

Conference Summary

On December 19, 2018, the 2nd Tribally Directed Collaborative Research Conference organized by *Kawe Gidaa-Naanaagadawendaamin Manoomin* brought together 51 participants, 38 of which represented Tribal Bands and organizations, at the St. Croix Casino in Danbury to discuss research centered around manoomin/psiq̄ (natural wild rice). Attendees included Tribal resource managers, Tribal leaders, elders, and rice chiefs from Bands spanning Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan: Bois Forte Band of Chippewa, Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, Prairie Island Indian Community, St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin, Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, 1854 Treaty Authority, Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission, and Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Epidemiology Center. University of Minnesota-Twin Cities research team members at the conference included faculty, researchers, and students. Some manoomin/psiq̄ researchers from the University of Minnesota-Duluth and University of Wisconsin-Madison were also invited.

Pre-Conference Activities

On December 18, the afternoon before the main conference, a small group consisting of 5 Tribal participants (Band members, Tribal educators, and Tribal organization representatives) and some members of the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities project team discussed ways to engage and support Native youth and students through learning about manoomin/psiq̄. The importance of having good mentorship, seeing real-life relevance, and gaining lasting and meaningful skills were emphasized. In the evening, the entire University of Minnesota-Twin Cities project team, as well as a few Tribal attendees, participated in a training on Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) led by Melonee Montano (TEK Outreach Specialist, Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission). The University of Minnesota-Twin Cities research team recognizes that TEK is knowledge that belongs to Indigenous people, and the team will never attempt to appropriate TEK in any of its research. The training session was prompted by some Tribal partners urging the team to hear about the values and perspectives guiding Tribal knowledge. The University of Minnesota-Twin Cities researchers greatly appreciated the opportunity to learn about TEK from Ms. Montano and commit to respecting Native values and experiences in their work.

Conference Welcome

At the main conference, we were deeply honored to have Francis Songetay of St. Croix start the morning with a prayer that welcomed everyone to the St. Croix Chippewa Reservation and begin the day in a good way. Karen Diver, Faculty Fellow for Inclusive Excellence with a specialization in Native Studies at the College of St. Scholastica and the former Chairwoman of Fond du Lac, followed with a welcome and introduced the goals of the conference: to reflect on the collaboration so far and to look forward to next steps in this joint project between Tribal partners and the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities team to protect manoomin/psiq̄.

Project Goals and Background

The University of Minnesota-Twin Cities project team described the goals of the project: (1) to support Tribes in their work to protect the vital cultural and natural resource of manoomin/psiq through collaborative research on its ecology, cultural significance, and policies and (2) to develop a set of research principles and guidelines to ensure ethical conduct by university researchers working with Tribes and Tribal interests - for this specific project and well beyond. The University of Minnesota-Twin Cities project team also provided background on the project, starting from their grant proposal-writing process, which involved some Tribal input, to their visits and first collaboration conference with Tribes, through which the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities team learned to understand the profound importance of manoomin/psiq for all Tribes as well as the need to listen to diverse Tribal perspectives.

Talking Circle

Through a talking circle, each participant introduced themselves and had the opportunity to share their experiences with manoomin/psiq and with the project.

Conference Themes

Sessions at the conference were centered around five themes: 1) Reflections on the research collaboration so far, 2) How to collaboratively analyze data from the project, 3) Interest in continuing the collaboration and seeking future funding, 4) Ideas for the next spring conference, and 5) Any other concerns about manoomin/psiq not yet considered in the project. Participants were invited to share their thoughts through writing at any time, in addition to out loud during the discussions.

Discussion of Best Practices & Assessment for Tribal Natural Resource Management

Tribal partners had the opportunity to share and compare best practices for their management projects. St. Croix discussed their wild rice lake restoration work; Fond du Lac described their Wild Rice Health Assessment; and Lac Du Flambeau, 1854 Treaty Authority, and GLIFWC compared their climate vulnerability assessments. The session ended with a conversation about the importance of thoughtfully engaging Native youth to prepare for future management and sustaining of natural resources.

Elders Panel on the Significance of Manoomin/Psiq

We were greatly honored to have four Tribal elders from Lac du Flambeau and Fond du Lac share their perspectives on manoomin/psiq. Moderated by Karen Diver, the discussion included each individual's long-time experiences and relationships with manoomin/psiq, as well as their thoughts on the future of manoomin/psiq.

Update of the Research on the Biophysical Dimensions of Manoomin/Psiq

Tribal partners introduced the manoomin/psiq lakes/streams of-interest and of-concern where collaborative fieldwork was carried out over the past summer and fall. Native and non-Native University of Minnesota-Twin Cities undergraduate and graduate students worked together at these sites and presented their preliminary hydrological and geochemical data, as well as their

up-coming ecological research plans. The Native students on the project shared inspiring and moving explanations of their motivation to work on this project.

Update of the Research on the Social Dimensions of Manoomin/Psiñ

University of Minnesota-Twin Cities social science researchers discussed their Minnesota State Licensed wild rice harvester survey study. The goals of the study are to assess values, beliefs and practices associated with wild rice and harvesting and to help examine current harvesting practices in the state, similar to on-going efforts in Wisconsin. The researchers also described their on-going assessment of the state of Minnesota's consultation process with Tribes. Finally, there was discussion of a protocol for responsible and ethical research by the university team members, which applies to research on both biophysical and social dimensions of Manoomin/Psiñ. The University of Minnesota-Twin Cities team hopes that this protocol can serve as a template for all researchers working with Tribes to carry out their work ethically.

Final Reflections and Looking Ahead

Many Tribal participants talked about seeing an encouraging collaboration emerging from the project, as well as hopes that other universities in the region can make similar efforts. There were reminders for university researchers to respect the deep significance of manoomin/psiñ, as well as to continue to grow the collaboration through more visits to Tribal partners and to manoomin/psiñ lakes and streams. All participants who completed the conference evaluation form expressed interest in the project team seeking future funding to continue this collaborative work.

Next Steps

Over the next months, the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities research team will continue to analyze data from the 2018 field season and work with Tribal partners to jointly interpret the findings and decide together how results should be disseminated. The University of Minnesota-Twin Cities team will also continue visits to Bands and Tribal organizations to maintain and grow the partnerships. In the spring, there will be a third collaboration conference, where plans for the next field season (summer 2019) will be formulated. In the meantime, there will continue to be monthly web-conferences, to which any Tribal representative is welcome to attend. Please contact manoominpsin-gc@umn.edu if you would like to be added to the email list. A draft of the full December 2018 report (to be disseminated only to conference participants) will be sent out for review in mid-February.

Continuing and Strengthening the Partnership

The University of Minnesota-Twin Cities research team invites Tribal representatives to contact them with any additional thoughts or feedback, including interest in the research team visiting their Band or Tribal organization to further discuss concerns about manoomin/psiñ 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 should let the research team know. The University research team can be

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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/psin. The team also appreciates having all Tribal partners hold the university researchers accountable.