

KEWEENAW BAY INDIAN COMMUNITY



Who We Are:

We are Ojibwewanishinaabe meaning “original human” but also known as the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community (KBIC), an Ojibwe nation. We have approximately 3,623 enrolled members (October, 2014) and are located in Baraga County of Michigan’s Upper Peninsula along the shores of Lake Superior. Our families share social ties through a tribal-wide network of totemic clans.

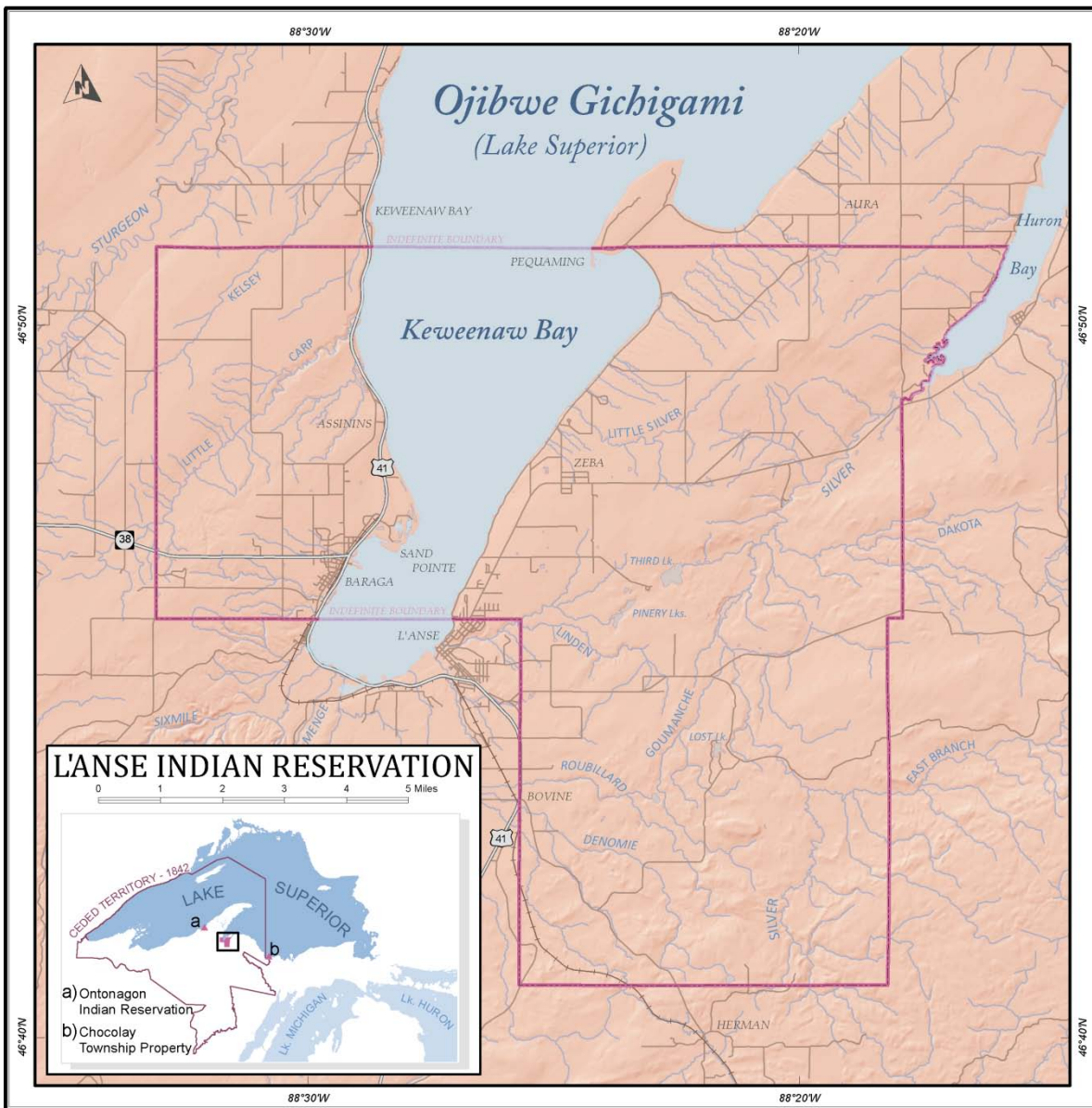
Traditionally, the Ojibwe **Odoodemiwag (Clan System)** was created to provide leadership and structure in order to care for these needs. There were seven original clans given duties to provide the structure needed to care for the people (Benton-Banai 1988:74-78, Benton-Banai’s original spellings intact below).

The **Ah-ji-jawk (Crane) and the Mahng (Loon) Clans** were given the power of Chieftainship. By working together, these two clans gave the people a balanced government with each serving as a check on the other. Between the two Chief Clans was the **Gi-goan (Fish) Clan**. The people of the Fish Clan were the teachers and scholars. They helped children develop skills and healthy spirits. They also drew on their knowledge to solve disputes between the leaders of the Crane and Loon Clans. The **Mu-kwa (Bear) Clan** members were the strong and steady police and legal guardians. Bear Clan members spent a lot of time patrolling the land surrounding the village, and in so doing, they learned which roots, bark, and plants could be used for medicines to treat the ailments of their people. The people of the **Wa-wa-shke-shke (Deer) Clan** were gentle, like the deer, elk, and moose or caribou for whom the clan is named. They cared for others by making sure the community had proper housing and recreation. The Hoof Clan people were the poets and pacifists avoiding all harsh words. The people of the **Wa-bi-zha-shi (Marten) Clan** were hunters, food gatherers and warriors of the Ojibwe. Long ago, warriors fought to defend their village or hunting territory. They became known as master strategists in planning the defense of their people. The **Be-nays (Bird) Clan** represented the spiritual leaders of the people and gave the nation its vision of well-being and its highest development of the spirit. The people of the Bird Clan were said to possess the characteristics of the eagle, the head of their clan, in that they pursued the highest elevations of the mind just as the eagle pursues the highest elevations of the sky.

The seven original clans have expanded into over twenty different clans according to region. The duties and responsibilities of the different clans within the system of government remain and the Clan System continues to build on equal justice, voice, law and order and reinforcement of teachings and principles of a sacred way of life.

We have cultural teachings through stories that signify the relationship between native people, wildlife and the natural world around us which is the sacred way of life. These teachings are not just a way to teach but are also a way to honor other beings with which we share this earth. A crucial part of the Anishinaabe way of life is the sustainable harvest of plants and animals. KBIC harvesting practices are protected by a land cession treaty between the Chippewa and the federal government in the 1842 Treaty of La Pointe which reserves our specific rights to fish, hunt, and gather on ceded territories. We continue to practice subsistence and commercial harvesting as it has been passed between generations. All KBIC enrolled members are entitled to Tribal hunting, fishing and trapping licenses which allow holders to harvest certain wildlife species as defined in our Laws.

(Excerpts from KBIC Wildlife Stewardship Plan 2014)



KBIC is a signatory to the Treaty of 1842 and the Treaty of 1854. The Treaty of 1854 established Reservation land bases which include the L'Anse and Ontonagon Indian Reservations. The primary land base is the L'Anse Indian Reservation, located in the western Upper Peninsula of Michigan along the shores of the Keweenaw Bay of Lake Superior (Figure 1). The L'Anse Indian Reservation consists of approximately 75,000 acres, 54,000 of which are land, and 21,000 of which is Lake Superior. There are approximately 19 miles of Lake Superior shoreline, 3,000 acres of wetlands, and 80 miles of rivers within five watersheds that are either wholly or partially within the L'Anse Reservation boundaries. The Village of Baraga and community of Zeba both lie entirely within the Reservation boundaries, while the Village of L'Anse lies partially within the Reservation.

The Ontonagon Indian Reservation is located in Ontonagon County along the Lake Superior shoreline, is approximately 3,000 acres in size, has about 2 miles of Lake Superior shoreline, and includes three watersheds partially within Reservation boundaries. KBIC also administers approximately 200 acres of land holdings and housing in Marquette County. The L'Anse Indian Reservation and the Ontonagon Reservation exterior boundaries are formally recognized by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA).

Ceded territories covering the western Upper Peninsula of Michigan and northern portions of Wisconsin and Minnesota were defined by the Treaties of 1842 and 1854. KBIC retains hunting, fishing, gathering, and other usufructuary rights within these ceded territories, and tribal members and government staff exercise these rights for subsistence, spiritual, cultural, management, and recreational purposes.