

## FROG FRIENDS

### CHAPTER 10 - EKO-MDAACHING GINJIGAN

Nokomis Annie went to find her rubber boots standing in the corner of the closet. A home-made net and a small white basin were sitting by the door. Waaban was cheerfully walking down the overgrown path. It was a bright spring afternoon in Wasauksing and it was time to count the *mogkiig*.

"Aaniin Waaban," smiled Nokomis Annie. "What a beautiful day! Look at the *mog'kii* poster I picked up at the Band Office. It is from the Toronto Zoo. It shows all the *mogkiig* that we might see in Ontario."

Waaban looked excitedly at his Nokomis as she continued, "There was also a *mogkiig* call CD from the Toronto Zoo. They have recorded all of the different *mog'kii* calls. I listened to it last night. It is in our *Anishinaabe* language! Did you know that the children at the school are going to listen to it this week in their language class?"

Waaban was excited to learn about *mogkiig* in his language. He loved *mogkiig*!

Nokomis Annie told Waaban that she was asked to take some of the students out for a short walk down to the edge of the *nibi* every afternoon for the next week to listen for *mogkiig*. "The students are going to listen to the calls and practice filling in forms to tell the Zoo about the *mogkiig* they hear. They are really excited to be included in the FrogWatch program."

Waaban looked at all of the materials they needed waiting by the door. "Hey, I like that basin you found," he said.

"It is white so we will be able to see all those little swimmers that we catch with our net," said Nokomis Annie.

"I brought my bug book and some *giishkaandag-niibiishaaboo* in case we get thirsty," said Waaban.

"I am anxious to see if I can find some medicine plants near the shore because I used all the medicines picked last year. Let's get going!" said Nokomis Annie.

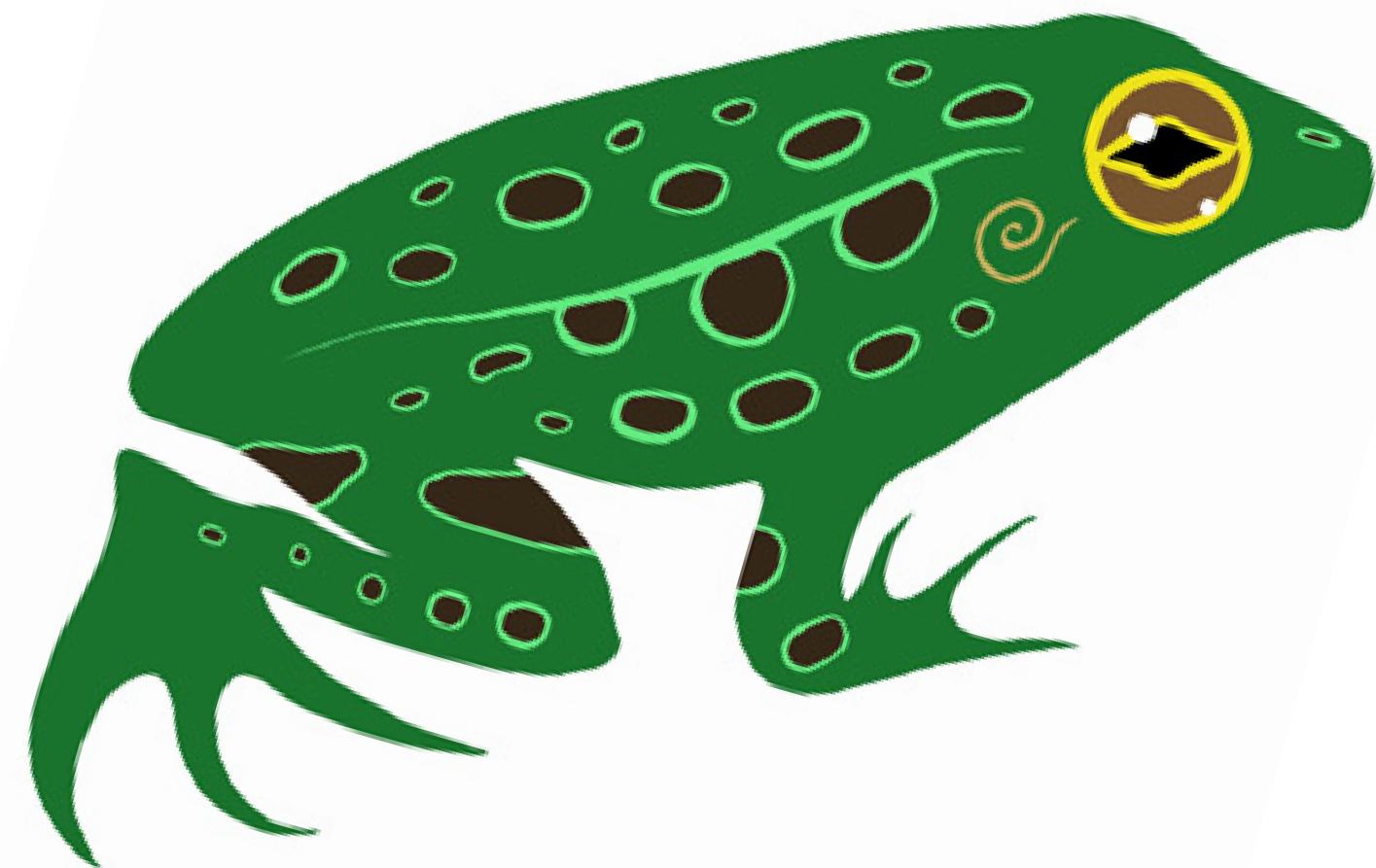
Waaban and Nokomis Annie walked down the path to the road and turned towards the shimmering *nibi*. Nokomis Annie brought *asema* and she spoke about the importance of placing an offering to thank and honour the *nibi*. Together they set their nets, basins, and notebooks on the big *Mishomis* rock that waited for them at the edge of the marsh.

Soon they were busy scooping marsh *nibi* into the basin to look for signs of life. The sun shone down on the pair as they worked with lots of laughter and chatting. Waaban was busy taking pictures to send to his cousins, Noodin and Ziigwan in the city. As they scooped, they counted the tiny insect babies that they saw.

Nokomis Annie helped Waaban look in the wetland to understand what each insect meant in relation to *nibi* cleanliness. The Toronto Zoo had sent them a 'Wetland Report Card' which explained how to check the *nibi* oxygen levels and cleanliness according to the types of insects found.

Working together, they had their 'Wetland Report Card' finished quickly. They found many insects, which was good news, because it meant that the wetland was fairly healthy! Maybe this spring it would need a litter cleanup, followed by *nibi* testing. From the far side of the marsh came the 'peep, peep' of the Spring Peepers, singing a song of joy and thanksgiving for the return of spring. Nokomis Annie and Waaban were excited to see the marsh waking up!

Nokomis Annie thought about some of the teachings her Elders taught her when she was young. When another season of life begins in the watershed, one of the very first *bineshiinh* of



spring to return to the waterways is the Red-winged Blackbird. The male Blackbirds arrive when there is still ice on the ponds and waterways. Some of the Old People say that it is this bird's call that wakes up those little Spring Peepers and encourages them to start climbing out of their mud beds to join the new season.

Another teaching Nokomis Annie remembered says that when the Spring Peepers start to call, it is time to take the spiles out of the maple *mitigook* because sap season is coming to an end. Science shares the accuracy of this teaching. When the temperature is warm enough in the waterways and wetlands, the first frog singers come out. This is when the sap in the maple *mitigook* begins to get cloudy and the sweetness fades from the sap.

"Waaban, next week when we come back, can you bring your iPod and digital recorder to record some of the sounds of spring in our wetland?" asked Nokomis Annie. She gently returned the insect babies to *nibiing* and rinsed out the basin.

"Of course I can Nokomis! I will also listen to the *mog'kii* calls CD so I am ready for next week. I can already sing like a Spring Peeper. Peep! Peep! Peep! Each week a new frog sings its song for us" Waaban exclaimed.

"This is going to be fun, listening for *mogkii* while we are out walking for our health. I really like the return of spring! The weather is nice for walking," said Nokomis Annie.

She sat on the *Mishomis* rock for a few moments longer, listening to the sounds of spring before she and Waaban began their walk home. Nokomis Annie remembered *Miskwaadesi's* eleventh challenge: "Come down to *nbiing*, Nokomis Annie. Bring your family with you. Show them how to help the *mishiikeniyag*. Tell the Elders where we lay our eggs so our nesting sites can be protected. Come to *nbiing*, Nokomis Annie, and visit with me and my relatives. Count all of the turtle species in your wetland."