**Ojibway Indian Fact Sheet**

This website was written for young people seeking Chippewa Indian information for school or home-schooling reports. We encourage students and teachers to visit our main [Ojibwa language](http://www.native-languages.org/ojibwe.htm) and [culture](http://www.native-languages.org/chippewa.htm) pages for in-depth information about the Ojibway/Chippewa tribe, but here are our answers to common questions asked by kids, with Ojibway pictures and links suitable for all ages. Photographs are the property of the sources we have credited.

url: <http://www.bigorrin.org/chippewa_kids.htm>



   **Chippewa Tribe**



[***Chippewa mothers past...***](http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/troufs/Buffalo/PB25.html)[***...and present***](http://www.sagchip.org/sevengen/woodshop.htm)

***What is the difference between Chippewa, Ojibway, Ojibwe, and Ojibwa? What do these words mean?***
There is no difference. All these different spellings refer to the same people. In the United States more people use 'Chippewa,' and in Canada more people use 'Ojibway,' but all four of these spellings are common. They all come from an Algonquian word meaning 'puckered,' probably because of the tribe's [puckered moccasin style](http://www.telusplanet.net/public/hexaquad/photo-ck17f.htm) of shoes. The Ojibway people call themselves *Anishinabe* in their own language, which means 'original person.'

***Where do the Chippewas live?***
The Chippewas are one of the largest American Indian groups in North America. There are nearly 150 different bands of Chippewa Indians living throughout their original home land in the northern United States (especially [Minnesota](http://www.native-languages.org/minnesota.htm), [Wisconsin](http://www.native-languages.org/wisconsin.htm) and [Michigan](http://www.native-languages.org/michigan.htm)) and southern Canada (especially Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan). Here is a [map](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c1/Anishinaabewaki.jpg) of Chippewa and Potawatomi communities in the US and Canada.

***How is the Ojibway Indian nation organized?***

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| http://www.bigorrin.org/ojib4.jpghttp://www.bigorrin.org/ojib5.jpg[***Flags of Chippewa bands***](http://users.aol.com/donh523/navapage/sault.htm) | Each Ojibway community lives on its own ***reservation*** (or ***reserve***, in Canada). Reservations are lands that belong to the Ojibways and are under their control. Communities of Ojibway Indians are called ***tribes*** in the United States and ***First Nations*** in Canada. Each Ojibway tribe is politically independent and has its own government, laws, police, and services, just like a small country. Some Ojibway nations have also formed coalitions to address common problems. The political leader of an Ojibway band is called a ***chief*** (*gimaa* or *ogimaa* in the Ojibway language.) In the past Ojibway chiefs were men chosen by tribal councilmembers, often from among the last chief's sons, nephews, or sons-in-law. Today Ojibway chiefs can be men or women, and they are elected in most Ojibway bands, like mayors and governors.  |

***What language do the Ojibways speak?***
Most Ojibway people speak English, but some of them also speak their native ***Ojibway language***. Ojibway is a musical language that has complicated verbs with many parts. If you'd like to know a few easy Ojibway words, *aaniin* (pronounced ah-neen) is a friendly greeting and *miigwech* (pronounced mee-gwetch) means "thank you." You can listen to an Ojibway man talk his language [here](http://www.schoolnet.ca/aboriginal/audiosam/anish/anish-e.html) and read an Ojibway picture glossary [here](http://www.native-languages.org/ojibwe_animals.htm).

***What was Ojibway culture like in the past? What is it like now?***
Here is a link to the [Mille Lacs Ojibwe](http://www.millelacsojibwe.org/) tribe of Minnesota. On their home page where you can learn about Ojibwe history and view photographs from the Ojibwe Museum.

***How do Ojibway Indian children live, and what did they do in the past?***

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| http://www.bigorrin.org/ojib6.jpg[***Ojibway string game***](http://www.civilization.ca/aborig/stones/toys/I15071.htm) | They do the same things any children do--play with each other, go to school and help around the house. Many Ojibway children like to go hunting and fishing with their fathers. In the past, Indian kids had more chores and less time to play, just like colonial children. But Ojibway kids did have [dolls](http://www.native-languages.org/dolls.htm) and toys to play with, and older boys liked to play [lacrosse](http://www.delvallacrosse.com/lacrosse_history.htm). Like many Native Americans, Ojibway mothers traditionally carried their babies in **cradleboards** on their backs. Here are some pictures of [Native American cradleboards](http://www.native-languages.org/cradleboard.htm). now.  |

***What were Ojibway men and women's roles?***
Ojibway women were farmers and did most of the child care and cooking. Men were hunters and sometimes went to war to protect their families. Both genders practiced story-telling, artwork and music, and traditional medicine. Ojibway men and women worked together to harvest wild rice. An Ojibway man used a pole to steer through the reeds, while his wife knocked rice grains into the canoe. Ojibway people still use canoes for ricing today, but both genders do the knocking now.

***What were Ojibway homes like in the past?***

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| http://www.bigorrin.org/ojib3.jpg[***Ojibway birchbark house***](http://www.trackertrail.com/survival/shelter/wigwam/wigwampukaskwa.html) | There were two types of dwellings used by the Chippewas. In the woodlands, Ojibway people lived in villages of birchbark houses called ***waginogans***, or wigwams. On the Great Plains, the Ojibwas lived in large buffalo-hide tents called ***tipis***. The Plains Ojibwa were nomadic people, and tipis (or tepees) were easier to move from place to place than a waginogan. Here are some pictures of [wigwam, tipi, and other Indian houses](http://www.native-languages.org/houses.htm). Today, Native Americans only build a wigwam or tepee for fun or to connect with their heritage. Most Ojibways live in modern houses and apartment buildings, just like you.  |

***What was Ojibway clothing like? Did they wear feather headdresses and face paint?***

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| http://www.bigorrin.org/ojib2.jpg[***Chippewa chief***](http://www.archives.gov/research/native-americans/pictures/select-list-120.html)http://www.bigorrin.org/ojib10.jpg[***Ojibwa moccasin***](http://www.civilization.ca/aborig/mocasin/mocoj1e.html)  | Chippewa women wore long dresses with removable sleeves. Chippewa men wore [breechcloths and leggings](http://www.native-languages.org/breechcloth.htm). Everybody wore [moccasins](http://www.native-languages.org/moccasins.htm) on their feet and cloaks or ponchos in bad weather. Later, the Chippewas adapted European costume such as cloth blouses and jackets, decorating them with [fancy beadwork](http://www.civilization.ca/aborig/stones/clothing/I22701.htm). Here are more [pictures of Ojibway clothing styles](http://www.nativetech.org/clothing/regions/region7.html), and some photographs and links about [Native American clothes](http://www.native-languages.org/clothing.htm) in general. Traditionally, the Chippewas wore leather headbands with feathers standing straight up in the back. In times of war, some Chippewa men shaved their heads in the [Mohawk](http://www.native-languages.org/mohawk.htm) style. Otherwise, Chippewa men and women both wore their hair in long braids. Some Chippewa warriors also wore a porcupine roach. In the 1800's, some Chippewa chiefs began wearing long headdresses like their neighbors the [Sioux](http://www.native-languages.org/dakota.htm). Here are some pictures of these different styles of [Native American headdress](http://www.native-languages.org/headdresses.htm). The Chippewas painted their faces and arms with bright colors for special occasions. They used different patterns for war paint and festive decoration. Some Chippewas, especially men, also wore [tribal tattoos](http://www.native-languages.org/tattoo.htm). Today, some Chippewa people still wear moccasins or a beaded shirt, but they wear modern clothes like jeans instead of breechcloths... and they only wear feathers or roaches in their hair on special occasions like a dance.  |

***What was Ojibway transportation like in the days before cars? Did they paddle canoes?***

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| http://www.bigorrin.org/ojib11.jpg[***Ojibway birchbark canoe***](http://www.rlnn.com/photographs/MHSPhotos.html) | Yes--the Ojibway Indian tribe was well-known for their birchbark canoes. Canoeing is still popular in the Ojibway nation today, though few people handcraft their own canoe from birch bark anymore. Here is an article with pictures of [Indian birch bark canoes](http://www.native-languages.org/boats.htm#canoes). Over land, Chippewa people used dogs as pack animals. (There were no horses in North America until colonists brought them over from Europe.) Today, of course, the Chippewas also use cars... and non-native people also use canoes.  |

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| http://www.bigorrin.org/ojib15.jpghttp://www.bigorrin.org/ojib14.jpg[***Chippewa woman***](http://www.kstrom.net/isk/food/wildrice.html)[***Chippewa man***](http://www.marquette.edu/library/neh/manessn/east.htm)[***harvesting rice***](http://www.kstrom.net/isk/food/wildrice.html)[***spear-fishing***](http://www.marquette.edu/library/neh/manessn/east.htm) | http://www.bigorrin.org/woodbead.gif***What*** ***was Ojibway food like in the days before supermarkets?***Ojibway bands lived in different environments, so they didn't all eat the same types of foods. Woodland Chippewas were mostly farming people, harvesting wild rice and corn, fishing, hunting small game, and gathering nuts and fruit. Here is a website about [Ojibwe wild rice](http://www.kstrom.net/isk/food/wildrice.html). The Plains Ojibwa were big-game hunters, and buffalo meat made up most of their diet. Here is a website with more information about [Native Americans' food.](http://www.native-languages.org/food.htm) http://www.bigorrin.org/woodbead.gif***What were Ojibway weapons and tools like in the past?***Ojibway warriors used bows and arrows, clubs, flails, and hide shields. Hunters also used snares, and when Plains Ojibway men hunted buffalo, they often set controlled fires to herd the animals into traps or over cliffs. Here is a website with pictures and more information about [American Indian weapons](http://www.native-languages.org/weapons.htm). Woodland Chippewas used spears or fishhooks with sinew lines for fishing, and special paddles called knockers for ricing.  |

***What are Ojibway arts and crafts like?***

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| http://www.bigorrin.org/ojib16.jpg[***Ojibway beadwork***](http://www.thunderbaymuseum.com/beadwork.htm) | Ojibway artists are known for their beautiful [beadwork](http://www.native-languages.org/beadwork.htm), particularly floral design. Other traditional Ojibway crafts include [birch bark boxes](http://www.lights.com/waterways/native/boxes.htm), [baskets](http://www.native-languages.org/baskets.htm), and [dreamcatchers](http://www.native-languages.org/dreamcatchers.htm). Like other eastern American Indians, the Ojibways also crafted ***wampum*** out of white and purple shell beads. Wampum beads were traded as a kind of currency, but they were more culturally important as an art material. The [designs and pictures](http://www.nativetech.org/wampum/wamppics.htm) on wampum belts often told a story or represented a person's family.  |

***What other Native Americans did the Chippewa tribe interact with?***
The most important Chippewa trading partners were actually other Chippewas. There were many different Ojibway bands, and they were closely allied with each other. The Chippewa Indians were also allies with their nearest kinfolk, the [Ottawa](http://www.bigorrin.org/ottawa_kids.htm) and [Potawatomi](http://www.bigorrin.org/potawatomi_kids.htm) tribes. The Ottawa, Potawatomi, and Ojibway tribes called themselves the ***Council of Three Fires***. The Ojibway tribe frequently fought with the [Iroquois Confederacy](http://www.bigorrin.org/iroquois_kids.htm) and the [Sioux tribes](http://www.native-languages.org/dakota.htm).

***What kinds of stories do the Chippewas tell?***
There are many Ojibway legends and fairy tales. Storytelling is very important to the Ojibway Indian culture. Many traditional Ojibway stories taught important lessons to children. Others were just for fun. Here is one legend about [how dogs came to the Ojibwa tribe](http://www.samoyed.org/dogind.html). Here's a website where you can read more about [Ojibwe mythology](http://www.native-languages.org/chippewa-legends.htm).

***What about Chippewa religion?***
Religions are too complicated and culturally sensitive to describe appropriately in only a few simple sentences, and we strongly want to avoid misleading anybody. You can visit this site to learn more about [Chippewa mythology](http://www.mpm.edu/wirp/ICW-141.html) or this site about [Native American religion](http://www.native-languages.org/religion.htm) in general.

***Can you recommend a good*** ***book for me to read?***
You may enjoy [The Birchbark House](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0786814543/natilangofthe-20), a historical tale by Native American author Louise Erdrich about an Ojibway girl growing up in the 1800's. Younger readers may like [Shannon, Ojibway Dancer](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0822596431/natilangofthe-20), about a contemporary Ojibway girl and her family. If you want to know more about Ojibway history and culture, two good sources for kids are [Ojibwe Lifeways](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0761408630/natilangofthe-20) and [Ojibwe](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0836836677/natilangofthe-20). You can also browse through our reading list of recommended [Native American books](http://www.native-languages.org/books.htm) in general.

***How do I cite your website in my bibliography?***
You will need to ask your teacher for the format he or she wants you to use. The authors' names are Laura Redish and Orrin Lewis and the title of our site is Native Languages of the Americas. We are a nonprofit educational organization working to preserve and protect Native American languages and culture. You can learn more about our organization [here](http://www.native-languages.org/faq.htm). Our website was first created in 1998 and last updated in 2015.

Thanks for your interest in the Ojibway Indian people and their language!