

Conference Summary

The Tribally Directed Collaborative Research Conference organized by the *Kawe Gidaa-Naanaagadawendaamin Manoomin* project brought together 51 participants, 38 of which represented Tribal Bands across Minnesota and Wisconsin and Tribal resource management programs, on April 19, 2018 at the Black Bear Casino, Fond du Lac Reservation, to discuss research around manoomin/psiq̄ (natural wild rice). Tribal resource managers, Tribal leaders, rice chiefs, and University of Minnesota faculty, staff, and students - including four Native students - participated. Representatives attended from Bois Forte Band of Chippewa, Citizen Potawatomi Nation, Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, Prairie Island Indian Community, St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin, Shinnecock Indian Nation, White Earth Nation, Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, 1854 Treaty Authority, Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission, and Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Epidemiology Center.

Conference Welcome

We were deeply honored to have Ricky Wayne DeFoe, a Fond du Lac member, start the morning with a prayer that welcomed everyone to the Fond du Lac Reservation and began the day in a good way. Karen Diver from College of St. Scholastica, the former Chairwoman of Fond du Lac and former Special Assistant to President Obama on Native American Affairs, then welcomed everyone to the conference and introduced the overarching goal of the project: for the University team to prioritize Tribal viewpoints and to work in collaboration with Tribal partners to protect manoomin/psiq̄.

Project Goals and Background

The University project team outlined the goals of the conference: (1) continue to build partnerships and relationships between University researchers and Tribal representatives, (2) work toward developing a set of research principles and protocols to ensure that Tribal interests are prioritized, and (3) start to establish a collaborative research plan to examine the ecology, culture, and policy surrounding manoomin/psiq̄ with the goal of protecting this vital natural and cultural resource. Background on the project was also provided, starting from the grant proposal-writing process that involved some Tribal input, the funding obtained from the Grand Challenges Initiative at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, and recent visits by the research team to different Bands and Tribal organizations to learn about manoomin/psiq̄ concerns and how Tribes want University researchers to help examine these issues.

Talking Circle

During a talking circle, all participants shared their backgrounds, perspectives, thoughts, and concerns. Tribal members and leaders expressed the profound spiritual and cultural meanings of manoomin/psiq̄, and their knowledge about factors impacting the health of manoomin/psiq̄. People discussed research and policy topics and potential future directions for collaborative projects. Some concerns were raised about accountable research by the University and the

need to address harms from other University practices and to develop trust and respectful relationships. A couple of participants pointed out that apart from engaging with University researchers, Tribal representatives should use this gathering as an opportunity to join efforts across Bands and Tribal organizations to pursue common interests of protecting manoomin/psiq.

Themes on Understanding and Protecting Manoomin/Psiq Habitats

Small group discussions were held around six themes that emerged from previous discussions between University researchers and Tribal representatives and were topics that the current University project team could readily help address. The themes were:

1. Impacts of water levels on manoomin/psiq
2. Impacts of invasive / competitive species on manoomin/psiq
3. Impact of contaminants and nutrients on manoomin/psiq
4. Harvesting practices and new generations of ricers
5. Management, policy, and decision-making affecting manoomin/psiq
6. Responsible conduct of research - principles and protocols

In these discussions, participants described their concerns related to each theme and brainstormed potential research topics, approaches, and study sites. Participants also discussed policy and advocacy strategies, and ways to encourage youth to participate in rice harvesting. The University research team also laid out principles of ethical and accountable research, and discussed ways in which University researchers should address past and present harms and develop relationships and meaningful community-engagement.

Representatives from each of the small groups shared reported back to the full group. All participants had the opportunity to contribute additional ideas on each theme and reflect on the ideas considered. Again, questions were raised about accountable research by the University, and it was very clear that the project team must establish and strictly follow a set of research principles and protocols approved by the Tribal partners before initiating any research activities.

Next Steps

To close the conference, next steps were discussed. Interested participants joined Working Groups centered around each of the six themes to continue discussions following the conference and to collaboratively establish research plans for the coming summer and beyond.

Over the next month, the Working Groups will guide the University researchers in finalizing a protocol for responsible and ethical research guidelines, and in developing a work plan for the summer. Next fall there will be another conference to share research outcomes, reflect on the research collaboration, and make further plans.

The following timeline is proposed by the research team:

- April 30, 2018 - Contact working Group members to coordinate web meetings

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- May 4, 2018 - Send draft of full conference report to participants for feedback
- May 4-25, 2018 - Working Groups establish summer research plan via web meetings
- May 18, 2018 - Deadline for feedback from conference participants on full conference report
- May 25, 2018 - Send out final conference report (with feedback incorporated) to conference participants
- May 25, 2018 - Send out research protocol and research plan to partners for approval
- June-September, 2018 - Collaborative field work approved by Tribal partners
- Fall, 2018 - 2nd conference to discuss summer findings, reflect on project, and plan next steps in the collaborative project
- 2019 (2nd year of 2-year funded project) - activities to be driven with Tribal partners

Continuing and Strengthening the Partnership

The University research team invites Tribal representatives to contact them with any additional thoughts or feedback, and with interest in the research team visiting their Band or Tribal organization to further discuss concerns about manoomin/psiq or generally how University researchers carry out work in Indian Country. Tribal members and representatives who were unable to attend the conference but would like to participate in the collaborative research, including joining a Working Group, should let the research team know. The University research team can be contacted via email at: manoominpsin-gc@umn.edu, or by phone: 612-624-9243 (Crystal Ng). More information about the project can be found at: <http://manoominpsin-gc.dash.umn.edu/>.

Miigwech / Pidamaya

The University research team very sincerely thanks all participants for their contributions to the conversation on collaboratively protecting manoomin/psiq. The team also appreciates having all Tribal partners hold the University researchers accountable.