The Midewiwin Society

Also known as the Grand Medicine Society, they are a chosen group who are responsible for the spiritual and physical health of the people. They believe that their gift of healing was given to them by the Creator, not learned. Special instruction by the elders were given to the apprentices on herbal medicines. The Mide (medicine men and women) invited candidates who showed evidence of possessing the gift of healing.

The Midewiwin showed and taught our people the importance of maintaining a balanced living by herbal medicines, vision questing, and the sacred teachings and songs. Prayers and songs invoked the power of the plant medicines.

Members of the Midewiwin were both spiritual leaders and healers. A new member initiated into the society is known as a First-degree member. They are qualified to conduct funeral services and preside at the Feast of the Dead, an annual memorial ceremony held for those who passed on during the previous year. Presently, after each passing of a community member follows a feast after four days which time the soul-spirit is thought to leave his physical body and travel to the spirit world. The grave is marked with the person's clan totem, turned upside down to signify death. Small wooden "spirit houses" were erected over their graves.

In order to conduct other rituals, new members had to master new duties, renew their knowledge of medicines both old and new, participating in annual retreats devoted to fasting and prayer to renew their spiritual force. Today they are four degrees of the Midewiwin. In earlier times they were as many as eight.

The Midewiwin is not specifically an Ojibway society, it is active among other Great Lakes tribes, the Ottawa, Potawatomi which are part of the Algonquin Family.