# ANISHINAABE MANOOMIN GENAWENI-MAAJIG

# THOSE WHO WATCH OVER THE WILD RICE

A GUIDEBOOK FOR
HEALING RELATIONSHIPS
WITH MANOOMIN ~ 2026

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS


The guidebook curators are Mae Davenport, Sofia Ledeneva, Isa Villalobos Alvarado, Jessica Tran, and Giovanni Delgado-Ortiz. They had the honor of weaving together the stories and teachings shared by the knowledge holders for this guidebook. The curators are grateful to each knowledge holder for their time and generosity. The curators sought guidance from Kathy Chosa Smith, study cultural advisor, on how to share the stories in a good way and how to avoid sharing stories or knowledge that are culturally sensitive.

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**Project students and researchers with a tribal partner at the 2023 Manoomin Psiŋ Knowledge Symposium.**

# GUIDEBOOK AUTHORS

This guidebook was created by and for **ANISHINAABE MANOOMIN GENAWENIMAAJIG** *(Those Who Watch Over the Wild Rice)*. The knowledge holder authors who generously shared their stories and teachings are listed below in alphabetical order. Each knowledge holder introduces themselves in the way that they would like to be introduced.

- **Eric Chapman Sr.,** enrolled member of Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians, Former Tribal Council Member, Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians; Eric first harvested Manoomin at the age of 8.
- **Kathleen Chosa Smith,** enrolled member of Keweenaw Bay Indian Community; Manoomin Ganawandang, Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission.
- **Rob Croll**, Climate Change Program Coordinator, Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission.
- **Ahshoni Daniels**, Otter Clan, Forest County Potawatomi Tribe; Ahshoni first harvested Manoomin at the age of 11.
- **Annette Drewes,** Writer and Manoomin ally; Annette first harvested Manoomin at the age of 46.
- **Joe Graveen**, enrolled member of Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians; Program Manager, Wild Rice Cultural Enhancement Program, Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians; Joe first harvested Manoomin at the age of 14.
- **Todd Haley**, enrolled member of Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians.
- **Marne Kaeske**, Cultural Preservation Specialist, 1854 Treaty Authority; Marne first harvested Manoomin at the age of 23.
- **Roger Labine**, Fish Clan, Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians; Water Resources Technician, Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians; Roger first harvested Manoomin at the age of 16.
- **Jason Peterson**, Ojibwe; Jason first harvested Manoomin at the age of 11.
- **Alan Peterson**, Fish Clan, Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians; Alan first harvested Manoomin at the age of 11.
- **Nancy Schuldt**, Nancy first harvested Manoomin at the age of 48.
- **Leon Boycee Valliere**, Eagle Clan, Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians.
- **Gerald White**, Eagle Clan, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe; Gerald first harvested Manoomin at the age of 8.
- **Raining White**, Eagle Clan, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe; Raining first harvested Manoomin at the age of 11.
- Two anonymous knowledge holders

# A PARTNERSHIP PROJECT GUIDED BY TRIBAL AND INTERTRIBAL AGENCIES

This guidebook shares teachings from Manoomin knowledge holders on healing relationships with Manoomin. The guidebook is intended for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Manoomin harvesters, stewards, and other relatives who would like to learn from each other about the gifts Manoomin shares with us all. Manoomin is a plant relative, growing naturally in shallow lakes and streams. In Ojibwemowin Manoomin means "good berry." Manoomin is an essential food, medicine, and traditional lifeway of the Anishinaabeg peoples. Manoomin communities and habitat have declined as a result of colonization, climate change, and contemporary land use practices that disrupt Manoomin lifecycles and ecosystems.

The guidebook is one outcome of a Tribal-University Research Collaboration *(Kawe Gidaa-naanaagadawendaamin Manoomin, manoominpsin.umn.edu),* a research project partnership, and a two-year interview study that was guided by tribal and intertribal agency partners who dedicate themselves to protecting and restoring restoring Manoomin *(Ojibwemowin, Psiŋ in Dakota, wild rice in English)* and nibi (*Ojibwemowin, Mni in Dakota, water in English)*, and all relatives. This guidebook shares teachings from Manoomin, Manoomin knowledge holders, and Manoomin harvesters on how to heal relationships with Manoomin. It is important to acknowledge that Indigenous voices in this guidebook are primarily those of Ojibwe and Anishinaabeg peoples. We acknowledge that Dakota peoples' stories of Psiŋ are critically important to healing relationships with Psiŋ; however, those stories are not represented in this guidebook.

The project was funded by a U.S. Department of Commerce National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Adaptation Sciences program grant (*NA21OAR4310282, 9/1/2021-12/31/2024);* the College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences, University of Minnesota; and The Nature Conservancy. The project advisory team originally included Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, 1854 Treaty Authority, Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission, College of Menominee Nation, Lake Superior National Estuarine Research Reserve, USDA Forest Service Northern Institute of Applied Climate Science, The Nature Conservancy, University of Minnesota, and Wisconsin Sea Grant. The partnership grew over time to include 35 tribal, intertribal, and non-tribal organizations. The project culminated in a Manoomin Psiŋ Knowledge Symposium on November 13-15, 2023, in which more than 350 knowledge holders gathered to honor tribal sovereignty and Manoomin through sharing food, language, stories, science, practices, and visions for a reciprocal future.

# INTERVIEW STUDY BACKGROUND AND APPROACH

One of several activities of the project partnership was to conduct an interview study. The interview study explores Manoomin, Manoomin knowledge holders', and Manoomin harvesters' teachings for healing relationships with Manoomin. The study was requested by tribal partners and directed by natural resource department staff with tribal and intertribal agencies in collaboration with two academic institution researchers (Mae Davenport, University of Minnesota and Deidre Peroff, Wisconsin Sea Grant) and a non-government organization researcher (Kristen Blann, The Nature Conservancy).

The University of Minnesota (UMN) research team, made up of an environmental social scientist, graduate students, and undergraduate students, gathered with Manoomin, Manoomin harvesters, and Manoomin knowledge holders (here forth, knowledge holders), either in person or virtually, to learn about Manoomin relationships. The knowledge holders guided the discussion, sharing stories, beliefs, fears, and hopes for the future. The authors and curators of this guidebook identify Manoomin as a knowledge holder because Manoomin is a teacher. Our cultural advisor, Kathy Chosa Smith, reminds us all, "Manoomin speaks through us." Interviews took place in 2023 with 17 knowledge holders following institutional and cultural protocol. Researchers and partners deliberated, documented, practiced, and monitored responsible and respectful research protocol in many ways with the project team.

**Researchers took many steps to ensure the process was respectful and reciprocal, including:**

- seeking guidance from a cultural advisor,
- completing trainings in cultural competency, human subjects research, and Indigenous research,
- participating in water and Manoomin ceremonies,
- submitting research protocol for institutional review and approval,
- following existing tribal-university MOUs,
- making the interview process accessible by offering multiple formats and traveling to knowledge holders' communities,
- offering knowledge holders asemaa (tobacco), a traditional Ojibwe practice of showing gratitude to knowledge holders for sharing their knowledge,
- compensating knowledge holders for the time they gave to participate, and
- supporting opportunities for knowledge holder review of interview transcripts and study publications such as this guidebook.

Manoomin knowledge holders were identified through discussions with tribal and intertribal agency staff. Following procedures for free, prior, and informed consent, UMN researchers invited knowledge holders to participate in the interview study. We facilitated interviews with 17 knowledge holders, 11 of whom identify as Native American, five identify as White, and one who did not report racial or ethnic identity. Knowledge holders' reported ages ranged from 31-66 years old. They started ricing at the earliest age of 8 and latest age of 48.

Interviews were semi-structured in format, meaning the researchers followed an interview guide with a standard set of questions, but the pace, sequencing, and direction of the interview discussion was set by the knowledge holder. The interview guide included questions about relationships with Manoomin, concerns about Manoomin, experiences harvesting Manoomin, and beliefs about sustainable harvesting and stewardship practices. Interviews were audio-recorded, with the consent of the knowledge holder, and transcribed verbatim by researchers.

Interview records were stored on a password-protected secure UMN database. Knowledge holders had the choice to have their knowledge de-identified (i.e., anonymous) or attributed to them in publications. Knowledge holders were also invited to have their interview transcripts archived in a restricted access archive. Interviews were analyzed collaboratively among researchers following adapted grounded theory procedures for qualitative data analysis (Charmaz 2014) and Indigenous research methods (Wilson 2008). Interview knowledge holders had the opportunity to review and edit the guidebook, including the knowledge they shared.

# GRATITUDE AND AN OFFERING TO MANOOMIN

We, the guidebook curators and knowledge holder authors, believe that to start this guidebook in a good way, we must first show our gratitude for **Manoomin, a gift from the Creator.**

We share this guidebook and teachings to continue our journey of healing relationships with Manoomin, **our relative.**

We put down asemaa *(tobacco)* to **ask permission** to share these stories.

We participate in **ceremony** to connect with the spirit world.

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Let us start by sharing the many ways in which we are grateful for the teachings, medicine, and sustenance Manoomin has given us.

## JOE GRAVEEN

"**You know [wild rice] is sacred.** We use it in ceremonies. A friend of mine said, 'It's in our life from the time that we're born to the time you travel on.' **It represents family, community, stories, laughter, hard work, time, music.** I just think about this year and hearing the rice fall into the canoe while you're harvesting. You know there's no other sound like it."

## RAINING WHITE

"Wild rice has been a part of my life since forever, I would say. I remember eating it as a kid. **That's kind of like our thing as an Ojibwe person, as an Anishinaabeg person.** It's always present, you know? Throughout my life, as far back as I remember. Even my mom who was nonnative…she always made sure to have rice. And that was really important to us. I realize now how important it was to have that relationship with wild rice: meals and special occasions and ceremonies and funerals. Everything. **It's always part of my life.** I eat it today, multiple times a week. So, it's very, very special to me."

## ANNETTE DREWES

"Ah, I fell in love with wild rice. I was learning who wild rice was….and to me, understanding where this natural food came from was really important. I was floating [in my kayak] into the edge of a bed of wild rice. And, just sitting there and watching the wildlife and **knowing that this plant has been growing for thousands of years.** It became a spiritual thing for me. I became passionate at that point."

# OVERVIEW OF FOUR TEACHINGS FOR HEALING RELATIONSHIPS WITH MANOOMIN

Four fundamental teachings emerge from the stories that knowledge holders shared about Manoomin relationships. These teachings are shared so that we all may learn from them. According to Kathy Chosa Smith, sharing knowledge and responsibility with others is an important Ojibwe worldview: "Our teachings are for everyone. Our teachings are given freely." Each of these teachings provides guidance for healing relationships with Manoomin. Each teaching reflects collective storythemes, or groupings of stories, across knowledge holders that explain the teaching. We share, in the words of the knowledge holders, to honor them and their teachings.

The teachings are first presented in summary form. Then, the teachings are presented along with their storythemes in the words of the knowledge holders, using direct quotations. The quotations include name attribution or anonymous attribution, following the consent of the speaker. The words in bold font highlight central phrases or themes within each quotation. Though each of the interviews was conducted individually (except one interview that included two knowledge holders), the teachings and storythemes align in many ways as one unified voice. That voice can be heard or interpreted as the voice of the knowledge holder, the voice of a close Manoomin relative, or the voice of Manoomin and Manoomin's teachings to us all. As Kathy Chosa Smith observes, "Manoomin is speaking through us. Manoomin is a beautiful gift that brings our voices together."

FIRST TEACHING:

## IF WE DON'T USE OUR GIFTS, THEY WILL GO AWAY.

If we don't use our gifts, they will go away. Healing begins by acknowledging past harms. Settler colonizers committed acts of racism, dispossession, and cultural genocide that continue in many ways today. Settler colonial policies and practices have caused profound cultural trauma and loss, especially in the erosion of identities, traditional practices, and rights. Settler colonizers attempted to destroy the relationships Indigenous peoples have with Manoomin. Because of these acts and ongoing harms, Manoomin has been neglected. Through it all, we learn that if we don't use our gifts, they will go away.

SECOND TEACHING:

## WE MUST MAKE THE TIME TO RECONCILE OUR RELATIONSHIPS AND TO RECONNECT WITH MANOOMIN.

We must make the time to reconcile our relationships and to reconnect with Manoomin. That process happens when we support and reclaim Indigenous identities and relationships with Mother Earth. Then we can relearn and appreciate who Manoomin is.

THIRD TEACHING:

## WHEN WE HONOR MANOOMIN, MANOOMIN WILL HEAL US.

When we honor Manoomin, Manoomin will heal us. Indigenous teachings and practices show us how to honor Manoomin. Supporting careful harvesting across generations and cultures honors Manoomin. We all need to come together to respect Manoomin and to care for Mother Earth. When we honor Manoomin, Manoomin will heal us.

FOURTH TEACHING:

## SHARE YOUR STORIES AND TEACHINGS FOR HEALING RELATIONSHIPS WITH MANOOMIN.

Share your stories and teachings for healing relationships with Manoomin. This fourth teaching is yet to come. What are new stories yet to be told? What are new teachings you have learned from Manoomin and other knowledge holders? With respect and gratitude, ask your elders, harvesting and processing partners, family members, communities, and other relatives for their stories and teachings. Telling these stories and sharing those teachings will bring all of us together.

# TEACHINGS AND STORY THEMES

## FIRST TEACHING: IF WE DON'T USE OUR GIFTS, THEY WILL GO AWAY

Knowledge holders interviewed recognize that healing begins in acknowledging the harms colonization caused to Indigenous peoples, communities, and nations, and to Manoomin. Over generations since European colonization, genocide, cultural erosion, and neglect of Manoomin have led to Manoomin's decline. Knowledge holders described the effects of genocide and racism on Anishinaabe and Ojibwe knowledge, stories, and practices for stewarding Manoomin: "People were forbidden to do these practices." As harvesting has declined, so too has the abundance of Manoomin, according to knowledge holders. Healing must start with acknowledging those harms.

**Researcher questions:** We have heard from wild rice harvesters and stewards that the harvest of wild rice has changed over the past several decades. What is your perspective on how harvesting has changed over time? What do you think has led to the decline in Manoomin harvesting?

**Knowledge holders' responses summarized:** If we don't use our gifts, they will go away. Healing begins by acknowledging past harms. Settler colonizers committed acts of racism, dispossession, and cultural genocide that continue in many ways today. Settler colonial policies and practices have caused profound cultural trauma and loss, especially in the erosion of identities, traditional practices, and rights. Settler colonizers attempted to destroy the relationships Indigenous peoples have with Manoomin. Because of these acts and ongoing harms, Manoomin has been neglected. Through it all, we learn that if we don't use our gifts, they will go away.

## CULTURAL GENOCIDE AND RACISM

**Rob Croll:** "Like a lot of things, **the decline of wild rice is directly related to settler colonialism and the change in how people interact with the land and the water here**. So, as there got to be more people, as the land was completely changed by being cut over, as people began to start industries and pollute, [that] changed the water. …That's how the decline, I believe, began. It was partly because, I hesitate to say it was intentional, but maybe to a certain extent. White folks like me realized how important rice was to the Ojibwe people here in this place and to the Dakota over in Minnesota. Just like with the Buffalo, [White people] intentionally tried to sever that relationship and push [Indigenous] people out of the rice beds."

**Roger LaBine:** "Having the kids taken away. [European settlers] were trying to assimilate these kids into their way. **People were forbidden to do these practices.** They were forbidden to do it. [Kids] were forbidden to be shown what wild rice was, what was important to them. So, Michigan has a lot of, you know, healing to go through. There was a lot of environmental amnesia because our elders today are those survivors of boarding schools. And a lot of people are embarrassed to tell their grandchildren, 'I don't know.'"

**Leon Boycee Valliere: "And later in time, what happened was one day a white bus showed up here. A white bus and four black letters on it. Those four black letters were USDA.** And here that bus came from the United States Department of Agriculture. When that bus stopped here and opened up the door, they started throwing out four white demons at our people. There was white lard. There was white flour. There was white sugar. And, there was white salt. And, as a result of that, that white bus showing up there with these four white demons, I've seen the first wave of destruction on native people. We never had diabetes here. But within a few short years of that bus showing up here, I've seen people go blind. I've seen people getting their limbs amputated. Because, these native people, their bodies are not equipped to process those types of food. The thing that you have to remember is at that time, people were impoverished here. And now you have somebody giving them food. And now people didn't have to work for food. 'Here, have some food. We'll give you a box of it and come back next month and we'll give you some more.' **So, their relationship to our traditional foods began to change."**

**Zhaashiigid Nooding (Bob Shimek) at the 2023 Manoomin Psiŋ Knowledge Symposium**

*PHOTO BY CLARISSA FRIDAY*

**Nancy Schuldt:** "It's just one more example of the **cultural genocide that has been occurring over time.** And I don't need to go into the historic details about how there has been oppression and genocide because it absolutely has happened in the area ever since European contact, and it's happening in more indirect ways these days."

**Jason Peterson: "A lot of people won't admit that there's racism, but there's a lot. I suppose they don't watch for it either.** Like the young kids now. When I was growing up in grade school and high school was when all the racism peaked. It was like you couldn't even go to school without getting into a fight. It's like, 'Come on man, just because your mom and dad hate us, why do you gotta hate us?' I don't think they have to deal with that as much anymore in schools. There's a lot of older people that still carry a lot of hate."

## THE EROSION OF CULTURAL IDENTITY AND TRADITIONAL PRACTICES

**Joe Graveen:** "Prior to the treaties, individual bands used to manage wild rice beds by bundling, and that was one way for doing that. **Then, a lot of the practices that they did back then, it's against the law today."**

**Gerald White:** "[Ricing], we could generate a lot of income for families. Usually, the parents rice together... And then, me and my brothers, we'd go out and sell some of our Manoomin, and we would give it to our mom. It was almost like a holiday atmosphere when the season was upon us. Everybody would go to town and eat. We'd get new shoes and new bell-bottom jeans, leather vests [laughter]. It was a treat, and we got that from our Manoomin. The income was pretty good, in the sixties and early seventies. **Then all of a sudden, the [cultivated] paddy industry came about, and the price went down to like 25 cents, 50 cents a pound, which was very hurtful to our families.** Nobody's ever been compensated for anything like that... for what the European American system did to us. I mean, this is not the only [example]. It's everything. It's the trees, it's the water, and we're always fighting against the system to leave it alone. Leave it alone."

**Jason Peterson:** "It's like identity. We're losing it. Wild rice, the migration stories of our people. One of the main characters in our stories is the wild rice. That's how I identify. And if I can't identify with anything, who am I, you know? So [people are] losing their ways, and **they're losing their identity** at the same time."

**Alan Peterson:** "We were told by a lot of old timers, that were told by their old timers, that **when that rice stops growing, that berry stops growing on this water, we're done."**

## MANOOMIN HAS BEEN NEGLECTED

**Leon Boycee Valliere:** "Let me start with the concept of acculturation. So, in the concept of acculturation, what happened was you had an original form of [Indigenous] government. You had an original form of leadership. You had original norms and mores that governed the relationship that people had with wild rice. And in our traditional form of governance with regards to wild rice, there were individuals who were given the title Rice Chief, Naagaanizid Menoominiked. And these Rice Chiefs that had ultimate authority dictated opening dates, when the rice beds would open. They dictated when sections of rice beds would open. And they also upheld order with regards to what were—or, I should say, what are—the traditional mores associated with wild rice harvesting. **And with the coming of the other forms of government and authority, the original Rice Chiefs lost their authority. And that's when it changed."**

**Nancy Schuldt:** "Treaties are the law of the land. And, **we've seen abject failure [of state and federal agencies] to live up to their responsibilities,** both as regulators and their trust responsibility to the tribes. I think I would also hasten to add that it's frustrating that so little documentation and inventory and monitoring of wild rice waters has occurred. Because I think if we had a baseline that went back 30, 40, 50 years—what does wild rice look like, and where were the really productive sustainable stands—we'd have a greater ability to really focus on enforcement and compliance."

**Anonymous:** "We also talk about how, with a lot of the gifts that we've been given, if we don't use it, we lose it. We've had a significant decline in ricers over the years. ...I think that's played into it as to why our rice has declined because **I think as a people as a whole, we are forgetting about the rice.** And then the rice is like, 'Okay, I'm just gonna start going away then, because why do I need to keep thriving so well, because there's not people out here visiting me and things.'"

## IF WE DON'T USE OUR GIFTS, THEY WILL GO AWAY

**Eric Chapman Sr.:** "We used to have ample wild rice waters here on the Reservation. But for some reason it went away, and I've heard it is because people aren't respecting it. **People weren't taking care of it, that's why it went away.** And a lot of times our elders say if you don't go harvest that beaver, you know, or harvest salmon or birchbark, you know, it's gonna go away."

**Nancy Schuldt:** "Harvesting wild rice is important for a lot of non-tribal people as well, and I think some of the same phenomena are happening with regards to the diminishing number of knowledge holders in the non-tribal group as well. I mean there's fewer people fishing, there's fewer people hunting, there are fewer people ricing. All of that serves to disconnect us from our relations in the natural world. I mean that's really depressing, because **the less connected we feel to the world around us and the plants, and the animals, and the water, and the land, the less we care about it."**

**Kathy Chosa Smith:** "I also believe too, that **if we don't use our gifts, they'll go away.** Now we're doing these restorations, but still, you need to stir up that muck."

**Donald and Karlene Chosa at the 2023 Manoomin Psiŋ Knowledge Symposium**

*PHOTO BY CLARISSA FRIDAY*

# SECOND TEACHING:

## WE MUST MAKE THE TIME TO RECONCILE OUR RELATIONSHIPS AND TO RECONNECT WITH MANOOMIN

Many of the harvesters and knowledge holders describe the need to reconcile relationships with Manoomin and with each other. Indigenous peoples, communities, and tribal nations are leading the way in this work. Non-native settler peoples have an opportunity to support Indigenous identities, knowledges, and practices by being advocates and allies. Processes of reclaiming and supporting Indigenous identities provide fertile ground for relearning. As project partners remind all of us, in this region, we all have a relationship with Manoomin. Project tribal partners encouraged our research team and non-tribal partners to pay attention to those relationships. They encouraged us to get out and renew those relationships with Manoomin by walking the land together, paddling the water together, harvesting together, and being in community across our generations and cultures. In our work we respect different ways of knowing, observing, and being in relationship with "Mother Earth." We learn from each other and our traditional and Western knowledge systems to reconnect with, honor, and protect Manoomin. We all can hear that drum, the "heartbeat of Mother Earth."

**Researcher questions:** How would you describe your relationship with Manoomin? What does Manoomin represent or mean to you today?

**Knowledge holders' responses summarized:** We must make the time to reconcile our relationships and to reconnect with Manoomin. That process happens when we support and reclaim Indigenous identities and relationships with Mother Earth. Then we relearn and appreciate who Manoomin is.

## SUPPORT AND RECLAIM INDIGENOUS IDENTITIES AND RELATIONSHIPS WITH MOTHER EARTH

**Raining White:** "I think there's a gap between my dad's generation and [my] generation. My dad's kids, we're all grown, you know, full-fledged adults. I think [my dad's generation] experienced things that kind of pushed them away from the culture in general. You know? And I don't want to, like, lay old claims or anything, but just the trauma that happened before my time. Like, **I feel like my generation is kind of recovering and reclaiming our identity."**

**Joe Graveen:** "I think there's more people moving back home. ...I think about things that are going on in the world, more so in our country, pipeline stuff, missing and murdered peoples, boarding schools... I think those things are coming to light, and **they're kind of motivating people to get back to their roots, I guess, and be traditional."**

**Eric Chapman Sr.: "I think that's part of it, you know, is people coming together more often and just sharing or talking about our Seven Teachings. And, you know, hatred isn't one of them.** Animosity isn't one of them. Those Teachings that our Grandfathers have taught us, and you don't even have to be a Native American to know those. But with those bad words are bad thoughts that really drain out the positive things in a community."

**Leon Boycee Valliere: "We are Ojibwe Anishinaabeg people and our relationship with wild rice is a very old relationship. And when we as people lose our understanding of what that relationship is, then we're no longer Ojibwe people, we're descendants of Ojibwe people. As long as I'm walking, guess what? People are gonna know it.** My elder that taught me a great deal about wild rice, he was still in the boat with me when he was 94 years old, still picking rice, still talking about rice, still teaching me about rice. And so we were very fortunate that we had a very active elder that knew the whole culture of wild rice. And he was very determined that those teachings remain on the earth. So that's what we're continuing."

**ROGER LABINE**

**"It's like when my grandfather was part of big drum.** And I heard that beat, and I heard that drum for the first time, and I was drawn to that drum. And I had to talk over with my grandparents, and parents, and my mentor about what that was about: **the heartbeat of Mother Earth."**

-Roger Labine

**Annette Drewes:** "I'll use this example from Itasca. We worked with [a representative] from the Leech Lake Band. We had almost 200 school kids there. The majority of the schools serve native students, and a mixed population, but a lot of native students. And I will remember forever, sitting in the canoe talking about the rice itself. I had rice spread out in the canoe, and each of the kids got to pick one. And we found the seed and looked at the hull and stuff. And then talking about harvesting it. And there was a young native gal, fourth grader, who was so excited, she's like, 'Oh, I do this with my family.' I invited her to step into the canoe and share her story of harvesting, and she did. The pride in her face, the confidence in her voice, sharing this cultural activity with her peers was wonderful to see. There are so few opportunities where native people have been invited into settings like that. And to me if we can figure out what are some of the barriers. Why aren't we getting native interns? What do they need, you know, to be in that situation? **And what can we do to support them?"**

## RELEARN AND APPRECIATE WHO MANOOMIN IS

**Annette Drewes: "To have a relationship with wild rice is to honor the fact that it's a living being.** It's a growing plant. It's something that belongs here, has been here for thousands of years."

**Anonymous: "I think we're supposed to suffer through these times and try to relearn who Manoomin is.** One, to get back to the relationship, but also to appreciate it all over again because we've lost so much of that. So, it's like in some ways we're being forced to put in the work again to understand Manoomin and how to work with it."

**Leon Boycee Valliere:** "Well, there's a lot that needs to be done. The process of educating is one. That's an important step. **[As] more people are educated about it, I think it's gonna serve the survivability of [wild rice].** Some of these things that have been historically debilitating or devastating to wild rice beds need to be addressed."

**Nancy Schuldt:** "**Also, the need for a recognition that climate change is not our friend, and it's especially not a friend of Manoomin**. It is so sensitive to so many environmental factors. The disruption to any one of them, or a combination of them, can be enough to knock it down sufficiently. You know there's nothing we can do about floods or droughts, both of which are happening, and at a higher frequency: intense storm events, wind events. Not much we can do about that, but **we can stop making things worse.** We can stop permitting projects that we know are going to alter hydrology in ways that are not conducive to supporting wild rice."

**Kathy Chosa Smith:** "Some of [the rice beds] have to rest. Maybe it isn't declining. Maybe they're waiting until things get into this alignment from when they'll flourish again, because the seed could stay there for quite some time; I think it's resting. **It's not meant for us right now until we reconnect.** I think we are meant to learn on our own again. We have to pick that work back up on our own and learn all over again. That's going to be a new way of being, right? Manoomin could be our teacher."

**Anonymous: "I've thought sometimes that Manoomin actually has that work that it's doing itself. It's like, 'These people are going to work for it.'** And it takes me back to the same, we have stories about maple, sugar maple sap and how it used to come out of the tree a long time ago just like already good to go. You didn't have to do anything with it. And then the people were basically taking it for granted. And so then the Creator was like, 'Okay, we're going to change this up. You're going to have to work for this now.' And that changed a lot of things. And so now you do appreciate it, once you go through all that work, and same with Manoomin."

**Nibi Ogichidaa Ikwe at the 2023 Manoomin Psiŋ Knowledge Symposium**

*PHOTO BY CLARISSA FRIDAY*

PHOTO BY CLARISSA FRIDAY

# THIRD TEACHING:

## WHEN WE HONOR MANOOMIN, MANOOMIN WILL HEAL US

Our project partners acknowledge that we all, all relatives, need healing. Honoring Manoomin is healing. Knowledge holders explained that honoring Manoomin means following Indigenous teachings and practices. Foremost, we must pay attention to the rice, including harvesting when the rice is ready, taking only what we need, and showing gratitude. Knowledge holders emphasized the need to support young people and elders to harvest. Above all, the knowledge holders stress coming together to care for Manoomin.

**Researcher questions:** What, if anything, should be done to support more harvesting or more sustainable harvesting? Who should lead the way in supporting sustainable harvesting?

**Knowledge holders' responses summarized:** When we honor Manoomin, Manoomin will heal us. Indigenous teachings and practices show us how to honor Manoomin. Supporting careful harvesting across generations and cultures honors Manoomin. We all need to come together to respect Manoomin and to care for Mother Earth. When we honor Manoomin, Manoomin will heal us.

## INDIGENOUS TEACHINGS AND PRACTICES SHOW US HOW TO HONOR MANOOMIN

**Raining White: "I think to harvest rice sustainably, you have to really pay attention to the rice.** And I mean, **if you look at the old ways that we did ricing as Anishinaabeg people, we had Rice Chiefs.** I don't know if you've heard that term before. So, somebody in every village would be responsible for their rice paddy or their lake or river, and they'd go check it out. And they'd be the ones to decide when it should be open. How often it should be opened. They go out there and check people's boats, and they would ban you from ricing if you messed up the rice too bad. If you broke 20 stocks, you had 20 heads in your canoe, or you're goofing around and going on before it was open. So, I think that's a big part that we're missing. We have a council that decides when the rice opens, and they go out and check rice and stuff. But there's so few of them and there's so much rice out there, that they can't check everything."

**Ahshoni Daniels: "It's very important that we pass this on and carry on our ways.** This is the whole reason why the Anishinaabe grows on water. So, we were sent here. Wherever this grows, we're supposed to protect this land here. That's our understanding: this is our home, and this is what led us here. That's why it's so important to preserve it and save our rice beds, because we see the decline. And, it's kind of scary, you know, because that's how we survived for thousands of years, and now it's not doing so good. It's a part of our identity."

**Marne Kaeske:** "We live by the clock and the calendar nowadays... **Traditional subsistence lifestyle in the past [was] dependent on when the resource was ready,** or other phenological indicators. Like when the moose appears in the night sky, [moose] appear in the woods."

**Todd Haley:** "I put down tobacco every time I go out on the water for rice. **You have to respect everything.** That's how you create that relationship between the rice fields and that ecosystem."

**Eric Chapman Sr:** "You know, the way I see it, if everything went away and we lost our power grids and oil dried up, stuff like that, we'd struggle. But those animals would still be there to sacrifice themselves for us. That's why it's important, **if you harvest a deer or fish, you show that animal thanks, that animal spirit [thanks] by offering tobacco because you're able to harvest.** So, you know, part of [the teaching] is to make sure that part of the story isn't forgotten either, because lot of people haven't heard that."

Todd Haley & Deb Connell

**Alan Peterson:** "Just like the old ones used to say, **'just take what you need, and it'll always be there, you know?'"**

## SUPPORTING HARVESTING ACROSS GENERATIONS AND CULTURES HONORS MANOOMIN

**Annette Drewes:** "We have a relationship, we have a duty to wild rice to harvest it. **I heard from several elders, if we don't harvest Manoomin, wild rice will disappear, go away."**

**Kathy Chosa Smith:** "It takes a community to be able to take the youth out to go and harvest rice. And, [we need] those integral young people, and our elders and teachers, when we come together. **To help [youth] reconnect to our food system, to help them understand, and to give them mentorship as well."**

**Tribal-University Research Collaboration *(Kawe Gidaa-naanaagadawendaamin Manoomin)* students making birchbark baskets.**

**Anonymous:** "We do need to keep the [harvesting] tradition going and get younger people interested in it. **I do feel a ground swell of interest in wild rice over the last three years, five years, and I hope that's translating to harvest as well.** I'm not quite sure if that's occurring, but it seems like there's more awareness of rice, acknowledgment, appreciation for it. I hope that's translating into harvest."

**Nancy Schuldt:** "There used to be a concerted effort on the part of the Rice Chiefs, the Rice Council to take youth down. **There used to be a lake that was kind of designated for the youth to go out and learn how to pole and paddle and to knock rice. That is something that hasn't happened for a while now,** and that's really disconcerting."

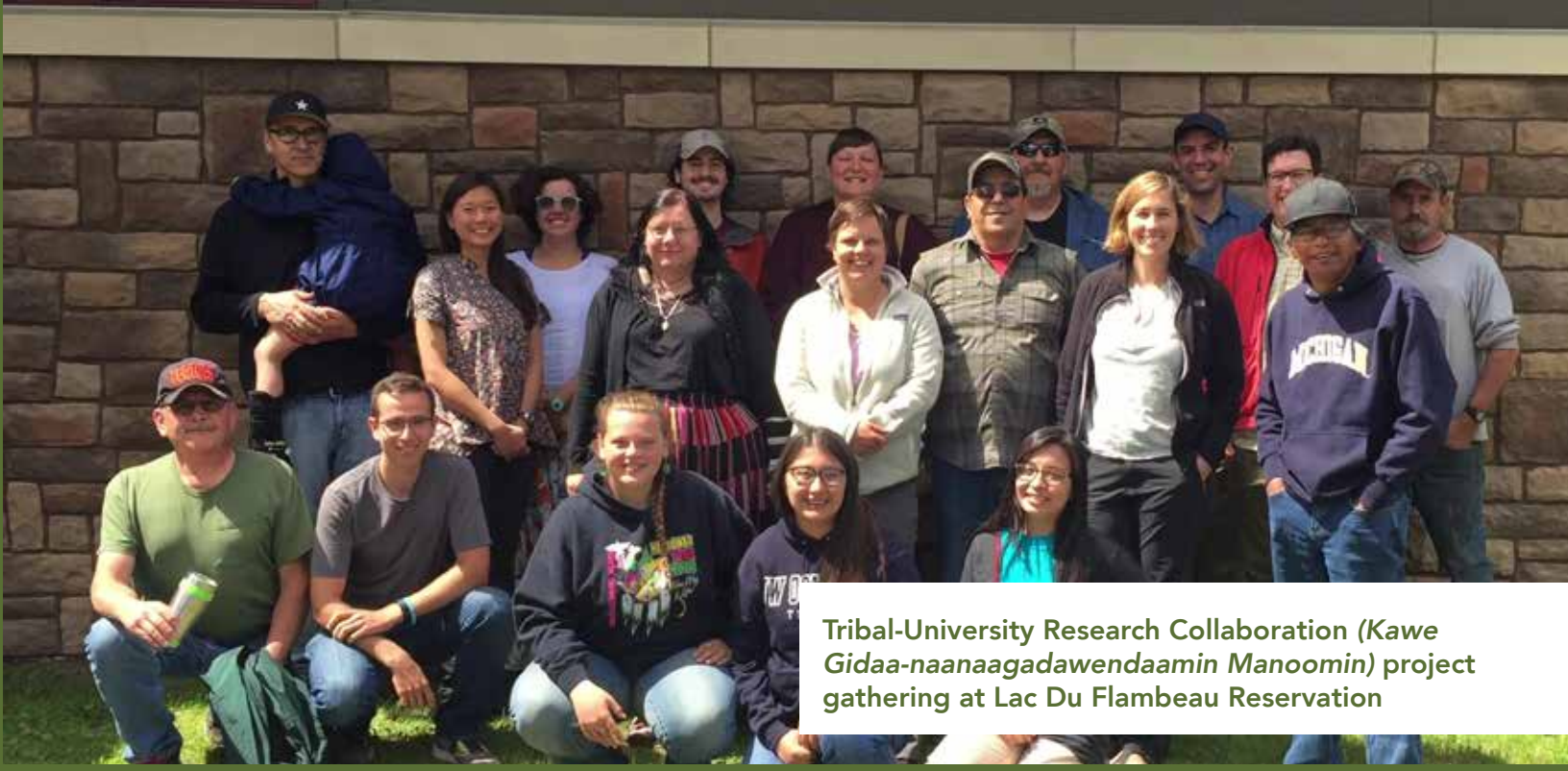
**Eric Chapman Sr.:** "I think **we could offer canoes and equipment, you know, sort of getting into offering our community processors or the thrashers.** And then just give [Manoomin] to those elders and those other people that can't get out there and harvest for themselves, you know. **They need that medicine too."**

**Anonymous:** "And so, the other part is we're just busy in today's lives and like nobody has the time to [harvest Manoomin], which is really disheartening because **we need to start returning to making the time to do that kind of stuff.** Making it a part of like our lifestyle, and I feel like employers, especially like tribal employers, need to carve in that kind of time too. Like, 'Okay families, you have this time off so you can go rice!' Because otherwise it's like you're just in this race all of the time, and you're missing out on why we're truly even here."

## WE ALL NEED TO COME TOGETHER TO RESPECT MANOOMIN AND TO CARE FOR MOTHER EARTH

**Todd Haley:** "The thing is, the DNR and the tribes work together with deer hunting and their fishing, gathering. They work with the general public on it. And I don't know about Minnesota, but in Wisconsin they're supposedly working on this [wild rice] management plan, which they've made some progress, but in my opinion, it's not good enough… All the forest management practices and clear cutting and stuff affects water levels. There's so many variables that go into it. But **you have to start somewhere. These agencies have to come together and create a management plan even for Minnesota… Until they do, the Manoomin suffers, because nothing's being done to maintain it or to improve it.** When nothing gets done out there, it's still degrading. We have to start somewhere. It may not be the right answer, but you're gonna find out, and you can change what you're doing while there's still rice out there."

**Leon Boycee Valliere: "**Well, we don't really need to reinvent the wheel because I think if **you look around, there are examples of where tribal communities have partnered with agencies, with universities.**



**Tribal-University Research Collaboration *(Kawe Gidaa-naanaagadawendaamin Manoomin)* project gathering at Lac Du Flambeau Reservation**

**And when we look at those relationships, those partnerships, we can see positive outcomes. And so, I think the idea is that we need to enhance, grow those natural relationships outward and to the point where we're not talking about one project, but lots of projects. Because we're all working for the same thing.** The end game here is survival for us as people. We're human tribe, we're human tribe. And as human tribe, we all depend upon our grandmother for life. And so that's why it's important to all of us, not just some of us. That's what I'd like to see."

**Roger Labine:** "The tribe, the riparian owners, the Lake Association, the Wisconsin DNR, the Michigan DNR, NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service), Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission. We have a lot of people that have that combo goal, that fight for the preservation of wild rice on this water body. **So, it's not the tribe against everybody else anymore."**

**Rob Croll:** "**That's what's going to solve this, is all of us working together and recognizing that we all, including our non-human relatives, are part of that solution.** We're consulting with them (Manoomin), and being present with them, and not just treating them as a resource, as a thing."

## WHEN WE HONOR MANOOMIN, MANOOMIN WILL HEAL US

**Kathy Chosa Smith:** "When I returned back to harvesting rice, oh my gosh, you really become aware of the landscape. And then so, when I start working, I don't want to quit. You just get into this rhythm, when you are ricing. And, I was like, '**I wonder if this is where our song has come from.'** When you're sitting out there thinking about Manoomin and that harvesting and that good, clean food that you want to put on a table for your family and share with friends and bring it to our ceremonies. It's rhythm, even push-pulling. **It's a rhythm. It can be really healing in a way.** I**t's ceremony.** To me, that's ceremony. I could sing the Nibi song when I'm out there."

**Nancy Schuldt:** "If we as a society are concerned about healthy diet and healthy lifestyles, [harvesting] is one of those ways where you're hitting all the right notes. I mean an active lifestyle: reconnecting with the world around us, and what that does for us. Either, **if you're a tribal person, that connection with your ancestors. Or, as a non-tribal person, that spiritual mental and emotional kind of healing that can come about when you are feeling that connection to your natural world** and breathing fresh air and dipping a canoe paddle into water and hearing the sound of wild rice falling into your canoe."

**Kathy Chosa Smith: "It's really important to have that relationship with Manoomin** because it can be healing in a way too."

# FOURTH TEACHING:

## SHARE YOUR STORIES AND TEACHINGS FOR HEALING RELATIONSHIPS WITH MANOOMIN

Share your stories and teachings for healing relationships with Manoomin. **This fourth teaching is yet to come.** What are new stories yet to be told? What are new teachings you have learned from Manoomin and other knowledge holders? With respect and gratitude, ask your elders, harvesting and processing partners, family members, communities, and other relatives for their stories and teachings. **Telling these stories and sharing those teachings will bring all of us together.**

On the following pages, this guidebook includes blank space for writing, drawing, and sharing your own teachings.

## What are your Manoomin stories?

PHOTO BY CLARISSA FRIDAY

**KATHY CHOSA SMITH**

"These teachings are for everyone and are given freely. Find your own path and journey to reconnect to the land, water, and food systems through Manoomin. These teachings resonate with all cultures.

**Pick up this work and keep going.**

What are new stories yet to be born? What are new stories yet to be told?"

*-Kathy Chosa Smith*

## What teachings have you learned from Manoomin and knowledge holders? From your family and community?

## How have you healed relationships with Manoomin?

## CITATIONS:

Charmaz, K. (2014). Constructing grounded theory. 2nd Ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Wilson, S. (2008). Research is ceremony: Indigenous research methods. Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing.

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