

Boozhoo giinawaa,

Aningkamwishgan indizhinikaaz. Ajijaak indoodem. Nagaajiwanaang indoonjibaa. I am Allie Tibbetts/Aningkamwishgan, of the crane clan, Fond du Lac Band citizen and resident. I am writing today to share my thoughts on the importance of protecting the manoomin, the wild rice, here in our beautiful homelands.

A lot can be said about the historical and ancestral importance of manoomin to us Ojibwe. Indeed we have been ricing since time immemorial and the practice is connective to the land here “where the food grows on water” and to our ancestors and, of great importance in this consideration, to those who come after us. But I sometimes feel as though those concepts may feel far away and not as tangible as what I will discuss further.

A great many Minnesotans can appreciate the cyclical nature of the land providing to us what we need. We are largely people who practice higher level environmental stewardship because we understand through our relationships with the land, whether it is hunting, fishing, or gathering. Many of our families and communities are not only provided for through these practices but thrive through these practices all over in Minnesota. A family with a successful hunt or fishing trip will be eating good. And so it goes.

I want to impress upon you that manoomin isn't just a culturally significant symbol, to the Ojibwe throughout time and to Minnesota as our state grain. It is a real life food staple, providing a good portion of my community's people's regular diets. I work in an educational program with children and families, and manoomin is more often a part of the daily menu than not; we serve and eat it several times a week. It is similar at the K-12 Fond du Lac Ojibwe School where wild rice frequents the school lunch menu. It is at every community meal, often a part of multiple dishes, and being cooked and eaten across the reservation by families daily. There really isn't another food item I can think of that occupies the same space in our lives. This is why I often refer to the Ojibwe as “the wild rice people”. We truly are. It was one of my daughter's first foods as a baby. When I asked her, now 4.5 years old, what she wanted to let you know about manoomin, she said, quite simply, “Tell them I love it.”

Manoomin is our food of the past and of the present. Please support its protection so it can remain our food of the future.

Aapiji miigwech,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Allie Tibbetts". The signature is stylized with a large, looped initial 'A' and a cursive 'T'.

Allie Tibbetts/Aningkamwishgan

Fond du Lac Reservation