

OUR HEARTS  
ARE AS ONE *fire*

AN OJIBWAY-ANISHINABE  
VISION FOR THE FUTURE

**JERRY FONTAINE**



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# MAAITAA

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## Prologue

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**Makwa ogimaa n'di-zhi-ni-kawz, makwa n' doodem  
zhigo ojibway-anishinabe niin sagkeeng doon-ji**  
(My name is bear chief, I'm bear clan and an Ojibway-  
speaking human being from "Where the River Widens.")

I WAS BORN an Ojibway-speaking anishinabe (*human being*), the son of an Ojibway-Anishinabe man and an Ojibway-Anishinabe woman, and grandchild of Ojibway-Anishinabe men and women. And, of course, I'll die as one. I was told at a very young age, kay-go-wah-ni-kayn andi-wayn-ji-ahn (*don't ever forget where you come from*).

The journey I share in this book is sacred and ceremonial in nature. Everything I've been shown and taught throughout this journey has been done within the context of ceremony and

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*English translations appear in the text or in endnotes the first time an Ojibwaymowin term is used. An extensive glossary is included at the end of the book.*

teachings, which embody the spiritual relationship between all living things and the universe. In this regard, everything shared within the context of this story is about our beginning and origin. So I begin with ah-se-ma-ke-wahd (*a tobacco offering*), calling upon the spirits and stories of Obwandiac, Tecumtha and Shingwauk. During the passing of tobacco and calling of the spirits, I ask to remain true to their visions and stories and give thanks to the ah-di-so-kahn-i-ni-ni-wahg/kwe-wahg (*sacred storytellers*) for sharing the ah-di-so-kah-nahg (*sacred stories*) and their di-bah-ji-mo-wi-nan (*stories of personal experience*), which help guide and teach us.

I'm sitting with Darrell Boissoneau of the nah-may doodem (*Sturgeon clan*), outside the lodge at his home in Ketegaunseebee (Garden River, Ontario). Darrell and I first met as *Indian Act chiefs* during the Assembly of First Nations national chief election in 1991.

We're talking about the ceremony that we'll begin shortly. Everything said about the ceremony is spoken quietly and in a thoughtful manner. This is a serious thing and we have to do it right and respectfully.



We're sharing these stories this fine, warm evening - it's still spring on the calendar but it feels like summer here. We're inside a lodge that we constructed. This lodge was constructed by many people who came over to help build it . . . nephews and friends and so on. It was initiated by our sweat lodge chief, James Roach. So this is where we are this evening. This is where we come to teach, where we come to learn, where we come to share, where we come to feast, where we come to do sweat lodge and bring families of the community together. What is important is that we started off in the sacred ceremony.

First of all, tobacco was passed, then the pipe was lit, and it was lifted. These are important anishinabe protocols that you must follow because in the past this is how we began our ceremony and conducted ourselves. Unfortunately, we've forgotten that this is an important step when you want to share stories. Many anthropologists, researchers and other people who want to acquire the knowledge of our people come in without using this part of the research, the protocol of sharing. They forget the offering of gifts and the expression and importance of these ceremonies so that we can share them in a respectful and truthful way. So I think that starting off in this way is a good way.

Starting off in such a sacred and important way is again giving recognition to how we did things and that we will continue to do this in the future. It tells us how we're different and how we do things differently from western society. This acknowledges and validates our own methods of research, our epistemology, our pedagogy, because this is where our truth resides - within these lodges and the stories shared - from lifting the pipe and all the sacred symbols that belong to our people. Being inside this lodge is honourable and we'll be guided by our ancestors and the spirits that you asked to be with us this evening, so that at all times we will speak the truth.<sup>1</sup>



# Nitam igo

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## INTRODUCTION

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**OUR HEARTS ARE as One Fire: An Ojibway-Anishinabe Vision for the Future** describes the impacts of Obwandiac (Ojibway and Ota'wa-Anishinabe),<sup>1</sup> Tecumtha (Shawnee-Anishinabe)<sup>2</sup> and Shingwauk (Ojibway-Anishinabe)<sup>3</sup> – their leadership and gift of vision – and of the N'swi-ish-ko-day-kawn Anishinabeg O'dish-ko-day-kawn (*Our Hearts Are as One Fire*), known in English as the *Three Fires Confederacy*, on the Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabe world. The use of the literal and metaphoric o-dah-bah-ji-gahn (*sacred bundle*), within which my pipe, medicines, knowledge of ceremonies, songs, teachings, and sacred, moral and personal stories lie, and ah-zhi-kay-ni-mo-nahd-a-di-sid bay-mah-di-sid<sup>4</sup> to help us learn and understand is uniquely Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabe. *Our Hearts Are as One Fire* is an attempt to share the spiritual journey of these three men through the eyes of their family, traditional storytellers and an Ojibway-Anishinabe person.

Our truth, gah-wi-zi-mah-ji-say-muh-guhk (*stories of origin*) and ah-di-so-kah-nahg ground the Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabe identity and intimate relationship with the land. This is what Obwandiac, Tecumtha and

Shingwauk sought to protect. Incredibly, we still struggle with this even today! Their struggles reflected their strength of vision and their commitment to protecting the Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabe way of life; Manitou Aki (*Creator's Land*); and the notion of naa'wi aki (*the middle ground*), which John Borrows describes as an “established body of intercultural law” with entrenched political, economic and military relationships between Anishinabe and *Euro-American* nations.<sup>5</sup> For Obwandiac, Tecumtha and Shingwauk, the middle ground was both a physical and spiritual place. It represented – and still does to some extent – a separation between cultures and nations. This separation is reflected throughout the collective history in the *Two Row Wampum*,<sup>6</sup> as the Anima-wi-ti-go-ing,<sup>7</sup> A-shig-a-ning<sup>8</sup> or the *indian nation*. Intimate accounts of experiences at different moments in the lives of Obwandiac, Tecumtha and Shingwauk were nurtured by unwritten messages and ah-way-chi-gay-wi-nan (*moral stories*), which acknowledged their commitment and responsibility to the Ojibway-, Ota'wa-, and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabeg. To their minds, separation meant reconciliation.

I have drawn heavily from Ojibway-Anishinabe gi-ki-dogah-gi-bi-i-zhi-say-ma-guhk<sup>9</sup> or gah-gi-gi-do-win (*oral history*),<sup>10</sup> the ah-di-so-kah-nahg and di-bah-ji-mo-wi-nan, three layers of knowing that help us understand the significance of o-gi-ma-wi-win (*to be esteemed*), o-gi-ma-win (*governance*), i-na-ko-ni-gay-win (*social order*) and di-bayn-di-zi-win (*to own one's self; to be self-determining and self-governing*). Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabe nah-nah-gah-dah-wayn-ji-gay-win<sup>11</sup> and i-nah-di-zi-win<sup>12</sup> are really about the Ojibway-Anishinabe story in thought and application.

*Our Hearts Are as One Fire* explores and speaks to the Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabe belief and de-bwe-win-da-mo-win (*faith*) in the principles of o-gi-ma-wi-win. It also tells us that generations ago, the honour and respect shown to Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabe leadership reflected the ideals of Ojibway, Ota'wa

and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabe societies. The families of the Anishinabeg have been respectful of the legacies of Obwandiac, Tecumtha and Shingwauk, which have been long-lived.

It's also fundamentally important to discuss Obwandiac, Tecumtha and Shingwauk's impact within the N'swi-ish-ko-day-kawn Anishinabeg O'dish-ko-day-kawn and the role the confederacy would have in shaping the *United States* and *Canada*. In fact, at the height of its power and influence, the confederacy had no parallel.

Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabe i-zhi-tah-win (*customary*), ah-ni-kay-o-gi-mah-kah-nah-wahd (*hereditary*) and o-gi-chi-dahg (*strong heart*) leadership had a definitive role within the structure of Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabe society. In fact, any discussion today concerning Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabe sovereignty has to take into consideration the clearly defined parameters of leadership and governance. Obwandiac, Tecumtha and Shingwauk reflected leadership in its most organic form, because they held no formal authority or power as such but were still able to unite the Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabeg and allied nations in brilliant and effective alliances that challenged the colonial powers of the day.

I've heard elders reflect that we sometimes get the power of knowing from the spirit that comes to us in stories and dreams. Not surprisingly, I have come to recognize and understand this in using Ojibway-Anishinabe-grounded i-zhi-chi-gay-win/ah-zhi-kay-ni-mo-nahd-a-di-sid bay-mah-di-sid to seek knowledge and answers. These ways have been used by our people since the beginning of time to learn things and find answers to complex issues. In this regard, o-dah-bah-ji-gahn<sup>13</sup> helps us understand the significance of Anishinabe manitou kay-wi-nan (*ceremonies*), n' zhwa-sho-gi-ki-nah-mah-gay-wi-nan (*the seven teachings*) and miskew ah-zha-way-chi-win (*the act of flowing; blood memory*).<sup>14</sup> We listen to and are touched by the stories of Obwandiac, Tecumtha and Shingwauk and that of the

N'swi-ish-ko-day-kawn Anishinabeg O'dish-ko-day-kawn from a place that is both refreshing and spiritually grounded.

My understanding of the world comes from this Ojibway-Anishinabe perspective, and I write and share everything from this unique place. This is not meant to disrespect anyone; rather, it is about honesty in acknowledging my place and that of my parents and grandparents. I imagine the same should be true for those who are Ojibway-French-Anishinabe, Ojibway-English-Anishinabe and Ojibway-German-Anishinabe and who wished to acknowledge their father and mother and so on.

The memories of Obwandiac, Tecumtha and Shingwauk and of the N'swi-ish-ko-day-kawn Anishinabeg O'dish-ko-day-kawn are preserved and acknowledged throughout Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabe communities and within our miskew ah-zha-way-chi-win, ah-di-so-kah-nahg (*sacred narratives*), ah-way-chi-gay-wi-nan and manitou kay-wi-nan. Together with our own di-bah-ji-mo-wi-nan, they form important parts of this story's metaphorical and literal o-dah-bah-ji-gahn.

They speak to Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabe truth and reinforce the accuracy of our stories, which is important from my point of view because academic discourse is often prone to long-winded monologue and rhetoric, making it difficult to listen to. Therefore, this conversation is meant to be direct, with specific focus on nah-nah-gah-dah-wayn-ji-gay-win, i-nah-di-zi-win and a-zhi-kay-ni-mo-nahd-a-di-sid bay-mah-di-sid/Ojibway-Anishinabe i-zhi-chi-gay-win – all of which connects us with a world that is grounded in the spirit of the land itself.

We've always understood that our Ojibway-Anishinabe gah-wi-zi-mah-ji-say-muh-guhk and ah-di-so-kah-nahg define our identity and intimate relationship with the land in its purest form. This is what Obwandiac, Tecumtha and Shingwauk sought to protect.

*Our Hearts Are as One Fire* seeks to bring some clarity to Obwandiac, Tecumtha and Shingwauk's understanding of

Neolin's (Lunaapewa-Anishinabe) and Lau-lau-we-see-kau's (Shawnee-Anishinabe) understanding of and spiritual visions regarding colonization and loss of culture and territory. I have to make it perfectly clear that this story is not an exercise intended to provide definitive answers regarding Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabe virtues specifically as they relate to leadership and governance. Rather, it seeks to explore the idea of leadership as expressed from the perspective of Obwandiac, Tecumtha and Shingwauk's responsibilities and influence. In sharing their stories, we explore the ideas of Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabe o-gi-ma-wi-win, o-gi-ma-win and the N'swi-ish-ko-day-kawn Anishinabeg O'dish-ko-day-kawn.

*Our Hearts Are as One Fire* also attempts to provide an appreciation for Obwandiac, Tecumtha and Shingwauk's understanding of their worlds as shared through their visions and beliefs. In some instances, when we speak of ceremony, the written word can often remain mute, depending on who is reading and writing. Chickasaw-Cheyenne-Anishinabe legal scholar Sakej Henderson, for example, points out that the original philosophers and thinkers of this land believed unequivocally that their stories were an intrinsic part of the universe.

It's important to keep in mind that how we came to think this way about our reality and our way of being and how we use these ways of knowing, thinking, doing, ceremony and spirituality to find answers can help all of us understand the subtle underpinnings of what is shared and written. The focus of *Our Hearts Are as One Fire* is therefore both ceremonial and academic, creating a strange dichotomy.

The personal and collective stories of Obwandiac, Tecumtha, Shingwauk and the N'swi-ish-ko-day-kawn Anishinabeg O'dish-ko-day-kawn concentrate on their resistance to Euro-American colonial hegemony and explore the complex relationships each had with the world around them. These relationships were often different from the one-dimensional blood-thirsty, stoic

and noble-savage stereotype used to portray Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabeg in the literature and throughout history. This story, on the other hand, describes the multi-layered and multidimensional spiritual, intellectual, emotional and political relationships Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabeg had with the world around them.

Ojibway-Anishinabe spiritual leader and philosopher Bawdwaywidun Banaise (Eddie Benton-Banai), from Lac Courte Oreilles, Wisconsin, tells us that “a long time ago, may-wi-zhuh our people, the original first peoples of this part of the world were organized in many different ways” and that the N'swi-ish-ko-day-kawn Anishinabeg O'dish-ko-day-kawn was established at the time of chi-bi-mo-day-win (*migration*), when the earth was young. In time it came to represent a political, economic, military and spiritual alliance that asserted sovereignty over a broad expanse of territory. The history of the N'swi-ish-ko-day-kawn Anishinabeg O'dish-ko-day-kawn goes back to the prophecy of the seven fires. Each fire represents a period of time marked by the occurrence of significant events such as dreams, celestial happenings and prophesied experiences.

In terms of responsibility within the N'swi-ish-ko-day-kawn Anishinabeg O'dish-ko-day-kawn, the Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabeg (*youngest brother*) were given the responsibility for safekeeping the *sacred fire*, the symbol of independence and sovereignty. The Ota'wa-Anishinabeg (*middle brother*) were responsible for preserving the sacred bundles and providing for the economic well-being of the confederacy. Lastly, the Ojibway-Anishinabeg (*eldest brother*) would look after the spiritual knowledge of the three nations, and record their history and their sacred and moral stories.

The N'swi-ish-ko-day-kawn Anishinabeg O'dish-ko-day-kawn's leadership, governance structure and use of the doodem (*clan*) was effective from a political, economic and military perspective because it defined nation responsibility, territorial control and protection from other nations.

## A NOTE ABOUT LANGUAGE

In applying this Ojibway-Anishinabe approach and pedagogy, I have used Ojibwaymowin concepts and words throughout the text. Ojibwaymowin is an important aspect of the Ojibway-Anishinabe gah-ki-do-gah-gi-bi-i-zhi-say-ma-guhk, kayn-dah-so-win (*ways of knowing*) and ah-zhi-di-bah-ji-mo-wi-nan (*traditions*) that have been passed from father to son, from mother to daughter, and from one generation to the next.

The Ojibwaymowin words are written phonetically. I've also taken the liberty of italicizing the first appearance of Anglicized words for Anishinabe place names and English word translations, since Ojibwaymowin is my first language. Again, this is not meant to offend anyone; rather, it's simply how I view the world. I make no apologies for this.

I use the word "Anishinabe" to describe other *indigenous* peoples and nations throughout this discussion because I have serious difficulties with western-imposed terms such as "*aboriginal*" and "indigenous." In reality they have no meaning or substance for me. I imagine I could be accused of the same thing for using the term "Anishinabe"; however, I have to be clear that I use the term out of respect for humankind. Having said this, I have no problem with the Mohawk-Anishinabeg describing me as Ojibway-Onkwehonwe, or the Okanagan-Anishinabeg doing the same with Ojibway-Sylix, the M'kmaq-Anishinabeg referring to me as an Ojibway-Ji'nm, or the Cree-Anishinabeg calling me Ojibway-Inineew. The point of all this is to move away from prescribed western words/classifications that have sought to minimize our being and invalidate our existence as Anishinabeg and human beings.

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*English translations appear in the text or in endnotes the first time an Ojibwaymowin term is used. An extensive glossary is included at the end of the book.*

The use of Ojibwaymowin throughout this discussion provides some context for traditional concepts of Ojibway-Anishinabe leadership, governance, ceremony and ethos, as the Ojibway-Anishinabe language speaks to our family, life and spirit. I appreciate those Ojibwaymowin teachers and speakers who support the standardization of writing, spelling and applying the principles of the double-vowel system. However, I have made a conscious effort to ignore this approach and the old-world Latin linguistic structures because of the linguistic colonization of our stories and memories that has taken place.

Gerald Vizenor, an Ojibway-Anishinabe scholar, tells us that the “anishinabe past was a visual memory and oratorical gesture of dreams and songs and tales incised as pictomyths on birch bark scrolls.”<sup>15</sup> I have therefore also made a conscious decision to ignore the rules of those who invented the written language, who invented the “indian, renamed the tribes, allotted the land and divided ancestry by geometric degrees.”<sup>16</sup> In my mind and spirit, Ojibwaymowin is the land and heart. It’s also difficult to apply English words and meanings to ah-zhi-di-bah-ji-mo-wi-nan, manitou kay-wi-nan, ah-di-so-kah-nahg, di-bah-ji-mo-wi-nan and the manitou wi-win (*coming to an understanding of the mystery*), because they are deeply spiritual at their core.

Our description of Ojibwaymowin as a kind and caring language is also helpful, since this is the language of ceremony, which has the natural ability to gift our dreams and visions with clarity and truth. Ojibwaymowin spiritually connects us because we feel it; we watch, listen and learn. Accordingly, I write and spell in Ojibwaymowin as I hear and feel it because it’s my mother and grandmothers whom I hear.

It was also important for me to reference seasons and dates weweni (*in a more truthful way*), mindful that Ojibway, Ota’wa, Ishkodawatomi, Menominee, Sac-Fox, Myaamia<sup>17</sup> and Bwa-anuk<sup>18</sup> Anishinabe nations would gather at Tchingabeng (*Cross Village*) to sound their voices and bring out the o-dah-bah-ji-gahn

for significant community and nation business from after the first thunder in April until the last thunder in mid-October. All important business was done in this way.<sup>19</sup>

Once decisions were reached, the opwaagan (*pipe*) was smoked and a visual record was made to remind everyone that the diplomatic and societal protocols were acknowledged and respected by the protocols of biin-di-go-dah-di-win (*to enter each other's lodges*) and bezhig onaagan gaye bezhig emikwaan (*one dish with one spoon*) – principles that governed how we treated each other.

Since the window for doing business was short (April–October),<sup>20</sup> seasons were very important. Treaties and other significant agreements would be negotiated and signed in June, July, August or September. (I'm therefore not sure what to make of treaties negotiated and signed during the winter months.)

I've decided to write this way because of attempts to erase our history and change our stories. If you visit Ojibway-Anishinabe sacred sites you won't see plaques or anything indicating why a particular site or name was important to us, as its importance is often reflected in the description of the place.

When you try to kill a language and replace it with another, you kill part of the truth and story. Can you imagine a world whose languages have been killed? That world becomes less articulate and beautiful. Using Ojibwaymowin is fundamentally important to reclaiming our voice and visions, because it's a way of talking with the universe.

This story echoes the generational experience of Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabeg and our relationship with the land. Obwandiac, Tecumtha and Shingwauk's leadership in challenging Euro-American colonial hegemony gave context to the idea of the middle ground, which was firmly rooted within this relationship.

## **THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF BAWDWAYWIDUN BANAISE**

Bawdwaywidun Banaise (Edward Benton-Banai) took on the responsibility of sharing elements of this story, as he considered it important in helping Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomini-Anishinabeg understand the interrelationships of space, land and territory.<sup>21</sup> In one sense, it's this concept of space, land and territory that anchors the stories and collective memories found in this narrative.

A pivotal moment in *American* history occurred on July 28, 1968, when a group of Anishinabeg started a movement to address the issues of equal rights, self-determination, improved living conditions, and protection and implementation of treaty rights. Spirituality and traditions soon became the rallying points of the American Indian Movement (AIM).

The movement and its notion of Red Power saw self-determination as both a means to an end and a means for taking control of *indian* lives in indian communities. At the forefront of the movement were spiritual leaders like Bawdwaywidun Banaise. There are some who believe that the movement actually began when Bawdwaywidun talked to Stillwater Prison inmates, urging them to “break the cycle of indians being sent to prison, not getting training, being released, and then going back to prison.”<sup>22</sup> To do this, he believed that indians had to establish a political agenda founded on “spiritualism”<sup>23</sup> – the one common thread that bound us to the land, our ancestors and each other.

The movement argued that police brutality, poor housing, unemployment, and poor education opportunities and facilities in *Minneapolis* had to be addressed and given municipal, state and national priority. Bawdwaywidun Banaise was one of the few who was able to create a narrative about this systemic violence and racism. He patrolled the city's streets to protect indian people from police brutality; he insisted that government prosecute those who killed indians; he demanded respect

for indian peoples' rights, customs and land. This commitment to purpose and action was not lost on the Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabeg.

I've had opportunities over the last several years to speak to Bawdwaywidun about the creation of the American Indian Movement and many other issues. Some of our discussions focused on the following questions: How did the United States and its historical social, political and economic narrative shape the movement's vision during the 1960s and 1970s? What were the critical events that moved people like him to start the movement? What were the movement's specific objectives when it was created? What can we learn from the movement's strategy of focusing on hope, self-determination and sovereignty? I refer to his responses to these questions throughout *Our Hearts Are as One Fire*.

Throughout this journey, Bawdwaywidun helped me understand who we are, how we came to these places and how we came to accept this way of life, which was "preserved in many different places like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that has been scattered from the Atlantic to the Pacific."<sup>24</sup> I also came to appreciate the way in which our di-bah-ji-mo-wi-nan and ah-di-so-kah-nahg helped define how we see ourselves. To my mind, Obwandiac, Tecumtha and Shingwauk spoke and sought to protect all of this.

Mii i'i-way ojibway-anishinabe i-zhi-chi-gay-win.  
Zhigo mii'iw eta-go o-way neen-gi-kayn-dahn zhigo  
ni-gi-noon-dah-wah ... Ahaaw sa. Weweni.

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# 1

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Gah-o-mah-  
mah-wahn-dah-wi-zid  
gah-ki-nah-gay-goo  
ji-gi-kayn-dah-so aki

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A PROPHET IS SOMEONE WHO HAS  
A COMPLETED VIEW OF THE WORLD;  
HE/SHE IMAGINES A WORLD THAT  
DOESN'T EXIST, SEES THINGS AS THEY  
ARE AND ASKS WHY, OR HE/SHE MIGHT  
DREAM THINGS THAT NEVER WERE  
AND SAY WHY NOT

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**Ni-biin-daa-koo-ji-ge gaye ni' o-nah-ko-nah  
ah-di-so-kah-nahg zhigo di-bah-ji-mo-wi-nan  
g'dah mi-kwe-ni-mah-nahn obwandiacbun (nigig),  
tecumthabun (mizhibizhi), miinwaa shingwaukbun  
(I pass tobacco and ceremonially call upon the sacred  
narratives, stories of personal experience and spirit  
of Obwandiac, Tecumtha and Shingwauk.)  
Meegwetch.**

I BEGIN THIS part of the story by calling upon the sacred stories and spirit of Obwandiac, Tecumtha and Shingwauk. I ask that I be truthful and respectful to their stories and I offer my tobacco.

**Mii i'i-way ojibway-anishinabe i-zhi-chi-gay-win.  
Zhigo mii'iw eta-go o-way neen-gi-kayn-dahn zhigo  
ni-gi-noon-dah-wah . . . Ahaaw sa. Weweni.**

When I was elected to my first term as *Indian Act* chief at Sagkeeng, an Ojibway-Anishinabe community, in 1987, my father pointed out that I would probably be expected to take on many responsibilities different from the ones prescribed by the *Indian Act* because this was the nature of the colonial beast. The challenge, he warned, would be to determine the fine line between being an advocate for the people and being effective opposition to the policies of the federal and provincial levels of government.

At the outset, I struggled to adjust to this new role because of the political and social dysfunction that was entrenched in the community. I came to realize very early that the *Indian Act* didn't do us any favours. This was in stark contrast to the world we once knew, one that produced leaders who were respectful

and understood the importance of balance and harmony within the clan, community and nation. Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabe society allowed for and encouraged this. It couldn't function any other way.

In the past, factional strife over any issue was a rarity; matters of the clan, community and nation were always discussed and decided in assembly by consensus. During these debates, o-gi-ma-wi-win were expected to listen and act in accordance with the decisions reached and in external matters were expected to be respectful and fair-minded and to have the ability to maintain a balance between competing interests.

### **OGIMAWIWIN | LEADERSHIP**

In every respect, Obwandiac, Tecumtha and Shingwauk's leadership styles came to define the true meaning of "leadership" within an Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabe construct. It should be noted that there is an obvious distinction between leadership and the notion of power within the Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabe world; leadership was certainly not about power.

For the most part, Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabe leadership have always been guided by the gift of spirituality and vision. I think this would be true of most Anishinabe societies as well. Comparatively, Tecumtha's vision of a sovereign Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabe state centred on a confederacy of Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabe nations was the outcome of at least two generations of activism and resistance. Tecumtha was therefore able to reach back into the past and draw on networks of international relations that stretched from the east coast to the most southerly parts of Manitou Aki, the west coast and the far north – economic, political, social and military relationships that had been vibrant and sustained since the beginning of time.

The question of leadership became more important to me during my tenure as *Indian Act* chief because of the political

divide that existed. This political separation was complicated by the lack of mutual accountability, and it seemed that the damage was almost irreparable. It struck me very early on that my political survival depended on mitigating some of these problems.

### **SAGKEENG | WHERE THE RIVER WIDENS**

Sagkeeng doon-ji (*I'm from Where the River Widens*). This is the place where my parents<sup>1</sup> and many from my family were born and are buried. It's an incredibly beautiful and spiritual place, yet it can be one of the most difficult places to live. Sagkeeng is an Ojibway-Anishinabe community situated at the mouth of *Lake Winnipeg*, where the *Winnipeg River* empties into it, and is one of the largest Ojibway-Anishinabe communities in Manitou Abi (Manitoba), with a population of approximately 8,500 citizens. Sagkeeng is also a signatory to Treaty 1, signed on August 3, 1871.

The separation of the community by the Winnipeg River into north and south shore has created many problems financially, politically and socially for Sagkeeng. It's certainly made for interesting political dynamics, given that many of the community's services and organizations are geographically situated on the south shore. Consequently, the community has had to continually address issues of north shore disconnect and separation for as long as I can remember.

Sagkeeng has always been an interesting study in contrasts. However, to my mind these contrasts are what keep the community focused on its vision for the future, one of political, social and economic sovereignty, along with improved social conditions, higher levels of employment and greater self-determination.

In March 1987, Sagkeeng was in receivership and in the midst of serious turmoil. There were issues with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), the *Indian Act* chief and council-appointed school board, co-management and so on. It was an

incredibly volatile place. As the newly elected *Indian Act* chief and council, we felt that we had thunder and lightning in our hands and were ready to make change. However, we were quickly brought back to earth.

On our very first day in office, we were given our first dose of reality. There was no joyous welcome or ceremony. It was mid-March and winter was being stubborn about leaving. The day was cold, damp and grey. Inside and outside the band (administrative) office, people were starting to gather.

In its arrogance or incompetence, INAC was either late or simply not coming to distribute the monthly welfare disbursements. After a few telephone calls, we found out that INAC wouldn't be coming that day. Problems with the requisitions, we were told. People became frustrated, quarrelsome and angry. Many shouted, "Why did we elect you bastards? What are my kids going to eat? You're all fucking useless!" This was certainly not how I had envisioned my first day in elected office.

However, with the help of my father and a local store-owner, we were able to assist some people with food and basic necessities. I promised myself that day that INAC would never put Sagkeeng in this situation again. The federal government, it seems, has the audacity to play with peoples' lives because this is how oppression and colonization work. It sees no harm in this!

I quickly came to the realization that two of the problems facing Anishinabeg were the *Indian Act* itself and the bureaucracy created to administer its policies. Everything disturbing about this federal piece of legislation manifests itself in the psyche of its bureaucracy and the people chosen to manage the misery it engenders. In reality, there is little that *Indian Act* leadership can do. You can kick at the *indian affairs* bureaucracy and all it does is grunt. Political dysfunction, jealousy and hatred! The *Indian Act* gave most of us a *Canadian* dystopian fantasy of who and what indians were to be by distorting our political, societal and familial reality and our notion of community.

In the contemporary world of the *Indian Act*, the position of chief is often seen as one part leader, two parts despot and the rest politician. The very thought of the position is often distorted and despised. Shingwauk's grandchildren,<sup>2</sup> Doreen Lesage, Dan Pine Jr., Betty Lou and Lana Grawbarger, who still live in the Ojibway-Anishinabe community of Ketegaunseebee, make an interesting observation regarding the *Indian Act* and its political impact on Shingwauk's two sons, Ogista and Buh-guj-je-ne-ne, both of whom were vying for the position of *Indian Act* chief in 1867. In their eyes, this began the fragmentation of power between traditional o-gi-ma-wi-win vis-à-vis *Indian Act*-elected leadership in many of our communities.

Of course, we continue to struggle to find balance between the *Indian Act* and its influence over leadership and community matters. Doreen, Dan, Betty Lou and Lana explain that as Shingwauk lay dying he passed his medals and title to Buh-kwun-je-ne-ne, the meaning of which is still uncertain to them.

Leadership – and all the responsibilities that go with it – is an intoxicating thing and, in some instances, very ambiguous; it has different meanings to different people. For me personally, having the opportunity to discuss this from the perspective of Obwandiac, Tecumtha and Shingwauk was exciting. I felt that it was important to talk about Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabe leadership with these men in mind.

As well, their influence and impact on Manitou Aki and our world is still felt today. They came to represent the true meaning of Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabe leadership. Their resolve and passion were indicative of this. Within the Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabe universe, Obwandiac (Ota'wa-Anishinabe), Tecumtha (Shawnee-Anishinabe) and Shingwauk (Ojibway-Anishinabe) were the brilliant stars. Their spiritual guides and medicine people, Neolin (Lunaapewa-Anishinabe) and Lau-lau-we-see-kau (Shawnee-Anishinabe), were the sun and moon.

## WAYESHKAD | IN THE BEGINNING

It was understood that individual leaders could never enter into or make treaties, agree to peace or make war in isolation from the clan, community or nation. It's interesting to note that that type of abuse of authority and/or political power was never an issue.

In one of our many discussions, Bawdwaywidun Banaise pointed out that Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabe o-gi-ma-wi-win in times past had the benefit of a well-structured clan and governing system to guide them because it was fundamental to everything in Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabe society in terms of leadership and societal responsibilities. The clans<sup>3</sup> also ensured a responsible and knowing society that valued mutual respect and order, which were fundamental to N'swi-ish-ko-day-kawn Anishinabeg O'dish-ko-day-kawn values and teachings.

More importantly, Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabe leadership held no formal authority or power, as they personified both parent and protector ideals. They were expected to be fair-minded and generous in their relationships with all people and communities. In political and external matters of the nation they were also expected to have the ability to maintain a balance of power among o-gi-chi-dahg (*strong heart protectors*) and ni-gahn-no-say-wi-ni-ni-wahg (*leaders, military leaders, war leaders*).

Ota'wa-Anishinabe philosopher and elder Pine Shomin (Mack-a-da-ming-giss-was), a peace and war leader from Anima-wi-ti-go-ing (*Cross Village*) in A-shig-a-ning,<sup>4</sup> makes this distinction when describing the difference in responsibilities between peace and war leaders:

Ni-biin-daa-koo-ji-ge gaye ni' o-nah-ko-nah  
ah-di-so-kah-nahg zhigo di-bah-ji-mo-wi-nan g'dah  
mi-kwe-ni-mah-nahn obwandiabun, tecumthabun,  
miinwaa shingwaukbun . . . Meegwetch.



A very long time ago there was darkness, and in this darkness, there were good and bad spirits. There was an old Anishinaayba named A-nim-aki (Thunder) who started to gather the Good Spirits to fight the Bad Spirits. He then explained to me that “War Chief” does not mean that I should take up a gun or rifle or hatchet. What it means is that I should try as hard as possible to do good things to counter the bad. “This,” he said, “is what Peace and War Chief means to us in our way of life.”<sup>5</sup>



**Mii i'i-way ojibway-anishinabe i-zhi-chi-gay-win.  
Zhigo mii'iw eta-go o-way neen-gi-kayn-dahn zhigo  
ni-gi-noon-dah-wah . . . Ahaaw sa. Weweni.**

An-o-gon-sit (*war leader*) responsibilities were to avoid confrontation and war if at all possible, and his or her responsibilities were actually pretty clearly defined and absolute.

### **IKWEISM | WOMEN LEADERSHIP<sup>6</sup>**

Gender wasn't a factor at all in determining who could serve in leadership positions. Women's councils had input on important decisions, such as whether to go to war or whether a village should be moved or not. Following the War of 1812, for example, it was O-zha-gash-ko-de-wi-kwe, the wife of John Johnston and daughter of Wa-bo-jig (a La Pointe Ojibway-Anishinabe leader) who advised the N'swi-ish-ko-day-kawn Anishinabeg O'dish-ko-day-kawn leadership during peace negotiations. Men's and women's councils would often consult

with each other about issues such as the sanctioning of small war parties. However, when the issue of war was of national concern, a more formal assembly framework would be used to debate the advantages and/or inconveniences.

As well, the Grandmother's Council within the Midewigun (*Grand Medicine Lodge*) was, and remains, responsible for specific teachings. They were expected to keep balance within the Midewigun and were entrusted with the responsibility of determining the economic needs of the community. And still today, they carry on their responsibilities. At one of their meetings at Peshawbestown (Michigan), for instance, the Grandmother's Council reminded everyone that the clan system is about remembering and respecting all of our families, because everyone is related and comes from this earth. Inasmuch as we've come to understand many things within this vast wah-wi-yah-kah-mig (*universe*), it's important to acknowledge that everything we are is rooted in this land. As well, the Grandmother's Council still has the responsibility for defining our *indianness*/Anishinabeness (*humanity*) and our obligations to each other, our community and our nations. The only thing they ask is that we always honour the animals that stood up and shared their skills and knowledge with us.

## **BAWAAJIGAN GAYE ONWAACHIGEWIN | VISION AND PROPHECY**

We also come to know from the stories passed to us that certain leaders possessed special gifts. Obwandiac, Tecumtha and Shingwauk, for example, were known for their gifts of kindness, generosity, humility and spiritual power.

The families of Obwandiac, Tecumtha and Shingwauk cannot emphasize enough the importance of keeping oral histories, as they help us understand the depth and subtle nuance of our existence in relation to the big picture. They spoke of Obwandiac's medicine bundle, of Tecumtha's oratorical skills and of Shingwauk's return to Ketegaunseebee following

Tecumtha's death. Shingwauk's family described a moment when he removed his breastplate and five musket balls fell to the ground.

Another story that fascinated me was one shared by Rufina Marie-Laws and her mother (Mescalero Apache-Anishinabeg) during my visit to the Mescalero Apache-Anishinabe reservation in *New Mexico*. Their story describes an incident involving their grandfather Goyathla (*One Who Yawns; Geronimo*) and the use of his medicine powers to avoid being captured by the United States cavalry. Rufina and her mother were smiling as they described how Geronimo was able to slow the coming of the morning's light to help his people avoid being captured.

Vine Deloria Jr. shares a similar story regarding Geronimo and how he was able to make his people disappear from view as members of the United States cavalry approached. In this story, Geronimo climbed to the top of a hill and began ceremony. As his people came out from hiding, they were surprised to see only cattle grazing where only a few moments earlier the cavalry had been.

In another story, Don Daniels, an elder from Long Plain (Manitoba) describes his own personal journeys to other parts of the world and accepts these experiences as fact. Despite never having travelled to other parts of the world by conventional means, he was able to describe intimate geographical and cultural details, which would have been impossible for anyone who had never physically visited those specific places.

Other stories similarly describe the extent of Shingwauk's medicine power during his first encounter with Europeans in one of his travels east. In one story, Shingwauk was able to make the fog settle at the mouth of the *St. Lawrence River* so that an encroaching ship was not able to anchor. It was something that couldn't be explained, but it acknowledged Shingwauk's spiritual, medicine and shape-shifting powers and the possibility of his ability to travel in time.

I share these stories because they openly question our reality and truth as we perceive it and the world as we know, see, taste, feel and experience it. Further, these stories reflect the spiritual bond that medicine people have with the natural order of the universe, which is revealing in and of itself. Moreover, within the context of this discussion they help us explore the idea of leadership through a spiritual and metaphysical lens, which I find proactive because of its endless possibilities.

### **ANOJ OGIMAWIWIN | TYPES OF LEADERSHIP**

There is also a more literal understanding of leadership that helps us reflect on the practical application of leadership. To reiterate, we know that leadership was expected to be generous and fair-minded. Their judgment was considered important in most civil and political matters. It was also understood that many of these civil leaders would have proven themselves in battle as o-gi-chi-dahg. This will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapters, which focus on Obwandiac, Tecumtha and Shingwauk specifically.

It's also important to note that other leadership positions existed throughout the communities and nations. These would include the ga-ki-gi-do-wi-ni-ni (*spokesperson*) and di-bah-koni-gay-wi-ni-ni (*judge*), who were expected to take a lead role whenever disputes arose within a clan or community. There were also the oshkabewisahg (*ceremonial helpers*) and mi-shi-no-way-wahg (*economic assistants*) to the o-gi-ma-wi-win, who had well-defined roles such as the distribution of food, gifts and supplies.

In times of armed conflict, the o-gi-chi-dahg or ni-gahn-no-say-wi-ni-ni-wahg would take on greater responsibilities in the extended clans and communities. As well, the organization and structure of Anishinabe society allowed for a seamless transition from war to civil leader and for other types of leadership positions.

In many communities today there is an effort to renew the roles and responsibilities of ah-di-so-kahn-i-ni-ni-wahg/kwe-wahg (*sacred storytellers*), o-gi-chi-dahg, jeeskahn i-ni-ni-wahg (*shaking tent men*), mi-shi-no-way-wahg, opwaaganan gay-nay-wayn-ni-mahd (*pipe carriers*) and medicine people. In this way, history is not the past but the present. We carry our history and it remains with us.

Following the defeat of Phil Fontaine during the Assembly of First Nations' national chief election in 1991, a number of young Ojibway-Anishinabe custom leaders and *Indian Act* chiefs were determined to change how things were done at the regional and national levels. Darrell Boissoneau was one of the shining lights and visionaries who began talking of the N'swi-ish-ko-day-kawn Anishinabeg O'dish-ko-day-kawn. One of the first contemporary gatherings was held at Kete-gaunseebee, in August 1991, during Darrell's term as *Indian Act* chief there.<sup>7</sup> This gathering became a defining moment for me personally. It came to represent everything that I've become, and bringing the N'swi-ish-ko-day-kawn Anishinabeg O'dish-ko-day-kawn fully back to life has become one of my life's missions.

As Darrell and I are having coffee one morning, we talk about the divisions throughout *indian country*. He remembers the Pine family story of Shingwauk's sons Ogista (who was Methodist) and Buh-guj-je-ne-ne (Anglican) both vying for the position of *Indian Act* chief in the 1867 election. Darrell points out that within the Ojibway-Anishinabe clan system, it would have been Tagosh (Catholic), the eldest son, who took on the role and responsibility as ah-ni-kay-o-gi-mah-kah-ni-wid. However, because of the *Indian Act* and its absurdity, Ogista and Buh-guj-je-ne-ne had to run against each other in an election process that still wreaks havoc and is often responsible for community and family divisions in the majority of our communities.

From the perspective of Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabe society, leadership was expected to value everyone's privilege and worth. In this regard, debates concerning issues of national concern were almost always decided by consensus rather than by majority vote. It was also expected that the clans and elders', men's, women's and youth councils would be involved in all discussions and decisions reached. As a result, once decisions were made, factional strife over any issue was a rarity and the resulting actions were almost always carried out without pause.

For the Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabe communities, accountability and transparency were fundamentally important to the nation; decisions reached by consensus and respect for the individual citizen were interdependent. I think, as well, that it was probably easier to debate and reach consensus during this period because many people would have held a similar worldview and cultural perspective with respect to the decision-making process, planning, protocols and so on. Unfortunately, as colonization becomes more ubiquitous, division and political differences become more common.

Abuse of authority and/or political power by leadership was never an issue, since individual leaders couldn't enter into or make treaties, agree to peace or make war in isolation from the clans, their community or nation. This was unthinkable!

My father saw progress and movement forward under the *Indian Act* regime as almost impossible because of the division it created within the community of Sagkeeng. In retrospect, what my father shared with me was probably more practical than anything I had been told up to that point, because I came to understand how Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabe communities were really about the bond between the clan (family) members, leadership and community. In many regards it had everything to do with ah-zhi-di-bah-ji-mo-wi-nan. From my father's perspective, leadership had to let the citizens

of Sagkeeng retake control of the community narrative and reassert o-zhi-bi-i-gay i-nah-ko-ni-gay-win (*jurisdiction*). To him this was an important first step.

I shared my father's thoughts with an elder at one of Sagkeeng's quarterly assemblies. As he quietly smoked his cigarette and looked beyond the people sitting and moving about, he spoke of Sagkeeng's right to restore traditional leadership and governance structures. The litmus test, he felt, would be understanding and accepting what these traditional systems and structures were. For him, it was our responsibility to show how these teachings were not meant to threaten anyone, since at the end of the day Ojibway-Anishinabe leadership and governance were about forgiveness, tolerance and acceptance.

#### **O-GI-MA-WI-WIN | TO BE ESTEEMED**

But back to my earlier point regarding leadership and responsibility. It might sound cliché to say that Obwandiac, Tecumtha and Shingwauk embodied the spiritual and physical manifestation of the cultural hero and mi-zhi-ni-way (*spirit messenger, dream helper*) who had the gift of vision and accepted responsibility for leadership. From my perspective, Obwandiac, Tecumtha and Shingwauk's ability to speak to the conscience of the people was what was truly remarkable about them. This is the universal meaning and reality of the prophet and leader as I see and understand it. Prophecy and leadership are such tenuous things to accept. The challenge is how you take meaning from stories and spirituality.

We know that prior to 1762, the Naticoke-Anishinabeg (*Tidewater People*) were the first to resist European colonial intrusion – as early as the 1650s. For Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabe nations, this was the beginning of the pressure placed on their societies by colonization and loss of land. In response to what was taking place, Obwandiac (1763), Tecumtha (1812) and Shingwauk (1812 and 1850)

understood that only a unified political and military presence could keep the colonial violence and land loss in check.

### **O-GI-MA-WIN | GOVERNANCE**

At a meeting at the *Ecorse River* (Michigan) in 1763, Obwandiac spoke to Neolin's dream and vision for protecting the Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabe way of life, pointing out that political and military resistance was fundamental to maintaining Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabe sovereignty and jurisdiction. As well, leading up to and during the War of 1812, Tecumtha knew instinctively that allied support would be critical to any military and/or political insurgency. He spoke repeatedly of this and the inherent inequity of the treaty process and negotiations taking place. In 1850, Shingwauk also sought to tackle this inequality, imbalance and inequity by addressing the question of land *bi-mee-ku-mau-gay-win* (*stewardship*) and ownership during the Robinson-Huron and Robinson-Superior treaty negotiations in 1850, both of which served as templates for the numbered treaty (1–11) process that began in August 3, 1871, and ended in June 27, 1921.

O-gi-ma-win, this fantastic ability to make independent decisions and enter into treaty, economic, political and military relationships, was full of purpose; it enabled the Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabeg to assert jurisdiction and exercise political, economic, military and spiritual sovereignty over land and resources.

This is what Obwandiac, Tecumtha and Shingwauk sought to protect. Their vision of a sovereign Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabe state based on a confederation of Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabe nations was the outcome of at least two generations of Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabe activism and resistance, and their success lay in their ability to reach back into the past and draw on networks of international relations that had been vibrant and sustained leading up to 1812.

**DOODEM | CLAN**

Fundamental to this network and organization were the seven original clans who defined the roles and responsibilities of Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabeg. Historically speaking, the clan was woven into the political, economic, military and spiritual fabric of the community and nation. We're told this in the ah-di-so-kah-nahg, which speak to our beginning and subsequent chi-bi-mo-day-win<sup>8</sup> westward, and we find further meaning still in our gi-ki-do-gah-gi-bi-i-zhi-say-ma-guhk or gah-gi-gi-do-win and the creation of the N'swi-ish-ko-day-kawn Anishinabeg O'dish-ko-day-kawn. All of this oral tradition holds profound meaning in our world and describes how the clan system made it possible for Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabe society to flourish and assert sovereignty over a broad expanse of territory.

Bawdwaywidun Banaise mentioned to me during one of our visits that we organized ourselves in this way because it enabled us to assert jurisdiction and exercise political, economic, military and spiritual sovereignty over a vast territory. The important thing to remember, he pointed out, is that the clans and seven guiding principles of kayn-daw-so-win (*ways of knowing*), zaw-gi-di-win (*love*), maw-naw-ji-win (*respect*), zoong-gi-day-win (*bravery*), gwu-yu-kaw-ji-win (*honesty*), duh-buh-say-ni-mo-win (*humility*) and de-bwe-mo-win (*speaking the truth*) provided context for Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabe governance and sovereignty. The doodem system, he continued, came to represent the essence of the individual, community and nation.

The word “doodem” is interesting in itself, deriving from the root “de,” meaning “heart” or “centre.” We see its meaning throughout Ojibwaymowin and in the relationship between the words “ode” (*heart*), “oodena” (*town or village*), “doodem” (*clan*) and “de-we'i-gun” (*the Big Drum*). Simply stated, it's about our connectedness: physically the heart is the centre of the body and the town or village is the centre of a community. The clan

is therefore accepted as the centre of identity/responsibility and the drum is the heartbeat and/or the centre of the nation.

The ethos of the o-gi-ma-wi-win and o-gi-ma-win structures had its roots in the teachings and natural laws of Anishinabe society. Ojibway, Ota'wa and Iskodawatomi-Anishinabe oral history, for example, makes it quite clear that an-o-gon-sit/ni-gahn-no-say-wi-ni-ni-wahg and o-gi-chi-dahg responsibilities were fairly representative of the community. In times of war, their influence and authority would depend in large part on the consent of their communities and of other o-gi-chi-dahg. It's important to point out that Anishinabe o-gi-ma-wi-win had a special relationship with the people because it never set itself apart from the will of the people.

Decisions regarding whether to maintain peace or go to war, move a village or enter into trade relationships were made at national general assemblies, with the civil leadership presiding. More often than not, civil leaders were older and had probably been o-gi-chi-dahg and ni-gahn-no-say-wi-ni-ni-wahg in their younger days. However, when certain civil leaders had the respect of many community councils they would generally be regarded as a regional leader.

The colonial game plan since first contact has always been to divide and conquer. It might sound overly simplistic and cliché, but attempts to create division, dysfunction and instability have been with us for a long, long time. The colonial modus operandi has been to curry favour with individual leaders, and quite often the colonial governments would decorate these leaders with medals or gorgets in recognition of their position as “*medal chief*.”

Unfortunately, the Ojibway-Anishinabe community is still having to deal with the colonial agenda, even to this day. The *Indian Act* in this instance continues to take its pound of flesh. So all this talk about healing and reconciliation is, in my view, a political distraction intended to wreak more havoc and confusion.

At its outset, this story had two fundamental tasks. The first was to explore the meaning of leadership and the second to explore sovereignty and self-determination from the perspective of the N'swi-ish-ko-day-kawn Anishinabeg O'dish-ko-day-kawn. The specific focus on Obwandiac, Tecumtha and Shingwauk as agents of change is important because of their influence on the events that helped shape Manitou Aki.

### **OBWANDIAC AND THE ROYAL PROCLAMATION OF 1763**

As the military and economic global conflict between Britain and France intensified in 1754, Obwandiac was this brilliant ray of sunlight that flashed brightly across the Anishinabe sky. In the period leading up to the War of 1812, Tecumtha and Shingwauk challenged the process of treaty-making and its impact on the Anishinabe collective.

The latter part of the seventeenth century was a critical period for Anishinabeg. The military and economic conflicts between Britain and France were directly impacting Anishinabe communities, their economic relationships and military alliances with each other and with other foreign nations. The surrender of Fort Ponchartrain, for example, in the autumn of 1760 forced the Anishinabe nations into a period of uneasy transition and would mark the beginning of a new era, specifically for Ojibway, Ota'wa and Ishkodawatomi-Anishinabeg.

In one of his first acts as governor general, Jeffery Amherst attempted to establish new diplomatic, military and economic guidelines by implementing a policy prohibiting gift exchanges and limiting the amount of powder, lead and guns to be traded. His actions challenged the fundamental principles of gift-giving and protocols of the nations-to-Crown relationship. This obviously reverberated throughout Manitou Aki and provided the backdrop to later events.

Both Obwandiac and Tecumtha saw the visions of Neolin and Lau-lau-we-see-kau as the symbiotic union of the Anishinabe

spiritual and political world, which rejected Anishinabe dependence on a Euro-American lifestyle. By extension, they championed “*indian sovereignty*” and a return to the traditional ways.

Neolin in particular was alarmed at how quickly the Lunaapewa-Anishinabeg had become dependent on European goods and white material culture after coming into contact with Swedish and Dutch traders during the early part of the seventeenth century. Amherst’s “new” diplomatic policies were just the tip of the colonial iceberg, and Neolin understood that there needed to be a clearer understanding of British colonial hegemony.<sup>9</sup>

Visionaries and medicine people have always played an important role in understanding the true nature and intent of European expansionism and colonization and the terrorism it perpetuated. Manitou Aki has seen the coming and going of many influential Anishinabe medicine people since the 1500s and 1600s. Their visions provided not only a spiritual foundation but also the politics for resistance. During the Anglo-Powhatan-Anishinabe Wars, for example, the Powhatan-Anishinabeg were able to draw on the memory of Powhatan-Anishinabe spiritual leader Nemattenow,<sup>10</sup> who advised Opechancanough during the war with the British, and of Metacom (*King Philip*), who led the Wampanoag-Anishinabe resistance in 1675–78.

To reiterate, spiritual leaders and medicine people have always been central to Anishinabe society. In 1811 and 1812, Tecumtha’s visit to the Creek-Anishinabeg and the following earthquakes that shook the southeastern region of Manitou Aki would come to serve as catalysts for the War of 1812. These resounding acts of nature reminded Anishinabeg of the unexplained and incredible primal power of these men and women, many of whom were skilled at travelling in the spiritual world. Historian Joel W. Martin’s written description of these earthquakes and Lau-lau-we-see-kau’s spiritual power is similar to the stories shared by Patricia and Norman Shawnoo and Jim Dumont.

Moses Dawson, influential owner of *The Advertiser*, a *Cincinnati* newspaper, wrote another story in which William Henry Harrison, then an army officer, demanded that Lau-lau-we-see-kau make the sun stand still and the moon alter its course to prove that he was a prophet. Soon after Harrison's challenge, on June 16, 1806, an eclipse of the sun took place. Some historians were quick to dismiss this story as nonsense, implying that astronomers travelling in the region had told Lau-lau-we-see-kau of the impending eclipse. Naturalist William Bartram, who travelled extensively throughout Creek-Anishinabe territory, wrote that there were medicine people who "were known to stop and turn back an army, bring rain and even assume the power of directing thunder and lightning."

Other spiritual leaders and medicine people were quite influential for brief periods. They include Shawnee-Anishinabe spiritual leader Peng-ah-she-ga, Scat-ta-mek (Lunaapewa-Anishinabe), who was very active from 1752 to 1775, and Munsee-Anishinabe Wang-o-mend, who influenced Lau-lau-we-see-kau for a time.

Women were also held in high regard. Lunaapewa-Anishinabe spiritual leader Beata was very prominent in the early part of the 1700s, despite the fact that many of her teachings had Christian undertones. Paiute-Anishinabe spiritual leader Wovoka led the Ghost Dance movement in the late 1800s. Seneca-Anishinabe leader and prophet Handsome Lake sought to awaken Haudenosaunee-Anishinabe spiritual consciousness. Goyathla (Geronimo) was another. These men and women came to represent the spiritual face of colonial resistance.

Lau-lau-we-see-kau's embracing of spirituality<sup>11</sup> and Tecumtha's vision of a political and military confederacy were effective and powerful. Ceremony and spirituality were all manifestations of this Ojibway-Anishinabe world and spiritual power. In many of our communities, medicine people who had the ability to nah-nahn-dah-wi-i'we (*cure by sucking*), hold the jeeskahn (*shaking tent*) and Wabanowiwin (*initiate dreams and*

*manipulate fire [in an] attempt [to reverse] an existing situation*) were expressions of this.

On September 3, 1783, the Treaty of Paris officially ended the American Revolution. The British eventually relinquished all claims to any territory south of Kitchi Gumi (*Great Lakes*). They were, however, successful in keeping control of the northern territory. In the deliberations that followed, the Anishinabeg sought to establish diplomatic relations with the newly created United States. Anishinabe nations made every effort to maintain the integrity of the middle ground and argued that the United States had no ownership of or right to territory west of the original proclamation line and the *Allegheny Mountains*. As a result, a third of the treaties negotiated and entered into during this period were peace treaties. All the others were land surrenders.<sup>12</sup>

In the treaty negotiations that followed, Anishinabe nations continued to argue that the British had no legal right to transfer any territory because the lands in question didn't belong to them. They also maintained that the N'swi-ish-ko-day-kawn Anishinabeg O'dish-ko-day-kawn and its allied nations had never been defeated in battle, nor had they ever surrendered. All of this political and diplomatic wrangling becomes a precursor to the dysfunction we see today, and it really has its roots in the 1493 papal bull *Inter Caetera*<sup>13</sup> and its implied Doctrine of Discovery, which speaks to this struggle between two very different worldviews and ways of life.

## **ZHAAGOOJI'IWE ZHIGO AGO' I-DI-WIN |**

### **THE IDEA OF CONQUEST AND TREATY**

The history of Manitou Aki is an interesting study of egregious politics. It's also a remarkable story of integrity, honour, respect and commitment to agreements and centuries-old conciliatory diplomacy. Ojibway, Ota'wa, and Iskodawatomi-Anishinabe nations and their communities have always been resolute in their attempts to remind the Euro-Americans of *biin-di-go-dah-di-win* and the *bezhig onaagan gaye bezhig emikwan* diplomatic

protocols that had existed prior to first contact. The Two-Row Wampum Treaty (1613) specific to the Haudenosaunee-Anishinabe Confederacy and the Dutch was one example of these protocols.

In response to the societal destruction and genocide waged, the onus has always been on Anishinabeg to “define what it meant to be human.” Often, political and military resistance was the only language the foreigners understood. The Powhatan Wars (1610–14, 1622–32 and 1644–46), Pequot War (1636–38), Kieft’s War with the Lunaapewa-Anishinabeg (1643–45) and King Philip’s War (1675) were just the beginning of the resistance that was to follow. As well, the Treaty of Glasco that ended the war between the Wampanoag confederacy and the British in 1678, followed by the 1701 Great Peace of Montréal treaty between the French and thirty-nine nations, became the face of European-styled treaties. During the course of these treaty negotiations, the American Revolution began (1775) and ended (1776) with the United States’ declaration of independence.

The Treaty of Fort Stanwix (at *Rome*, New York), the first of the “*conquest treaties*,” negotiated and signed by the Mohawk-Anishinabeg on October 22, 1784, effectively surrendered territory in what is now *Kentucky*, *West Virginia*, *Pennsylvania* and northern *Ohio*. The Iroquois ceded land they claimed between the *Appalachian Divide* and the *Ohio River*. This arrangement was dressed up as a peace treaty in an attempt to legalize the land titles of thirty thousand settlers already west of the new Appalachian Divide and Allegheny Mountains proclamation line.

From my perspective, the Treaty of Fort Stanwix was troublesome for a number of reasons, the first of which concerns the roles of *indian superintendent* William Johnson (brother-in-law to Joseph Brant), Joseph Brant (self-appointed Mohawk-Anishinabe leader) and *indian agent* George Croghan (father-in-law to Joseph Brant) in the negotiations. Johnson was just one of many land speculators who were negotiating these new

treaties in an attempt to take control of large tracts of surrendered Anishinabe territory. This conflict of interest and the fact that the Mohawk-Anishinabeg Confederacy had no authority to negotiate or surrender lands that didn't belong to it in the first place were obviously troublesome to the Shawnee-Anishinabeg.

The Treaty of Fort McIntosh (at *Beaver*, Pennsylvania) was negotiated and signed by George Rogers Clark,<sup>14</sup> Arthur Lee,<sup>15</sup> Richard Butler<sup>16</sup> and a small number of younger “hand-picked” Wendat,<sup>17</sup> Lunaapewa, Ota'wa and Ojibway-Anishinabe leaders on January 21, 1785. The treaty recognized American sovereignty for the first time and established a new boundary line east of the *Cuyahoga* and *Muskingum Rivers* in what is now north and southeastern Ohio.

Not surprisingly, the Shawnee-Anishinabeg refused to participate in the negotiations or recognize any part of the treaty, because the lands in question were part of their traditional territories. Realizing that they underestimated Shawnee-Anishinabe opposition to the treaty, the United States immediately sought to mitigate the damage by returning some of the surrendered lands north of the Ohio River and east of the Muskingum River.

Within a year of the Fort McIntosh treaty, on January 31, 1786, Richard Butler, Samuel Holden Parsons<sup>18</sup> and a small number of unknown Shawnee-Anishinabe leaders agreed to the Treaty of Fort Finney.<sup>19</sup> However, many of the more notable leaders in attendance took the opportunity to give the Americans a belt of black wampum as a declaration of war.

Of course, land was and remains an important consideration for the United States and the Anishinabe nations. As fragile as it was, the United States would pass the Northwest Ordinance on July 13, 1787, in an attempt to create the first organized territory of the United States. The ordinance would also establish a boundary and separation line between the Anishinabe nations and the United States and give the continental government the right to negotiate for more Anishinabe land.

Despite the opportunity for increased economic development and financial trade, the N'swi-ish-ko-day-kawn Anishinabeg O'dish-ko-day-kawn and the Shawnee-Anishinabe nation firmly opposed the ordinance because of their concerns regarding the loss of sovereignty. In their view, the lack of commitment to a more substantive treaty process jeopardized well-established economic, political and diplomatic relationships. They argued that United States policies and legislation were often duplicitous in nature, as reflected in the young republic's negotiation of a number of questionable treaties.

From the perspective of the N'swi-ish-ko-day-kawn Anishinabeg O'dish-ko-day-kawn, the political will of the United States to respect its political and legal obligations was simply not there. Despite the Royal Proclamation of 1763, which recognized Anishinabe title to land/resources and acknowledged the sovereignty of Anishinabe nations, there was serious doubt about the transition taking place.

### **AMERICANISM AND THE NOTION OF EXCEPTIONALISM**

The nations-to-nation relationship also became more strained because the United States saw itself as qualitatively different from other nations, as manifested in the politics of *Americanism*<sup>20</sup> or *American exceptionalism*. French writer Alexis de Tocqueville<sup>21</sup> explored and referred to this ideology in his seminal work, *Democracy in America*, in the early part of the 1800s. The spirit and intent of treaties as negotiated became collateral damage to the larger political agenda of the United States.

In view of the negative politics and lack of diplomacy regarding American exceptionalism, Anishinabe nations continued to argue that treaties were analogous to *contracts* between two independent and sovereign entities. For us, land was a living embodiment of the political, economic and social relationship established by the treaty framework and was also fundamental to how we saw the universe. From our perspective, land was

inalienable and held in common by all human beings to be passed from one generation to the next.

As Anishinabe opposition to Americanism deepened, Mi-chi-ki-ni-kwa (*Little Turtle*), a well-respected Myaamia-Anishinabe<sup>22</sup> o-gi-chi-dah and o-gi-ma-wi-win, led allied Anishinabe forces in opposition to the United States and was soon joined by We-ya-pier-sen-wah (*Blue Jacket*), a Shawnee-Anishinabe o-gi-chi-dah.

During this period, generals Arthur St. Clair and Josiah Harmar, who had negotiated and signed the Treaty of Fort McIntosh in 1785, pushed to ratify the Treaty of Fort Harmar (negotiated on January 9, 1789, at *Marietta*, Ohio).<sup>23</sup> There was little Anishinabe support for the treaty because it ignored the most basic issue regarding non-indian settlements west of the new boundary line. By and large, many Anishinabe leaders saw it as a simple reiteration of the Fort Stanwix and Fort McIntosh treaties.

As a result of the generals' overzealousness, Harmar was defeated badly at the Battle of the Maumee on October 20, 1790, and St. Clair was easily defeated by Mi-chi-ki-ni-kwa and We-ya-pier-sen-wah on November 3, 1791. For the most part, Little Turtle's War came to represent a struggle between two very different ways of life and worldviews.

After these defeats, the United States entrusted "Mad" General Anthony Wayne with the responsibility of organizing a regular army, and at the Battle of Fallen Timbers, in August 1794, the United States defeated We-ya-pier-sen-wa. Despite the numerous accolades Wayne received, it should be noted that Mi-chi-ki-ni-kwa and We-ya-pier-sen-wah handed the United States more casualties than in the wars of Geronimo, Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull, Cochise and Red Cloud combined.

### **JAY TREATY (1794) AND TREATY OF GREENVILLE (1795)**

The impact of the Jay Treaty (negotiated and signed on November 19, 1794, and proclaimed on February 29, 1796) was lasting,

and many of our people are still reeling from it all. The treaty provided for the complete withdrawal of the British from forts and territory in the United States, but it allowed for British trade and commerce within the territory. It also saw the creation of two separate international jurisdictions – Canada and the United States.

The following year, on August 3, 1795, the Treaty of Greenville (at present-day *Greenville*, Ohio) surrendered large tracts of Anishinabe territory in what is now Ohio and also recognized the United States as a sovereign power for the first time. In return, the United States agreed to recognize Anishinabe “ownership” of the remaining lands and provide an “annuity” system of payment or services in-kind. All of this signalled a fundamental change to the nations-to-nation relationship and the politics of the middle ground.

### **TECUMTHA AND THE WAR OF 1812**

Tecumtha was particularly bothered by Mi-chi-ki-ni-kwa’s agreement to the provisions of the Treaty of Greenville. However, many believed that Mi-chi-ki-ni-kwa thought that the treaty might facilitate a process where the Myaamia-Anishinabe nation would share jurisdiction over the territory. Other leaders, including Te-ta-boh-ske (Lunaapewa-Anishinabe; *Grand Glaize King*) and Ca-te-wee-ke-sa/Ca-ta-ca-has-ca (Shawnee-Anishinabe; *Black Hoof*), saw the treaty as the new middle ground. Tecumtha was particularly troubled by this, as the treaty stood in stark contrast to Anishinabe sovereignty and jurisdiction ideals.

With the signing of the Treaty of Greenville in 1795, the United States made it clear that it was intent on developing and establishing a different type of political, economic and diplomatic relationship, one that acknowledged its control and power.

“Hand-picked” Anishinabe leaders also began to negotiate decidedly one-sided treaty agreements. Often these leaders were more than willing to accept the authority and primacy of

the United States. Of course, this same approach has been used throughout the history of the colonial world, since indirect control was often more cost-effective and politically, economically and diplomatically self-serving. These same “hand-picked” leaders argued in their defence that the Northwest Ordinance (1787) and the Treaty of Greenville were attempts to accept the existence of aboriginal and treaty rights – however minimal they might have been.

In the period leading up to 1812, Tecumtha encouraged Anishinabe nations to challenge the colonial violence and land surrenders taking place. He pointed out that the majority of treaties surrendering huge tracts of land were unacceptable from a legal and political perspective, because no individual leader and/or community had the authority to surrender the sovereignty of lands that belonged to all Anishinabeg collectively.

From 1805 to 1820, editor, clergyman and lawyer Jeremiah Evarts (William Penn) made the legal and political argument that the *Indian Removal Act* would break every treaty the United States negotiated and would effectively destroy whatever humanity and national honour the country hoped to establish. Evarts saw treaties as compacts between independent communities, with each party acting through its government. In his view, the Northwest Ordinance and the Treaty of Greenville were antithetical to the legal and political understanding and application of treaties.

In fact, Tecumtha was increasingly frustrated with the complicity of Anishinabe leadership in some of the treaties and land surrenders being negotiated. As a result, he remained focused on the threat they posed toward Anishinabe lands and society. At the time, this was seen as a bold rebuke of leadership and the treaty negotiations/land surrenders that were taking place.

Many saw Tecumtha and Lau-lau-we-see-kau’s politics of resistance focusing on decolonization as a catalyst for maintaining Anishinabe sovereignty and spiritual renewal. Raising

the Anishinabe consciousness and pushing the idea of a multi-national alliance and confederacy was a message that reverberated throughout Indian country.

During his visit with the Creek-Anishinabeg, for example, Tecumtha raised the question of land and national security and the possible extermination of their nations and societies. He also urged the Creek-Anishinabe nation to join with the N'swi-ish-ko-day-kawn Anishinabeg O'dish-ko-day-kawn and other allied nations in the resistance movement.

At the same meeting, Tecumtha received an unexpected boost from Benjamin Hawkins, an Indian agent who was there to bully the Creek-Anishinabeg into accepting a federal road across their territory. Hawkins, in truth, signalled the emergence of the Indian agent and Indian superintendent who took advantage of economic opportunities in Indian country by exploiting speculative and commercial opportunities. This was further exacerbated by the Indian agent and Indian superintendent's disregard for Anishinabe sovereignty and interests. In his opposition to Hawkins and others like him, Tecumtha reflected a revolutionary and bold persona that emboldened many Anishinabeg and their communities when speaking to the importance of maintaining the integrity of Anishinabe lands.<sup>24</sup>

How do we explain Tecumtha's visit to the southeastern United States (present-day *Georgia, Alabama, South Carolina* and *North Carolina*) and the series of goos-ko-say aki (*earthquakes*) in the region? We can rationalize it by saying it was purely coincidental, or we can try to understand it from an Anishinabe worldview that looks at the power of spirit and the universe differently and acknowledges the possibility of these types of events. The *New Madrid* earthquakes, as they came to be known, are estimated to have measured 8.2 on the Richter scale and were felt over approximately 50,000 square miles and moderately across 1 million square miles.<sup>25</sup> To provide some context, the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, for instance, was felt over

6,200 square miles. Many came to see these earthquakes as a reflection of Lau-lau-we-see-kau's spiritual power.

This idea of a political, social, economic and military multi-national confederacy was innovative and challenging for the period. Logistically it seemed almost impossible to organize, given the vast territory, differences in language and dialects, national focus and protocols. Despite these obstacles, Tecumtha was able to successfully articulate the commonalities in the Anishinabe struggle.

### **SHINGWAUK'S INFLUENCE ON PRE-CONFEDERATION AND NUMBERED TREATIES**

As the fight for land increased following the War of 1812, Shingwauk questioned the land cessions taking place. For example, the surrender of 2.7 million acres of land in southern Ontario and the 1836 Bond Head Treaty on Manitou Minising (*Manitoulin Island*) were particularly troublesome, as they posed serious threats to the political, social, economic and land integrity of the Anishinabe communities.

The discovery of rich mineral and metal deposits in the *Lake Huron* and *Lake Superior* regions brought everything to a head, making it clear that a different and more equitable approach to treaty negotiations was needed. In the end, William B. Robinson was forced to negotiate the Robinson-Huron and Robinson-Superior treaties in 1850. They represented a new type of treaty and served as a template for the numbered treaties.

In retrospect, Obwandiac, Tecumtha and Shingwauk were the quintessential embodiment of leadership in terms of their brilliance as political and military strategists.

**Mii i'i-way ojibway-anishinabe i-zhi-chi-gay-win.  
Zhigo mii'iw eta-go o-way neen-gi-kayn-dahn zhigo  
ni-gi-noon-dah-wah. Ahaaw sa. Weweni.**

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Cover illustrations: Steve Pego | The crane is representative of ogimawiwin (*leadership*) and the seven eagle feathers represent seven grandfathers; the floral design on the banner reminds us that we all belong to Mother Earth. In the Circle of Life, blue is for the men, red for the women, and silver for the leaders that have left this world. The pipe represents communication with the spirit world.

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