Iskigamizigan (Maple Sugar Camp)

Traditionally for the Ojibwe, the springtime ritual of the making ziinzibaakwad (maple sugar) was an important harvest season. In fact, the month of April is named for it—iskigamizige-giizis, Maple Sugar Moon. Collected ziinzibaakwadwaaboo (maple sap), was cooked down to sugar, which could be easily stored for later use and transported in ziinzibaakwado-makak (birch bark baskets for maple sugar). The people would head to their sugarbush camps once days warmed enough to get the sap flowing through the tree trunks. Days would be spent gathering the sap and slowly and watchfully simmering it over the fire until it became crystalline. Today, many Ojibwe people continue the tradition each spring, often making both maple sugar and maple syrup because today storage and transporting the liquid are not an issue.

The artwork is by Wesley Ballinger, GLIFWC’s ANA language specialist, who is designing story boards using Ojibwemowin (Ojibwe language) to talk about several traditional Ojibwe harvest activities.

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