

### ***Greetings to past participants and teachers of Wild Rice Camp,***

In your mind's eyes, ears and nose, take a moment to recall the beauty of seeing manoomin growing receptively to our restoration efforts at the Net River Impoundment. Hear the songs sung by Scott Heron as sacred asemma was passed around and offered to the rice-growing waters. Take in the scents of rice as it was parched in the large heavy kettles. Laugh again at the incredible generosity, wit and wisdom of Roger's stories as he nourished us with his knowledge of manoomin.

Our relationship with manoomin continues to unfold and deepen as we come together as community to create the ricing sticks, push poles, and moccasins to process the rice. Over time, we become acquainted with certain water bodies and learn how wild rice responds to the ebb and flow of the waters. The whole process of seeding, harvesting, parching, dancing, winnowing, cooking and eating are all part of a beautiful connection to wild rice that keeps it relevant in our lives. Over the past several years, the KBIC Wild Rice Camp has been such a wellspring of inspiration to the larger community to foster a positive relationship with manoomin. We have a long-term commitment to our wild rice restoration projects and to honoring and promoting the activities associated with rice to our community.

It is always good to recall the migration story of how the people came to be in the Great Lakes area. Over one thousand years ago, the Anishinaabe lived along the Atlantic coastline of Turtle Island (North America). They were visited by eight prophets and given seven prophecies to follow. The third prophecy directed the people to travel westward until they found the place where "food grows on water." When they arrived in the Great Lakes Region, they discovered vast beds of wild rice, the prophecy thus fulfilled. *Gichi Manidoo Gitigaan*, the Great Spirit's Gardens, are those special places in the wetlands of the Great Lakes Basin where manoomin grows. For the waterfowl that consume the seeds in late summer, wild rice provides nourishment prior to a long southward migration, for the wildlife who reside year-round, the protein-rich wild rice grains provide sustenance to survive the long winter, for the people, manoomin brings community together to harvest, process and feast on this delicious grain. Manoomin is essential to wetlands, wildlife and the identity of the people. This dynamic has unfolded over many millennia and continues today. Manoomin is the "food that grows on water." Manoomin is the good berry, whose presence fulfilled the prophecies foretold in the Anishinaabe's migration from the east. Wild rice continues to be a traditional staple of our diet. Wild rice is a primary ingredient in many recipes, honored in meals at ceremonies and eaten at special feasts.

As we are all well aware this year, the need to keep ourselves safe and prevent the spread of Covid-19, our much-loved traditions need to adapt accordingly. This is a year to take what you know of wild rice and experience ricing activities in your own way, perhaps with those closest to you. Uncertainties with Covid-19 abound and appropriate responses change faster than any of us can keep pace with.

Reduced numbers of staff are ever more committed to keeping our wild rice programs going. Restoration work is ongoing at 9 locations in Baraga County, and several more sites in Houghton and Marquette Counties. We are working with those who harvest rice on our behalf to purchase seed for planting into our restorations sites. We also express huge thanks to KBOCC for their purchase of rice for our on-going restoration work and keeping vital the important collaboration between the NRD and College. In addition, the MDNR and NRCS have provided financial support for Wild Rice Camps and the purchase of rice for seeding and educational purposes. Many of our areas are looking promising with self-sustaining populations of wild rice. These are such encouraging signs.

In lieu of Wild Rice Camp this year, included with this letter are links to resources and documents for you to read highlighting wild rice harvesting regulations (which vary between Wisconsin and Minnesota and are being developed for Michigan). Also, there are many programs and activities available to support your relationship with rice. On the KBIC NRD website <http://nrd.kbic-nsn.gov/wild-rice-management-and-restoration> you will find the Ecosystem Valuation Characterization study, in which Sand Point, the Net River Impoundment and Vermillac Lake are featured.

The staff at the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC) maintain an updated website for information on Wild Rice. Here is the link to their useful site: <https://www.glifwc.org/WildRice/> where you can obtain information on harvesting regulations, the outlook for rice in Wisconsin and Minnesota, and educational materials. Other valuable resources are from the 1854 Treaty Authority. Here is a link to their Wild Rice Resource Guide <https://www.1854treatyauthority.org/management/biological-resources/fisheries/reports.html?id=191&task=document.viewdoc>

A participant in the 2019 Wild Rice camp was Todd Marsee, the designer and photographer at the Michigan Sea Grant. Those of you in attendance no doubt noticed him discreetly taking many pictures of camp activities. Todd has shared with us a link to a beautiful collage of images from camp that have been used to create an inspired book capturing the happy spirit of Wild Rice Camp. Here is a link to the Shutterfly site where the book can be purchased <https://michiganseagrant.shutterfly.com/>. Note that there may be Covid-related delays in printing and shipping.

We are grateful to the Rice Chiefs in the Great Lakes area for their prayers and care for wild rice. Roger will be checking lakes in our area and keeping us informed. Here at KBIC we gather in accord with the 1842 Treaty. In Wisconsin, one would need to be an enrolled member or resident to harvest. Please check with your local governments and be aware of the treaty rights in your area for guidance on wild rice harvesting regulations.

Again, think back to the wonderful teachings we have received from our primary teachers Roger Labine and Scott Herron and all our wonderful teachers at Wild Rice Camps, and bring these valuable lessons forward. So many new and beautiful friendships were begun and these connections can only grow more beautiful – with each other, with the land, waters and rice. We are people keeping our relationship with wild rice vital and keeping manoomin on the waters. Please be welcome to share your stories of wild rice. The world is listening and receptive to hear more.

We will continue to post updates on the KBIC-NRD website and the NRD Facebook page as the wild rice surveying and restoration takes place.

Miigwech to all of you.

Sincerely,

***Wild Rice Planning Team***



Wild Rice at Net River Impoundment, July 2020. Photo credit: Kyle Seppanen

**Manoomin with *miinan* (wild blueberry), *mashkiigimin* (cranberry), *bagaan* (hazelnuts), and *ziinzibaakwad* (maple sugar)**

***Ingredients:*** 1 cup manoomin and one tablespoon each of dried cranberry, blueberry, hazelnuts and maple sugar

Recipe yields 4 1-cup servings

Put all ingredients in a cooking pot and add 3 cups of water. Allow the rice to cook until most of the water is gone — about 1/2 hour. Serve and enjoy!

You may wish to add more fresh fruit or add warm milk and serve as a breakfast porridge — *delicious!*

