

# Ashi-Nisiwag Giizisoog

## Manidoo Giizisoons

Manidoo Giizisoons is the little spirit moon and begins its cycle as a new moon on December 17. Names for winter moons reflect different traditions over time. *Maji bibooni giizis* refers to the start of the winter moon. *Gitchi bibooni giizis* is the big winter moon. Whatever the tradition or belief, the moons of December and January seemed to capture the attention of people the world over.

### The Spirit of Forestry

By Steve Olson

Fond du Lac Forestry

December brings the Spirit Moon. Spirit reminds me of the spirit of managing the land. FDL Resource Management is currently carrying on a tradition that has endured thousands of years.

In the book *1491* Charles C. Mann describes how the land in the Americas was managed prior to the arrival of Columbus. For example, Eastern forests were managed for nut crops. Native management strategies encouraged chestnut, oak, and other trees with edible nuts. Vast openings were created to entice bison movement eastward, out of the prairie and into the eastern forests.

Today FDL Forestry continues this land management tradition. For a number of reasons our forest landscape is presently

dominated by aspen; we are trying to re-introduce oak into this system. FDL forestry has been planting oak since 1988. Aspen is a tough competitor growing 4 to 10 times the height of the oak. But armed with a brush axe, chainsaw or brush saw, we give the oak a chance.



This winter Forestry will continue a wildlife project along the Stoney Brook. We'll be using brush cutters to mow down alder and willow. In another 2 years we'll burn the mowed areas. Much like it did before 1491, the burning will keep the brush back. Resulting grass and forbs will feed the wildlife we depend on in winter months for food.

*The world was created when muskrat brought mud from the bottom of the flood to be placed on turtle's back. The turtle's shell has thirteen central plates, called scutes. The traditional Ojibwe calendar year follows a 13 moon lunar cycle. The names of each moon are influenced by natural phenomena, animal activity, and cultural practices and beliefs. Because the area in which Ojibwe is spoken is so vast, not all Ojibwe people use the same names for the moons.*



### Ojibwe Biboon

By Dave Wilsey,

UMN Extension

*Biboon*. Winter.

Anishinaabe probably know winter better than any other of Minnesota's communities. In earlier times, winter was survived in lodges framed with saplings and covered with *wiigwaas*, birch bark.

Cedar strips were used to attach the *wiigwaas* to the frame. Winter lodges were

larger and differently shaped than the peaked lodges of spring and fall due to the need to conserve heat and shelter entire families. The winter

landscape is the rightful domain of the Anishinaabe. Winter months were dedicated to hunting and trapping. *Aagimag*, snowshoes, were fashioned from bent *aagimaak* or *baa-paagimaak* (black or white ash wood) and rawhide lacing;

*nabagidaabaan*, toboggans, were fashioned from *wiigwaais-mitig* (birch). The English term "toboggan" is actually a corruption of the Ojibwe

word! Snowshoes and toboggans were key survival tools and remain essential winter technologies to this day. The Ojibwe are recognized for use of the "bear paw" style of snowshoe and the pointed snowshoe, which is often referred to as the "Ojibway style."

Winter was and remains the season of storytelling - *aadizookaanag* (legends) of the people, the seven fires, and the gifts of the people are passed from elders to the children.

*Prepared with support from the National Park Service's "Winter Lifeways of the Ojibwe," Grand Portage National Monument.*

### A Native American Christmas, By Looks for Buffalo (Cherokee).

*Everyday is our Christmas. Every meal is our Christmas. At every meal we take a little portion of the food we are eating, and we offer it to the spirit world on behalf of the four legged, and the winged, and the two legged. We pray-- not the way most Christians pray-- but we thank the Grandfathers, the Spirit, and the Guardian Angel.*

*The Indian Culture is actually grounded in the*

*traditions of a Roving Angel. The life-ways of Roving Angels are actually the way Indian People live. They hold out their hands and help the sick and the needy. They feed and clothe the poor. We have high respect for the avatar because we believe that it is in giving that we receive.*

*To the Indian People Christmas is everyday and they don't believe in taking without asking. Herbs are prayed over before being*

*gathered by asking the plant for permission to take some cuttings. An offer of tobacco is made to the plant in gratitude. We do not pull the herb out by its roots, but cut the plant even with the surface of the earth, so that another generation will be born its place.*

*Excerpted from eaglerocktradingpost.com/nachristmas.*

### Events:

**17 December:** 13 Moons Workshop: *Wanii'iganan / Adaawaagan*, Trapping and Fur Handling, Info - 218.878.8001

*Thirteen Moons* is produced monthly by the Fond du Lac Resource Management Division and University of Minnesota Extension. Content is based on the appropriate moon, and addresses culture, ecology, and the management of natural resources. Comments and contributions should be directed to the FDL Resource Management @ 218.878.8001