

All About Winter Weather

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Introduction: This cultural unit will cover the different seasons and what Ojibwe families do during that time of year.

Cultural Objective: Students will learn about the different seasons dress attire, especially during the winter months because of the concern for extreme cold.

Cultural Information: The PPT presentation will show how the weather in the winter has many layers and what Ojibwe families are made of and who does the work.

Before the winter months are here, we have been busy gathering, hunting, fishing, picking berries, making maple syrup, and tanning the hides. Almost everything we get from the spring camps to the fall camps we will have dried and packaged in raw hide bags or birch bark. Here is what occurred during the seasons to give you a background before our winter weather started:

As (**Ziigwan**) spring approached, Ojibwe families moved to sugar bush. This was an area where many sugar maple trees could be found. They would meet up with friends and relatives that they had not seen since their move to winter camp. This was a time of greeting and catching up on all the news. Each family had their own part of the sugar bush, tapping the trees for sap and boiling it down to make maple sugar. As before, the men went out to get food. This time of the year they spread nets to catch flocks of wild pigeons. Before the ice was off the lakes, the men speared fish through holes in the ice. After the ice melted the men fished with large nets. Early spring was a good time to trap fur bearing animals as their fur was the thickest and glossiest. Spring is also the time birch bark could be taken to make canoes. In every band there were older men and women who were especially skilled in canoe building. They were helped by younger members who learned the craft from them.

Summer (**Niibin**) is a time to think about planting gardens. Ojibwe families would move back to their summer village after sugar making when the leaves of trees were beginning to unfold. The men fished and hunted and the women and children planted corn, pumpkins and squash. This was also a time of gathering berries and plants that families used for food, medicine, and materials to make utilitarian baskets, mats, etc. Summer was a time for visiting friends and ceremonial feasts and dances. Summer was also a time to play games like lacrosse, foot races, wrestling, jumping, shooting matches and other contests.

In early fall (**Dagwaagin**), families would travel by canoe to rice lakes and marshes and worked together to harvest wild rice. There were late chokecherries and early cranberries to pick, dry and store away. The men spent a great deal of time hunting. Fall was the season to shoot ducks and geese. As much food as possible needed to be gathered and stored away for the long winter. The men began to prepare for the trapping of fur bearing animals. The women set out nets to bring in a winter supply of fish.

In the winter (**Biboon**) the village would break up into small family groups and move to their winter camps in the forest. This custom arose because there was not enough game in any one place to feed more than a small number. Men went out each day to hunt deer and other large animals. While the men were out hunting, the women preserved deer meat by drying it over low open fires. At night the women made and repaired clothing/moccasins and worked on beadwork

designs. Grandmothers wove fish nets and hunting bags, made ropes and cords, helped with the cooking, brought in fire wood, and took care of the young children. The men made snowshoes and repaired their hunting gear. Winter was also the time for telling traditional stories. Stories were told to children to entertain but also to teach them. When boys and girls were not helping their elders, they had many ways of having fun. They slid down hills on toboggans or large pieces of bark, held snowshoe races and snowball battles. A favorite winter pastime was snow snake. In this game, players slid smooth, flattened poles over the snow to see whose pole would slide the farthest. This game was also played by grownups.

Winter weather was harsh on the tribes who lived in the northern region of the country and in Canada. From the beginning of time, the harsher the weather the more deaths occurred. Sickness affected many children and elders. Sometimes the hunting parties would get lost and have to buckle down for the night, or days if the weather did not change. If they had not gotten enough food, they might have starved or possibly froze to death. Winter weather in the northern parts of the world can be very harsh.

Like previously mentioned, winter weather was harsh on the tribes who lived in the northern region of the country and in Canada. So, clothing was a very important part of staying warm and safe from the harsh weather.

Clothing was very specific: The Ojibwa made their clothing out of animal skins. The skins were mostly buck skins. During winter time Ojibwa wore fur robes and mittens. Men wore leggings, moccasins, and breechcloth. Women wore dress, leggings, moccasins made out of animal skins and petticoats made of woven nettle or thistle fiber.

Women were responsible for making clothes. They used different tools to help them make the clothing. For example, they used bone needles to pull thread through the small holes on a cloth. Clothing also was made from buffalo skins, and in the winter, the men wore buffalo robes and snow shoes.

They traveled on land by foot and wore snowshoes during the winter, transporting goods on dog sleds. Inside the moccasins was some type of fur, (beaver, muskrat, weasel, rabbit, fox) All types of animal fur were used. The same was with mitts and coats were made with buffalo or deer skin with animal fur inside, as well. Women occupied their time by tanning hides and sewing.

So, as you can see, layers upon layers of clothing with fur inside of the mukluk's or high-top moccasins and fur mittens were worn. Head gear was made specifically with fur in mind during the winter months for both men/women.

The first story I want to talk about: In 1959 our family moved from our barracks home in California. My father was a marine and the barracks was military housing. We moved into a two-room log home with no electricity, no running water, no indoor bathroom, only outdoor and no heat or stove. There was an old wood cook stove with water storage on one side and wood stove on the other for heating our home and cooking meals on. That was the first winter we were going to learn about cold weather; that fall we got ready with our cousins and they began teaching us about chopping wood and what would be needed to get for both heat and cooking. We would go to a metal building to wait for our bus and that first storm in October was a really heavy one. We were in the metal building waiting for the bus to come and I looked at the weather through the door about every half hour. The first time I could see that the snow was far away, but the wind was harsh, then the second to the last time I looked, I could not see across the road anymore. We heard the door open and my mom was there and said to grab each other's hands and stay tight, we could hardly see each other. My mother was in front and I was at the tail and all five of us kids hung on for dear life. Today, I don't know how our mother got us back to the house. Long ago the farmers would put a rope from the house to the barn, to the chicken coops, outhouse, just in case we can't see in front of us with the severe storms we would get in our region. At that time, I didn't know what the temp or wind chill factor were.

I would like to share another story about a winter day that I have never encountered since: I was in nursing school and I had two young boys. I had to get them up at 5am to get them dressed and get ready to bring to a babysitter before

heading to class in Rolla. I did not live far from the west reservation line, now called Davis Hill. My husband would get up to put a gas propane heater blower under the car to get it started, the wind chill factor was 70 below at our house. Once I left and got on the highway, the wind chill factor dropped to 90 below zero. I got almost to my sister-in-law's house when the car froze up, but luck was with me that day, because there was a car behind me that took me to her house. Then they went and got my husband and he brought another heater over and they warmed the car up and brought it to my sister-in-law's house. I was able to then take off and get to Rolla for class. As the day went on, it got warmer so all the vehicles were able to start after a few turns of the key. The temperature rose to -45 degrees by that afternoon. To me these were lessons of how dangerous winter weather can get in a split second. So, if there are warnings out that a storm is coming, make sure you have water, food, good heat, and a secondary compressor that would turn all your electricity on in case of an emergency. Always have a blanket, warm clothes, boots, and gloves in your car.

Author biography:

Boozhoo, my name is Miigizi Ikwe, Wapski Makwa indoodem, Mikanock Wajii. My other name is Frances Allard, I'm from the Turtle Mountain Chippewa Reservation in Belcourt, ND. I am Anishinabe Ikwe (Ojibwa)/Cree/Mitchif and the eldest of 8 siblings. I have two sons, an adopted daughter, a foster daughter and an adopted grandson. I have seven grandchildren and one great-granddaughter. I raised two other young men as well; one lives here in Belcourt and the other lives in Colorado. My father was a marine, my mother was a beautician, and when I was a child, we traveled throughout the US/Guam/Japan before returning to the Turtle Mountain home of my parents in 1959 when I was 14 years old.

I have had a lot of educational experiences, both formal and informal. I graduated from Turtle Mountain Community High School in 1963; got an LPN degree in 1974 through the Lake Region Jr. College in Devil's Lake, ND and was trained in Belcourt; completed a BA in Communication/Dance in 1985 (Missoula, MT) during the summers I worked as a woodland fire fighter; added an AA in Chemical Dependency in 1993 and an AA in Child Abuse/Neglect in 1994 from Lummi Community College (which later became Northwest Indian College) in Bellingham, WA; and then went back to TMCC for an AA in Commercial Art/Graphic Design in 2005; and picked up many certificates along the way. During those years, I was educated also by many Elders from different tribal nations and finally came home to Belcourt in 1995 and began my studies with all the Elders in the Turtle Mountains. I learned a lot and was honored to sit with them and learn from them. I also went to Canada to learn from the other half of my blood line, the Cree Nation. My travels took me across the US/Canada and across the ocean to Guam and Japan, learning many cultures along the way. The very first teachings I learned were the Seven Teachings of the Ojibwa, which came from my Aunt Edna Cloud who began this journey for me.

While I was in college, I learned to do research and found that very interesting. That training has become even more useful now that I am a board member of the Turtle Mountain Chippewa Tribal Nations Research Group, a board that reviews and approves all research done on the Turtle Mountain Chippewa Reservation. There are individuals from various universities who want to do research with our Turtle Mountain people, and the board makes sure they are following the guidelines of the Tribal Nations Research Group. We are the protectors of our people in the research/data arena.

I learned to sew in high school and loved it. This is one of my gifts that I have. I design all of my regalia (the traditional clothing/accessories) that I wear for Ceremonies/Pow Wows/special occasions. Since I have moved home, I have designed and made regalia for my grandchildren and other young people as well as others who request it of me. I am a Cultural Advisor for TMCC and ND EPSCoR. I work with 6-12 graders in ND EPSCoR NATURE camps during the summer months and ND EPSCoR NATURE Sunday Academies during the school year. I write cultural supplements for each of the STEM topics covered in the various STEM activities. If I am not familiar with a STEM topic, I do research on the topic so that I can figure out which cultural information fits best with it. This I have been doing for 22 years. I work for TMCC as an instructor, and was asked by the TMCC president and vice president many years ago to develop an archive for our artifacts by our people (clothing, tools, baskets, sculptures, etc.) for the college, which I did for 6 years. I am also currently working for the Turtle Mountain Chippewa Heritage Center for the last 3 years as an archivist/assistant for our artifacts and the tour guide to explain the historical way of life of our people here on the Turtle Mountain

Chippewa Reservation. I also do research on various artifacts in our collection to find the importance/year/geographic origin of the items.

I realize that my passion is all about what I have learned and how to give back to our families, relatives, friends, and those who want to know who we are as Anishinabe people. I am grateful for the teachings of our elders, our young people of today and my children. I am also a sponsor for those who are struggling with alcohol/drugs on a one-on-one basis, as well in the sweat lodge. I work with the youth, adults, and the elders, outside this community in all four directions.

As I look at my journey throughout my life, my vision is to work with my people in any way I can to teach what I know, and pass it on to all that are interested in our Native way of life. I live simply so that I can live in peace and harmony in nature, which means I will follow the Seven Teachings in a good way. Those teachings came from my elders and I take the lessons they taught me seriously and to heart. So, my mission is to guide those who want the Seven Teachings in their life. The Seven Teachings are Love, Honesty, Humility, Bravery, Respect, Wisdom and Truth.