

# Déwégen – The Drum

The drum and singing can mean different things to each person. But, the drum for the Nishnabé has special meaning: it represents the heartbeat of our people.

The word **déwégen** has its root in the word **odé**, which means heart in our language.

In a traditional sense, our instruments are more than simple material objects we use to make music. They are representative of where we come from, our connection to **Nokmeskignan**, Grandmother Earth. The swooshing sound of a rattle represents the creation of this world. When a **déwégenatek**, drumstick, strikes the drum, it is an extension of our own heartbeat. **Ngemwenen**, our songs, is our original language before we spoke **Bodéwadmi**.

Though the **déwégen** is used for social, ceremonial, and personal reasons, it always will connect us to the old ways. With the popularity of pow wows, many people associate the drum with fun times and dancing. This is a good thing for us to have that connection with each other.

If you learn to make your own **nich déwégen**, hand drum, you may notice some things. The drum shell is made of **kishké**, cedar. **Nmishomes**, my Grandpa, takes the cedar boards in his wood shop and smooths and cuts them. Next, he cuts the pieces to form a circle and glues them all together. **Kishké** is a sacred tree that we use for medicine, and it also makes good drums and boxes for feathers. The step we will teach you to do today is to string the drum. The hide is **seksi**, deer. It is thin and strong, and it makes a real nice sound when it is dry. When you string your own **déwégen**, you put a piece of yourself into it. Every **déwégen** looks and sounds unique, and yours will be like no other.



Jason Wesaw with hand drum and big drum



Hand drum with painting by David Martin

Part of caring for your **déwégen** is to make a **shkmot**, bag, for your drum. You should always put your drum away when not in use, and treat it with respect. You will want to make a **natek**, stick, for your drum. You can do this by getting a good piece of maple, hickory, or red willow, about 10 inches long. Wrap some yarn around one end and cover it with a nice piece of leather. This will be soft and light, and should produce a good sound when hitting the **déwégen**. Some people even tie a little **séma** to the drum so it always has medicine on it.

Most importantly, your new **déwégen** should make you feel good. Have fun with it. Over the years, the drum has taught me so much about this way of life. I have been able to sing all over the country and it is an honor to do this. I hope everyone had fun and learned something good today.

**Wéwéne !!**

## Nich Déwégen Agnomaksajuk Zheshmowen

### Hand Drum Class Language

<b>Déwégen</b>	Drum
<b>Odé</b>	Heart
<b>Nokmeskignan</b>	Grandmother Earth
<b>Déwégenatek</b>	Drum Stick
<b>Ngemwenen</b>	Songs
<b>Bodéwadmi</b>	Potawatomi
<b>Nich Déwégen</b>	Hand Drum
<b>Kishké</b>	Cedar
<b>Nmishomes</b>	My Grandfather
<b>Seksi</b>	Deer
<b>Shkmot</b>	Bag
<b>Séma</b>	Tobacco
<b>Wéwéne</b>	Thank You

### Vowel Sounds

**A** = ah as in father

**E** = uh as in put

**I** = ee as in feet

**O** = oh as in bowl

**É** = eh as in bet

