



Weaving Knowledges in Tribal-University Research



Guidance from the Kawe Gidaa-Naanaagadawendaamin Manoomin Collaborative

2023

BACKGROUND

Kawe Gidaa-Naanaagadawendaamin Manoomin—translating from Ojibwemowin to English as “First We Must Consider Wild Rice”—is a tribally driven research collaborative including participants from Great Lakes tribal nations, intertribal treaty organizations, natural resource agencies, and interdisciplinary researchers at the University of Minnesota (UMN). The goal is to protect Manoomin (Ojibwemowin), Psin (Dakota), Wild Rice (English), or *Zizania palustris* (scientific) through prioritizing tribal knowledge and perspectives on its cultural significance and ecology. Wild Rice is considered a sacred relative as well as food, medicine, and a gift from the Creator by Anishinaabe/g (sing./plural), Dakota, Ho-Chunk and other Indigenous peoples of the upper Great Lakes region. The decline of Wild Rice has been well-understood and documented throughout its natural range since European colonization. Here we present the findings from a qualitative evaluation that explores the collaborative’s approach to engaging multiple ways of knowing through the guidance of “Kawe Gidaa-Naanaagadawendaamin Manoomin.”

When we consider Wild Rice first, we



We respect the rights and personhood of Wild Rice

"I guess what wild rice means to me is, it means life... It's one of the first foods that are given to a young baby when they're able to finally start eating solid food and it's a food that's shared when a person passes away, it's one of the last foods that they've been given for their journey... It means life because it provides that medicine."
— Eric Chapman, Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa

We offer tobacco and honor tribal ceremonies

We value Wild Rice as our teacher

	Value
	Practice
	Wisdom

"I thought that climate change would bring people together and that didn't happen. Now I believe that mnomen [wild rice] will bring us together to fix our broken relationships with each other and the land."
— Dr. Mike Dockry (Citizen Potawatomi Nation), UMN

METHODS

From 2020-2021, we interviewed 24 members of the Wild Rice Collaborative. We gathered feedback on how the project weaves together different systems of knowledge, including Tribal Ecological Knowledges and Western sciences. Interviewees included 10 tribal affiliates and 14 university affiliates, including Native and non-Native tribal agency staff, university students, and faculty. The interviews took place on Zoom™, lasted on average 55 minutes, and were analyzed with open coding in NVivo 12 (QSR International). From analysis, we identified values, practices, and wisdom that are key to our work together. While the guidance in this document emerged from the interviews, ongoing dialogue continuously develops our practices and understandings.



When we consider Wild Rice first, we



Prioritize tribes

We uphold tribal sovereignty

Memoranda Of Understanding establish our knowledge production and data sharing protocols

The Ojibwe title of our collaborative reflects that the research is tribally driven and prioritizes tribal views

"...letting the original, the Anishinaabe peoples and the Native Americans be that first layer of protection for Manoomin... We understand it and we know it from a spiritual type of sense." – Kelly Applegate, Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe

Students, especially Native students, are the bridge because they can walk in two worlds



Bring our holistic gifts

"Manoomin has no boundaries..." – Joe Graveen & Eric Chapman, Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa

"...we're each bringing together part of the story that Manoomin shared with us as part of the big picture."

– Peter David, Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission

We each bring diverse ways of understanding and protecting Wild Rice

We learn with Wild Rice across the seasons and years



Share time on land and water

"At Lac du Flambeau, paddling the river was extremely illuminating. We were able to paddle the length of the entire river one day... It's just hard when you're not actually at the place, to remember all the little things, I think... People who are in the actual location together can really bring back different memories or different thoughts or different ideas. And that also really changed the science..." – Interview participant, UMN

We prioritize tribal visits and showing up when invited



Treat each other as relatives

Wild Rice is our relative and teaches us to build meaningful relationships

We bring our true selves

"What I've come to learn from this project and what some of our partners have taught me is that knowledge is a process and that knowledge is a relationship." – Dr. Mae Davenport, UMN

"I don't want to live in a society that hurts people... I want to be a part of building something beautiful where we all thrive, and where we're all respected and cared for... [To] actually make this world better, we have to be humble, we have to be accountable, and we have to collaborate." – Dr. Laura Matson, J.D., UMN and Lockridge Grindal Nauen PLLP

Relationships foster knowledge exchange

"I think the story of Manoomin's decline and loss is a story of environmental injustice. And the wrongs that were committed to the Ojibwe and others– that you have these kind of parallel injustices to the landscape... massive logging, land conversion, mining–it's really this terrible injustice..."

– Interview participant, UMN

We hold institutions accountable for past and present harms



Pursue just futures

"...sustain Manoomin, which will in turn sustain Anishinaabe people."

– Melonee Montano (Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa), UMN and Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission

We don't just document decline; we pursue a future where Wild Rice thrives

This study was conducted as part of the Kawe Gidaa-Naanaagadawendaamin Manoomin Collaborative. The evaluation research team was led by Hannah Jo King (king1306@umn.edu) and Mae Davenport (mdavenport@umn.edu) at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities (UMN) with the support of: Jamie Colvin (Seminole Nation of Oklahoma), Haskell Indian Nations University; Kellen Cooks, Cornell University; Mike Dockry (Citizen Potawatomi Nation), UMN; Emily Green, UMN; Anna Kadrie, UMN; Amelia Kreiter, UMN; and Michala Zien, UMN. We are grateful for the artwork in this document done by Sarah Agaton Howes (heartberry.com). We would like to thank all of the participants in our interviews and meeting discussions who provided their wisdom in this research, including (those who wish to be named): Kelly Applegate (Mille Lacs), Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe; Naomi Blinick, UMN; Eric Chapman (Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa); Diana Dalbotten, UMN; Peter David, retired Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission; Joe Graveen (Lac du Flambeau), WI. Lac du Flambeau Wild Rice Cultural Enhancement Program; Katherine Hagsten, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe; Hima Hassenruck-Gudipati, UMN; Kari Hedin, Lake County Soil & Water Conservation District; Dan Larkin, UMN; Laura Matson, UMN and Lockridge Grindal Nauen PLLP; Melonee Montano (Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa), UMN and Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission; G.-H. Crystal Ng, UMN; Madeline Nyblade, UMN; Bazile Panek (Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Ojibwe); Cara Santelli, UMN; Nancy Schuldt, Fond du Lac Resource Management Division; and Darren Vogt, 1854 Treaty Authority. Finally, the partnerships created through this project are among its most important outcomes. We would like to acknowledge the tribes and intertribal organizations in our partnership: 1854 Treaty Authority; Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa; Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission; Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council, Inc; Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians; Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe; Minnesota Chippewa Tribe; and St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin. Funding for this project comes from The National Science Foundation (Award #2009256). For more information go to <https://manoominpsin.umn.edu>.