

Advanced Praise for *Kawbawgam*

“We are all lucky that Tyler Tichelaar loves history. This book is a monumental accomplishment. Tyler has already proven himself a master of historical fiction and fact. By writing about Kawbawgam, he took on the most extreme challenge, researching local Native American history. In doing so, he became a myth buster, trying to reveal the real stories, names, and dates. I collect Native American photographs, and I now look at them with a whole new understanding.”

— Jack Deo, Owner, Superior View Photography

“Tyler Tichelaar’s careful and thoughtful research put forth this important book documenting the life of a loved community member, Charlie Kawbawgam. You’ll find answers and understanding in its pages.”

— Cris Osier, Executive Director, Marquette Regional History Center

“Tichelaar’s book is an invaluable compilation of research in local and regional history, but more importantly, it begins to integrate Native history into the dominant Anglo-American narrative by focusing on Charles Kawbawgam. Arguably there would not be a viable Native community in Marquette today (and maybe even no Marquette) if not for this extraordinary individual, skilled cultural mediator, and leader who guided his people during a difficult time of transition for Native peoples. As the author acknowledges, the history of this area remains incomplete without these stories and voices, so there is much work to do, and Tichelaar’s book provides an excellent introductory guide.”

— Rebecca J. Mead, History Professor, Northern Michigan University

“Tyler Tichelaar’s meticulous research is helping to clarify and correct the record regarding Native American history in the Upper Peninsula.”

— Beth Gruber, Research Librarian, John M. Longyear Research Library,
Marquette Regional History Center

“Tichelaar’s extensive and well documented research fills the gaps between the legend and the man, a must read for any local history buff.”

— Larry Buege, Author of the Chogan Native American series

“This Kawbawgam biography is a noteworthy work that has been thoroughly researched. Through this historical biography, the author presents us with one of the few Ojibwa histories of the Upper Peninsula and ultimately connects regional history with that of the United States. For a Yooper or outsider this is a valuable piece of history to be read and included in your library.”

— Russell M. Magnaghi, History Professor Emeritus,
Northern Michigan University

“Meticulously researched and highly readable, *Kawbawgam* is a serious biography of one of the most famous but least understood figures in Marquette County’s past. This book enriches our knowledge of local Native American history and will be an invaluable resource for future scholars.”

— Adam Berger, PhD, Marquette Regional History Center

“Tyler Tichelaar sorts fact from fiction concerning Kawbawgam and Marquette’s early history. This book is thoroughly researched and long overdue.”

— Jo Wittler, Curator, Marquette Regional History Center

“Kawbawgam is a thorough and well-researched portrait of someone whose name is familiar to everyone in central Upper Michigan, yet few have bothered to delve into the depths of his story. Tyler Tichelaar separates fact from fiction as he tells a tale full of adventure and pathos, politics and war, kindness, coercion, and compromise. You won’t soon forget this book.”

— Sonny Longtine, Author of
U.P. People and *Murder in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula*

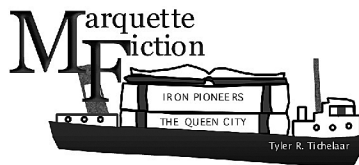
A Microcosm of the 19th Century
Ojibwa Experience in Upper Michigan

KAWBAWGAM

The Chief, The Legend, The Man

Tyler R. Tichelaar

Author of *My Marquette*, *Haunted Marquette*,
When Teddy Came to Town, and *The Marquette Trilogy*



Kawbawgam: The Chief, The Legend, The Man

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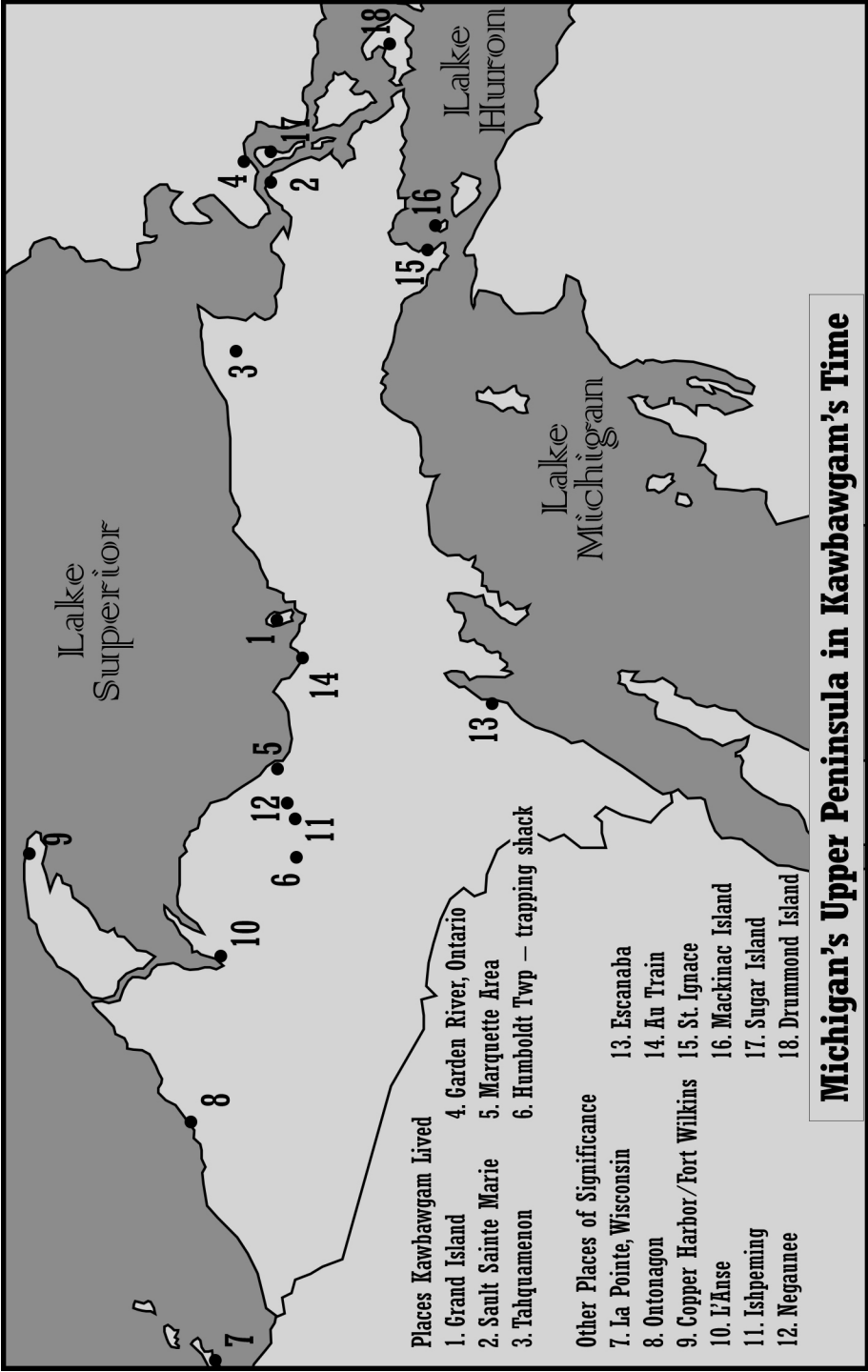
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“We all recognized our indebtedness to Charlie
and I for one shall never forget it.”

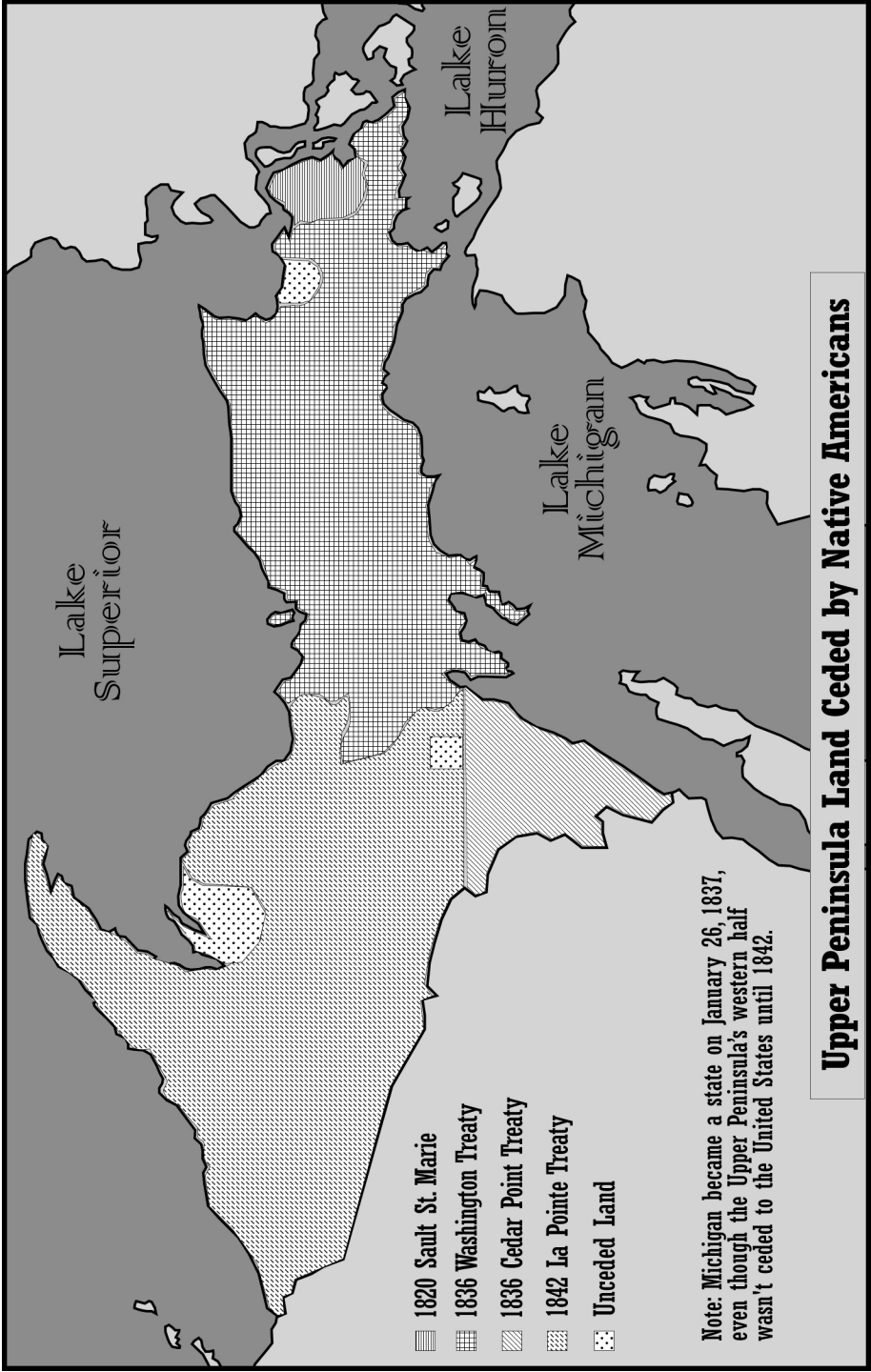
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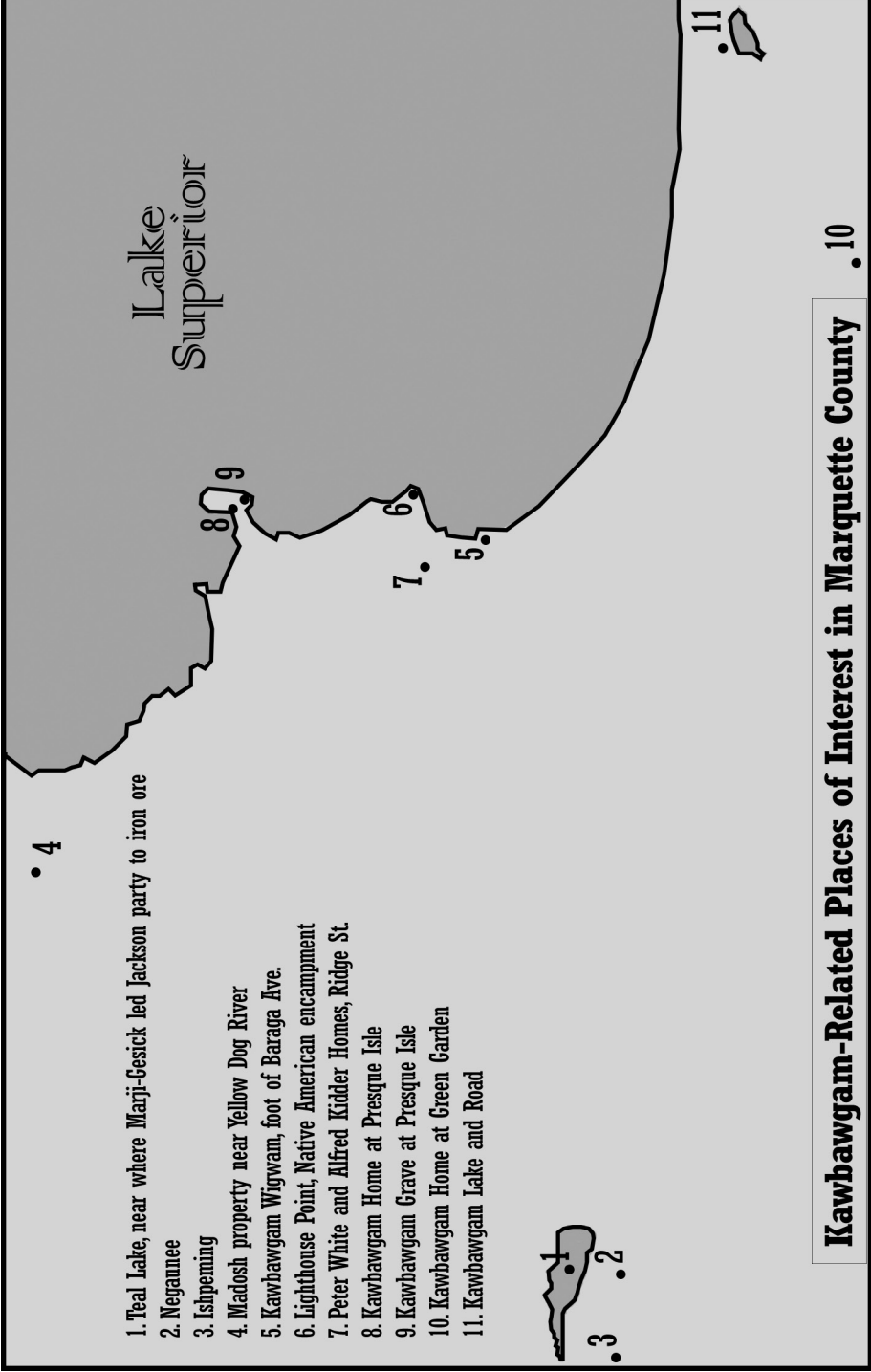
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Michigan's Upper Peninsula in Kawbawgam's Time





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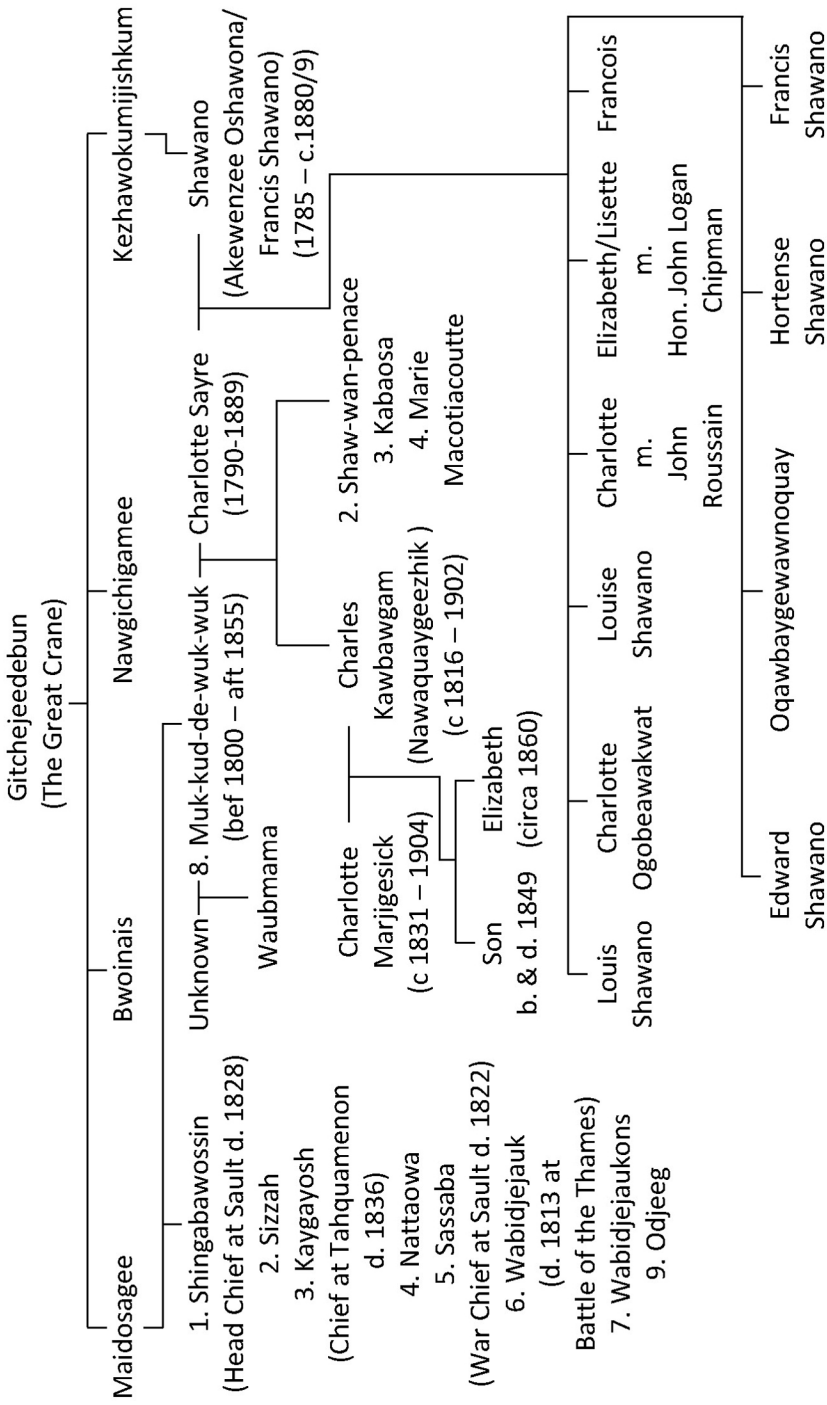
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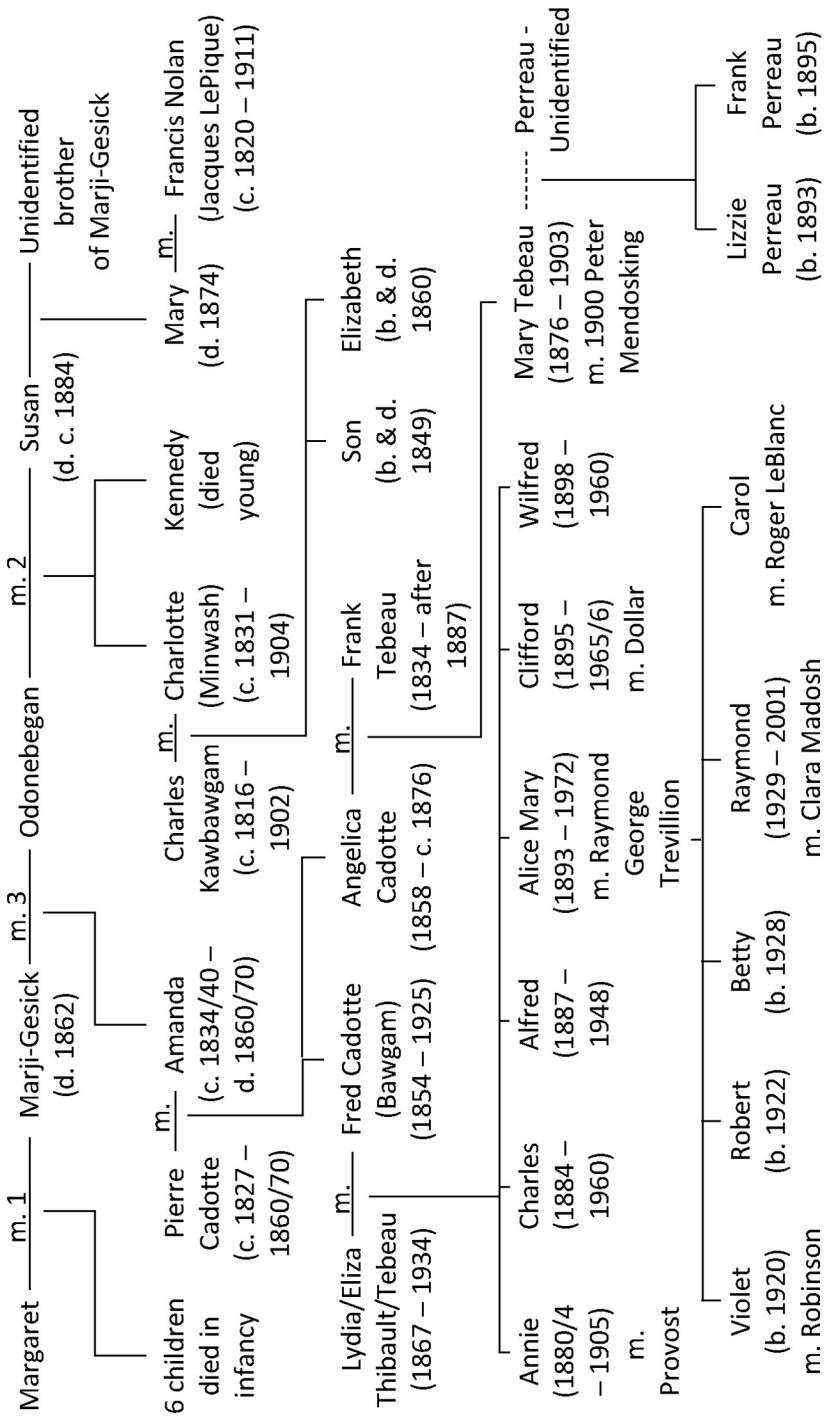
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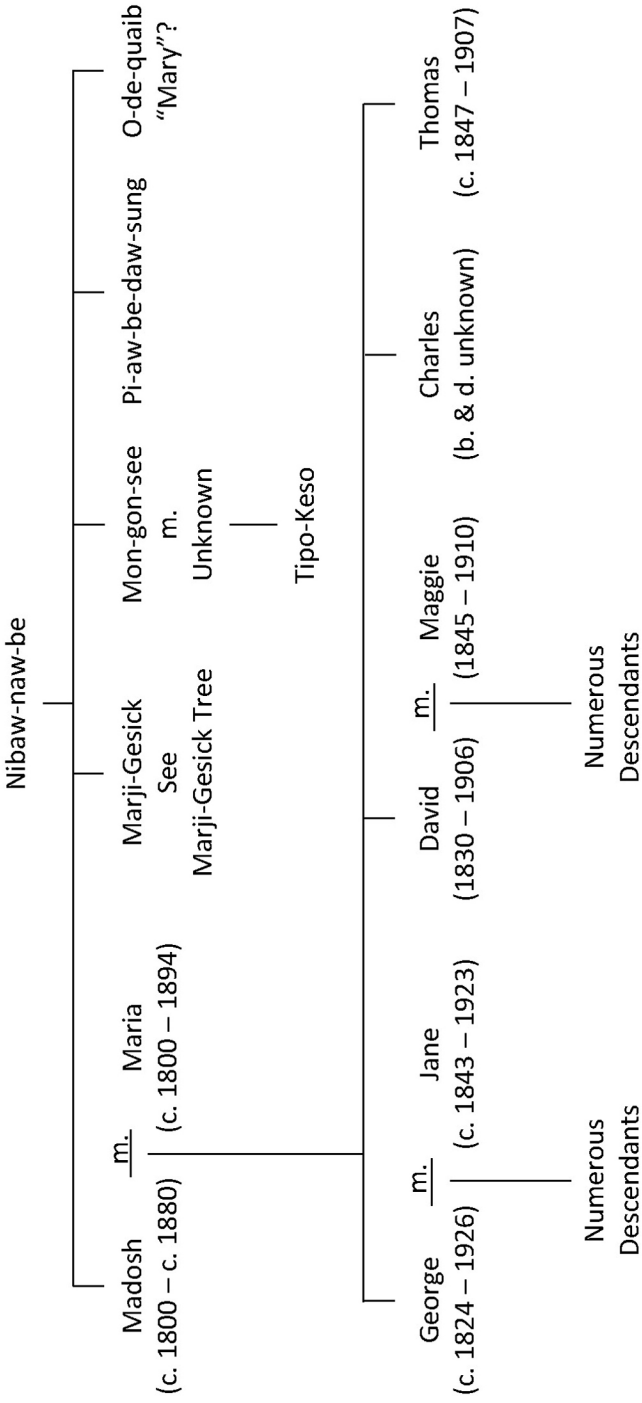
Kawbawgam's Family - The Crane Clan



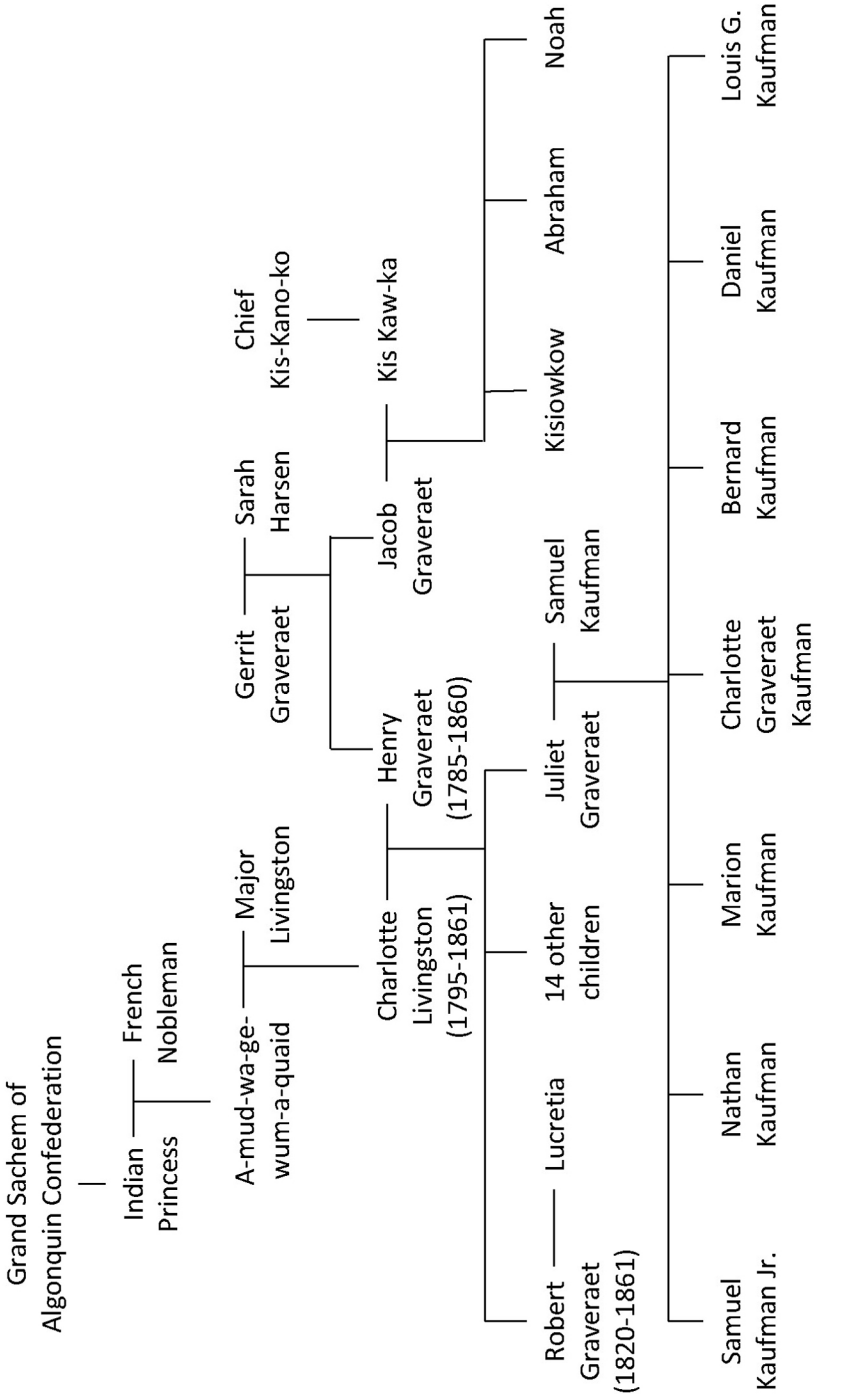
Marji-Gesick Descendants

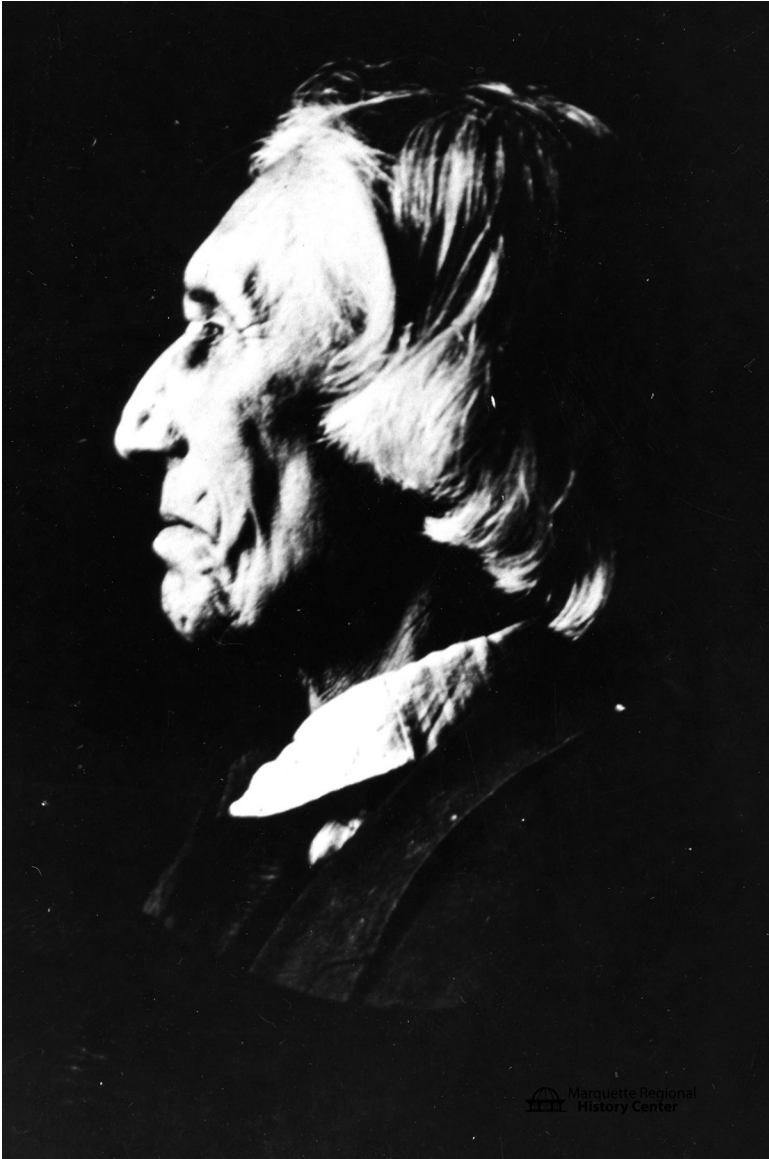


Madosh Family



Graveraet Family





Chief Charles Kawbawgam



Introduction

IN 1888, A TALL, SLIM, Ojibwa man went fishing at the Dead River, which marked the border between Presque Isle, the little peninsula that jugged out into Lake Superior and had recently become a city park, and the city of Marquette in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The man, known to most as Chief Kawbawgam, was likely in his early seventies, although he did not know for certain his own age. What he did know was that his people had been in this land for centuries before the white man came. In his lifetime, he had seen the change from a handful of French and British traders to a population explosion of Americans across Michigan's Upper Peninsula. He had lived throughout the eastern and central Upper Peninsula and even in Ontario. Often, he had been forced to move because of the encroachment of white Americans. However, he had also befriended many whites.

But at the moment, all those events were far from his mind. Today, he was intent on catching a meal for himself, his wife Charlotte, their great-niece Mary, who lived with them, and the extended family members who lived around them. There were always many mouths to feed. Fortunately, the earth always provided for them. The Ojibwa had long been fishermen, and having grown up at Sault Sainte Marie, Charles Kawbawgam had learned to fish at the St. Mary's Rapids, which had once teemed with whitefish. Now he fished along the shores of Presque Isle Park, where he lived at the grace of his benefactor, Peter White, one of Marquette's leading businessmen. White had befriended him in 1849 when White was just a boy of eighteen, shortly after arriving in Iron Bay as a member of the party that had founded Marquette.

More recently, White had secured Presque Isle from the US Government to preserve as a park for Marquette. Kawbawgam and his wife Charlotte had moved from Presque Isle when they heard it would become a park, but White and some other friendly white men had built the Kawbawgams a home there and assured them they could remain at Presque Isle for the remainder of their lives. Their home was a wooden frame house, a far cry from the wigwams Kawbawgam had lived in most of his life, but he and Charlotte had adapted to it, just as they had adapted to the many other changes they had seen throughout the nineteenth century.

Today, Kawbawgam had made his way to the Dead River. At his age, it was becoming harder to move quickly, and his eyesight was not what it had been; he dreaded the day when he would no longer be able to fish or hunt. He knew his eyesight would have made it difficult to tie a fly or hook a worm, but he had never liked the white man's fishing pole anyway. Carrying a sucker net, he waded into the river. The water was chilling to his old bones, but he had gotten far enough into the river where he might have had some luck had he not heard someone shouting behind him.

Turning around, Kawbawgam saw a white man emerging from the forest. The old Ojibwa took one look at the man and knew there would be trouble. He couldn't see the man's face very well because he was so far away, but something in the man's tone told Kawbawgam this one was no friend to Indians.

"What do you have there?" the man shouted to him, approaching the riverbank.

Kawbawgam did not answer. He understood English, but his own English was not the best, so he rarely spoke it. He simply continued walking toward the shore, not sure how he would deal with this man.

"You've got a net there, don't you?" said the man. "You know it's not the season for fishing with a sucker net."

By now, Kawbawgam had nearly walked back to the bank. He did not respond to the man, instead enjoying the return of warm air on his bare feet. He looked over to where he had set his shoes a few feet farther up the bank.

"Do you hear me?" the man asked.

"Indians fish all seasons," Kawbawgam finally said, looking straight at him.

"No," said the man. He was several inches shorter than the tall Indian chief, but Kawbawgam knew smaller men were often the most aggressive. Still, he felt he was within his rights.

“Yes,” said Kawbawgam. “Treaty say so.”

“What treaty?” asked the man. “I don’t know about any treaty. I’m an officer of the State of Michigan, and it’s not the season to fish with nets. I’m going to have to write you a citation.”

Kawbawgam wasn’t sure what a citation was. He only knew this man was giving him a hard time, even though his people had been fishing here for generations before this man was even born.

Kawbawgam stood there and stared at the man while he took out a small tablet of paper and began scribbling on it.

“You Indians think you can get away with breaking the law just ’cause you’re Indian,” the man said.

“Not breaking law,” said Kawbawgam.

“You are. Anyway, it’s up to the judge what he does with you. He oughta lock you up to make an example of you,” said the man. He handed the piece of paper to Kawbawgam.

“What it say?” asked Kawbawgam.

“What’s it say?” repeated the man in amazement. “It says you broke the law. It says you were caught fishing illegally with a sucker net out of season. It says you’ll have to pay a fine.”

“Fine?”

“Yes. You know—a penalty. You’ll have to pay money for committing the misdemeanor of fishing with a net out of season.”

“Who pay?” asked Kawbawgam, realizing it was a stupid question, but irritated enough to want to argue.

“You pay. You take that to the judge down at the Marquette County Courthouse and he’ll decide how much the fine will be.”

Kawbawgam took the paper from the man and stared at it for a minute. He could barely speak English. He certainly couldn’t read it. He’d have to get someone to explain it to him, perhaps Peter White.

Kawbawgam stuffed the piece of paper in his pocket.

“Hey, don’t wreck that citation,” said the man. “If you don’t go to the court, I’ll have you arrested.”

Kawbawgam stared at the man.

“And I need to confiscate this,” said the man, grabbing the net from Kawbawgam’s hand before the old man knew what was happening.

The man took the net and broke it over his knee.

Kawbawgam remembered a time when he could have broken this man over his own knee.

Not replying, he walked over to his shoes.

“That’s right. You put your shoes on now and get out of here,” the game warden barked. “And you can bet I’ll check with the judge to make sure you paid that citation. Otherwise, I’ll find you and have you arrested.”

Kawbawgam bent down to pick up his shoes. Then he carried them home. He wasn’t going to sit down on the ground and put his shoes on in front of this man.

He acts like he owns the land and the fish, Kawbawgam thought as he walked home. Charlotte won’t be happy that there won’t be any fish for supper. But despite how the white men don’t act like Christians toward the Indians, Gitche Manitou looks after us.

*

Chief Charles Kawbawgam is not well known by most people. He is not a figure of national renown, but only local renown among the Ojibwa, the residents of Upper Michigan, and especially, the people of Marquette, Michigan. Although Kawbawgam is a household name in Marquette, if not for his and his wife’s prominent gravestone at Presque Isle Park, it is questionable whether most residents would even know his name today.

Personally, as a lifelong and seventh-generation resident of Marquette, I can’t remember when I didn’t know about Chief Kawbawgam. As a boy, my grandfather Lester White told me his father had been friends with the chief. Over time, as a lover and author of local history, I came to know the general details of Kawbawgam’s life that most locals know. According to the sign beside his grave, “Charley” Kawbawgam was born in 1799 and died in 1902, having lived 103 years. His wife, Charlotte, is buried beside him. She was the daughter of Chief Marji-Gesick. The sign also tells us that Presque Isle was their home and will be into eternity. Books about Marquette’s history frequently mention how when the first settlers came to Marquette in 1849, Chief Kawbawgam was already there, and he let several of the settlers live in his cedar bark wigwam until they could build homes of their own.

The only other incident of note usually recorded about Kawbawgam is that he was a “good Indian”¹ who never got into trouble with the law except once when an overzealous game warden gave him a citation for fishing out

of season with a sucker net, as we have just seen, although the details of this incident are not fully known—I have fictionalized the scene for dramatic purposes.

From such facts, a very meager biography of Kawbawgam can be created. But such a biography leaves out many of the most interesting facts of Kawbawgam's life and also the experiences of the Ojibwa during his lifetime as the white races "conquered" the land and spread across Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

Kawbawgam's story is not as dramatic as that of Pocahontas, Geronimo, or Tecumseh, yet it is one worth telling. Few Americans today are ignorant of the terrible crimes eighteenth and nineteenth century white Americans committed against the Native Americans throughout the United States as they stole their land through dishonest and misleading treaties, and murdered them, sometimes overtly, sometimes subtly through policies that forced their removal under horrible conditions.

And yet, in Upper Michigan, no extreme violence occurred between Native Americans and whites, at least not after the War of 1812. As a result, I grew up believing the settlement of the Upper Peninsula by whites had been peaceful, and even that the Native Americans had welcomed the white settlers, all because I had heard how Kawbawgam himself had welcomed the white settlers and helped them during Marquette's early years.

The truth is far more complex and far more fascinating.

It is time that Charles Kawbawgam's full story be told. It is time to remove many of the misconceptions about him and the status of his people, the Ojibwa, during his lifetime. This story deserves to be told because it is part of the history of all the people who call Upper Michigan home, and indeed, part of the history of the United States, especially when we consider that the whites took the Upper Peninsula from the Ojibwa because of its mineral resources—resources that ultimately helped the Union win the Civil War, helped the United States win two World Wars, and continue to power the iron industry today. No person in the United States has not benefited from the iron industry, and so here in Kawbawgam's life story is also the tale of how that industry began—an industry that provides us today with everything from automobiles to nails and guns. And as that iron industry was birthed, the traditional Ojibwa world began to pass away.

Kawbawgam's story is the tale of a vanishing world. He was born into an Upper Peninsula with few whites in it. He grew up at Sault Sainte Marie, in a time and place where the few Europeans in the area—primarily of French

and British descent—often intermarried with the Native population, creating a *métis* (mixed race) world. He spent a childhood in an atmosphere largely filled with tolerance and understanding of the Native Americans, and then he saw it quickly change into one marked by racism and intolerance as the Americans spread westward, hungry for the Upper Peninsula’s mineral riches, as well as its other natural resources, including fish and lumber. Kawbawgam saw settlements of largely nomadic Native Americans with the occasional wooden house built by a white man be replaced with cities of thousands of whites who encroached on Native American camping, fishing, and even burial grounds. Kawbawgam was among the Native Americans left to fend for themselves in small communities on the outskirts of white men’s cities. But he also learned how to befriend the whites, thereby ensuring the survival of himself and his people without forced assimilation or removal.

This is Kawbawgam’s story, but it is also the story of every American—it is our shared history that too often we forget or deny. It is the story of a simple, noble man who tried to carve out a place for his people in the margins of an industrial revolution. It is the story of how he earned respect from white Americans during his lifetime. And it is the story of how his memory has been respected, but also how his name and image have been appropriated by white Americans for their own purposes in the more than a century since his death.

I hope you come away from this book respecting the fine line Kawbawgam often had to walk. I hope you come away with a better understanding of a past too often romanticized, and whose realities are more fascinating than any fictional account. I hope, ultimately, you agree with me that Upper Michigan’s history needs to be revised so none of its citizens are left out.

Tyler R. Tichelaar
Marquette, Michigan
November 1, 2020



A Note on Spelling, Word Choice, and Sources

THE OJIBWA LANGUAGE IS DIFFICULT to translate and even to spell in English. Furthermore, over the centuries, various spellings have been used for the different Native American tribes and the names of many of the Native people mentioned in this book. I have tried to give alternate spellings and even explanations for them where possible, but for the sake of easy recognition by readers, I have overall opted to use the most commonly known spellings, even though they may not always be the most accurate to the Ojibwa tradition and language. For example, the name of Kawbawgam's father-in-law, Chief Marji-Gesick, is probably not spelled in a manner that reflects how it was pronounced, especially considering there is no "r" sound in Ojibwa; however, it is so well-known a spelling that for the sake of the lay reader who is not familiar with Ojibwa, I have retained the spelling that has most frequently appeared in histories.

I have also made specific choices about the names of various Native American tribes, for example opting for Ojibwa over Ojibway, Ojibwe, Chippewa, Anishinaabe, or Anishinabek. That said, I am aware that Ojibway is probably the closest to the correct pronunciation. I have also opted for Sioux over Dakota or Dakota Sioux.

These choices were not easy to make, and they may not be the best or most optimal choices. My choices certainly do not reflect any disrespect to Native Americans, some of whom may disagree with them. They have simply been made for the ease of the reader.

I have also striven to leave out the niceties of such pronunciations and spellings from the main text and instead include them in footnotes. I hope lay readers will read the footnotes, which I have placed at the bottom of pages for easy reference. I have also included endnotes for the sake of citing my sources. The endnotes are solely citations and do not include any additional information about the topic so there is no need to consult them unless one is interested in pursuing a source further. For this reason, the endnotes are at the back of the book.

I have tried to be as meticulous as possible about my sources. However, in many cases I have not been able to pinpoint sources of research. For example, the Marquette Regional History Center has many folders full of newspaper clippings from *The Mining Journal*. Unfortunately, while a newspaper article might refer to Kawbawgam or another subject, the original collectors of these items sometimes failed to notate the pages or dates when the newspaper articles appeared and I have not always been able to locate this information. There were also many handwritten documents I found that do not have dates or even their authors' names on them. However, my endnotes and bibliography pages should provide enough information for people to verify sources or conduct their own search to pinpoint details I have been unable to verify myself. I would also like to note that over the course of its history, Marquette's *The Mining Journal* has also been known as *The Daily Mining Journal* and *The Weekly Mining Journal*. To remove confusion and simplify, I have just referred to it as *The Mining Journal* in all instances. If a source cannot be found in *The Daily Mining Journal*, it is likely in *The Weekly Mining Journal*. I have also alphabetized *The Mining Journal* sources under "T" in the bibliography to avoid confusion.

Finally, I do not by any means consider this book the final say on Kawbawgam. No doubt there are many articles and other sources in existence that I did not find, but that future historians may be able to locate to expand on the work I have begun. Regardless, I hope this book will provide a greater understanding of Kawbawgam and the Ojibwa experience in Upper Michigan in the nineteenth century.



Chapter 1 Kawbawgam's Birth and Family Background

MOST BIOGRAPHIES BEGIN WITH A sentence stating that their subject was born on such and such a date at such and such a place. Such a statement is impossible to make with any accuracy for Charles Kawbawgam because the Ojibwa of his day did not keep written records. Several historians, pseudo-historians, and people who knew Kawbawgam have given various approximate dates for his birth, ranging from 1799-1832. Kawbawgam's own statement about his age should, one would think, be the most reliable source of information, but because Kawbawgam did not write English and only spoke it minimally, everything of importance he said about himself has been filtered down to us by his interpreters, so even the reliability of these statements is questionable. Therefore, several statements regarding his age need to be considered to determine the most likely date for his birth.

Birthdate

First, let us tackle the general belief that Kawbawgam lived to be 103 years old, having been born in 1799 and died in 1902. These are the dates on the sign beside his grave, which serve as a source of wonder to those who visit his final resting place at Presque Isle Park in Marquette, Michigan. Furthermore, Marquette County's death records list his age as 103.¹

The idea that Kawbawgam was born in 1799 stems from a statement he made regarding his age in 1849, the year Marquette was founded. At that date, Peter White, later Kawbawgam's great friend, arrived to help found the

2 Kawbawgam

city, along with Robert Graveraet. This event and White and Kawbawgam's first meeting will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4. For now, it is significant to note that Peter White, eighteen at the time, had already learned to speak Ojibwa so he could converse with Kawbawgam when he first arrived in Marquette. Forty years later, in 1889, White recalled that he had asked Kawbawgam soon after they met how old he was. Kawbawgam had replied, "I am fifty. I spent twenty years at the Soo; twenty years on Tonquoemenon bay [sic Tahquamenon Bay], and ten years on the Canadian side."² This statement would place Kawbawgam's birth in 1799. However, as we will see, Kawbawgam likely came to Marquette a year or two before it was officially founded, which is not accounted for in his math, and he likely rounded up his sense of years to the nearest decade, so this statement is not necessarily reliable. Furthermore, we are getting this information through Peter White, who seems to have taken great pride in later life over his friend Kawbawgam's advanced age. White had a reputation as a teller of stories, so he may have exaggerated Kawbawgam's age or not recalled in 1889 what Kawbawgam had actually told him forty years earlier, although in 1905, he stated that he had recorded what Kawbawgam told him in his diary at the time.^{3a} We cannot know, therefore, whether White exaggerated or misremembered or whether Kawbawgam simply stated what he believed was true at the time.

On other occasions, Kawbawgam made statements concerning his age that make it seem more likely he was born several years after 1799. During the lawsuit his wife Charlotte conducted against the Jackson Iron Company in 1882, which will be discussed in Chapter 8, Kawbawgam was called upon as one of the witnesses. At that time, he told the court he was either seventy-six or seventy-seven, which would place his birth year as 1810 or 1811.⁴ In 1888, when the lawsuit was again before the courts, *The Mining Journal* reported that Kawbawgam was seventy-five,⁵ which would put his birth at 1813, although it is unlikely *The Mining Journal* reporter knew the chief's true age.

Our best source for determining Kawbawgam's age comes from a statement he made to Homer Kidder. Between 1893 and 1895, Kidder would record many of Kawbawgam's Ojibwa stories and the events of his life. Kawbawgam told Kidder that his earliest recollection was seeing

a. This diary no longer seems to exist. It is not in the collections of any of the three major places where White's papers are located: the Marquette Regional History Center, the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan, or the Burton Historical Collection at the Detroit Public Library.

his uncle walking up a hill in Sault Sainte Marie in a British officer's red coat. The Ojibwa had been allies of the British during the War of 1812, so Kawbawgam apparently thought this incident happened during that war (1812-1815), which would make his birth closer to 1810 if we assume he was two to five at the time when one is likely to have their first memory. However, this incident actually happened in 1820 when Lewis Cass, then Michigan Territorial Governor, visited the Sault to convince the Ojibwa to cede land there to the United States so a fort could be built. The Ojibwa opposed this idea, and we know from other sources that at least one of them, the war chief Sassaba, wore a British uniform to the meeting with Cass as a sign of protest and to show that the Ojibwa remained loyal to the British.⁶ Sassaba was the brother of Kawbawgam's father, and because of the tension that Sassaba's behavior caused at the Sault,⁷ as will be discussed in Chapter 2, it is not surprising that this uniform would be part of Kawbawgam's first memory. If Kawbawgam's first memory is then from 1820, his birthdate is more likely between 1815 and 1818. Another *The Mining Journal* article that appeared soon after Kawbawgam's death says he was probably born about 1819,⁸ but this date seems too late for him to have had his first memory in 1820. Surprisingly, his marriage record from 1847 says he was twenty-five at the time,⁹ putting his birth as late as about 1822, but again, this date is unlikely.

Finally, one of Marquette's first residents, Mrs. Samuel (Eliza Anna) Barney, stated that when she arrived in Marquette in 1850, Kawbawgam was "only about eighteen."¹⁰ That would suggest he was born about 1832, but such a date is far too late. For one, it would make him the same age or younger than his wife Charlotte, and Ojibwa men usually took younger brides. Furthermore, it does not align with his brother-in-law Jacques LePique's memories of living near Kawbawgam's family in the Sault in the 1830s, so we can dismiss Mrs. Barney's statement. She made this statement when she was eighty years old, some sixty-five years after she first met Kawbawgam, so her memory may have failed her. She also, as we will see, had reason to dislike Kawbawgam and belittle the praise he received for living to be more than one hundred. That said, given that he appeared to be twenty-five in 1847 and eighteen in 1850, Kawbawgam may have looked young for his age in his youth, but then how are we to take Peter White's belief that he was fifty in 1849?

In any case, Kawbawgam was probably in his mid to late eighties at the time of his death, rather than the famous age of 103 usually cited for him. Notably, several other Native Americans in the Upper Peninsula claimed to

4 *Kawbawgam*

have lived for more than a century at this time, whether through a vain desire to appear older than they were or from simply being ignorant of their true ages. White Americans also liked to promote this idea of Native Americans living to advanced ages, Peter White being just one example.

Real Name

Just as confusion exists over Kawbawgam's birth date, so there is confusion over his name. Johann Georg Kohl (1808-1878), a German travel writer and historian who lived among the Ojibwa in 1855 at La Pointe, Wisconsin, and at L'Anse and Sault Sainte Marie, Michigan, noted that the Ojibwa he met tried to conceal their real names when asked for them. To learn an Ojibwa's name, you usually had to ask others who knew the person. Wives also often evaded questions about their names by giving their husbands' names. They appeared to feel that giving their names was beneath their dignity.¹¹ Possibly, they also believed that if an enemy knew your true name, it allowed the enemy to have power over you.¹² Kawbawgam's true Ojibwa name was Nawaquay-geezhik (Noon Day), which was listed in the Treaty of 1855 (spelled there as Naw-o-ge-zhick).¹³ However, he rarely used it, preferring "Kawbawgam," a pet name given to him as a boy by his mother. Its meaning has never been properly explained, and when Homer Kidder interviewed Kawbawgam in the 1890s, he did not receive a satisfactory answer to his inquiries about it.¹⁴ The only source that has offered an interpretation of it is a 1965 article in Marquette's *The Mining Journal*, which claims it means "undulating,"¹⁵ a suggestion perhaps that the boy Kawbawgam moved about quickly with a wave-like motion. The reliability of this translation, however, is questionable, and the article does not give its source for such an interpretation. Furthermore, the Ojibwa often gave new or altered names to each other when they married, and rather than referring to their in-laws by given names, they would refer to them in a roundabout manner such as "the man who is son-in-law."¹⁶ Consequently, Kawbawgam may have been reluctant to share his nickname's meaning. He and his mother seem to have taken it to their graves with them. However, if it did mean "undulating," it suited him because he spent his life undulating between his traditional Ojibwa lifestyle and the Americans' efforts to bend the Ojibwa to their will through assimilation or removal efforts.

Ancestry

More confusion exists over Kawbawgam's parentage. Kawbawgam had at least one stepfather who has often mistakenly been cited as his father. His mother had at least two and possibly three husbands.

Kawbawgam's father was Muk-kud-de-wuk-wuk (Black Cloud).^{17b} Muk-kud-de-wuk-wuk lived either on Grand Island or on the mainland across from Grand Island where the city of Munising, Michigan, is today. Muk-kud-de-wuk-wuk's name appears in the 1820 treaty with the Chippewa at the Sault where it is spelled as Macadaywacwet.¹⁸ Other sources say he also signed the 1836 Treaty with the Chippewa as a chief of the second class,¹⁹ and the 1842 Treaty of La Pointe, but I have not found his name listed in either place. Two Native Americans with similar names are listed in the 1842 treaty—from the Lac de Flambeau band, May tock cus e quay, and from the Lac Vieux Desert band, Medge waw gwaw wot—but neither appear to be Kawbawgam's father given the locations associated with them.²⁰ However, Muk-kud-de-wuk-wuk did sign the 1854 Treaty with the Chippewa at La Pointe, where he is listed under the La Pointe band as “Mac-caw-day-wa-quot, or the Black Cloud 2^d chief.”²¹ We do not know how long Muk-kud-de-wuk-wuk lived, but Kawbawgam stated that he was present at the 1855 council of the four Algonquian nations, which Kawbawgam himself attended.²² On Kawbawgam's death certificate, his father's full name is given as Charles Makadoaque, a sign that Kawbawgam was, in a sense, named after his father.²³ It is unknown where “Charles” came from as a family name, but it obviously resulted from a British or French influence, the French having been in the Great Lakes region since the early seventeenth century and the British being the dominant European power in the area from the time they had won the French-Indian War (1756-1763) until the War of 1812.

Through his father, Kawbawgam could claim an illustrious ancestry. His great-grandfather was Gitcheojeedebun, known as the Great Crane because he was the head chief of the Ojibwa's Crane clan. Gitcheojeedebun would have four children, the mother of whom is unknown. The oldest child was Naidosagee/Maidosagee who would be Kawbawgam's grandfather and also the head chief.²⁴ Besides Muk-kud-de-wuk-wuk, Naidosagee would have eight other sons, all Kawbawgam's uncles. The three most significant were Shingabawossin (d. 1828), head chief at the Sault like his grandfather had been; Sassaba (1790-1822) a warrior chief at the Sault; and Kaygayosh (d. 1836), chief at Tahquamenon and later head chief at the Sault after Shingabawossin died. As previously mentioned, Sassaba is believed to be

- b. Kawbawgam's father's name has had several variations due to various translations of the name into English, including Muk-kud-d-wuk-kwuk; Makadoaque (the name that appears on Kawbawgam's death certificate) (Nertoli p. 6), and Mukcawday mawquot (a spelling Homer Kidder recorded during his interviews with Kawbawgam) (Bourgeois p. 14-15).

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the uncle who wore the British uniform and provided Kawbawgam's first memory.²⁵ Consequently, Kawbawgam, besides being a chief himself, was at birth the son, nephew, grandson, and great-grandson of chiefs. In time, he would also be the stepson, brother, half-brother, and son-in-law of chiefs.

Before marrying Kawbawgam's mother, Muk-kud-de-wuk-wuk had previously married a woman whose name is unknown. With her he had two children, Joseph Thompson (also known as Waubmama, White Woodpecker, or White Pigeon), and John Kabaosa (b. 1805 and also known as Jones).²⁶ It is not known what became of Muk-kud-de-wuk-wuk's first wife. Some chiefs had more than one wife, so she may have still been married to Muk-kud-de-wuk-wuk when he married Kawbawgam's mother, but given that Kawbawgam was the oldest child of that marriage and likely born about 1816, many years after the birth of his youngest paternal half-brother, it is more likely Muk-kud-de-wuk-wuk's first wife died not long after the birth of her second child.

Kawbawgam's mother was Charlotte Sare or Sayre. Her Ojibwa name was Bechanokwetokwe (One Cloud Woman). Charlotte's parents' names are not known. Some researchers have speculated she was Charlotte Sayer Pemousse, daughter of Chief Pemousse.²⁷ There was a large Sayer family at the Sault at this time, which is likely the same as the Sayre family, but how Kawbawgam's mother was related to them has not been determined. In any case, Charlotte was born about 1790-1800 in Wisconsin or Canada, and died on February 15, 1889 at the Sault.²⁸ Perhaps Kawbawgam inherited his longevity from her. Charlotte was of mixed race, being both Ojibwa and Scottish, although what percentage of Scottish blood she had is not known.²⁹ Her surname suggests her father, not her mother, was of Scottish descent. Scottish traders, as well as English and French traders, often married Native American women. Regardless, her Scottish blood reflects that Kawbawgam was born into a *métis* world, and that even he himself was *métis*, despite many newspaper reporters toward the end of his life repeatedly stating Kawbawgam was "pure Indian."

Kawbawgam's parents are believed to have had four children:

1. Charles Kawbawgam
2. Shaw-wan-penace (aka Oshawwunnebenace/South Bird, Shawonong (from the South) who would also be a chief (This child, however, may be confused with Kawbawgam's half-brother Edward Shawano, since Shawano is also translated as "from the South."))

3. Kabaosa, born after 1816.^c
4. Marie Macotiacoutte (probably a form of her father's name), who was baptized on December 25, 1821 in Green Bay, Brown County, Wisconsin,³⁰ but probably born before 1818 by which time Charlotte Sayre and Muk-kud-de-wuk-wuk had parted.

Kawbawgam's parents were not together for much longer than seven years. The marriage was dissolved when another chief from the Sault, Shawano (South Wind)^{31d} was on a hunting trip to the Grand Island area and became so taken with Charlotte that he took her and her children to the Sault with him.^{32e} Despite being separated from his father, Kawbawgam appears to have maintained a relationship with him until the end of his father's life.

The marital situation of Kawbawgam's parents was not unusual among the Ojibwa, although it was often grossly misunderstood and frowned upon by European and Christian contemporaries who equated such behavior with polygamy rather than divorce. Bishop Frederic Baraga, the most famous missionary to Upper Michigan's Native Americans, worked tirelessly to convert the Natives from his arrival in Upper Michigan in 1843 until his death in 1868. Baraga's biographer, P. Chrysostomus Verwyst, in his *Life of Bishop Baraga*, remarks, "Polygamy was one of the great impediments to his [the Native American's] conversion. This great evil had gradually almost entirely disappeared prior to Baraga's arrival in the Indian country."³³ However, this statement misunderstands the Ojibwa concept of marriage at the time. Polygamy had existed in earlier centuries and continued, but it seems to have been rare by the nineteenth century. German author Johann Georg Kohl stated that another well-known writer on the Ojibwa, whom he doesn't identify, said the Ojibwa didn't think it respectable to have multiple

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- c. This child may be confused with Muk-kud-de-wuk-wuk's son John Kabaosa, believed to be born in 1806. They may be one and the same. It is unlikely this child was named for a deceased older brother since we know John Kabaosa was alive around 1836 when he moved to Ontario with his father and brother Waubmama, as we will see later.
 - d. Shawano's name is also often written as Sha-wa-no or Sheweno Kwainzegor Ka-ga-qua-dung and even Francis O'Shawwano and Francis Chavinane or Chavineau.
 - e. Notably, Shawano was a cousin to Kawbawgam's father, also being a grandson of the Great Crane. Maynard (p. 7) claims Shawano outranked Muk-kud-de-wuk-wuk and exercised his right as a major chieftain to take Charlotte from her husband, but this does not reflect Ojibwa custom. More likely, Charlotte fell in love with Shawano.

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wives, and Kohl himself testified that the Ojibwa he met considered it simply horrible to be in a position to support multiples wives.³⁴ By Kawbawgam's time, polygamy was not as common as divorce. It was not unusual for men or women among the Ojibwa to put aside a spouse and choose another. Toward the nineteenth century's end, Jacques LePique, Kawbawgam's brother-in-law, would state that divorce was practiced by the Ojibwa earlier in the century, remarking, "When they didn't like one another, they didn't tie them up like you do; they had a better way of marrying in them days."³⁵ Kawbawgam's father-in-law, Chief Marji-Gesick, had multiple wives, although he lived with them at various times rather than all at once. The Ojibwa saw no sin in this; however, whites did, which resulted in Chief Marji-Gesick's marital relations becoming an item of contention when years later his daughter Charlotte tried to claim her father's rights when she took the Jackson Iron Company to court, as we will see in Chapter 8.

The confusion over Kawbawgam's parentage was best clarified upon his death by Detroit lawyer William B. Cady. Cady sent a letter dated January 8, 1903 to Marquette's *The Mining Journal* after Kawbawgam's obituary had been printed with some misinformation about Kawbawgam's parentage. Cady had been hired several years earlier to handle some land claims concerning the heirs of Kawbawgam's stepfather Shawano. At that time, Cady had spoken through an interpreter to Kawbawgam and his half-brother Edward, who succeeded Shawano as chief at the Sault, and assembled the following facts.³⁶ Kawbawgam and another child were born to a lesser chief who lived on or near Grand Island. Another chief, Shawano, from the Sault then came and took away the lesser chief's wife along with her children to the Sault. Later, Kawbawgam's mother and Shawano had four children of their own: Louis, Edward, Charlotte (Mrs. Roussain), and Lisette (Mrs. Chipman).³⁷

Shawano was born at Drummond Island in 1791, so he would have been about twenty-six when he married Kawbawgam's mother, while she was likely in her late teens by that time. (Shawano was apparently also previously married, having a son named Edward who would have been Kawbawgam's stepbrother.)³⁸

Charlotte and Shawano had the following children:³⁹

1. Louis B. Shawano born circa 1818/1823. Died March 26, 1910.
2. Charlotte Ogobeawakwat, born circa 1822. Died March 6, 1922 in Garden River, Ontario, Canada. Married John Cornelius Katawkequonabee Wahlen on May 18, 1848.

3. Louise Shawano, born circa 1826. Died October 3, 1906 in Sault Sainte Marie, Michigan.
4. Charlotte Shawano, born circa 1828. Died July 8, 1912 in Sault Sainte Marie, Michigan. Married John Roussain.
5. Elizabeth/Lisette Shawano, born June 5, 1835 at Sugar Island near the Sault. Died July 2, 1864 in Detroit. Married John Logan Chipman.
6. François, baptized July 21, 1836 in Sault Sainte Marie, Michigan.
7. Edward Shawano, born circa 1838. Died September 20, 1899 in Sault Sainte Marie, Michigan.
8. Ogawbaygewawnoquay, born circa 1840.
9. Hortense Shawano, born circa 1841. Died after 1845.
10. Francis Shawano, born June 6, 1842 in Manitowaning, Ontario, Canada.

Altogether then, Kawbawgam's mother had fourteen children. To trace the history of all of them and their descendants is beyond the scope of this book, but we know at least a few of them remained significant in Kawbawgam's life into adulthood.

Kawbawgam's half-sister Charlotte married John (Jean) Roussain in Sault Sainte Marie on June 24, 1846.⁴⁰ She would have been about eighteen at the time and he about twenty. We know almost nothing about Charlotte, but John Roussain's obituary from the January 5, 1890 *Democrat* (Sault Sainte Marie newspaper) states:

Death of John Roussain, of Sugar Island

Ex-Supervisor John Roussain died at his home on Sugar Island, last Saturday night at 11 o'clock, aged 64 years. Mr. Roussain was one of Chippewa county's oldest settlers and for eight years represented Sugar Island township in the board of supervisors. He was a member of the G. A. R. post, of this city, under the auspices of which the burial took place Tuesday. Two sons, James and Robert, survive him. In many respects Mr. Roussain was a character. For a long time he controlled the political situation on Sugar Island and came to be known as the "boss" of the Island. Many will be found to remark "Old John had a big heart and always meant well."⁴¹

The Roussains had five children, including a daughter Harriet, and two sons, John Jr. and Benjamin, who apparently preceded their father in death.⁴² One of the other sons has to be named Robert because he appears in the

1880 census as living with his grandparents, Chief Shawano and Charlotte (Sayre) Shawano.⁴³ I have been unable to unravel the Roussain family tree, but a Eustace Roussain (who may have been John Roussain's father or an uncle—he is referenced in a letter from John as we'll see in Chapter 4), had children by three Ojibwa sisters, Shauwunnanbanoqua, Wanwausumoqua, and Payahaubuoqua.⁴⁴ John Roussain's brother also married an Ojibwa woman. Two Roussain brothers, who may be John and his brother, were said to have created strong trading relationships with their Ojibwa relatives.⁴⁵ If John Roussain was not métis, his children would be, and marriages between French-Canadians and Natives were common at this time.

More surprising was the marriage of Kawbawgam's younger half-sister, Lisette (Elizabeth), to John Logan Chipman, an American, in 1852. This marriage drew quite a bit of attention, partially after the fact because Chipman became a prominent Michigan politician. More about Lisette and Chipman will be presented in its proper chronological place in Chapter 5.

Kawbawgam's half-brother Edward was selected by Chief Shawano to become chief of the tribe at the Sault upon his death.⁴⁶ It is important to note that chieftainship was not hereditary, although often members of the same family were chosen to be chiefs. We will look later at how Kawbawgam achieved chieftainship himself. Because Edward was chosen to be his father's successor, in agreement with the 1855 treaty, he was educated at government expense and sent to school at Albion College, Lansing, and Oberlin before returning to the Sault.⁴⁷ By 1846, Albion had established an "Indian Department" to educate "Those Indians who are expected to become Preachers, Interpreters or Teachers of Schools among their Aboriginal Brethren of the West" according to its 1846 catalog. It included the sons and daughters of tribal leaders as well as common Native American children. While many of these Native Americans adopted white names, Edward Shawano was one of the few who retained his Native name. While at Albion, Edward was elected to the Clever Fellows Society, the only mention of his attendance.⁴⁸ This education was for the government's benefit as much as Edward's since the government likely wanted him to assimilate and lead his people to become model Indians who lived like whites. Unfortunately, Edward's education would be largely for naught as we will later see in Chapter 7.

Since Kawbawgam's mother lived until 1889, Kawbawgam likely stayed in touch with her and his family throughout most of his life, although few details have been recorded about his relationships with his relatives during his adult years.

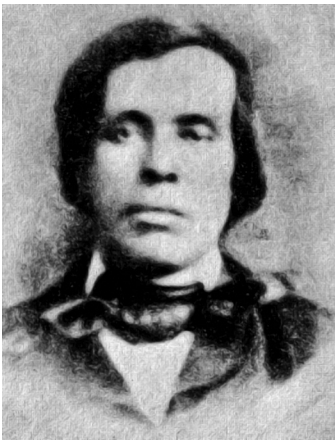
Catholicism

Kawbawgam's parents appear to have been Catholic, and while a baptism record does not exist for Kawbawgam himself, some do exist for his siblings. As noted above, his full sister Marie Macotiacoutte, was baptized on December 25, 1821 in Green Bay, Brown County, Wisconsin.⁴⁹ Since this baptism took place after we know Charlotte Sayre was with Shawano, it may show that Kawbawgam's father was not Catholic but his mother and stepfather were. We also have a baptismal record for Kawbawgam's half-brother François from July 2, 1836. The record lists him as François M. Chawenon/Shawenon. He was baptized by Jean-Baptiste Proulx and the sponsors were Louis and Marie Nolin. (The Nolin family will play a significant role in Kawbawgam's story.)

Based on his siblings' baptism records, we can assume Kawbawgam was Catholic from childhood. While it is unlikely he was baptized at Grand Island, he probably was baptized as a child at the Sault. No Catholic church existed at the Sault when Kawbawgam was a child, but in 1818, Father Provencher, while en route to Fort William, baptized forty-one children at the Sault. A mission was established there soon after, and other priests sporadically visited the area until Bishop Frederick Resé established regular Catholic services at the Sault in 1834. The following year, the first St. Mary's church was built and a parochial school begun.⁵⁰ Therefore, we can assume Kawbawgam was baptized by the time he was in his late teens if not in his childhood, although he probably did not attend the Catholic school since by all accounts, even as an adult, he could not read or speak English well. Protestant schools at the Sault were also established in the 1820s, but it is doubtful he would have attended these. He was definitely Catholic by the time he married in 1847 since the ceremony was performed by the Jesuit priest, Father Jean-Baptiste Menet. However, we do not know whether Kawbawgam regularly attended Mass. It is also noteworthy, as we will see, that Kawbawgam held onto the stories of his ancestors, which shows this was a time when religious beliefs were in flux among the Ojibwa between Christianity and their traditional religion. Baptism records for members of the Roussain family at the Sault, into which Kawbawgam's half-sister would marry, reflect this transitional period; for example, the baptism record of Josephte Roussin [Roussain] on August 17, 1835 lists her parents as Jean-Baptiste Roussain and Brunetta, an "Indian" and a "pagan."⁵¹

Clan

The Ojibwa were divided into numerous clans. Originally, five clans existed, but by the nineteenth century, they had further divided into twenty-one, according to mid-nineteenth century Ojibwa historian William Whipple Warren in *History of the Ojibwa People*,⁵² although Warren's contemporary Henry Schoolcraft only listed fifteen.⁵³ A person belonged to their father's tribe. Everyone was required to marry outside their clan so they would not marry their close relatives.⁵⁴ To marry someone of your clan was considered one of the great sins and punishable by death.⁵⁵ This taboo shows the Ojibwa were knowledgeable about the problems caused by incestuous relationships and had their own moral codes prior to their interaction with Europeans, something most white writers of the time ignored or dismissed. Certain clans were also linked together as phratries, providing special hospitality and mutual assistance to one other.⁵⁶ Each clan was then broken down into bands of fifty to two hundred people.⁵⁷



William Whipple Warren

Each clan had a totem, which was a bird or animal. According to legend, these totems came from six strangers who arrived from the bottom of a great salt water lake in human form. The strangers originally gave the Ojibwa five totems, although Warren lists six: crane, catfish, bear, martin, wolf, and loon. These five or six clans made up approximately 80 percent of the Ojibwa population during the nineteenth century, and the remaining totems were offshoots of them.⁵⁸ The Crane clan held predominance over the others and provided the region's hereditary chiefs.⁵⁹ Kawbawgam was born into the Bosinasse or Echo-Maker

Crane totemic clan that resided at the Sault, and which claimed prominence over all other clans by hereditary rights.⁶⁰

That the Crane clan resided primarily at the Sault is not surprising since the Ojibwa were, according to legend, led there by a crane. This event dates back several hundred years to when the Ojibwa separated from the other Algonquin peoples. The Ojibwa were one of the principal branches of Algonquins, the others being the Ottawa (Odawa), Potawatomi, Delaware, and Menominee.⁶¹ The Potawatomi and Ottawa were most closely related to the Ojibwa, and according to Ojibwa legend, the three nations first resided along

the shores of a great salt sea to the East (the Atlantic Ocean). Eventually, they moved west along rivers until they reached the Straits of Mackinac. There the three nations decided to go their separate ways. The Ojibwa chose to go north and west, ultimately settling in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, Wisconsin, and the north shore of Lake Superior in what is Canada today. The Ottawa settled primarily in Ontario and Lower Michigan while the Potawatomi settled in southwestern Michigan, around Lake Michigan's southern shore, and up into Wisconsin.

Legend states that upon separating from the Potawatomi and Ottawa, the Ojibwa were led to the Upper Peninsula by a crane that circled overhead. Its voice begged them to follow it, and eventually, it led them to the rapids of the St. Mary's River, where today Sault Sainte Marie stands. For this reason, the Ojibwa at the Sault came to call themselves "Boweting inini," meaning "People of the Falls."⁶² Another story regarding the crane and the falls tells of the founding of Sault Sainte Marie. Today, a statue of a crane and two children stands in front of the Chippewa County Courthouse in Sault Sainte Marie. The statue includes a plaque with the following explanation:

The statue depicts the Chippewa Legend of two young brothers who fled their wicked mother, who was pursuing them with the intent to kill them. When they reached the north shore of the St. Mary's Rapids they were met by a crane, who after hearing their story carried them to the south shore of the rapids. The crane then met the mother on the north shore and agreed to transport her to the other side. Instead, the crane dropped the mother in the rapids. When she hit the stones below, the mother's skull cracked open and her brains became the whitefish that inhabit the rapids to this day. The crane adopted the boys and one of them remained in the area, married the daughter of the crane, and founded Bahweting.

Regardless of how the Ojibwa arrived at the Sault, they remained because the rapids at the St. Mary's had a heavy concentration of fish, which became a primary source of food for them. The Ojibwa's oral traditions suggest they arrived about the year 1400.⁶³ The Ojibwa even had a story about the origin of the St. Mary's rapids, saying the rapids were created when the trickster spirit Nanabozho stepped on a beaver dam.⁶⁴ The Ojibwa called the area Bahweting, but later the Jesuits would rename it Sault Sainte Marie—French for St. Mary's Falls—to honor the Virgin Mary. The French would consequently call the Ojibwa at the St. Mary's River "Saulteurs."⁶⁵



*The Crane Statue in front of the
Chippewa County Courthouse, Sault Sainte Marie, Michigan*



Ojibwa fishing on the St. Mary's River at the Sault circa 1890. The International Railroad Bridge, built in 1887, is in the background. Note that the fishermen are using nets. George Shiras III said that at the time the near-shore waters of Lake Superior were so teeming with whitefish that the Natives never thought to resort to the white man's habit of using a fishing pole.⁶⁶

In time, the Ojibwa split into the northern and southern Ojibwa, the southern staying in the Upper Peninsula and Wisconsin along Lake Superior's south shore, the northern moving into Canada along Lake Superior's north shore. This division happened about 1640, contemporary to when the first Europeans arrived in the area.⁶⁷

Despite these divisions, the Ojibwa, Ottawa, and Potawatomi remained closely allied. They frequently met at Michilimackinac just south of the Straits of Mackinac for military and political reasons. Their meeting was known as the Council of the Three Fires.⁶⁸ The three nations would go to war together against the Iroquois Confederacy, the Sioux, and later against the British when the nations sided with the French in the French-Indian Wars (1754-1763), and then against the Americans when the nations sided with the British in the Northwestern Indian Wars (1785-1795) and the War of 1812 (1812-1815).

While many members of the Crane clan resided at the Sault, the clan had spread throughout the area, claiming it was also the first clan to pitch its wigwams and light fire near La Pointe, Wisconsin.⁶⁹ The clan's Echo-Maker designation refers to the loud, far-reaching cry of the crane; the Crane clan's members were said to have equally loud, ringing voices.⁷⁰

The Loon totem also claimed to be the head chiefs of the Ojibwa, citing that loons have rings around their necks like the chief wampum (a beaded necklace worn by the chiefs), but all the other clans disagreed on this point and acknowledged the Crane clan as the chief clan.⁷¹

During Kawbawgam's youth, his paternal uncle Shingabawossin^f was recognized by the Ojibwa as the head chief from the Crane clan at the Sault. Significantly, Shingabawossin was acknowledged by Governor Cass of Michigan as the head of the entire Ojibwa tribe in the 1825 treaty made at the Sault.⁷² Shingabawossin stood 6'3" and, according to Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, then Indian agent at the Sault, he was "well proportioned, erect in his carriage, and of a commanding and dignified aspect. Of a turn of mind deliberate and thoughtful, he is at once respectful and respected." Shingabawossin once traveled from the Sault 400 miles to La Pointe to fight with Waubojeeg (White Fisher or White Crane), the chief there, against the Sioux at the battle of Falls of the St. Croix River.⁷³ Both Shingabawossin and Waubojeeg's daughter, Susan Johnston, would be significant people in Kawbawgam's early world, as was Kawbawgam's other uncle Sassaba, who wore a British officer's uniform when Governor Cass came to the Sault in 1820.



*Kawbawgam's uncle,
Chief Shingabawossin,
head of the Crane Clan at
Sault Sainte Marie in the 1820s*

At this time, the Americans began to manipulate the position of chief among the Ojibwa. While Shingabawossin was already acknowledged as a chief by his people, Cass and Schoolcraft decided to recognize him as head chief.⁷⁴ The Ojibwa did not acknowledge anyone as a head chief, but the British and Americans enforced their own ideas of hierarchy and monarchy upon Native Americans, so they saw a head chief as equivalent to a high king over several minor kings. Cass likely chose to designate Shingabawossin as the head chief because he was the most amiable chief at the Sault in 1820, as we will see in Chapter 2. Such designations, usually conferred upon various chiefs with medals, caused confusion and

resentment among the Ojibwa because it disrupted their traditions. In most cases, the chiefs chosen by the whites were not acknowledged as such by the Ojibwa.⁷⁵ Often, they were men agreeable to or easily coerced by whites into agreeing to deals beneficial to the whites. Shingabawossin seems to have been an exception since he was already a chief and well-respected by his people prior to Cass' arrival.

f. The name is often hyphenated as Shin-ga-ba-wos-sin.

The Ojibwa actually had two levels of chiefs. Civil chiefs were of the first rank while war chiefs were of the second.⁷⁶ However, no chief really had authority over the others. The Ojibwa had a long history of government, but no organizational hierarchy. Leadership was maintained through oratory.⁷⁷ Chiefs would get together to discuss issues and come to agreements. To become a chief, one had to show leadership abilities as a great warrior, show great wisdom in times of crisis, or be born into it. Chieftainship was not by primogeniture or necessarily hereditary, but it usually passed from one family member to another.⁷⁸

Kawbawgam achieved his own status as a chief through his family relationships, although the details of this process are not clear. He may have had a right to chieftainship through his biological father, or perhaps through his stepfather, although when his stepfather Shawano died in 1884, his chieftainship passed to his biological son Edward, Kawbawgam's half-brother. By this time, Kawbawgam was not living at the Sault, so it stands to reason Edward, who did reside there, would become the chief in the area. Kawbawgam would move to Marquette in the 1840s shortly after marrying Charlotte, daughter of Chief Marji-Gesick, who was part of the Madosh family in Marquette County. Kawbawgam likely became acknowledged as a chief by virtue of his being Marji-Gesick's son-in-law and probably succeeded him as chief upon his death, although this is conjecture. Arthur Bourgeois, in his introduction to *Ojibwa Narratives*, says Kawbawgam became a chief after the death of Chief Madosh (Kawgayosh) a head chief recognized by the US Government, who was Chief Marji-Gesick's brother.⁷⁹ However, as I'll discuss in Chapter 7, this seems unlikely.

Childhood and Native Beliefs

We know very little about Kawbawgam's childhood. Because his family was Catholic, we can only speculate to what degree he grew up experiencing the typical Ojibwa lifestyle prior to the nineteenth century. This topic is important because Kawbawgam was obviously a leader in his community as an adult, but it is hard to know to what degree he adopted white ways, especially when it came to religious beliefs.

Traditionally, Ojibwa boys and girls would make prepuberty fasts, abstaining from food and fixing their minds on the spirit world. The fasts' purpose was so the child would hopefully acquire a guardian spirit, which was often visualized as a person or animal. This spirit would give them sound advice, knowledge, and possibly even power to influence the course of future events.⁸⁰

German writer Kohl wrote about such experiences in 1855 after interviewing Ojibwa at L'Anse, Michigan. This fact suggests such practices were still common among the Ojibwa, despite the influences of Christianity, well into the nineteenth century. Kohl describes the children who made these fasts as:

...able, at the tenderest age, to fast for days on behalf of a higher motive, retire to the most remote forests, defy all the claims of nature, and fix their minds so exclusively on celestial matters, that they fell into convulsions, and attained an increased power of perception, which they did not possess in ordinary life.⁸¹

The children would make their “dream-beds” in the trees, about ten to twelve feet off the ground. According to the Ojibwa, the good spirits and dream genii reside high in the air while the Matchi-Manitou wanders about on the ground and annoys people, so the dreamer needs to be above where the Matchi-Manitou’s snakes, toads, and other animals would disturb him. The children were also warned that if they had bad dreams, they were to return home and try later, over and over, until the right dream came.⁸²

In particular, Kohl interviewed Agabe-gijik (The Cloud), an older Ojibwa who recounted his dream from his youth to Kohl. This Ojibwa was likely a generation older than Kawbawgam. He describes a spirit coming to him who ordered him to follow him, and he did so through the air. He felt like he and the spirit were ascending a mountain until they came to a summit where he found a wigwam and four men sitting around a large white stone. From there the four men told him to ascend and he did so, rising higher and higher in the air and seeing an abundance of birds and game below him, which meant he was to be a famous hunter.⁸³

If Kawbawgam had such a dream experience, one has to wonder what the spirits showed him. Did he realize he had a destiny to become a chief among a small band of his people at Marquette, or that he would be involved in founding a city at the heart of the great iron industry the Americans would develop?

As a Catholic, did Kawbawgam also hold on to old beliefs that an Ojibwa leader should develop an intimate, long-term relationship of reciprocity with spirit persons? The spirit persons would then provide him with material help and create a balance among the various powers in the Ojibwa universe to allow him and his people to survive and be secure. Similarly, as the Ojibwa converted to Christianity, they came to believe the “blessings”

of white technology and skills would result from respectful behavior toward the white man's god.⁸⁴

We can only guess what Kawbawgam's religious beliefs may have been. How did he reconcile a belief in Christianity with the traditional Ojibwa religious beliefs and myths and legends he grew up hearing? That these legends were important to him is reflected in the fact that in the 1890s he would remember so many of them and recount them to Homer Kidder to ensure they would be preserved.

Conclusion

Chief Kawbawgam's origins and family background remain cloaked in obscurity. Similarly, his early years are largely lost to us from a lack of historical record. In Chapter 3, we will delve into the parts of his life that are fairly well-documented, beginning with his marriage to Charlotte in 1847. First, however, in Chapter 2, we will set aside Kawbawgam himself and look at an overview of the state of the Ojibwa and their relations with the Americans who arrived at the Sault when Kawbawgam was hardly more than a toddler. The coming of the Americans would be the most significant force of change to the Ojibwa way of life, and it would affect Kawbawgam's own behavior and relationships with white Americans as an adult.