

Anishinaabe Bizindamoo Makak

Episode 7: January 20, 2022

Erik Redix (ER): Boozhoo Anishinaabedoog. Gibizindaan *Anishinaabe Bizindamoo Makak*. Miskwaa Anang indizhinikaaz. Migizi indoodem. Odaawaa zaaga'iganing indonjibaa. Gichi Onigamiing indaa. Ingikinoo'amaage Ojibwemowin Oshki Ogimaag Gikinoo'amaadiiwigamigong.

Welcome to *Anishinaabe Bizindamoo Makak*, a program featuring Ojibwe first speakers telling stories in English and Ojibwemowin, the Ojibwe language. I'm your host, Erik Redix, and I am the Anishinaabe language Director at Oshki Ogimaag Community School on the Grand Portage Reservation. In episode seven, we are once again joined by Maajigwaneyaash, Dr. Gordon Jourdain. Maajii is from the Lac La Croix First Nation in Northwest Ontario, and recently returned to the Waadookaadaading Ojibwe Language Institute in Hayward, Wisconsin, where he now serves as the Director.

I wondered if you had anything you wanted to talk about your new role as the Director at Waadookaadaading, and yeah, just kind of any reflections you had about that.

Gordon Jourdain (GJ): For us as an Anishinaabe people, particularly Ojibwe Anishinaabe people, we are going to have to do everything ourselves as we have always done. And before anybody came to this, this part of the earth. We are self reliant people, self sufficient, and if we are going to be continue to be that way, we have to exude that more so than ever before. I use that as a preface to answering your question, because that's happened in my life. When I first came to a Lac Courte Oreilles, and I probably talked to you before I was working as a journeyman carpenter, and that's what I used to do in my past life in Canada (laughter) until they caught wind that there was a first language speaker living in the area and I got the call. So I was, I was really excited about that.

However, as a first language speaker, I didn't have any degrees back then. In the Western idea of what is, what the sense of being qualified for anything is. I always felt diminutive compared to licensed teachers that were in the classrooms, teaching in the mainstream school, because I felt that way, and the system made me feel that way too without having to say anything. You know, the silence is very powerful in our institutions, particularly with education. And as a first language speaker, I had to be humble enough to say, you know, I need to learn how to do this. I need to take classes in education so that I can be a better and effective teacher of Ojibwemowin, and particularly Ojibwe philosophical thinking is what I'm really, really interested in, how we look at the world, and how my grandmother looked at the world through the eyes of my grandmother, this world is totally, totally different. And I wish for everybody to have that same experience that she did, but contemporarily, that world does not exist, but we could have a semblance of that if we learned and taught our children to speak Ojibwemowin, or at least understand Ojibwemowin. That's the beginning of returning back to that that type of association with our environment, because a lot of the teachings of our elders, of our spiritual advisors, of the ones that have lived on before us and have passed on even as far back as the time before Wenaboozhoo came.

A lot of the knowledge that we were given right as a right of being human are spiritual. Being spirit and talking about spirit through Ojibwe language is a powerful medium for us as Anishinaabe people, and we need to exercise that right, because that's the only thing that

was not taken away from who we are, and that's what has permeated throughout all of the genocide, all of the racism, all of the globalization that takes place in the world these days, removal of children from families, making it unlawful for us to exercise our practicing our customs, speaking our languages, everything we were bombarded as a people, but all these things. But you know what? We never, ever lost our spirit. Our spirit is always, always going to be there with us. And being strong in that spirit, because I lived with my grandmother and my grandmother was strong in spirit. We also have a blood memory of what it's like to have been close to the Creator through our memory of what it's like to be close to the Creator. There's no place that we can go as Anishinaabe people to learn that. We have to teach that to one another. Nobody is going to come into our world and say, "step aside, I'm going to help you get this back." Nobody's going to do that unless we do it ourselves.

And my being here from where I started out from, from not being able to speak English at all when I was a kid and going through school where all my teachers were not Native teachers. I still managed to make it to Waadookaadaading and became an immersion teacher. And I still had drive and self intrinsic motivation to be a better educator, and I became educated in the academic world and had acquired and obtained my doctor's degree in teaching and learning. And now I'm back again to give back to the community where I started from. It's the role of the community that was here that started this school, that that sustained this school, I am a model of that idea, of that first idea of the person who thought about this. And as a first language speaker, I had to kind of like this, I had my own biases about things. I had to get rid of those to participate in something that's as phenomenal as having an immersion school in a prospering immersion school in a community that had the forethought and the infrastructure to do this. It takes a lot of people, doing many, many different things in different in different areas, for us to be able to do this.

ER (8:36): So, for example, when you were there the first time, the school only went to fifth grade, and now it's up to eighth grade, right?

GJ: When I was here, the first time we went from K to 3. And currently it's K to 8, and we're talking about 9 to 12. And hopefully our dream is to be an Ojibwemowin granting institution of four year degrees, and beyond that....

ER (9:18): We just finished December, started January and the terms that I was familiar with, *Manidoo Giizisoons* for December and *Gichi-manidoo-giizis* for January, and I wondered if you had any insight on why we call December and January by those terms?

GJ: I've never heard of those particular ones, *Manidoo Giizisoons* and *Gichi-manidoo-giizis*. December actually be that particular moon, it doesn't correlate with the with the Gregorian calendar, as we have talked about before, our moon doesn't decide to come up and change on the first of December because of our connection to our environment, we adhere to the what's happening on outside in the natural world. So at the time, at that place where I grew up, December is actually *Aabita-bibooni-giizis*, because it recognizes the positioning of our grandfather, the sun, where it comes down in the horizon every single day, and usually

around the 21st is what my grandmother used to call, *azhe-giawe-niibin*, returning back to the summer.

And she used to say, "*Nashke Maajiigwaneyaash, bi-izhaan omaa nagake nashke ganawaabam awedi giizis.*" She would always sit by the window at my mother's house. This is when she got older, and we had to move into my parents house, because I used to live in a little log cabin with her. She always sat by the window in the evenings, and the window at my father's house faced the West, where the sun went out all the time, and she would always, always sit there. And it's not until later on in my life when I realized that she was marking the position of the sun, where it descended in the horizon on a daily basis, and she didn't mark it by using a calendar, but by the position of where that sun fell down that day. And she would always say, "*Nashke Nashke Maajiigwaneyaash, ganawaabam gimishoomisinaan giizis,* it's going to fall in the same place for a couple days."

So it rests there. Our grandfather, the sun, rests in that position for a couple days, acknowledging its relationship with our grandmother the moon. The grandmother Moon is very, very bright, vibrant that time of the year. It's also significant and marks the relationship that we as Anishinaabe people, Ojibwe thinking people, understand the relationships and the roles of the man and the women, so that our grandmother, the moon takes the responsibility out from the grandfather Moon for a couple nights and becomes very, very vibrant. And this year, it was vibrant for four nights because, because *azhe-giawe niibin*, almost coincided with the full moon for that month, for that particular month. So it was a very powerful time this year. So from that regional knowledge over there, or I dare say that it's something that all of our Anishinaabe people knew a long time ago, marking that time of when our grandfather, the sun, marks the end of its northernmost journey and comes down on that same place for two days and then returns back to being summertime again. I kind of put that together. And they never actually said this, but I that is called *Aabita-bibooni-giizis*, that marks the middle of the winter.

ER (13:33): That's really interesting.

GJ: Yeah, prior to that, one would *Gashkadino-giizis*, the freezing moon, *Gashkadino-giizis*. Ojibwe people are a society people. And each of those societies that we had long time ago, and we still have those Midewiwin, Big Drum, and several other societies, they'll have different names for those moons, because it marks the ceremonial preparations evident within those particular societies there. So I can't really say too much about where *Manidoo Giizisoons* and *Gichi-manidoo-giizis* would come from. I would be assuming things.

ER (14:26): Well, what was the term they used in Lac La Croix for January?

GJ: January would be, I think that would be, like the eagle moan, return of the eagle moon, *Migizi-giizis izhinikaazo*, because the eagles come back because they leave over there. As a matter of fact, when I came and lived down this way, I saw an eagle in January or December, and I was like, "Oh my gosh, is this an omen?" Because I never saw them where I grew up. I put out more tobacco than I usually do (laughter), because I've never seen that before. It's that regional connection to the place that is important to us as Anishinaabe

people and as a person who grew up in the time when all these people were still very strong and vibrant in understanding who they were as Anishinaabe people, I respect the regional vernacular that's used to describe things. And I tried to stay away from suggesting

that there's only one way to say something.

ER (15:49): And then you mentioned a little earlier about that we can't think of those Anishinaabe terms as corresponding exactly to the Gregorian calendar, right? Like *Manoominike-giizis* is August. You know, if we switch over the Gregorian calendar and then call August *Manoominike-giizis*, August 1 *Manoominike-giizis*, well, there isn't really rice anywhere, right? The first of August anywhere. But my point is, is that those things don't exactly line up right?

GJ: I've been a mentor of Ojibwe immersion teachers for a long time now, and as their mentor and also advisor to different programs that they were developing curriculum to be teaching in classrooms. I would introduce that concept of our grandmother, the Earth, being the wisdom keeper. And it's, it's what we should follow as our advisor on what are our pedagogy is for our schools. And to introduce the idea that, you know, the moon is what we have to follow. And it's also okay to use the numbers that are that are used for the Gregorian calendar. So if it's the first of August, and we use like, what is the one before August? Is that *Miini-giizis*? So it could be *Miini-giizis* 31st and still be *Miini-giizis* 1st, and then change, change the name of the moon on the 15th of August, so it would be *Manoominike-giizis*, is the 15th. That's how we did that. That's how we were able to organize and be part of a contemporary way of recognizing the progression of time with those two different ideas. So amalgamating, you know, Western paradigm of observing the passage of time and our Anishinaabe way of marking those times as well. So we just put those two ideas together, and that worked well, I still use that.

ER (18:25): I was wondering if you could tell that the story about your grandmother and marking the position of the sun, if you could maybe give a little Ojibwe synopsis of that story.

GJ: Aa mii iwidi nakake gaa-, gaa-tazhi-ombigi'id a'a nookomisiban, Kijiwanong izhinikaade ishkoniganens imaa biitawe'ii Zhaaganaashiiwakiing miinawaa imaa Kichi mookomaanakiing, zaaga'igan imaa ayaa aa mii imaa beshiw ayaag i'iw ishkonigan.

Mii dash a'a nookomis gaa-nitaawigi'ig. Aapiji gii-kichi-mindimoowenyiwin awe mindimoowenh. Mii dash igo apane gii-ayaawaad, gii-naanaagajitood kakina gegoo eyaanig imaa bagwaje'ii. Memindage ogii-naanaagaji'aa' bineshiinya', giigoonya', mitigoog, aa kakina go gegoo bemaadziimagadinig. Waawaashkeshiwag ge ogii-naanaagaji'aa': "Hoowa! Wiinge onzaami-ozaawizidog a'a waawaashkeshi," ikidooban ako gii-, gii-niibininig ingoji go apii gii-, gii-, gii-miinike-, miinikegiisowang apii. Mii apii gaa-minwenimaad ini waawaashkeshiwan, "Wiinge minopogozidog!" ikido.

Mii dash ge ini gaa-naanagaji'aad ini haa'aan gi-mishoomisinaan aa, aa giizis bemi-, bemi waasakanendamawinangid i'iw bemi-, bemi-widamawaad ono aa manidoon.

Odooshkaabewizimigod ono manidoon, babaa-maamaada'ookiid i'iw nakake mino-, minawaanigoziwin, mino-bimaadiziwin.

Mii dash iwe nakake iwidi gii-na-, gii-ani-kichi-minidmoowenyiwi awe nookomis aapiji.

Ingii-endaamin dash ako imaa he'iing mitigo-waakaa'igaanzhish. Ingii-aanjigozimin dash iwidi nakake endaawaad ingi indede-, indedenaaban. Mii go imaa apane gii-namadabid he'ii waasechigan iwidi nakake inaasami'ayaa waasechigan ningaabii'anong eni-izhi nikiiweshkaad a'a giizis.

Mii nangona imaa apane naanaagaji'aad ini aandi nakakeyaa ezhi-bangishinid, ezhi bangishimoninid ini giisisoon. Mii dash imaa apii ingoji go apii gii-ayaag goda gii-ishkwaa kashkadinogiisisowang, nawaj igo gii-ani-oshpi-biboong apii, mii i madwe ganoozhid ako imaa waasechigan: "Nashke Maajigoneyaash!" ikido. "Nashke ganawaabam awedi giizis, wii-kibisikaa ajina," ikido.

Mii dash imaa nakake nangona ezhi-bangishimod a'a giizis imaa. Naasaab apii izhi bangishimon niizhogon. Mii dash imaa ani-kichi-, ani-kichi-ayaa'aawiyaan mii go bijinag gii-ani-nanisidotamaan nakake wegonen dinawa nangona gaa-dazhindang awe mindimoowenyiban apii gii-aninoojiinwiyaan. Gaawiin igo weweni ingii-pizindawaasii. Ambegizh sa geyaabi bimaadizid indinendam apii-, noongom epiitiziyaan. Weweni aapiji nawaj indaa-bizindawaa.

Mii dash iwe gaa-tazhindang iwe nakake mii imaa ezhi-gibizikaad a'a giizis. Aapiji waasa giwedining waa-, waa-apiichi-izhaad. Mii imaa ezhi-gibisikaad miinawaa ba-izhi-maajaad. Zhaawanong nakake miinawaa izhaa. Baamaa miinawaa iwidi aapita-niibino-giisisowang mii iwidi miinawaa gibisikaad niizhing. Mii dash iw ezhi-azhe-giwe-biboong apii.

Miinawaa bemi-izhi-aazhawishkaad iwidi ezhi-bangishimong miinawaa ezhi-gibisikaad iwidi azhe-giwe-niibin apii. Mii imaa endazhi aa'aazhawi-, aa'aazhawihkaad awe gimishoomisinaan, giizis. A awe dash haa'aa niibaagiizis, gookomisinaan, mii go-, mii iniwen waadookaagod weweni ji-a, gaye wiin a'aw ingoding onaadamaawan a'aw gim-, gookomisinaan niibaagiizis ini gimishomisinaan. Mii imaa apii memindage nooma-, noongom, niizh midaaswaak niizhtana-ashi-bezhig kinoonowin, gegaa go naasaab apii azhe-giwe-niibin miinawaa, miinawaa aa mooshkine-aasod a'a gookomisinaan gegaa go apii, naasaab apii gii-izhiwebad iwe nakake.

Geget idash igo apii menindage aapiji gii-kichi-waasa-, waasaapikizi awe nakake gookomisinaan. Niiyodibik igo apane gii-kichi-waasaapikizi. Mii dash iwe nakake wiidookawaad iniw gimishoomisinaan ji-anweshininid ajina. Nawaj dash wiin awashime apiitaaso awe nakake gookomisinaan niibaagiizis.

Mii imaa wendinamang iwe gikino'amaagoowin aaniin nakake ezhi-naaadamaadiwaad ingiw anishinaabe-inini miinawaa anishinaabe-ikwe gegoo ezhichigewaad o'o awashime bezhig awiya ji-anokiisig. Naadamaadiwaad weweni bimiwidoowaad i bimaadiziwin.

ER (23:58): Miigwech! I wonder, too, if there is any kind of, you know, where your grandmother did that, and kind of mark the point, you know, that point of the return of summer. But then, did she talk at all about how the days start to get longer, but yet it still gets colder, right? And it's the same thing with summer, you know, we start to lose daylight, but those are the hottest days of the year, in July, when we start to lose daylight.

GJ: After just listening to them and almost like eavesdropping on their conversations, because we were always in the same building all the time, and we often talk about, you know, kids are not listening to us when they're in the same place. They're busy doing something. Oh, I was listening! (Laughter). I had no choice, so I was actually learning a few things when I was in the same room with my parents, or any adults that were talking about life in general. But what I did here is the marking of the Autumnal and Vernal equinoxes. I don't know if that's the plural word for Equinox, but they talked about *Aagwiitoo-biboon* and *Aagwiitoo-niibin*. So *Aagwiitoo-biboon* would be the vernal equinox that time when, when? What is it? The days are the same. Lent is that? What is that? How that works. And then *Aagwiitoo-niibin* is the autumnal equinox. So those are the words that I remember just listening to them talking about that particular time of the year, they did say *biichaa giizhigad*, which is the days are getting longer. *Biichaa* means the distance between one place to the next, or even from the morning time to the night time is getting longer. *Biichaa* means that it's takes more time for that action to occur. So they did use *Nawaj ani biichaawan-giizhigadoon*, the days are getting longer. *Nawaj ani-biichaawan-dibikadoon*, *biichaa-dibikad* would be the same way, *biichaa-dibikad*, because the day is from the time the sun goes down until it comes up again. That space in between, that time is getting longer. So that's *biichaa*, which is a distance marks time.

ER: Miigwech for tuning into Anishinaabe Bizindamoo-makak. Support for this program comes from the Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Ojibwe and the Minnesota Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund. Our producer is Staci Drouillard. The theme song is by the Stonebridge Singers. Until next time, this is Erik Redix. Giga-waabamin!

Ojibwe Transcription by Gordon Jourdain