

## ***GAA MIINIGOOYANG: “That Which Is Given To Us”***

### **Teaching and Research Viewer Guide**

*PBS eight's* landmark series, *Ojibwe/Waasa Inaabidaa: We Look In All Directions*, celebrates an extraordinary Native American nation, the Anishinaabe/Ojibwe of the Great Lakes region. We hope that the *Ojibwe/Waasa Inaabidaa: We Look In All Directions* television series, and teaching/discussion guides for each program reflect the richness and resiliency of the past, present and future *Ojibwe* life. These guides were constructed for use in middle school and high school social studies classes, but they are very usable and appropriate for adult viewers as well. The series illuminates a vibrant, important, indigenous nation of the Great Lakes region with much to share and teach.

**Episode Three, *Gaa miinigooyang, “That Which Is Given To Us,”*** examines the patterns of Anishinaabe/Ojibwe economic survival in the Great Lakes environment over time. “That Which Is Given to Us” refers to the Ojibwe belief that everything we have is given to us by the Creator as a gift that we must give thanks for humbly. Survival in the northern harsh environment of the Great Lakes was dependent on a delicate seasonal cycle of hunting, fishing, and gathering that was precarious and could easily result in starvation. Before European contact, Ojibwe survival and economic well-being depended upon being in balance and harmony with both the plant and the animal worlds. The Great Spirit provided the gifts of food, shelter, clothing, medicine and dreams and the people completed the circle of giving through ceremonies, offering tobacco (a mixture of traditional plants) or other gifts in gratitude, and by sharing with each other. The inter-dependency of all things formed the traditional economic philosophy of the Ojibwe system: the individual is dependent upon the group for survival, the group is dependent on nature for survival, and nature is dependent on the supernatural for survival. Wealth, in the traditional Ojibwe world-view, was measured by the ability to have enough to share with others and to giveaway more than one receives.

However, the Euro-American supply and demand market economy, began to compete for the acquisition of the resources (furs, timber, minerals, etc.) found on the land that the Ojibwe historically occupied. The cultural clash of economic and philosophic world-views had a profound impact on the economic survival and culture of the Ojibwe then and now.

**The teacher guide for this program consists of:**

- Discussion questions and related activities to engage students and other viewers with program-specific concepts prior to viewing the program
- Guide questions to help focus the viewing experience
- Discussion questions and related activities to reinforce or extend learned concepts following the student viewing experience
- Assessment of learning suggestions

**The following themes are central to using “Gaa miinigooyang-That Which Is Given to Us” as a learning activity:**

- The Anishinaabe/Ojibwe are an indigenous American culture of the Great Lakes region with a long history of trade and economic activity.
- The traditional economy was reflected in the activities associated with each of the four seasons: Summer - birch bark gathering, fishing, berry gathering, hunting, etc., Fall –gathering wild rice, hunting, trapping, etc., Winter – hunting, fishing through the ice, trapping, etc., Spring – gathering maple sugar, spear-fishing, etc.
- Cultural contact with Euro-American explorers and traders resulted in the adaptation of this seasonal cycle to new tools, weapons, and trade goods.
- Trade with Euro-American groups for desired goods resulted in the accumulation of debt by the Ojibwe and an imbalance in their relationship with the environment.
- The treaties of 1837, 1842, and 1954 ceded land to the United States, but the Anishinaabe/Ojibwe were guaranteed the right to remain on the land and to hunt, fish, and gather on the ceded territory for survival and to maintain traditional ways. U.S. government

policies of assimilation made it difficult for the Ojibwe culture to maintain its economic integrity.

- The Ojibwe continue to adapt to cultural and environmental changes in a modern world. These adaptations are reflected in both traditional and new economic activities.

### **Suggested Discussion Questions and Activities *Before Viewing Program***

1. Students need to know the definition of economics: **“Study of how individuals, groups or nations allocate their limited (scarce) resources in which to satisfy their unlimited wants and needs.”** Within this definition, there are economic terms that need to be known and understood: **allocate** - need to make decisions; **limited resources** - land, labor, capital, entrepreneurship; **unlimited wants and needs** - goods (things that are made or products from hunting, fishing, and gathering) and services (duties performed by people). **The basic economic problem is scarcity** (not enough).
2. The students break into cooperative groups and brainstorm how they think the Native Americans in their area survived economically. They do this by first listing what they believe were the resources available to the indigenous people before contact with the Euro-American cultures. Once a listing is determined, ideas about the resources were utilized are brainstormed.
3. Discuss ways tribes in rural areas are surviving today. Have they maintained any of the traditional methods? What new methods of economic survival are they utilizing?

### **A partial glossary would include:**

- natural resources
- allotment
- assimilation
- capitalism/market economy
- entrepreneurship
- subsistence economy
- self-determination
- the New Deal

- Relocation Policy for Native Americans
- Treaty of 1837 (main economic provisions)
- Treaty of 1842 (main economic provisions)
- Treaty of 1954 (main economic provisions)
- Voight decision (1983)
- National Indian Gaming Act

### **Maps:**

- Map of Great Lakes region showing the extent of Ojibwe (or your local tribal region) settlement prior to contact with Euro-Americans.
- Map of Great Lakes region showing present Ojibwe (or your local tribe) reservations

### **Guide Questions to Focus Viewing**

1. What economic activities reinforced the belief system of the Ojibwe (or your local tribe)?  
*How* did these activities reinforce the belief system?
2. What happened to Ojibwe culture (or your local tribe) when traditional economic activities were disrupted or no longer allowed?
3. What efforts were made to assimilate the Ojibwe (and other tribes) into the general culture of the United States (be specific)? What was the economic impact of these assimilation efforts?
4. What traditional economic activities continue today? What new economic activities are tribes involved in today?

### **Discussion Questions and Activities *Following Viewing the Program***

1. The students divide into cooperative groups and analyze the immediate and the long-range economic effects of the treaties mentioned in the program or treaties relevant to your local area. This is charted. Did anything of value occur for the tribe because of these treaties? What was problematic?

2. How has the tribe maintained cultural sovereignty and economic integrity? This should be charted in some form with each challenge to sovereignty and economic integrity listed and the adaptations made by the tribe shown as discussed bullet points under these challenges.
3. Students interview Ojibwe (or your closest tribal community) residents (preferably elders) about the importance of traditional economic activities such as maple sugaring and wild rice harvesting. What impact (positives and negatives) on the tribe has occurred because of these activities?
4. Students interview a variety of tribal individuals of different age groups, genders, occupations, etc., about the impact (positives and negatives) of gaming on the culture and economic well-being. A general survey of the surrounding civic community should be taken about gaming. How do the interviews of tribal members compare with the findings from the surrounding population? What conclusions can be made from the similarities or differences between these findings?

### **Economic Simulation**

The “Bead Game” simulation was developed by Ken Ripp, a high school teacher in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. It was taken from the Internet for inclusion in this teacher guide. It offers students the opportunity to examine the three basic economic systems of market, command, and traditional economies. It is a wonderful way to begin an exploration of how an economic system reinforces both cultural values and life style.

However, it does not address what occurs when political sovereignty and economic integrity are disrupted by foreign influences. This is what occurred with the Ojibwe. After engaging in this simulation, the students, working in small cooperative groups, should discuss the following questions and arrive at answers acceptable to the group:

1. Does there appear to be a bias in this simulation toward a particular economic system? If so, what evidence exists to support this conclusion? If not, continue with the next question.

2. Is the description of the traditional economy (“That’s the Way We’ve Always Done It Ville”) depicted in the simulation descriptive of the economy of the pre-European contact Ojibwe? If it is, determine evidence to support this conclusion. If it isn’t, determine in what ways there are differences. The groups should share conclusions. What kind of economy (traditional, command, market, mixed) do the Ojibwe have today? What evidence supports this conclusion?