

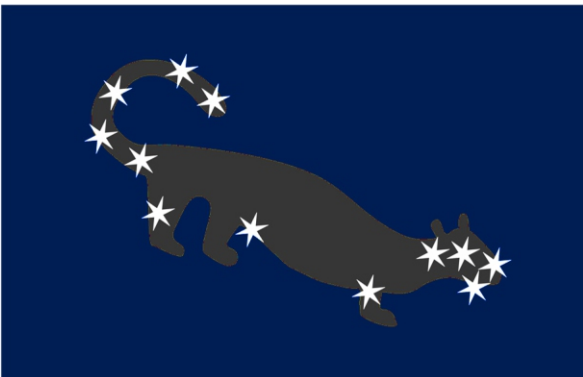
March - Week 5

Great Panther Constellation Rising

Our view of the night sky changes throughout the year. Different stars are visible during different seasons in relation to the position of the Earth as it travels around the sun. Many people look to the night sky and see not only individual stars, but they “connect the dots” and visualize images from groupings of stars. These groupings are collectively called Constellations. People from different cultures recognize different constellations. The Ojibwe people of the Great Lakes region and the Lakota people of the Northern Plains see different constellations as they reflect cultural ceremonies and often correspond to phenological events in the regions in which they live.

One such Ojibwe constellation that rises in the spring night sky is the Great Panther. The Ojibwe people believe the Great Panther lives at the bottom of Lake Superior and it can rise from the lake and cause floods. Observing the rise of the Great Panther in the night sky signals the impending spring melt and the rising water levels of lakes and streams that are soon to follow. Historically this guided the Ojibwe people to move from their winter camps in the lowlands near lakes and rivers to their upland sugar bush camps.

Observe the night sky this week. Do you see the Great Panther rising? What constellations do you see? What family traditions do you observe that are marked by the arrival of spring? Draw and write about your connections to the constellations in the spring night sky, “connecting the dots” between images in the sky and cultural/natural events you observe at this time of the year.



The Great Panther constellation.