

Summer 2026 Lake Michigan Jiimaan Journey (communal naming underway)

Nibi gaa-bimaaji'iwemagak. Nibi, water, gives life. As part of this, Anishinaabeg have always navigated the waterways by jiimaan to make our lives; for, harvest, trade, ceremony, governance, travel, recreation, and more. Many people have held and continued the teachings and relations with water, as well as continued the knowledge and teachings of our Jiimaan.



There have also been many growing efforts to expand and remake these relations across our communities in the past decades (e.g. waterwalks, wiigwas jiimaan). In summer 2026, with intentions to continue to contribute to the broader and growing efforts across Anishinaabeg territories, we are planning a jiimaan journey from Chicago to the Straits of Mackinac from June 27-July 20th. There are many roles and ways to participate in the journey. Youth participants under 18 must be accompanied by an adult caregiver. Paddle crew will primarily be 18 and up. This is an invitation to join or contribute to jiimaan journey in whatever ways seem right to you! The trip is intended to continue to rebuild right relations with water, with our more than human and human kin, to ensure Jiimaan knowledge and practice continues, and to invite us all to continue to imagine and enact our healthful thriving and navigation of a changing climate (ecological and political) through trade, travel networks, and cross-community relations that our ancestors engaged in and that will be central to our collective futures. We believe this may be the first time a group of Anishinaabeg have made such a journey on Lake Michigan since treaty times. We hope that there will be more - perhaps along the western shoreline - in future years. Or perhaps in other lakes!

Fred Harrington, Jiimaan caretaker, along with 30+ paddlers, ground crew, and helping organizers including Anna Lees and Megan Bang, will lead the journey as we head to the Straits of Mackinaw. The straits are what we call the heart of the great lakes and a central place of trade routes governed by the Odawa since time immemorial. This place is also of grave concern this spring and summer as Enbridge prepares to dig the "Great Lakes Tunnel Project" for replacing Line 5; the place where our fresh waters converge, our fish relatives make life, and where our ancestors lived centuries ago and their remains are still held. Many others will take up roles to plan, prepare, paddle, cook, support, teach and learn, and offer other gifts, teachings, intentions along the way. This journey is intended to bring our prayers, medicine, strength in, and collective awareness to a place and peoples during this critical time.

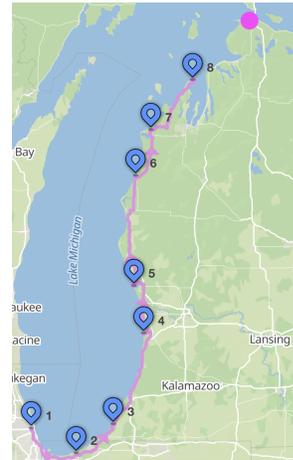
What is the path?

We will depart from Chicago and plan to take about 3 weeks traveling along the shoreline. We plan to travel 25-35 miles a day and stop for camp along the way. We will spend 2-4 nights at each site.

We will have 2 major 3-4 hour paddles each day (morning and afternoon) with some evening paddles - weather permitting.

Primary Landing Sites Planned/Reserved So Far:

- Indiana Dunes Campground
- Tower Hill Camp
- Holland Campground
- Muskegon Campground
- Orchard Beach State Park (Manistee)
- Platte River Campground (Sleeping Bear Dunes)
- Leelanau Cabins
- Waganakasing
- Wilderness State Park



How can I register or find out more?

To express interest, register and receive updates and communication [please fill out this form](#):

<https://forms.gle/nHzSEhTGjjsvFaoM7>

Want to contribute? [Review these suggested ways](#) (see attached)!

For questions, thoughts, (inquiries into sanity 😊), etc: Lakemichiganjiimaanjourney@gmail.com

How did the idea of paddling from Chicago to the Straits come to be?

In 2008, Waganakasing Odawa revitalized this practice with a youth Jiimaan Journey through the inland waterways from Petoskey, MI to Cheboygan, MI. They paddled from Lake Michigan through the inland waterways into the Straits of Mackinac to Lake Huron. Through this week-long journey, youth and adult facilitators paddled two g'chi jiimaan 48.1 miles camping overnight and paddling by day. The idea was sparked by elder Odawakwe Yvonne Walker-Keshick who wanted youth to see our waterways as our ancestors did in an effort to build their cultural identities and participation. Since then, the community has continued youth Jiimaan Journeys through the inland waterways and expanded the opportunity to Chicagoland in 2022 with a river journey down the Des Plaines River and jiimaan paddles off the shore of Lake Michigan.

Since that time some of the Chicago Native community has joined LTBB jiimaan through the inland waterways. As part of these experiences together, and other projects, we have been focused on engaging families in our traditions, especially around our seasonal practices, sharing traditional stories, our histories, and lived experiences. We have spent time focusing on what our responsibilities are and how we can collectively engage in ethical deliberation and decision-making within and across communities through changing climates. This journey is intended to honor the elders who have been keeping these practices alive, to grow people with jiimaan teachings and experiences across the 3 Fires, and to rebuild our trade and travel networks along Lake Michigan.