

Ojibwe Stories

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How Gwingwa'aage Got His Name

For the Ojibwe and many other Anishinaabe peoples, words in their languages can have much more meaning than we might expect. Many words for different animals in the Ojibwe language for example, can describe many things about the animal, like the way it looks, sounds, walks, or even eats! This story tells us a bit about how one troublemaking creature got its name from the Ojibwe people, after being too careless on one of his journeys.

Once, long ago, four spirits of the sky world were flying high and fast past mother earth. These sky spirits were trouble makers, and loved to laugh and fly past the earth just close enough so that all the beings on the land and in the water would be afraid of them. The spirits came to the earth many times, and would light up the sky with their light, diving and flying so that even the biggest bears and bison would try to hide away, and the tallest trees would tremble in their roots.

Mewinzha gii-niiwiwag agiw manidoog gaa-ondabijig imaa ishpming giwenh. Gii-pabaamisewag miziwekamig manidoo-gitigaaning giwenh agiw manidoog. Shke, Mii inendaagoziwaad da-babaa-gaagiibaadiziwaad. Gii-nitaa-baapiwag gaye. Apane giwenh gii-pabaa-zegi'iwewag wawaaj igo mendidojig dibishkoo go makwag miinawaa mashkode-bizhikiwag. Gii-paapagishkaawag mitigoog gaye.

One of these spirits was the most troublemaking and wild of all of his siblings. His brothers always needed to warn him that he was flying too close to the earth, even for them. No matter how many times the little sky spirit was told, he always wanted to fly closer and closer, scaring as many fish, birds, and plants as he could.

Awe bezhig manidoo gii-gaagiibaadizi nawaj igo apii-sh o-wiiji-manidooon giwenh. Shke, apane-go odaano-gii-gina'amaagoon iniw odinawemaaganan aw netaa-gaagiibaadizid manidoo. Gaawiin dash ogii-pizindawaasiin iniw odinawemaaganan aw nawaj egaashiinyiwid manidoo. Geget gii-minwaanigozi aw ani-babaa-zegi'iwed giwenh.

On one particular night, the spirits were once again flying above the earth, scaring and tricking all the beings with their bright light. As the four spirits traveled above the land, the youngest and most wild spirit wanted to fly closer and closer to the earth, wanting to scare the people and other beings that lived below. As the young spirit flew closer, he felt himself being pulled toward Mother Earth!

Aabiding gii-babaamisewaad, mii miinawaa babaa-zegi'iwewaad agiw manidoog. Nawaj besho akiing gii-izhise ji-zegi'aad iniw gakina bemaadizinijin. Anindigo besho akiing dagoshin. Gezika gii-ani-inamanji'od gii-izhi-wiikobijigaazod imaa akiing!

The young sky spirit tried hard to fly back up into the night sky, but soon found himself plummeting toward the ground below. Now all the people, creatures, plants, and even Mother Earth herself were trying to hide and protect themselves as the young spirit dropped toward

Mii apii ayaano-gii-animised a'aw egaashiinyiwid manidoo. Gaa-izhi-bangishing imaa akiing. Geget giwenh gii-segiziwan iniw gaa-kanawaabamigojin ani-bangishing. Gaa-pangishing, imaa basadinaanig gaa-ozhichigaadenig. Gaa-izhi-

<p>the land. Soon the spirit crashed himself into the ground... *BOOM!*... creating a huge crater where he had fallen on Mother Earth. The crash formed a large valley where he had dropped, now left behind by his brothers.</p>	<p>naganigod iniw odinawemaaganan aw manidoons.</p>
<p>After many years and the young spirit having disappeared, that valley slowly began filling with water, becoming a beautiful lake. As the years passed, grass and trees began growing around the shores of the new lake. One morning, as the sun rose above the place where the young sky spirit had crashed, many animals and people had gathered to drink and collect water from the lake, as they had been doing for many years after the spirit had created the valley with his mistake.</p>	<p>Gaa-pangishing a’aw manidoons imaa akiing, Mii imaa basadinaanig gii-ani-mooshkinebiinig. Noomaya-go iw bezhig zaaga’igan gii-ani-ozhichigaadenig. Gaa-izhi-maajiigininig anooj dibishkoo mitigoog naa mashkosiwan imaa jiigibiig. Wayiiba niibowa awensiyag gii-pi-naazkamowaad imaa oshki-zaaga’inganig. Gii-kiishkaabaagwewag iidog agiw awensiinyag.</p>
<p>As the beings all went about their day, they began to notice something happening in the lake’s water. The people and other animals watched as a single creature that they had never seen before began to swim out of the water’s depths, making its way onto the shore. All of the beings watched as this small creature shook away the water from its brown fur, and angrily stomped its way toward the forest. The people stepped back as they watched the creature make its way toward much larger animals, scaring them away with its growls, teeth, and claws! Even the big black bear was frightened by the ferocity of the little creature!</p>	<p>Gaa-izhi-maaminonendamowaad gegoo enakamigadinig imaa naawiyi’iing nibiikaang. Mii gezikaa gaa-mookibiid aw bezhig awensinh gaa-mayaginaagozid. Shke, gii-ozaawadowe, gii-dakoozi, gii-gaashaabide! Gaa-izhi-maajiigidaazod imaa noopiming gii-segi’iwed gii-niikimod. Wawaaj igo geget iniw makwan ogii-osaakawaan! Geget gii-onzaamidigaazo giiwenh.</p>
<p>The people soon recognized the wildness and boldness of the little brown beast, remembering the sky spirit who had crashed into the earth all those years ago.</p>	<p>Gaa-izhi-maaminonenimigod aw mayaginaagozid ji-aawigwen i’iw gwiingwan gaa-pi-bangising. Mii baapizh gwiingwa’aage wiinzhigaazod a’aw awensinh.</p>
<p>Because of where the little creature had come from, the people named the new animal “gwingwa’aage”. To the Ojibwe people, “gwingwa” means “shooting star” and “-aage” means “where something came from”. Today, many of us know the little wild creature as a wolverine, but to the Ojibwe he is known as the one that came from a shooting star.</p>	

