

# *Anishinabe today*

*"We call ourselves Anishinabe. Other people have called us Chippewa or Ojibwa people. But we are Anishinabe."  
—Eddie Benton, Anishinabe educator & spiritual leader*



# Booshoo Friends!

("Booshoo" means "hello" in the Anishinabe language. It is a form of welcome and greeting. With that we would like to welcome you to learn something about us, your Anishinabe neighbors in northern Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota. Most of the Anishinabe people, or Chippewa Indians as we are also known, live on reservations in these three states.)

## How we came to the Lake Superior Area

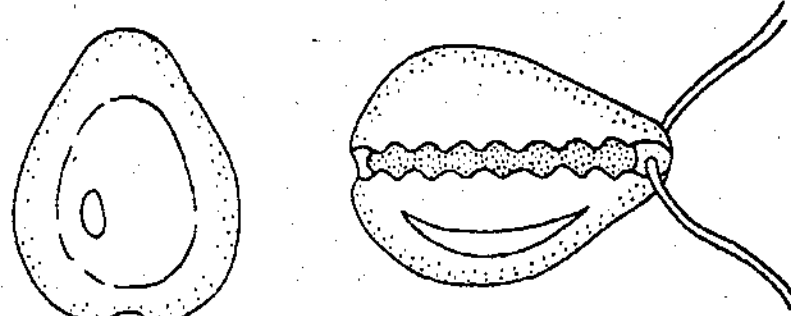
Although we have been called Chippewa or Ojibwa Indians, our name for ourselves is Anishinabe, which means the original people.

The Anishinabe have lived in the Great Lakes Region for hundreds of years. The Anishinabe were here long before the European settlers came to our region, which is now northern Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota.

Our legends tell us that our ancestors, who once lived on the East Coast, traveled in a long migration to the Lake Superior region. They were guided there by the appearance of the Sacred Megis Shell. The Megis Shell, we are taught, is a Sacred Shell used by the Creator to guide the Anishinabe people to where He wished them to go. The people stopped and made camps wherever the Megis was seen to go down. The sacred Megis was last seen on Madeline Island, one of the Apostle Islands in Lake Superior. Madeline Island became one of the central homelands of the Anishinabe people.

The Anishinabe found good living in the Great Lakes Region where the Megis had guided them. Food was abundant as the land and lakes provided plenty of fish, wild rice, deer and numerous plants and animals.

In those days, we lived in bands, or small family groups, and moved to different campsites during the various seasons. We would move near the maple stands in the springtime in order to gather the sweet sap from the trees. In the spring, too, we would harvest fish



Megis Shell

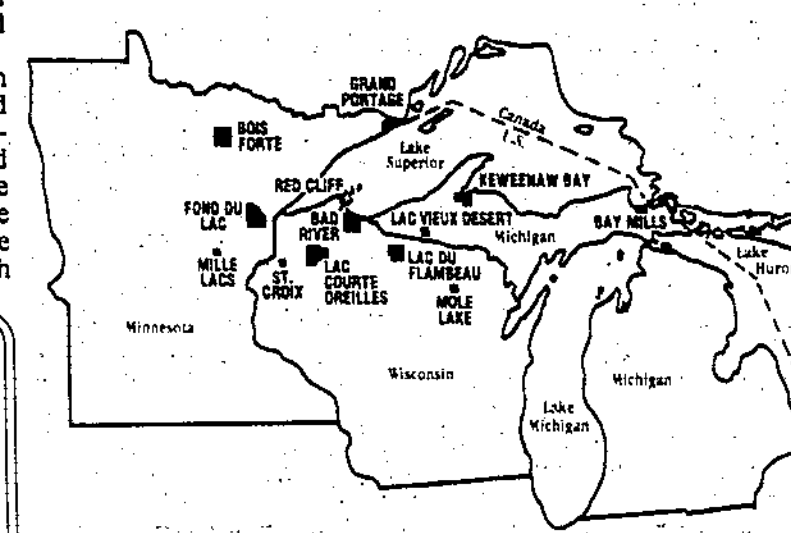
as they spawned on the shores of the many lakes and rivers, netting and spearing them, as was our way. We would move to summer camps for hunting, fishing, and berry gathering. Later, as fall began, the bands would move near their favorite rice beds, in order to gather the ripened wild rice out of the lakes.

So, our way of life took us to many different locations throughout the region. Sometimes the different smaller bands would gather together for several days. Then,

the people would share stories, feast, do ceremonies and dance. Today, we still come together from our various reservations for powwows, which is a time to dance, and for ceremonies.

Today, life is quite different for the Anishinabe. We no longer move freely from camp to camp. Rather the different bands live on reservations, areas of land reserved for the Indian people through treaties with the federal government. Most of the reservations were established in the Treaty of 1854.

GLIFWC Member Tribes



Cover photo: Nicole Moore attending a powwow in Toledo, Ohio. Nicole is the daughter of Stephen Moore, Bad River Tribal member. (Photo by Amoose)



An Anishinabe youth participates in a marathon run last summer. The run supported the spirit of healing and unity between communities. Runners carried an Eagle Staff throughout the course which united the reservations.



## Storytelling: An ongoing oral history

The history of the Anishinabe people has been passed down through the years through stories. We have an oral tradition, which means instead of writing our history and legends in books, we tell the stories to each other. Storytelling has traditionally been done in the winter, when the snow is on the ground. Usually, the elders tell the stories of days gone by and of the legends that had been passed to them by their elders.

One of the most outstanding characters in Anishinabe legends

was Way-na-boo-zhoo, the original man. He is the primary person in the Anishinabe creation stories.

On the following page is one of the Way-na-boo-zhoo stories which is related by Eddie Benton-Banai, a spiritual leader and educator who now lives on the Lac Courte Oreilles Reservation. This story appeared in his book entitled *The Mishomis Book* and is re-printed with the permission of Mr. Benton, to whom we say "Megwetch" (thank-you)!

# Original Man Walks the Earth

Boozhoo, I have more Ojibway stories to tell you. These e-ki-na-ma'-di-win' (teachings) have been handed down to me by my Grandfathers.

After Original Man was placed on the Earth, he was given instructions by the Creator. He was told to walk this Earth and name all the o-way-seug' (animals), the plants, the hills, and the valleys of the Creator's gi-ti-gan' (garden).

Original Man had no name of his own yet. Later, people would refer to him as Anishinabe and, still later, Way-na-boo'-zhoo. But at this early time, he who had no name would name all the Creation.

As Original Man walked the Earth, he named all of the ni-bi' (water). He identified all the rivers, streams, ponds, lakes and oceans. He learned that there were rivers that ran underground. These are the veins of Mother Earth. Water is her life blood. It purifies her and brings food to her.

Original Man also named all the parts of the body. He even named the o-kun-nug' (bones) and organs inside the body.

While Original Man was carrying out the instructions given to him by the Creator, he noticed that the Earth had four seasons. All life was part of a never-ending cycle.

The plants were given new life in the spring. With the coming of summer, they blossomed and bore the seeds for the next generation. Some of the plants produced fruits.

In the fall season, the leaves of many of the plants turned from green to many spectacular colors. The leaves gradually fell to the ground as the gee-zhi-gad-doon' (days) got shorter and the dee-bee-kad-doon' (nights) got colder.

In winter, the cold winds of the Gee-way'din (North) brought the purifying snows that cleansed Mother Earth. Some of the plants died and returned their bodies to their Mother. Other plants fell into a deep sleep and awoke only when Grandfather Sun and the warm winds of the Zha-wa-noong' (South) announced the coming of spring.

As Original Man traveled the Earth, he identified what fruits were good to eat and what was not to be eaten. As he went, he found that some o-gee'-bic-coon' (roots) were good for food. Others were good for mush-kee-ki' (medicine). Some roots could be used to make dyes of different colors and flavorings for food. Other roots could be used as a strong thread in sewing and in making tools.

As he walked, Original Man

talked with the animals. He named them as he went. He noted that some animals were good for we-sin'-ni-win' (food) and medicine. He noticed that each type of animal had its own individual kind of wisdom. He did not know that all of these plants and animals would play an important part for all the people that would be coming to live on the Earth at a later time.

Original Man traveled everywhere. There was not one plant, animal, or place that was not touched by him.

In his travels, Original Man began to notice that all the animals came in pairs and they reproduced. And yet, he was alone.

He spoke to his Grandfather the Creator and asked, "Why am I alone? Why are there no other ones like me?"

Gitchie Manito answered, "I will send someone to walk, talk and play with you."

He sent Ma-en'-gun (the wolf). With Ma-en'-gun by his side, Original Man again spoke to Gitchie Manito, "I have finished what you asked me to do. I have visited and named all the plants, animals, and places of this Earth. What would you now have me to do?"

Gitchie Manito answered Original Man and Ma-en'-gun, "Each of you are to be a brother to the other. Now, both of you are to walk the Earth and visit all its places."

So, Original Man and Ma-en'-gun walked the Earth and came to know all of her. In this journey they became very close to each other. They became like brothers. In their closeness they realized that they were brothers to all of the Creation.

When they had completed the task that Gitchie Manito asked them to do, they talked with the Creator once again.

The Creator said, "From this day on, you are to separate your paths. You must go your different ways."

"What shall happen to one of you will also happen to the other. Each of you will be feared, respected and misunderstood by the people that will later join you on this Earth."

And so Ma-en'-gun and Original Man set off on their different journeys.

This last teaching about the wolf is important for us today. What the Grandfather said to them has come true. Both the Indian and the wolf have come to be alike and have experienced the same thing. Both of them mate for life. Both have a Clan System and a tribe. Both have had their land taken from them. Both have been hunted for their wee-n'es'-si-see' (hair). And both have been pushed very close to destruction.



We can tell about our future as Indian people by looking at the wolf. It seems as though the wolf is beginning to come back to this land. Will this prove that Indian people will cease to be the "Vanishing Americans?" Will Indian people emerge to lead the way back to natural living and respect for our Earth Mother?

The teaching about wolf is important for another reason. From the wolf came the ah-ni-moosh-shug' (dogs) that are friends to our people today. They are brothers to us much like wolf was a brother to Original Man. Because Gitchie Manito separated the paths of wolf and man, and since our dogs today are relatives of the wolf, we should never let dogs be around our sacred ceremonies. To do so would violate the Creator's wishes and endanger the lives of those participating in the ceremony. So also, dogs are not supposed to be around places where ceremonial objects are stored. Some tribes today honor dogs in special ceremonies. This is done to recognize the special brotherhood that existed between wolf and Original Man.

It is from the sacrifices that Original Man made in naming all of the Creation that our Naming Ceremonies today are taken. For this ceremony, a medicine person is asked by the father and mother of a child to seek a name for their young one. This seeking can be done through fasting, meditation, prayer, or dreaming. The Spirit World might speak to the medicine person and give a name for the young child.

At a gathering of family and friends, the medicine person burns an offering of Tobacco and pronounces the new name to each of the Four Directions. All those present repeat the name each time it is called out.

In this way the Spirit World comes to accept and recognize the young child with the new name. It is said that prior to the Naming Ceremony, the spirits are not able to see the face of the child. It is

through this naming act that they look into the face of the child and recognize him as a living being. Thereafter, the Spirit World and all past relatives watch over and protect this child. They also prepare a place in the Spirit World that this living being can occupy when his life on Earth is at an end.

At this ceremony the parents of the child ask four women and four men to be sponsors for the child. It is a great honor to be asked to fill this position. After the child is given a name, each of the sponsors stand and proclaim a vow to support and guide this child in his development. In this way a provision is made by which the child will always be cared for.

Through this Naming Ceremony that was started by Original Man continuity is given to the lives of the people who would come to inhabit the Earth.

Today, we should use these ancient teachings to live our lives in harmony with the plan that the Creator gave us. We are to do these things if we are to be the natural people of the Universe.



A tired princess rests during a powwow. Each reservation selects junior and senior youth each year to represent the tribe at powwows.



# Kids on the reservations

Anishinabe parents are concerned that their children learn the ways of the culture. Being part of a minority, a group different than the dominant society, Anishinabe teachings, values, and language are not part of school. Even history does not relate the viewpoint of the Indian people. For instance, we don't think that Columbus discovered America because we already had!

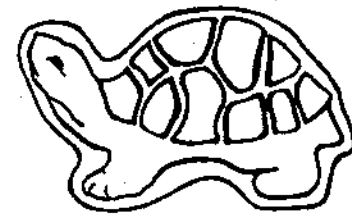
So, many of the tribal councils and parents try to assure that traditional knowledge and an understanding of the Anishinabe way. They promote opportunities to learn our language in on-reservation classes, bring us to pow wows and ceremonies, and make sure that culture is part of on-reservation programs, such as in Headstart. A few reservations, like Fond du Lac in Minnesota and Lac Courte Oreilles, have their own schools on reservation where Anishinabe culture is part of the curriculum.

One particularly important program is called T.R.A.I.L.S. which usually meets several times a week for several age groups. T.R.A.I.L.S. offers a variety of activities for reservation kids.

For instance the Bad River T.R.A.I.L.S. recently began the first on-reservation karate class, which has met with good success. T.R.A.I.L.S. encourages knowledge of the Anishinabe language and culture and pride of the Anishinabe heritage. It teaches self-respect, traditional respect of others and discourages drug and alcohol use. Seasonal culture camps are held for the youth at different sites. Traditional crafts, language, stories and spirituality is learned during these sessions.



Explaining hibernation to the Bad River Headstart Class is Ron Parisien, a wildlife technician with the Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission. Ron displays a badger to the group.



Members of the Red Cliff Boxing Club practise for an upcoming meet. Participants in competitive sports is encouraged on many reservations.



Anishinabe youth prepare poles for a sweat lodge — one of several traditional projects during a summer youth camp on the Red Cliff Reservation, Wisconsin.

# Tribal governments today

Tribes are somewhat like small states. They have their own elected governments, constitutions and laws which apply on the reservations. By the United States law, Indian tribes are called domestic, dependent nations. That is because the tribes were respected as sovereign nations when the first European settlers came to what is now the United States. That respect for the nationhood of tribes has remained as part of the United States Constitution and system of law.

Tribes are governed by tribal councils, much like city councils or county boards. Council members as well as tribal chairmen and officers are elected officials. On most reservations, council members serve for two years. In Minnesota tribal councils are called Reservation Business Committees (RBCs).

The tribal chairman is the leader of the tribe. The chairman is not a traditional chief, rather an elected leader - like the governor of a state is an elected leader.

Tribal councils make laws which govern the reservation. An example would be the codes which regulate on-reservation hunting and fishing activities. They also must pass the laws which govern tribal off-reservation hunting and fishing seasons. Tribal councils make budget decisions regarding the

reservation as well. For instance, the council determines the amount of monies which may be needed to run the various programs such as: social services, education, alcohol and drug abuse, and natural resource management.

The tribal councils also run businesses that are tribally owned. Many tribes have their own businesses, like restaurants, bingo halls, bowling lanes, construction companies and so on. The council, or RBC, is responsible for making the management decisions involved in running those businesses.

Council members must also deal with political issues that arise between the tribe and the federal, state, other tribal, county or city governments. This may have to do with environmental issues, roads, economic development or off-reservation hunting and fishing activities.

They must also hire and monitor tribal employees, much like a city or county. Each tribe must maintain a staff which includes administrative staff, tribal wardens, tribal biologists, social workers and medical staff, business managers and maintenance workers.

Essentially, running a tribe is much like running a county or state, so council members are kept busy and must be aware of many legal and political issues which may affect the tribe.



Lac Courte Oreilles Tribal Chairman Gaiashkibos being interviewed by WOJB Radio. Tribal Chairmen are the political leaders and spokespersons for their tribes. WOJB Radio — "The Voice of the Ojibwa" — is a public radio station located on the Lac Courte Oreilles Reservation near Hayward, WI.

## Treaty rights are very important to the Anishinabe

The Chippewa tribes in northern Wisconsin, Minnesota and Michigan have retained off-reservation hunting, fishing and gathering rights in treaties that were made with the U.S. government. These are called treaty rights.

Those treaties were made in the early to mid 1800s and include the 1836, 1837, 1842 and 1854 Treaties. Treaties are agreements made between governments. In those Treaties the United States government made agreements with the Chippewa nation to purchase land. These were called cession treaties. The tribes ceded land in exchange for services and money. The amount of money paid to the tribes per acre in these treaties was very, very small.

However, the tribes did not sell some of their rights, but rather kept them. These are the retained rights to continue to hunt, fish and gather on the lands that they had sold.

This is why the Chippewa today have the right to hunt, fish and gather off-reservation through regulations that are adopted by tribal ordinance. These treaty rights are very important to the Anishinabe people, not only because they provide for a way of living, but because they were reserved for us by our ancestors who had the wisdom to keep those rights for the generations to come.



Tribal elders are much respected by the Anishinabe and their advise is sought. Above Nelson Sheppo, Lac du Flambeau, participates in a ceremony. He holds a tobacco pouch.



Venison has always been an important part of the Anishinabe diet and remains so today. Hunters typically share their catch with an extended family, elders and the community.





Frank Wiggins, Bad River Reservation collects sap from sugarbush (maple trees) every spring. The sap is boiled until the liquid turns into a thick tasty syrup.

## Maple sugaring

Spring is traditionally another special time of year for the Anishinabe because the sap starts to run in the sugarbush (maple stands). Most of the people who gather maple syrup do so for home use. Maple syrup and maple sugar were traditionally used as sweeteners by the Anishinabe people.

To gather sap from the sugarbush, taps, or little wooden spouts, are set into the tree trunks. Containers are nailed below each tap to collect the sap as it slowly drips out of the spout.

Each day the cans are checked, emptied and reset. Once enough sap has been collected, it is emptied into a vat and boiled for a long time. It is boiled and stirred until the evaporation turns the runny liquid into a thick syrup.

Maple sugaring is pretty special because not too many people do it anymore. Many of the tribal elders recall using maple syrup and candies as a sweetener for their foods regularly. But now its more of a treat.



Ricing — an early fall event for the Anishinabe.



"Dancing" rice on the Fond du Lac Reservation, MN.

# Ricing

In the early fall of every year comes ricing season. This is a very important time for the Anishinabe because we harvest the manomin (wild rice) that grows in the river beds and shallows of the lakes.

The Anishinabe people have always depended on wild rice as a very important food. That is why many of the reservations are located near important ricing rivers or lakes. Off reservations wild rice is also considered very special, a gourmet food, and is very expensive to buy in the stores. This is because there is only a limited amount of wild rice and because it takes a lot of time to harvest and process the rice correctly.

The elders of the tribe usually watch the rice. So do the tribe's biologists. When it is ripe, the season is declared open.

Many people still use the canoe to harvest rice. The canoe, which in early days was made out of birchbark, is still the best type of boat to use for ricing because it glides through the delicate rice beds without tearing up the rice stalks.

One person poles the canoe through the rice beds. He stands up in the rear of the canoe and uses a long pole to slowly push the canoe along. Another person sits in the middle of the canoe with ricing sticks used to carefully bend the long stalks of rice over the canoe and then gently knock the ripened rice into the bottom of the canoe.

Anishinabe people are very careful not to break or damage the rice. It is highly valued and many of the old rice beds in Wisconsin have been destroyed by development and the use of motorboats

through the rice beds. Motors snag the rice and tear it out.

After the canoe is filled with rice, it is brought ashore and dried in the sun and then carefully heated. Later the rice is "danced" to break the husks off the grain and finally winnowed, which is still done by many in birchbark winnowing baskets. Some people still use the old ways of heating the rice in a huge iron kettle over a fire. The rice must be watched very carefully or it will burn. Others have developed machines which process the rice mechanically.

Wild rice is popular for soups, casseroles or delicious side dishes and is frequently served with venison, beaver or waterfowl. Wild rice is always part of Anishinabe feasts.



# The Pow Wow

Pow Wow time is a special time for the Anishinabe people. It is special in many ways, for it is an occasion to come together and meet friends and family from other reservations, a time to share in food and feasting, ceremonies and the dance.

Most reservations have one weekend in the summertime which is their pow wow weekend. So the "pow wow circuit" is busy during the summer months for many Anishinabe families and dancers as they travel to and from the different reservations.

Central to the pow wow are the drums. Most reservations have their own drum—which is usually a traditionally made dance drum and six or so singers. Dance drums are different from ceremonial drums which are used for special, sacred purposes. The singers have had to learn many different songs in the Anishinabe language. The songs have different meanings and different purposes. There are songs for warriors or veterans, honor songs, songs for women, and inter-tribal songs.

Dancers dance in a large circle around the drums, which are in the center of the dance arena. The dancers have also had to learn the steps and movements for a variety of dances as well as make the special dance outfits.

The pow wows have many types of dancers, including traditional and fancy dancers, grass dancers and jingle dress dancers. Hours of work and craftsmanship go into the dance outfits worn at the pow wow. Traditional men and women dancers wear outfits as they Anishinabe did in the old day. They use buckskin for leggings and dresses, bones for breast plates and jewelry and the beading on their outfits follows traditional colors and patterns.

Fancy dancers are more modern. The men sometimes wear bright colorful feather bustles and others are in "grass dance" outfits which simulate the use of long prairie grasses in days gone by. Usually they use bright colored yarns and have beautiful bustles which they wear on their backs. Women dancers have dresses made of silks, decorated with tassels. Bibs, or smocks, are usually beaded beautifully as are their belts and leggings. This is what I want to be. The dance style of fancy dancers is fast and intricate. Traditional dancers usually move slower, but all their movements have a special meaning.

Jingle dress dancers have metal jingles fastened in many layers around their dance outfits. They are very beautiful and the sound of a whole line of jingle dress dancers entering the dance circle is a won-

derful accompaniment to the beat of the drum.

Traders come, too, from all over and set up stands on the outskirts of the dance circle. They sell many kinds of Indian articles - many of them are made by Anishinabe, but others have things made by southwestern tribes as well, like the Navajo. The food stands have all kinds of wonderful things to eat. Fresh, hot fry bread with honey or Indian tacos are always popular. But they have all kinds of special things - venison and wild rice soups or venison burgers are another favorite.

Many things happen during the pow wow. Families and friends come together, something like a homecoming. There are special meetings on reservation and often times spiritual ceremonies take place. Naming ceremonies, for instance, are often performed at

pow wow time. This is a special occasion when an Indian person receives his Indian name from a spiritual person.

The pow wow also has special honor dances, which are dedicated to honoring particular people for their services. Almost always the warrior, or veterans, are honored during a pow wow. So are people who have done special things for the community.

Pow wows usually begin with the Grand Entry. All dancers line-up and enter in single file during the first song. In front comes the flags and flagbearers with the American flag, the Anishinabe Eagle Staff, and a Veteran's Flag. The drum continues until all dancers have entered the dance circle. When the drum stops, opening ceremonies and prayers are performed by our spiritual leaders.



A fancy dancer in a contest pow wow.



A youthful grass dancer.



A traditional dancer.



# Anishinabe environmentalism

The Anishinabe are a spiritual people and believe in taking time to give respect and thanks to the Great Spirit. We are taught to honor the earth and to live in harmony with nature and all the other forms of life. This includes the four-legged creatures, the winged creatures, and those that swim in the water. The Earth is our mother and provides for us all that we need, but we must respect her well-being and be sure to care for her.

For these reasons, the Anishinabe are very concerned today

about the well-being of the Earth and all her creatures. Modern day problems such as pollution, toxic waste, acid rain, over harvest of trees and animals are of great concern to Anishinabe tribes. Tribal councils and tribal experts work with others in the larger community to promote a healthier environment - a healing process that is needed by a much abused Mother Earth.

We look to the future—to the well-being not only of ourselves, but for the generations which will

follow us. This is as our ancestors did, and the ways which we continue to follow. Therefore, we concern ourselves with issues such as mining and the impact that mining operations may have on the Earth in the coming years that our eyes may not live to see.

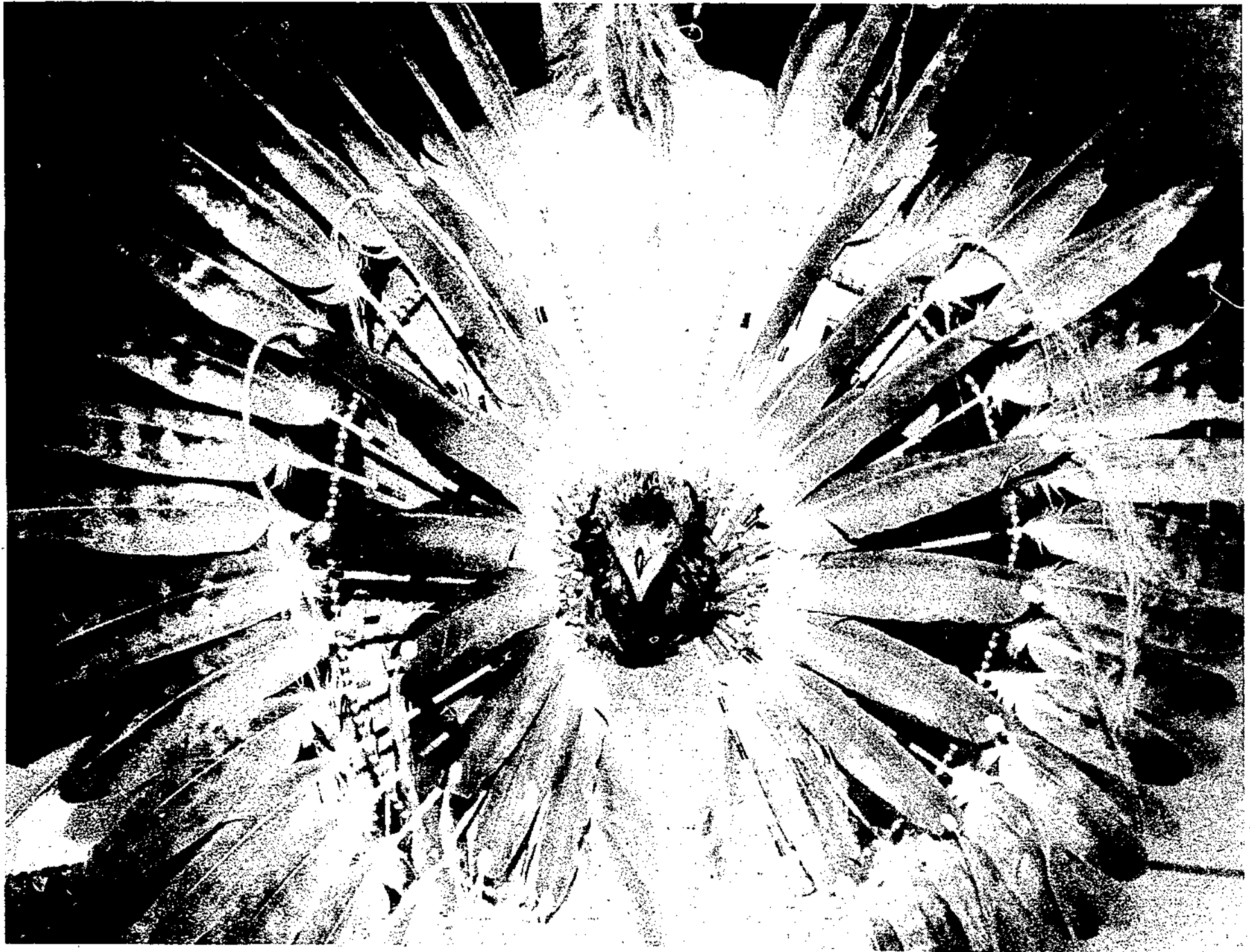
The Anishinabe people have been spiritually instructed that they are "Keepers of the Earth." This is a great responsibility and also a great opportunity to apply our values and our wisdom towards caring for the Earth.

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The bustle from a traditional dance outfit.