

# Anishinaabemowin Kinship Terms<sup>1</sup>

Almost all of the nouns specifying kin relations are **dependent**, so would be labeled *nad* in the system of Nichols and Nyholm 1995 (*nad* stands for ‘dependent animate noun’). A dependent noun is one that obligatorily carries a specification of relationship (often called a **possessor** in grammar). So, for example, a daughter or son is always *someone’s* daughter or son, and the term makes no sense apart from the son or daughter’s *parents*, and so in Anishinaabemowin requires a possessive marker, such as **indaanis**, ‘my daughter,’ or **gidaanis**, ‘your (sg.) daughter. The basic stem of the word meaning ‘daughter’ is /**daanis**/, but this stem is never used without some kind of possessor marking. That is why such a noun is called a **dependent noun**, as opposed to a so-called **independent noun** such as **mitig**, ‘tree,’ which does not require a possessor, and in fact, rarely has one (though, of course, it can optionally have one, **nimitigom**, ‘my tree’). Because dependent noun stems require specification of relationship, they are cited in the dictionary (and here) with a **first person (prefix) inflection**, e.g., **nimishoomis**, ‘my grandfather,’ which has a prefix **ni+**, ‘my,’ attached to the basic word-stem /**mishoomis**/. I have identified this first person inflection (and in some cases third person) by putting it in **red**. To express other terms of relationship, such as ‘your grandfather,’ the red portion should be replaced with the appropriate inflection, as in **gimishoomis**, ‘your (sg.) grandfather.’ It is important to remember that you won’t find the word for ‘grandfather’ under «m» in the dictionary (for /**mishoomis**/, the basic stem), but rather under «n», because it is listed under the full word including the first person prefix, **nimishoomis**.

A few kinship terms are **independent** nouns, and are labeled below as *na*.

The **plural** of a given term is indicated below by means of a suffix, for example, the entry form **nimishoomis** is followed by **-ag**, indicating that the plural form is **nimishoomisag**, ‘my grandfathers.’ Notice that you don’t include the hyphen in the plural form; here the hyphen just tells you that this is a **suffix**, that is, that is added to the end of the word. In some cases, when a suffix is added, it can change the spelling (pronunciation) of the basic stem. For example, in the case of singulars ending in /nh/, the final /h/ must be replaced with /y/ when making the plural, for example, the plural of **nisayenh**, ‘my older brother,’ which is listed simply as taking suffix **-ag**, is actually **nisayenyag**, with the «h» of the singular changed to «y» before the plural suffix. This the case with every word that ends in «nh».

Many kin terms have a special **vocative** form, which is used when directly addressing someone. So, for example, when referring to one’s grandmother in a conversation (i.e., as a third person), one will likely say **nookomis**, ‘my grandmother.’ But when speaking

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<sup>1</sup> All forms from Nichols, John and Earl Nyholm. 1995. A concise dictionary of Minnesota Ojibwe. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. More information is given in the dictionary than here. This publication ©Rand Valentine, 2001. (Contact:: jrvalent@facstaff.wisc.edu).

directly to your grandmother (rather than talking to someone else about her), you would use the vocative form, **nooko**. Vocatives are indicated in the chart below with the specification *vocative*. I have undoubtedly missed some, so you should consult Nichols and Nyholm 1995 for more details.

The table below is organized generationally. See other documents for traditional kinship charts.

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### General Terms for Relatives

inawemaagan <i>na</i> –ag	relative, kinsman
(n)indinawemaagan -ag	my relative
(n)indoodem -ag	my clan (see notes below)
odoodeman ‘her/his clan’	

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### +3 Generations (One’s Great-Grandparents’ Generation)

aanikobijigan <i>na</i> –ag	great-grandparent, great-grandchild
(n)indaanikobijigan -ag	my great-grandparent

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### +2 Generations (One’s Grandparents’ Generation)

nimishoomis –ag	my grandfather
nimishoo <i>vocative</i>	
nookomis -ag	my grandmother
ookomisan, ‘her/his grandmother’	
nooko <i>vocative</i>	
naan <i>vocative</i>	

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### +1 Generation (One’s Parents’ Generation)

(n)ingitiziim -ag	my parent (one who raised me)
niniigi’ig -oog	my parent
(n)imbaabaa -yag	my father
also noos (traditional) -ag	
also (n)indede -yag	
nimaamaa -yag	my mother
also (n)inga (traditional)	
ogiin, ‘her his mother’	
nimishoomenh -yag	my parallel uncle (father’s brother)
ninoshenh -yag	my parallel aunt (mother’s sister)
(n)inzhishenh -ag	my cross-uncle (mother’s brother)
(n)inzigos -ag	my cross-aunt (father’s sister)

(n)inzinis -ag	my father-in-law
(n)inzigozis -ag	my mother-in-law

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## 0 Generation (One's Own Generation)

nisayenh -yag	my older brother, my older male parallel cousin
nimisenh -yag	my older sister, my older female parallel cousin
nishiime -yag	my younger sibling
(n)indawemaa -g	my younger parallel cousin
nijikiwenh -yag	my sibling of opposite sex; my parallel cousin of opposite sex; (if I am female) my brother; (if I am male) my sister
wiijikiwenyan 'his friend(s)'	(if I am male) my brother, my male friend
nijikwe -yag	(if I am female) my female friend
wiijikwen 'her friend(s)'	
niikaanis -ag	(if I am male) my brother; my friend
also niikaan	
niitaa -g	(if I am male) my brother-in-law
niitaawis -ag	(if I am male) my cross-cousin of the same sex; my father's sister's son; my mother's brother's son
(n)indaangoshenh -yag	(if I am female) my cross-cousin of the same sex; my father's sister's daughter; my mother's brother's daughter
niinim -ag	my sibling-in-law of the opposite sex; (if I am female) my brother-in-law; (if I am male) my sister-in-law
niinimoshenh -ag	my sweetheart; my cross-cousin of the opposite sex; (if I am female) my mother's brother's son, my father's sister's son; (if I am male) my mother's brother's daughter, my father's sister's daughter
niwiidigemaagan -ag	my spouse
niwiiw	my wife
wiiwan, 'his wife'	
(n)indikwem -ag	my wife, lit. 'my woman'
nimindimooyenyim	my wife, lit. 'my old lady'
(n)indininiim -ag	my husband, lit. 'my man'
ninaabem -ag	my husband
(n)indakiwenziyim -ag	my husband, lit. 'my old man'

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## -1 Generation (One's Children's Generation)

(n)ingozis -ag also (n)ingos	my son
(n)indaanis -ag also (n)indaan	my daughter
niniijaanis -ag	my child
niningwanis -ag	my cross-nephew; (if I am male) my sister's son; (if I am female) my brother's son
nishimis -ag	my cross-niece; (if I am male) my sister's daughter; (if I am female) my brother's daughter
(n)indoozhim -ag	my parallel nephew; (if I am male) my brother's son; (if I am female) my sister's son; my step-son
(n)indoozhimis -ag	my parallel niece; (if I am male) my brother's daughter; (if I am female) my sister's daughter
(n)indoozhimikwem -ag	my stepdaughter
na'aangish na -ag	son-in-law
nina'aangishiim -ag	my son-in-law
niningwan -ag	
na'aanganikwe na -g	daughter-in-law
nina'aanganikwem -ag	my daughter-in-law

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## -2 Generations (One's Grandchildren's Generation)

noozhishenh -yag	my grandchild
noozis <i>vocative form</i>	

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## -3 Generations (One's Great-Grandchildren's Generation)

aanikobijigan na -ag	great-grandchild; great-grandparent
indaanikobijigan	my great-grandchild

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## Some Clan Terms<sup>2</sup>

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awaazisii	bullhead
maang	loon
ajjaak	sandhill crane
waabizheshi	marten
migizi	eagle
mikinaak	turtle
ma'iingan	wolf
nigig	otter
zhaangwesi	mink
zhingos	weasel/ermine
wazhashk	muskrat
ginebig	snake
bizhiw	lynx
omakakii	frog
adik	caribou
omashkooz	elk
esiban	raccoon
ginoozhe	pike
ogaa	walleye (pickerel)
maashkinoozhe	muskellunge (musky)
namebin	sucker
name	sturgeon
gekek	hawk

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### Notes on Clans

The following notes are from Densmore, Frances. 1929. Chippewa customs. Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 86. Washington: Government Printing Office.

“The [English] word *totem* is irregularly derived from the term *ototeman* (odoodeman) of the Chippewa and cognate Algonquian dialects. The stem of this word is *ote* (-oode), signifying a consanguine<sup>3</sup> kinship, and the suffix *-m* indicates a possessive relationship. Groups of persons having a blood relationship were (RV or!: are) designated by the name of an animal which in common usage, came to be called their “dodem animal.”

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<sup>2</sup> This list is from: Jackson, Dana. 1994. Learning the Bad River Ojibwe dialect as a second language, Intermediate lessons 1-81. Bad River Education Department.

<sup>3</sup> “Of the same lineage or origin; having a common ancestor.” (American Heritage Dictionary)

‘Warren<sup>4</sup> states, “the Algics<sup>5</sup> as a body are divided into several grand families or clans, each of which is known and perpetuated by a symbol of some bird, animal, fish, or reptile which they denominate the Totem or Do-daim (as the Ojibways pronounce it...) The totem descends invariably in the male line, and intermarriages never take place between persons of the same symbol or family, even should they belong to different and distinct tribes, as they consider one another related by the closest ties of blood and call one another by the nearest terms of consanguinity.” ... The entire list of 21 clans given by Warren are the crane, catfish, loon, bear, marten, reindeer, wolf, merman, pike, lynx, eagle, moose, rattlesnake, black duck or cormorant, goose, sucker, sturgeon, whitefish, beaver, gull, and hawk. He states further that “the crane, catfish, bear, marten, wolf, and loon are the principal families, not only in a civil point of view, but in numbers, as they comprise eight-tenths of the whole tribe.”

‘Personal informants stated that the bear and marten were the “most aristocratic” of the animal clans, and the crane and eagle among the bird clans. There were only a few of the sturgeon clan among the Mississippi Chippewa, but members of the catfish clan were very numerous.’

In traditional pictographic representation, people were typically identified by their totem animal, as in the following fragment from a petition of a group of Chippewa chiefs to the president of the United States in 1849, depicting two chiefs, one of the crane clan and the other of the marten.<sup>6</sup>



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<sup>4</sup> Here Densmore is quoting William Warren, who was half Ojibwe, spoke Ojibwe, and in the 19<sup>th</sup> century wrote a history of the Ojibwe people, based on extensive interviews with Ojibwe elders in Wisconsin and Minnesota. Warren, William, 1885. *History the Ojibways*, based upon traditions and oral statements. Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society 5:29-394. St. Paul. (Reprinted as *History of the Ojibwe people*, Minnesota Historical Society Press, St. Paul. 1984).

<sup>5</sup> He uses the word *Algic* the way that *Algonquian* is used nowadays.

<sup>6</sup> From University of Wisconsin Historical Society website.