Gathering on the Great Turtle: Where Native Futures Blossom

Oweesta's 2027 Capital Access Convening

Long before Mackinac Island became known for horse-drawn carriages, historic hotels, and summer tourism, it was and remains a place of deep significance to the Anishinaabek peoples of the Great Lakes.

Known in Anishinaabemowin as Michilimackinac, Place of the Great Turtle, the island sits where Lakes Michigan and Huron meet at the Straits of Mackinac. Its name reflects the shape of the island rising from the water like the back of a great turtle and carries forward a much older story of Indigenous life, gathering, movement, and exchange.

For generations, Odawa, Ojibwe, and Potawatomi people traveled these waterways to fish, visit relatives, gather for ceremony and council, share knowledge, trade, and maintain relationships across the Great Lakes. Long before European commercial systems reached the region, Indigenous people had already established networks of exchange connecting communities, resources, knowledge, and relationships. That history remains alive today.

Michigan is home to **12 federally recognized Tribal Nations:** Bay Mills Indian Community; Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians; Hannahville Indian Community; Keweenaw Bay Indian Community; Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians; Little River Band of Ottawa Indians; Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians; Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawatomi Indians, also known as the Gun Lake Tribe; Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi; Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians; Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe; and Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians.

These Nations are part of Michigan's living present and future, with sovereign governments, vibrant cultures and languages, growing economies, and enduring relationships to these lands and waters.

Convening on Mackinac Island

On June 7-9, 2027, Oweesta will bring its 12th Annual Capital Access Convening to Mackinac Island.

There is something especially meaningful about gathering in a place where Indigenous people have exchanged resources, knowledge, and ideas for generations.

Native CDFIs, Tribal leaders, funders, investors, practitioners, and partners from across the country will gather on the Great Turtle to learn from one another, strengthen relationships, and build new pathways for capital to reach Native communities.

That work reflects what Native CDFIs do every day. We move capital through trust, local knowledge, accountability, and relationships built over time, creating pathways to homeownership, entrepreneurship, clean energy, infrastructure, community facilities, and Native ownership.

CAC brings community leaders together with funders and investors to listen, exchange ideas, challenge assumptions about risk, and build stronger partnerships.

Oweesta's Four Directions of Capital carries that work further by recognizing strong Native economies require more than one financial tool. Communities need grants and capacity, lending and debt capital, tools that share and reduce risk, and pathways to ownership and equity.

Gathering at Michilimackinac gives our work deeper meaning.
Indigenous gathering and exchange have always been part of Mackinac Island. It never left. Indigenous people are still here, and the Great Turtle remains part of a living Anishinaabek homeland.

In June, we gather on the Great Turtle to honor that history, strengthen relationships, move resources, and create the conditions for Native futures to blossom, shaped by the vision, strength, and self-determination of Native communities.

