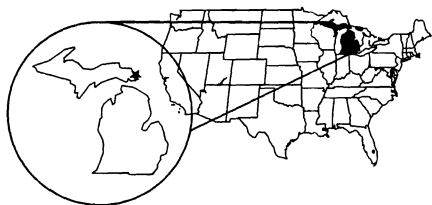


## SAULT STE. MARIE TRIBE OF OJIBWE (OR CHIPPEWA)



In northeastern Michigan, based on 293 acres of reservation land, is the Sault Ste. Marie Ojibwe (or Chippewa), the largest of the Michigan tribes with a tribal enrollment of over 24,000.

The Sault Ste. Marie Chippewa flag has a black background, which is unusual for any flag. It bears a colorful seal replete with symbolism. The seal is divided into quarters, each of a different color, representing a compass direction and bearing an animal symbolizing a particular clan. At the center of the seal is a stylized turtle on whose shell are a crane and an ash-tree branch. The tribe describes its flag's symbolism (*Wabun-Anong*, pamphlet, June 1982) in this way:

A teal-blue body of a turtle, completely circular and edged in aquamarine, forms the center of the seal.

"TURTLE represents to our people the Mother Earth we stand upon, sustaining us with constancy and generosity and is the central part of the symbol . . . We are cared for by our Earth Mother with her blessings of food, clothing, shelter, and medicine . . . We give thanks to Earth Mother, the direction below us . . . Turtle emerged from the water with Earth on its back, providing a living place for human beings and all creatures between sky and water. Turtle is medium of communication, the emissary of beings of this world and time and beings of another world and dimension of time. Turtle symbolizes thought given and thought received and represents clarity of communication between beings. Aqua-green symbolizes plant life and growing things."



On the back of the turtle a black crane with white body and wing accents prepares to take flight toward the west, and to its left is a mountain-ash branch in black.

“CRANE represents our people’s eloquence of leadership and direction. The voice of the Crane is unique and infrequent. When Crane speaks, all listen. Crane is the spokesperson for the clans. MOUNTAIN ASH TREE is the sacred tree of the Anishinabek [“our People”] . . . able to survive in places where other trees cannot. Its leaves, berries, and bark are used for medicines. The Mountain Ash is used as an example for strength, durability, and strong character.”

Radiating from the central turtle are four arc sections (quarters) separated by aquamarine lines. The quarter to the east is yellow with a black rabbit with white highlights and bordered in red.

“EAST, the direction of the rising sun, is thought of as a Grandfather personifying the winds and natural phenomena of that direction. East is the direction of the physical body. It symbolizes all that is new in the creation, like all newborn creatures, including man. Like the rising sun, a new day is brought to light. So it is with all things. Knowledge is brought to consciousness and like the circling of the sun, the seasons change. East is the time of change. It is the spring, the time of change from blackness to beauty. It is the sun breaking over the horizon.

“RABBIT represents Manabozho, a messenger of Kitche Manitou [Great Spirit]; an intermediary on earth among different species of beings; and an advocate for the Anishinabek, to whom he imparted the gift of knowledge. From the east leading to the west is a YELLOW PATH. It is said by our elders that this is the path of life, the path of the Great Warrior, the Sun. We give thanks to our eastern Grandfather.”

The quarter to the south is red with a black eagle with white accents.

“SOUTH, a continuation of our circle of life, is the direction of maturing life, like young men and women. It is the time of year we call summer, the time we call mid-day, and the time of day the eagle soars. South is the direction of full understanding.

“EAGLE receives from Kitche Manitou the gifts of strong wings, keen sight, and proud bearing. Eagle symbolizes courage and pre-knowledge. His sphere is the mountains and the heights. RED symbolizes earth and fire. We give thanks to our southern Grandfather.”

The quarter to the west is black with a black deer with white highlights and edged in yellow.

“WEST, the direction of the setting sun, is the time of gradual change as from daylight to darkness, from life to death. It is evening, the change of life in midagedness. It is change like the leaves or the hair on our heads from natural colors to the likes of natural frost. West is the time of full maturity. It is the time of insight. West is the direction of the emotional part of ourselves.

“DEER receives from Kitche Manitou the gift of grace. Deer symbolizes to our people love. BLACK symbolizes change from this life. We give thanks to our western Grandfather.”

The quarter to the north is white with a black bear standing upright with white highlights and edged in red.

“NORTH is the time of our elders, our old people. It is a time of wisdom, so much like the answers found in our dreams. It represents the night, as a time called midnight, and a time called winter when things are as unpredictable as our dreams. North is representative of those things that are positive, a time of snow and purity.

“BEAR received from Kitche Manitou the gifts of courage and strength. Bear is representative of all medicine powers in creation. Claws dig medicine roots. Bear passes knowledge on through dreams, visions. WHITE symbolizes spirituality. We give thanks to our northern Grandfather.”

Enclosing the seal are three thin rings—the inner green, the middle yellow, and the outer red.

“RAINBOW is the beautiful bridge to the spirit world and the colors of the universe. Red is symbolic of earth and fire. Yellow is the path the sun crosses through the day. Blue is symbolic of sky and waters. From wherever we stand upon our Earth Mother we have companionship of these four directions . . . The direction above recognizes the daytime and nighttime skies of our creation. This is where we look to acknowledge the Great spirit, the Creator. The Creator gives us everything we know . . . Therefore, our greatest acknowledgment is to the Creator of all the universe. We give a grateful thanks.”



A new logo recently adopted by the tribe features the crane taking flight toward the east and carrying a mountain-ash branch in its beak. The image is surrounded by a ring outside which curve to the upper left “Sault Ste. Marie Tribe” and toward the lower right “of Chippewa Indians”, separated by two turtles. The entire logo is usually represented in black or gold. 🐢

[Thanks to Jessica Jeffreys at the tribal headquarters in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, for the pamphlet with the flag’s description.]