

Giizisoo-Mazina'igan

The Thirteen Moons and Turtle's Back

Turtles are an important part of spirituality for many Native American Tribes, not just the Anishinaabe. Turtles are incorporated into many different parts of Anishinaabe life and spirituality, including their calendar. The Anishinaabe calendar is based on the Cycles of the Moon, dividing the year into 13 months, 1 more month than our 12 year cycle!

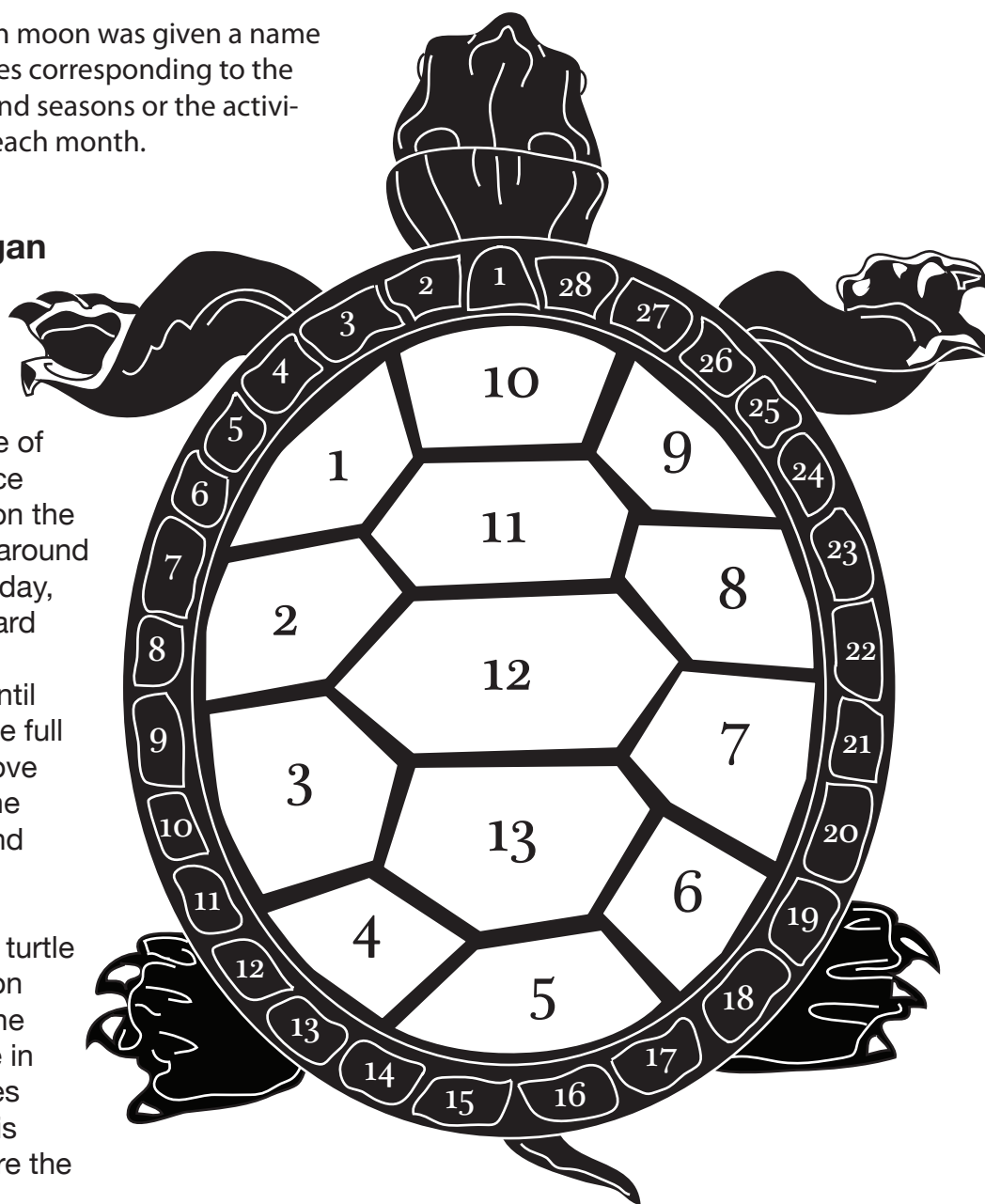
Every 28 days a new moon would appear, signifying the end of a cycle. According to legend, after the great flood, Nanaboosho, a clever trickster spirit, put a piece of the earth on Turtle's back and created the world we see today. It was at this time that Nanaboosho counted the 13 plates on Turtle's back, comparing them to the 13 moons.

Over time each moon was given a name and a story, often times corresponding to the changes of weather and seasons or the activities you would do in each month.

How to Use the Giizisoo-Mazina'igan

On the start of the next lunar cycle, when there is a New Moon, place 1 stone on the first large plate of the turtle's back. Place another small stone on the smaller plates going around the turtle shell. Each day, move the stone forward one plate around the outside of the shell until you've completed one full cycle, or 28 days. Move your inner stone to the second large plate and repeat the cycle.

While you use your turtle calendar, pay attention to the seasons and the changes you can see in Nature. What activities do you do outside this time of year? What are the animals doing?



The Thirteen Moons & Their Anishinaabe Name

March/April
Bopogaame giizis
 Broken Snow Shoe Moon

April
Ziisibaakadake giizis
 Sugar Moon

May
Nmebine giizis
 Sucker Moon

June
Waabgonii giizis
 Blossom Moon

July
Miin giizis
 Berry Moon

August
Mnoomni giizis
 Rice Moon

September
Waabagaa giizis
 Changing Leaves Moon

October
Bnaakwii giizis
 Falling Leaves Moon

November
Baashkaakodin giizis
 Freezing Moon

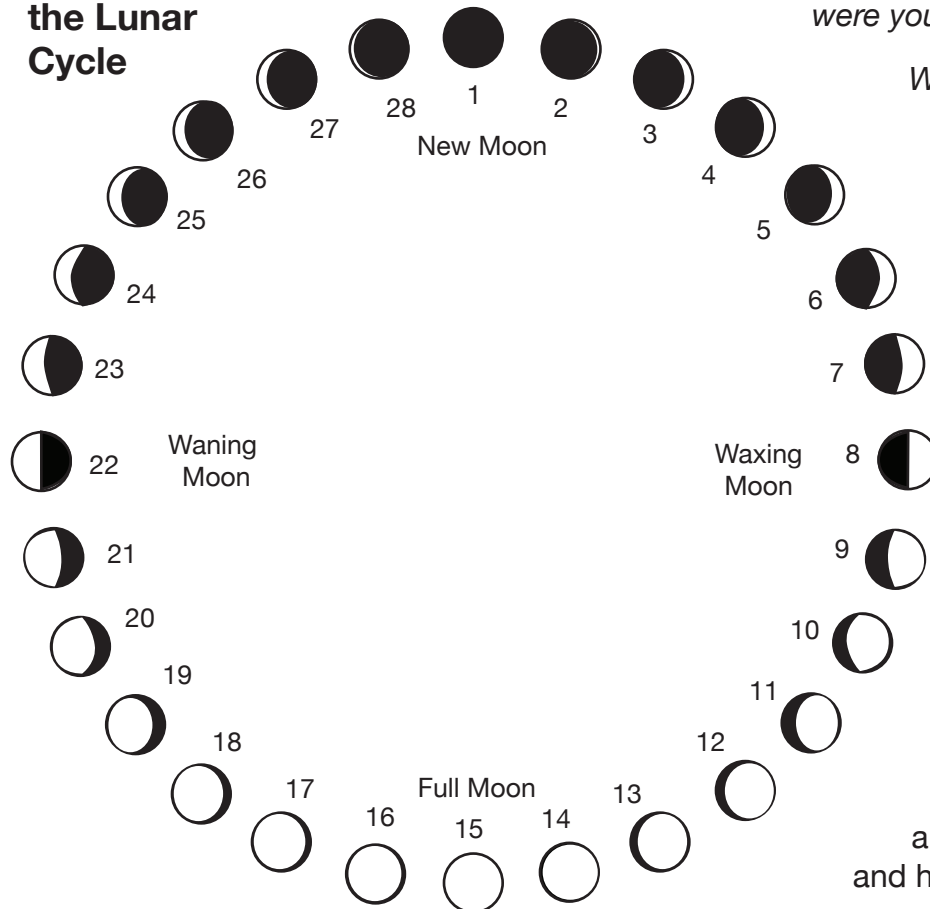
December
Manidoo giizisoonhs
 Little Spirit Moon

January
Manidoo giizis
 Spirit Moon

February
Makwa giizis
 Bear Moon

March
Naabidin giizis
 Snow Crust Moon

A Western Depiction of the Lunar Cycle



Which Anishinaabe Month were you born in?

Why do you think the months are named what they are?

What stories could you tell about these months?

What are some similarities and differences between the Western and Anishinaabe Lunar Calendars?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of each and how could you use each in your own life?