The Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission’s (GLIFWC) 2005 annual poster features Ajijaak, the crane. This poster is part of a series that will feature other Ojibwe clan symbols. The artwork is done by Nick Hockings, Lac du Flambeau.

Ajijaak is an Ojibwe clan symbol. In fact, ajijaak along with maang, or loon, are co-leaders representing chieftainship in the Ojibwe clan system. The Ojibwe relied on the traditional clan system as an effective system of government. The roles people played in society were determined by their clan, which was largely the clan of their father.

Ajijaak is known for its skill as a fisher. According to Nancy Jones, Canadian Ojibwe elder, crane and his cousin moshka’osi (blue heron) can move the feathers on their breasts to simulate small “minnows” in the water, attracting larger fish. When the big fish come after the minnows, the crane stabs them with its long, pointed beak.

Tall and regal appearing on land, the crane’s long legs make wading through shallow water and muddy wetlands easy. Ajijaak is also eye-catching in the air with neck outstretched and a six to seven foot wingspan!

In the spring, the Ojibwe say that moshka’osi calls out “mooshka’am” (The water is rising!) to warn all the other animals so they won’t be flooded out.

For a copy of the Ajijaak poster contact GLIFWC, Public Information Office, P.O. Box 9, Odanah, WI 54861; phone (715) 685-2150 or email pio@glifwc.org. Additional posters and information can be seen on our website at www.glifwc.org.