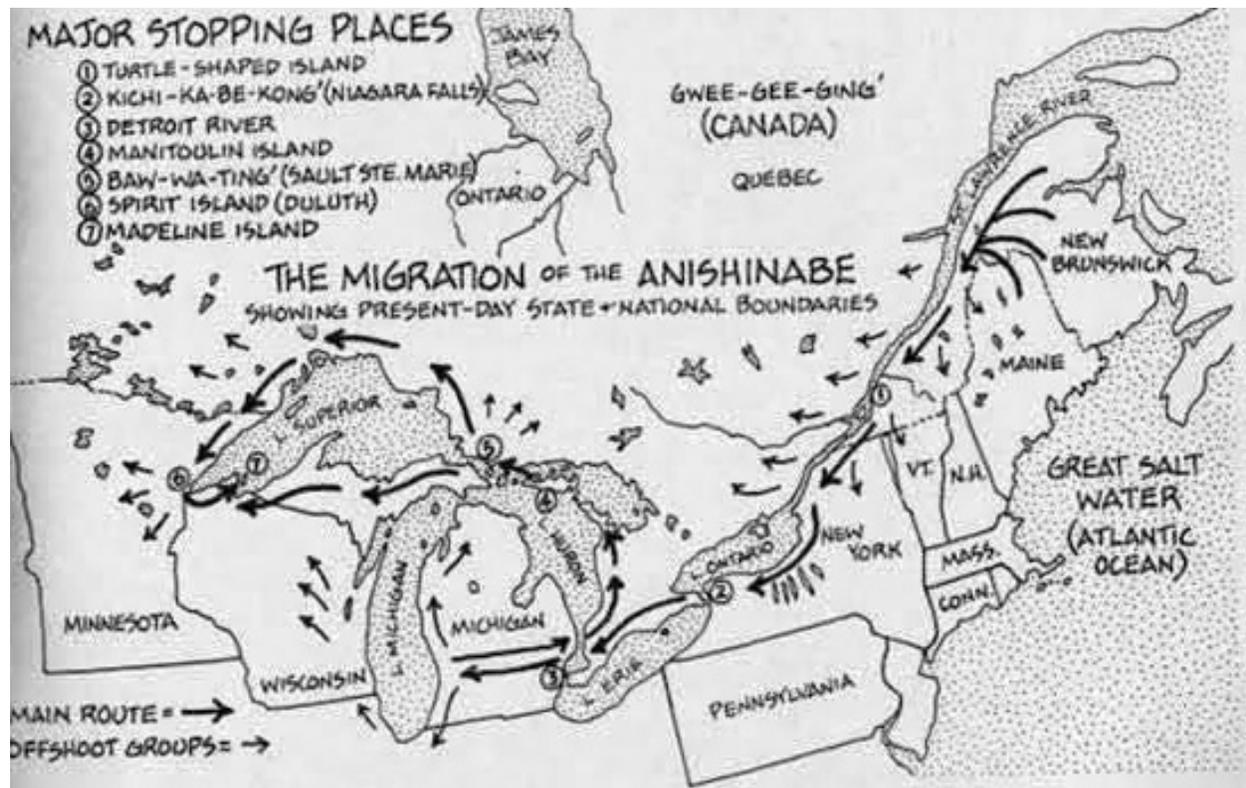


Chicog-Then and Now for February, 2026  
JoAnn Malek

Our Chicog world was covered with white over Thanksgiving weekend, 2025. It was a joy to wander on snowshoes through the stunning forest. Every flexible tree, bush, grass was bowed to the ground. A knock with my ski pole would bring the heavy snow down and send each stave back up. Repeating the action again and again allowed me to follow my trails. More of a problem were the fallen limbs, branches, and trees. But the beauty of snowshoeing is that I can walk anywhere!

Snowshoes have been around for thousands of years. They distribute body weight over a large surface so we can walk atop soft snow without sinking down. "Studies have proven that walking and running in snowshoes burns more calories than any other exercise known to the human race" according to the Northern Lights Newsletter. It seems to me that walking in deep snow without snowshoes would burn even more calories.

People of Central Asia (Northeastern Siberia) most likely first used snowshoes around 4000 B.C. Through the ages, in all parts of the world, unique varieties of snowshoes have been developed for winter survival.



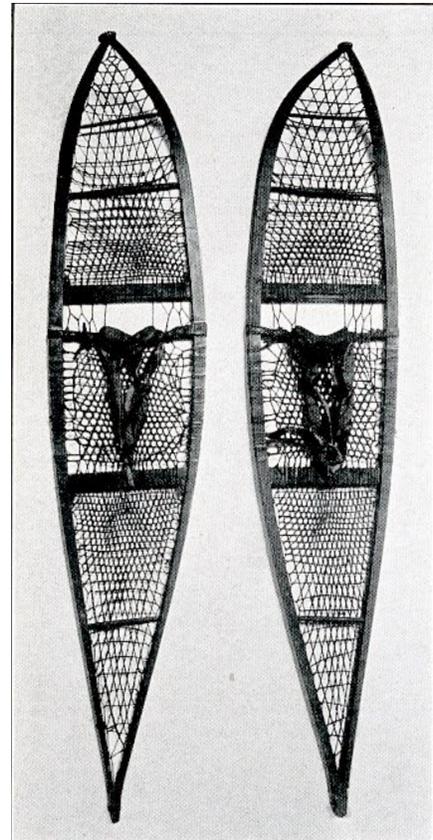
For Ojibwa tribes in this area snowshoes were as necessary in winter as canoes in summer. “Ojibwa” (Ojibwe, Ojibwag, Ojibway) is the name given them by other Native American tribes. The name means “pucker” referring to their moccasin style, with toes sewn inward to keep snow out.

U.S. treaties referred to this group as Chippewa, dropping the “O” and saying “jibwa”. The Ojibwa referred to themselves as “Anishinaabe” meaning original people

“Agin” is the Ojibwa word for snowshoe. The Ojibwa design incorporated qualities of lightness, strength, gracefulness. With long pointed tail and equally long, pointed, turned-up toe, the shoe could slide easily across snow and through brush.

To build these snowshoes, strips of green wood, most often white ash, were steamed or heated over the fire to soften. When pliable, the wood pieces would be carefully bent. The frame was strengthened with cross blocks. Decking was narrow strips of moose, deer, elk, caribou, or horse rawhide, woven together and tied to the frame. A leather wrap held the foot in place, usually a toe thong with an ankle loop that left the heel free. “Nind agimosse” means “I walk with snowshoes”. The typical snowshoe walk is a long swinging gait, a swaying motion of the body.

“Occasionally we find some article invented by man in a relatively primitive state, with the strain of necessity upon him, of such great perfection that modern ingenuity has been unable to improve upon it.” The Penn Museum Journal. December, 1911



*Chipewyan Indian  
(Athabaskan) snowshoe  
from Penn Museum*



*George Catlin, Snowshoe Dance at the First Snowfall, 1835-1837, oil on canvas*

The snowshoe dance is a traditional Ojibwe event. With a song of thanksgiving to Great Spirit for sending a return of snow, hunters wearing snowshoes dance around a pair of snowshoes suspended from a tall pole. The dance is a request for successful hunting during the coming winter.

**Do you have stories** to tell about Chicog-Then?  
I'd like to listen. Call or text me at (612) 250-0301.

**Thank you for reading *Chicog-Then and Now***  
Town Website: [www.townofchicog.com](http://www.townofchicog.com)

### **IMPORTANT FEBRUARY DATES**

Wednesday 2/11, 6pm, monthly Chicog meeting

Wednesdays 2/11&25, Namekagen Transit Service

Wednesday 2/25, 10:30-12, Books&Bread, Beaverbrook

Thursday 2/12, 10:30-12, Bibliodragon bookmobile, town hall

(Bookmobile routes are cancelled when there's a  
"feels like" temperature of 20 degrees or lower)

Thursdays 10:30-2:30, Weekly Walkabout pot lucks, town hall