario would experience different activities compared to those in North Dakota during the same period or season.



## The Full Moon Calendar of the Anishinaabeg Peoples

Full moon names reflect the traditions of local cultures. Throughout *Anishinaabe Aki*, various full moon names are used, influenced by regional differences. In areas like Lower Peninsula Michigan and

southern Ontario, these are the names given to the 12 full moons and one leap moon:

*Ashi niso-waawiyezi-dibik-giizis* (the thirteen full moons) named in *Anishinaabemowin* (the Ojibwe language) can be formulated as follows:\*\*

**Namebini-giizis** (Sucker Fish Moon: Full Moon on or after the Winter Solstice): January.

**Onaabani-giizis** (Hard Crust on the Snow Moon): February, lunar orbit January-February;

**Ziinzibaakwadooke-giizis** (Sugar Making Moon): March, lunar orbit February-March. (For some Anishinaabeg, March 28 marks the start of the New Year.)

**Waabigwanii-giizis** (Showing Buds Moon): April, lunar orbit March-April;

**Gitige-giizis** (Planting Moon): May, lunar orbit April-May;

**Ode'imini-giizis** (Heart Berry Moon): June, lunar orbit May-June;

**Miini-giizis** (Blueberry Moon): July, lunar orbit June-July;

**Odatagaagomini-giizis** (Blackberry Moon): August, lunar orbit July-August.  
Note: The eighth moon can fall in either July or August, depending on the year.

**Mandaamini-giizis** (Corn Moon):  
September, lunar orbit August-September;  
this full moon shines in Waatebagaa-giizis,  
the Leaves Are Turning Color Moon.

**Binaakwe-giizis** (Falling Leaves Moon):  
October, lunar orbit September-October;

**Gashkadino-giizis** (Freezing Over Moon):  
November, lunar orbit October-November;

**Gichi-bibooni-giizis** (Big Winter Moon):  
December, lunar November -December;

**Oshki-bibooni-giizisoons** (New Winter Little Moon; lunar December-January leap month; the 13th moon or leap month is usually placed between the 1th and 2nd moons of our lunar calendar).

Then there is another Full Moon, traditionally called **Ma'ingan Giizis** (Wolf Moon). Then there is another Full Moon, traditionally called **Ma'ingan Giizis** (Wolf Moon). Some Anishinaabeg refer to the second or third full moon in a calendar month this way, while others use it to describe the third Full Moon in a season with four Full Moons, or the thirteenth moon of a lunar year. The howling of wolves at this full moon signifies a time of transformation in the spiritual realm; [bearwalkers](#) and other shapeshifters become active during this Full Moon.

Other names in use are **Ozhaawashko-giizis** (Blue Moon), [Miskwi-dibik-giizis](#) (Blood Moon), and **Miskomini-giizis** (Raspberry Moon). Those are neologisms, based on European names.

**Ozhaawashko-giizis** (Blue Moon) is an example of a Westernized term (neologism) that aligns with the solar (Gregorian) calendar introduced by European settlers. In the Gregorian calendar, a blue moon has two meanings. A *seasonal* Blue Moon is the traditional (Western) definition, referring to the third full moon in a season that contains four full moons. The second definition is a *monthly* Blue Moon, which is the second full moon within a single calendar month. Additionally, in the context of the Ojibwe lunar calendar, a "blue moon" is defined as the 13th moon cycle (month) in a natural year.

**Miskwi-dibik-giizis** is a moon that is fully eclipsed, especially during the summer moons.

The expression "blood moon" (a newly coined term) is often used to refer to a series of four consecutive total lunar eclipses. The Ojibweg sometimes refer to this moon as *Miskomini-giizis* or *Miskwiwmini-giizis* — "Raspberry moon"; it is the seventh moon of Creation, when great changes begin. This period is dedicated to healing and restorative practices.

The annual full moon cycle is represented on the turtle's shield as follows: in a clockwise direction, beginning at the top right corner and in the center from top to bottom.

**Mandaamini-giizis** (Corn Moon, appearing in September) is shown in the image above as a yellow moon; the red moon, known as Raspberry Moon, represents a total solar eclipse occurring during the Blueberry Moon (July); the blue moon signifies the thirteenth full moon in a leap month.

For the Anishinaabe people, the turtle is like an *ookomisan* (grandmother). The grandmother is the power of the nation. She represents the spirit of the people, the women, and the land. Like no one else, she is able to love, to nurture and to discipline the children of the nation. We refer to the *ookomisag* as “beings of kindness,” who have become closest to understanding the Spirit, the land, and the teachings that comprise truth.

To the Anishinaabe people, the turtle is akin to an *ookomisan* (grandmother). The grandmother embodies the strength of the nation. She symbolizes the spirit of the

people, the women, and the land. Unlike anyone else, she has the capacity to love, nurture, and discipline the nation's children. We call the *ookomisag* "beings of kindness," as they have come closest to comprehending the Spirit, the land, and the teachings that embody truth.



"Straight through the void of space from the stars the Wiindigoo came, moving through the earth to stabilize the tumbling, holding the Earth's poles constant." Image: "Wiindigoo and the Creation of the Ice Poles" © 2023 Zhaawano Giizhik.

## Why the new year starts in the winter

Traditionally, the Anishinaabeg live according to a lunar calendar. The conformity of "year" (as dictated by the Gregorian solar calendar) is not a traditional Anishinaabe concept. As we understand it, all is a continuum. The solstices and equinoxes are pivotal moments on this continuum, each with their own medicines.

To most Indigenous People of Turtle Island, new life (the beginning of a new lunar calendar cycle) starts in *ziigwan*, or spring. To us who follow the cycles of the moon, *ziigwan* starts with the rising of the full moon that heralds the flowing of the life-giving maple tree sap. Some Anishinaabeg celebrate the rising of the Sugar Making Moon as the New Year.

The full moon occurring around March 6-7 is the nearest full moon to the vernal equinox on March 20. This date, based on the solar calendar, signifies the astronomical start of spring in the Northern Hemisphere, when *Giizis* the Sun crosses the celestial equator heading north. *Ziinzibaakwadooke-giizis* (Sugar Making Moon) is our name for the full moon that appears in March.

We refer to the spring equinox, or late spring, as *Minookamin*. Traditionally, *Minookamin* marks the start of the new year for the Society of the Dawn People (*Waabanoowiwin*), in contrast to the Midewiwin, who consider the new year to begin in Winter. The celebration or ceremony of the Spring Equinox takes place immediately following the Sugar Bush camps.

So, for some Anishinaabeg, new life (the start of a new lunar calendar cycle) begins in spring when Mother Earth awakens. For others, especially the Misi-zaagiwinini Anishinaabeg (Mississaugas), the lunar calendar begins—and thus the New Year—when the full moon appears in February, as bears start to emerge from their winter dens. In the southeastern part of *Anishinaabe Aki*, February is called *Makwa-giizis*, or Bear Moon; another term for this period is *Makoonsag-gaa-nitaawaadi-giizis*, the Moon when the bear cubs are born. Additionally, some Anishinaabeg consider the moons when maple sap starts to flow as the beginning of a new year, occurring from mid-March to mid-April, depending on the region.

But why do most Anishinaabeg today celebrate "new year" in the winter? There is no straightforward answer to this. Some suggest that celebrating New Year on January 1 was imposed on us by the European invaders who introduced the Gregorian solar calendar to Turtle Island. This is certainly true. However, there is more to consider. Although the traditional start of a new lunar cycle rarely falls on January 1, it often occurs in the week before or after, depending on when the full moon appears right after the Winter Solstice. An ancient teaching, likely from pre-contact times, has been handed down by an old warrior society known as the *Windigookaan* (No-flight Contraries; literally: "Society of the Cannibal Winter Monster"), suggesting that it was the *wiindigoog* who were responsible for creating *biboon* (winter). They did this to save the planet; their interference from the sky formed the polar caps and the seasons, marking the start of the Anishinaabe lunar calendar...

This teaching explains that everything in the universe is ice until it becomes warm enough to melt on a planet or by a sun/star. This is where the Wiindigoo spirits play a role. No matter where they are — whether on earth or in space —, *wiindigoog* track the boundary between ice and water.

It is believed that long ago, the *wiindigoog* were not humans but spirits residing along the shores of the *Jiibay-ziibi*, the majestic River of Souls that winds its way through the Galaxy. They were ghastly beings, resembling enormous, terrifying skeletons with bones protruding against their ash-gray skin, the color of death. In this celestial realm drifting through the sky, surrounded by gas, debris, and massive [clouds of water](#), they would lie in wait to capture and consume the unfortunate souls of deceased humans who were not ready for their [journey home to Waakwi](#) — the Land beyond the stars where their ancestors dwelled.

.But then, long ago, countless lifetimes past, the earth shifted, plunging the world into chaos. It was then that the sky *wiindigoog* stepped forward to restore order. They journeyed directly from the stars through the void of space, moving through the earth to stabilize its tumbling and keep the Earth's poles steady. As a result, the *wiindigoog* were endowed with the gift of ice for maintaining the Earth's actual poles. This event heralded the creation of *biboon* (winter) and the start of the Anishinaabe calendar, initiating the cycle of the seasons around the Winter

Solstice — just days before the full moon rises, when the sucker fish spawn...

## THE LUNAR CALENDAR OF MEDICINE COMPARED TO THE GRANDMOTHER LUNAR CALENDAR

However, not all Anishinaabeg follow the above teaching of the Wiindigoo Society. I already mentioned the people of the Dawn Society, who celebrate New Year around Spring Equinox. And then there are those who follow an alternative time-keeping system, called *oondaadesewin giizhigadoo-mazina'igan* ("Generations Calendar") or *mashkiki dibik-giiziso-mazina'igan* ("Medicine Lunar Calendar").

However, not all Anishinaabeg adhere to the teachings of the Wiindigoo Society. I previously mentioned the Dawn Society members, who observe New Year around the Spring Equinox. Additionally, there are those who use a different time-keeping

system known as *oondaadesewin giizhigadoo-mazina'igan* ("Generations Calendar") or *mashkiki dibik-giiziso-mazina'igan* ("Medicine Lunar Calendar").

Followers of the *oondaadesewin/mashkiki* calendar believe that the *Ookomisan/Grandmother* calendar, as recognized by the Anishinaabeg Peoples, is an inaccurate legacy of the European invasion dating back to 900 CE with the arrival of the Norsemen, followed by the large-scale invasion of the Americas beginning in the 15th century. The *oondaadesewin/mashkiki* time-keeping system, distinct from (and potentially much older than) the lunar calendar teachings observed by most traditional Anishinaabeg Peoples, which state that a month consists of 28 days, asserts that the *Grandmother-Moon* orbits the *Earth-Mother* every 29 days, 12 hours, 44 minutes, and 2.8 seconds. Consequently, according to the *oondaadesewin/mashkiki* theory, a 12 moon cycle spans approximately 354 days, differing by 11 days from the solar calendar.

According to the *Oondaadesewin/Mashkiki* Calendar theory, this would put the *Ookomisan/Grandmother* calendar out by half a month in 14 years and advance until *Gashkadino-Giizis* or *Baashkaakodin-Giizis*

(The Freezing Moon) would start on the summer solstice. The Mashkiki calendar recognizes this disparity. It dictates that 12 moons/months of our calendar equals approximately 354 days, which is 11 days short of the solar year. Every three years this equals 33 full days, so the 13th moon/month is added.

According to the Ondaadesewin/Mashkiki Calendar theory, the Ookomisan/Grandmother calendar would be off by half a month in 14 years, eventually leading to *Gashkadino-Giizis* or *Baashkaakodin-Giizis* (The Freezing Moon) beginning on the summer solstice. The Mashkiki calendar acknowledges this difference, stating that the 12 moons/months of our calendar total approximately 354 days, which is 11 days less than a solar year. This discrepancy accumulates to 33 full days every three years, necessitating the inclusion of a 13th moon/month.

The Ondaadesewin/Mashkiki theory posits that the calendar cycle starts and concludes with a 13th moon, with the extra time managed by having two consecutive 13th moons. Every 76 years, which is considered an average lifetime, the 10th year of the cycle includes an additional 13th moon. This moon is referred to as

*Ingichi-ookomis Manidoo Dibik-giizis* ("Great-Grandmother-Spirit Moon") in the Mashkiki/Generations Calendar theory. Unlike the traditional Anishinaabe belief that the calendar starts in *Gichimanidoo-giizis* or *Maajii-bibooni-giizis* (Great Spirit Moon/The Beginning of Winter Moon/the Month of January), followers of the Ondaadesewin/Mashkiki calendar believe the lunar year starts when the Earth-Mother is reborn, typically during the moon of the Vernal equinox (in *Zaagibagaa-giizis*, the Budding Moon, or the Month of May). Consequently, this would mean that the Moon of the Falling Leaves/October is the sixth, rather than the ninth, moon of the lunar year.

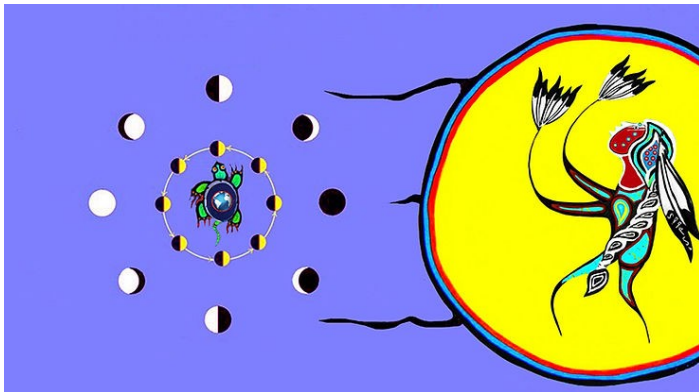


"Nibi, Gift of the Thirteen Moons," illustration by Zhaawano Giizhik. ©2023 Zhaawano Giizhik.

## **THE FACES OF ᑎᑎᑦ ᑭᑦᑭᑦ GRANDMOTHER MOON (MOON PHASES):**

Similar to *anangoog*, the stars, *gimishoomisinaan dibik-giizis* (Grandmother Moon) and her positions and "face" (moon phases) throughout the seasons are traditionally significant sources of information for the Anishinaabeg. As *Gookomisinaan* orbits

Mother Earth, she occasionally finds herself between Mother Earth and Father Sun. In this position, Gookomisinaan does not reflect any light toward Mother Earth, and the bright sunlight obscures her from view. This phase is known as *oshki-agoojin*, or *oshkagoojin* ("Hangs Anew"; new moon). In the illustration above and below, the *oshkagoojin giizis* is depicted as a (nearly) dark circle. Each night, as Grandmother Moon progresses in her orbit, a small sliver of moon reflecting sunlight becomes visible. This is referred to as *waanaabikizi* (crescent moon). As Grandmother Moon continues her orbit, more of her face reflects sunlight, waxing. She can sometimes even be seen during the day.



"Grandmother Moon's Dance Around the Earth Turtle" - An artist's impression of the moon phases. © 2022-2023 Zhaawano Giizhik.

Clockwise from the top: First quarter, waxing crescent, new moon, waning crescent, last quarter (as seen from Earth), waning gibbous, full moon, waxing gibbous.

Approximately a week after *oshkagoojin*, we observe Gookomisinaan appearing as *aabitawaasige* (a half-moon). (*Aabitawaasige* signifies that Grandmother Moon has completed a quarter of her journey around the Earth, also referred to as the "first quarter moon.") Each subsequent night, more of Grandmother Moon's surface reflects sunlight; from our perspective, it seems to grow in size, but in truth, we are simply seeing more of it. At this point, Grandmother Moon is about two weeks into her orbit, positioned on the Earth's side where Father Sun can illuminate her entire visible face. This phase is called *Waawiyezi-dibik-giizis*: The moon is round (full). Or: *Miziweyaabikizi* ("the Moon is shining everywhere"). For most traditional Anishinaabeg, a full moon marks the beginning of a new month. As Gookomisinaan continues her orbit, her face seems to shrink (waning) until it is once again dark - *oshki oshkagoojin* (a new "new moon"). Then the cycle repeats...

*Miziweyaabikizi/Michaabikizi/Waawiyezi-dibik-giizis*: Full moon  
*Oshki-agoojin/Oshkagoojin*: New moon (literally: "Hangs Anew")  
*Aabitawaasige/Aabitawaabikizi*: Half moon  
*Agoojin*: (Moon) hangs/is in the sky  
*Epiitaagoojing*: Moon phases  
*Oshki-giizis/Oshkaasige*: Waxing moon  
*Aabitawaasige*: Quarter moon  
*Ishkwaawaasige*: Waning moon  
*Bikwaabikizi*: Gibbous moon  
*Waanaabikizi/Bajiishkiwine Giizis*: Crescent moon  
[Makadewaabikizi](#): Eclipsed moon  
*Epiitaagoojing/Enagoojing/Epiitaasige*: Moon phases

*Ahaaw sa. Mii sa ekoozid. Miigwech gibizindaw noongom. Gigiveda-waabamin wayiiba, Mino bimaadizin!*  
Well, that is the end. Thank you for listening to me today. I hope to see you again soon! Live well!

NOTES:

\* An interpretation of teachings by, among others, Michel Sutherland from *Pîhtâpek*

*Iliiwak* (Fort Albany, Ontario) and  
Ogimaawab Joseph Sutherland  
(*Gakaabikaang*/Minneapolis, Minnesota).

**\*\*** It's important to recognize that the Anishinaabeg (Ojibweg) across different regions use various names for the moons, reflecting the many dialectical variations. Our culture and language are traditionally deeply connected to nature, so the names are often derived from natural observations, animal behaviors, and the cultural practices and beliefs of each community. The unifying concept is that the moons guide us through our calendar, seasonal changes, plant life cycles, and animal migrations. Equally significant is that each moon cycle is accompanied by spiritual and moral teachings, which are integral to our Indigenous society.

Many of the current names for the moons originate from the cultural interactions between the Anishinaabeg and the *Wemitigoozhiwag* and *Gichi-mookomaanag* (Europeans and Americans). The land-based relationships that were once clear and significant before contact became disordered and frequently lost their meaning, leading to some moon names being replaced by those reflecting the cultural perspectives of the Anglo invaders.

An instance of a Westernized name is *Animikadaadiwi-giizis*, meaning "Welcoming Each Other Moon," which relates to the settlers' tradition of exchanging New Year greetings in January. The impact of Christianity on Ojibwe culture is apparent in a name used by the Ojibweg in Northwest Ontario for December: *Gichi-anama'e-giizhigani-giizis*, or "Big Church Days Moon." Another example of Western influence is *Joolay-biisim*, which is an "Ojibwenized" version of the English word for the moon preceding August ^

The distinctions among different regions are evident in the wide range of lunar orbits and Moon names. I attempted to chart this extensive array of Moon names (including cross-cultural and post-contact names) in the list below:

### **JANUARY:**

Great Spirit Moon

*Gichi-manidoo-giizis*

(According to the Anishinaabe lunar calendar, "leap month" happens in the December-January time frame).

Start of the Winter Moon  
*Maajii-bibooni-giizis*

New Winter Moon  
*Oshki-bibooni-giizis*

Long (Shining) Moon  
*Giinooji-giizis/Genoji-giizis*  
Halfway Winter Moon  
*Aabitaa-bibooniwi-giiz(h)is*

Welcoming Each Other Moon  
*Anamikadaadiwi-giizis*: a Westernized,  
post-contact name

**FEBRUARY:**  
Suckerfish Moon  
*Namebini-giizis*

Bear Moon  
*Makwa-giizis*

Groundhog Moon  
*Akakwijiishi-giizis/Akokojish-giizis*

Moon when the bear cubs begin to be  
birthed

*Makoonsag-gaa-nitaawaadi-giizis*

Short Day / Shines Briefly Moon

*Gaa-dakwaasiged-giizis/Gaa-dakwaasigej-*

*giizis/ Gaa-dakoowaasigej giizis/Gaa-*

*dakwegiizisoj-biisim* : a Westernized, post-  
contact name

Big Moon

*Gichi-giizis*

Long (Shining) Moon

*Ginoози-giizis*

Bald Eagle Moon

*Migizi(wi)-giiz(h)is*

**MARCH:**

Sugar Making Moon

*Ziinsibaakwadooke-giizis/*

*Ziinzibaakwadooke-giizis*

Hard Crust on the Snow Moon

*Onaabani-giizis/Onaabdin-giizis*

Broken Snowshoe Moon  
*Bebookwedaagime-giizis/Pokwaagami-  
giizis*

Crow Moon  
*Aandego-giizis*

Goose Moon  
*Nika-giizis*

Suckerfish Moon  
*Namebini-giizis*

**APRIL:**  
Sugarbushing Moon  
*Iskigamizige-giizis*

Frog Moon  
*Omakakiiwi-giizis*

Broken Snowshoe Moon  
*Bobookwedaagime-giizis  
/Bebookwedaagame-giizis/*

*Bebookwedaagiming-giizis/Pokwaagami-giizis/ Bookoogami-giizis*

Loon Moon  
*Maango-giizis*

Suckerfish Moon  
*Namebini-giizis*

Spirit Moon  
*Manidoo-giizis*

**MAY:**  
Budding Moon  
*Zaagibagaa-giizis*

Flowering Moon  
*Waabigon-giizis/Waabigonii-giizis/  
Waabigwanii-giizis/ Waawaasagone-giizis*

Bear Moon  
*Mako-biisim* (term used by the  
Northwestern Ojibweg (Northwest  
Ontario)).

Suckerfish Moon  
*Namebine-giizis*

Loon Moon  
*Maango-giizis*

Heart-berry (Strawberry) Moon  
*Ode'imini-giizis* (term used by the  
Bodéwadmi Anishinaabeg (Potawatomi))

**JUNE:**

Heart-berry (Strawberry) Moon  
*Ode'imini-giizis/Odeyimin-giizis*  
Gardening (Planting) Moon  
*Gitige-giizis*

Flowering Moon  
*Waabigwanii-giizis/Waabigwaniwi-giizis/  
Waabigonii-giizis/Waawano-giizis/  
Baashkaabigonii-giizis*

Budding Moon  
*Zaagibagaawi-giizis/Zaagibagaawi-  
biisim*[\[1\]](#)

Sweet Juneberry Moon

*Bazagwaakomini-giizis/Zagaakominag-giizis/Zagaakominoog-giizis*

(Names used by the Northwestern/Plains Ojibweg)

Mud Turtle Moon

*Mishiikenh-giizis*[\[2\]](#)

Egg Moon

*Waawano-giizis*

(Meaning Unknown) Moon

*Ozhibinigaawi-giizhis*[\[3\]](#)

**JULY:**

Halfway Summer Moon

*Aabita-niibino-giizis/Aabita-niibini-giizis*[\[4\]](#) /

*Aabita-niibinoowi-giizhis*[\[5\]](#)

Blueberry Moon

*Miini-giizis*[\[6\]](#) / *Miin-giizis*[\[7\]](#)

Raspberry Moon

*Miskomini-giizis, Miskwiwmini-giizis*

Flying Moon

*Baashkawe'o-giizis*

Keeps Shooting Moon

*Baapaashkizige-giizis*

Hatching Moon

*Baashkaawe'o-giizis*

Be All Out in Leaves Moon

*Giizhibagaawi-giizis /Giizhibagaawi-biisim*[\[8\]](#)

Unripe (Blue)Berry Moon

*Ishkaninjiimini-giizis*[\[9\]](#)

There Are Many Blueberries Moon

*Miinikaa-giizis*[\[10\]](#)

Picking Blueberries Moon

*Miinikewi-giizis*[\[11\]](#)

Be Heard Shooting Moon

*Madwezige-giizis*

(Meaning Unknown) Moon

*Opaaskowi-giizis, or -biisim*[\[12\]](#)

July Moon

*Joolay-biisim*[\[13\]](#)

**8th MOON** (the eighth moon can fall in either July or August, depending on the year):

Thimbleberry (Blackberry) Moon

*Odaatagaamini-giizis*

### **AUGUST:**

Ripening moon

*Aditemini-giizis/Aditewimini-giizis/*

*Aditemini-biisim/Aditewimini-biisim* [\[14\]](#)

Haying Time /Reed or Rush Cutting Moon

*Manashkosiwe-giizis*

(Meaning unknown) Moon  
*Manizhigewi-giizis* [\[15\]](#)

Ricing Moon  
*Manoominike-giizis* [\[16\]](#)

Wild Rice Moon  
*Manoominii-giizis* [\[17\]](#)

Blackberry Moon  
*Odatagaagomini giizis*

Blueberry Moon  
*Miin-giizis* [\[18\]](#)/*Miini-giizis* [\[19\]](#)

Blueberries Moon  
*Miinani-giizis*

Raspberry Moon  
*Miskomini-giizis, Miskwiwmini-giizis*

Berry Gathering Moon

*Miinike-giizis*

Flying Moon  
*Basikwa'ow giizis*

(Meaning unknown) Moon  
*Omba'owi-giizhis* [20]/*Omba'owi-biisim*  
[21]

Middle of the Summer Moon  
*Aabita-naaniibino-giizis*

**SEPTEMBER:**  
Leaves Turning Color Moon  
*Waatebagaa-giizis/ Waabaagbagaa-giizis*

Corn Moon  
*Mandaamini giizis*

Ricing Moon  
*Manoominike-giizis*

Moose Moon  
*Moozo giizis*

**OCTOBER:**

Falling Leaves Moon

*Binaakwe-giizis/binaakwii-giizis/binaakii-giizis* [22]/ *binaagwewi-giizhis* [23]

(WO)/*binaakwewi-giizis*[24]/*Binaakwiiwi(k)-giizis* [25]/*Binaakwiiwi-biisim* [26]

Leaves Turning Color Moon

*Waatebagaa-giizis/Waatebago-giizis*

Freezing (Over) Moon

*Gashkadino-Giizis* (Western

dialect)/*Baashkaakodin-giizis/Mshkawji-giizis* (Eastern dialects)

Whitefish Moon

*Adikamego-giizis*

Trout Moon

*Namegos-giizis/ Namegosi-giizis*

**NOVEMBER:**

Whitefish Moon

*Adikomemi-giizis*

Freezing (Over) Moon

*Gashkadino-Giizis* (Western dialect)/*Baashkaakodin-giizis/Mshkawji-giizis* (Eastern dialects).

Full moon names are influenced by local cultures. This is the 11th lunation of the year; some (Southeastern) Ojibwe people refer to it as *Mshkawji/Mashkawjiwin Giizis*, meaning "Freezing Moon." Similarly, the Ininew (Cree) people call it "Kaskatinowipisim" or "Freeze up Moon." The traditional territories of both the Ininew and Ojibwe nations are in the Great Lakes region, where freezing temperatures typically begin in October and November, coinciding with the 11th lunation of the year.

**DECEMBER:**

Little Spirit Moon

*Manidoo-giizisoons*

Spirit Moon

*Manidoo-giizis* [\[27\]](#)

Great Spirit Moon

*Gichi-manidoo-giizis* [\[28\]](#)

Winter Moon

*Biboon-giizis*

Winter Arrives Moon  
*Bijji-biboon-giizis*

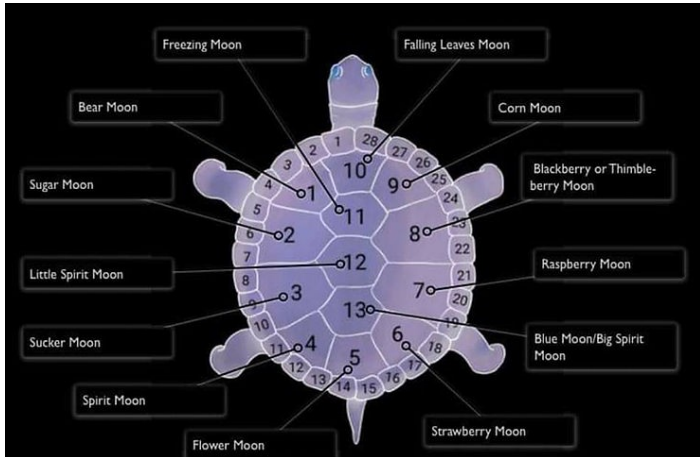
Big Winter Moon  
*Gichi-bibooni-giizis*

Feast Abundantly Days Moon (a post-contact name)  
*Magoshe-giizhigan-biisim/ Magoshe-giizhigani-biisim/ Magoshe-giizhigani-giizis/Magoshewi-giizhigan-giizhis/Makozhe-wi-giizhigani-giizis* [29]

Big Church Days Moon (a post-contact name influenced by Christianity)  
*Gichi-anama'e-giizhigani-giizis/Gichi-anami'e-giizhigani-giizis* [30]

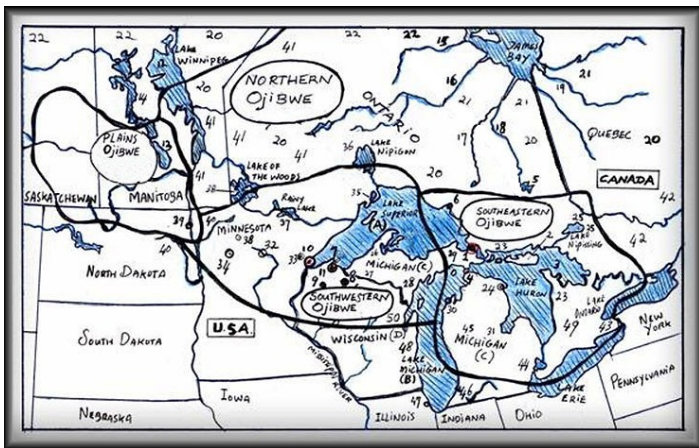
**An alternative Anishinaabe lunar turtle calendar**, followed by the Misi-zaagiwinini Anishinaabeg (Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation), according to

which the New Year starts in *Makwa Giizis* (Bear Moon; February), is depicted below:



1. *Makwa Giizis* (Bear Moon) - the First Moon of Creation
2. *Ziisibaakwadoke* (Sugar making Moon) - the Second Moon of Creation
3. *Namebini-giizis* (Suckerfish Moon) - the Third Moon of Creation
4. *Manidoo-giizis* (Spirit Moon) - the Fourth Moon of Creation
5. *Waabigon-giizis/Waabigonii-giizis/Waabigwanii-giizis/ Waawaasagone-giizis* (Flowering Moon) - the Fifth Moon of Creation

6. *Ode'imini-giizis/Odeyimin-giizis* (Heartberry Moon) - the Sixth Moon of Creation
7. *Miskomini-giizis, Miskwiwmini-giizis* (Raspberry Moon) - the Seventh Moon of Creation
8. *Odaatagaamini-giizis* (Thimbleberry/blackberry Moon) - the Eight Moon of Creation
9. *Mandaamini giizis* (Corn Moon) - the Ninth Moon of Creation
10. *Binaakwe-giizis/binaakwii-giizis* (Falling Leaves Moon) - the Tenth Moon of Creation
11. *Gashkadino-Giizis /Baashkaakodin-giizis/Mshkawji-giizis* (Freezing Over Moon) - the Eleventh Moon of Creation
12. *Manidoo-giizisoons* (Little Spirit Moon) - the Twelfth Moon of Creation
13. *Ozhaawashko-giizis* (Blue Moon)/*Gichi-manidoo-giizis* (Great/Big Spirit Moon) - the Thirteenth Moon of Creation



[1] *Zaagibagaawi-giizis*: term used by Northwestern Ojibweg (Northwest Ontario) and Western Ojibweg (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta). *Zaagibagaawi-biisim* is used in the Northeast (Northern Ojibweg/Anishininiwag (Oji-Cree)). [^](#)

[2] *Mishiikenh-giizis*: a term used by the Bodéwadmi Anishinaabeg (Potawatomi). [^](#)

[3] *Ozhibinigaawi-giizhis*: term used by Nakaweg-Ojibweg from Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. [^](#)

[4] *Aabita-niibini-giizis*, *Aabita-niibino-giizis*: terms used in Northwestern Ontario. [^](#)

[5] *Aabita-niibinoowi-giizhis*: term used by Nakaweg-Ojibweg from Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. [^](#)

[6] *Miini-giizis*: term used by the Northeastern Ojibweg. [^](#)

[7] *Min-giizis*: term used by the Southeastern Ojibweg and Odaawaag Anishinaabeg (Odawa). [^](#)

[8] *Giizhibagaawi -giizis*, or *Giizhibagaawi-biisim*: used in Northwestern Ontario and by the Northern Ojibweg/Anishininiwag (Oji-Cree). [^](#)

- [9] *Ishkaninjiimini-giizis*: term used in Northwestern Ontario and by the Northern Ojibweg/Anishininiwag (Oji-Cree). ^
- [10] *Miinikaa-giizis*: term used by the Northwestern Ojibweg. ^
- [11] *Miinikewi-giizis*: term used by the Northwestern Ojibweg. ^
- [12] *Opaaskowi-giizis*, or *-biisim*: term used by the North-shore Ojibweg in Ontario, and by the Northern Ojibweg/Anishininiwag (Oji-Cree). Its literal meaning is unknown to me. ^
- [13] *Joolay-biisim*: Westernized, post-contact name used by the Northern Ojibweg/Anishininiwag (Oji-Cree). ^
- [14] *Aditemini-giizis/Aditewimini-giizis*: terms used by the Northwestern Ojibweg (Northwest Ontario). and Western Ojibwe (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta). *Aditemini-biisim/Aditewimini-biisim*: terms used by the Northern Ojibweg/Anishininiwag (Oji-Cree). ^
- [15] *Manizhigewi-giizis*: term used by the Western Ojibweg (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta). Its literal meaning is unknown to me. ^
- [16] *Manoominike-giizis*: term used by the Northwestern Ojibweg (Northwest Ontario). ^
- [17] *Manoominii-giizis*: term used by the Southeastern Ojibweg and Odaawaag Anishinaabeg (Odawa) and the Southwestern Ojibweg (Minnesota). ^
- [18] *Miin-giizis*: term used in Lower Peninsula Michigan and Wisconsin

(Southshore Ojibweg) and Southern Ontario (Northshore Ojibweg). <sup>^</sup>

[19] *Miini-giizis*: term used in Lower Peninsula Michigan and Wisconsin (Southshore Ojibweg), Southern Ontario (Northshore Ojibweg), and Northwest Ontario (Northwestern Ojibweg). <sup>^</sup>

[20] *Omba'owi-giizhis*: term used by the Western Ojibwe (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta). Its literal meaning is unknown to me. <sup>^</sup>

[21] *Omba'owi-biisim*: term used by the Northern Ojibweg/Anishininiwag (Oji-Cree). <sup>^</sup>

[22] *Binaakii-giizis*: term used by the Northwestern Ojibweg (Northwest Ontario). <sup>^</sup>

[23] *Binaagwewi-giizhis*: term used by the Western Ojibweg (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta). <sup>^</sup>

[24] *Binaakwewi-giizis*: term used by the Northwestern Ojibweg (Northwest Ontario). <sup>^</sup>

[25] *Binaakwiiwi(k)-giizis*: term used by the Northwestern Ojibweg (Northwest Ontario). <sup>^</sup>

[26] *Binaakwiiwi-biisim*: term used by the Northern Ojibweg/Anishininiwag (Oji-Cree). <sup>^</sup>

[27] *Manidoo-giizis*: term used by the Southeastern Ojibweg and Odaawaag Anishinaabeg (Odawa) and Northwestern Ojibweg (Northwest Ontario). <sup>^</sup>

[28] *Gichi-manidoo-giizis*: term used by the Bodéwadmi Anishinaabeg (Potawatomi) to denote the month of December. <sup>^</sup>

[29] "Feast Abundantly Days Moon": a designation stemming from Anglo/Christian influences.

*Magoshe-giizhigan-biisim/ Magoshe-giizhigani-biisim*: terms used by the

Northern Ojibweg/Anishininiwag (Oji-Cree).

*Magoshe-giizhigani-giizis*: term used by the Northwestern Ojibweg (Northwest Ontario).

*Magoshewi-giizhigan-giizhis*: term used by the Western Ojibweg (Manitoba,

Saskatchewan, Alberta). *Makozhewi-*

*giizhigani-giizis*: term used by the

Northwestern Ojibweg (Northwest Ontario).

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[30] *Gichi-anama'e-giizhigani-giizis/Gichi-anami'e-giizhigani-giizis*: Christian-

influenced name used by some Ojibweg

from Northwest Ontario. ^

# 13 Thirteen Grandmother Moons



Loretta Gould painting: Guided by Our Teachings

All over the world, cultures and communities have mapped the moon cycle, which happens 13 times per year, in cycles of 28 days. For many Nations, including the Anishinabek Nation, there are teachings and other culturally important aspects of the moon cycle, which is associated with women's menstrual cycles as well as other natural phenomena like the tides. Indigenous teachers and

knowledge keepers can provide more specific information on the teachings that go with each moon, which will depend on their particular history and culture.

Since this etextbook was made in the territories of the Mississaugas of the New Credit (Anishinabek Nation), the moons laid out here are those of the Mississaugas. The moons correspond to the seasonal changes happening to the land; thus, Indigenous communities in different parts of the country will have different moons. What is common to all communities is the idea that these moons orient us to the passage of time, the changing seasons, animal migrations, and plant life cycles, and that each moon cycle has associated spiritual and moral teachings.

### **Interactive 3.1** 13 Moons

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<https://pueblosoriginarios.com/norte/bosques/iroqueses/tortuga.html> }

La salida y la puesta del sol, el ciclo de la luna y el verano, época de crecimiento, e invierno, cuando la tierra duerme, eran utilizados por los iroqueses para medir el tiempo.

Cada una de las 13 lunas llenas del año era celebrada de una manera especial con elaborados rituales de agradecimiento al *Gran Creador*, a través de la palabra, la música y la danza.

Todo lo que tiene vida tiene integridad y debe agradecerse antes de ser utilizado. Así se agradece a los animales antes de comerse y a las plantas antes de ser cosechadas.

La comunidad se reunía en las casas comunales, las mujeres se ubicaban al oeste y los hombres al este. Sólo en ciertas ceremonias como bodas o funerales, los géneros se mezclaban.



La espalda de la tortuga es un símbolo importante para la comunidad iroquesa, sobre la de la *Tortuga Abuela* (la Tierra), crece el "[El árbol de la Paz iroqués](#)". Las trece placas presentes en la espalda representan las trece lunas llenas del ciclo de las estaciones iroquesas y muestran la relación entre la Tierra y la Luna; estos sectores se nombran de acuerdo a las prácticas de temporada y a las ocurrencias ambientales naturales.

Seguí esta presentación para conocer la celebración correspondiente a cada una de ellas.



MEDIO INVIERNO enero febrero

La *Gran Ceremonia de Medios de Invierno* o de *Año Nuevo* se llevaba a cabo en enero o febrero, dependiendo del ciclo lunar, cinco días después de

la



Los bailarines usan máscaras para ahuyentar a los malos espíritus.

Los hombres iroqueses pertenecientes a la "*Sociedad de las Caras Falsas*" usan máscaras talladas en madera para representar los seres sobrenaturales que han visto en sus pesadillas.

Sacudiendo enormes sonajas hechas con caparazones de tortuga, danzan para expulsar los demonios.

Ilustración de W. Langdon Kin.  
National Geographic. Noviembre de 1937.  
Ver: *Indios de los Bosques Orientales*.

primera luna llena que aparece luego que las estrellas de la Osa Mayor son visibles en el cielo nocturno.

Se realizaba durante nueve días con rituales para renovar integralmente las creencias religiosas y celebrar la llegada de un nuevo año espiritual, por lo general comenzaba con la "*Agitación de las cenizas*" y finalizaba con una ceremonia de clausura tradicional.

Conocé las principales características:

#### [Ceremonia de Medios de Invierno:](#)

- [Las "Cabezas Grandes" y la Agitación de las Cenizas.](#)
- [Invocación del Tabaco.](#)
- [Ritual de los Sueños Compartidos.](#)
- [Sociedad de las Caras Falsas.](#)
- [Danza del Oso.](#)
- [Juego de los carozos de melocotón.](#)
- [Sacrificio del Perro Blanco.](#)

- [Danza de la Gran Pluma.](#)



Las actividades en la casa comunal incluyen banquetes, cantos, bailes, juegos y relatos.  
*Ilustración cortesía de Lazare y Parker.*

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Máscara realizada con chala.  
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Máscaras utilizadas en el rito  
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*Los bailarines usan máscaras para ahuyentar a los malos espíritus.*

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Sacudiendo enormes sonajas hechas con caparazones de tortuga, danzan para expulsar los demonios.

Ilustración de W. Langdon Khin.  
National Geographic. Noviembre de 1937.  
Ver: [\*Indios de los Bosques Orientales.\*](#)

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... dado a las personas durante el pasado año. El baile se realizaba alrededor de dos cantantes sentados cara a cara que utilizaban sonajas o caparazón de tortuga para crear el ritmo. Los bailarines están vestidos con plumas. La danza se realizaba en la anteúltima noche de la *Ceremonia*.

*Imagen:*

Lyman Johnson en la Reserva Tonawanda, Nueva York.

*Audio*

*Canciones de la Casa Comunal Iroquesa.*

musical de la Biblioteca del Congreso de Estados Unidos, Washington.

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**AZUCAR DE ARCE** principios o mediados de marzo

La *Ceremonia del Arce* se realizaba a principios o mediados de marzo cuando la savia del árbol comenzaba a circular.



Con cuchillos le realizaban un corte de unos dos o tres dedos de diámetro y una palma de largo, luego se colocaba un palo para dirigir el líquido dulzón hacia un recipiente.

La savia recolectada se hervía en vasijas para ser luego utilizada como edulcorante y energizante. Después de varios días de actividad era el tiempo del festival para agradecer a los creadores. Se realizaban bailes sagrados y se quemaba tabaco para que su humo fragante llegara al mundo de los espíritus del cielo, mientras oradores honraban a los árboles de arce.



### TRUENOS primavera

La *Ceremonia del Trueno* se celebra cuando los abuelos hacen llegar sus voces con el primer trueno de primavera. Llegan desde el oeste con estruendo, traen el agua que renueva la vida.

Se desarrolla durante cuatro días, en los que se envían saludos, amor y agradecimiento a los abuelos, los seres del trueno. Es una ceremonia masculina, generalmente incluye una *Invocación del Tabaco*, una *Danza de Guerra* y un *Juego de Lacrosse*. Es una ceremonia que reemplazó las antiguas realizadas para el sol y la luna.



*Iroqueses jugando Lacrosse, su deporte favorito.*

Un jugador salta para atrapar la pelota de piel de venado disecada, luego tratará de lanzarla

tras la línea de gol del equipo contrario. Puede llevar la pelota en la raqueta, pero no debe tocarla con las manos

Ilustración de W. Langdon Kin.  
National Geographic. Noviembre de 1937.

Ver: *Indios de los Bosques Orientales.*





En algunas ocasiones, en el *Juego de las Semillas de Melocotón* jugaban los hombres contra las mujeres, el equipo ganador no tendrá que plantar esa temporada.

## SIEMBRA mayo

Antes de la siembra, se pide la bendición del *Creador*. La *Ceremonia* se desarrolla durante un día, en la *Casa Comunal* se agradece el regreso de la temporada de siembra y se pide una buena cosecha.

Las mujeres cantan agradeciendo a la *Madre Tierra* y a las *Tres Hermanas* acompañadas por la música de sonajeros hechos con la caparazón de la tortuga, alternativamente cantan los hombres mientras las mujeres aplauden.

Se desarrolla el *Juego de las Semillas de Melocotón* y para finalizar la *Gran Danza de las Plumas*.

## **Las Tres Hermanas (Maíz-Frijol-Calabaza)**

Una leyenda iroquesa habla de tres hermanas que brotaron del cuerpo enterrado de la hija de la *Mujer del Cielo* para entregar al hombre el don de la agricultura. Todas diferentes en apariencia y personalidad, viven juntas y se ayudan mutuamente; enseñan que hay fortaleza en la diversidad.

Los iroqueses usaban para sus cultivos un sistema "*intercalado*", primero plantaban el maíz -la hermana mayor-, dos o tres semanas después los frijoles, y entre las filas las calabazas.

Las plantas de maíz eran postes naturales por donde los frijoles podían subir, a la vez que servían para estabilizarlas durante los fuertes vientos. Las hojas de las calabazas -grandes y espinosas- daban sombra al suelo, lo que permitía conservar la humedad e inhibía el crecimiento de la maleza. Las raíces de los frijoles proporcionan un "*hogar*" para un tipo particular de bacterias que fija el nitrógeno en el suelo, lo que permite que la misma parcela pueda ser cultivada durante varios años. Las *Tres Hermanas* además se complementan en cuanto a sus valores nutricionales.



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## FRESAS junio

La *Ceremonia de las Fresas* se realiza generalmente en la segunda quincena de junio. Los niños -jugando- son los que encuentran las primeras fresas maduras. Las tomarán para ellos y para las personas que no fueran capaces de recogerlas por sí mismas. Se fijará entonces la fecha para el festival que se realizará en la *Casa Comunal*, en la que se agradecerá a las plantas que proveen de las fresas cuando llega el aire caliente.

Habrán dos *Grandes Danzas de la Pluma*, en la primera serán elegidos una niña y un niño para repartir la bebida realizada con las bayas a la gente. Antes de beber, las personas expresan su agradecimiento personal a las fresas, augurando un nuevo encuentro para el próximo año. La segunda danza tiene el objetivo de fortalecer todo lo sucedido ese día. Los ancianos dicen que la fresa es la líder de las bayas, pues viene del mundo del cielo y es la primera baya en madurar, luego de la fresa, maduran las otras bayas.



festival.

Una muñeca realizada con hojas de maíz decora un cuenco de madera que contienen fresas para celebrar el

## FRIJOLES VERDES julio agosto

La *Ceremonia de los Frijoles Verdes*, se realiza coincidiendo con la maduración de los frutos, generalmente a principios de agosto.

Está dirigida a los espíritus de los frijoles para agradecer su generosidad y solicitar que puedan seguir otorgándole sus frutos. Se realiza la *Gran Danza de las Plumas* y la *Danza Soporte de Nuestra Vida*. La alimentación apropiada para la ocasión consiste en una sopa de frijoles, galletas y pan.

MAIZ VERDE agosto septiembre

La *Ceremonia del Maíz Verde* se celebra a fines de agosto o principios de septiembre, es el momento en que las *Tres Hermanas* (maíz-frijol-calabaza) han madurado. "*Maíz Verde*" es una expresión que se refiere al maíz maduro que se podía comer.

Está dedicada a los espíritus de los alimentos por la cosecha y al *Creador* para hacer posible un nuevo ciclo de crecimiento por la cosecha por venir. La ceremonia incluye el nombramiento a los bebés y su elevación a los *Guardianes de la Fe*. Se realizan además las danzas de la *Gran Pluma* y del *Tambor* y el *Juego con Semillas de Melocotón* entre los distintos clanes.

Algunos frutos son dejados en los tallos para facilitar el proceso de secado; el maíz seco y la harina de maíz eran recursos importantes para soportar el largo invierno que se avecina.



### COSECHA octubree

La Ceremonia de la Cosecha, es una ceremonia organizada por las mujeres que se realizaba generalmente en Octubre, cuando la campaña agrícola llegaba a su fin.

El significado de la ceremonia consiste en agradecer a los espíritus de los alimentos con danzas y canciones. Un orador analiza la suerte de la temporada de crecimiento que ha concluido. Comparten una sopa de maíz dulce.

*El maíz era cosechado por las mujeres iroquesas.*

Entre los altos tallos caminan las mujeres recogiendo las mazorcas y los colocaban por arriba del hombro en la cesta que llevaban en sus espaldas. La mujer sentada quita las chalas. A menudo el maíz era asado o hervido cuando estaba verde o tostado para una comida ligera. Eran populares albóndigas y sopas de maíz, también preparaban "popcorn" que colocaban en vasos cerámicos.

Ilustración de W. Langdon Kin.  
National Geographic. Noviembre de 1937.  
Ver: *Indios de los Bosques Orientales.*

## DEL CAZADOR otoño

La primera luna llena después de la *Luna de la Cosecha* señala el comienzo de la temporada de caza. Las hojas de los árboles caen, las piezas de caza han engordado; los cazadores pueden ver fácilmente a los animales que vienen a alimentarse de los granos caídos.

Es el momento de la *Ceremonia de la Luna del Cazador* para dar gracias a los animales que se sacrifican para dar alimento. Nunca se los torturará ni se desperdiciará nada de lo obtenido.

Los hombres partirán hacia los lugares de caza, mientras las familias esperan que retornen a salvo y con los recursos necesarios.

## ALMACENAMIENTO otoño

Los iroqueses utilizaban ingeniosas técnicas para almacenar sus alimentos. Construyeron bastidores que sujetaban a las vigas del techo sobre los cuales colgaban el maíz junto a la calabaza.

En los fogones de la *Casa Comunal* cada familia ahumaba la carne y el pescado. Los frijoles se secaban y guardaban en recipientes con gruesas tapas. También almacenaban alimentos -maíz seco, carnes, verduras- en vasijas que cubrían con cortezas, muchas de ellas eran enterradas en el interior o cerca de la *Casa Comunal*.

El otoño está transcurriendo y es tiempo de asegurarse las provisiones para soportar el crudo invierno y agradecer por los alimentos recogidos.

#### AGRADECIMIENTO noviembre

Es tiempo de pobreza. Habrá ceremonias para compartir alimentos y celebrar al mundo en acción de gracias. Para agradecer a la *Madre Tierra* que desde el principio de los tiempos ha cuidado el bienestar de los hombres y como en la *Ceremonia del Trueno*, enviar saludos y agradecimiento a los abuelos que con voces atronadoras y relámpagos controlan las fuerzas que intentan impedir que la vida continúe.

#### NARRACIONES noviembre diciembre

En la *Casa Comunal*, cuando los cazadores han regresado luego de la temporada de caza, es tiempo de narrar historias. Los cazadores contarán sus anécdotas y se enterarán de lo sucedido en su ausencia. Los adultos enseñarán la cosmovisión iroquesa a los jóvenes.

A través de cada historia, los oyentes aprenden los valores, leyes y comportamientos aceptables para la comunidad. La gente hablará de sus problemas y de lo que le molesta, lo que ayudará a estar en paz unos con otros.

#### GRAN NEVADA diciembre enero

Tiempo de frío. Ceremonias para agradecer por el año que ha pasado y de preparación para el siguiente. La tierra descansa bajo un manto de nieve, para los hombres también es tiempo de

relajación y de aprontes para el próximo ciclo que está por comenzar.