

# AMERICAN INDIAN BULLETIN

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## LEECH LAKE BAND OF OJIBWE

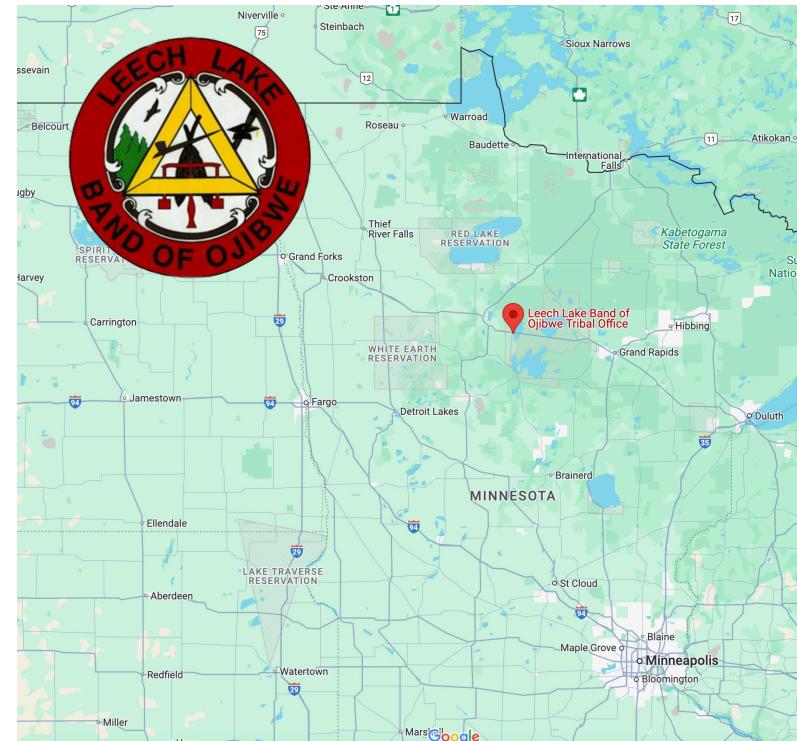


## INTRODUCTION

The Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe (Gaa-zagaskwaajimekaag Ojibweg) is a federally recognized tribe located in north-central Minnesota. They are part of the larger Ojibwe (also known as Anishinaabe or Chippewa) Nation, the second-largest Indigenous group in North America. The Leech Lake Reservation, established by treaty in 1855, encompasses over 865,000 acres across four counties and is home to numerous lakes, including the significant Leech Lake. As of recent data, the Band has over 9,000 enrolled members and maintains a strong cultural identity, actively working to preserve their language, traditions, and treaty rights. The tribal government is located in Cass Lake, Minnesota, and the Band is a key member of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, working collaboratively with five other Ojibwe bands in the state.

## RELATIVES

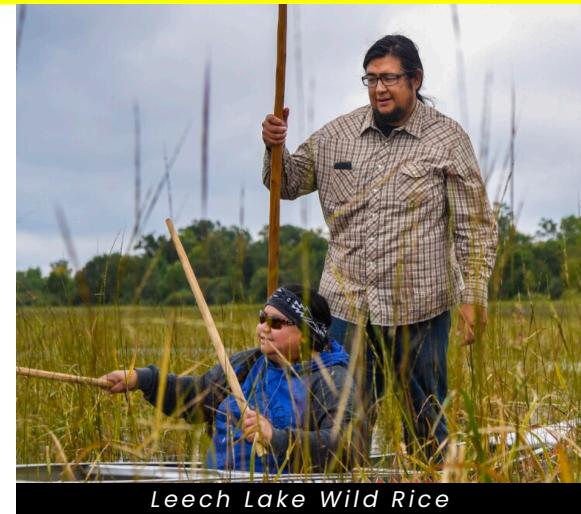
The Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe are closely related to other Ojibwe (Anishinaabe) bands throughout Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, and Canada, sharing a common language, culture, and history as part of the second-largest Indigenous group in North America. Historically, their relationships with the Dakota people in the region were complex, marked by periods of both alliance and conflict before facing shared challenges with European settlement. Today, these intertribal connections, particularly within the broader Ojibwe Nation, remain significant aspects of their cultural and social fabric.



# HISTORY

In the 1600's, the Dakota Indians had communities at Leech Lake. The Ojibwe bands moved into the region during the mid-to-late 1700's. The first Ojibwe settlements were on small islands on Leech Lake. This area in north central Minnesota was the home of the Mississippi and Pillager Ojibwe bands. In 1847, treaties took sections on the southwest corner of their lands with the Mississippi and Pillager bands from the Menominee and Winnebago tribes that were to be moved from Wisconsin. The remaining land was ceded by treaty in 1855 that established the reservation. The 1864 Treaty expanded and consolidated the reservation in the area of the three lakes. The intent at that time was to have the other Minnesota Ojibwe bands move to the Leech Lake area. By 1867, the plan was changed and White Earth Reservation was created to be the home of all Ojibwe people. The area of the Leech Lake Reservation was reduced by executive orders however, in 1873 and 1874 added land.

Located along US Highway 2, the reservation is southeast of Bemidji with Walker just outside on the southwest corner. Cass Lake is the largest community within the reservation. Eleven communities make up the reservation. In addition to Cass Lake, there are Ball Club, Bena, Inger, Onigum, Mission, Pennington, Smokey Point, Sugar Point, Oak Point, and Squaw Lake.



Leech Lake Wild Rice



Tribal College



Tribal Justice Center

## Continue reading here

<https://www.llojibwe.org/drm/subnav/llbohistory.html>

# LANGUAGE LEARNING

## Introduction

The Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe speak Anishinaabemowin, a vibrant Algonquian language with distinct dialects spoken across the Great Lakes region. It is a polysynthetic language, meaning words can be quite complex, incorporating many grammatical elements. While facing endangerment due to historical assimilation pressures, the Leech Lake community actively engages in language revitalization efforts to preserve and pass on Anishinaabemowin to future generations, recognizing it as a vital part of their cultural identity and heritage.

## Language learning resource

<https://ojibwe.lib.umn.edu/>

## Birch bark gathering & use

ode'imiini-giizis (*na*)—June  
mitigwaaking (*na*)—forest  
wiigwaasi-mitig (*na*)—birch tree; *wiigwaasi-mitigoo* (*pl*)  
*wiigwaasi-anibish* (*ni*)—birch leaf; *wiigwaasi-anibishan* (*pl*);  
also *wiigwaasi-anibishibag* (*ni*); *wiigwaasi-anibishibagoon* (*pl*)  
*wiigwaas* (*ni*)—birch bark; *wiigwaas* (*pl*)  
wanagek (*na*)—bark of a tree; *wanagekwag* (*pl*)  
wiigob (*na*)—basswood tree; *wiigobiiq* (*pl*); also *wiigobaatig* (*na*);  
*wiigobaatigoo* (*pl*); also *wiigobimizh* (*na*); *wiigobimizhiig* (*pl*)  
*wiigob* (*ni*)—basswood inner bark; *wiigobin* (*pl*)  
*wiigwaasika* (*vai*)—he removes bark from a birch tree  
maniwigwaase (*vai*)—he gathers birch bark  
mang shkiinzhiigwe (*vai*)—he has big eyes  
agaasa shkiinzhiigwe (*vai*)—he has small eyes  
bibagaa (*vii*)—it is thin; also *bibagaaaganad*  
gipagaa (*vii*)—it is thick; also *gipagaaaganad*  
onizhishin-wiigwaas (*vii*)—it is good bark  
maanendaagwaa (*vii*)—it is considered bad bark  
ozaan baatemanag-wiigwaas (*ni*)—very dry birch bark  
gidisksie (*vii*)—it comes apart; also *gidisksiemagad*  
*wiigwaasi-jiiamaan* (*ni*)—birch bark canoe; *wiigwaasi-jiiamaanan* (*pl*)  
*bisketenagan* (*ni*)—sap basket; *bisketenaganan* (*pl*)  
*wiigwaasi-makak* (*ni*)—birch bark basket; *wiigwaasi-makakoon* (*pl*)  
*wiigwaasi-naagan* (*ni*)—birch bark dish; *wiigwaasi-naaganan* (*pl*)  
*wiigwaasi-gamig* (*ni*)—birch bark lodge; *wiigwaasi-gamigoon* (*pl*)  
*wiigwaasi-bakwaan* (*na*)—birch bark roof; *wiigwaasi-bakwaanag* (*pl*)  
*mookomaan* (*ni*)—knife; *mookomaanan* (*pl*)  
*migoos* (*ni*)—awl; *migoosan* (*pl*)  
*waagikomaan* (*ni*)—crooked knife; *waagikomaanan* (*pl*)

# Resources

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**Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe Official Website:** <https://www.llojibwe.org/>

**Leech Lake News:** <https://www.leechlakenews.com/>

**Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe Housing Authority:** <https://llboha.org/>

**Leech Lake Division of Resource Management (DRM):** <https://www.llojibwe.org/drm/>

**Minnesota Indian Affairs Council - Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe:**

<https://mn.gov/indian-affairs/tribal-nations-in-minnesota/gaa-zagaskwaajimekaag-leech-lake-band-of-ojibwe.jsp>

**National Museum of the American Indian - Leech Lake Ojibwe:**

<https://americanindian.si.edu/environment/ojibwe/People.cshtml>

**National Indian Law Library (NARF) - Leech Lake Band of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, Minnesota:**

[https://narf.org/nill/tribes/minn\\_chippewa\\_leech\\_lake.html](https://narf.org/nill/tribes/minn_chippewa_leech_lake.html)

**Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe - History Page:** <https://www.llojibwe.org/aboutUs/history.html>

**Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe - Heritage Sites:** <https://www.llojibwe.org/drm/cultural/heritage.html>

**NativeAmerica.travel - Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe:**

<https://nativeamerica.travel/tribes/leech-lake-band-of-ojibwe>